Advice to consider if you’re gambling

These seven pieces of advice will help you make sure your gambling doesn’t start to have a negative impact on your life.

Set a money limit in advance, and stick to it
Before you begin playing, decide how much you can afford to spend and commit to it. In the moment, it can be hard to stick to a pre-determined limit, but if you’re playing online, most websites or apps will set you a limit on your account. Otherwise, you can write it down, separate the funds into another pot or account, or tell someone you trust what your limit is.

Walk away from your losses
If you’ve lost the money that you set as your limit, it’s time to walk away. Trying to win back your losses when gambling is a losing game, and the chase can start to negatively impact your life. If you haven’t already been keeping a record of what you’re spending, you can use this handy calculator to keep track.

Treat gambling as an expense
Gambling companies are cleverly designed to make money for themselves. Over time, you’ll give away more money than you gain. If you do gamble, think of it like buying a cinema ticket — you’re paying a fixed price for the entertainment, not trying to win a profit. That way, anything you might win is a bonus.

Set a time limit in advance
It’s easy to lose track of time when you’re caught in the moment. But what other life moments are you missing out on while you gamble? Research shows that the more time someone spends gambling, the more money they lose. So set a time limit, keep an eye on the time, and when the time’s up, move on to something else.

Notice your feelings
Ask yourself how you feel when you make the decision to gamble, or while you’re playing. A lot of people use gambling as a distraction from difficult thoughts, emotions or feelings, but over time, it can actually make things worse. Instead, get out and about, try another activity that you enjoy, talk about it with someone you trust or get non-judgemental support from the GamCare helpline.

Keep other activities in the mix
If gambling has become your go-to activity when you want to have fun, that might suggest it could start to negatively impact your life. Keep things balanced by spending time on other activities you enjoy.

Take lots of breaks
Gambling for long stretches of time can make it difficult to keep track of the time and money you’re spending while playing. Stepping away at regular intervals for some air or a bit to eat will clear your head and help you keep a healthy perspective.

Be careful if you drink or do drugs
Drugs and alcohol make it harder to stick to your limits. If you do drink or use drugs, talk to a friend about your gambling and limits, to help you stick to what you have decided.

Let’s open up about gambling
If you’re worried about someone’s gambling habits, or want to better understand your own, then the first thing to do is talk to someone about it — whether that’s a trusted friend or family member, or the GamCare helpline.

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