
The History of Bingo

Written by Matt Kennedy | Last updated: 12 June 2015

Many of us believe that Bingo miraculously appeared on our shores circa 1960. However, there is a long history of random number games, stretching back many centuries. Bingo as we know it today is a form of **lottery** and is a direct descendant of *Lo Giuoco del Lotto d'Italia*. In Elizabethan times, gambling was popular across all classes from the rich playing the lottery to the poor having fun playing 'shove-a-goat-with-a-groat'.

Bingo Is Born

But Bingo as we now know it was created by Edwin Lowe, an American and travelling toy salesman, who came across the game, then called Beano, in 1929. They used to yell Beano but one time he heard a player accidentally yell Bingo and the modern game was born. But there was a problem – because there were so few cards during large games there were many winners. So Lowe asked a tutor of maths to devise 6000 new cards, with numbers that were non-repeating. The professor went insane but Lowe and Bingo had its cards. In response to the hordes of letters Lowe would receive, asking for assistance in setting up **games of bingo**, Lowe published the first Bingo Instructional Manual. The manual was soon to be followed by a newsletter, known as The Blotter, which was published each month. The Blotter became a huge hit, attracting around 37,000 zealous subscribers. In the mid-1930s, Lowe's company had 1,000 workers, desperately attempting to stay on top of the demand. "We used more newsprint than the New York Times!", Ed Lowe once exclaimed! Lowe claimed that the world's biggest bingo game in its history took place in the Teaneck Armory in New York's Teaneck Armory. The game, said Lowe, attracted a total of 60,000 bingo players and approximately 10,000 were denied entrance into the club.

Bingo halls

The Betting and Gaming Act in Britain legalised existing social gaming in the 1960s, which meant the formation of bingo clubs. As there were a lot of cinemas with smaller and smaller audiences – the clubs took over these spaces. These cavernous halls were filled with gambling women trying for the bingo mecca of full house. These women got a vibrant social life into the bargain.

Bingo Lingo

Soon there was a bingo hall in every town and a kiosk on every promenade. In bingo in the UK it has long been a tradition that the callers who announce the numbers use a commonly known nickname to refer to each number as it is drawn. These nicknames are commonly referred to as 'bingo lingo'. There are rhyming phrases for every number from nought to 90. In certain UK bingo halls, the number caller announces the number with the players in the hall intoning the particular rhyme in a call and response method. In other bingo halls the caller announces the rhyme and is followed by the players collectively calling out the number. Bingo was a huge success right up until recently when the combination of a smoking ban and a recession saw the numbers start to dwindle. But luckily for all Bingo fans the internet was on its way to save the day and one of the nation's favourite numbers game.

Responsible Gambling: Gambling should be fun and never seen as a way to make money. Only gamble with money you can afford to lose. If you feel you may have a problem, visit [gambleaware.org](https://www.gambleaware.org) or call the National Gambling Helpline on 0808 8020 133. All sites featured on Top Online Bingo Sites are licensed by the UK Gambling Commission. You must be 18+ to gamble.

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