

Talking about gambling and related harms

Language and imagery tips for media professionals

This resource supports media professionals to use respectful, inclusive and evidence-informed language when discussing gambling and related harms. It aims to reduce stigma, support 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 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.

How to frame gambling and related harms in media reporting

Media stories influence how communities understand gambling, how stigma is perpetuated and whether people feel able to seek help. When reporting on gambling and related harms, aim to:

✓ Explain the bigger picture

Provide context about systemic drivers of harm, such as product design, access, targeted marketing, venue environments and policy settings. This shifts the focus from individual responsibility to shared responsibility.

✓ Report lived experience ethically

When sharing personal or family stories:

- Ensure informed consent, clarity of purpose and respect for the person’s preferred language
- Avoid sensationalising, focusing solely on crisis moments or presenting people through the lens of harm

- Include elements of coping, community support, cultural context and recovery, where appropriate
- Provide clear and visible pathways to help and support

✓ **Avoid framing that stigmatises**

Avoid language that implies blame, irresponsibility, weakness or moral failure. Instead, describe gambling harm as a health and social issue shaped by broader systems and environments.

✓ **Select imagery with care**

Imagery strongly shapes public attitudes.

- Avoid pictures that glamorise gambling (e.g., winning moments, bright gaming machines, piles of money, stylised chips)
- Avoid images that depict distress without context, or reinforce shame (e.g., isolated people in dark rooms)
- When showing personal impacts, pair visuals with support information
- Preference images that reflect community, cultural safety, support, agency and recovery

Working with lived experience

People with lived experience offer essential insights into harms, recovery and systemic issues.

When engaging with lived experience:

- Treat individuals as equal partners in storytelling and message development
- Respect their preferred language, framing and boundaries
- Use trauma-informed approaches and provide safe, supported environments for sharing
- Where possible, work with individuals who are prepared and supported through structured lived-experience programs (e.g., [ACT Gambling Support Service](#))
- Follow best-practice guidelines for working alongside people with lived experience

Supports

Include these help-seeking pathways in all relevant communications:

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

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