

“I want to win sweepstakes and lotteries!”

With our expert tips, you'll learn insider tricks that'll increase *your* chances of bringing home big prizes!

1 Win sweepstakes prizes!

Pinpoint the best contests!

Along with Contests.about.com, where expert “sweeper” Sandra Grauschopf helps cull the most reputable sweepstakes, head to SweepsAdvantage.com, Online-Sweepstakes.com, SweepsU.com, and WinIt. WomansWorldMag.com.

Get organized!

Set up a separate e-mail address to keep all your sweepstakes and contest e-mails organized, suggests Grauschopf. “Then set up folders in your Internet browser—one for the contests you enter once, another for the those you enter every day, a third for those you enter monthly and a fourth folder for expired sweepstakes.”

Boost your odds!

“Local contests attract fewer people,” notes Grauschopf. “Sticking to your neck of the woods, say, by entering a local grocery store contest or restaurant promotion, increases your chances. Also, follow your favorite brands on Twitter, Facebook and Pinterest and sign up for their contests on social media where fewer people enter them.”

Start a sweeps club!

Sweepstakes can also help you “win” friends! “Consider starting a sweepstakes club,” suggests Grauschopf. “Get together, say, once a month, to share info about local sweepstakes and boost your motivation.”

Avoid this mistake!

“The most common error is not reading all the rules!” says expert sweeper Carolyn Wilman. “Whether entering a baking contest where you must use certain ingredients or a travel contest that allows only one entry per household, it pays to read the rules.”

Sidestep scams!

What to watch for? Is the contest asking for money or credit card information? No real contest will ask you for that. Another red flag: Asking you to pay taxes to the sweepstakes company. You only pay taxes on winnings to the IRS.

2 Boost your lottery odds!

Play the easiest-to-win lottery!

“Invest your lotto dollars in the Cash 5 game in your state where you have a decent chance of winning a fair amount of money,” says lottery maven Gail Howard. “You can improve your odds by *millions* by playing the Cash 5 game in your state rather than Mega Millions or Powerball!”

Increase your odds with the 70% rule!

Got a 39-number Pick 5 ticket? Add your five numbers and be sure the sum falls between 75 and 125.

“Regardless of which lottery you pick, 70% of the time, the sum of the winning numbers falls within that range,” says Howard.

Pick the right numbers!

Always aim for a relatively even mix of odd and even lotto numbers, urges Howard. “Drawing all odd or all even numbers only occurs 2% of the time! The best mix of odd to even numbers is two odd/four even, or four odd/two even, or three odd/three even. One of these three patterns occur in about 80% of the drawings!”

Nix quick picks!

A lottery study shows that 48% of all tickets sold are quick picks, but only slightly more than 20% of jackpot-winning tickets were quick picks, Howard notes. “So 52% of lotto

players do *not* use the quick picks option, yet they win 79% of the jackpots! Bottom line? “You have a better chance of winning by picking numbers randomly out of a hat than by using quick picks.”

Avoid common lottery mistakes!

Go above 31! Most Lotto players choose calendar numbers, such as birth dates. That means that the most heavily played numbers are one through 31—so pick at least one number over 31 to up your odds.

Avoid the same number group! “Never choose all your numbers from one number group, such as single digits or all 20’s, “All six winning numbers being drawn from one group is highly unlikely,” Howard says.

Don’t play 1-2-3-4-5-6! The most popular set of numbers played is 1–2–3–4–5–6. In every state thousands of tickets are bought in each drawing with this combo, but this is one of the least likely combos to be drawn!

—Kristina Mastrocola

Our expert panel

Sandra Grauschopf, About.com’s sweepstakes expert, has been helping people win contests and sweepstakes for more than a decade. Find more of her winning tips at Contests.about.com.

Carolyn Wilman—author of *You Can’t Win if You Don’t Enter*—runs ContestQueen.com, where she gives tips on how to find, organize, enter and win prizes from sweepstakes, contests and giveaways.

Gail Howard, author of *Lottery Master Guide*, is the creator of the most successful lottery systems used in the world today. To date, 107 first prize lotto jackpot winners have won a total of more than \$101 million with her strategies.

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