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How to Stop Gambling: 7 Helpful Tips

Gambling can be a hard addiction to manage. These 7 tips provide people with simple ways to reduce the temptations of gambling.

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About 2.6 percent of the population (about 10 million people in the United States) have gambling problems and experienced hardships associated with gambling. If you or a loved one needs help avoiding gambling, consider these seven tips.

Article at a Glance:

- Approximately 10 million people in the U.S. have a gambling problem, so you are not alone
- It's important to understand why you gamble and avoid gambling temptations and triggers

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- Try to find positive alternatives to gambling or postpone it while gambling cravings are very intense.
- Professional help is available to stop gambling and stay away from it for good.

1. Understand the Problem

You can't fix something that you don't understand. To eliminate gambling from your life, you must learn about the issue and admit you have a [gambling problem](#).

The American Psychiatric Association identifies gambling as a mental health disorder similar to addictions triggered by alcohol and drugs. You might have a gambling disorder if you have:

- The powerful need to gamble with larger amounts of money
- Feelings of restlessness or irritability when not gambling
- Made repeated and unsuccessful attempts to quit gambling
- Found yourself completely preoccupied with gambling
- Noticed you gamble to manage stress
- Continued gamble to “get even”
- Lied to friends, coworkers and loved ones about gambling
- Lost relationships or created conflict about gambling
- Needed financial support

Be honest with yourself when you look over the symptoms of gambling disorder, or even better, ask a loved one about their opinion of your gambling for a clearer understanding. Stop denying and start seeing the negative effect gambling has on your life.

2. Join a Support Group

Now that you have recognized the problem, you can seek assistance from a support group. Support groups are organizations maintained by people with similar experiences and pasts. Though support groups lack professional interventions, they are free to try out in person or in online chat rooms.

[Gamblers Anonymous](#) is one support group specifically built around the needs of people with gambling problems. The group is based around the familiar 12-step approach used by other support groups like Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous.

For more information on support groups for gamblers, you can contact the gambling hotline at the National Council on Problem Gambling. They offer voice and text support for people with gambling issues and can point you toward helpful group options to manage the trials of gambling addiction.

3. Avoid Temptation

Gambling is a temptation, but seeing [gambling as an addiction](#) is a significant step because it permits you to use skills from addiction recovery and relapse prevention. For someone in recovery, avoiding people, places and activities linked to gambling can help them avoid a setback. By avoiding these triggers, you can avoid the thoughts and feelings that encourage gambling.

So, if driving by a casino after work sparks thoughts of gambling, take an alternative way home. If watching sports makes you want to bet on it, consider watching something else. Cut up your credit cards and let your spouse handle the checkbook.

It may seem like an inconvenience, but just as a person with a drinking problem should not go into a bar, you have to identify and avoid your triggers. Work with a loved one on your list of triggers and find ways to avoid the temptations to reduce the risk of gambling.

4. Postpone Gambling

With addictions, there are cravings. Cravings are strong urges to complete the desired behavior. As a gambler, you could have cravings to call your bookie, go to the casino, cash your paycheck or other behaviors linked to gambling.

Cravings are intense, and while you are in the middle of one, it feels like it could last forever. It will not, though. All cravings have a beginning, middle and end. So as long as you can postpone your gambling, you can maintain recovery.

An excellent way to approach this issue is by paying attention to your cravings, what they feel like, what you think about during the craving and how long it tends to last. By studying the craving, you begin to take away its control over you.

Once you build an understanding of the situation, you can list a set of thoughts or actions to distract from the gambling. Perhaps, deep breathing or calling a friend when a craving hits will be the best ways to postpone gambling.

5. Find Alternatives to Gambling

[Avoiding triggers](#) and distracting during cravings are great ways to deal with gambling, but to improve your state, you'll need to find healthy alternatives to gambling. By replacing gambling behaviors with positive ones, you shift the focus away from the bad and towards the good.

Some gambling alternatives include:

- Physical activity (e.g., going for walks, weightlifting, team sports or yoga)
- Meditation
- Spending more time with friends and family who do not gamble
- Volunteering at a hospital or animal shelter
- Exploring new hobbies
- Traveling

Just think of the fun, beneficial alternatives you can explore with the extra money you have from not gambling.

6. Think About the Consequences

Shame and guilt are strong feelings for anyone in recovery from addiction. Shame and guilt can be dangerous because too much of them can encourage people to relapse, but some levels of shame and guilt can motivate you to stay in recovery.

Think about the consequences of your past gambling to avoid gambling in the future. Think about:

- The emotional pain you caused your loved ones
- The financial hardships you put your family in
- Any lies you told to disguise your addiction from others

Try not to dwell on past behavior, and only use it for motivation to avoid gambling in the future. Too much shame or guilt can be counterproductive.

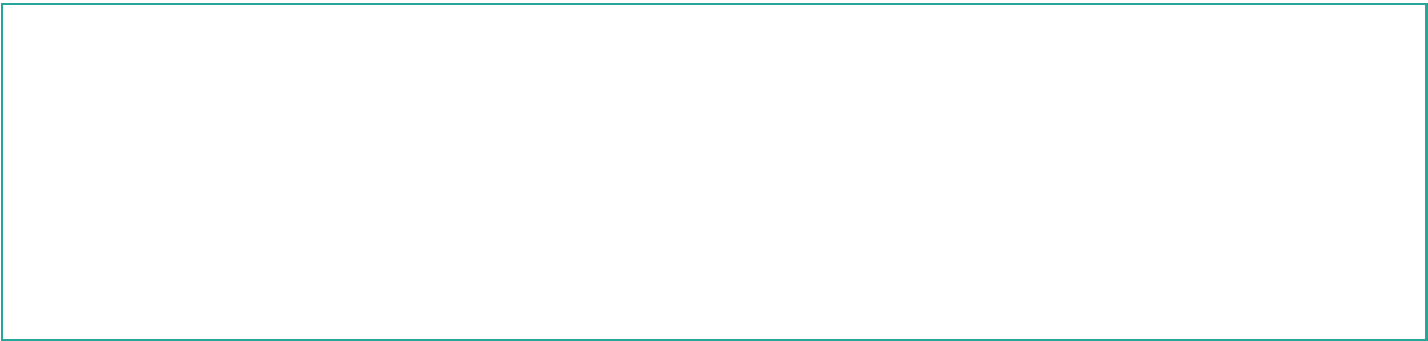
7. Seek Professional Help

If your gambling is severe, consider seeking professional help as soon as possible.

Professional treatment from a mental health or addiction specialist could be the difference between a life of financial uncertainty versus living in financial stability.

[Professional treatment](#) methods can teach you ways to stay away from gambling as well as refining the skills you are already employing. With professional counselors and therapists widely available, the only thing holding you back is your reluctance. Even better, you can seek professional help while participating in a support group.

If your gambling addiction co-occurs alongside a substance use disorder, [contact the experts at The Recovery Village](#). One telephone call can change your life for the better. Don't hesitate, call today for a confidential, personal assessment with one of our representatives.



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