

## Gaming, Betting, Gambling

This brochure for parents deals with an extremely important issue prevalent today: Many teenagers gamble and some of them develop problematic gambling behavior. Here, you will receive information about gambling and its risk potential, its importance for teenagers and how you can handle it so that you can deal with this topic before it is too late.

A brochure for parents who do not want to leave their children's happiness up to chance.

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# for parents

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Aktion Jugendschutz,  
Landesarbeitsstelle  
Bayern e.V.

# for parents



## Games of Chance Among Youth

Dear Parents,

You as the mother, you as the father, you know your child like nobody else does. You play an important role in the life of your child, your words make a difference. Every day, you provide your daughter, your son with support and security.

For parents, the subject gambling is a particular challenge.

With your influence, you can also play a role in the development of your child in this field. Especially if difficulties arise, you as the adult counterpart are needed.

With this brochure, Aktion Jugendschutz Bayern (Initiative for Youth Affairs Bavaria) would like to support you in this important task.



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# Personal preliminary remark

This brochure is intended to provide you with points of reference. Both the education of children as well as games of chance and their possible consequences are complex and important issues.

In my many years of professional experience in youth work and addiction prevention, I have learned some essential things:

It is worth taking children and teenagers seriously. Even if the efforts of adults do not immediately result in visible success, they are appreciated. Many important processes which take place internally remain hidden from us at first.

It is worth trusting that children and teenagers will develop positively. This trust supports their development. Children will keep the adults' trust in mind and this will strengthen their confidence.

In case of difficulties and problems, it is important to look at what is happening and react at an early stage. Even awareness of behavior can make a difference and it is a requirement for further steps.

As a father of three children I know that theory on how to bring up children is not always easy to implement directly in one's personal situation. However, information and other ideas often provide you with the confidence and the freedom to control your own behavior.

Best wishes

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## 1. Games of chance

People play. In doing so they discover the world, learn and have fun. Games of chance, too, have been part of the human culture for a long time. At the beginning, people asked the Gods and predicted fate. Today, games of chance always involve money. The excitement and the hope to win make games of chance interesting for a great many people.

A great variety of games of chance is available and attractive for teenagers. And they take advantage of it. They play poker on the internet, gamble with slot machines or believe that they can become rich by sports betting. However, games of chance involve risks: In addition to the risk of losing money there is above all the danger of becoming addicted.



Games of chance are regulated by laws.

The German Interstate Treaty on Gambling defines games of chance as follows (section 3):

“Games of chance are defined as gambling if a consideration for the acquisition of a chance of winning is required and if gain depends in whole or mainly on random chance ...

Games of chance also include bets for consideration on the occurrence or outcome of a future event.”

**Pursuant to the German Law for the Protection of Youth (section 6), children and teenagers are principally prohibited from participating in games of chance!**



There are legal and illegal offers.

Even if all games of chance are characterized by the features money and chance, there are very different types of games of chance. In Germany, basically games of chance may only be offered by the state. In this way, fraud and criminality should be prevented and the protection of youth and players should be ensured. Sports betting, providers of which are to receive a license in the near future, as well as slot machines outside of state-owned casinos are excluded. Furthermore, other provisions apply in Schleswig-Holstein.

Teenagers who participate in games of chance risk their wagers and winnings.

A person who plays illegally cannot claim his or her winnings before a court. In case of children or teenagers, sometimes their age is only effectively controlled when the winning is paid. Then they will not receive the payment because they participated illegally in the game.

Many offers on the internet are offered from abroad and are illegal in Germany. In this respect, game manipulations and fraud cannot be excluded even if the odds of some of these providers are higher.

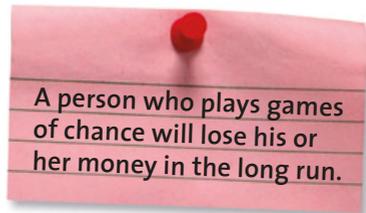
Only if money is used, is it a matter of gambling in the legal sense.

