ADVANCED POT-LIMIT OMAHA

Volume II: LAG Play

Jeff Hwang

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Advanced Pot-Limit Omaha

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By

Jeff Hwang

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To Billy Talent, the greatest rock band America has never heard of; and to everyone who has made it this far with me.

Introduction

The basic philosophy is this: Defend the button, attack the blinds, and 3-bet at your discretion.

In *Advanced Pot-Limit Omaha Volume I: Small Ball and Shorthanded Play* (*APLO Vol. I*), we talked in depth about defending the button (Small Ball), or flat-calling in position against a pre-flop raiser, and using the positional advantage to control both pot size and our opponent via the float. We also discussed 3-betting before the flop in position (situational LAG) as well, both in low stack-to-pot ratio (SPR) Pump-and-Shove scenarios and in deep-stack, mid-to highSPR tactical scenarios.

Now that we have mastered the loose-passive pre-flop, Small Ball elements of our overall playing strategy, we can turn our collective attention to our elements of pre-flop attack: loose-aggressive (LAG) pre-flop tactics. These elements are:

1. Opening fire on the blinds

2. Attacking the limper

3. 3-betting in position

In *APLO Volume I,* we covered the basics of blind stealing and playing behind a limper in our discussion on Small Ball (Part IV), while 3-betting before the flop (Part V) was also covered in detail. Here in *Advanced Pot-Limit Omaha Volume II: LAG Play (APLO Vol. II)* , we will examine these LAG tactics in greater depth in order to allow you to comfortably -- and profitably -- open up your game even further than before.

Using This Book This book is designed to provide as little or as much case study as you, the reader, may require in order to grasp its ideas. It is meant to be an exhaustive -- but efficient -- study of LAG play.

We begin by applying the concept of variable-ratio reinforcement to continuation bet frequencies in Part I: C-Bet Frequency. Then in Part II: The LAG Approach, we will discuss our LAG approach both before and after the flop. This will be followed by a discussion on playing in deep-stack ante games, which have become prevalent online in the year since *APLO Vol. I* was published.

But then, following Part II, our focus shifts squarely from theory to application.

Parts III through VII contain hand walkthroughs -- case studies, if you will -- covering the three LAG elements: opening fire on the blinds, attacking the limper, and 3-betting before the flop in position. The hand walkthroughs in each of those chapters are arranged by order of increasing stakes, with the exception of the beginning -- each chapter starts with hands from $2-$4 blind play, followed by $0.25-$0.50, $0.50-$1 and $1-$2 blind games, and then deep-stack ante games ranging from $0.50-$1 with $0.20 antes ($200-max) to $2-$4 with $0.75 antes ($800-max).

That said, I recommend that you start by reading only the $2-$4 blind hands your first time through the book, and then go back and use the remaining hands for additional study as desired.

Part III: Opening Fire on the Blinds includes 80 hands representing the most basic element of LAG play. Part IV: Attacking the Limper (33 hands) covers the second element of LAG play. Part V: Playing Out of Position (64 hands) deals with situations in which you have opened with a raise but wind up playing out of position *after* the flop, either because you raised and got called or 3-bet by a player with position on you, or because you were in the blinds and raised into either the big blind or a limper.

Part VI: 3-Betting in Position vs. Small Ball (85 hands) deals with situations in which a player has opened with a raise in front of you, and you have a choice between flat-calling and playing Small Ball, or 3-betting in position -- our third element of LAG play.

Part VII: Blind Defense (29 hands) covers situations in which you are in the blinds and out of position against the pre-flop raiser, and must choose between calling, 3-betting out of position -- a play that is generally *not* recommended -- or otherwise folding.

All of the hands in this book are from short-handed online play, though these strategies and case studies apply to live play as well.

By now, if you have read both my first book, *Pot-Limit Omaha Poker: The Big Play Strategy (PLOP)* and *Advanced Pot-Limit Omaha Vol. I: Small Ball and Short-Handed Play (APLO Vol. I)* , you should have acquired virtually all of the technical skills and concept knowledge you need to play PLO at an advanced level. You should have a thorough comprehension of big-pot science, the straight draws in PLO, and starting hand construction from *Pot-Limit Omaha Poker*. You should also be familiar with floating and SPR, as well as the application of advanced skills such as check-raising, checking-and-calling (check-calling), and picking off bluffs as discussed in *APLO Vol. I.*

The text that follows assumes that you are familiar with these concepts.

And now, without wasting any more time on introductions, let's talk about the key concept that drives our approach to c-betting, and in turn makes our LAG approach tick.

Variable-Ratio Reinforcement

Once you get to a certain point in your development as a poker player -- once you've learned hand valuations and attained the necessary technical skills to play the game -- the next big step to opening up your game is figuring out how to regulate your opponents' behavior in such a way as to make them easier to play against. That is, the next step is founded in large part on psychology.

Enter variable-ratio reinforcement.

Variable-Ratio Reinforcement

Variable-ratio reinforcement is generally defined as delivering reinforcement after a target behavior is exhibited a random number of times.

Let's take a slot machine, for example. A gambler sits down at a slot machine and bets $1 a pull. Now as you would expect, most of the time, the gambler will bet $1 and lose, which of course is great for the casino. But if all the gambler does is bet $1 and lose every time, eventually he will quit (and/or go broke) and never want to play again. And so every few spins, the slot machine will reward the gambler with a payoff: $1 here, $1 there; $5 here, $1 there.

And then every once in a long while, the machine will reward the gambler with a big payoff in the form of a jackpot.

Now none of this quite adds up, which is how the house wins in the long run. But the promise of the big payoff, along with the intermittent rewards, is generally enough for the casino to reinforce the target behavior, which is to have the gambler keep betting $1 a pull.

That brings us to our next topic, which is the reinforcement schedule.

Reinforcement Schedules: Variable vs. Fixed

There are two basic types of reinforcement schedules: variable-ratio reinforcement schedules, and fixed-ratio reinforcement schedules.

Let's start with the latter, which is the most basic. A fixed-ratio reinforcement schedule is a schedule in which reinforcement is delivered at fixed intervals. Let's say, for example, that you are the casino and you want the slot machine to pay out 20% of the time, or every fifth spin. That is, the gambler will lose $1 four times in a row and get a payout on the fifth every time.

The reinforcement schedule would look something like this:

Slot Machine: Fixed-Ratio Reinforcement Schedule

Adjusted for payouts, the schedule might look more like:

Slot Machine: Fixed-Ratio Reinforcement Schedule with Payouts

In this scenario, for every 25 spins, the gambler would win $18 on the five winning spins and lose $20 on the rest, for a net loss of $2. For the house, this represents a payout rate of 92% and a house edge of 8%, which isn't too far from the real thing, depending on what casino you are in.

Now all of this sounds great, but there is a major problem: *Nobody would ever play a game with a payout (reinforcement) schedule like this one*!

Ok, so maybe "nobody" and "ever" might be a little strong, but the point remains: It wouldn't take long for the gambler to figure out that this slot machine pays out every fifth spin, and *only* every fifth spin. And as a result, the gambler would eventually quit playing on the spins they know they are going to lose (assuming the payout amounts are still random, meaning that the location of the $10 payout on the schedule is either random or unknown, for example).

Using a variable ratio is the fix for this problem.

Variable-Ratio Reinforcement Schedule

A variable-ratio reinforcement schedule uses a predetermined ratio while delivering the reinforcement randomly. Going back to the slot machine, let's say that you once again are the casino and want the slot machine to pay out 20% of the time, or every fifth time *on average*.

Now your reinforcement schedule may look something like:

Slot Machine: Variable-Ratio Reinforcement Schedule

And adjusted for payouts:

Slot Machine: Variable-Ratio Reinforcement Schedule with Payouts

In aggregate, the expectation is the same: Over 25 spins, the gambler will still net a $2 loss, giving the casino a 92% payout rate and an 8% house advantage. But in reality, this scenario is far, far more likely to achieve the desired result, which is to have the gambler keep playing. Because in contrast to the fixed-ratio reinforcement schedule, a variable-ratio reinforcement schedule with a 20% reinforcement ratio allows for clusters of payouts (e.g. back-to-back wins), as opposed to having spins (or blocks of spins) where the gambler can say for certain that he would lose, and quit playing as a result.

