

December 2019

# Safe Toys and Gifts Month: *Gift Responsibly This Holiday Season*

## Bingo's Birthday Month

Bingo's origin dates back as far as 1530, as an Italian lottery called "Lo Giuoco del Lotto D'Italia". After making its way through the French lotto, it arrived in Germany where it was used as an instructional tool to teach children numbers and letters. In 1929, it finally made it to North America under the name "Beano", and was made popular at county fairs. <sup>1</sup>

After being renamed "Bingo", the game was improved and popularized by New York toy salesman Edwin S. Lowe; it was then sold to Milton Bradley, and has grown into the phenomenon it is today. <sup>1</sup> Today this game spans across retirement homes and casinos and continues to be commonly used for gambling. Despite its origins (and current use) as a recreational gambling game, it can also be purchased at big-box stores as a toy for children.

If you are planning on purchasing a bingo game for a minor this year, remember to take a lesson from Germany, and to use it as a teaching guide. Research shows that among adolescent at-risk and problem gamblers, a substantial amount were introduced to gambling by a family member. <sup>2</sup> When introducing this popular game to minors, it is important to keep in mind their age and to stay away from placing bets of any kind.



## The Risk of Gifting Minors Scratch Off Lotto Tickets

As you check off your holiday shopping list, remember that while lottery tickets and scratch offs may seem like an easy and fun stocking stuffer, playing the lottery is off-limits to minors for good reason. According to Florida statutes, gambling is prohibited to anyone under the age of 18, and recent studies have shown that people who have developed problem gambling behaviors by the age of 30 are three times more likely to have engaged in a greater variety of gambling activities during their childhood. <sup>3</sup>

According to Jennifer Kruse, FCCG's Executive Director, "The idea that a game of poker among teens or the gifting of a lottery ticket to a minor is harmless, simply because they are not smoking or drinking, is sending the wrong message that somehow gambling is acceptable for underage persons. It is essential to remember that gambling is strictly prohibited for individuals under the age of 18 in the Sunshine State. Of equal importance, attaching a lottery ticket to a child's gift or including a lottery ticket in a child's holiday stocking can actually cause harm." <sup>4</sup>

Additionally, gambling activity is exposed to today's youth more consistently now than in years past.

With a wide variety of gambling-based games and activities easily accessible through video games, online websites, and even cell phone apps, it can be easy to forget that gambling is dangerous for minors. With the risk of developing gambling problems later in life increasing as the variety of exposure to different types of gambling during childhood increases, it is important to keep in mind how hazardous gifting a minor a lottery ticket can be.

Instead of exposing the children in your life to even more of these gambling activities, and putting them at a higher risk, focus on buying personal and meaningful gifts and stocking stuffers this season.

As Kruse summarizes, "Parents and other adults must remember that just as gifting a child a bottle of alcohol or a pack of cigarettes is inappropriate, so too is the gifting of lottery tickets to minors. We must create safeguards to help protect our youth and ensure they understand that gambling is a risky behavior, as is the consumption or use of alcohol, drugs, or tobacco".

To learn more about responsible gifting or to get help with a gambling problem, reach out to Florida's 24/7, Confidential, and Multilingual Problem Gambling HelpLine: 888-ADMIT-IT (236-4848).



## GET CONNECTED

Florida's Problem Gambling HelpLine

 888-ADMIT-IT

 321-978-0555

 [gamblinghelp.org](http://gamblinghelp.org)



# References

- <sup>1</sup> Bellis, Mary. "How Was Bingo Invented?" *ThoughtCo*, ThoughtCo, 24 June 2019, <https://www.thoughtco.com/history-of-bingo-4077068>.
- <sup>2</sup> Shapira, N., Ferguson, M., Frost-Pineda, K., Gold, M., Gambling and Problem Gambling Among Adolescents in Florida, A Report to the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling, February 2003
- <sup>3</sup> Caribonneau, R., Viataro, F., Brendgen, M., Tremblay, RE., Variety of Gambling Activities from Adolescence to Age 30 and Association with Gambling Problems, December 2015.
- <sup>4</sup> Kundu, Priya V eta l. "Gambling-Related Attitudes and Behaviors in Adolescents Having Received Instant (Scratch) Lottery Tickets as Gifts" *Journal of Adolescent Health: Official publication of the Society for Adolescent Medicine* vol. 52, 4 (2013): 456-64.