The following table provides you with an overview of the most common games of chance and their legal status in Germany:

Legal	Illegal
Lotto in lotto agents shops and on the internet <i>by the state</i>	Lotto and the like on the internet <i>by commercial providers</i>
Sports betting, in sports betting shops and on the internet <i>by the state or by commercial providers with licenses</i>	Sports betting, in sports betting shops and on the internet <i>by commercial providers without licenses</i>
Slot machines in arcades and restaurants <i>by commercial providers</i>	Slot machines on the internet
Slot machines <i>in state-owned casinos</i>	
Roulette and other casino games <i>in state-owned casinos</i>	Roulette and other casino games <i>outside of state-owned casinos and on the internet</i>
	Poker on the internet
	other card games on the internet
	privately organized games of chance



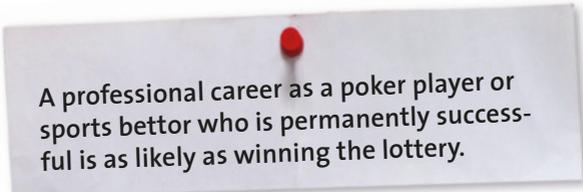
Lotteries where prizes are drawn (e.g. quiz, tombola) and for which a small amount of money of up to 50 cents is paid are excluded. Also card game tournaments of skat, sheepshhead and poker are not illegal when only a small participation fee is required.



**A person who plays games of chance will lose his or her money in the long run.**

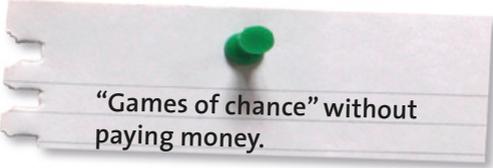
The different games of chance offer different chances to win. However, all commercial offers are designed in such a way that the providers make money with them which means the players finance their profits.

In the year 2011, commercial providers of slot machines “made” profits of 4.14 billion euros in Germany. The state’s revenues from games of chance amounted to around 3 billion euros.



**A professional career as a poker player or sports bettor who is permanently successful is as likely as winning the lottery.**

Many people believe that when engaging in sports betting and playing poker, their skills will enable them to earn money. Experts consider it as proven that also with these games, chance plays a greater role. In sports betting, odds balance possible insider information. In poker, the following also applies: As soon as everybody plays equally well, the outcome of the game mainly depends on chance.



**“Games of chance” without paying money.**

On the internet, there are a lot of free “offers for games of chance”. On play-money websites, even children may legally play poker or slot machines. Chances of winning are often significantly higher than in real-money games. These offers seem harmless; however, they may also be regarded as training for future gamblers. They arouse curiosity and create an early bond to games of chance. If someone is successful, it is more likely that he will switch to games of chance where money is invested.

## 2. Problematic gambling and gambling addiction

Many gamblers in their youth once had the experience of hitting the jackpot. This feeling to win deeply impressed them and they keep on looking for this feeling although sooner or later they see that they are losing a lot of money and should actually stop gambling.

Slot machines, sports betting and poker on the internet have a high addictive potential.

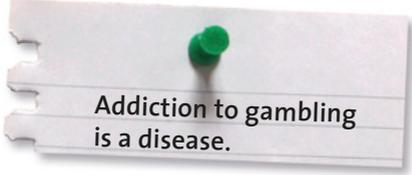
In the case of games of chance there is the risk of losing money and becoming addicted. Games which particularly promote the development of an addiction have a high addictive potential. Among other things, they are characterized by:

- **ease of access**  
Especially on the internet and on smartphones games of chance are available everywhere 24 hours a day and seven days a week.
- **a high frequency of events and short payment intervals**  
E.g. with slot machines, it is merely seconds between the start and the end of a game.
- **a seemingly decisive role of skill involved**  
With poker or sports betting, players often think that they have greater chances to win because of their skill; in the end, however, chance determines the result.

Getting high on gambling.

Similar to drugs or alcohol, games of chance stimulate certain regions in the brain. If a person wins a game, positive feelings are triggered; if a game is lost, negative feelings are triggered. In both cases the tendency to continue gambling is reinforced in order to win again and even more or to make up for the loss and to soften the disappointment. The suspense when waiting for the outcome of a game is a further addicting factor.





Addiction to gambling is a disease.

