

First Bet First Beat

Sports Gambling 101

When I first got interested in sports gambling, I had no idea what anything meant. Spread, money lines, money movement, who was the favorite, what payouts would be. Nothing. It's so simple now, but at first I really couldn't grasp it. Some get it right away, some get it on their own; I was not one of these people. So I figured I would search the internet, read some books, digest it all, and present it in an easy to consume way for people interested in throwing a few bucks into sports gambling. Gambling on sports is super easy (winning... not so much), and makes games soooooo much more fun to watch. I'm not a big baller gambling by any stretch, I just like the excitement of having some skin in the game. I generally will only bet \$5-\$15 on any one game/bet. Just enough to keep my interest, but not so much that I really stress about losing. That's my favorite way to do it, but to each their own. So let's dive in.

When gambling on sports, especially when there are 2 teams going against each other, there are 3 basic bets that are offered (we'll dive into in game bets in a later post); ***the spread, money line, and Over/Under***. When you gamble on sports, you are gambling against the sports book you choose (this is generally referred to as **Vegas** when talking with your friends, but your sports book will have their own name and generally will be online). Let's explore your basic options when gambling against Vegas.

The Spread

When hearing about sports gambling, you'll often hear talk about the spread. When 2 teams are playing each other, there is a team that is generally regarded as the better team. When playing the spread, Vegas will handicap the score. This handicap is referred to as the spread; the team that is considered the better team (the favorite) will have a defined number of points taken from their total while the team that is considered worse (the underdog), will have points added to their total. Let's check an example.

313 Minnesota Vik...	-3	-120
314 Philadelphia E...	+3	+100

In this example we have the Vikings (-3) vs. the Eagles (+3). When betting the spread in this case, we will subtract 3 points from the Vikings total because they are the favorite. (quick note: you view the spread as either taking points from the Vikings OR adding points to the Eagles, it's never both) If we bet the Vikings spread, -3, the Vikings need to win by more than 3 points for us to win the bet. This is what we call "covering the spread". Covering the spread means the team you picked to win, wins the game with the points that Vegas assigned to them. For example, if the Eagles lose by 2 points, they cover the spread because their +3, adjusted for the spread, would put them ahead of the Vikings. If the Vikings win 24- Eagles 17, that means they covered- they won by more than 3 points. Let's try another example.

Date: 01/15/2018	Home	Away
Golden State Warriors	+6 -110	-6 -110
Cleveland Cavaliers		

The bottom team is always the home team. In this case, Vegas has the Golden State Warriors favored by 6 points. As it reads above, they will give 6 points to the home team, or remove 6 points from the away team. Side note: it's not a 12 point swing, its either giving the home team 6 or taking 6 points away from the away team, NOT both.

A Push

A push in gambling terms means a tie. In the above example, if the final score is Warriors 120 - Cavs 114, the game results in a push based upon the spread offered. When you push a bet, you generally get your money back. Vegas views it as a draw or a tie.

The Hook

311 Jacksonville J...	+9½ -110
312 New England ...	-9½ -110

When viewing spreads, often times you'll see a number with a half point attached to it (.5). This is called a hook. This is used as an incentive to take a bet. When a half point is added to a spread it ensures there will not be a tie - you either win or you lose. The half point will either be in your favor or screw you over, but will never end in a push. You probably think, "this half point means not hing", but you will be shocked how many times this little son of a bitch comes back to bite you in the ass. Always take into account the hook, it means something.

Money Line

For me the money line was the hardest concept to grasp. It's not really intuitive but once you understand it, it's super simple. To put simply, the money line tells you how much you will win based on how much you wager. When viewing a money line between 2 teams, the team with the "-" in front of their number is the favorite, and the team with the "+" in front of their number is the underdog. A "-" bet means that you have to risk more money, with less in return. A "+" means that you could risk less money with a higher return.

5 St. Louis Blues

+125

6 Toronto Mapl..

-145

So here's how a money line works; the number tells you how much money you could return based on a \$1.00 (or \$100) bet. Based on what we've discussed, the STL Blues are +125 UNDERDOGS. This bet means— if you bet \$1.00 you would receive \$1.25 if you won (Side note: when you win your original bet, you receive the original amount wagered (\$1.00) and the amount won (\$1.25), so the total you would have in your account would be \$2.25). On the contrary, if you were to make a \$1.00 bet on the Maple Leafs, you would win \$.69. When you're betting on the favorite, you would need to make a bet of \$1.45 to win \$1 given the money line provided. Let's look at another.

313 Minnesota Vik...

-3 -120

314 Philadelphia E...

+3 +100

In this case the favorite is the Vikings at (-120) and the underdog at (+120). When you take a money line, you are taking that team to win straight up - no points will change; you win or you lose. So to take the favorite means you have to risk \$1.20 to win \$1.00. If you were to take the underdog in this case, you would be risking \$1.00 to win \$1.00 because the money line is a straight +100. We gotta do one more.

