

# Talking about gambling and related harms

## Language and imagery tips for health communicators

This resource supports health communicators to use respectful, inclusive and evidence-informed language when discussing gambling and related harms. Its goal is to reduce stigma, encourage help-seeking and promote shared responsibility across individuals, communities, industry and government. Co-designed with people with lived experience, researchers and professionals, it provides practical guidance on effective language and imagery.

### Key language principles

- Use person-first language: for example, ‘a person who gambles’, ‘a person harmed by gambling’
- Avoid labels: such as ‘gambler’, ‘problem gambler’ or ‘gambling addict’
- Frame gambling harm as a public health issue, rather than a personal or moral failing
- Avoid sensational, moralising or trivialising language
- Highlight shared responsibility: including environmental, industry, regulatory and community factors
- Include support information in all communications (see Supports section)

See the Commission’s [Guide for talking about gambling and related harms](#) for more information.

### Framing gambling and related harms

When creating health communication materials, provide context. Gambling is a legal activity that people may participate in for many reasons. Gambling behaviours and related harms are shaped by social, cultural, policy, economic and environmental factors – not just individual choices.

Acknowledge the role of product design and marketing. After explaining the broader context, offer practical steps that people can take to reduce their risk of harm or address harm they may already be experiencing.

#### Example:

“Gambling is designed to keep people spending. It can harm anyone. If it’s no longer fun, here are some steps to help you regain control and reduce harm.”

While encouraging critical thinking, ensure your messages do not stigmatise people who gamble.

## Imagery in health communication

Imagery plays a critical role in shaping perceptions and emotional responses. When illustrating gambling harm:

- Avoid images of gambling products (e.g., poker machines, casino tables)
- Do not use visuals that reinforce negative stereotypes (e.g., people looking distressed or despondent)
- Choose imagery that promotes empowerment, hope and recovery
- Reflect diversity, dignity and real-world contexts

## Working with lived experience

Engage people with lived experience as equal partners in storytelling, advocacy and message development. Respect their preferred language and create safe, supportive environments for sharing.

Where possible, collaborate with individuals who are well prepared and supported through structured lived experience programs (e.g., through the [ACT Gambling Support Service](#)). Always follow best-practice guidelines for working alongside people with expertise through lived experience.

## Supports

Include these support pathways in relevant communications:

- Gambling Helpline 24/7: 1800 858 858 | [actgamblingsupport.org.au](https://actgamblingsupport.org.au)
- Lifeline 24/7: 13 11 14 | [lifeline.org.au](https://lifeline.org.au)
- National online gambling support (including live chat): [gamblinghelponline.org.au](https://gamblinghelponline.org.au)
- Commission's Gambling Harm support: [everystorymatters.act.gov.au](https://everystorymatters.act.gov.au)
- Peer Support: [actgamblingsupport.org.au/support/peer-support](https://actgamblingsupport.org.au/support/peer-support)

Gambling & Racing Commission  
GPO Box 158, Canberra City ACT 2601

 [GRCBoard@act.gov.au](mailto:GRCBoard@act.gov.au)  
 [gamblingandracing.act.gov.au](https://gamblingandracing.act.gov.au)

© Australian Capital Territory, Canberra 2026