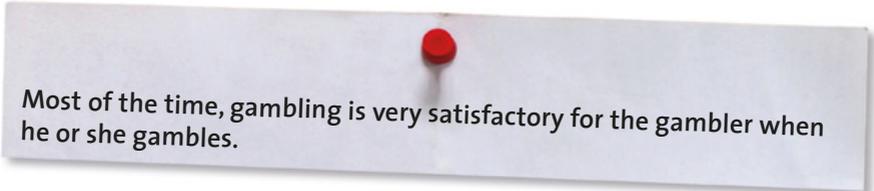
Today, gambling addiction is internationally recognized as an addictive disorder. It is referred to as problematic and pathological gambling. It is considered problematic if several of the following items are true:

- All thoughts revolve around gambling.
- Stakes are increased in order to feel good.
- It is not possible to gamble less or stop completely.
- Gambling less results in restlessness and irritation.
- Losing money is a cause for renewed gambling.
- Gambling is used to escape from problems.
- The gambling problem is concealed by lying.
- Money is borrowed to finance gambling.
- Important relationships with family and friends are put at risk.
- The job is put at risk.
- In order to raise money for gambling, illegal activities are carried out.



Gambling as a fun pastime may turn into a serious problem.

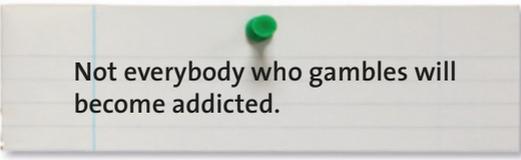
As with other addictions, the transition from harmless gambling to problematic and finally pathological gambling is a process. Transitions are smooth. At the beginning the impression to win predominates, later gambling is often an attempt to make up for the losses until a pathological gambler finally loses all his money.



Most of the time, gambling is very satisfactory for the gambler when he or she gambles.

For a short time, gamblers can forget their worries while playing and relax for a moment. The bigger the worries, the more important these moments can become. Therefore it is often denied that gambling is the cause of problems like debts or the breakup of relationships. In addition, many gamblers are ashamed and try to conceal that they gamble.

The first step to change problematic gambling behavior is to admit it to oneself and to others.



Not everybody who gambles will become addicted.

Many people play games of chance without developing problematic gambling behavior. For example, around half of the German population regularly plays the lottery, and yet there are very few people “addicted to lottery”.

### 3. Teenagers and games of chance

Puberty and the following years are a real challenge for teenagers. They are looking for their role in society. They are discovering their sexual identity. They are orienting themselves with respect to a profession. They are searching for meaning and happiness.

In most cases, teenagers think that their gambling-related problems result from poker, slot machines and sports betting.

Friends are becoming more and more important, at home there are often conflicts and arguments.

Teenagers are in the phase between being a child and an adult. They increasingly develop their own ideas and explore environments outside their families. However, even if there is resistance against the parents, parents still remain important points of reference.

If you apply the results from studies to a group of 100 teenagers between 14 and 17 years, the following picture emerges: 50 have already participated in gambling, three of them on more than 100 days. Four gamble at a high risk and three to four have gambling-related problems.

They want to participate in the world of adults.

Children and teenagers are principally not allowed to gamble. Nevertheless, they gamble. The first experiences are usually made at the age of 12 or 13. The access to offers on the internet (casinos, sports betting and poker sites), to slot machines in restaurants, pubs or snack bars and to privately organized gambling is particularly easy for young people under the age of 18.



**Gambling is promoted effectively and is regarded as hip.**

Advertising posters, arcades and sports betting shops as well as websites use beautiful women and confident men to attract people's attention to games of chance. They promise big profits and success. These promises are extremely attractive for teenagers. Stars and role models from the fields of sport and entertainment play poker and at the same time promote providers of games of chance. These providers sponsor sports clubs and place advertisement for themselves on shirts and banners at the edge of playing fields.

**The most common cause for teenagers to participate in games of chance is the hope to win money.**

Likewise, they play because they are bored, because they want to take their mind off things, because they want to experience excitement or because they want to relax. Many also play because friends, siblings, relatives or their parents do.

**Teenagers are venturesome and do not think a lot about the long-term consequences.**

In addition, some think that chance follows rules or that they can influence it. However, this is not the case. Even after a long period of losses, the chance to win does not increase. Equally, winning or a lucky streak cannot be predicted. Luck cannot be influenced by strategies.

**Teenagers cross boundaries and go through excessive phases.**

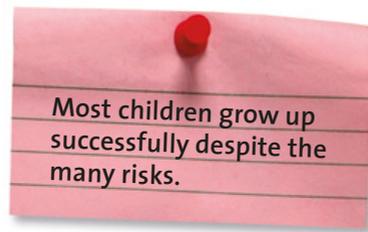
Studies have shown that more teenagers than adults have a problematic or pathological gambling behavior. This also means that a large part of young gamblers gives up this behavior; if this were not the case, at least as many adults would be affected. There is an ongoing debate as to whether the term pathological gambling is appropriate for teenagers, or if only problematic gambling would be more suitable.



