# Gambling – seeking help

This is one activity in a sequence designed to challenge students to develop a stronger understanding of gambling and the ways in which it presents risks for young people across all socio-cultural groups. This activity aims to explore how gambling has evolved and changed with the adoption of online gambling and smart phone apps. It empowers students to recognise that gambling is not a game and being good at gaming does not mean you will be good at gambling. These resources were developed in collaboration with [GambleAware](https://www.gambleaware.nsw.gov.au/) and [Liquor and Gaming NSW](https://www.liquorandgaming.nsw.gov.au/).

The activity sequence includes four lessons.

1. Some truths about gambling
2. Sports betting and advertising
3. Online gambling
4. Gambling – seeking help

Duration: 30 minutes

## Focus of the learning

* Develop strategies for recognising and responding to dependence on gambling or online gaming situations.
* Develop skills to seek help for self and others if problems with gambling occur.
* Demonstrate a sound understanding of support networks both online and offline for issues and concerns with gambling.
* Consider the different sources of help available and how a young person may overcome barriers in accessing these services.

## Suggested course outcomes and content

### Outcomes

3.1 Evaluate how contextual factors influence attitudes, values and behaviours.

3.2 Analyse the positive and negative implications of technology and digital media on self-concept, independence, relationships and health behaviours.

5.1 Critically analyse situations, attitudes and behaviours that influence independence, health, safety and wellbeing in different contexts.

5.2 Recognise and respond appropriately to situations which may be limiting or harmful to self and others.

7.2 Demonstrate the capacity to seek help for self and others.

### Content

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| Learning context | Content |
| Independence  Focus: Building self-concepts and independence | Self-management   * responsibility for self and actions * strategies for future success |
| Drugs and alcohol  Focus: Making safe and responsible choices | Responsible behaviour   * gambling safely |

## Teaching notes

### Creating a safe and supportive learning environment

There are a number of strategies that can be used to create a supportive learning environment which enables students to feel safe to learn and ask questions. They include:

* Making students aware at the beginning of Life Ready sessions that disclosing personal information that indicates they may be at risk of harm will be reported to the school principal in all instances. This includes personal disclosures related to instances of abuse, drug use, neglect or sexual activity under the legal age of consent.
* Being aware that some parts of Life Ready can be confronting and sensitive for some students.
* Enabling students to withdraw if they find issues personally confronting to protect them from making harmful disclosures. Equally, it is important to be prepared for issues that arise as a result of a student making a public disclosure in the classroom.

More information on creating a safe and supportive learning environment can be found on the [Life Ready website.](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/key-learning-areas/pdhpe/life-ready)

### Evaluating resources before use

Preview and evaluate all strategies, resources and teaching and learning approaches in full before use with students to determine suitability for student learning needs, stage of development and local school context. Consider the age, maturity, cultural background, sexuality, gender, sex, health and other characteristics of students in your care. Apply professional judgements to all strategies, teaching and learning approaches and resources including audiovisual materials (e.g. videos, media clips and YouTube), interactive web-based content (e.g. games, quizzes and websites) and texts.

Use the [resource review flowchart](https://schoolsequella.det.nsw.edu.au/file/083acd3a-daca-4307-9afe-bc6c888f694a/1/final-resource-flowchart-html5.zip/index.html) to decide about the suitability of teaching and learning resources.

Materials should be reviewed in full and endorsed by the school principal before use in NSW government schools.

### Communication with parents and caregivers

Some aspects of Life Ready may be viewed as sensitive or controversial, such as learning about abuse, child protection, drugs, respectful relationships, sexual health, sexuality and violence. Inform parents and carers, prior to the occasion, of the specific details of the Life Ready program, so that parents and caregivers have time to exercise their rights of withdrawing their child from a particular session. In this regard, a parents or caregiver’s wish must be respected.

Establishing how parents and caregivers will be informed about programs and involved in consultation is a school-based decision. Where parents and caregivers indicate they wish to withdraw their child from a program it is useful to negotiate which parts of the Life Ready program they are concerned about. A sample information letter is available on the [Life Ready website](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/key-learning-areas/pdhpe/life-ready).

## Learning experiences

### Activity one – Warning signs (10 minutes)

As a class, view the three Check in with checkmates clips on the [GambleAware NSW Youtube channel](https://www.youtube.com/c/GamblingHelpNSW).