This is because the variable ratio does not specify *when* the payouts occur, only how often they occur *on average*.

That said, with regard to PLO, there is one major application for variable-ratio reinforcement. That application is the continuation bet (c-bet).

Pot-Limit Omaha: C-Betting Concepts

1. **When heads up in position with the pre-flop initiative, you want to follow through with a continuation bet (c-bet) as often as you can get away with it without becoming a magnet for check-raises.**

2. **If you have a hand that can stand a check-raise, you should generally bet.**

3. **If you have no piece of the flop and have little chance to improve -- such as when you have 8♠ 7♠ 6♦ 5♦ on a K♥ Q♣ 2♥ board -- you should generally bet in a heads-up pot, but check in a multiway pot.**

4. **If you have a marginal hand or draw that cannot stand a raise but has some value -- such as a non-nut flush draw, a gutshot or openended straight draw, or top pair or less -- you should tend to check behind. Ditto if you hit a pivot card (such as Q-J-9-8 on a T-5-2 board), where a lot of help can arrive on the turn to give you a big draw.**

5. **The weaker, or more straightforward the opponent -- the less likely he is to attempt to check-raise you -- the more often you should bet hands like one pair or air, and openended straight draws.**

6. **The trickier the opponent in a heads-up pot -- the more likely he is to attempt to check-raise you -- or the more opponents in the hand, the more often you should check behind those one-pair hands and openended straight draws.**

Part I: Continuation Bet
(C-Bet) Frequency

To c-bet or not to c-bet.

Here's a typical situation, one that represents the majority of the hands you will encounter when playing against the blinds. You open with a raise from the button before the flop, and only the big blind calls. The flop comes x-x-x (any three cards), and your opponent checks. The SPR > 8.

The question is this: How often do you follow through with a continuation bet (c-bet)? 50% of the time? 75%? 100%?

The answer is that you c-bet as often as you can get away with it, without becoming a check-raise magnet. And how often that is depends largely on your opponent.

Let's say your opponent is the type who never check-raises, never checks-and-calls, and always folds to a c-bet after he checks. Against this opponent, you can safely follow through with a c-bet roughly 100% of the time (you might check the nuts) because you are going to win every time you bet. But if, instead, your opponent is on the other end of the spectrum and is the type to go for a check-raise every time he checks to you in this situation, you are basically doing one of two things:

1. Betting only the nuts or close to it, because that is better than betting air and then folding to a raise, betting a weak or nonnut draw and then folding to a raise, or betting a marginal hand like one pair and then having to guess how good it is when your opponent raises, or...

2. C-betting/3-betting virtually any time you catch a decent piece of the flop -- maybe even top pair or better -- if you can stomach it.

	Opp. Check-Raise Frequency	Our C-Bet Frequency
Opponent A	~0%	~100% (~Any Flop)
Opponent B	~100%	~0% (~The Nuts)*

Obviously, most players fall somewhere between those two extremes, and of course you are going to flop the nuts more than 0% of the time as well (*again, if you were actually up against a 100% check-raiser, you might be c-betting/3-betting with a good chunk of your range), but you get the point: Your optimal c-bet frequency is going to be player-specific and dependent on how often your opponent check-raises, and to a lesser extent on how often he check-calls.

In a perfect world, you would simply bet every single time your opponent checks. The problem is that you are going to miss the flop about as often as your opponents do, and -- this being Omaha -- you are going to miss (or simply not flop strong) more often than not. As a result, if you simply bet every time, you are going to wind up getting check-raised often by your more astute opponents. This is something you (or, at least, I) would prefer to avoid, because it makes your opponents less predictable and harder to play against, when you really want to win the small pots where nobody really has anything without much of fight.

Obviously, against the weakest opponents who never check-raise and/or will always fold to c-bet when they check, you can go ahead and bet every time they check. But against everybody else, you should check back from time to time, and the trickier the player -- the more often they are willing to check-raise -- the more often you should check behind.

PLO Tip: The less likely the opponent is to check-raise, and the more likely he is to fold to a c-bet after he checks, the more often you should follow through with a c-bet.

PLO Tip: The trickier the opponent -- the more often they check-raise, and to a lesser extent the more often they check-call with marginal hands -- the more often you should check behind.

Target Behavior and Reinforcement Now you don't have to play a perfectly balanced game -- you just have to check back often enough to make your opponents more predictable and easier to play against. You want them to bet when they have it and check when they don't.

Every time you check behind reinforces the idea that you don't bet every flop, which makes those times you do bet appear stronger by tightening your perceived betting range, while also discouraging your opponents from going for a check-raise with their strong

hands by virtue of your threat to take the free card. And every time your opponent sees you check back top pair, undertrips or overpairs on paired boards, flush draws, gutshots, openended straight draws, *etc.* on the flop reinforces the idea that you don't always have nothing every time you check behind on the flop, which will discourage your opponents (some, but not all) from blasting away on later streets.

And again, you cater your check-back/c-bet range to your opponents, meaning that you go ahead and bet as often as you can get away with it, while checking behind more often against your more sophisticated opponents.

This gets messy at times -- sometimes you will check and get outdrawn when your opponent would have folded to a bet, and sometimes you flop top pair and still just have top pair on the turn when your opponent comes out firing (which you often aren't folding for one bet), *etc.* But nobody said the game was easy. Full-ring PLO and playing in multiway pots is fairly straightforward and fairly easy to teach; short-handed PLO and playing in short-handed pots is a lot trickier with a lot more gray area.

In the case of the continuation bet, the target behavior is that you want your opponents to become predictable by virtually eliminating their check-raise move, subsequently betting when they have it, and checking when they don't. And you reinforce this behavior by checking behind with some frequency, varying that frequency based on the particular opponent.

PLO Tip: You want your opponents to bet into to you when they have it, and check when they don't.

PLO Tip: Every time you check behind reinforces the idea that you don't bet every time, which makes those times you do follow through with a c-bet appear stronger.

C-Betting: Applying Variable-Ratio Reinforcement

The gist of the discussion thus far is that you want to discourage your opponents from check-raising you when you take the pre-flop initiative, while encouraging them to bet when they flop strong and check when they don't. And in order to do so, you reinforce the "no check-raise" and "bet when they have it, check when they don't" behaviors by checking behind from time to time; how often depends on the opponent.

A 20% reinforcement schedule might look like this:

C-Betting: Variable-Ratio Reinforcement Schedule (Illustration Only)

Note that the schedule is for illustration purposes only -- I'm not saying 20% is the magic number, only that this is what a 20% variable-ratio reinforcement schedule might look like. But the question is, how exactly would you go about applying such a schedule in real life?

The answer is in the cards.

VRR in Practice: Built-In Randomization is in the Cards There's a key point to be made in all of this, and it is that randomizing your game *doesn't* mean that you play randomly. It doesn't mean that you look at your watch and base your playing decisions on the position of the second hand, or that you bet four times and then check once, or whatever.

The key to randomizing your game is simply that you don't play every flop the same way every time, while at least giving the appearance that you can hit most any flop hard.

The appearance part is related to starting hand selection, which we will discuss in Part II: The LAG Approach. But there is a built-in mechanism for randomizing our play, and it is that *flops are inherently random*. In other words, the flop is different every time, because that is what happens when you deal three random cards out of a 52-card deck. Meanwhile, we have a different answer for any given flop depending on what we hold in our hand.

Let's take a 9♣ 7♦ 3♣ flop, for example. The situation is standard -- we open with a raise from the button and only the big blind calls, and the SPR > 8. The flop comes 9♣ 7♦ 3♣, and our opponent checks to us. You hold any one of a group of hands you might have opened with from the button.