## 4. What you can do ...

Whether games of chance remain a harmless leisure-time activity or lead to serious problems depends on many circumstances. In addition to the availability and addictive potential, the personality and the social environment are very important.

### 4.1. What you can do to make your child strong.



People who get along well in this world despite difficult circumstances have learned to take responsibility for the course of their lives. They do not rely on luck or chance. They look for opportunities and have a realistic picture of their abilities.



As the parents you essentially shape the personality of your child.

- **Children and teenagers need recognition and affirmation.**

Your trust in your child strengthens his or her self-confidence. This is what your child needs to be able to act independently.

- **Children and teenagers must be allowed to discover the world on their own.**

Many things can only be learned through experience, including the fact that your children are responsible for their own actions.

- **Children and teenagers need limits and rules.**

They provide them with security and orientation. By experiencing limits, they also learn to recognize their own limits.

- **Parents are role models.**

Your children are influenced by you, both when they are acting in accordance to your wishes or in protest.

- **Role models have to be realistic.**

Every human being has strengths and weaknesses. If you are honest with your own weaknesses, you make it possible for your children to do the same.

You communicate values to your child.

Your child internalizes the values and attitudes you demonstrate in daily life. These values and attitudes determine your actions whether you are aware of them or not. The more aware you are of your own motives, the better you can influence them. In a complicated world that is guided by different interests, one's own principles are a good point of orientation.

There is a difference between being lucky and being happy.

In order to make a profit with gambling you need luck. Your own performance merely plays a small role or none at all. However, it is your own efforts and endeavors that make you happy and content, not only when an exterior success is achieved. Whether it concerns family, hobbies, training or profession: children and teenagers need areas where they can get involved.



#### 4.2. What you can do before your child participates in games of chance.



Of course you should not allow your child to participate in gambling. There is no reason not to observe legal requirements: no gambling under the age of 18. Is it necessary to play for money at home, to fill out a lottery ticket together or to buy your daughter or your son a scratch card?



Do not play for money in the presence of your children and do not take them to places where people play for money. If you participate in games of chance on a more or less regular basis or if people in your environment gamble, your child will realize it sooner or later. If your child has questions in this regard you should answer them in a way that is honest, clear and appropriate for his or her age.



Children and teenagers are inevitably confronted with gambling offers. The temptation to participate is strong. To completely resist this temptation or at least not to develop problematic gambling behavior, it is helpful that your children are informed about such dangers at an early stage. Sooner or later your child will act independently. In the end, he or she will also decide whether and how he or she plays.



It is a conscious decision whether and when you talk to your child about gambling. Is your child old enough? Are there any reasons? Are the current circumstances favorable? You yourself can best judge your child, of course.



### 4.3. What you can do if your child already gambles.

**The consequences of reproaches are usually defensive reactions.**

In particular if your child has already had experience with gambling and if he or she (and maybe his or her friends) likes it, you will achieve more in a conversation when you do not only emphasize the negative aspects of gambling. If you directly criticize your child's behavior he or she will most likely become defensive.

**Without any moral pressure it is easier to figure out the negative side effects of one's own behavior.**

A good way to discuss the problematic aspects of gambling is to also talk about the fascinating effect gambling has on your child. It is helpful to be curious, to show interest and to listen carefully. Why does your child gamble and what is it that he or she likes about it? Does he or she already have any idea about the problematic aspects of gambling?



## How do I recognize problematic play behavior?

A problematic or pathological gambler typically tends to borrow money from acquaintances, friends and the family again and again. He is usually in debt. Gamblers are often very clever at hiding their problems. They lie to get money, to conceal their debts or do everything so that nobody knows that or how much they gamble. They are often skillfull when trying to justify their unreliability and why they neglect their social relationships.

Such behavior may be the consequence of gambling problems; however it does not have to be so. There may also be other reasons.

