



# Adolescents and Gambling

**INFORMATION FOR PARENTS**



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# Play – Luck – Risk?!

Children and adolescents have a basic need to play. Many skills and character traits are learned and tried out during play. Play accompanies childhood and adolescence, and we adults too also enjoy playing. It's fun, exciting and gives us pleasure.

Gambling is also a part of this. But where are the boundaries here? When does play become gambling? And when does play become risky?

In this pamphlet, we explore the issue of gambling and show you as parents, how you can recognise the fascination and attraction in order to minimise the risks and dangers for your child, or prevent them from even occurring in the first place.



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## What is gambling anyway?

Gambling or games of chance are games in which winning and losing entirely or primarily depends on luck – and not on the skill or decisions of the players. Because games of chance are often played for money, they are subject to legal regulations such as a general gambling ban for people under the age of 18.

What makes gambling exciting? As well as the possibility of winning money or material things, gambling offers an intrinsic attraction: It's a challenge to juggle with the risk – a challenge that many people are willing to accept. However, your own skills have hardly any influence on whether you win or not.



*It's gambling when money  
or an asset is staked  
and the decision about  
winning is entirely or  
primarily dependent  
on chance.*

**Examples:**

- Lotteries
- Bingo
- Scratch tickets
- Poker
- Black jack
- Slot machines
- Betting on sports
- Throwing dice
- Internet gambling
- Roulette





## How big is the chance of winning?

The chances of winning when gambling follow the laws of probability.

In the popular game of chance "6 out of 49" the chance of "6 correct with super number" is 1 : 140 million! You can imagine it rather like this: Someone lays out 5 cent coins nose to tail on the road next to the motorway from Flensburg to Athens.

One of these coins is marked on the back with a dot. If a person travels along this 2,800 km route by car, stops and turns over a coin to find he/she is holding the marked coin in their hand, this has the same probability as getting the "6 correct with super number".

The probability of being struck by lightening is much higher.

***Chance does not have  
a memory;  
It's not possible to influence  
random numbers!***

## Games of chance are currently “in” among adolescents

More than 36% of youths under 18 years of age have gambled at least once in their life. Around 15% have done so in the last year. In the process, considerable sums of money are gambled away. (As of 2019)

**Internet gambling** is particularly interesting for adolescents, owing to its increasing presence in the media, youth-specific advertising and easy availability on PCs and mobile phones. The internet offers a difficult-to-monitor, wide-ranging product with access restrictions that can be easily by-passed by adolescents – by entering the false date of birth, for example.

Demo websites and enticing offers with welcome bonuses as start money tempt adolescents into taking part.

There's an increasing trend to mix gambling with other types of game, not dependent on luck. So-called **simulated gambling** is a digital and interactive gambling activity that does not require the use of money. These simulated games are almost identical to games of chance with real money.

The problem with simulated games of chance is that a **gaming thirst is explicitly promoted** through complex algorithms. Periods of loss are rapidly followed by periods of winning again, and the odds are much higher than with true games of chance.

The psychological barrier to gambling for real money is therefore lower.







Simulated games of chance can be found as integral parts of computer games or downloaded as free-of-charge apps.

Online games such as Candy Crush or Farm Heroes Saga are also offered in **social networks**. Playing success can be shared with other players on social platforms such as facebook, which can increase your attachment to the game and encourage playing for a longer time.

The fascination lies in the competitiveness so that rewards are achieved through the praise of other people. The risky element: In the free-of-charge gaming apps, you can buy **virtual currencies** such as gold bars or rubies with real money to shorten waiting times or purchases skills in order to progress more quickly through the game.

It's also possible to buy these virtual currencies by paying with a Paysafe card. These are available from petrol stations, kiosks and supermarkets, for example. It's possible to pay for things on the Internet very easily without giving personal information, bank or credit card details using the card's pin code. As the purchase of Paysafe cards does not have any age restrictions, there are **no legal protection mechanisms for children and adolescents**. Analysing the user's surfing behaviour also allows advertising to be customised to their interests.



In summary, the following risk factors can be identified:

- high odds entice you to participate in real gambling
- tournaments within the online games encourage you to play
- child and player protection regulations can be circumvented
- the structure of the games can entice adolescents to invest money and play longer
- available 24/7
- few social controls or none at all

**Slot machines** in restaurants, snack bars and amusement arcades also represent a big incentive as they are very accessible. They promise quick winnings and encourage you to play for money.

**Betting on sports** – for example, football betting lists in classrooms or sports club changing rooms are particularly popular among adolescents. Their own knowledge about individual sports gives the impression that the result of the game can be easily predicted and winnings can be achieved.

