

NEW YORK STATE OFFICE  
*of the*  
ATTORNEY GENERAL

# SWEEPSTAKES!

**"YOU'RE A WINNER!"  
"YOU HAVE BEEN SELECTED!"**

*In the mail, on the phone, over the internet: legitimate companies and scammers both use come-ons like these to garner attention and business. Sweepstakes and contests often promote products or services, but scammers also use them to steal your money and your identity. Before getting involved with a sweepstakes, take some simple steps to be sure it is on the "up and up."*



Attorney General  
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## Legitimate Sweepstakes:

- **Identify a sponsor** – Legitimate sweepstakes are usually sponsored by a company or organization with a headquarters address, a company website and contact information.
- **Have clear contest rules** – These rules let you know about eligibility to win, use of winners' names, settling disputes, etc.
- **Follow sweepstakes laws** – It is illegal for a sweepstakes to require you to make a purchase or a donation, or imply that doing so will increase your chances of winning.
- **Request a reasonable amount of information** – Entrants should expect to provide name, email or home address, and date of birth. Do not provide financial information or social security numbers on an entry form.

## Be Wary of Sweepstakes Scams That:

- **Ask you to wire money** – The IRS is informed of legitimate winnings and they may deduct taxes due. If the sweepstakes sponsor asks you to pay taxes up front, it is a scam.
- **Send you a large check to announce your win** – The checks are usually fake and are used to access your banking information. Legitimate contests require you to sign a notarized affidavit before sending a check.
- **Ask for bank or credit card account information** – The only sensitive information a sweepstakes needs from a winner is a social security number, in order to report accurate information to the IRS. Share this only if you are confident that the sweepstakes is legitimate.
- **Give you the “Hard Sell”** – By law, you don’t have to buy or donate anything to win a sweepstakes and pressuring you to do so is illegal.
- **You “won” without entering** – You have to be in it to win it; if you didn’t buy a ticket, it’s probably a scam. Also, it is illegal for foreign lotteries to sell across international borders.
- **Send notices that appear to be from a government agency** – The federal government does not notify winners. This is a scam.



Think you’ve been scammed?  
Report it!

**NYS Office of the Attorney General**  
**Consumer Frauds Bureau**  
1-800-771-7755  
[www.ag.ny.gov](http://www.ag.ny.gov)