

Gambling Issues

Help with gambling problems

Gambling is more accessible than ever. You don't have to leave your home to place bets or play casino games such as blackjack and roulette – you can simply switch on your computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone, even your interactive TV. Online gambling is also available 24/7, which means you can keep betting long after the high-street bookmakers and casinos have closed their doors. Any type of gambling comes with a risk, but online gambling makes placing a bet as easy as checking your email. It's more important than ever to understand how to stay safe when gambling.

For many people, gambling is not a harmful activity, but for some it can become a serious problem. If you are concerned that your gambling may be getting out of control, there are lots of things that you can do to make it more difficult to gamble, and there is help and support available to help you change your relationship with gambling for the better whenever you may need it.

Gambling: The risks

Gambling in general comes with risks that can affect several areas of your life. If you're spending too much on gambling it

can cause financial problems to mount up more quickly than you may realise. The impacts on your mental wellbeing can also be vast, especially if you try to hide what's going on from those around you, which can affect your relationships. The more isolated you become, the more you will find that you feel anxious, stressed, even depressed.

Online gambling also comes with additional risks that affect many other online activities, such as criminals trying to gain access to your online accounts or personal information using phishing emails, fraudulent websites or viruses and spyware. You can find information and advice on how to keep your antivirus and anti-spyware software up to date at www.getsafeonline.org. It's always a good idea to check that any online gambling site you choose to gamble with is registered with the [Gambling Commission](http://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk) and has met the standards required to offer gambling activities in the UK, and that any site is secure before you enter any payment information.

Additionally, signing up to an online gambling account with your email address means you will likely opt-in to receive

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promotions such as free bets, bonuses or free to play games which also offer a paid version. It's important that you read the terms and conditions of any promotion so that you understand how much you will need to stake, or how much time you will have to play for before you are eligible for a reward or level up. This way, you can make an informed decision about whether you want to bet or play at all. Remember, you can opt out of receiving promotional emails at any time – click the unsubscribe links at the bottom, or email the gambling company to let them know you don't want to be on their mailing list anymore. You can find out more on the [Gambling Commission website](#).

Is gambling a concern for you?

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Are you frequently short of money because you've spent all your money gambling?
- Do you take out loans so you can have money for gambling (and perhaps have many loans at the same time)?
- Do you think about gambling all the time or talk about it constantly?
- Do you struggle to pay your bills or to buy essentials such as food because of your gambling?

- Do you lose track of how much time and money you've spent gambling?
- Do you frequently feel the need to gamble bigger sums of money to get a buzz out of gambling?
- Have you sold household or personal possessions or valuables to make money for gambling or to pay gambling debts?
- Do you often gamble in secret or lie about what you're doing when you're gambling?
- Are you spending more and more time by yourself to gamble, away from family and friends?
- Do you feel gambling is your only source of enjoyment, and that nothing else gives you any pleasure?
- Is your gambling affecting your performance at work?
- Have you ever lost a job because of gambling?
- Have you ever argued or damaged a relationship with someone because of gambling?
- Are your friends and family worried about how often you gamble or how much you spend on gambling?

If you've answered yes to one or more of these questions, you may have a problem with gambling, and it may not just be causing difficulties for you but also the people around you. You are not alone – help is available.

How to help yourself

If you've recognised you have a problem with gambling, the first thing you may want to do is to remove your access to it. You can 'self-exclude' from all types of gambling, either in a physical venue or online, which means you ask the gambling business to stop you from gambling with them if you try to. This can be for between six months and five years.

You can ask the staff in a venue to do this for you, or you can arrange exclusion from multiple gambling venues through 'multi-operator self-exclusion schemes':

- **GAMSTOP** can exclude you from most online gambling companies who are licensed to pr: www.gamstop.co.uk
- The Multi Operator Self-exclusion Scheme allows you to choose the betting shops that you would like to be excluded from. Call **0800 294 2060** or visit <https://self-exclusion.co.uk/>
- SENSE can exclude you from land-based casinos: <https://www.nationalcasinoforum.co.uk/voluntary-self-exclusion-sense/>
- The Bingo Association can help you to self-exclude from all bingo halls: www.bingo-association.co.uk

- BACTA manages self-exclusion for arcades and adult gaming centres: www.bacta.org.uk/self-exclusion

www.begambleaware.org also has useful information about self-exclusion.

