

# You can control your gambling

Self-help workbook

**GAMBLEAWARE**  
[gambleaware.nsw.gov.au](http://gambleaware.nsw.gov.au)  
**1800 858 858**





## Who is this workbook for?



This book is for anyone who's ever thought they might have issues with gambling. It uses proven techniques that have helped many people to reduce their gambling or quit altogether. Take 20 minutes to read it through – it might change your life.

## How do I know if I have an issue with gambling?

A starting point is knowing the point when gambling for fun tips over into gambling harm.

There are no hard and fast rules, but it might be helpful to ask yourself a few questions to help determine if you're at risk of developing a damaging relationship with gambling:


- Do you gamble more than 5% of your weekly income?
- Do you gamble regularly, say, more than once a week?
- Do you plan your sessions ahead rather than going spur of the moment?
- Do you gamble alone?
- Do you view gambling as a way to earn money?




If the answer to any of the above questions is yes, you may be at risk of developing issues with gambling. Another way to look at it is to ask yourself “Would I be better off if I gambled less or not at all?”

## **You're not the only person to have issues with gambling**

Developing an unhealthy relationship with gambling is no reflection on your level of intelligence, strength, willpower or integrity.



Gambling issues affect people from all walks of life, from lawyers to labourers. Some people who develop these issues suffer from other emotional challenges but, for many more, gambling harm seems to come out of the blue.



So don't be ashamed. Be honest with yourself. Owning up to it doesn't mean that you have to tell everyone that you have an issue with gambling, or that you have to stop gambling completely. What's more, getting a handle on your gambling is easier than you think, if you're smart about it.

## Is self-help right for me?

**You'll only know if you try it. If you think you might have an issue, self-help could be your first option, and it might be perfect for you.**

But although self-help strategies are effective for lots of people, they're not for everyone. People often find they need additional support.

That's because stopping or controlling gambling can be difficult without addressing the underlying reasons for gambling. Once people understand what's making them gamble, they may find stopping is not as hard as they thought. This can be hard without professional help.

If self-help doesn't work for you, or you believe you might need more help down the track, then check out the other free, confidential options at the back of this workbook.

## STEP 1: EXPLORE YOUR MOTIVATION TO CHANGE

The fact is, not everyone's motivated to make a major change like giving up gambling. Take a moment to figure out what stage you're at on the motivation spectrum.

### How motivated are you?\*

| Common barriers  |
|--|
| No awareness or reluctance to acknowledge the problem (denial leading to a lack of motivation to change) |
| Thinking about changing (recognising a problem but still not actively motivated to change)               |
| Becoming determined to change (getting motivation and strength to do something)                          |
| Taking active steps to start changing (motivated to commence actively changing)                          |
| Maintaining changes once they're made (motivated to continue changes made)                               |

*\* Based on James Prochaska and Carlo DiClemente's "Stages of Change" model.*

## Exploring your motivations

Knowing your reasons for and against change can help you understand your motivations. The more motivated you are, the greater your chance of success.

Remember, there's nothing to gain by pretending that you want to change your gambling. No one else can make the changes for you. If you deny that a gambling issue exists, or you go through the motions of changing just to please others, no real change can occur.

## Getting motivated

Think about your reasons for continuing gambling. Are they based on a desire to satisfy your own needs over and above anyone else's? For instance, is your desire to relax or escape preventing you from making mortgage repayments?

So let's begin. Using the worksheet over the page, list the reasons you feel you should do something about your gambling. Rank them in order of importance. Then list your reasons in favour of continuing to gamble. Take a second to reflect on each question and write your answers down.





## Reasons to stop or control my gambling

For example, struggling to make mortgage repayments, not spending enough time with your children or partner, always needing to lie to cover up your gambling.

| Reason | Ranking |
|--------|---------|
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## Reasons to keep on gambling

For example, enjoyment, emotional escape, winning money.

| Reason | Ranking |
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## Making a start

Understanding your true reasons for overcoming your issues with gambling is essential for success.

But even if you're not entirely sure about whether you're ready to change completely, it's still probably a good idea to make a start. Sometimes people might be unsure when they start the self-help process, but their motivation increases as they go on.



