FREE GUIDE

What to do if you notice a sensitivity to gambling

Noticing the signs early is a strength. These practical steps help many people regain control — at their own pace.

Step by step: how to gradually step back

1. **Notice your triggers**
   For one week, note when the urge to gamble appears: time of day, mood, place, people, ads. Patterns quickly become visible.

2. **Set a clear goal**
   Decide whether you want to stop completely or cut down first. Write the goal down with a date — for example, “no gambling on weekdays from next Monday”.

3. **Create barriers**
   Delete gambling apps, unsubscribe from casino and betting newsletters, and use the self-exclusion and blocking tools offered by gambling sites, app stores and your bank.

4. **Limit access to money**
   Turn on gambling transaction blocks in your banking app, avoid carrying large amounts of cash and don't keep card details saved on gambling sites.

5. **Reduce step by step**
   Lower your time and budget each week — for example, by a quarter — instead of trying to change everything at once.

6. **Tell someone you trust**
   Sharing your plan with a partner, friend or relative makes it easier to stick to and gives you support on difficult days.

Replace the urge

Gambling often fills a need — excitement, relaxation, distraction or company. Find another way to meet that need:

Excitement and adrenaline
Sport, climbing, team games, board or video games without money stakes.

Stress relief
A walk, breathing exercises, a shower, music, journaling.

Boredom
A new hobby, a course, cooking, a project with a visible result.

Loneliness
Meeting friends, volunteering, a club or a support group.

The “urge wave”
An urge rises, peaks and fades if you don't act on it. Delay the decision by 30 minutes, change place and keep your hands busy.

If you still decide to play

If you choose to gamble, these rules reduce the risk of harm:

- Decide on a budget in advance — only money you can afford to lose, as the price of entertainment.
- Set a time limit and use a timer or the platform's limit tools.
- Never chase losses. When the budget is gone, the game is over for today.
- Never borrow money, use credit or sell things to gamble.
- Don't gamble when you're upset, stressed, lonely or under the influence of alcohol.
- Treat winnings as luck, not income — and don't put them straight back in.
- Take regular breaks and plan gambling-free days every week.

When to seek professional help now

If you can't stick to your limits, are hiding debts, or gambling is affecting your sleep, work or relationships, it's time to talk to a specialist. In many countries help is free — and the in-depth test is a good first step.

Play Aware is a non-profit initiative for the prevention of gambling addiction. The self-check is for information only and does not replace a professional diagnosis. For people aged 18+.