What do you do?

Flop: 9♣ 7♦ 3♣, Your Opponent Checks*

Your Hand	Action
J♣ T♦ 9♠ 8♣	?
K♠ Q♦ J♠ T♦	?
T♠ T♦ 9♠ 9♦	?
A♣ A♦ J♠ 2♣	?
A♥ K♠ Q♦ 9♠	?
K♦ Q♣ J♠ 2♥	?
7♠ 6♥ 5♠ 4♣	?

*You have pre-flop initiative and positional advantage, SPR > 8

Here's how I approach it:

Flop: 9♣ 7♦ 3♣, Your Opponent Checks*

Your Hand	Comment	Action
J♣ T♦ 9♠ 8♣	Top pair, 13-card nut wrap with flush draw	Bet
K♠ Q♦ J♠ T♦	Nut gutshot, no flush draw, pivot card, overcards	Check
T♠ T♦ 9♠ 9♦	Top set	Bet
A♣ A♦ J♠ 2♣	Overpair, nut flush draw	Bet
A♥ K♠ Q♦ 9♠	Top pair, overcard improvers	Check/Bet
K♦ Q♣ J♣ 2♥	Non-nut flush draw	Check
7♠ 6♥ 5♠ 4♣	Middle pair, sucker wrap	Check/Bet

*You have pre-flop initiative and positional advantage, SPR > 8

Some of the decisions are fairly clear cut, while some of them are somewhat player dependent. For example, I am almost certainly betting the strong hands -- J♣ T♦ 9♠ 8♣ for top pair with a 13-card nut wrap and a flush draw; T♠ T♦ 9♠ 9♦ for top set; and A♣ A♦ J♠ 2♣ for an overpair and the nut flush draw. These are hands that I will not fold to a check-raise.

I am most likely checking K♠ Q♦ J♠ T♦ for a nut gutshot but no flush draw, having hit a pivot card (the 9♣) that could lead to a wrap on the turn, as well as a fistful of overcards. This hand has a lot of potential value that I would lose if I were to bet and get check-raised, in which case I would most likely have to fold. I am also likely checking K♦ Q♣ J♣ 2♥ for a non-nut flush draw, as it has some value I would lose if I were to bet and get check-raised, and then most likely have to fold.

The other two hands -- A♥ K♠ Q♦ 9♠ for top pair and overcard improvers, and 7♠ 6♥ 5♠ 4♣ for middle pair and a sucker wrap -- are fairly player dependent. I would go ahead and bet these hands against weaker, more predictable opponents, but might check these hands back against trickier opponents for pot control purposes.

So you can see how the variable ratio would change depending on the opposition, as I would bet five times out of these seven hands against a weaker opponent, but might only bet three times and check four times against a trickier opponent. You can also see how our play on any given flop is naturally randomized by the cards we hold in our hands.

PLO Tip: Our play on any given flop is naturally randomized by the cards we hold in our hands.

Sample Variable-Ratio Reinforcement Schedules

Let's take another look at the contrast in variable-ratio reinforcement schedules over a sample of 25 hands against two different opponents -- a weak opponent who rarely check-raises, and a strong opponent who check-raises with some frequency. It is the same situation: You are heads up with position on the big blind, with the pre-flop initiative and an SPR > 8, and your opponent has checked to you.

The shaded boxes represent hands you might bet against the particular opponent given your holding; the white boxes represent hands you might check back.

VRR Schedule Against Weak Opponent Who Rarely CheckRaises

VRR Schedule Against Tricky Opponent Who CheckRaises with Some Frequency

Again, note the disparity in our reinforcement schedules against weaker opponents vs. trickier opponents. In this particular 25-hand sample, we would follow through with a c-bet 19 out of 25 times (76%) against the weaker opponent, but only 12 out of 25 times (48%) against the trickier player.

Also note that these tables are for illustration purposes only, and that they by no means imply that 76% is the optimum c-bet percentage against a weak player or that 48% is an optimum c-bet percentage against a tough player -- the intention is only to illustrate the disparity between how we approach the two types of players given the same set of hands.

C-Betting in Position: Practice Situations

1. It's a $1-$2 game online, five-handed, and you are dealt T♦ T♠ 6♠ 6♥ in the cutoff seat. The UTG player folds. You ($221.05) open with a raise to $7, and only the big blind ($250.20) calls. The flop comes A♥ 9♥ 4♣. Your opponent checks. What do you do?

Answer: Bet. You have an underpair without much in the way of improvers, and the acehigh flop provides a good c-betting opportunity.

2. It's a $1-$2 game online, six-handed, with $200 stacks. You are dealt A♦ K♥ T♦ 5♥ on the button. You open with a raise to $7, and only the big blind calls. The flop comes 9♦ 6♦ 3♥. Your opponent checks. What do you do?

Answer: Check. With the bare nut-flush draw, you should generally take the free card.

3. It's a $2-$4 game online, four-handed, and you are dealt A♥ K♥ J♠ 3♦ on the button. The UTG player folds. You ($1,151.90) open with a raise to $14, and only the small blind ($320.30) calls. The flop comes T♣ 9♥ 6♥, giving you the nut-flush draw with a nut-gutshot-straight draw. Your opponent checks. Do you check or bet?

Answer: Bet. You have a nut gutshot with the nut-flush draw, and as such have enough draw that you do not fear a check-raise.

4. It's a $1-$2 game with $0.30 antes online, six-handed. You are dealt A♥ J♦ 9♥ 3♥ in the cutoff. It gets folded to you, and you ($585.35) open with a raise to $8.80. Only the small blind ($147.70) calls. The flop comes 9♠ 9♣ 7♠, giving you trip nines with an ace kicker. Your opponent checks. Do you check or bet?

Answer: Bet. Generally speaking, you should tend to bet overtrips.

5. It's a $2-$4 game online, three-handed. You are dealt K♣ Q♦ T♣ 4♣ on the button. You ($400) open with a raise to $14, and only the small blind ($245.30) calls. The flop comes K♥ Q♣ 5♣, and your opponent checks. What do you do?

Answer: Bet. Top two pair should generally be bet.

6. It's a $1-$2 game online, six-handed, with $400 stacks. You are dealt J♥ T♦ 9♥ 8♣ on the button. The cutoff opens with a raise to $7. You reraise to $24, and only the cutoff calls. The flop comes 8♦ 7♥ 4♣. Your opponent checks. What do you do?

Answer: Bet. You cannot get check-raised off of top pair with a 13-card nut wrap.

7. It's a $1-$2 game online, six-handed, with $400 stacks. You are dealt J♥ T♦ 9♥ 8♣ on the button. The cutoff opens with a raise to $7. You reraise to $24, and only the cutoff calls. The flop comes Q♥ 6♦ 3♥. Your opponent checks. What do you do?

Answer: Check. In a mid-SPR situation, you should take the free card with the bare-flush draw.

8. It's a $1-$2 game online, six-handed. You are dealt J♥ T♦ 9♥ 8♣ on the button. The cutoff ($400) opens with a raise to $7, and you ($400) reraise to $24. The small blind folds, but the big blind ($75) calls. The cutoff now folds. The flop comes Q♥ 6♦ 3♥. Your opponent checks. What do you do?

Answer: Bet. There is $56 in the pot, and the big blind has a $51 remaining stack, making this an ultra-low-SPR situation with less than one pot-sized bet left. With no money left to play, you cannot get check-raised off your draw. That said, you should bet and take a shot at winning the pot without a fight.

9. It's a $1-$2 game online, six-handed, with $200 stacks. You are dealt A♠ K♥ Q♠ T♦ on the button. You open with a raise to $7, and only the big blind calls. The flop comes Q♥ 6♦ 3♥. Your opponent checks. What do you do?

Answer: Sometimes check, sometimes bet. With top pair and a fistful of overcard draws to top two pair, you can comfortably check back the flop for pot control purposes. But against a weak player, you should generally go ahead and bet it.