What could I do with all of the extra time and money?  
What activities might I engage in? How might I feel  
different? Who could I spend more time with?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins or other markings visible.

## What would my life look like if I kept gambling for another 10 years?

What's the worst-case scenario? How much money will I have spent? What will happen to my relationships?

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## How to set your goal



### 1 Pick your goal: controlled gambling or abstinence (quitting)

While it's true that many people find they can resume gambling at controlled levels, it's not possible for everyone: it may not work for you.

It's hard to maintain control. Being exposed to the familiar sights and sounds of gambling and occasional wins, along with external stress means that it's possible that your gambling could get out of control again.



## 2 Write down your goal

Once you've settled on your self-help goal, take note of it here.

**My goal is to** ☐ stop gambling ☐ control gambling

If your goal is to control your gambling, write down the limits you're setting for yourself.

**My gambling budget is** \$\_\_\_\_\_ per week

\_\_\_\_\_ hours per week

## 3 Involve a partner or a friend as a support person

Talk about your gambling levels regularly with a trusted friend or family member. They might also be able to provide you with emotional support.

Remember, having someone close involved can help keep you on track. Even if you feel confident of success or you feel awkward at first, you're going to need them at some stage, so take a deep breath and ask. If that proves too difficult, consider talking to a professional online or by phone.

## STEP 2: MONITOR YOUR GAMBLING

### Why monitor?

Research shows that we're more likely to remember the wins than the losses. Because of this, it's all too easy to convince ourselves that we don't spend too much money gambling.

Recording the level of your gambling serves three important purposes:

- 1** It makes you aware of exactly how much you gamble.
- 2** It allows you to monitor and notice any changes in your levels of gambling. Noticing reductions can be very motivating.
- 3** Detailed records can reveal patterns in your gambling. For example, gambling after a stressful day at work is dangerous. This allows you to make plans and strategies to deal with risky situations.

Monitoring requires effort and consistency. Don't underestimate its importance. Resist the temptation

to think that you know your own habits – the results may surprise you. Self-monitoring is an important step in regaining control.

### **Five important things to remember about monitoring**

- 1** Record your gambling transactions immediately rather than relying on your memory.
- 2** Make sure you have enough monitoring sheets (see next page) to use every day. You can also keep notes on your mobile phone or use one of the many apps available, ask your counsellor.
- 3** Review your records at the end of each week.
- 4** Be patient and persevere. It's not easy to accurately identify and label thoughts and feelings. This takes time and practice.  
You're learning an invaluable skill.
- 5** Don't panic. Coming to terms with your level of gambling debt can be an important wake-up call, but it can cause some people to panic and gamble more. Remember – if gambling led you into debt, it won't lead you out of it.

## Need Help?

If you need help with debt consolidation, see a free financial counsellor. Contact GambleAware on **1800 858 858** or **[gambleaware.nsw.gov.au](http://gambleaware.nsw.gov.au)**.

### Five things to monitor

- 1 The time and place you gambled (include a start and stop time).
- 2 The thoughts and feelings you experienced before gambling. Including:
  - how you were feeling (upset? sad? angry?)
  - what caused you to feel that way (a mistake at work? an argument with your partner? outstanding bills?)
  - your reasons for gambling (to escape negative feelings? to win money? to pay a bill?)
  - a tension rating, where 1 = low and 10 = high (or some other relevant emotion such as depression or anxiety)

- 3 The net win/loss amount for the session.
- 4 The thoughts and feelings you experienced after gambling, including how you felt, why, and a 10-point rating of tension (or some other relevant emotion).
- 5 A running tally of your net gambling debt.



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**Note:** How you record things is up to you, just make sure that you record all of the necessary information immediately after each gambling session.

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## Weekly review

After you've monitored your gambling for a week, it's time to review. Do this once a week so you can track your progress. Ask yourself ...

### **"Have I stayed on track?"**

Calculate your weekly losses and total time spent playing. Did you stick to your limit? Did you manage to reduce your levels of gambling? If so, pat yourself on the back and maybe plan a reward.

