

Protect Yourself from Sweepstakes Scams

Con artists often use sweepstakes to lure consumers into sending money to claim a “prize” they’ve supposedly won, often for a contest they didn’t even enter. Sweepstakes scams tell you the only thing separating you from your “winnings” is a fee to cover the taxes or service charges, but the winnings often never materialize.

Sweepstakes precautions for consumers:

- **Don’t pay to collect sweepstakes winnings.** Legitimate sweepstakes don’t require you to pay “insurance,” “taxes” or “shipping and handling charges” to collect your prize.
- **Hold on to your money.** Scammers pressure people to wire them money through commercial money transfer companies like Western Union or to overnight a check or money order. Once you send this money, it’s unlikely you will ever recover it.
- **Look-alikes aren’t the real thing.** It is illegal for any promoter to lie about an affiliation with – or an endorsement by – a government agency or well known organization.
- **Phone numbers can deceive.** Some con artists use technology that disguises their area code when they call you. They may be calling from anywhere in the world.
- **Take control of the calls you receive.** Register your home and cell phone numbers on the national Do Not Call List by calling toll-free 1-888-382-1222 (TTY 1-866-290-4236), from the number you wish to register or sign up online at www.donotcall.gov.
- **You do not need to make a purchase to enter or win.** It is illegal to require a purchase to enter a sweepstakes in Kansas, and making a purchase does not increase your chances of winning.
- **The odds of your winning from a sweepstakes mailing will be in the official rules and regulations.** The odds of winning a typical sweepstakes is one in 117,000,000 and the odds of being struck by lightning is approximately one in 800,000, so you are 146 times more likely to be struck by lightning than to win the sweepstakes.
- **Check the rules on the back of the certificate or envelope for the actual contest deadline.** Don’t be fooled by the words “urgent” or an official document.
- **If you enter your personal information (such as your name, address and/or telephone) it will be sold to other companies.**

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