

Reducing stigma:

A quick-reference guide for talking about gambling harm

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What is gambling harm?

Gambling harm is any negative consequence or side effect of gambling. It affects the health and wellbeing of individuals who gamble, families, communities, and the broader population.

The most obvious type of gambling harm is financial, but other harms include relationship difficulties, health problems, emotional or psychological distress, issues with work or study, cultural stresses and criminal activity.

Language is powerful

Language can influence how people think and feel about individuals who experience gambling harm. Negative language often causes those affected to feel embarrassed, guilty or ashamed. This creates stigma, which discourages help seeking among people who would benefit from treatment and support.

The key to non-stigmatising language is to avoid defining, blaming or judging a person based on their participation in activities that lead to harm.



How to talk about gambling

Problematic language	Concerns/considerations	Alternative language
A gambling habit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The word 'habit' tends to have negative connotations when used in relation to gambling Diminishes the issues of gambling harm Blames and stigmatises the individual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequent gambling Harmful gambling
Compulsive gambler Degenerate gambler Disordered gambler Habitual gambler Out-of-control gambler Pathological gambler Problem gambler	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often clinically or technically inaccurate Perpetuates negative stereotypes Blames and stigmatises the person Implies the person is the behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Person experiencing harm from gambling Person negatively affected by gambling
Ex-gambling addict Former gambling addict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perpetuates stereotypes Stigmatises the person Implies that a person can never be free from the label or that they cannot truly recover 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Person with lived/personal experience of gambling harm
Gamble responsibly Responsible gambling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implies that the person experiencing gambling harm is 'irresponsible' Overuse alongside pro-gambling messages has diminished their value Used continuously by the gambling industry to suggest it is meeting obligations of care but in actuality de-legitimises the sentiment Implies the individual is to blame for any harm they may experience 	<p>When referring to the gambling industry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsible provision/service of gambling <p>When referring to individuals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> gambling without harm gambling without negative effects/consequences
Gambling addict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For some people, this is a useful way of categorising the symptoms/issues they experience, but for others it is a stigmatising label that implies they are a problem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Person addicted to gambling Person experiencing a gambling addiction
Punter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implies excessive gambling on races – horses or greyhounds i.e. wagering Has become an Australian colloquialism often used without regard to underlying negative connotations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Person who gambles Person who bets on races Person who wagers
Vulnerable to gambling problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disempowering Indicates a predisposition to problematic gambling behaviour and may imply that a person is unable to recover May not resonate with those people likely to be affected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People at risk of gambling harm due to...

Support services

Free, confidential advice, support and referral 24/7

Gambler's Help – 1800 858 858
(Gambler's Help Youthline: 1800 262 376)

Self-help resources, practical advice and tips to help people manage their gambling

gamblerhelp.com.au

Free 24/7 crisis support and suicide prevention

Lifeline – 13 11 14 or lifeline.org.au

Information and online counselling via chat or email

gamblerhelponline.org.au

Peer support

bchs.org.au/services/gambling-support/peer-connection