**Signs & Symptoms of Problem Gambling**

**Warning Signs:**

* Have you ever felt the need to bet more and more money?
* Have you ever lied to people important to you about how much you gambled?
* Have you repeated unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back or stop gambling?
* Do you gamble as a way of escaping emotional or physical pain?
* Have you ever relied on others to provide money to relieve a desperate financial situation caused by gambling?
* Have you ever jeopardized or lost a significant relationship, job or career opportunity because of gambling?
* Have you gambled to get money with which to pay debts or to solve other financial problems?
* Have you borrowed money to finance your gambling?
* Has gambling ever made your home life unhappy?
* Do you gamble to try to get your money back?

[**The Four Phases of Gambling**](https://problemgambling.az.gov/signs/four-phases-gambling) **Addiction:**

Problem gambling is thought to be a progressive disorder, traveling through four phases. Although this describes the four phases, anyone experiencing problems in life due to gambling will probably be able to identify with this progression.

**Winning phase:**

The winning phase often starts with a big win, leading to excitement and a positive view of gambling. Problem gamblers believe they have a special talent for gambling and that the winning will continue. They begin spending greater amounts of time and money on gambling.

**Losing phase:**

Problem gamblers become more and more preoccupied with gambling. They start to gamble alone, borrow money, skip work, lie to family and friends and default on debts. They also begin to “chase” their losses.

**Desperation phase:**

Problem gamblers lose all control over their gambling. They feel ashamed and guilty after gambling, but they can’t stop. They may cheat or steal to finance their addiction. The consequences of [compulsive gambling](https://psychcentral.com/lib/symptoms-of-compulsive-gambling/) catch up with them: they may lose their jobs, get divorced, or get arrested.

**Hopeless phase:**

In the hopeless phase, problem gamblers hit “rock bottom.” They don’t believe that anyone cares or that help is possible. They don’t even care if they live or die. They may abuse drugs and alcohol to numb the pain. Many problem gamblers also consider or attempt suicide.

[**Gamblers Anonymous 20 Questions**](https://problemgambling.az.gov/signs/gamblers-anonymous-20-questions)

If someone answers "yes" to seven or more of these questions, Gamblers Anonymous suggests it is an indication of a serious problem.

1. Did you ever lose time from work or school due to gambling?
2. Has gambling ever made your home life unhappy?
3. Did gambling affect your reputation?
4. Have you ever felt remorse after gambling?
5. Did you ever gamble to get money with which to pay debts or otherwise solve financial difficulties?
6. Did gambling cause a decrease in your ambition or efficiency?
7. After losing did you feel you must return as soon as possible and win back your losses?
8. After a win did you have a strong urge to return and win more?
9. Did you often gamble until your last dollar was gone?
10. Did you ever borrow to finance your gambling?
11. Have you ever sold anything to finance gambling?
12. Were you reluctant to use "gambling money" for normal expenditures?
13. Did gambling make you careless of the welfare of yourself or your family?
14. Did you ever gamble longer than you had planned?
15. Have you ever gambled to escape worry or trouble?
16. Have you ever committed, or considered committing, an illegal act to finance gambling?
17. Did gambling cause you to have difficulty in sleeping?
18. Do arguments, disappointments or frustrations create within you an urge to gamble?
19. Did you ever have an urge to celebrate any good fortune by a few hours of gambling?
20. Have you ever considered self-destruction or suicide as a result of your gambling?

### **Gambling Disorder Diagnostic criteria per the DSM 5**

Problem gambling was renamed from pathological gambling to gambling disorder and classified in the category “[Substance-Related and Addictive Disorders](http://www.dsm5.org/Documents/Substance%20Use%20Disorder%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf)” in the DSM-5.  The criteria for diagnosis are as follows:

Persistent and recurrent problematic gambling behavior leading to clinically significant impairment or distress, as indicated by the individual exhibiting four (or more) of the following in a 12-month period:

* Needs to gamble with increasing amounts of money in order to achieve the desired excitement.
* Is restless or irritable when attempting to cut down or stop gambling.
* Has made repeated unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back, or stop gambling.
* Is often preoccupied with gambling (e.g., having persistent thoughts of reliving past gambling experiences, handicapping or planning the next venture, thinking of ways to get money with which to gamble).
* Often gambles when feeling distressed (e.g., helpless, guilty, anxious, depressed).
* After losing money gambling, often returns another day to get even (“chasing” one’s losses).
* Lies to conceal the extent of involvement with gambling.
* Has jeopardized or lost a significant relationship, job, or educational or career opportunity because of gambling.
* Relies on others to provide money to relieve desperate financial situations caused by gambling.