* Create a list of warning signs that may indicate someone’s gambling is getting out of hand. Some signs to look out for include:
  + unexplained debts or extra cash and possessions
  + feelings of depression including isolation from friends
  + obsession with simulated gaming apps and games
  + spending lots of time talking or thinking about gambling
  + experiencing mood swings, feeling stressed when not gambling
  + having disagreements with family and friends about gambling
  + obsessing about odds when watching sport instead of focusing on the game
  + lying or being secretive about gambling activities
  + missing work or school or grades falling due to time being spent gambling
  + borrowing or taking money from family and friends
  + continuing to gamble to win back money you have lost.
  + pulling away from friends, social activities and events
  + changes in sleep patterns.

Source: [GambleAware](https://www.gambleaware.nsw.gov.au/supporting-someone/supporting-young-people/signs-gambling-may-be-a-problem-young-people)

Discuss how gambling issues can impact on the following aspects of life:

* relationships with family, friends or a partner.
* dependent children (where a parent or carer has a gambling issue).
* employment or career plans.
* financial impact and future financial impact e.g. loans, credit checks, debt.

Introduce students to the video [Hear Nick’s gambling story](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K0U0oHgk4H4) (start at 4min and 9 sec, finishes at 9min 33 sec), (Duration 2min 16 sec) from the [GambleAware NSW Youtube channel](https://www.youtube.com/c/GamblingHelpNSW).

* What does Nick see as the benefits of him getting help for the issues he was experiencing with his gambling?
* Can you suggest any other benefits to getting help for harmful gambling behaviours?
* Where did Nick get his best support from in changing his gambling habits?
* What enables and makes it easier for people to access help for situations and behaviours such as gambling habits? Consider how family and friends could help.

Remind students that as well as recognising the signs or symptoms of their own or their friends gambling behaviours there may be young people who are affected by the gambling behaviour of their parents. This can be a hard issue to face alone, but there is help out there. The GambleAware service also offers support for children whose parents experience issues with gambling and can refer young people to lots of other support services (1800 858 858).

For further information on accessing help and counselling services students can access [GambleAware](https://www.gambleaware.nsw.gov.au/) for more information

### Activity two – Seeking help (20 minutes)

Share the statement with the group from the report [The stigma of problem gambling: Causes, characteristics and consequences](https://responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/resources/publications/the-stigma-of-problem-gambling-causes-characteristics-and-consequences-351/)

Most recent problem gamblers perceived being negatively judged by others because of their gambling. Expectations and fear of being devalued and discriminated against were strong deterrents to problem gambling disclosure and help seeking. Secrecy was the main mechanism used to cope with stigma, meaning family and friends are typically unaware of someone’s gambling problem. This secrecy is grounded in fear of rejection and being stereotyped, judged and discriminated against. Fear of disclosing a gambling problem means self-help is the most common form of help used, followed by support from family and friends.

Source: [Hing, N, Russell, A, Nuske, E & Gainsbury, S 2015, *The stigma of problem gambling: Causes, characteristics and consequences*, Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, Melbourne.](https://responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/resources/publications/the-stigma-of-problem-gambling-causes-characteristics-and-consequences-351/)

As a group, discuss the following.

* Propose reasons why people with gambling issues find it so hard to seek help?
* Suggest why people might hide their addiction or issues from their friends or family?
* List some of the stigmas attached to harmful gambling.
* What assumptions may people make about individuals who are experiencing harm from gambling?
* What resources are available for people to get help if they are experiencing harm from gambling?

The NSW Office of Responsible Gambling calls its website [GambleAware](https://www.gambleaware.nsw.gov.au/). Do you think this is a powerful and effective name? What message does this name send to the wider community? Give reasons for your position.

Students access and explore the [GambleAware – I need support](https://www.gambleaware.nsw.gov.au/i-need-support) page.

* Locate support services and help for people who are experiencing problems with gambling.
* Consider how you could start a conversation with a friend or family member who you feel is experiencing harm from their gambling. The focus should be around offering them support and help as well as directing them to support services.
  + How could you start that conversation?
  + What are some challenges you might need to address?
  + Do the challenges outweigh the concern?
  + What is the best approach to communication?
  + What would you include as part of the conversation?
* Draft a text message or an email. Some sentence starters are provided below.
  + I’m worried or concern for you because
  + I miss seeing you as your always doing
  + I’m happy to come and support you in talking to someone.

Encourage students to use the messages from GambleAware as well as other relevant websites from across Australia:

* [Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation](https://www.google.com/search?q=Victorian+Governmet+responsib+gambling&rlz=1C1GCEA_enAU956AU956&oq=Victorian+Governmet+responsib+gambling&aqs=chrome..69i57j0i333l2.16232j0j4&sourceid=chrome&%7bgoogle:instantExtendedEnabledParameter%7die=UTF-8)
* [problemgambling.sa.gov.au](http://www.problemgambling.sa.gov.au/)
* [gamblinghelponline.org.au](http://www.gamblinghelponline.org.au/)

## Teacher notes – Gambling

Many people in NSW and across Australia gamble by playing poker machines, betting on sporting events, buying lottery tickets or playing casino games. For most people gambling is an occasional social activity that causes no harm. For some gambling can cause serious harm and have a negative impact on their social, emotional, mental and financial health.