### **"Is gambling working for me?"**

What do you usually feel like after winning? What do you feel like after losing? Which occurs more often: winning or losing? When is your tension rating the highest? Is it after losses?

### **"Do I have a plan for my debt?"**

Calculate your total debt. Is it growing? Do you have a plan to deal with it? If you don't have a plan, consider seeing a financial counsellor.



## Handy hint: make memory cards

Use memory cards to remind yourself of anything important you discover from your weekly reviews. Take them out when you think about gambling. Keep them in your wallet or on your phone, or in some other easy-to-access place.

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For example, if I'm stressed after work and want to relax by gambling, I should remind myself about how I felt after I gambled last time. It was the tensest part of my week.

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## STEP 3: MANAGE GAMBLING CUES AND URGES

Knowing your usual triggers for gambling can be very helpful in anticipating and managing dangerous situations.

### The 3 types of gambling cues

For regular gamblers, certain times, places and emotions become associated with gambling and become gambling cues. These cues trigger gambling-related thoughts and feelings, such as the anticipation of winning. Anticipation is both pleasurable and exciting – it can be difficult to resist.

#### 1 Gambling-related cues

For many gamblers, exposure to gambling-related cues like walking past a pub or TAB, or seeing a sports betting ad on TV, can trigger an urge to gamble. Mixing with people who are heavy gamblers and spend a lot of time talking about gambling can be particularly risky. Peer pressure and being constantly reminded of gambling and big wins can undermine resolve not to gamble.

## 2 Situational cues

For regular gamblers, certain times and places become associated with gambling. Thus the excitement in anticipation of gambling also becomes associated with them.

## 3 Emotional cues

Certain emotions can act as triggers for gambling episodes. Depression, anxiety, stress, anger, boredom, loneliness, low self-esteem and overconfidence are all common cues. These emotions may come up at predictable times – for example, loneliness after work, or anger after arguments at home.

Gambling offers an emotional escape in two ways:

- The anticipation of winning that many gamblers experience is pleasurable.
- The act of gambling is highly distracting, meaning it can block out unpleasant feelings for a short time.

## Cues may act in combination

Sometimes, different cues work together.

For example, a cue like having money in your wallet might be harmless enough, but when it occurs alongside other cues, like going out for lunch with friends or watching someone else gamble, it might lead to a strong urge to gamble yourself.

## Managing gambling cues

The next step to managing your gambling is to identify specific, relevant cues.

### **Review your monitoring sheets for gambling cues**

Based on your monitoring sheets, write a list of any gambling-related cues (say, walking past the TAB on the way home), situations (times and places) or emotions (say, being angry after a fight at home) that seem to be linked to your urge to gamble.

- Are there particular times when you're more likely to gamble excessively?
- Are there situations, thoughts and feelings that come before excessive gambling?
- Are there combinations of situations, people, environments, thoughts and feelings that set you off?

Spend some time to work these out. Then organise them in a chain. What starts the chain off? What comes next, and after that, and after that? Continue the chain analysis until you reach the point where gambling starts.

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Ideas to get you started on your strategies are over the page.

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## Pin down your strategies

Once you've come up with a list of your main gambling cues, sit down and work out strategies you can use to avoid contact with these situations. If you brainstorm with a friend or partner, you may come up with better strategies.

### Some ideas to get you started

- List and arrange alternative activities with your friends and family during high-risk times. Carry the list with you so you have alternative responses at hand.
- Plan a route home that avoids your favourite gambling venues, possibly finding a travel buddy to help you stay on track.
- Avoid exposure to sports and racing results.
- If friends ask you to gamble, decline. Don't fool yourself into thinking that you'll just go and watch. Instead, suggest another activity.
- Consider requesting that friends avoid talking about gambling when you're around.

- If your friends don't support your efforts to overcome your gambling issues, you may have to decide whether it's in your interest to continue mixing with them or to move on.
- Limit access to finances. Leave your credit and debit cards at home and only take small amounts of cash with you if you do go gambling
- Consider handing over financial control temporarily to someone you trust. (This isn't a permanent solution – it can have negative effects in the long run.)
- Consider asking a venue or venues to exclude you from their premises. Call GambleAware for more information on **1800 858 858** or visit **[gambleaware.nsw.gov.au](http://gambleaware.nsw.gov.au)**.

