

TIME LINE FOLLOW BACK METHOD

Retrospective Report of Gambling Behaviour

Timeline Followback (TLFB; Sobell and Sobell, 1996) is a method of retrospectively assessing gambling behaviour over a specified period of time. The method was originally developed to assess alcohol use retrospectively but has been applied to other addictive behaviour including drugs and gambling. The procedure involves using calendars and memory aids to determine specific days and amounts of money gambled over a specified time period. TLFB can be done both in-person and over the telephone.

For more information on TLFB please refer to:

Sobell, Linda, C., and Sobell, Mark, B. (1996). *Timeline Follow-Back user's guide: A calendar method assessing alcohol and drug abuse*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Addiction Research Foundation.

The following are instructions, tips, and notes compiled by Dr. David Hodgins and researchers at the Addictive Behaviours lab for utilizing TLFB to retrospectively assess gambling behaviour.

Time Line Follow Back:

- What we would like to do now is recall your gambling for the 2 months prior to you quitting.
- What date did you quit gambling?_____. We'll go back 2 months from that date.
- We want to get an idea of how money you spent on each day during this time.
- This is not an especially difficult task when you use a calendar.
- What the calendar does is give you a picture of the dates and patterns of your gambling.

- What we have found is that calendars are very useful in helping people recall their gambling.
- The idea is to record the type of gambling and the amount spent on gambling each day.
- On days where you did not gamble at all I will write “zero”.
- For days where you did gamble I will write the type of gambling activity and the amount of money that was won or lost.
- It is important to write something for every day of the calendar.

Helpful Hints

- If you have an appointment book or a daily diary, you can use that to help you recall your gambling.
- Standard holidays such as Halloween and Christmas are marked on the calendar to help you recall your gambling around these times. You can also write in personal holidays and events such as birthdays, vacations, celebrations, major sporting events, and so on.
- People who have a fairly regular gambling pattern can use such patterns to help them fill out the calendar. For example, you may have a weekend/weekday change in your gambling or your gambling may be different depending on the season, or whether you are on holidays or business trips, or you may gamble playing cards every Tuesday with friends.

Your Best Estimate

- In filling out the calendar we want you to be as accurate as possible.
- We realize that it is hard for anyone to recall things with 100% accuracy, whether it is gambling or anything else.
- If you can't recall whether you gambled on a Monday or a Thursday of a certain week, or whether it was the week of November 9th or November 16th give it your best guess.

- If you are not sure if you gambled \$500 or \$700 you should say \$600. The important point here is that \$500 to \$700 is very different than if you said you gambled only \$5 to \$10 as opposed to \$1800 to \$2000. Does that make sense?
- Remember your job is to provide the best daily estimate using the calendar.

Start Calendar with Gambler

- Let's begin! As I said before, what we want you to do is use the calendar to record your gambling for the 2 months prior to you quitting gambling.
- Let's start with yesterday () and go back 2 months from there.
- Do you have any special holidays or dates you want to mark on the calendar to help you better recall your gambling during the past 2 months?
- When was the last time you gambled in the past 2 months?
- How much did you gamble on this day?
- What was the greatest amount of money spent or won over the last two months? Do you recall when this occurred?
- What was the least amount of money spent or won over the last two months? Do you recall when this occurred?
- As mentioned earlier, some people will have patterns to their gambling that can help them recall their use. Do you have any notable patterns to your gambling?
- During the past 2 months, did you have any extended periods of abstinence of 7 days or more, when you did not gamble at all, not even a penny? What was the longest period of total abstinence? What was the next longest period of total abstinence?
- During this period of time, did you have any extended periods of heavy gambling of 7 days or more? What was the longest number of continuous days in a row you were gambling during this period?
- What was the next longest period of continuous gambling days:
- Do you have any questions?