

Winning Ways to Keep Gambling Safe

All gambling has potential risks. If you are experiencing financial, family, emotional or physical health problems because of your gambling you should consider taking a break to fully understand its impact on your life and to help you gain control. If you do choose to gamble, consider the following strategies to limit your risk.

Set a budget on your time and money

Spend only what you can afford to lose. Leave your bank and credit card at home. When your budget is gone and your time is up, walk away! Do not try to win back your losses or use rent or grocery money to continue to gamble. Keep a diary of how much time you play and record your wins and losses—memory is selective in remembering the wins.

View gambling as entertainment—not a way to make money

Play knowing that you will almost certainly lose. Go with friends who do not have gambling problems and ask them to support you in staying within your preset limits. See the money lost as part of your entertainment budget.

Understand the odds—the “house” always has the edge

Make your gambling decisions based on an accurate understanding of your odds of winning. Expect to lose. Accept that you have no control over the outcome of the game—it is truly random. You cannot change the outcome, there are no winning strategies and you cannot influence luck. The odds are stacked against you and always favour the house.

Recognize risk factors

Do not gamble when you are feeling vulnerable, depressed, bored, lonely, anxious or angry. Be careful not to use gambling as a way to escape problems or avoid difficult feelings or situations. Mixing alcohol and gambling is very risky. Take frequent breaks from gambling. Walk outside to clear your head.

Part of a balanced lifestyle

See gambling as an enjoyable part of a balanced lifestyle. Have other meaningful activities in your life—not just gambling. Spend time with family and friends. When you feel like gambling, consider another activity, such as going to a movie.

Listen to the concerns of others

If others express concern about your gambling, listen to them! They may be seeing something you are not. People who do not have gambling problems do not let their gambling behaviours negatively affect relationships in their personal, social or professional lives.