 Some truths about gambling

Suggested duration: 65 minutes

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 debunk myths and misconceptions associated with gambling, and build students understanding of the costs of gambling and the impact of alcohol use on gambling. These resources were developed in collaboration with the NSW Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing.

The activity sequence includes four lessons.

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

Course 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.

What do we want students to know, understand or be able to do?

* Possible use of drugs and alcohol in licensed venues can lead to opportunities for high-risk gambling behaviours such as spending more money than you normally would.
* Develop assertive and avoidance behaviours to respond to high-risk gambling situations.
* Articulate their own limitations in terms of gambling in high risk situations.
* Recognise the risk of using online or mobile gambling channels in sporting settings while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
* Recognise the early warning signs of problem gambling and respond with knowledge of support services for themselves and others.
* Understand that drug use and intoxication is a major contributing factor in risk taking behaviours, including gambling and sports betting.
* Critique the advertising of gambling and challenge advertising techniques that promote excitement, glamour and skill and promise easy financial and social rewards.
* Recognise that gambling is not a game and being good at online gaming or mobile apps does not mean young people will be successful in gambling.
* Identify that the risks of gambling are considerable and it should not be undertaken lightly.
* Justify that responsible gambling means understanding the true odds of the game and the risks involved.
* Recognise that taking up gambling as a young person can increase the chances of developing a gambling problem.
* Develop strategies for recognising and responding to dependence on gambling or online gaming situations.
* Critically analyse the financial consequences of problem gambling both online and offline.
* Demonstrate 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 what will enable and assist a young person to access these services.

Suggested content

| Learning context | Content |
| --- | --- |
| Independence  Focus: Building self-concepts and independence | Personal values and beliefs   * influences on values and beliefs, e.g. technology, social and cultural norms, media, family, relationships * influence of values, attitudes and beliefs on decisions and actions in various contexts   Digital competencies   * online safety, e.g. digital footprint, scams, security, bullying and harassment * positive and negative influences of technology, e.g. online communities, connecting with others, gaming, body image |
| Drugs and alcohol  Focus: Making safe and responsible choices | Responsible behaviour   * gambling responsibly |

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 – Alcohol and gambling (10 minutes)

* Class brainstorm – Behaviours associated with drinking alcohol:

1. what behaviours may young people engage in while using alcohol?
2. which behaviours might result in loss of money or potential legal issues?
3. what percentage of young people do you believe engage in gambling?

* Students record the risks and outcomes associated with alcohol use and gambling. Use a Venn diagram to draw comparisons between the outcomes.
* As a whole group, discuss. Discussion points:
  + many young people use alcohol and gambling without problem or negative outcomes.
  + some young people engage in gambling of all kinds from poker machines, to sports betting to online games involving exchange of real money.
  + licensed premises where alcohol is readily available can lead to opportunities for high-risk gambling behaviours with access to poker machine lounges, casinos and even private gambling rooms.
  + both alcohol and gambling can be used in the privacy of the home or socially with others.
  + when young people consume alcohol, decision making is affected. This may influence their decisions about gambling.
  + alcohol can lower inhibitions. Young people may perceive lower risk or greater confidence in relation to their chances of winning or losing money through gambling.
  + both alcohol use and gambling can impact on other aspects of an individual’s life, including relationships, decision making and financial impact. Responsible decision making is crucial.

Activity two – James’ story (15 minutes)

* Students reflect on their own understanding of gambling. Invite students to share their understanding of sports betting, online gambling, online gaming where money could be exchanged, or where poker machines and gaming lounges were a prominent feature.

The Protecting and Supporting Children and Young People Policy sets out the responsibilities of NSW Department of Education and Communities’ employees under the legislation. All staff have a duty to recognise safety, welfare or wellbeing concerns for children and young people that arise from or during the course of their work. If staff have reasonable grounds to suspect risk of harm to a child or young person, they are required to tell their principal or workplace supervisor.

* Watch James’ story at the NSW Gambling Help website, which is featured on the main page on the sliding menu [gamblinghelp.nsw.gov.au](http://www.gamblinghelp.nsw.gov.au/)
* Discuss as a class some of the challenges that James experienced as a young person engaging in gambling for the first time.
  + When did James gamble for the first time?
  + What were his initial impressions?
  + How did his friends influence his decisions?
  + When do you think he developed a real problem with gambling?
  + What were some of the warning signs?
  + If you were friends with James, what advice would you give him?