Take time to think your strategies through, and add to them. For instance, what will you say if someone wants to start a conversation about gambling with you?



## Dealing with urges

As much as you might try to manage gambling cues, it's almost certain that a gambling urge will come up at some point or another. It's important to have a strategy in place for these times. Take some time to write down your plan for dealing with urges on the next page.

Here are some suggestions.

- Practice listing the 4 most negative consequences of gambling for you (use a memory card).
- Avoid fantasising about winning. Instead, ask yourself, "How will I feel when I lose?"
- Use the memory cards (as in Step 2) to remind yourself of traps that you might fall into
- Call a friend, or GambleAware on **1800 858 858**, or visit **[gambleaware.nsw.gov.au](https://gambleaware.nsw.gov.au)** where counsellors can talk to you by live text or email.

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## Managing stress

Stress is a common trigger. Many people gamble to try and escape stress. For many, ironically, gambling only increases the stress they're trying to escape.

Learning to deal with stress is an important life skill. It might not come naturally to you. If you have difficulty dealing with stress, try some of the strategies below, and don't be afraid to seek professional help.

### List your sources of stress and problem-solve with loved ones

Take a moment to list some of the things in life that currently cause you stress. Then make a time to sit down with your partner or a friend and come up with some strategies to deal with them. You might like to use the table on the next page.

Effective problem-solving is a skill – it takes practice. Try following these 3 steps:

- 1 Write down all the possible solutions.
- 2 Write down the pros and cons of each solution.
- 3 Pick the best solution. Carry it out and evaluate the outcome. If it didn't work out, try another solution.

## Talk about your problems

Talking about stressful situations can be stressful, at least at first. This is normal. Because of this, many of us choose to avoid talking about our problems at all. If you're reluctant to talk about your problems with those around you, go to "I should be strong enough to stop or control my gambling on my own" on page 62.

Communication is always part of the solution, though who you choose to share your problems with is totally up to you.

## Set goals and manage time

Are you giving yourself enough time to get things done, and are you properly prioritising tasks? Do you acknowledge when you successfully complete a task? If not, consider these options:

- Keep a to-do list (handy hint: use the notes function on your mobile device).
- Rank activities in order of importance.
- Allocate an amount of time to each activity.
- Tick off activities as you complete them to give you a sense of accomplishment.

## Look after your physical health

- Make sure you get enough sleep.
- Exercise regularly. Consider a team sport.
- Maintain a balanced diet. Too much caffeine, alcohol and sugar can contribute to stress, and smoking does, too. While you may think smoking and drinking alcohol take the edge off, they actually increase your stress levels.
- Relax. Go for a walk, take a massage, have a long hot bath, go fishing, do a muscle-relaxation exercise, call a friend.





## STEP 4: ADDRESS BELIEFS THAT DRIVE ISSUES WITH GAMBLING

### Relationship between beliefs and behaviour

All of us hold beliefs about how the world works. They influence our perceptions and drive our behaviour. Certain beliefs drive the issues people may have with gambling. That's why addressing those beliefs is important.

#### Example

Two people are playing the pokies: Trevor and Dianne. Trevor believes this is his lucky day, gambling is an easy way of making extra money, and that the only way he can impress others is through his gambling skills. Dianne believes that gambling is a way of entertaining herself. She sees herself as a mature adult who doesn't need to impress everyone.

For Trevor, winning is an important source of self-esteem. A win will boost his ego and reinforce his belief that he can win. A loss will undermine his self-esteem, resulting in further gambling to feel good again.

For Dianne, a win or loss will have little effect on her ego. She will readily accept losing, as it's money she's happy to spend to be entertained and she'll stop the session there.

## Common beliefs that drive issues with gambling

### **"I can make money from gambling."**

Gambling is a form of entertainment, and when you pay for entertainment you don't expect to make money from it. Essentially, you're paying the venue a fee to participate in their games and have some fun. Ask yourself:

- Do I expect to spend a set amount of money to be entertained or to make money?
- Am I spending a similar amount of money and time on gambling as I would on other forms of entertainment?