10. It's a $1-$2 game online, six-handed, with $200 stacks. You are dealt A♠ K♥ Q♠ T♦ on the button. The cutoff opens with a raise to $7. You reraise to $24, and only the cutoff calls. The flop comes Q♥ 6♦ 3♥. Your opponent checks. What do you do?

Answer: Bet the pot. You have top pair in a low-SPR situation. The play is to bet the pot and commit if check-raised.

11. It's a $1-$2 game online, six-handed, with $400 stacks. You are dealt A♠ K♥ Q♠ T♦ on the button. The cutoff opens with a raise to $7. You reraise to $24, and only the cutoff calls. The flop comes Q♥ 6♦ 3♥. Your opponent checks. What do you do?

Answer: Sometimes check, sometimes bet. As in situation #9, you have top pair with a fistful of overcard outs, and with the pre-flop initiative in a mid-SPR situation (in contrast to situation #10); the only difference is that you 3-bet in this hand. The overriding consideration is SPR, and *not* the fact that you 3-bet pre-flop. In other words, it would be a mistake to say that you should c-bet top pair when you 3-bet pre-flop, because the fact that you 3-bet is not the deciding factor.

12. It's a $1-$2 game online, six-handed, with $200 stacks. You are dealt K♦ Q♣ T♥ 7♦ on the button, and open with a raise to $7. Only the big blind calls. The flop comes J♦ 5♥ 3♣. Your opponent checks. What do you do?

Answer: Usually check, sometimes bet. You hit the pivot card, and have a backdoor diamond draw as well. That said, you should tend to check this. However, if your opponent is a weak player and rarely check-raises, you might venture a bet on this flop.

13. It's a $1-$2 game online, six-handed, with $200 stacks. You are dealt J♦ T♦ 8♥ 5♣ on the button, and open with a raise to $7. Only the big blind calls. The flop comes K♦ 7♥ 2♣. Your opponent checks. What do you do?

Answer: Bet. You have no hand, no draw, and little prospect for improvement on a relatively dry board.

14. It's a $1-$2 game online, six-handed, with $200 stacks. You are dealt K♥ Q♦ J♠ 9♥ on the button, and open with a raise to $7. Only the big blind calls. The flop comes T♥ 6♦ 4♠. Your opponent checks. What do you do?

Answer: Usually check, sometimes bet. You hit the pivot card with backdoor hearts as well. Most of the time, you should check and take the free card. But against a truly weak opponent, betting is OK.

15. It's a $1-$2 game online, six-handed, with $200 stacks. You are dealt A♠ K♠ J♦ 5♦ on the button, and open with a raise to $7. Only the big blind calls. The flop comes A♥ 8♦ 4♦. Your opponent checks. What do you do?

Answer: Sometimes check, sometimes bet. This is a flop that offers some conflict, as you have top pair with a flush draw. The problem is that your flush draw is rather weak, and as a result, you may not be able to stand a check-raise. That said, you should tend to check back the flop and play pot-control, though you may still bet against weaker opponents.

Part II: The LAG Approach

The LAG approach to playing short-handed pots both before and after the flop.

Our LAG (loose-aggressive) pre-flop playing approach encompasses three basic elements:

1. **Opening fire on the blinds**
2. **Attacking lone limpers in position, and to an extent**
3. **3-betting in position to isolate and build the pot for value.**

In other words, the basic elements are technically nothing we haven't already talked about before. Our LAG approach does not so much represent a strategy in itself completely distinct from Small Ball, but rather a *shift in emphasis* from pot control to attack when playing against the blinds, when playing behind a limper, and when playing behind a pre-flop raiser. Put differently, the difference is not in the starting hands that we play, but rather what we do with them when there is one limper or are no limpers in front of us.

Our focus is still on playing short-handed pots (heads up or three way) with the positional advantage.

Under Small Ball, we are already playing a wide variety of hands in position. However, our Small Ball strategy allows for openlimping with a wide variety of hands from late position -- particularly the more marginal-and speculative-class hands -- where the positional advantage tends to trump the pre-flop initiative, and where we favor pot control and ease of play over aggression, the pre-flop initiative, and bloating pot size. That said, the more comfortable you become playing *with* the pre-flop initiative, the wider the range of hands and the more often you will be able to comfortably bring it in for a raise.

Doing so will allow you to:

1. **Pick up the blinds more often without a fight.** You can't win the blinds pre-flop by limping. The more often you open with a raise before the flop, the more blind money you can pick up without risking any more money.

2. **Build the pot for value in a favorable situation where you have the positional advantage.** The consolation prize for those times when the blinds defend is that you will generally be in a favorable situation in which you have the positional advantage, and now there is more money in the pot than there would have been had you merely openlimped. This is generally an advantage, unless raising pre-flop and taking the initiative causes you to make playing errors.

3. **Have the versatility to take advantage of your opponents any way you see fit, and the ability to tailor your play to both your opponents and your opponents' stack sizes.** Having the ability to play both with and without the pre-flop initiative gives you greater versatility to tailor your play to your opponents, and to your opponents'stack sizes as well. It gives you the ability to changegears at will. You can open fire on the blinds and/or limpers, or limp in and play pot control, or otherwise force shorter-stacked players to play deep and see a flop, should you so choose.

It's important to note that playing a predominantly LAG pre-flop style does *not* preclude you from playing Small Ball, and vice versa. Playing LAG against the blinds does not mean that you can't flat call raises pre-flop in position; nor does it mean that you can't open limp with marginal or speculative hands -- especially dry big pairs.

The point to be made is that you don't mold your playing style to fit a label; you don't say "I want to be a LAG player" and then copy what "LAG players" do. Rather, labels such as "LAG" are meant to describe a general style of play, and not the other way around. In other words, you develop your own style of play -- which may incorporate elements of both the Small Ball and LAG approaches, and perhaps more of one approach than the other -- and *then* you can classify the overall body of work.

In fact, if you truly become a complete player, you should not even be able to "label" your overall style as one thing or the other. You should be able to adjust your style of play to the situation and be able to vary your play between LAG and Small Ball as the situation dictates.

Also note that playing a LAG style *doesn't* mean that you play LAG in every position, but rather when you are in late position, or when you are in the hijack (and sometimes UTG in 6-handed play) and the players behind you are fairly tight. Because generally speaking, you don't want to spend a lot of time getting caught playing heads up out of position with sub-premium hands, no matter what you label your style of play. Consequently, when playing out of position, you still want to open with predominantly premium-class hands.

That said, our goal here is to develop the skills needed to further open up your game and enable a more LAG-heavy style of play.

Let's take a look at our LAG approach before the flop.

Opening Fire on the Blinds

The first thing to note about starting hand considerations is that the set of playable starting hands under a LAG-heavy approach is *identical* to the set of playable starting hands under the Small Ball-heavy approach (which in itself is an extension of the starting hands prescribed in *Pot-Limit Omaha Poker: The Big Play Strategy*). Again, the only real difference is what you do with those hands. And in this context, "LAG" simply means "taking the pre-flop initiative," whereas "Small Ball" means playing without it.

In other words, we are already playing rather loosely under Small Ball; our LAG approach simply adds the aggression factor.

When opening fire on the blinds -- the first and most basic element of our LAG approach -- you still want a hand that has big-pot potential. Playing LAG does not mean that you throw all starting hand criteria out the window. Rather, your hand may or may not have some structural weakness (like a gap, for example), but it should still have the potential to develop into a big-pot hand. All hands should be at least single-suited -- if you are on the button with Q-J-T-9 rainbow and everybody has folded to you, you should tend to avoid raising and bloating the pot, as this hand lacks real big-pot potential without having the benefit of a suit.

