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The Fine Print Behind Online Gambling Bonus Offers

By Mike Hellmer

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If you have never opened an account with an online casino, poker room, or sports book you may be wondering if the bonus offers are legitimate. We are all aware of the wisdom in the sayings, "If an offer sounds too good to be true, it probably is" or "There is no such thing as a free lunch". So what's the catch? When a casino offers you \$100-\$1000 in free money should you dismiss it, assuming that there are all sorts of strict requirements, making it too difficult to achieve the pay-out? The quick answer is no. These offers are for real and in most cases the required terms and conditions to receive the pay-out are typically quite easy to achieve. Some are as simple as making small minimum deposit of \$50 to \$100. Some require, in addition to minimum deposit, a minimum, but achievable, level of play.

How are the online gambling sites able to give away free money and remain in business? The answer is simple. In most cases they get the entire bonus back and more. Casinos live by the odds that all casino games are in their favor and that eventually you'll lose your original deposit and the bonus. Online poker rooms, on the other hand, get the bonus back by taking a rake (usually 5%) of every pot.

Let's take a look at the various "free money" offers and the requirements for full cash-out access to the money. The requirements (the catch) are found in the terms and conditions of the bonus offer on the site.

No Deposit Required! Some casinos and poker rooms offer free money without any initial deposit requirements. These offers legitimate and you will be able to play at all the real money tables and slots. The typical catch is that you will need to make at least one deposit before the bonus plus any winnings are released. For example, if you receive a \$10 bonus and have \$50 in winnings from that bonus, you will have to make a small deposit to your account before the \$60 is released for withdrawal.

First Deposit Bonus. To entice you to deposit real money into an online gambling site, a first deposit bonus is almost always offered. The interesting thing is not that they all do it, but the very wide range of bonuses offered. You'll find one online site offering a 10% bonus while one of its competitors offers

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200%. All online gambling sites have a maximum bonus limit. So a site that offers a measly 20% bonus could have their maximum bonus set to \$200 (deposit \$1000) while the site that offers the whopping 200% bonus could have a maximum bonus set to \$100 (deposit \$50).

Poker Room First Deposit Bonus. The catch for a poker room is that you will have to play a minimum number of raked hands and there may be a time limit. For example, to receive a \$50 bonus you may have to play 100 raked hands in 60 days. The raked hand requirement is typically easy to achieve; however some of the very large bonus offers are more difficult. Sometimes these large bonuses are paid in installments. For example, to receive a full \$200 bonus the poker room might require 500 raked hands with \$20 released every 50 raked hands. If you're new to online poker, don't be discouraged by the number of raked hands required; a typical online table will play 50 to 100 games per hour.

Casino First Deposit Bonus. The catch for an online casino is that you will have to wager a required amount before the bonus is released for cash-out. The typical online casino will deposit the bonus into

your account soon after you make your initial deposit. Some deposit bonuses are instantly deposited at the same time as your deposit. Some casinos require that you claim your deposit bonus by filling in a simple form. In this case the bonus may not get credited to your account for 1 to 3 days. Even though the deposit bonus has been credited to your account and you can use it to wager, you will not be able to withdraw the bonus portion until you meet the wagering requirements. The wagering requirements typically state that you must wager 10 to 20 times your deposit plus bonus to release the bonus for cash-out. For example, you deposit \$50 and receive a \$10 bonus. The casino has a wagering requirement of 10 times your deposit plus bonus, which means that you will have to wager \$600 (10 x \$60) for the \$10 bonus to be released for cash-out.

Sports Book First Deposit Bonus. The catch for an online sports book is that you will have to wager a required amount before the bonus is released for cash-out. The typical online book will deposit the bonus into your account soon after you make your initial deposit. Some deposit bonuses are instantly deposited at the same time as your deposit. Some books require that you claim your deposit bonus by filling in a simple form or sending an email. Even though the deposit bonus has been credited to your account and you can use it to wager, you will not be able to withdraw the bonus portion until you meet the wagering requirements. The wagering requirements typically state that you must wager 3 times your deposit plus bonus to release the bonus for cash-out. For example, you deposit \$100 and receive a \$20 bonus. The online sports book has a wagering requirement of 3 times your deposit plus bonus, which means that you will have to wager \$360 (3 x \$120) for the \$20 bonus to be released for cash-out.

Reload Bonuses. Reload bonuses are very typical for online sports books, but occasionally you will see them offered in online casinos and poker rooms. The reload bonus simply offers a bonus on deposits made after your initial deposit. The requirements are generally the same as the first deposit bonus requirements.

Before making a deposit at an online gambling site, be sure that you understand the requirements for the bonus to be released for cash-out. You may have to drill down a page or two to get the information. If the bonus requirements seem difficult to achieve then consider another gambling site.

Mike Hellmer is a poker enthusiast and the webmaster of Molly's Poker and Gambling Portal ().

Online Gambling – Keep Control

By Adel Awwad

Gambling can be addictive no matter where you are doing it – at a land casino, playing the lottery or at an online casino. Sometimes it is easier to get carried away at an online casino than at a regular land casino because you aren't actually handling money or chips, your money is all digitally displayed. Further, money can go fast when you are having fun.

As it is with all gambling, it is important to keep control when you are gambling at an online casino. By keeping track of your credits and cash and setting yourself honest limits that you adhere to, online gambling won't be a problem for you. Further, by setting limits on yourself for how much money you are willing to gamble and lose, you can keep control of your online gambling habits and make it a fun experience as it was meant to be. Gambling can be a lot of fun, a real adrenaline rush—especially when you are winning. There is an adrenaline rush when you are losing too, and that's when online gambling can get out of control and before you know it, you've spent much too much money, much more than you intended to gamble away. There are other precautions you can also take such as watching your drinking, not playing when you are tired and setting a time limit on each gambling session.

If you think you have a gambling problem, then please contact your local gambler's anonymous help group and get some help. It is so important not to let gambling run or ruin your life. "Just one more twenty/hundred/thousand dollars" is never something you should say more than you can afford to. Watch and keep track of what you are doing, how much money you are inputting into an online casino and keep the game and gambling experience fun for you and everyone.

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