Gambling is defined as the risking of something of value on a chance outcome in the hope of winning a more valuable prize than the original stake. Monetary gambling refers to spending real money on poker machines, race betting, sports betting, scratchies/lotteries, keno, bingo, poker, other casino games, esports betting, fantasy sports betting, and informal private betting. Simulated gambling is defined as games which imitate many core characteristics of gambling (e.g., the look, sound and actions) but which do not provide an opportunity for a cash payout. Examples of simulated gambling include video games with ‘mini’ gambling components, gambling-themed apps from an app store, free demo or practice games on real gambling websites or apps, and games with gambling components on social networking websites, as well as purchasing loot boxes and betting with in-game items.

According to the [NSW Gambling Survey 2019](https://www.responsiblegambling.nsw.gov.au/research2/nsw-gambling-survey-2019), most forms of gambling have declined in the last decade. In 2019, 53% of people in NSW engaged in some form of gambling in the previous 12 months. In 2016-17 they spent $9.53 billion, with lottery tickets and race betting most popular with people aged 45 – 64. Gamblers aged 18 – 24 years were most likely to bet on sports and use gaming machines. This age group are also more likely to experience harm from gambling. Some people who engage in risky gambling behaviours put themselves and others at risk of depression, distress, job loss, relationship breakdown, bankruptcy and illegal behaviour to fund debts.

The [Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Gambling in Australia snapshot (2021)](https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/gambling) estimates that 1.33 million people in Australia were classified as being at some risk of gambling-related harm in 2018 with males more likely to suffer gambling related harm than females. It was found that risky gambling behaviours increased for young people aged 18-34 years and decreased for older people aged 35 -54 years. Less than one percent of people who gambled in NSW sought help for problems relating to their gambling in the past 12 months and it is estimated that the actions of one problem gambler can affect up to six other people around them.

As young people are particularly vulnerable to the normalisation of gambling through exposure to gambling advertising, gambling products, gambling in the home and the increase in the availability and accessibility of gambling through various online platforms, education is an important part of awareness raising.

It is illegal for anyone under the age of 18 to gamble, including Lotto, Scratchies and online gambling.

### Young people and gambling

How young people are engaging with gambling is changing. This change is being driven by rapid technological changes, the high-level of engagement of young people with mobile technology and gaming, the increase in traditional and online gambling advertising and the expanding variety of games with gambling-like components and monetary gambling opportunities.

GambleAware NSW commissioned the [NSW Youth Gambling Study 2020](https://www.gambleaware.nsw.gov.au/resources-and-education/check-out-our-research/published-research/nsw-youth-gambling-study-2020) to investigate gambling and simulated gambling behaviours amongst young people aged 12 – 17 years in NSW. The study aimed to increase understanding of gambling engaged in by young people in NSW in order to prevent and reduce gambling-related harm. GambleAware NSW is acting on the findings of the report with a program of work focused on the education and raising of awareness of parents, young people, and the community, through schools, sport and online and social media.

For young people gambling is often presumed to be a small risk due to low access to licensed venues in which gambling takes place. However, this belief does not consider the ways in which gambling has changed over the last decade and fails to recognise the influence of gambling advertisement on young people. Recent findings from the CQUniversity study [Exploring the changing landscape of gambling in childhood, adolescence and young adulthood](https://www.gambleaware.nsw.gov.au/resources-and-education/check-out-our-research/grant-funded-research) suggest that simulated gambling on social media, video games, smartphone applications and online betting are key issues for young people under 18. [GambleAware](https://www.gambleaware.nsw.gov.au/) further suggest that the proliferation of online and mobile channels and the normalisation of gambling through advertising within sport have changed the way young people are exposed to and impacted by gambling.

The [NSW Youth Gambling Study 2020](https://www.gambleaware.nsw.gov.au/resources-and-education/check-out-our-research/published-research/nsw-youth-gambling-study-2020) found that 70% of young people between the ages of 12-17 years had engaged in monetary gambling or played games with gambling components in the past year. This indicates a far higher proportion of young people engaging in gambling than many other forms of risk-taking including alcohol use, smoking and illegal drug use. On average, young people started gambling at around 11 – 12 years of age. This is also lower than the average starting age of 16 years for tobacco smoking and alcohol consumption ([Australian Institute of Health and Welfare](https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/alcohol/alcohol-tobacco-other-drugs-australia/contents/priority-populations/younger-people)).

