

WHERE BETTING BELONGS

AN INDUSTRY PERSPECTIVE

Algebra in French

Why betting should speak the language of the sports fan

> To understand a £10 bet, a fan should not need to learn a new vocabulary and a new kind of maths. If the product needs a glossary, perhaps the product is the problem.

KEITH O'LOUGHLIN

September 2026 · wherebettingbelongs.com

THE ONE-PAGE VERSION · 2 MINUTE READ

To understand a £10 bet, a fan should not need a new vocabulary and a new kind of maths. The industry has tried to explain betting to people. The better answer is betting that does not need explaining.

1. **One bet, four answers.** £10 on a horse at 5/2 shows as 5/2, 3.50 or +250 depending on where you are. Only "£35 back if it wins, £0 if it loses" answers what a newcomer actually wants to know.
2. **A language of its own.** Each way, Rule 4, BTTS, Asian handicaps, Yankees and wagering requirements. Keep the slang for the people who love it, but belonging to the club should not be the price of a bet.
3. **The real cost comes last.** A £20 Patent costs £140 and a £10 Lucky 15 costs £150. A newcomer often finds out what a bet really costs in the last box on the slip.
4. **The embarrassment tax.** Adults would rather nod than ask in front of their mates, so they sit it out or guess. And the numbers are hard for many: in England's last full skills survey, 49% of working-age adults had numeracy at or below the level expected of an 11 year old.
5. **Make the product do the work.** Before anyone confirms, the screen should answer five questions: what am I saying will happen, what will I pay in total, what comes back if I am right, what do I lose if I am wrong and how likely does the price say it is. Traditional odds stay there for anyone who wants them.
6. **Simple should mean safer, not faster.** Show the total cost, keep returns and profit apart and show losses as clearly as wins. A slick screen that hides the margin or nudges bigger stakes is still a bad screen.

> **What it means.** Put the bet where the fan already is, in the media brands and sports they follow, with licensed bookmakers doing the betting. Design for the fan who bets twice a year as carefully as for the one who bets twice a day. Keep the slang. Lose the entry fee.

Watch the Grand National with people who rarely bet and you will see it every year. Someone asks what each way means. Someone wants a fiver on the grey because their nan liked greys. Someone says the favourite is "only 5/1", and half the room nods without a clue whether that is good or bad. Nobody wants to be the one who stops the fun to ask.

None of them is stupid. They know their sport, their jobs and their lives. They have just been handed a product that speaks its own language and does its own sums. For an English speaker, it is like being asked to learn French and algebra on the same afternoon. Or, more accurately, algebra in French.

The industry's answer has been to explain betting to people. There is a better one: build betting that does not need explaining.

> **A fan should not need a glossary to back their team.**

01

Three prices. One question.

Put £10 on a horse at 5/2. Depending on where you are, the same price looks like this:

CONVENTION	DISPLAYED	WHAT IT MEANS FOR £10
Fractional	**5/2**	£25 profit if it wins, plus your £10 back
Decimal	**3.50**	£35 back in total if it wins
American	**+250**	£25 profit if it wins, plus your £10 back
Plain English	**£35 back**	**£35 back if it wins. £0 if it loses**

Four rows, one bet. Only the last one answers what a newcomer actually wants to know: if I put £10 on, what happens to my money?

There is nothing wrong with fractions, decimals or American odds for people who like them. The mistake is making everyone learn one before they can have a bet.

02

An industry fluent in its own language

The price is just the warm-up. Racing has each way, Rule 4, SP and non-runner no bet. Football has 1X2, BTTS and Asian handicaps. Multiples run from accas to Yankees, Lucky 15s and Goliaths. Offers arrive with wagering requirements and stakes not returned.

Some of it is wonderful. A day at the races would be poorer without its slang, and regulars enjoy knowing a drifter from a steamer. Keep it. But belonging to the club should not be the price of a bet.

Take the Yankee: four horses, eleven bets, made up of six doubles, four trebles and a four-fold. The slip gives you the name and assumes you know the rest. Often the first time a newcomer finds out what a bet really costs is in the last box on the slip.



The slip says £20. It costs £140. A Patent is seven bets, so £20 a bet is £140 in total.



£10 a line. £150 in total. A Lucky 15 is fifteen bets. The real cost only appears in the last box.

The jargon does more than confuse. In company, it can make perfectly capable adults feel they are about to be exposed as beginners. That feeling matters more than another glossary ever will.

03

The embarrassment tax

Then there is the bit nobody likes to admit. Adults hate looking stupid. A child will ask a daft question and laugh it off. By forty, most of us would rather nod.

Picture it. You are in the pub with your mates, the match is on and someone suggests an acca. Someone else is quoting prices. You know the teams, the players and the form. What you do not know is the shorthand. Do you stop everything and ask for a lesson? Or smile and say you are grand?



