

# A Parent's Guide to Sports Gambling



parent  
tips



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## Why do Parents Need to Pay Attention?

Sports gambling is no longer something that just happens in casinos or Vegas sportsbooks. It's on phones. It's in apps. It's discussed openly on social media, podcasts, YouTube, and even during live games. For many teenagers, sports gambling is being normalized long before they fully understand money, the risks, or the high addiction levels it can lead to. Sports gambling isn't just a financial issue; it's a formation issue. They are forming habits and a mindset now that will go with them later.

Even if your student has never placed a bet, they are likely being exposed to:

- Betting ads during a game on TV or ads on mobile games
- Friends talking about parlays and odds
- Influencers treating gambling like a game
- Apps that look and feel like video games

**This guide isn't about panic.** It's about awareness, conversation, and proactive parenting.

## What Sports Gambling Looks Like for Students Today

Sports gambling for teens doesn't always look like placing a traditional bet. It may include:

- Using betting apps with fake money that normalize the behavior
- Following "locks," "picks," or betting influencers
- Friends are placing bets on their behalf
- Pooling money for group bets
- Talking about wins without ever mentioning losses
- Using Venmo, Cash App, or gift cards to move money quietly
- Even stealing their parents' IDs to get approved by betting apps.

Because it often feels social, competitive, and skill-based, students may not recognize it as gambling in the same way that we looked at it growing up.

## Why Sports Gambling Is Especially Risky for Teens

Teen brains are still developing, particularly in areas related to impulse control, long-term thinking, and risk assessment. Gambling preys directly on those vulnerabilities (especially in young men). The risks include:

- **Long-term Addiction:** Gambling addiction can form quickly, especially when wins happen early.
- **A Distorted view of money:** Students may begin to see money as something to "win" rather than earn.
- **Emotional swings:** Wins bring highs; losses bring shame, secrecy, or anger.
- **False confidence:** Sports knowledge can create the illusion of control.
- **Spiritual impact:** Gambling trains the heart toward quick gain rather than patience, stewardship, and trust.

## Warning Signs Parents Should Watch For

Not every sign means your student is gambling, but being able to see the patterns can help us know if it is something we need to check-in on. What to watch for:

- Increased secrecy around phones or finances
- Strong emotional reactions tied to sports outcomes
- Talking obsessively about odds, parlays, or bets
- Sudden access to money without explanation
- Borrowing money from friends

Trust your instincts here. If you see something wrong, there's probably something wrong. Curiosity and conversation are better than letting this go.

## A Biblical Perspective for Parents to Share

While the Bible doesn't mention sports gambling directly, it speaks clearly about the heart issues underneath it.

Key themes to discuss:

- **Stewardship over quick gain** (*Proverbs 13:11 "Wealth gained hastily will dwindle, but whoever gathers little by little will increase it."*)
- **Wisdom vs. impulsivity** (*Proverbs 21:5 "The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty."*)
- **Contentment vs. chasing more** (*Philippians 4:11-13*)
- **Trust in God, not chance** (*Jeremiah 17:7 "Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him."*)
- **Integrity and honesty in handling money** (*Luke 16:10 "Whoever is faithful in very little is also faithful in much..."*)

## So... "What I Do Now?"

You don't need to become an expert overnight. Small, intentional steps make a big difference.

- 1. Start the Conversation This Week**  
Ask questions. Stay curious. Don't assume.
- 2. Set Clear Family Expectations**  
Be clear about your household's stance on gambling and money.
- 3. Monitor Apps and Finances**  
Know what apps your student uses and how money moves digitally.
- 4. Teach Money Skills Early**  
Budgeting, saving, earning, tithing, and generosity all counter gambling culture.
- 5. Ask for Help If Needed**  
If gambling is already happening, reach out to church leaders early. Early help is a strength, not a failure.

**Always remember, parents, you can do this. You are not alone. God is with you, and so are we.**