According to the [Loot Boxes: Are they grooming youth for gambling](https://www.gambleaware.nsw.gov.au/resources-and-education/check-out-our-research/grant-funded-research) report by CQUniversity, more young people engaged in simulated gambling and purchased loot boxes in the past year than engaged in traditional forms of gambling. A loot box (also called a loot/prize crate) is a consumable item that can be redeemed to receive a randomised selection of other virtual items, or loot. This loot is tied to improving the gaming experience for players, and can range from cosmetic customisation options for a player's character, to game-changing equipment which increases a player’s chances of winning, to additional in-game currency. Loot boxes resemble gambling slot machines because no player skill is involved, and the outcome (prize) is randomly determined.

Experts have designed Ioot boxes to replicate many of the addictive elements of gambling (see below); they foster the impression of near-misses to encourage the purchases of more chances. They dole out rewards on just enough of a reinforcement schedule to keep players engaging with them, and they perpetually promise the chance of acquiring extraordinary rewards (jackpots). Many of these rewards are often available for direct purchase in the game’s store, but for high prices, causing players to believe taking a risk on the chance of the loot box is better than spending the money directly, even though the odds are in the favour of the game.

Loot boxes are common in the best-selling video games and are a growing concern due to the risk and reward properties that closely align them with traditional gambling, the potential for encouraging greater gambling involvement, and the potential for associated gambling harm. Both adolescents and young adults who had either opened, bought or sold loot boxes within the last 12 months were also more likely to have gambled in the last 12 months, gambled more frequently and spent more money, suffered more gambling problems and related harm and have a more positive attitude towards gambling in general.

The proliferation of online and mobile gambling channels and the normalisation of gambling through advertising within sport have changed the way young people are exposed to and impacted by gambling. For young people who follow sport, gambling promotion is a normal part of the lived experience. Ground signage, team uniforms, information relating to gambling odds and scheduled advertising all add to the ubiquity of the message on both television and radio. Young people surveyed for the [NSW Youth Gambling Study 2020](https://www.gambleaware.nsw.gov.au/resources-and-education/check-out-our-research/published-research/nsw-youth-gambling-study-2020) reported frequent exposure to gambling advertising. This was most commonly noticed as advertising on television, online and on social media. Frequent exposure to gambling advertising appears to normalise the behaviour amongst young people. Access to online devices also influenced gambling participation. Focus group participants said that how often and how long they participated in simulated gambling was directly linked to how accessible their device was and the degree of parental monitoring.

The [NSW Youth Gambling Study 2020](https://www.gambleaware.nsw.gov.au/resources-and-education/check-out-our-research/published-research/nsw-youth-gambling-study-2020) revealed that most under-age gamblers are introduced to gambling by a family member, and that having a parent who gambles or friends who are involved in gambling may further increase the chance of risky gambling behaviours among young people. Furthermore, the study acknowledged that some young people have gambling problems, with 1.5% of respondents classified as problem gamblers and a further 2.2% as at-risk gamblers. Young people were more likely to be a problem or at-risk gambler if they had lower levels of wellbeing, were more impulsive or started gambling at a younger age

Research shows discussing gambling harm in schools is a powerful tool

Young people are likely to benefit from school-based intervention and prevention programs that are aimed at changing attitudes and beliefs related to gambling behaviours. It is also important to involve parents, carers, community leaders and educators so that they also understand the current gambling environment to enable them to minimise young people’s exposure to harm. in 2020 a literature review and teacher survey looked at how gambling harm prevention could be implemented. From the report it was concluded that:

* teachers are important for any school-based prevention program
* school programs which include a parent element are more likely to be successful
* school-based programs are more likely to lead to knowledge, awareness and attitude change than behaviour change
* any program should look at the convergence of gaming and gambling.

## References

[Australian Institute of Health and Welfare](https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/alcohol/alcohol-tobacco-other-drugs-australia/contents/priority-populations/younger-people)

[Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Gambling in Australia snapshot (2021)](https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/gambling)

[Exploring the changing landscape of gambling in childhood, adolescence and young adulthood. - CQUniversity](https://www.responsiblegambling.nsw.gov.au/research2/research-grant-reports#id881696-03List)

[GambleAware](https://www.gambleaware.nsw.gov.au/resources-and-education/for-teachers-and-youth-workers/free-classroom-resources) classroom resources

[Loot Boxes: Are they grooming youth for gambling? - CQUniversity](https://www.responsiblegambling.nsw.gov.au/research2/research-grant-reports#id881696-03List)

[NSW Gambling Survey 2019](https://www.responsiblegambling.nsw.gov.au/research2/nsw-gambling-survey-2019),

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