

This lesson plan can
be used for both
grades 8 and 9.

About Gambling

SUMMARY

Objective: To provide students with information about gambling and common misperceptions about gambling, and to help students understand why people gamble.

Process: Students will participate in an activity in which they will be presented with common gambling myths and truths. Students will have to explain whether they think the statement is true or false, and why.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- raise awareness and understand the negative consequences of gambling
- help students understand and apply critical thinking to false messages about gambling

CONTENT AND TIME (45-MINUTE LESSON)

- 8.1 Introduction to Gambling (10 minutes)
- 8.2 Gambling: Truth or Myth? (20 minutes)
- 8.3 Why do People Gamble? (10 minutes)
- 8.4 Closure: Key Messages (5 minutes)

8.1 What is Gambling?

(10 minutes)

Open a discussion with your students about what gambling is. Obviously your students are not playing VLTs in a casino, but many of them are participating in gambling behaviour. Have them brainstorm types of gambling that they have noticed among their peers. Help students understand that gambling can occur anywhere, not only in casinos or racetracks, and that it can involve wagering, daring and betting on card games, pool games, sporting events or personal skill competitions. Young people also gamble online and in video games, using money, virtual coins or credits.

Clarify to your students the difference between social and problem gambling.

Social gambling is casual or occasional gambling. People who gamble socially see it as a form of entertainment that has a cost, just like going to a movie with friends. They accept the loss of money because they see gambling as a way to spend time with friends, rather than as a way to make money.

Problem gambling happens when a person becomes unable to control their gambling, and when they keep choosing to gamble despite the trouble it is causing in major areas of their life, such as family, friends, leisure, school or work, health (physical, mental, emotional, spiritual), money, and legal. Gambling more than you can afford to, and trying to win back your losses, are examples of problem gambling.

8.2 Gambling: Truth or Myth?

(20 minutes)

Objective: To help students understand common truths and misconceptions about gambling.

Instructions: Create the following four signs and post them in the four corners of the classroom.

- yes, definitely
- yes, but
- absolutely not
- not really

Explain to your students that you will be reading some statements about gambling, one at a time. Once you have read a statement, they will then go to the corner that best represents how much they agree or disagree with that statement (e.g., yes, definitely). After the students have made their decisions, have them discuss with the others in their corner why they chose to stand where they are. Have a representative from each group share the reasons for their decision. Afterwards, share with the class whether the statement was true or a myth, and discuss.

Statement: Teens don't gamble, so they don't develop gambling problems.

Discussion: Teens do gamble. Many believe that adolescents do not gamble, but teenagers wager, dare and bet on card games, pool games, sporting events and personal skill competitions. Young people also gamble online and in video games, using money, virtual coins or credits. For many, winning and losing these activities is secondary. They play for the enjoyment, the social interaction and the challenge. For some, gambling can be a lot like an addictive drug, which may become a problem.

Statement: Teens gamble just for the fun of it.

Discussion: Most teens who gamble do so for fun and only spend a little of their money or belongings on it. However, others spend all their money gambling and report feeling worried or unhappy about it.

Statement: Gambling is a way to make money.

Discussion: This is a myth. More often than not, gambling is a way to lose money. For example, the chances are winning the jackpot for Lotto 6/49 is about one in 14 million.

Statement: People can't predict whether a coin is going to come up heads or tails.

Discussion: This is true. Each flip of the coin is an independent event. It doesn't matter what came up in the previous flips. The chance of heads or tails coming up in a single flip is 50 per cent, no matter how many times you flip the coin.

Statement: Knowing a game well has got to increase your chance of winning.

Discussion: This is a myth. Knowing the rules of poker inside out, or knowing who all the players are on your favourite hockey team and their opposition, won't increase your chance of winning. Knowing something about the game might make it seem easier to decide what plays to make or which team to bet on, but it won't help you anticipate which cards you'll be dealt or how the players will act on the ice.

8.3 Why do People Gamble?

(10 minutes)

Have students form groups of three to four people, and have each group brainstorm reasons that people gamble. Have the groups record their responses and share them with the class.

Some possible reasons could include:

- excitement
- entertainment
- escape: to forget daily stresses and avoid emotions or feelings
- economics: to win money
- pride or reputation: to be seen as a “winner” or a “high roller”
- challenge: to try to “beat the odds” or compete with others
- boredom: gambling gives some people something to do
- loneliness: some people gamble to try to fill a void in their life

8.4 Closure: Key Messages

(5 minutes)

Most teens exchange bets for fun, for something to do, as a challenge or as a way to make friends. The risk and excitement can make the game enjoyable and fun. But for some adolescents, gambling can be a lot like an addictive drug, which may become a problem. Studies have shown that adolescents are more likely than adults to get into trouble with gambling. Problem gambling can lead to troubles with money, stress, and relationships with family and friends.

Remind students that it's OK if they choose not to gamble, and that it's important to not be swept away in a moment of excitement or peer influence if they do choose to gamble. Think critically, evaluate the risks and have a clear picture of the situation at hand.