From the *button*, this means:

- Premium-class hands. Any four-card rundown with a suit from A-K-Q-J down to 6-5-4-3, big double-pair hands with a suit, premium-plus AAhands, premium pairplus hands such as Q♠ Q♣ J♠ T♣, suited-ace hands with rundowns such as A-9-8-7 with a suited ace, *etc.* Also, any four-card rundown with a single gap from A-K-Q-T down to 6-5-4-2, A-K-J-T down to 6-5-3-2, and A-Q-J-T down to 7-5-4-3, though the top gap hands (K-J-T-9 down to 7-5-4-3) are technically more marginal hands.

- Speculative-class hands. Speculative-class wrap hands with high-card strength, such as Q-J-9-7 and Q-J-T-7; smaller pairplus wrap hands such as 9-8-7-7; suited aces with connectors, such as A♠ 9♦ 8♥ 2♠; suited aces with big pairs, such as A♠ Q♣ Q♦ 4♠; and suited-aces, Broadway-wrap hands like A♠ K♦ J♣ 3♠.

- Three Broadway cards. Any three cards ten-and-higher, such as K-Q-J-x, K-Q-T-x, and A-J-T-x.

- Three middle rundowns with an overcard kicker. In other words, you can bring it in for a raise with Q-9-8-7, but you should generally open limp with 9-8-7-2.

- Small-Ball hands. Any three cards with 13-card nut wrap potential, at least single-suited.

In other words, you can open fire on the blinds with potentially your entire playing range with the exception of dry pairs.

With that list in mind, the tighter the blinds are, the wider your blind-stealing range should be. If the blinds are extremely tight, you might consider raising with virtually any hand you choose to play, with one caveat: You should generally avoid trying to steal the blinds with hands with dry pairs in them, such as J-J-5-3 with a suit, Q-Q-T-7 with a suit, or K-K-J-2 with a suit, as you are likely going to be handicapped after the flop unless you flop a set. However, a hand like A♠ Q♣ Q♦ 4♠ for a big pair with a suited ace is good enough for a raise, as is a hand like K♠ K♦ Q♠ J♣.

Again, playing "LAG" doesn't mean that you have to raise with every hand you play. If you are more comfortable openlimping with speculative wrap hands like 7-6-4-2 with a suit or a marginal Small-Ball hand like J-6-4-3 with a suit, then you can go ahead and openlimp with them.

PLO Tip: You want a hand that may or may not have a structural weakness (like a gap), but at least has legitimate potential to develop into a big-pot hand. All hands should be at least single-suited.

PLO Tip: You should generally avoid raising with hands that you don't want to get 3-bet with, namely dry pairs.

Adjustments for the Cutoff Seat When everybody folds to you in the cutoff seat, you have another obstacle to overcome, and that is the player on the button. Generally speaking, you should tighten up a bit in the cutoff seat. But how much so depends on how loose, tight, and/or aggressive the player behind you is (his or her stack size is another major consideration, which we will discuss in the next section: Playing Out of Position).

Ideally, you'd like to have a really tight player on your left who rarely -- if ever -- calls raises pre-flop. This way, you effectively get to have the button twice, and therefore don't have to adjust your game much. But if, instead, the player on your left is extremely loose and will call any pre-flop raise, you need to tighten up your blind-stealing requirements -- otherwise, you will often find yourself playing heads up out of position after the flop when the button calls your raise, but the blinds fold. In fact, with this type of player on your left, you can still open limp with a wide range, so long as the button doesn't raise much pre-flop, but you should avoid opening with a raise with most everything except the premium-class hands.

Now if, instead, you have a maniac on your left who raises and 3-bets pre-flop at every opportunity, then you have even more problems, as you can no longer figure on seeing the flop cheaply. In that case, you need to tighten up considerably. You should also look to change seats, or otherwise find a different game

From the Hijack Seat Clearly, you should tighten up more from the hijack seat. You can still take some liberties if the players behind you are fairly tight; otherwise, if the players behind you are fairly tough and/or loose, you may want to restrict your open raising range to premium-class hands.

As we have discussed in both *Pot-Limit Omaha Poker: The Big Play Strategy* and *Advanced Pot-Limit Omaha Volume I: Small Ball and Short-Handed Play*, the one thing you want to avoid is getting stuck playing pots heads up out of position, and especially with sub-premium hands.

PLO Tip: You want to avoid getting stuck playing pots heads up out of position, and especially with sub-premium hands. With tough and/or loose players behind you, you should tighten up your open-raising range considerably.

UTG
Playing UTG six-handed, you should be playing reasonably tight, unless the players behind you are unbelievably tight, or are really just so weak after the flop that you just don't care.

The Size of the Raise Generally speaking, when you are on the button and there is nobody else in the hand but the blinds, you should go ahead and bring it in for a full pot-sized raise. In other words, in a $1-$2 game online, you should go ahead and bet the full $7, especially since it is natural in online play to simply bet the max (3.5x the big blind in this case); alternatively, in a $2-$5 game live, it is natural to open with a raise to either $15 (3x the big blind) or $20 (4x the big blind). However, if the blinds are extremely tight, but you have a hand like Q-J-T-9 doublesuited and you really want to see the flop, you might consider bringing it in for a minimum raise to encourage action.

Not only is a pot-sized raise the most natural bet size in online play, it is the one that has the greatest chance of either picking up the blinds, isolating limpers, or otherwise resulting in a heads-up pot in position after the flop. In addition, a full pot-sized raise also maximizes the value of the positional advantage by building a bigger pot before the flop than a smaller raise would.

When playing out of position, you really need to consider the purpose of the raise. If you are opening fire on the blinds, then you should probably bring it in for the full raise. If, on the other hand, the players behind you are fairly loose but you still want to juice the pot a little, you might consider bringing it in for a smaller raise to encourage the blinds to come in and create a multiway pot.

Playing Out of Position: The Impact of
Stack Sizes

When playing out of position -- meaning any position but the button for the purposes of this particular discussion -- there is another major consideration other than how loose/tight, passive/aggressive, or weak/strong the players behind you are, and it is stack size.

Consider the following two scenarios. It is a six-handed $1-$2 blind game, you are in the hijack seat, and the UTG player has folded, so that action is on you. Your actual hand is irrelevant. Assume that all opponents are competent, but not strong.

In which situation would you be more likely to open with a raise? Situation A, or Situation B?

Situation A
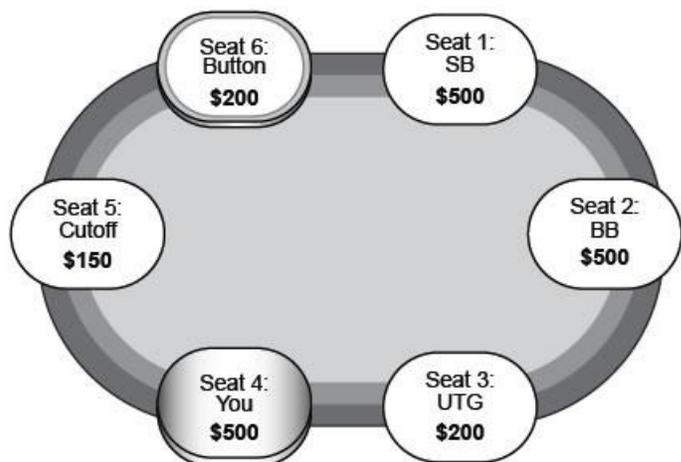
Situation B
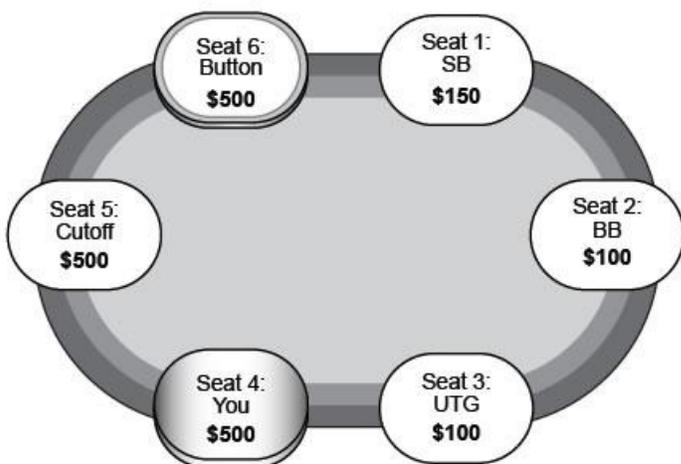
The best answer should be fairly obvious, and it should be Situation A.