It's not uncommon for parents to take part in gambling with their children, sometimes without knowing that this is not allowed and has its own risks.





## **Faster – Higher – Riskier**

When we are young, trying out possibilities, testing the boundaries and exceeding them, as well as doing what is forbidden plays a large role. Games of chance are particularly attractive to young people because of their easy availability and minimal money threshold as well as their interactive elements. The threshold to accessing the game is low, the desire to make fast money is high.

As a group, adolescents are particularly at risk of developing gambling-related problems. They tend to overestimate their ability to influence the outcome of the game with their individual skills. “Almost wins” create feelings of joy and increase playing intensification.

Numerous demo gaming websites are offered on the internet. Initial successes seem to be rewarding and tempt you to play with real money.

**But the gaming fun also has risks.** A small but significant proportion of youths exhibit risky and often uncontrolled gambling behaviour. It then becomes “Win at any price”. But: the earlier the exposure to gambling, the greater the danger of developing problematic behaviour. The government is aware of this problem. This is why it has forbidden participation in games of chance for underage persons.

## What does the law say?

Persons under the age of 18 are forbidden to take part in games of chance such as slot machines. This applies to restaurants, bars, bistros, snack stands or motorway service stations as well as scratch and lottery tickets, playing poker on the internet or betting on sports. These are forbidden, even in the company of parents or other adults.

***Underage persons are  
forbidden to take part in  
any kind of gambling***

(see child protection legislation and the State Gambling Treaty)

There are a few exceptions when underage children are allowed to take part in gambling: participation is allowed at local festivals, church fairs or fun fairs if the value of the winnings in the form of goods is of minimal value. In these cases the enticement to play is small. There is also hardly any danger of getting into debt.



## How do I recognise risky gambling behaviour?

The gambling behaviour of your child could be problematic if he/she:

- suffers from a “chronic lack of money”.
- often borrows money from other people but cannot pay it back and sells his/her own property without an identifiable reason.
- suddenly has a large quantity of cash without being able to explain why.
- always talks about games of chance and the high possibilities of winning.
- spends more and more time with games of chance – including on the internet.
- does not show much interest in school and his/her school performance, and plays truant (skips school).
- neglects other interests and friends to do gambling.

If several of these points apply:

- Make absolutely sure that you stay in close contact with your child, even if he/she avoids you!  
Show interest in the gaming behaviour of your child. (Which games does he/she particularly like? Why does he/she enjoy playing?)
- If you don't make any progress by talking to your child in person, get in touch with an advice centre. Relatives too will receive non-binding, confidential and free-of-charge help, including anonymously if requested.

You can find further information and  
advice via

[www.faul-es-spiel.de/en](http://www.faul-es-spiel.de/en)  
[www.elternberatung-sucht.de](http://www.elternberatung-sucht.de)  
[www.check-dein-spiel.de](http://www.check-dein-spiel.de)  
[www.spielen-mit-verantwortung.de](http://www.spielen-mit-verantwortung.de)



## Things you can do:

- If you play games at home, do not play for money!
- Speak with your daughter or son about the different games of chance that they could encounter.
- Explain the difference between skill and luck to your child. Skill can be trained; luck can't!
- Encourage conversations about gambling – possibilities of winning and risks, playing for money and duration.
- Tell your child that playing games of chance is forbidden for underage persons – even in the uncontrolled sphere of the internet.



***You are also a  
role model  
for your child  
in the issue  
of gambling!***

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Edition: 2nd edition, June 2020

Authors: Martina Kuhnt, Niedersächsische Landesstelle für Suchtfragen (NLS); Nina Roth, Referat Suchtprävention der Landeszentrale für Gesundheitsförderung in Rheinland-Pfalz e.V.; Natalie Thiem-Schulze, Präventionsprojekt Glücksspiel Berlin I pad gGmbH

Layout: Pascale-Aimee Keuns, ADesign4You

Translation: tolingo GmbH

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# HELP AND ADVICE ON GAMBLING ADDICTION

for those afflicted, relatives and professionals



[www.fauler-spiel.de/en](http://www.fauler-spiel.de/en)

Advice telephone on gambling addiction of the **Federal Centre for Health Education** 0800 1 37 27 00 (free-of-charge and anonymous)

**Präventionsprojekt Glücksspiel | pad gGmbH**  
Charlottenburger Str. 2, 13086 Berlin

Telephone: 030 - 84 52 21 12

Fax: 030 - 84 52 21 17

Messenger: 0152 - 56 18 02 85

Email: [praevention.gluecksspiel@pad-berlin.de](mailto:praevention.gluecksspiel@pad-berlin.de)