The older we get, the less appetite we have to look stupid.

Ask what 5/2 means in front of your mates?

No f**king way!

THE EMBARRASSMENT TAX

The numbers back this up. In the last full skills survey, 49% of working-age adults in England had numeracy at or below the level expected of an 11 year old. The OECD puts the share with very low literacy at about 18%. Neither figure measures betting, but both are a warning against designing for an imaginary customer who is fluent in everything.[1, 2]

The appetite is there too. Around two thirds of people who watched the 2024 Grand National live had some kind of bet on it, sweepstakes included. They came for the race, the craic and the shared moment, not the vocabulary.[3]

49%

of working-age adults in England at or below Entry Level 3 numeracy, roughly age 9 to 11 (2011)[1]

18%

of adults in England with very low literacy (OECD, 2024)[2]

2 in 3

people who watched the 2024 Grand National live had some form of bet on it (YouGov)[3]

So people pay the embarrassment tax. Some quietly sit it out. Others guess: they tick each way without realising it doubles the cost, or copy a mate's Lucky 15. Either the sport loses a fan, or someone spends money on something they do not understand.

> **Simplicity and choice remove the embarrassment tax.**

04

Make the product do the work

> **"Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler."**
>
> ATTRIBUTED TO ALBERT EINSTEIN

The usual fix is education: another glossary, another explainer video. Fine for people who want them. But nobody should have to study before a fiver on the National.

A train app does not open with a lecture on ticketing. It shows the journey, the fare and the total, and lets you buy. Betting should work the same way. Before anyone confirms a bet, the screen should answer five questions:

1. **What am I saying will happen?**
2. **What will I pay in total?**
3. **What comes back if I am right?**
4. **What do I lose if I am wrong?**
5. **How likely does the price say it is?**

For that 5/2 horse, it looks like this:

Your bet	ILLUSTRATION
Your selection	**This horse to win**
You pay	**£10 in total**
If it wins	**£35 returned, including £10 stake (£25 profit)**
If it loses	**£0 returned (£10 lost)**
Chance implied by price	**About 29%***
Traditional odds (optional)	**5/2 · 3.50 · +250**

* The chance implied by the price includes the bookmaker's margin. It is not a forecast.

Experienced fans can still switch to fractions. Newcomers see the money without doing the maths.

Multiples work the same way. Do not lead with "Yankee". Lead with the decision: "Pick four horses. That is eleven bets at £1, so £11 in total. If only your 3/1 and 5/1 shots win, £24 comes back. If fewer than two win, nothing does." The maths has not gone anywhere. The product has just done it for you.

05

Simple should mean safer, not faster

A fair question is whether easier betting means more betting. Done properly, it should not. The aim is to take out the confusion and keep every fact that helps someone decide whether to bet at all.

That means the total cost before you confirm. Returns and profit kept apart. Losses shown as clearly as wins. Offers and limits in plain English. And protection tools described for what they are: a 24 hour time-out is a breather, while self-exclusion is a formal step for people who want to stop.[4]

A slick screen that hides the margin, nudges bigger stakes or milks a near miss is still a bad screen. Good design respects the fan's judgement, including the decision not to bet.