## “I can win.”

On the surface, this belief appears to be true. Every heavy gambler has wins and sometimes walks away with them. However, what happens in the long term?

Unfortunately, we all tend to focus on wins instead of losses. This is partly due to wishful thinking, which leads us to believe facts that support our wishes and ignore facts that don't.

Gaming machines and track betting are designed to focus our minds on winning. For example, pokies play happy music when you win and stay silent when you lose. This bias leads many people to believe they can win frequently because they see and hear other people doing it.

In reality, how much have you won and lost altogether since you started gambling? The monitoring exercise you did at Step 2 should help with this, or you can try the Gambling Calculator on the **GambleAware website**. The results may surprise you.

## “I can control the outcome.”

Many gamblers believe they can control outcomes through skill. This is understandable, as many features of gambling encourage this belief.

- Gambling is often presented as a form of competition. We automatically associate competition with skill.
- When we gain more experience on a particular game, it's natural to feel more knowledgeable and thus better able to control the outcomes.
- Many games allow us to control how we play, encouraging the notion that we can change our playing strategy to control the outcome.

In reality, the vast majority of games are based on pure chance. No skill, experience, knowledge or strategy can influence the outcomes in any way.

Even for games that have an element of skill – like poker – chance is more important than skill in determining outcomes. In all forms of gambling, whether skill is involved or not, the odds are stacked against the player. That's why gamblers inevitably lose in the long run.



## **“I only just missed winning that time.”**

Near wins are almost as exciting as actual wins. They encourage people to gamble more because it feels like the big win is just around the corner.

However, most games are based on pure chance, so the outcomes have zero on each other. A near win does not increase the chance of a win in any way. Whether you just had a near win, a big win or a loss, the chances of getting a big win in the next game remain the same, and the chances are never in your favour.



## **“That jackpot is due any time now.”**



Many pokies players believe poker machines work in random cycles. While they can't predict exactly when a winning cycle will come up, they think that the longer they play the more likely a win becomes, because the machine has to make up for previous losses to achieve a certain return to the player.

However, this is not how gaming machines work.

Poker machines operate randomly at all times. There are no cycles. What happened on previous spins can't predict what will happen on future spins.

Machines don't make up for previous losses.

If you talk to a gambling specialist, they can explain how poker machines work. You can also check out the YouTube video Gaming Machines: Facts and Myths.

### **"I know how to read the form on sports and racing."**



Many sports bettors and racing wagerers believe they can beat the house by tracking form and keeping track of a few variables over time.

They don't realise that professional sports betting companies employ dozens of professional mathematicians and massive computing software capability to track hundreds of variables to consistently beat the house. This is what it takes. There are no exceptions.

### **"One big win and I'll be out of debt."**


It's common for people to turn to gambling as a quick and easy way to pay off their debts. They may even feel it's the only way.

However, the reality is that gambling probably caused the debt problem in the first place. You've gambled




for a long time and are well behind. What's changed? Even on the remote chance you get a few big wins, what are the chances you'll use that money to pay off your debts vs continuing to gamble? Even if you use the winnings to pay off your debts, would the experience of winning encourage you to go back and gamble more? What would happen then?

### **“Gambling’s an addiction – I can’t control it.”**



Whether gambling is an addiction or illness is still hotly debated by experts. Whether it’s an addiction or not, believing we have no control over it is unhelpful. It discourages us from taking personal responsibility and do the necessary things to get our lives back on track.



Unlike a drug addiction or illness, there’s no external substance, or bacteria or virus, that enters the body and causes the issue. Excessive gambling is a behaviour we repetitively choose to engage in, knowing both its rewards and its consequences.

Taking personal responsibility for our actions gives us the power to regain control.

## Addressing gambling beliefs

### What are your gambling beliefs?

Make time to write down your own gambling beliefs on the gambling belief worksheet. What specific beliefs drive you to gamble or gamble too much? Use the list of common beliefs above as a starting point and add your personal beliefs.

