



## Washington State Gambling Commission

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### Free Poker as a Promotion Commercial Businesses

Commercial businesses often use promotions to attract customers. The most common promotion is a drawing. For example, you write your name on a slip of paper and drop it in a box. There is no entry fee and if your name is drawn from the box, you win a prize.

Businesses hope you'll make purchases while you're there to enter the contest and that you'll return later to make additional purchases.

The popularity of poker has inspired "free poker" promotions that businesses, usually taverns, use to attract customers.



Some businesses hire outside companies to arrange free poker games or tournaments. Whether you offer free poker games to your customers, or hire an outside company to run the games, there are restrictions.

**Free to Play:** Players must not be charged any fee, direct or indirect, to participate in a promotional poker game. For example, players:

- Cannot be charged an entry fee; this would be a direct fee.
- Cannot be required to purchase food, drink, goods, or services, this would be an indirect fee.

Players cannot get additional chips or other advantages by purchasing goods or services from the business.

#### Equipment:

- Professional gambling equipment, such as professional poker tables and logo chips from a casino (gambling equipment regulated by us), cannot be used in promotional games.
- Gambling equipment that can be purchased by the public, such as generic cards, layouts, and chips, can be used in free poker games.
- Chips, cards, and layouts printed with a promotion company's logo or sponsor are okay to use.

Businesses may award prizes to winners of free poker promotions and tournaments.

Players must not be allowed to gamble, wager, or bet against another player during free poker promotions or tournaments.

**Promotion companies** may charge a business a fee to organize, advertise, and provide equipment to operate free poker tournaments. Players may earn points to advance to other free tournaments and win additional prizes. Players cannot be charged any fee, direct or indirect, to play or advance in the tournament.

If free poker is played as a promotion at your business, you are responsible for making sure all appropriate federal, state, and local laws are followed. You could face criminal charges for not following the rules.

If you have a gambling license and violate the rules, you could face administrative penalties (fines, suspension, or revocation of your gambling license).

Free poker as a promotion is not a gambling activity and does not require a license or permit from us.

#### To learn more, see:

- [Promotions brochure](#)
- Promotions law [RCW 9.46.0356](#)
- Gambling laws [RCW 9.46](#)
- Gambling rules [WAC 230](#)
- Our [Agency Overview](#) brochure

**For questions** about operating free promotions, contact our Field Office closest to you:

**Everett** ..... (425) 304-6300 ..... [EverettFO@wsgc.wa.gov](mailto:EverettFO@wsgc.wa.gov)

**Spokane** ... (509) 325-7900 .. [SpokaneFO@wsgc.wa.gov](mailto:SpokaneFO@wsgc.wa.gov)

**Tacoma** .... (253) 671-6280 .... [TacomaFO@wsgc.wa.gov](mailto:TacomaFO@wsgc.wa.gov)

**If you or someone you know have a gambling problem, call (800) 547-6133**

To inquire about the availability of this document in an alternate format, please call (360) 486-3466 or (800) 345-2529, ext. 3466. Teletype (TTY) users please call (360) 486-3637