



The Wired Up guide to online competitions

This guide has been edited and reproduced for Wired Up courtesy of [Loquax](#), the competitions portal.

Running a website competition?

Getting Started

You first need to decide what you want your competition to achieve for your site? What is the purpose of running the competition? Why are you running it? Some possible reasons are:

- To build your email list.
- To get new users into the site.
- To reward your current user base.
- To get users to visit a new part of your site.
- To promote and sell your products.

You then need to decide a competition style to fit your aims. For example, a tiebreaker competition won't build up your mailing list. A simple prize draw or competition advertised freely on your site may not be ideal to reward your user base. And a simple enter your email to enter competition won't get users looking over your site

Choosing the Rules

Competitions need rules, and you'll need to make sure they're adhered to.

Is your competition open to **UK residents only**? Will you allow more than **one entry per person** or per email address or per home address? If you do allow multiple entries, can a person enter more than once per day, week, or month? Will you **disqualify people** if they bend the rules?

Make sure the rules are clear and accessible to everyone – it will soon be a legal requirement to do so.

No Purchase Necessary

A frequent mistake often made is the No Purchase Necessary rule. You cannot charge people to enter your competition if an element of skill is not involved. For example, if Comper X purchases an item from an online store and then has to provide a tiebreaker/slogan to enter a competition this is an element of skill. However, if Comper Y purchases an item from an online store to enter a prize draw this is deemed illegal, unless a No Purchase Necessary route is offered.

Make sure you get your rules correct!

If you do make changes to your competition whilst it's running, for example by extending the entry period, allowing more entries per person, then let people know. Give a **clear explanation** of the changes on the website and if possible email the previous entrants to let them know to come back and visit.

Once you've announced the winner, send the prize out as soon as possible. If there are problems regarding the prize, such as a delay in getting it mailed off, stay in contact with the winner letting them know of any problems. This is very important. Winners can often become frustrated (and even irate) when their prize doesn't show up (some people are impatient and expect their prizes the next day, but 14-28 days after notification is a reasonable and adequate time period). By maintaining contact and keeping them informed of progress they will at least know you are doing all you can to help them.



Exclusive User Competitions

The web is full of people entering competitions. Unfortunately some sites/marketers dismiss "compers" (i.e. people who enter competitions for a hobby) in a manner sometimes nothing short of insulting. Remember, these people are also consumers and potential customers, so treat them well and they will respond! However, some websites do want to avoid the "comper" entering their competitions. For example, rewarding the loyalty of regular readers by giving them the chance to win prizes.

On the whole it can often be difficult to prevent others from entering/finding your competition. However, if you really want to here are a few useful tips.

- **Use Hidden URL's:** Use your mailing list to tell subscribers the URL of your competition, and don't advertise the web page on your site.
- **Use Forms:** If you want people to visit your site and enter the competition, use a submission form. Email addresses and answers can be distributed quite freely and legally around the net, so sites have no grounds for complaining when they become inundated with emails from compers who are looking for a prize to win.
- **Complicate Questions:** Aim the questions at your users - or ask them for a password from your newsletter? Answers will quite possibly find themselves into the public domain so why not rotate the questions (a randomiser script can do this).
- **Set Restrictions:** Country, age and other restrictions can be used to prevent entries from certain areas.
- **Use Common Sense:** The web is after all worldwide. Sites with competitions can be found easily using the search engines, or word of mouth. Competitions can be used as a traffic builder, to gain new customers, so make the most of the opportunity. By preventing entries to your competition you could end up losing out on potential visitors, users, and possibly even future sponsors!

Remember "compers" do talk, they do have opinions and they do shop on and offline. A well-run competition can generate you positive feedback and good comments in many public forums!

Cheats Shoudn't Prosper

Cheating is an element of online competitions that sadly has raised its ugly head. But how do we define cheating?

Sharing competitions answers, either in public forums or privately by email is **not** cheating. Remember that people are talking about your website and encouraging others to visit. Use this promotion positively.

Some people will exploit your competition by entering under multiple email addresses and multiple names - one competition Loquax ran attracted entries from 60 people all at the same address! We've also noted people entering under their marriage name and then following up with an entry in their maiden name. Keep an eye on your competition entries and make sure that people are adhering to your rules.

For more information on running effective online competitions visit www.loquax.co.uk/webmaster/