

Warning signs of problematic gambling behaviour and how to act on them

General warning signs

Length of play

- Starts gambling when the venue is opening, or only stops when the venue is closing
- Gambles most days

Behaviour during play

- Gambles on more than one machine at once
- Rushes from one machine to another
- Significant increase in spending pattern

- Complains to staff about losing, or blames venue or machines for losing
- Rituals or superstitious behaviours (rubbing or talking to machine)

Money

- Asks to change large notes before gambling
- Uses coin machine at least four times

What to do

On their own, these may be early warning signs. A patron showing several of these signs could be experiencing problems with gambling.

- Monitor the patron's behaviour.
- If you notice a patron who is showing two or more of these signs, record what you have noticed and tell your manager.

Probable warning signs

Length of play

- Finds it difficult to stop gambling at closing time

Behaviour during play

- Often gambles for long periods (three or more hours) without a proper break
- Plays very fast
- Gambles intently without reacting to what's going on around them

Money

- Gets cash out more than once through ATM or EFTPOS
- Avoids cashier, and only uses cash facilities
- Puts large wins back into the machine
- EFTPOS repeatedly declined

Social behaviours

- Becomes angry or stands over others if someone takes their favourite machine/spot

What to do

A patron showing any of these signs is much more likely to be experiencing problems with gambling.

- Monitor the patron's behaviour.
- Record what you have noticed and tell your manager, who will speak with the patron.
- If a patron shows **two or more** of these warning signs, follow the steps for **strong** warning signs (below).

Strong warning signs

Length of play

- Gambles from opening to closing

Behaviour during play

- Shows obvious signs of distress or anger (crying, holding head in hands, shaking, outburst towards staff or machine)

Money

- Tries to borrow money from other patrons or staff

Social behaviours

- Tells staff that gambling is causing them problems
- Significant decline in personal grooming and/or appearance over several days
- Friends or family raise concerns
- Tries to hide their presence at the venue (doesn't answer mobile phone, asks staff not to let others know they are there)

What to do

A patron showing **any** of these warning signs is probably experiencing problems with gambling.

- Monitor the patron's behaviour
- Record what you have noticed, and tell your manager, who will speak with the patron, refer them to support and counselling services, offer them the opportunity to self-exclude, or recommend an exclusion order if the patron is at risk of harm or at risk of causing harm to others.

Source: Developed by the Office of Responsible Gambling, based on international and Australian best practice and informed by key research, including Delfabbro, P., Thomas, A. and Armstrong, A.R. (2016), 'Observable indicators and behaviours for the identification of problem gamblers in venue environments', *Journal of Behavioral Addiction*, 0, 1-10. DOI: 10.1556/2006.5.2016.065; and Thomas, A., Delfabbro, P. and Armstrong, A.R. (2014), 'Validation study of in-venue problem gambler indicators', report prepared for Gambling Research Australia.