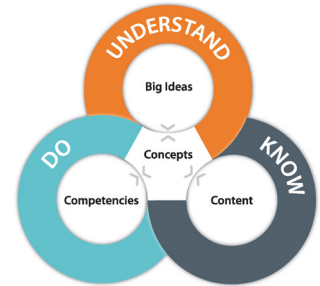


Charles Barkley: Learning when to stop

Charles Barkley is a retired basketball player who has a long history of high-stakes gambling. He has made many controversial statements such as declaring that excessive gambling is not a problem if you have enough money, but that drug use can “mess up your life.”

This lesson plan uses the story of Charles Barkley to explore different gambling-related themes such as risk and losses. It encourages students to think about the potential benefits and harms of gambling, what factors can impact our gambling behaviours, and what we can do to keep our gambling safe and fun.



Instructional strategies

1. Ask students what, if anything, they know about Charles Barkley. Then distribute copies of the [Charles Barkley handout](#) included at the end of this document and give them time to read it (or have one student read it aloud). Afterwards, facilitate a class discussion with some or all of the questions below.
 - a. Barkley claims that excessive alcohol or other drug use is a problem, and that excessive gambling is not a problem if you have enough money. What do you think?
 - b. Part of the reason Barkley lost so much money is because he never knew when to stop. He always tried to win \$1 million. How might goals, beliefs and assumptions affect people’s gambling behaviour?
 - c. Barkley himself admits that his gambling “is a bad habit.” Why do we sometimes continue to do something even though we know it’s a bad habit?
 - d. What if Charles Barkley had become a governor and was still gambling at that million dollar level? Do you think his gambling interests would have affected his priorities when acting as a governor?
 - e. When is gambling fun? When is it not fun?
2. Ask students to think about and list the potential benefits and risks of gambling. If desired, have them work in pairs or small groups. Then facilitate a class discussion using the questions below.
 - a. What do you think are the potential risks and benefits of gambling? What factors might contribute to the risks? What factors might increase the benefits?
 - b. Is gambling always risky? Why/why not?
 - c. What are some tips you might give someone to help them keep their gambling safe?

For Arts Education 7: Ask students to write a poem, or draw or paint a picture that illustrates the concept of risk. Encourage them to be creative. Invite them to share their art piece with the class if they’d like!



Gambling literacy

Big ideas

- ✓ Gambling can be a fun recreational activity but can also lead to significant harm
- ✓ As humans, both individually and as communities, we need to learn how to manage gambling in our midst
- ✓ We can learn how to control gambling by examining the different ways people have thought about it, engaging in critical self-reflection and listening to each other

Competencies

- ✓ Assess the complex ways in which gambling is linked to human culture and impacts the health and wellbeing of individuals, families, communities and societies
- ✓ Explore and appreciate the diverse cognitive, social, emotional and physical factors that impact gambling behaviour
- ✓ Develop personal and social skills to reflect on and manage personal behaviour and choices related to gambling

For a complete look at the gambling literacy competencies, as defined by the Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research, see: <https://www.uvic.ca/research/centres/cisur/assets/docs/iminds/hs-gambling-curriculum.pdf>

Links to curriculum

First peoples' principles of learning

- ✓ Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors
- ✓ Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place)

English Language Arts 7

Big ideas

- ✓ Exploring text and story helps us understand ourselves and make connections to others and to the world
- ✓ Exploring and sharing multiple perspectives extends our thinking

Competencies

- ✓ Apply appropriate strategies to comprehend written, oral, and visual texts, guide inquiry, and extend thinking
- ✓ Think critically, creatively, and reflectively to explore ideas within, between, and beyond texts
- ✓ Respond to text in personal, creative, and critical ways
- ✓ Exchange ideas and viewpoints to build shared understanding and extend thinking

Arts Education 7

Big ideas

- ✓ Experiencing art challenges our point of view and expands our understanding of others

Competencies

- ✓ Take creative risks to express feelings, ideas, and experiences
- ✓ Express, feelings, ideas, and experiences through the arts

This resource was developed by the **Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research** with funding provided by the **BC Responsible & Problem Gambling Program**. Any views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the BC Responsible & Problem Gambling Program or the Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research.



STUDENT HANDOUT

Charles Barkley

Charles Barkley is mostly known for basketball. He played power forward for the Philadelphia 76ers, Phoenix Suns and Houston Rockets, averaging 22.1 points and 11.7 rebounds per game over a 16-year career spanning the 80's and 90's.

Though shorter and heavier than most other high-ranking players, Alabama-born Barkley outplayed taller and faster opponents, earning himself a long list of career honours and awards, including five-time All-NBA First Team selection, 11-time All-Star, and shortest player in NBA history to lead the league in rebounding. He won two gold medals as part of the US "Dream Team" at the 1992 and 1996 Olympic Games, and is one of only four players ever to have compiled at least 20,000 points, 10,000 rebounds and 4,000 assists. Barkley, NBA MVP in 1993, has been named one of the 50 greatest players in NBA history.

Currently a popular sports analyst on *Inside the NBA*, the ever-entertaining and outspoken retired basketball star has written several books, including *I May Be Wrong but I Doubt It*, and has appeared several times in films and TV shows. He considered running for governor of Alabama (as a Republican), wanting to bring focus back to poverty and education instead of hot-button issues. But he also supports gay rights, pro-choice and other Democrat-like ideas.

As expected from a larger-than-life character, Barkley has been involved in his fair share of controversies, usually involving aggressive or reckless behaviour and speaking his mind. For example, in the 1990's he was part of a controversial national advertising campaign that rejected pro-athletes as role models, saying that the job of role model was for parents and that it was wrong to tell kids that they can grow up to be sports stars because, for the vast majority, it's impossible. Barkley has always been honest and open about his ideas and lifestyle, including his love of high-stakes gambling. More than once he's won a million dollars in single night, and many more times than that he's lost a million trying to "break the casino." Playing blackjack he once lost \$2.5 million in about six hours. But to Barkley his excessive spending on gambling isn't really a problem because he can afford to lose millions. He doesn't enjoy losing money of course—quite the opposite—but he thinks losing money when gambling isn't like messing your life up with alcohol or other drugs. In 2007 he claimed:

"It's not a problem. If you're a drug addict or an alcoholic, those are problems. I gamble for too much money. As long as I can continue to do it I don't think it's a problem. Do I think it's a bad habit? Yes, I think it's a bad habit. Am I going to continue to do it? Yes, I'm going to continue to do it."

While Barkley has no plans to give up the rush and excitement of gambling, he says he's currently taking a more moderate approach and has dialed back his ideas about both winning and losing, thanks to advice from his gambling buddies. He says he no longer tries to "break the casino" because it's impossible, and puts limits on his wins and losses to keep it fun.