### Analysing your gambling beliefs

The next thing to do is to honestly analyse your gambling beliefs. You need to examine the evidence.



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The monitoring exercise in Step 2  
or the Gambling Calculator tool  
would be helpful here.

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For example, if you believe you can make some money from gambling, you should ask yourself:

- How much have I won and lost in the last month (or quarter, or year), since I started gambling?
- On balance, how much am I up or down by?
- Of all the times I've won money, how much did I take home and how much went back into chasing losses?
- Would I have more or less money in the future if I continued gambling vs stopped gambling?

## Changing gambling beliefs

Once you've analysed your gambling beliefs, it's time to challenge your own untrue and unhelpful beliefs. This is crucial. It will require a lot of effort and you need to have an honest think about whether the effort's worth it. Referring back to your motivations for change in Step 1 could be helpful.

### Let's work through an example.

Say you've always believed you can't control your gambling because the urges are too strong.

#### Gambling belief

"I can't control my gambling urges."

This belief isn't helpful because it doesn't encourage you to take responsibility for your gambling. Is it even correct?



## Analysing belief

Well, there are all those times you gave in to your urges, like just yesterday. So there's evidence the belief is true. Hang on, what about last week when you chose to go to the gym after work instead of gambling, despite feeling strong urges to do so? What about the 6 months last year you quit gambling because you had enough of it?

## Changing belief

The evidence shows that a different belief is more correct:

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“I can be successful at resisting gambling urges, especially when I am motivated and consistently making an effort to change.”

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Not only is this belief based on facts, it's also more likely to give you the confidence to stop.

The previous worksheet can be used to analyse and change each one of your gambling beliefs.



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## STEP 5: ASK OTHERS FOR HELP

Many people who face challenges with gambling think they have to struggle alone to overcome them. In fact, it's a lot more effective to work with family and close friends who are supportive. They may be a partner, parent, sibling or best mate.

Your chosen support person can provide you with feedback, reinforce your motivations and help maintain your efforts, particularly when the going gets tough.

### Ways talking to your support person can help

How can your support person help you overcome gambling issues? It depends on what you choose to share.

Here are some suggestions:

- Communicate openly and honestly about life problems that are your gambling cues. Adopt a policy of solving problems with their support before cues lead to gambling.

- Don't bottle up your emotions. Tell your support person exactly how you're feeling and what feelings you're struggling with so they can support you.
- Talk to your support person whenever you have difficulties dealing with gambling urges. Talk through your urge as well as why you want to overcome gambling issues. The process of turning thoughts into words can often make a difference.
- Consider asking your support person to monitor or even manage your finances for a while as a temporary measure.
- If your goal is **abstinence** and you lapse, be honest and tell your support person. Dealing with a lapse directly and getting support to keep going is much more effective than concealing it.
- If your goal is **controlled gambling** – again – be honest and tell your support person whether you're sticking to your budget or not.

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## Other support



Remember that other forms of support are available if you need some extra help, like GambleAware and Gamblers Anonymous. See the back of this workbook for more information.

### Conflict with family and friends

Family and friends can be a great source of support in your change journey. However, they can also be a source of conflict. Many negative consequences of excessive gambling affect not only you but your loved ones as well.

Sometimes conflict can get out of control, involving constant criticisms, arguments, personal attacks and references to past mistakes. This sort of conflict erodes motivation and self-esteem, and makes a relapse more likely.


The good news is that as you start to reassert control over gambling, the negative impact of gambling on your loved ones will reduce – your relationships will naturally improve. Remember you all share the same goal at the end of the day: for you to overcome




gambling harm. Show your loved ones you understand how your gambling has affected them and invite them to come along with you rather than work against you.

If you continue to experience serious relationship problems, perhaps because those problems were already there or are caused by something else, consult a relationship counsellor to help you through the issues.

### **Borrowing money**



Often people borrow money from their family and friends to cover their gambling debts. This money is often not paid back despite the best of intentions and the cycle of gambling and debt continues.



Borrowing money from family and friends is not a solution, it provides temporary relief at best, and can make the situation worse.