743 Illinois	+4	-110	+160
744 Nebraska	-4	-110	-190

Gambling Basketball style. On most gambling sites you can put money on literally any league in the world; the kid you played with in high school who plays in Turkey, the Final Four star who ended up in Italy, and of course the NCAA games. Here's a nice simple shitty Big Ten matchup from the midwest. Illinois at +160 is the underdog, and they are on the road visiting Nebraska who is the favorite. If you were to bet \$1.00 on Illinois you would win \$1.60 back — +160. It would take a \$1.90 bet on Nebraska (-190) to win \$1.00. When betting the underdog, the + tells you how much your bet will return for a \$1.00 bet; when betting the favorite the money line will tell you how much you need to bet to win a dollar (-190= 1.90 to win \$1.00).

Recap on money line: “+”= underdog
“-“= favorite

The logic above applies mostly to team sports. When gambling on individual sports, almost all of the picks will have a “+” designation. This means that there are multiple people in the group that could win, and competitively they are all very close. Occasionally there will be one person who is the outright favorite, and they will have a “-“ money line, but when this happens everyone else in the field will have a “+” money line.

THU 12:00a

Abu Dhabi HSBC Golf Championship 2018

Dustin Johnson	+500	Rory McIlroy	+700	Justin Rose	+800
Henrik Stenson	+1400	Paul Casey	+1600	Branden Grace	+2000
Tommy Fleetwood	+2000	Tyrrell Hatton	+2200	Martin Kaymer	+2800
Matt Kuchar	+2800	Matthew Fitzpatrick	+3300	Rafael Cabrera Bello	+3300
Thomas Pieters	+4000	Bernd Wiesberger	+4000	Kiradech Aphibarnrat	+5000
Ross Fisher	+5000	Byeong Hun An	+5500	Thorbjorn Olesen	+6600
Ian Poulter	+6600	Lee Westwood	+6600	Graeme McDowell	+6600
Haotong Li	+8000	Joost Luiten	+8000	Alexander Levy	+8000
Bryson DeChambeau	+8000	Dylan Frittelli	+8000	Paul Dunne	+8000
Alexander Bjork	+10000	Chris Paisley	+10000	Dean Burmester	+10000
George Coetzee	+10000	Pablo Larrazabal	+10000	Eddie Pepperell	+12500
Jeunghun Wang	+12500	Nicolas Colsaerts	+12500	Andy Sullivan	+15000
Chris Wood	+15000	Danny Willett	+15000	Hideto Tanihara	+15000
Jordan Smith	+15000	Ryan Fox	+15000	Haydn Porteous	+17500
Matthieu Pavon	+17500	Nacho Elvira	+17500	Renato Paratore	+17500
Richard Sterne	+17500	Shubhankar Sharma	+17500	Soren Kjeldsen	+17500

When gambling on an individual sports, like golf, the money line will vary greatly. There will always be a favorite (in this case Dustin Johnson at +500). This looks like a slam dunk, but there are so many individuals that could potentially win this event because the talent level is so close, the odds of you picking the precise individual who wins is a long shot. So if you choose correctly, you're in the money - even if the person you choose is the favorite.

So that's how money lines work. The underdogs tell you how much you will win if you bet \$1.00 (or \$100) and the favorites will tell you how much you need to wager to win \$1.00 (or \$100). AS A REMINDER: when placing a wager on the money line, you are picking that team to win straight up with no point handicap. Money lines paint a picture of what a game is anticipated to be; see below.

Spread	What It Means
+1100	This is a huge long shot, if you picked this and won you're a very happy person right now
+750	Still probably not going to happen, and if it does you're lucky
+250	This team is probably a big underdog, but it wouldn't be crazy for them to win, just an upset

+115	This team is an underdog, but only slightly
+105	Hardly even an underdog, this game is essentially a toss up
-105	Hardly a favorite, this game is essetually a toss up
-115	A favorite, but not with much certainty, many spread will have a payout like this since it can go either way
-150	Starting to get a little more of a favorite, but no gurantee by any means
-220	This team is a heavy favorite, but you could still improve your bank roll by gambling on them at your own risk
-500	This team is a heavy heavy favorite, and its almost not even worth the risk
-800	This team is probably the Patriots, and are all but guranteed to win

Over/Under

When Vegas determines a spread and a money line, they will also come up with the total number of points scored between the 2 teams; Over/Under. Remember; its the total of the TWO TEAMS COMBINED. You get to pick if they will score less together or more together.

311 Jacksonville J...	+9 -115	+360	O46½ -110
312 New England ...	-9 -105	-450	U46½ -110
313 Minnesota Vik...	-3 -120	-180	O38½ -110
314 Philadelphia E...	+3 +100	+160	U38½ -110

In these examples Vegas puts the O/U for the Jaguars/Patriots game, or the total number of points scored at 46.5 points (it has the hook, remember?), and the Vikings/Eagles game at 38.5 points. You'll find that under 40 points tends to be on the lower end, but O/U's, spread, and money lines vary from sport to sport. Money lines on baseball change drastically based on who's pitching while NFL games remain relatively consistent.

Hope this helps. Happy gambling to you. Please comment with any questions or if you need some clarification, i'll try my best.

Spread/images: BetDSI & Bovado (Golf)

Money line graphic: yours truly