You see, when everybody has 100BB stacks, the main consideration is how loose/tight, passive/aggressive or weak/strong the players behind you are. But when you are sitting deep in a game where there are other big stacks in the neighborhood of 200BBs+, the *location* of those stacks becomes extremely important and the overriding factor in your decisions.

In Situation A, you have position on all of the big stacks, and, therefore, are not so concerned with the players behind you, though you should still tighten up a bit if the players behind you are strong, loose players who are likely to challenge you in position. That said, generally speaking, you can afford to play quite liberally from the hijack seat in this type of situation.

But Situation B, on the other hand, is suicide. In this situation, you are really playing two games: a 50BB to 75BB game against the players you have position on, but a 250BB game against the players who have position on you. And not only should you play squeaky tight, but you really need to pick up and find another game.

This is a situation with not a lot of upside, but a lot of downside.

Attacking the Limper

The second element of our LAG approach is Attacking the Limper.

Let's say that you are on the button, and only one player has limped in front of you. Generally, in this spot, you should revert to normal full-ring strategy, which is to raise with the premium-class hands, and limp in with the speculative and marginal hands -- which now include the additional Small Ball hands presented in this chapter. However, if the blinds are extremely tight and the limper is a weak player, you might consider raising with additional hands, which should generally be composed of high cards -- hands such as K-Q-J-8 or K-Q-T-7 at least single-suited, or a Broadway wrap hand like A-K-T-3 with a suited ace.

By raising, you are looking to knock out the blinds and isolate the limper, while building a bigger pot for value when you have the positional advantage against weak players.

Playing Behind Two or More Limpers When two or more players have limped in front of you, you can anticipate playing a multiway pot after the flop. In this case, you should generally revert to normal full-ring strategy and restrict your raises to premium-class hands, while limping in with speculative and marginal hands.

Facing a Raise in Position: 3-Betting
vs. Small Ball

When you face a raise and have the positional advantage on the pre-flop raiser, you have three choices. You can either:

1. Fold
2. Call and play Small Ball, or
3. 3-bet (reraise) to improve your chances of isolating the raiser, while building the pot for value.

We discussed 3-betting pre-flop -- the third and final element of our LAG approach -- in Part V of *Advanced Pot-Limit Omaha Volume I: Small Ball and Short-Handed Play*, and if you haven't already done so, I recommend going back and reading that discussion.

That said, the most important thing is that you maintain control of the hand. And assuming that you are not folding, there are a number of factors that may affect your decision whether to 3-bet to isolate and build the pot for value, or whether to call and play Small Ball:

1. Absolute Position. If you are on the button, you can 3-bet comfortably knowing that nobody else can come in behind you. But if you are in the hijack seat and the UTG player opens with a raise, you might think twice about 3-betting with K♥ 7♦ 5♥ 4♦ or J♠ 9♦ 8♠ 6♦ -- if somebody else is liable to call (or raise) and keep position on you after the flop. These types of hands do well enough heads up with the positional advantage, but are less valuable in multiway pots.

2. Stack sizes. Let's say it's a $1-$2 game, and you ($200) are dealt J♠ 9♦ 8♠ 6♦ on the button. The cutoff seat opens with a raise to $7, and it is your turn to act. You should be more inclined to 3-bet your opponent if he has $200 or 100BB stack than if he has a $40 or 20BB stack, as 3-betting light against the short stacks serves merely to neutralize your positional advantage.

3. The contents of your hand. Let's say it's a $1-$2 game with $200 stacks. You are on the button, and the cutoff opens with a raise to $7. In this case, you should be more inclined to 3-bet with a hand like J♠ 9♦ 8♠ 6♦ -- a doublesuited rundown with two single gaps, and the kind of hand that does well enough in either Pump-and-Shove (low-SPR) 3-bet situations or deep-stack isolation 3-betting situations -- but flat call with a pure Small Ball hand like Q♦ T♥ 9♦ 5♣, a single-suited rundown with a top gap and a dangler.

Also, as noted, you should generally avoid 3-betting with hands containing single pairs other than A-A-x-x -- such as K♠ K♦ Q♥ 5♠ or 9♦ 9♠ 8♦ 7♠ -- as these kinds of hands are hard to improve to when they miss the flop, and they are going to miss the flop more often than not.

The exception is when the stacks are really deep -- maybe 200-300BBs or more -- and you have a real premium pairplus hand like K♠ K♦ Q♠ J♦. What you really want to avoid is a situation where you get 4-bet and get stuck with a dry pair in a low-SPR situation and have to guess at how good the pair is (against what often -- but not always -- will be A-Ax-x). At least when you flop a pair while holding a hand with four cards of separate rank (like T-9-8-7), you can generally shove comfortably in a low-SPR situation, knowing that you probably have about 11 (or more) outs against A-A-x-x, depending on what else you have in addition to two pair or trips draws. You don't have this luxury when holding dry kings.

4. The action in front of you. If you are on the button and the cutoff opens with a raise in front of you, you can generally afford to be quite liberal when 3-betting. However, if there is a raise and a call in front of you, you should generally restrict your 3-bets to the premium-class hands, as you are very unlikely to see the flop heads-up in this case -- or at least not for 3-bets (you might see a 4-bet from the original raiser that knocks out the player in between, though!).

5. Your opponent. With extremely weak opponents over whom you have complete control *after* the flop, you might be able to get away with doing just about anything you want before the flop. But with more sophisticated opponents -- particularly those who may be strong enough to outplay you in 3-bet pots from out of position -- you might save your 3-bets for your stronger hands, while flat-calling and playing Small Ball with everything else.

6. Your own comfort level. This aspect is almost completely ignored when most players talk about the merits of 3-betting. Usually, whenever the topic of 3-betting is discussed, there's always at least one guy who says "3-betting is the nuts!" But as I have stressed before, *post-flop play dictates pre-flop playing strategy*.

3-betting in itself is *not* actually the nuts -- how strong the play can be depends greatly on your comfort playing *after* the flop in 3-bet pots. That said, the more practice you get and the more comfortable you become playing in 3-bet pots with the initiative, the more often you should 3-bet. On the other hand, if you find yourself constantly getting outplayed after 3-betting in position, you might be better off tightening your 3-bet range, or otherwise try spending time practicing the play in smaller games than usual.

3-betting and taking the initiative vs. flat calling and playing Small Ball is the subject of Part VI: 3-Betting in Position vs. Small Ball.

Playing from the Blinds

The place the average player screws up most is when playing in the blinds. The first big mistake the average player makes is loosely defending their blind against raises, and as a result winds up playing big pots out of position with sub-premium hands. The second big mistake the average player makes is thinking that they need to attack limpers -- or attack the big blind when in the small blind -- and as a result winds up building big pots out of position with sub-premium hands.

No matter what you label your playing style -- "LAG" or otherwise -- you should focus more on attacking the other players'blinds when in position than defending your small blind or trying to attack them from out of position.

And in either blind position, you should tend to avoid "attacking limpers" with a whole lot less than premium-class hands.

When Everybody Has Folded to You in the Small Blind When everybody has folded to you in the small blind, you should avoid trying to steal if the big blind is a tough player, as he is liable to call (or 3-bet) any raise you make, at which point you will be heads up out of position in a raised pot, in a game (PLO) where making the last raise doesn't yield as big an advantage as having the positional advantage.

Generally speaking, you wouldn't be giving up much if you simply gave up your small blind every time. That said, you should generally fold if the big blind is tough, though you will probably play the premium-class hands, anyway. And *that* said, openlimping with premium hands from the small blind against a tough opponent in the big blind isn't nearly as bad as it sounds if you consider the importance of position.