## **STEP 6: PREVENT RELAPSES**

Once you've learned the skills described in Steps 1 to 5, you'll need to maintain the gains you've achieved. This is done simply by regular practice and review, and by monitoring any signs of relapse so that you can act quickly to stop it.



## Keeping the long view

The path to recovery is often bumpy. There are bound to be ups and downs as you struggle to regain control over gambling habits.

So it's important to have realistic expectations of change and to keep your eye on the big picture. Lapses do occur. Often they're just hiccups rather than signifying complete failure.

A relapse, on the other hand, is where old habits return and take over.

Whether you succeed in the long run depends on how you respond to the hiccups along the way.

Take each hiccup as a warning not to become complacent and redouble your efforts in applying the skills you've learned. Re-read this self-help workbook, talk to your support person, talk to a gambling counsellor. If you see each hiccup as a complete failure then you'll likely feel hopeless and give up, making a complete relapse much more likely.

## How to deal with lapses

None of us are perfect and we all make mistakes from time to time, despite our best intentions and sincere effort. So how do you deal with a lapse if it happens?

The first point to make is very obvious – you can stop at any time. So stop. Don't put in the next coin, place the next bet or buy another ticket. It may seem very difficult when you're back in the old gambling mood, but you're the only one in control of your actions, and you can stop any time.

Take time out and change the scene, slow down, and take a moment to think, review everything you've learned and recall all the work you've been doing to change.

Quite often people who have a momentary lapse use that as an excuse to keep on gambling: "I've stuffed up already so I might as well keep on going." However, when we examine this thought closely, we can easily see that the impact of losing \$50 is very different to losing \$500 which is very different to losing \$5,000. Be real with yourself and the likely impact of continuing

gambling on your life. Be careful to not use a lapse as justification for a complete relapse. Instead of going down a negative spiral, use a lapse as an opportunity.

An opportunity to learn from your mistakes, adjust your strategies and redouble your efforts.

It's plastic and looks like a credit card, but instead it reminds you to stop and question your intention to gamble.

## Relapse checklist

This checklist may help you spot early signs of relapse:

- 1 Are you gambling regularly?
- 2 Are you planning the next session?
- 3 Are you missing out on other things because of the money spent on gambling?
- 4 Are you chasing wins or losses?

## STEP 7: GET PROFESSIONAL HELP

If self-help isn't working for you, don't despair. Professional support is Step 7, and having issues with gambling and gambling addiction is one of the most treatable psychological conditions.



Studies show that treatment is effective for 80% to 85% of gamblers, even for the most hardcore, long-term gamblers.

Even though issues around gambling respond so well to treatment, many people suffer for decades. Some may lose hundreds of thousands of dollars before they seek professional counselling. Even then, many drop out.

See if you can relate to some of these arguments people use to resist reaching out to professionals.

### **“What good would talking to someone do?”**


Many people who have issues with gambling feel as though they've already tried everything to stop. They can't imagine how speaking to someone about their gambling could help them gain control.




The fact is, if you don't address your motivations for gambling, it can be nearly impossible to stop, no matter how smart or determined you are, or what strategies you use.

You might think you understand why you gamble, but human beings are pretty bad at figuring out the real causes. GambleAware clients are nearly always surprised when we begin to explore this aspect – there's always more to it. A specialist gambling counsellor can help.

### **“I know how gambling works.”**



Most people who have issues with gambling have spent a lot of time gambling, and they've spent a lot of time thinking about gambling, too. They're confident that they know exactly how their preferred gambling games work.



But, like most things in life, we don't know what we don't know. There are big gaps in what most gamblers think they know about gambling. They might be shocked.

**“I should be strong enough to stop or control my gambling on my own.”**

Many of us have been brought up believing that sharing our problems is a sign of weakness, and that dealing with problems ourselves is a sign of strength.

The reality is that most people who keep their problems secret are scared of having to deal with or talk about them. They keep their problems to themselves out of fear, not strength. The greatest sign of strength is reaching out for help when you recognise you need it.

## **What do counselling and treatment involve?**

You can get free, confidential counselling through GambleAware services all over NSW. No referrals are required.