## If you are sure that your child has problems because of gambling.

The contact to your child gives you the chance to influence his or her behavior. Relationships with friends and family are a valuable help to overcome crises. It may be difficult, yet it is possible, to reject your child's behavior and to recognize and appreciate him or her as a person at the same time. For example, you should not lend money to a gambler but absolutely support him or her if he or she tries to get away from gambling. If your child can no longer give up gambling by his or her own efforts, he or she should seek professional assistance. You will find addresses and information pertaining to professional assistance in the following chapter. You can get counseling for yourself and forward the contact to your child.



## 5. Further information

### 5.1. Websites for adults

The following selected internet addresses provide you with anonymous and free information and contact possibilities with respect to the help system. The areas of specialization are mentioned below the addresses.

On the internet you will find detailed information about games of chance and addiction to gambling.

#### [www.verspiel-nicht-dein-leben.de](http://www.verspiel-nicht-dein-leben.de)

Here you will find an online counseling and a self-test in German and Turkish.

#### [www.verspiel-nicht-mein-leben.de](http://www.verspiel-nicht-mein-leben.de)

“Don’t gamble my life” is a free online program for parents, partners and family members. In six modules you will receive information about addiction to gambling, stress, responsibility, communication, social support and future planning.

#### [www.gluecksspielsucht.de](http://www.gluecksspielsucht.de)

The forum “Glücksspielsucht” (addiction to gambling) offers a discussion platform for gambling addicts, relatives and pedagogical specialists and serves the purpose of sharing one’s experiences with addiction to gambling and its consequences.



## 5.2. Websites for teenagers

On the internet, your children will find information and more. Maybe you could give your child a few tips; maybe he or she wants to search the internet on his or her own. You will find suitable offers for teenagers on the internet below.

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

This site provides adults and in particular also teenagers with information, a quiz, a self-test, contact possibilities and access to a help system, in part also in Arabic, Turkish and Vietnamese.

### [www.check-dein-spiel.de](http://www.check-dein-spiel.de)

Here, in addition to information, a test of their knowledge and a self-test, teenagers will also find an anonymous and free online counseling. This site also includes videos with sign language.



A computer game for the prevention of gambling addiction.

The browser game “Spielfieber – Der Countdown läuft...” makes it possible for teenagers to deal with the problematic aspects of gambling and to have fun. It may also be an occasion to talk to your child about the topic.

You will find the game and background information free of cost at [www.spielfieber.net](http://www.spielfieber.net)  
For teenagers the game is also on Facebook:  
<http://apps.facebook.com/spielfieber>

## 5.3. Telephone counseling

By calling the following telephone numbers you can talk confidentially and anonymously with experts about the subject gambling and addiction to gambling. All numbers with the prefix 0800 are free of cost; the area code 0511 of Hannover corresponds to the usual local rate.



Even before problems occur, a short talk can be helpful.

Hotline of the Federal Center for Health Education (Bundeszentrale für gesundheitliche Aufklärung, BZgA): 0800 - 137 27 00  
Expert hotline NRW: 0800 - 077 66 11  
Telephone counseling in Turkish: 0800 - 326 47 62  
Telephone counseling in Russian: 0511 – 701 46 64



## 5.4. Counseling centers



Today, there are counseling centers all over Germany that specialize in the topics gambling and addiction to gambling. Here, persons concerned as well as their parents, partners and friends will find contact persons and access to the help system. Counseling is free of cost, confidential and anonymous, if desired. You decide how often and when you want to come and what is to happen during the discussions. It is possible to obtain information about problematic gambling, to clarify one's own situation and to obtain assistance to overcome difficult situations. In order to apply for an outpatient or stationary therapy it is normally necessary to go to an counseling centers.

The above-mentioned telephone counseling and the following addresses on the internet will provide you with telephone numbers and addresses of counseling centers nearby.

[www.verspiel-nicht-dein-leben.de](http://www.verspiel-nicht-dein-leben.de)

[www.gluecksspielsucht.de](http://www.gluecksspielsucht.de)

## Responsible:

**Publisher:** Aktion Jugendschutz,

Landesarbeitsstelle Bayern e.V.

Fasaneriestr.17, 80636 München

Munich, November 2014, 2. unrevised edition 2015

This brochure is a publication of the Referat für Prävention gegen Glücksspielsucht, Aktion Jugendschutz Bayern e.V., financed by Landesstelle Glücksspielsucht in Bayern.

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**Graphics:** Elisabeth Münscher, Munich

**Print:** Aktiv Druck und Verlag, 97500 Ebelsbach

**ISBN:** 978-3-938395-16-5

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