 Seeking help - gambling

Suggested duration: 30 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 empowers students to recognise when help is needed for themselves or others and which services support people experiencing gambling problems or addictions. 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.

7.2 Demonstrate the capacity to seek help for self and others.

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

* Develop strategies for recognising and responding to dependence on gambling or online gaming situations.
* Develop 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 how a young person may overcome barriers in accessing these services.

Suggested content

| Learning context | Content |
| --- | --- |
| Independence  Focus: Building self-concepts and independence | Self-management   * responsibility for self and actions * strategies for future success |
| 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 – Warning signs (10 minutes)

As a whole group, create a list of warning signs that may indicate problem gambling.

Signs a person might have a gambling problem

* Think yourself of someone else might have a problem with gambling? Here are some signs to look out for:
* Feeling of depression including isolation from friends
* Obsession with simulated gaming apps and games
* Spending lots of time talking or thinking about gambling
* Experiencing mood swings, feeling stressed when not gambling
* Having fights with your family about gambling
* Obsessing about odds when watching sport instead of focusing on the game
* Lying or being secretive about gambling activities
* Missing school or grades falling due to time being spent gambling
* Borrowing or taking money from family and friends
* Continuing to gamble to win back money you have lost.

Source: Responsible Gambling VIC [responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/getting-help/young-people](http://www.responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/getting-help/young-people)

Discuss how problem gambling can impact on the following aspects of life:

* relationships with family or a partner
* dependent children (where a parent or carer has a gambling habit or problem)
* employment or career plans
* financial impact and future financial impact e.g. loans, credit checks, debt.

Introduce students to the video You’re stronger than you think from the [NSW Gambling Help website](http://www.gamblinghelp.nsw.gov.au/real-story/youre-stronger-than-you-think/?colour=yellow) or [YouTube](https://youtu.be/YZ9kZPEPa2E).

* Students brainstorm the benefits of seeking help.
* Discuss what enables and makes it easier you people to access help for situations and behaviours such as gambling habits?

Remind students that as well as recognising the signs of symptoms of our own gambling habits, or those of our friends, there may be young people who are affected by the gambling addiction of their parents. This can be a hard issue to face alone, but there is help out there. The NSW Gambling Help service also offers support for children whose parents experience problems with gambling and can refer young people to lots of other support services (1800 858 85).

For further information on accessing help and counselling services students can access Gambling Hangover videos and information — [gamblinghelp.nsw.gov.au](http://www.gamblinghelp.nsw.gov.au/) and [youtube.com/user/GamblingHangover](https://www.youtube.com/user/GamblingHangover)

Activity two – Seeking help (20 minutes)

Share the statement with the group from the report Stigma and Help Seeking for Gambling Problems.

“People with gambling problems attempted to hide their gambling problem — even from themselves — to avoid feeling shame and stigma. They also tended to articulate their experience of stigma through discussing their fears of exposure, and the consequences of family and friends finding out that they have a gambling problem. Problem gambling counsellors reported that their clients feared being labelled a ‘problem gambler’, and that people they knew would find out they were receiving problem gambling counselling.”

Source: Centre for Gambling Research, School of Sociology, Research School of Social Sciences, College of Arts & Social Sciences, The Australian National University. Available online: [problemgambling.sa.gov.au/\_\_data/assets/pdf\_file/0013/14710/stigma-and-help-seeking-for-gambling-problems-ANU-november-2013.pdf](http://www.problemgambling.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0013/14710/stigma-and-help-seeking-for-gambling-problems-ANU-november-2013.pdf)

As a group discuss:

* propose reasons why people with gambling problems find it so hard to seek help?
* how might people hide their addiction or issues from their friends or family?
* what kind of stigma is attached to gambling problems?
* what assumptions may other people make?
* how may other people perceive people with gambling addictions and habits?
* what preconceived judgements might be made by others?

Consider the NSW Gambling Help slogan You’re stronger than you think. Do you think this is a powerful and effective slogan? What message does this slogan send to the wider community? Give reasons for your position.

Students access and explore the [NSW Gambling Help website](http://www.gamblinghelp.nsw.gov.au/).

* Locate support services and help for people who are experiencing problems with gambling.
* Draft an email for a friend or family member who is experiencing problems with their gambling, offering them support and help as well as directing them to support services.

Encourage students to use the messages from the NSW Gambling Help website as well as other relevant websites from across Australia:

* [teenshealth.org/teen/your\_mind/problems/gambling.html](http://teenshealth.org/teen/your_mind/problems/gambling.html)
* [relationships.org.au/what-we-do/services/problem-gambling](http://www.relationships.org.au/what-we-do/services/problem-gambling)
* [kidbet.com.au](http://kidbet.com.au/)
* [responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/newsroom/media-releases/2013/gamblings-not-a-game-highlights-gambling-risks-to-kids](http://www.responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/newsroom/media-releases/2013/gamblings-not-a-game-highlights-gambling-risks-to-kids)
* [problemgambling.sa.gov.au](http://www.problemgambling.sa.gov.au/)
* [problemgambling.gov.au/resources](http://www.problemgambling.gov.au/resources)
* [gamblinghelponline.org.au](http://www.gamblinghelponline.org.au/)

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.