I'm not saying you shouldn't raise with the real premium hands; I'm just saying that it's something to consider. After all, limping in and calling a raise might be better than raising and getting 3-bet.

On the other hand, if the big blind is a weak player over whom you might have some control even from out of position, you might play a little more liberally. You probably raise with the premium-class hands, though you might limp in and try to play a small pot with some of the more mediocre hands.

Playing from the Big Blind When Only the Small Blind Has Limped When you are in the big blind and only the small blind has limped in front of you, how to play it is really up to you. Generally speaking, the more comfortable you are playing with the pre-flop initiative and/ or the weaker your opponent, the more often you should raise in order to either build the pot for value, or otherwise win the pot outright.

3-Betting Out of Position No way. Well, maybe I shouldn't say "No way." Players can often get away with 3-betting pre-flop from out of position in online games where the stacks are often less than (and sometimes considerably less than) 100 big blinds -- and there are probably times where stack sizes may dictate that 3-betting from out of position and creating a low-SPR situation with a real premium-class hand may be preferable to flat calling and playing a mid-range SPR situation heads up out of position -- but the play has little to no application in deeper stacked play, and especially deeper stacked live play.

I'm not saying I've never done it -- in fact, I've included several hands in Part VI: Blind Defense in which I've 3-bet from out of position myself.

But you have to think carefullyabout what you are trying to accomplish when doing so. For example, if you are trying to discourage the button raiser from trying to steal your blinds in the future, then forget about it: It's probably not going to work. Personally, I've never raised from the button in PLO and folded to a 3-bet from the blinds before in my life. If the stacks are reasonably deep -- 100 BBs or so or bigger -- the button raiser is usually licking his lips when a player in the blinds comes out with a 3-bet; if the stacks are little shorter to the extent that there is one bet left or so, the button raiser usually will say "OK" and go along with it.

Just about the only time the player on the button will *really*be annoyed by a 3-bet from the blinds is when the 3-bet is all-in or near it, and that is assuming the player on the button doesn't have A-A-x-x.

Much like being the first raiser out of position, 3-betting out of position usually serves to merely build a bigger pot out of position. If there is any advantage in it, it is probably marginal at best. I think most of the time, most players are better off giving up their blinds to the first raise than 3-betting and either compounding the problem or otherwise chasing a small edge. This will become even more true as some online sites move to raise the minimum buy-ins on their PLO games.

LAG Play: Post-Flop Play

In terms of hand valuation, post-flop play is essentially identical regardless of pre-flop playing approach; the real difference between post-flop play using a LAG-heavy approach vs. a Small Ball-heavy approach is that you will be playing with the pre-flop initiative more often when you take a more LAG-heavy approach. This, in turn, means that you will probably be checking behind more often when taking a LAG-heavy approach than a Small-Ball-heavy approach.

Here's the basic situation once again: You open with a raise before the flop from the button, and only the big blind calls. The SPR > 8, so this is a deep-stack scenario where there are three legitimate bets left to play.

At this point, there are two basic possibilities on the flop: Your opponent will either (a) Check, or (b) Bet.

Situation A: Your Opponent Checks This is the situation we've been talking about thus far: Whether to follow through with a c-bet or whether to check behind.

If you have a hand strong enough to withstand a check-raise -- such as top set, the nut flush, a nut wrap, or the nut flush draw with a gutshot -- or if you have no piece of the board and little chance of improving whatsoever, then you should go ahead and bet. If you have a marginal hand or a draw that cannot stand a raise but has some value -- such as a non-nut flush draw, a gutshot or openended straight draw, or top pair or less -- you should tend to check behind. You should also tend to check if you hit a pivot card (such as Q-J-9-8 on a T-5-2 board), where a lot of help can arrive on the turn to give you a big draw.

And the weaker, or more straightforward the opponent, the more often you should bet those marginal hands or draws. Meanwhile, the trickier the opponent -- the more likely he is to attempt to check-raise you -- the more often you should check behind those one-pair hands and openended straight draws.

Situation B: Your Opponent Bets Into You This is a different scenario from the one described thus far in this book, but if you have already read *Advanced Pot-Limit Omaha Volume I: Small Ball and Short-Handed Play*, then you are already equipped to handle it. And basically what it comes down to is mastering the float, the subject of Part I of *Volume I*.

If your opponent bets into you, you should tend to call (float) if you catch a piece of the board (such as top pair or two pair) or flop some kind of nut draw, such as the nut flush draw, a big wrap that contains some non-nut outs, a nut openended straight draw and perhaps a nut gutshot straight draw as well.

The key thing to remember is that the big-pot hands are still the big-pot hands, and the small-pot hands are still small-pot hands. So if you flop a big-pot hand like the nut straight with a flush draw, the overfull, or a 13-card nut wrap with a flush draw, then you should still raise if your opponent bets into you. On the other hand, the small-pot hands such as the bare nut straight, middle set, top two pair and undertrips are still small-pot hands in a heads-up pot, and as such, you should tend to smooth call with these hands when facing a bet.

In addition to keeping the size of the pot down, one of the main benefits of smooth calling with these strong small-pot hands is that doing so will add weight to the float. This is because if your opponents think you only smooth call with air, they will start firing second shots more and more often, which will devalue the float. If, on the other hand, your opponents know that you will smooth call with the nut straight, a set, and trips, they will be less inclined to keep firing once you've called on the flop.

Now if you miss the flop completely and your opponent bets, you should tend to fold, though you might consider a bluff raise if the board is paired or there is a possible flush on the board.

Below is a table using K♠ Q♥ T♠ 7♦ as an example. K-Q-T-7 with a single suit is a fairly representative LAG hand in that it is imperfect with a gap and a relative dangler (the seven does not help form a wrap and thus is a dangler, but does help form a nut straight and thus is not a *complete* dangler), but it has 13-card nut wrap-plus flush draw potential. As a result, this hand is going to flop a small-pot hand the vast majority of the time, but at the same time has some potential to develop into a big-pot hand.

LAG Play: Holding K♠ Q♥ T♠ 7♦ as Pre-flop Aggressor, Heads Up in Position*

Flop	Note	If Opponent Checks, tend to...	If Opponent Bets, tend to...
9♣ 5♠ 2♦	Air	Bet	Fold
9♥ 6♠ 2♦	Nut gutshot	Check	Call (float)
J♦ 6♥ 4♠	Air/pivot card	Check	Fold
9♥ 8♦ 4♠	Nut open-ended straight draw	Check/Bet	Call (float)
J♥ 9♠ 2♦	13-card nut wrap	Bet	Call/Raise (semi-bluff)
J♠ 6♦ 3♠	Second-nut flush draw, pivot card	Check	Call (semi-bluff float)/ Fold
J♠ 9♦ 8♥	Nut straight with straight re-draw	Bet	Call/Raise
A♠ J♦ T♦	Nut straight with no re-draw on two-flush board	Bet	Call (pot control)
K♥ 8♦ 4♠	Top pair	Check/Bet	Call (combo float)
K♥ T♦ 7♠	Top two pair	Bet	Call (pot control)
K♥ K♦ 3♠	Overtrips, nut improvers	Bet	Call
K♥ K♦ 7♥	Overfull	Bet	Raise/Call
A♠ 7♥ 7♠	Undertrips	Check/Bet	Call (pot control)
3♠ 3♦ 2♥	Overcards	Check/Bet	Fold/Call (float)

*Heads up with positional advantage on average opponent, and SPR > 8

Controlling the Turn-River: The Check-Back Range and The Float

So far, we have discussed the importance of checking behind with regard to LAG play and deflecting check-raises on the flop. That said, once you have checked behind on the flop, your control of the hand on the turn and river is a function of two things:

1. Your check-back range on the flop
2. The float

The Check-Back Range
The first part is your check-back range on the flop, which must be wide enough -- and must have enough value in it -- in order to make checking back the flop work.

