



The more you play, the more you lose Playing the pokies in New Zealand

Pokies are the most easily accessible form of gambling in New Zealand. Go to any community and you will find some machines attached to a hotel, restaurant or club. Outside, the sign may tell you which 'charity' organisation will receive your money when you lose it.

Pokies are user friendly. They have touch screens, are digital and have few moving parts. They are run by a computer program which has randomly determined outcomes of play.

There are no strategies for winning. Although pokies are programmed to return 87% of what is put into them this doesn't mean that you will get something each time you gamble. It does mean that if you play enough spins to cover every possible combination (about 80 million) then you can expect to get 87% of your money back.

To put it into context:

The chances of winning the highest prize on a machine are 1 in 10 million. You have a better chance of being hit by lightning.

If you purchase something for \$1 and you get 87¢ back from it, its not a particularly good deal. So, if you go out and spend \$1,000 on the pokies and you are lucky enough to get back \$870 then you are definitely not moving ahead.

Pokie machines have features which are added to give you the feeling that you are in control and have a second chance to win. However, they are part of a computer generated programme that is included in the calculations done by the maker of the machine, so the free spins are paid for by the losses you have already made on the machine. The only bonus is that they add a sense of excitement for the player.

"Double ups" offer you the chance for the machine to also take your winnings. Jackpots are a major part of the experience of gambling on pokie machines, but they are merely the losses which have been factored into the 87% return that must be made to players.

Myths:

- If you play long enough you will eventually win
- There are 'hot' machines
- Venues know when the jackpot will go off
- Some machines are due to win
- Players can control the outcome of the game
- The machine has just paid out, it is not likely to have a win for a while
- When the machine shows a series of near misses the chance is that you are about to win
- Machines are required to pay back to a player
- Venues can alter machines to control their behaviour
- If you touch the buttons in a particular way you will win
- Machines are more likely to pay out at a particular time of day
- Positive thoughts will help you win
- Playing faster/slower (on the pokies) increases the chances of winning
- I'll get back to even and then I'll quit
- I have a special strategy that helps me win. I pick certain numbers for the lottery and press the stop button on a slot machine at exactly the right time

**The only thing you have control over is
yourself**

**The machine decides whether you win or lose
You can't do anything about it
The odds are that you will lose**



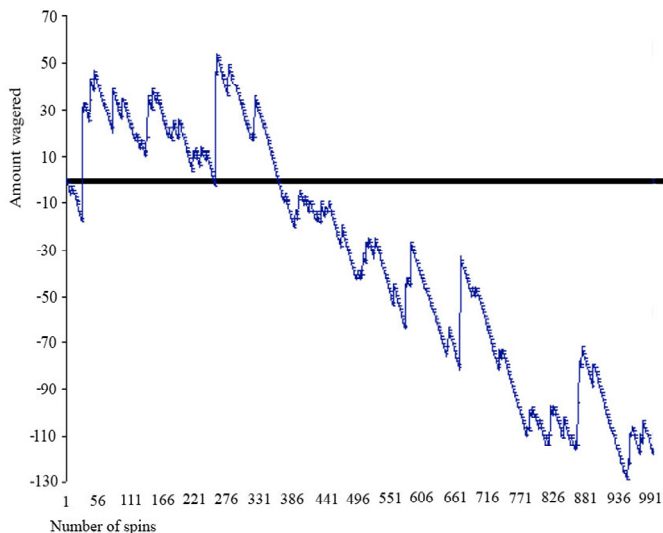
Gambling strategies:

Understand that the pokie machines are for your entertainment, not to win from. You must expect to pay for them as you would any other form of entertainment.

If you want to play for a while, then stick to the 1¢ machines. Play as low bets as you can and make sure you understand the rules. If possible play a machine with free spins to extend your playing time. Your chances of winning are the same if you only bet 1 credit as if you had played 100.

Play at venues where they provide extras that could be considered as compensation for your money lost, for example free food or drinks.

Strive to maintain positive coping skills and a healthy life-style in order to deal with the stressors in your life and to achieve balance and well-being.



Safe betting:

- Don't gamble every week
- Leave your ATM card at home
- Make a limit and stick to it
- Only gamble for fun or entertainment
- Be open to whanau/family about your gambling and how often you do it
- Keep your winnings. If you make a win, collect and then put the winnings elsewhere so you don't spend it
- Don't borrow to gamble. If you can't afford it, don't do it
- When you lose, don't spend your money chasing your losses. They will always be there and only get bigger
- Alcohol and gambling are a bad mix so be careful about drinking when gambling
- Don't go gambling alone. Make it a night out with friends, and be sociable as well
- Know when to walk away... don't chase losses
- Don't gamble when you are depressed or to get rid of emotional or physical pain
- Be aware of the warning signs of problem gambling

Figure 1. Outcomes on a slot machine. This is how your money gets lost. From N Turner & R Horbay (2004) How do slot machines and other electronic gambling machines work? *Journal of Gambling Issues*, 11.

**Pokie machines are not designed to give you extra income.
They are designed to make a profit for their owners.
If you think you can beat them think again,
the fact is the odds are stacked against you**

References

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