

You Can't Win If You Don't Enter

By Carolyn Wilman, the Contest Queen

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Review/Interview by Bonnie Staring

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When I saw the front cover, I felt that all was right with the world. Finally, a book that spoke to me in a way that no other had ever been able to. I took the phone off the hook and locked myself in the study, eager to gain new contesting knowledge.

You Can't Win If You Don't Enter is an informative guide to winning your share of all the fabulous prizes companies are offering every day. Sound too good to be true? Think again.

The Contest Queen

With tens of thousands of dollars in annual winnings from hundreds of contests, Carolyn Wilman truly is a Contest Queen. Like many great heroes of our time, Carolyn's journey started with one step. She won a gift certificate to a hair salon back in 1990 through a radio contest—and she hasn't looked back since.

A winning streak in 2004, including trips to Europe, the Caribbean and even a meeting with Sting, prompted her to write this book and share her knowledge with others. By using her own techniques, Wilman averages 5-10+ contest wins per month, making her more than qualified to steer contest and sweepstakes players in the winning direction.

Carolyn Wilman

While there are many ways to enter contests—by phone, mail, ballot box, internet and text messaging—Wilman's book focuses on the easiest ones to enter: internet contests. With a few clicks on the keyboard, you can be entered to win anything and everything from DVDs to home theatre systems to trips to cars to cool cash. Kitchens and handbags and cash, oh my! I'm getting all shaky just thinking about it.

When it comes to contesting, there are three types of people in this world:

- Those who enter
- Those who think about entering

- And those who just don't get it

Why bother?

For those still wondering why they should bother entering, statistics alone show that the more you enter, the better your chances are at winning. *You Can't Win If You Don't Enter* does speak to all three groups by covering the basics of contesting from both the corporate and consumer points of view. Wilman also delves into why companies hold contests and what actually happens to all those electronic entries.

She explores the reasons why a lot of people don't bother entering, including avoiding unwanted junk emails. There's an entire chapter (that her husband had written) dedicated to virus protection and anti-SPAM tools for those concerned with protecting their computer. While I would normally just hope to win a new system, I could now do things in a way to protect the one we already have.

For those "in it to win it"

For the avid contestor, Wilman discusses the pros and cons of contest entering software. Even as a member in good standing of the Win a Contest Newsletter group, I didn't know such software existed, let alone the numerous types available. Wilman claims to cut her entering time in half by using one particular program. I can only imagine what she uses this additional spare time for: scrapbooking her photos of free vacations, going to the bank to deposit all those cheques—maybe polishing a new car or two.

Envy aside, this book explores a hobby that many enjoy, and more are discovering with every new contest that appears on television, in magazines and on store shelves. Wilman lists recommended groups that people can join, newsletters they can subscribe to and ways to get the most out of each entry.

You Can't Win If You Don't Enter also rewards readers with great stories from other contestors, quick tips and even notes on contesting etiquette that Emily Post would approve.

The inside scoop

Even with all the information Wilman provides in this book, I just had to ask the Contest Queen a few more questions:

Q: What's the one piece of advice you'd give?

A: My number one tip is READ THE RULES. Sometimes I forget to take my own advice. (Her book describes a "win" that turned out costing her more than she expected for a trip to Germany where airfare was NOT included.)

Q: Is there a prize that you regret winning?

A: I wouldn't say regret winning, but once we won a outdoor pack containing two cans of Water Deck Seal, two cans of marine seal (for boats) and six cans of plastic spray paint. We don't own a deck or a boat. We gave all of it away to friends that do and the plastic paint is still sitting in our basement.

Q: Is a win today just as exciting for you now as your first-ever contest win?

A: I love winning. I get as excited winning a T-shirt as I do a trip. Most people that get into this hobby do so after entering a promotion on a lark and then winning. They feel so lucky they begin to enter, enter, enter. I think that's why so many people get hooked. I call it "contest crack": one hit and you're hooked!

Addict. Nut. Freaky woman who waits for the mail to arrive. We contestors (sweepers in the U.S.) have been called a lot of names in our pursuit for prizes, but we know the truth. *You Can't Win If You Don't Enter* sums it up quite nicely. Carolyn Wilman has proven that women really

can do anything — and before I get back to checking my inbox for a prize notification, I'd like to say thank you.

About the Author

Carolyn Wilman has worked in sales and marketing for over two decades. She is the founder of Imagination Edge Inc., a promotional consulting business. As the official Contest Queen, Ms. Wilman enters several thousand contests and sweepstakes each month. Visit www.contestqueen.com for more information.

Review by [Bonnie Staring](#)

Bonnie is a writer and performer who dreams of becoming a game show host one day. She and her husband have five houseplants.

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