

Game shows need more female contestants



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How's your trivia knowledge? If that's your hidden talent, maybe the time is right to put it on display.

Megan Barnes is a Maryland stay-at-home mom of two. Earlier this year, the new US game show *500 Questions* was looking for very smart women, and contacted her directly through Facebook Messenger. Only about 25% of the contestants on trivia shows are female. Some game shows are already trying to level that playing field: *Jeopardy* has a program to make sure that half of all new contestants are women. How did *500 Questions* find Megan? Over the past four years she has appeared on three other game shows and won a total of US\$125,403.

Megan talked with me about how she sort of fell into the world of game shows. She lives in a region filled with "game show people" — their county apparently has the highest percentage of PhDs in America. She loves playing "pub trivia" as her weekly night away from the kids and she also enjoys the online trivia game www.learnedleague.com.

In 2007 she took a *Jeopardy* test on a whim and successfully tried out for the show, but they didn't call her right away to appear. Meanwhile, she was now following their message board and noticed there were also auditions for *Who Wants to be a Millionaire*. In 2009 she appeared on that show and won \$16,000.

In 2010 she finally got the call from *Jeopardy* (multiyear delays are not uncommon), flew to LA, and dethroned Tom (the

reigning five game champion.) She went on to win two more games for an impressive total of \$103,203, or over \$34,000 per game! For any of you who aren't familiar with the show, this is particularly impressive given that 72% of contestants lose their first game, and the average winning game is only about \$20,000. Megan thought this would be her last game show but it seemed she had been bitten

by the bug. You start thinking... what's next?

She had always loved *Wheel of Fortune* but knew it was really hard to get on that show because a lot more people can pass the initial test. Opportunity knocked when they posted a request for "audition videos" — one minute about why you wanted to be on the show. She sent them a friendly informal pitch filmed in her backyard. It took her 17

months to get on the show but her persistence paid off in 2014 and she came in second place winning another \$6,200.

Then this year she was scouted out by *500 Questions*, the new hardcore trivia game. The audition process was rigorous: two tests via telephone, two tests via Skype, and then they flew her out for a simulated show in L.A. She was flown out again a few weeks

later to film seven episodes over a gruelling nine hours. They asked her to pack five different outfits and they would decide what looked best on the set. Megan quipped that the toughest part was having to wear the same old green dress every day! Although there were no cash winnings this time because she wasn't able to knock out the "genius challenger," she did enjoy the free trips to California and the thrill of it all.

Megan wouldn't recommend the pursuit of game show winnings as part of a retirement plan, but she was able to use the money for a down payment and moved her young family from a rental apartment to a new house.

Why are game shows looking for more smart women? Megan said that trivia shows have tended to be more male-dominated in the past because (in her view) men aren't as shy to

strut their stuff. Women tend to be more reticent about showing off on national television. But they are just as smart. And perhaps not surprisingly, game shows tend to attract obsessive personalities, male or female: people who like to memorize lists or figure out word games.

What is Megan's advice for women who like the idea of going on a game show? "Remember that there are things you can control and things you can't control. You can control how much you study and you can watch lots of shows to understand the game strategy. Every show has specific quirks. But you can't control if you mispronounce your answer or if you blank out on a question. Most importantly, if you are going to do this, make it fun and get over yourself — people won't remember what you were wearing!"

Sounds like good advice for the game of life in general.

Are you able to manage your wealth?

BMO has released a new index ranking residents of each province out of a score of 100 on who is most successful in managing their wealth.

With a score of **72.9** residents of Saskatchewan had the highest score among the provinces

	Score
National	69.3
Sask.	72.9
Que.	71.1
Alta.	70.6
N.L.	70.4
N.S.	70.0
Ont.	69.2
Man.	68.4
P.E.I.	66.7
B.C.	66.3
N.B.	58.9

21% of Canadians are not very confident that they would be prepared financially if they had to deal with significant life changes, such as getting married or a job loss

81% of Canadians have a financial strategy

66% of Canadians did not use a professional to draft their financial plan



	% that have a financial strategy	% that have not used a professional to draft their financial plan	% who consider retirement savings a top priority in financial plans	% who have a life insurance plan in place	% who have a will	% who have a critical illness insurance plan in place	% who have a disability insurance plan in place	% confident they would be prepared financially in the event of a significant life change (marriage, birth of a child, job loss etc.)
National	81%	66%	35%	66%	40%	35%	39%	62%
Sask.	86	57	46	72	36	40	52	70
Que.	81	66	43	73	40	41	48	61
Alta.	81	71	26	72	36	45	50	65
N.L.	81	61	36	78	41	39	48	71
N.S.	76	71	41	72	43	35	44	56
Ont.	80	66	36	62	43	30	31	62
Man.	82	66	34	65	29	33	41	58
P.E.I.	79	74	35	73	45	27	46	64
B.C.	81	76	23	57	35	30	37	59
N.B.	68	72	27	57	31	35	5	45