Show Me the Real Odds

GAMBLING IN PLAIN LANGUAGE



IF SOMEONE ASKED WHETHER YOU GAMBLE, WHAT WOULD COME TO MIND?

Maybe a casino. A lottery ticket. A night at the racetrack.

But gambling has changed.

Today, it can happen almost anywhere—from sports betting and online casinos to fantasy sports for money, lottery games, and gambling-style features built into some games and apps.

It may not always feel like “gambling.” It can feel like part of watching the game, checking an app, or having a little fun.

And with a phone, placing a bet can take only seconds.

But the basic idea is the same:

Gambling means risking money or something of value on an uncertain outcome in the hope of winning something of greater value.

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Understanding what gambling is—and what keeps us coming back—can make it easier to recognize when the bet is starting to take more than expected.

EVERY FORM OF GAMBLING INCLUDES THREE ELEMENTS:

Wager/Stake: something to lose

Risk: an outcome that cannot be controlled

Potential Reward: Possible payout or prize

Gambling can be exciting before the outcome is even known. The **anticipation of a possible reward** engages brain systems involved in motivation and reward, which can help explain why the possibility of a win can feel so compelling. [2]

Repeated betting can also create a cycle where attention shifts from enjoying the activity to thinking about what might happen on the next bet. After a loss, the pull to keep going can become even stronger.

Trying to win back money that has already been lost is called "chasing losses."

Research shows that chasing can include continuing to gamble, increasing the amount wagered, taking greater risks, or returning to gambling sooner after losing. [3]

Thoughts like **"one more bet," "I'm due," or "I can win it back"** are worth noticing.

A previous loss does not make the next bet more likely to win.

GAMBLING IS ALSO EASIER TO ACCESS THAN EVER.

Sports broadcasts, television commercials, social media, digital ads, mobile apps, and celebrity endorsements can make betting feel like a normal part of everyday entertainment.

That makes understanding how gambling works even more important. Knowing the role of chance, reward anticipation, repeated betting, and chasing losses can help you recognize when gambling is beginning to take more **time, attention, or money** than you expected.

Knowing the real odds isn't about taking the fun out of the game. It's about understanding what's happening behind the bet—and recognizing when it may be time to step away.

1 MILLION MISSOURIANS

may experience gambling problems

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[3] Banerjee, N., Chen, Z., Clark, L., & Noël, X. (2023). Behavioural expressions of loss-chasing in gambling: A systematic scoping review. Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews, 153, 105377.

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