To prevent yourself from accessing online gambling activities, it may also be helpful to download blocking software. Specific software is available to block access to gambling activities, including one call [gamaban](http://www.gamaban.com). Anyone who contacts the National Gambling HelpLine (operated by gambling support charity GamCare) on Freephone **0808 80 20 133** or through web chat at www.gamcare.org.uk can receive free access to [gamaban](http://www.gamaban.com) software for up to three devices (i.e. a phone, a laptop and a tablet) for up to 12 months.

General blocking software is also available which can block adult content (such as www.netnanny.com), and your internet service provider (ISP) may also be able to offer you an option to opt out of all adult sites or supply you with anti-virus software that allows you to block certain areas such as gambling. You can also try asking your mobile phone or interactive TV provider to limit or block your access to gambling services. Find out more at <https://www.gamcare.org.uk/self-help/blocking-software/>

Keep busy

Other things which may be helpful if you would like to avoid gambling include activities that help take your mind off it, particularly physical activities

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such as walking, playing sports or going to the gym if you are able to. Exercise can help boost your self-esteem by releasing ‘feel-good’ hormones called endorphins in your brain.

Spending more time on planned activities with your loved ones may also help by giving you something to look forward to – plus they may help you show your friends and family that you appreciate their support. Try to plan activities for the week ahead, so you always have something to focus on.

There’s also help available if you need some additional support. The National Gambling HelpLine is available every day from 8am - Midnight, (Freephone **0808 80 20 133** or web chat via gamcare.org.uk) and can provide information, advice and support for anyone that is affected by gambling problems, including referral into a national network of face-to-face, online or telephone treatment available for gamblers as well as their family and friends.

GamCare Advisers can also provide more information about where you can find specialist support around connected issues, such as debt management.

GamCare also operates a free online Forum, as well as daily online chatrooms, where you can connect to others in similar situations to share your experiences, seek support and support others. You can find out more at www.gamcare.org.uk

If you work in a pub, club, bar or brewery, we at the Licensed Trade Charity are here to help

with your problems too, including difficulties with debt and gambling addiction. You can talk to us about anything, so call us on **0808 801 0550** or visit

www.licensedtradecharity.org.uk

Staying safe

If your gambling hasn’t become problematic and you want to make sure it never does, here are some tips from the charity GambleAware to help you gamble safely:

- Don’t think of gambling as a way to make money but as an entertainment expense, like buying a cinema ticket.
- Only gamble with money you can afford to lose.
- Set a time and money limit in advance – then stick to it.
- Never chase your losses – winning your money back after you’ve lost usually just leads to bigger and bigger losses.
- Always avoid gambling when you’re depressed or upset.
- Don’t drink or take drugs while gambling.

Young people and gambling

Underage gambling may be illegal, but children and young people may also be able to access some types of gambling – including online gambling. If you’re a parent or a guardian there

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are things you can do to reduce the likelihood that a child in your care will gain access to gambling, including online:

- If you have any online gambling accounts yourself, always keep your passwords safe and never leave your computer unattended while you're logged on.
- Keep your credit cards, debit cards, PINs and other financial details safe too, and make sure a child cannot access them.
- Use parental controls on your home computer that restrict access to adult and gambling sites.

Talk about gambling with young people too, so that they know they can ask questions and make sure they have all the facts. You can find more information for young people, parents and teachers at www.bigdeal.org.uk.

Useful links

If you are experiencing any of the issues covered in this guide, in the first instance call our free helpline on 0808 801 0550. Our Advisors will listen without judging and will work with you as best they can to achieve a positive outcome. If you prefer you can email: support@ltcharity.org.uk.

Visit our website: www.licensedtradecharity.org.uk. It's full of useful

information about the kind of issues we know people who work in the licensed trade face.

Other sources of information:

- Gambling Commission: www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk

This is the government body that regulates the gambling industry. The website includes information for the public on safer gambling and consumer rights.

- GamCare: www.gamcare.org.uk

GamCare is a charity that provides free information, advice and support for anyone affected by problems gambling.

- BeGambleAware: begambleaware.org

This website aims to help people make informed decisions about their gambling (includes a [report](#) that evaluates online blocking software).

- Gamblers Anonymous: www.gamblersanonymous.org.uk

The GA website offers help for people with gambling problems, including a forum, chat room and information, plus a facility to help you find your nearest GA meeting in the UK

- Get Safe Online: www.getsafeonline.org

A UK website that provides easy-to-understand information regarding online safety.

NOTE: This guide is not exhaustive. It has been produced by the Licensed Trade Charity to

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provide you with an overview of the issue in question. If you're experiencing problems with this issue, our Advisors are available to you.