



National Hobby Month

Please, Play Responsibly

Hobbies are essential for a healthy and well-rounded life. They provide us a much-needed opportunity to leave behind the stress of daily life and fill us with a sense of joy and relaxation. From extreme sports to drawing comics, types of hobbies are as diverse as the people that engage in them. As a legal activity in the state of Florida for anyone 18 years and older, gambling has become a popular hobby as well. If you are one of the many Floridian's that choose gambling as a recreational activity, it is important to set safe guidelines for yourself, such as never betting more than you can afford to lose and setting limits on time and money. January is National Hobby Month, and if gambling is a pastime of yours the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling encourages you to take a look at your gambling habits and ensure you have safe practices.

For most people, gambling is a safe recreational pastime. However, it can escalate into a dangerous addiction with severe consequences for some. That is why it is so important to establish guidelines and safe practices to minimize your risk. Establishing responsible gambling habits is just as important as responsible drinking habits, such as having a designated driver and knowing when to stop drinking. Similar to these habits, responsible gambling practices help players to enjoy gambling safely. If you are unsure if your gambling habits are safe, take a look at the following signs of problem gambling:

- Gambling with more money to feel the same excitement.
- Becoming irritable when attempting to cut back gambling.
- Unable to stop gambling.
- Preoccupied with thoughts about gambling.
- Gambling when feeling distressed.
- Gambling to try to get even after a gambling loss.
- Lying to family or friends about gambling.
- Jeopardizing your relationships or job because of gambling.
- Relying on others for financial bailouts caused by gambling.

If gambling is no longer fun for you, or if you have a loved one that may be struggling with a gambling problem, contact Florida's Problem Gambling HelpLine, [888-ADMIT-IT \(236-4848\)](tel:888-ADMIT-IT). It's available 24/7, completely confidential, multilingual, and provides help and hope. The HelpLine is also available via text at 321-978-0555, LiveChat on gamblinghelp.org, by email at fccg@gamblinghelp.org, or by messaging the FCCG's [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages.

Stay Active for Walk Your Pet Month

If gambling is one of your chosen recreational activities, it is important to incorporate other hobbies into your life as well. Walk Your Pet Month is a great time to explore these other activities! Taking a daily walk with your pet is not only a great bonding experience, but also provides amazing health benefits. Just 15 minutes of sunlight a day can lower blood pressure, improve brain function, cultivate better sleep, and even help fight depression.¹ Additionally, walking leads to decreased stress levels, lower cholesterol, improved mood, and a longer life.²



If all of these benefits still haven't convinced you to explore this hobby, consider the abundant outdoor experiences that are available throughout Florida this time of year. With temperatures averaging in the mid seventies, it's the perfect time to explore all of the pet-friendly art festivals, craft fairs, pop-up markets, and hiking trails your community has to offer. You may even find additional hobbies that peak your interest into while you are out and about.

If you are having trouble breaking away from gambling to enjoy other hobbies or if gambling is negatively affecting you or a loved one, contact Florida's 24/7 confidential, multilingual, Problem Gambling HelpLine, [888-ADMIT-IT](tel:888-ADMIT-IT)



References

- ¹ “15 Health Benefits of Sunshine.” The Active Times, 27 Apr. 2016, www.theactivetimes.com/fitness/nutrition/15-health-benefits-sunshine.
- ² Wadyka, Sally. “How to Get the Biggest Benefits of Walking.” Consumer Reports, www.consumerreports.org/exercise-fitness/benefits-of-walking/.