

# Facilitating Limit Setting and Limit Adherence

## Summary Report for the Manitoba Gambling Research Program

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### Research Priority:

*Explore ways to meet the information needs of individuals across the range of gambling risk behaviours in order to assist players in making informed decisions.*

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## Significance

Many gamblers overspend because they do not understand how gambling games, especially electronic gaming machines (EGMs), work (Wohl, Christie, Matheson, & Anisman, 2010). This misunderstanding, combined with the emotionally arousing and dissociative state of gambling, leads to faulty decision-making such as spending more money than one can afford to lose (Stewart & Wohl, 2013). Setting and adhering to a pre-set limit is a key responsible gambling tool to prevent overspending and progression toward disordered gambling (Blaszczynski, Ladouceur, & Shaffer, 2004). Thus, responsible gambling education tools are needed to teach players about their odds, and the importance of setting pre-committed time and/or money limits on play. Importantly, educational animation videos about EGM mechanisms have shown utility in promoting responsible gambling strategies (see Wohl et al., 2010; Wohl et al., 2013). However, little research has compared different timing and content of responsible gambling tools to best facilitate responsible gambling strategies. This research addresses what, and when, information is best presented to players in order to increase limit setting behaviours.

## Research Questions

This research examined two potential ways to encourage responsible EGM gambling. The first chapter examined when responsible gambling information (i.e. an educational video) was best presented in order to facilitate informed decision-making. The second chapter examined what type of limit-setting information was effective at encouraging responsible gambling strategies.

Each chapter should be read as its own, standalone manuscript. Chapter 2 and the research reported therein does not follow from the research reported in Chapter 1.

## Methodology

**Note:** To ensure the sample independence, we asked players whether or not they had participated in previous gambling-related studies at the gambling venue. If they responded in the affirmative, they were ineligible to participate. Moreover, to receive remuneration, participants needed to sign a form. We cross-checked participant signatures to ensure they didn't participate in a previous study. There were no duplicate signatures.

### Chapter 1:

- Gamblers (98 total) were recruited upon entering casinos in two large Canadian cities.
- Participants completed some questionnaires and were randomly assigned to watch the responsible gambling animation either prior to engaging in play or once they reach their pre-set money limit.
- Once they reached their pre-set limit, all participants were told that if they wanted to, they could continue gambling by spending their participant compensation funds (in reality, no participants were allowed to continue gambling past this point).
- After gambling, participants were assessed on variety of measures such as the Problem Gambling Symptomatology Index (PGSI) and on readiness to change their gambling behaviours.

### Chapter 2:

- Gamblers (131 in study one, 141 in study two) were recruited upon entering casinos in two large Canadian cities and completed some questionnaires prior to engaging in play.
- In study one, participants were given a \$10 gambling limit. They were then randomly assigned to receive either a general information or personalized behavioural feedback pop-up message. The general information message stated that they had reached their pre-set limit of 80 credits. The personalized behavioural feedback message stated that they had reached their limit of 40 credits and the dollar amount (\$10), as well as the amount of time they had spent gambling. The players in the personalized behavioural feedback condition also had access to this information during the gambling session.
- In study two, participants were allowed to set their own limit within the \$10. They were then randomly assigned to one of four conditions based on a 2 (general information vs. personalized behavioural feedback pop-up message) x 2 (ability to discard message immediately vs. delayed) design. In the delayed condition, the pop-up message was on the screen for ten seconds before participants were allowed to click "continue" to the next screen. In the immediate condition, the "continue" button was available right away.
- After the pop-up message, participants were asked if they wanted to continue gambling with their compensation money, but no one was actually allowed to do this.
- Finally, participants were assessed on measures such as the PGSI and readiness to change their gambling behaviours.

## Key Findings

Chapter one found that responsible gambling education tools are best presented during a gambling session, or at a time when players must make a decision about their gambling behaviour. When players view educational information before a gambling session, they tend to discount that knowledge when making gambling related decisions. Players who were educated during a gambling session made better informed and responsible decisions. However, this effect

did not hold true for gamblers high on the PGSI. Thus, responsible gambling tools appear to be more effective as a means of problem gambling prevention, rather than treatment. In the first study of Chapter 2, we found that providing general or personalized informative pop-up messages made no difference in players' responsible gambling behaviour. In fact, most players (regardless of condition) failed the manipulation check, indicating that they did not even read the pop-up message. Thus, in Study 2, half of participants were unable to exit the pop-up message for ten seconds in an attempt to increase attention to the content of the message. Yet a large portion of the sample still failed the manipulation check, and there was no difference in limit adherence between the conditions.

## **Conclusions**

In Chapter 1, we found that an educational animation video was more effective at promoting responsible gambling when viewed during a gambling session, as opposed to before gambling was initiated. In Chapter 2, we found that additional nuanced information in pop-up messages made no difference in promoting responsible gambling, likely because players often ignore the content of pop-up messages.

## **Implications**

This research implies that responsible gambling education tools should be presented to players in the midst of gambling, rather than before a gambling session. Unfortunately, pop-up messages may not be an effective way to offer responsible gambling information because many players ignore the content of these messages.



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