

What is problem gambling?

Problem gambling happens when gambling starts to affect your life, relationships, or finances in ways that feel harmful or out of control.

While gambling might feel exciting or like a way to escape, it can be hard to stop once it becomes part of your routine. If gambling is starting to feel overwhelming, you're not alone.

With the right support, it's possible to take back control and create positive change.



It's not just about how much or how often you gamble. It's about how it's impacting your wellbeing.

Signs & effects

Problem gambling can show up differently for everyone. Some common signs include:

- 
Gambling more than planned
 Spending more time or money than you meant to, even when you try to cut back.
- 
Strained relationships
 Arguments, tension, or growing distance from people you care about because of gambling.
- 
Chasing losses
 Trying to win back money you've lost, only to end up losing more.
- 
Financial stress
 Borrowing money, selling belongings, or doing things you wouldn't normally do to keep gambling going.
- 
Avoiding other parts of life
 Missing work, study, or time with loved ones because of gambling.
- 
Hiding your gambling
 Keeping it secret from friends or family, going to different venues to gamble, or feeling embarrassed about how much you're gambling.

Wherever you are, help is at your fingertips with the **Support Toolkit**

👉 lifeline.org.au/toolkit

Causes

There's no single reason why problem gambling happens. It often builds over time from a mix of experiences and feelings, such as:

Early gambling wins

Getting lucky early on can create the belief that gambling is an easy way to make money.

Financial stress

Gambling might feel like a way to escape money worries or try to fix financial problems.

Coping with emotions

Feelings like stress, anxiety, loneliness, or boredom can lead to gambling as a distraction.

Social influences

Spending time with others who gamble or seeing constant gambling ads can make it feel like part of everyday life.

Finding it hard to stop

Gambling can become difficult to control because of the cycle of risk, reward, and emotional highs.

Chasing losses

Trying to win back money you've lost, which often leads to even bigger losses.

Whatever the cause, there are ways to navigate what you're feeling. And remember, support is available every step of the way.

Recognising when and how urges to gamble show up

Having a plan like below can help you prepare for situations that might lead to the urge to gamble. This can make it easier to spot what's happening and respond in ways that support your wellbeing.

Gambling management plan

Anticipate	What situations or feelings make me want to gamble? e.g., boredom, stress, gambling ads, being around others who gamble
Identify	How might I feel or respond? e.g., excited, confident that I will win, in need of money
Manage	What can I do instead? e.g., call a friend, go for a walk, use a gambling block app



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Practical management strategies



Set limits

Decide on time and money limits before you gamble - and try your best to stick to them.



Take a break

Spend time on other activities you enjoy, like exercising, volunteering, or catching up with friends.



Keep track of your spending

Writing down how much you're gambling can help you see the bigger picture and notice patterns.



Talk to someone you trust

Sharing how you're feeling with a friend, family member, or counsellor can help lighten the load.



Block access

Try using self-exclusion tools or apps to help limit access to gambling sites or venues.



Find other ways to manage stress

Things like mindfulness, deep breathing, or moving your body can help you cope in healthier ways.

Want to try something now?

If you're feeling the urge to gamble, a simple action can help you shift focus. Try **using your five senses**, doing a few rounds of **box breathing**, or adding yourself to a self-exclusion register like **BetStop**.

5 SENSES TECHNIQUE

Look for...



5 things you can **see**



4 things you can **feel**



3 things you can **hear**

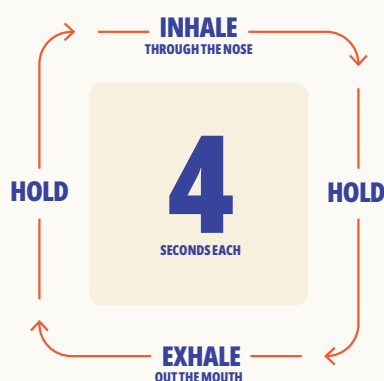


2 things you can **smell**



1 things you can **taste**

BOX BREATHING



JOIN THE NATIONAL SELF-EXCLUSION REGISTER

BET STOP

THE NATIONAL SELF-EXCLUSION REGISTER™

betstop.gov.au

By joining, you'll lose access to all phone and online gambling providers.



Everyone is different, so what works for someone else might not work for you, and that's okay.

The key is to keep experimenting until you find what helps you most.

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When to seek help

You may want to speak to a health professional if:

- ✓ Gambling is causing financial stress or debt.
- ✓ You feel like you can't stop, even when you want to.
- ✓ Your relationships, work, or study are being affected.
- ✓ You're feeling anxious, hopeless, or overwhelmed.
- ✓ You're turning to alcohol, drugs, or other risky behaviours to cope.
- ✓ You've tried to cut back on gambling but keep going back.

Reaching out can feel difficult, but it's a sign of strength.

Support is always available to help you feel more in control and hopeful for the future.

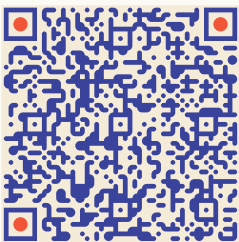
Support is available

Understanding and managing problem gambling isn't something you have to do on your own.

Head to our **Support Toolkit** to find more practical strategies and discover national and local support services that can help.

The Support Toolkit also offers information on a wide range of mental health and wellbeing topics you can explore at your own pace, whenever you need.

Visit lifeline.org.au/problem-gambling/services or scan the QR code to get started.



If you're feeling overwhelmed right now, Lifeline is here to support you.

You can reach us 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

☎ Call 13 11 14

✉ Text 0477 131 114

💬 Chat online at lifeline.org.au/crisis-chat

If your life is in danger, please call 000.