Typically, treatment is successfully completed after 6 to 8 weekly, one-on-one sessions with a trained counsellor.



And here's something you should know about all GambleAware counsellors: they've seen and helped many people just like you. They won't judge you or think poorly of you. They're on your side from the get-go – able, willing and ready to help you take your life in the direction you want.

GambleAware counsellors are available over the phone, online or in person. Call **1800 858 858** 24/7 or visit **[gambleaware.nsw.gov.au](https://gambleaware.nsw.gov.au)**.

## One last thing

It's challenging to change the way you think about something that's been a big part of your life. But there's no easy road. If gambling has created challenges for you, you can be sure that continuing to gamble is not the way to overcome them. You – and only you – can make the changes needed to improve the quality of your life.

You may face setbacks along the way, but don't give up hope. Keep at it. Re-read this booklet and revise the skills you've learned. Practice is essential to gaining control over gambling issues. Get as much support as possible to make the job easier.

**We wish you all the very  
best on your journey**



## GambleAware is for you

We're here to support anyone in NSW impacted by gambling, and that includes you. Contact us if you want to know more.

- If you're affected by a gambling-related issue or you're worried about a friend, loved one, employee or workmate, GambleAware offers free and confidential self-help resources, counselling and professional support services – including legal assistance and financial counselling – all over the state.
- We have more counsellors and more ways to speak with them – by video chat, online chat, email and over the phone, as well as in person.
- We can provide culturally appropriate Aboriginal-specific support, and support is available in over 40 languages, including 中文 (Mandarin and Cantonese), Tiếng Việt (Vietnamese), العربية (Arabic) and Italiano (Italian). Just ask.
- GambleAware counsellors are available to talk to 24/7.

**GAMBLEAWARE**  
**[gambleaware.nsw.gov.au](https://gambleaware.nsw.gov.au)**  
**1800 858 858**

# GambleAware regional directory

If you have questions about GambleAware support and services available in your region, get in touch with your GambleAware Service.

## GambleAware Blue Mountains & Western Sydney

Key centres include Parramatta, Penrith, Lidcombe, Blacktown, Katoomba, Lithgow, Springwood, Emerton, Richmond.

## GambleAware Central Sydney

Key centres include Campsie, Belmore, Camperdown, Ashfield, Lewisham.

## GambleAware Far & Western NSW

Key centres include Bathurst, Bourke, Broken Hill, Cobar, Coonamble, Dubbo, Orange, Walgett.




## **GambleAware Hunter & New England**

Key centres include Cardiff, Forster, Gloucester, Maitland, Mayfield, Muswellbrook, Singleton, Taree, Armidale, Glen Innes, Gunnedah, Inverell, Moree, Narrabri, Tamworth.

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## **GambleAware Illawarra & Southern NSW**



Key centres include Wollongong, Shellharbour, Nowra, Ulladulla, Batemans Bay, Bega, Goulburn, Queanbeyan, Cooma, Harden.

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## **GambleAware Mid & Northern NSW**

Key centres include Coffs Harbour, Grafton, Lismore, Port Macquarie and Tweed Heads.

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## **GambleAware Murrumbidgee**

Key centres include Albury, Wagga Wagga, Corowa, Finley, Deniliquin, Holbrook, Glenroy.

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## **GambleAware Northern Sydney & Central Coast**

Key centres include Manly Vale, Narrabeen, Ryde, Tuggerah, West Gosford, Wyong, Toukley, San Remo.

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## **GambleAware South Eastern Sydney**

Key centres include Kogarah, Sutherland, Bondi Junction, Darlinghurst.

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## **GambleAware South Western Sydney**



Key centres include Fairfield, Bankstown, Liverpool, Campbelltown, Bonnyrigg, Wingecarribee, Wollondilly.

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# Help is close at hand

No matter how you're affected by gambling – your own or someone else's – GambleAware can help. For free, confidential advice and support, and to find services near you, go to **[gambleaware.nsw.gov.au](https://gambleaware.nsw.gov.au)** or call us on **1800 858 858** 24/7.

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