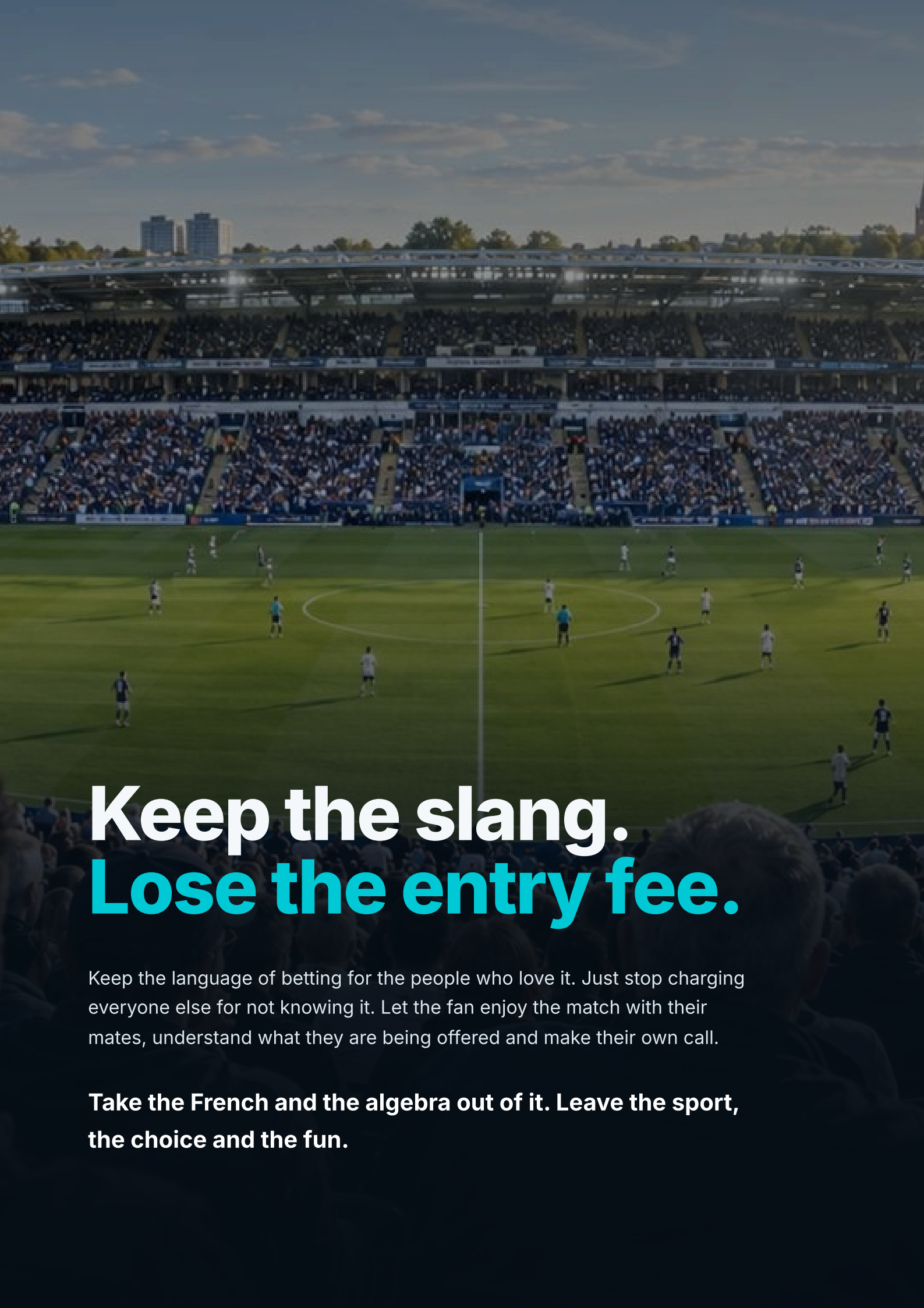
06

Where betting belongs

Fans do not learn sport from a bookmaker's menu. They learn it watching the match, reading the racecard, following the score and arguing with their mates. That is where a bet should live too.

Media brands and sports can put the moment first and let a bet follow naturally, with the cost and the outcome in plain sight, while licensed bookmakers take care of the betting itself.

Design for the fan who bets twice a year as carefully as for the one who bets twice a day. That fan might know more about football than anyone in the room. They just do not speak bookmaker, and nobody should feel foolish for that.



Keep the slang.
Lose the entry fee.

Keep the language of betting for the people who love it. Just stop charging everyone else for not knowing it. Let the fan enjoy the match with their mates, understand what they are being offered and make their own call.

Take the French and the algebra out of it. Leave the sport, the choice and the fun.

THE FUNTERON APPROACH

Funteron is redesigning something complicated and making it simple.

Funteron designs a betting experience within the websites and apps of media brands and sports, supported by licensed bookmakers. It puts the sport first and aims to explain the cost, potential return and bookmaker-implied chance of a bet in ordinary language. The fan stays within the media experience rather than being sent to a bookmaker website.

Funteron holds no funds, sets no odds, accepts no bets and is paid in bookmaker commission. funteron.com

---

Keith O'Loughlin is CEO of Funteron and former CEO of OpenBet. He chairs Christchurch Casino in New Zealand.

Notes and sources

1. **Full Fact, commentary on the 2011 Skills for Life numeracy survey (2023).** fullfact.org/education/rishi-sunak-maths-unemployment
2. **National Literacy Trust, OECD Survey of Adult Skills results for England (2024).** literacytrust.org.uk/blog/piaac-adult-skills-survey-how-do-englands-literacy-skills-compare-on-the-world-stage
3. **YouGov, A fifth of Brits wagered on the Grand National (30 April 2024).** yougov.com/en-gb/articles/49290
4. **UK Gambling Commission, guidance on time-outs and self-exclusion.** gamblingcommission.gov.uk/public-and-players/guide/page/give-yourself-timeouts-from-gambling gamblingcommission.gov.uk/public-and-players/page/self-exclusion

Editorial note: The 5/2 price and the Yankee figures are illustrations, not live offers. This paper sets out design principles. It does not claim they have been proven to increase participation or reduce harm.



Where Betting Belongs

An industry perspective by Keith O'Loughlin

wherebettingbelongs.com · funteron.com

18+. Free support is available 24 hours a day from the National Gambling Helpline on 0808 8020 133.