

Op-Ed: Gift responsibly this holiday season

By Drew Svitko and Josh Ercole

As the holiday shopping season is underway, the Pennsylvania Lottery is reminding players and its retailer partners to gift responsibly by discouraging the sale of lottery products to anyone under the age of 18. While Lottery tickets can make fun gifts for some adults, they are not intended for use by minors.

During the holiday season and throughout the year, the Pennsylvania Lottery is strongly committed to the prevention of underage gambling. Every year, the Lottery joins the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG) by participating in the [Gift Responsibly Campaign](#) to raise awareness about the risks of underage lottery use.

As part of this campaign, the Lottery is reminding its network of more than 10,000 retailer partners to monitor self-service vending machines for underage play. Retailers are also encouraged to ask for identification to verify that Lottery players are over the age of 18. As a reminder, each and every Pennsylvania Lottery terminal displays messaging that players must be 18 or older to play.

According to NCPG, many young people report their first gambling experience happened when they were between 9 and 11 years old.

Research has shown that the sooner a child begins to gamble, the more likely that child is to develop problem gambling issues later in life. This is one of the main reasons why the Pennsylvania Lottery, along with its partners, including the Council on Compulsive Gambling of Pennsylvania, Inc. (CCGP), strongly encourage gifting responsibly this holiday season.

When children are introduced to gambling during the holidays, they begin to associate the activity with enjoyable times in their lives, which may create issues down the road. Instead, consider offering children other activities, such as crafting, playing a board game as a family, or decorating holiday cookies together. While the tickets may seem like harmless fun, they are still a form of gambling and are never an appropriate gift for children.

This holiday season, remind your family members and friends about the risks associated with allowing children to gamble. Also, consider having a conversation about gambling with your kids. It's never too early to talk to them about problem gambling and why they need to wait until they are older to make any decisions about gambling.

While most adults can play Pennsylvania Lottery games without issue, we understand that gambling can be problematic for some players. The Pennsylvania Lottery is committed to promoting responsible play and supporting the state and national councils on problem gambling. As we work to generate funding to benefit older Pennsylvanians in a socially responsible way, we want to ensure that all of our players always play responsibly. That means playing within their financial means and only for entertainment, and ensuring our players are of legal age.

Additionally, you can read over CCGP's [10 Rules of Responsible Gambling](#) to find helpful tips that will help you ensure you are gambling responsibly. The [CCGP website](#) also has information available on self-help meetings, including those that are being conducted virtually. If you or a loved one is struggling with problem gambling issues, don't be afraid to ask for help.

If compulsive gambling is a concern for you or someone you care about, please call 1-800-GAMBLER **(1-800-426-2537)** for free and confidential assistance. Chat and text options are also available at www.pacouncil.com/helpline. Know the signs. Have the conversation. Please play responsibly.

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