Clear Sportsbook Promotions Matter

Idea In Short

Operators should present every promotion's conditions with the same prominence as its headline figure, before a customer deposits money. Wagering requirements, minimum deposits, expiry dates and eligible bets determine an offer's real value, and regulators in Ohio and New York already expect clear disclosure. Compliance teams should audit the full customer journey, from the advertisement to registration to the account page that tracks remaining requirements. Podcasts and comparison reviews should disclose paid relationships so audiences can judge each recommendation. Younger bettors face particular risk: a study across seven Mississippi universities found that 6% of student sports bettors met criteria for problem gambling, so plain information and responsible gaming messages deserve priority.

A generation used to making money decisions on its phones has a new product to weigh. In October 2026, research published by Inside Higher Ed found that 15% of American undergraduates had participated in digital wagering since entering college. Among male students, the figure reached 25%. The survey covered 5,034 students across 310 mostly public institutions. Those findings raise a question for businesses that sell gambling products. How much can customers understand about an offer before they commit their money? A big promotional figure draws attention, but its conditions set the real value. Digital platforms control how that information appears.

The difference between an offer and its conditions

Sportsbook promotions add a second set of decisions to the wager. A customer might receive bonus credit after a deposit, but qualifying conditions decide how that credit can be used. Wagering requirements state how much play must happen before some funds can be withdrawn. Expiry dates can limit the time left to meet those requirements. A customer needs all of this before accepting, because the advertised amount tells only part of the story.

Comparison services help make these conditions easier to find. Covers publishes betting information alongside casino reviews and promotional guides. Readers who examine Rainbet's promo details can see how the reward is divided across the first three qualifying deposits. The review also names a 40-times wagering requirement on the combined deposit and bonus amount, along with a $30 minimum deposit. Those details show the gap between the advertised reward and the conditions attached to it. Take a hypothetical case in which a customer deposits $100 and receives a $100 match. A 40-times requirement on the combined $200 means $8,000 in wagers before the funds can be withdrawn. Few readers would guess that figure from the headline offer alone.

Regulation has become more specific about advertising

American regulators increasingly expect operators to explain promotional conditions before customers deposit funds. Rules differ by state, but the direction is the same. Conditions must be complete, easy to find and visible when the customer decides. These rules give consumers a firmer basis for comparing offers. They also set expectations for the businesses that design them.

Ohio

Ohio's rule on promotions and bonuses requires clear and unambiguous promotion rules. Those rules must cover the active period, eligibility limits, and wagering and redemption requirements. The terms must also be complete, accurate and not misleading. An operator may require bonus funds to be played through before withdrawal, but it must not stop a patron from withdrawing their own funds. The rule also bars calling a promotion free or risk-free when the patron must risk their own money to use it or withdraw winnings. Operators must make the rules available to patrons and to the regulator, and they must stop offering any promotion they find does not comply.1

New York

New York takes a similar approach through its advertising restrictions. Operators must clearly disclose the material terms of a promotion and any limits on it. When a customer must wager a set amount to receive promotional credit, the required spending must appear with the same visual prominence as the reward. The state's rules also bar operators from calling the credit free, and they require a clear and conspicuous statement of any material limit on the offer. A limit that sits behind a link or in small print does not meet that standard.

That requirement targets a familiar problem in digital advertising. Large figures can fill a mobile screen while the qualifying conditions get far less space. Regulators now want both pieces of information shown together.

Clear communication starts with product design

Businesses often build detailed marketing playbooks on audience targeting and customer acquisition. Sports wagering needs more care, because a promotion can involve financial commitments beyond the first deposit. Compliance teams should examine the whole customer journey, including the advertisement and the registration process. If the offer changes after someone creates an account, the platform must explain the new conditions before the customer takes part. A useful test is to show the offer to someone unfamiliar with it and ask what they must do to withdraw money.

The design question extends to how easily customers find restrictions after signing up. A promotion might exclude certain bet types or require minimum odds. Another could set a deadline for completing qualifying wagers. Customers benefit when account pages show the remaining requirements and explain how progress is calculated. For operators, those features can reduce disputes over whether a promotion has met its conditions. They also give support teams one shared reference when they answer account questions. Plain language helps as much as layout. Terms written in short sentences, with the withdrawal rule first, are easier to read on a phone.

Research shows why younger bettors need better information

A study in the Journal of American College Health looked at sports gambling among students at a large American public university. Researchers Elizabeth McEvoy and Lindsey Mortenson worked with Christopher Frank to analyze survey responses from 1,489 undergraduates. Among the 152 respondents who reported previous sports betting or gambling, 38% screened positive for potential problem gambling. The screening result is not a clinical diagnosis, and one university does not represent every American campus. It does point to a substantial group whose behavior needs attention.

Other research points the same way. A University of Mississippi study of students at seven Mississippi universities found that 39% had gambled in the past year. Among students who

bet on sports, 6% met criteria for problem gambling and 10% were at moderate risk.2

The wider Inside Higher Ed research found a gap in institutional education. Its separate survey of 271 student success administrators found that just 3% reported updates to financial literacy or orientation programs covering gambling risks. Another 56% said their division does not view digital wagering as a high-priority problem. Meanwhile, 38% of surveyed students thought digital wagering deserved more attention from their institutions, including 45% of men and a third of women. The survey did not ask students whether they saw their own use as a problem. Universities can close the gap through financial education. Betting operators have a matching duty to explain what their products require before customers begin to play.

Advertising relationships deserve the same transparency

Promotional messages reach customers through channels that can look like independent commentary. Sports podcasts are one example. A presenter might discuss an upcoming game and then introduce a paid betting promotion. Listeners need to know when a commercial relationship shapes that recommendation. The Federal Trade Commission [FTC] says a connection should be disclosed when a significant minority of consumers would not expect it, and that payment and affiliate commissions generally qualify. It adds that when a claim is made audibly, the disclosure should be made at least audibly.3

That principle applies to comparison websites as well. If a publisher earns a commission through a promotional link, readers should know about the relationship. The review still has to explain the product's conditions. The FTC says a plain label such as paid link next to an affiliate link is adequate disclosure of the link's nature, while a term such as commissionable link is probably not clear enough. Covers combines betting odds and predictions with casino promotional coverage, so it matters that editorial information and commercial offers stay distinct. Its Rainbet page carries a partnership note stating that the offer applies when readers sign up through the site's exclusive link and that Rainbet runs an affiliate program. A published bonus breakdown gives readers details they can check against the operator's terms, and a clear commercial disclosure helps them judge the recommendation itself.

- 1Rule 3775-16-09: promotions and bonuses
- 2UM researchers warn of problem gambling risk among college students
- 3FTC's Endorsement Guides: what people are asking

Summary

Clear promotions serve customers, operators and regulators at once. An advertised figure attracts attention, yet wagering requirements, minimum deposits and expiry dates decide the value a customer receives. Rules in Ohio and New York already require plain, prominent disclosure, and operators that design promotions around those rules reduce disputes and support workload. Account pages that show remaining requirements extend that clarity after registration. The same standard applies to commercial relationships in podcasts and comparison sites, where readers and listeners need to know when a paid link shapes a recommendation. As digital wagering reaches more young adults, transparency about what a product requires becomes part of responsible practice.