Activity three – Our own gambling habits (10 minutes)

* As a follow up to James’ story, students use a personal mobile device to review the 8 questions which make up the Gambling Help website online quiz at [gamblinghelp.nsw.gov.au](http://www.gamblinghelp.nsw.gov.au/need-help/do-youhave-gambling-problems-take-the-quiz). It is important that students are not encouraged to share personal information but to use the quiz to develop their understandings of the personal impact of gambling. The quiz is designed to encourage students to reflect on warning signs of problem gambling and what to look for in self and others.
* In pairs or small groups, students’ discuss:
  + what is one thing you notice from the quiz questions?
  + propose reasons for the quiz questions including the warning signs of problem gambling, for example, “often I get the urge to return to gambling to win back losses from a past session”?
  + predict what percentage of people who engage in gambling or sports betting have a problem?
  + how could the NSW Gambling Help hotline (1800 858 858) assist people who have a problem with their gambling?
  + develop some tips and advice for a young person to encourage responsible behaviour in relation to gambling at a licensed venue (when they turn 18).
  + what could you do to support friends or relatives who may have developed a problem with gambling.

Activity four – Challenging myths (20 minutes)

* Students work in small groups of 4-5.
* Groups record their ideas on butcher’s paper or an online space for the question — Why do people engage in gambling?
* Allow 5 minutes for groups to discuss and record ideas. Encourage students to think about the ways in which gambling is promoted as exciting, glamorous and skilful, easy financial and social rewards.
* Students identify the ideas from their group (or another group’s brainstorm) that they consider to be myths or misconceptions about gambling by circling or highlighting these ideas. For example, people can win easy money, the odds are in their favour, the more they play, the more chances they have to win.
* Students work in pairs to research the facts behind these myths or false beliefs. Students should be encouraged to find at least one fact or piece of evidence that proves each myth wrong to share with the whole group. Use the Myths and Facts sheet to record information.
* The following sites provide information.
  + [gamblinghelp.nsw.gov.au](http://www.gamblinghelp.nsw.gov.au/)
  + [problemgambling.gov.au/facts](http://www.problemgambling.gov.au/facts)
  + [problemgambling.sa.gov.au](http://www.problemgambling.sa.gov.au/)
  + [responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au](http://www.responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/)
* Invite each group to share their myths and their findings with the whole group and add to their myths and facts sheet as groups present additional information.

Activity five – Warning signs and support services (15 minutes)

* In small group, students create a list of warning signs that may indicate someone has a problem with gambling. Share these as a whole group.
* Brainstorm some long term consequences of problem gambling including effects on:
  + finances
  + career
  + family relationships
  + partner/ friends
* Students use the [Gambling Help website](http://www.gamblinghelp.nsw.gov.au/) to develop a list of support services available to help people.

Teacher notes – Gambling

As young people are particularly vulnerable to the normalisation of gambling through exposure to sports betting advertising, gambling products, gambling in the home and the increase in the availability and accessibility of gambling, 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

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 others gambling can become a problem and have a negative impact on their social, emotional, mental and financial health.

In 2009, 70% of Australians engaged in some form of gambling and spent over $19 billion on gambling, around $12 billion of which was spent playing the poker machines. Some people who engage in this type of gambling can have serious gambling problems and at present over 500,000 Australians are at risk of, or are, problem gamblers. The Australian Government estimates that only 15% of those affected by gambling problems seek help, and the actions of one problem gambler affects the lives of between 5 and 10 other people. Problem gamblers lose around $21,000 each year which reflects a large portion of the average Australian salary (http://www.problemgambling.gov.au/facts/).

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 take into account the ways in which gambling has changed over the last decade and fails to recognise the influence of gambling advertisement on young people. According to the Victorian Responsible Gambling Association, the latest research shows that simulated gambling on social media, video games, smartphone applications and online betting are key issues for young people under 18. The NSW Office of Liquor, Gaming & Racing (OLGR) 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.

Recent studies indicate that 77% of young people between the ages of 10 and 24 years of age engaged in gambling over a 12-month period (Australian Council for Educational Research Ltd, 2011). 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. Further studies indicated that between 3-5% of these young people would be classed as problem gamblers and as many as 19% were considered “at risk” (Australian Council for Educational Research Ltd, 2011). Not surprisingly, many problem gamblers first developed gambling habits while still in their teenage years and have continued to engage in risky levels of gambling well into their adult life.

Most under-age gamblers are introduced to gambling by a family member, and having a parent who gambles or friends who are involved in gambling may further increase the risk of problem gambling among young people (Australian Clearing House for Youth Studies, 2013). Not only would young people ‘likely benefit from school-based intervention and prevention programs aimed at changing idiosyncratic belief systems and superstitious beliefs connected to gambling behaviours’ (Taylor et al., 2014), but it is important that parents, carers, community leaders and educators have an understanding of the current gambling environment to enable them to minimise young people’s exposure to harm.

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 lived experience. Ground signage, team uniforms, gambling statistics quoted by commentators and scheduled advertising all add to the ubiquity of the message on both television and radio.

A study by Ebiquity noted that in 2012, there were 528 individual online betting advertisements on free-to-air television, shown more than 20,000 times, primarily during family viewing time, with airings on pay-television estimated as many times higher.