Let's say you open with a raise before the flop, and are heads up with position on the big blind after the flop. Let's also say you are c-betting whenever you catch any piece of the board, any time you flop air, or any time you flop a draw bigger than a gutshot -- in other words, you are betting every time unless you flop a gutshot straight draw. Obviously, how often that happens depends on what your pre-flop raising range is, but for the sake of discussion, let's say you flop a gutshot 5% of the time, and thus are c-betting 95% of the time.

There are a few problems with this. One is that there is no way you flop strong often enough to stand a check-raise on 95% of flops, and thus you are going to get check-raised often. Secondly, there is no pot-control element to your play, and you might find yourself having some problems with small-pot hands like A-A-x-x on a paired board, non-nut flushes, undertrips, *etc.* But the other main problem -- and the point of this particular discussion -- is that your opponents will start to recognize how weak your check-back range is, and begin to pounce on you every time you check back the flop.

This is a problem because you only hit the gutshot 9% of the time on the turn, and unless you are calling on the turn with the bare gutshot (assuming you don't pick up anything else), then your opponent will win the pot about 91% of the time on the turn with a bet.

But what if you include openended straight draws and flush draws in your check-back range? Well, with these draws you still only hit about 18% and 20% of the time on the turn, respectively.

How about checking top pair? Now we are starting to get a little stronger, as you will improve to two pair or trips by the turn about 24% of the time, and thus will have enough hand to call a bet on its own merits.

However, if you are only calling a turn bet less than 24% of the time after checking the flop, you are still going to get run over. That said, merely checking behind a lot on the flop carries little value unless you are also consistently blocking steal attempts on the turn -- otherwise, you pretty much *are* just giving up the pot when you check back the flop.

Enter the float (again).

The Float The float is the final piece of the puzzle, and the one that holds our LAG approach together like glue. Because not only must you deflect check-raise attempts on the flop, but you must also discourage steal attempts on the turn, river, or turn-river by blocking them with the float. Moreover, you must block them often enough to raise your opponent's perceived risk profile of attempting to steal such that your opponents will stop trying, allowing you to either take a shot at the pot on the turn yourself, or take the free card again.

Your opponent has to *know* that he will have to fire two shots to win the pot, and that your check-back range is wide enough -- and has enough value in it -- to withstand two shots often enough that trying to steal is futile.

The bottom line is that when you check back the flop, you are *going* to see the river, almost without fail (*almost* -- you'd probably check a pivot card like K-Q-T-7 on a J-4-3 flop, but fold unimproved, and you probably fold a bare gutshot as well, and probably bare non-nut flush draws, too). And at this point, it is now quite relevant that you are going to hit that gutshot straight draw 17% of the time by the river, that openender 33% of the time, and that flush draw 36% of the time. Meanwhile, when you check back top pair, you will improve to two pair or trips about 43% of the time, assuming you don't have another pair in your hand.

In other words, when you check back the flop, you are going to have something legitimate to call (or raise) a bet with on the river -- if not the turn -- a healthy percentage of the time, and we haven't even taken into account whatever other combinations of draws you might pick up on the turn. And the threat of that outcome will serve to discourage your opponent from initiating a turn-river steal sequence to begin with, thus giving you greater control of the pot.

That said, in order for this to work, you must consistently make the stopping call -- the float -- and block your opponent from stealing the pot on the turn.

Playing Out of Position After the Flop

You shouldn't strive to do it intentionally, but if you raise before the flop from any position other than the button, you are inevitably going to wind up playing hands heads up out of position from time to time, either because somebody called or 3-bet your raise.

The main adjustment you have to make is that you can't fold every time you raise before the flop and then check to your opponent, particularly against your more astute opponents who float often or are otherwise inclined to bet if you check.

What that really means is that you have to include legitimate holdings in your checking range -- hands that you would be comfortable either checking-and-calling or check-raising with. Good candidates for checking-and-calling include top pair or overpairs, or the bare nut flush draw, perhaps with some overcards or other potential help to go with it.

You should generally go ahead and bet your stronger hands or draws, but you should have the check-raise in your arsenal as well. And so, good candidates for a check-raise might be the nut flush draw with a gutshot, a nut wrap, top set, or other big-pot holdings. That said, you should tend to bet your strong hands.

Meanwhile, having the check-call and check-raise in your arsenal will discourage your opponents from stealing every time you raise before the flop and check to them on the flop, which will at times buy you a free card and/or a steal opportunity on the turn.

Low-SPR Situations and 3-Bet Pots Out of Position In low-SPR situations in general, the low-SPR rules apply -- you are basically either going to bet/commit or check-raise top pair-or-better, or an openended straight draw or better. Now when you open with a raise and get 3-bet by a player behind you and only you call, your opponent has the pre-flop initiative. In these spots, the standard play will generally be to go for a check-raise with your strong low-SPR (small-pot) hands, which means anything you would shove in a low-SPR situation.

Getting 3-Bet in a Mid-to-High-SPR Situation When you open with a raise and get 3-bet by a player with position on you, only you call, and the SPR > 4, the situation is a bit trickier. Sometimes, if you flop strong, you might simply lead into your opponent and hope he raises so you can 3-bet. But as the SPR climbs towards 13 and reaches highSPR territory (4-bet territory), the one thing you stop doing is check-raising with marginal hands, like bare top pair, or top-and bottomtwo pair.

Remember, the SPR rules pretty much always apply: 3-bet territory (SPR is between 4 and 13) is judgment territory, which means you check-raise with small pot hands at your own discretion; but anything higher than 13 is clear 4-bet territory, which means big-pot hands (or air) *only*.

And so, for marginal hands or draws in mid-to highSPR situations, your best play is often the check-call and/or reverse float (check-call, bet turn).

C-Betting Situations: Out of Position

1. It's a $0.50-$1 game with $0.20 antes, six-handed, and you are dealt A♥ Q♥ J♣ 3♠ in the cutoff seat. You ($279.80) open with a raise to $4.70. The button ($136.90) calls. The small blind folds, but the big blind ($416.90) calls. The flop comes K♣ T♥ 6♠. The big blind checks. Do you check or bet?

Answer: Bet. You cannot get raised off of the 13-card nut wrap.

2. It's a $2-$4 game with $0.75 antes, five-handed, and you are dealt A♥ K♣ T♣ 8♣ in the cutoff seat. The UTG player folds. You ($1,480.55) open with a raise to $17.75, and only the button ($416.35) calls. The flop comes T♥ 5♥ 3♣. What do you do?

Answer: Either check-call or bet. You have top pair and a handful of overcard draws to top two pair. Rather than bet out and risk bloating the pot or otherwise getting raised off the hand, a check-call may induce a bet from a worse hand. Meanwhile, you also have the dry A♥, and so you don't really fear a heart falling, as a third heart may serve to help you win the pot.

In the actual hand, I bet the pot and my opponent folded, but I do like the check-call here as well.

3. A $0.50-$1 game with $0.20 antes, five-handed. You are dealt K♠ 9♠ 8♦ 7♣ UTG. You ($572.90) open with a raise to $4.50, and only the cutoff ($459.70) calls. The flop comes Q♣ 8♣ 3♥. Do you check or bet?

Answer: Bet. This is a half-awkward situation where you have a marginal hand (middle pair) and no draw. Checking and calling will not alleviate the situation. I think the best option is to simply bet the hand through (pot/pot/half-pot, a.k.a. The Betting Machine).

4. It's a $0.50-$1 game with $0.20 antes, six-handed. You ($200) are dealt A♣ T♣ 9♦ 8♠ in the small blind. The first two players fold. The cutoff ($59.65) limps in. The button folds. You raise to $5.20, and both the big blind ($147.25) and limper call. The flop comes 7♠ 7♥ 5♣. Do you check or bet?

Answer: Check or bet. With two players behind you, the best you can do here is guess, and there are no good options. You could bet and hope neither of your opponents have anything, or you can check-pray.

In the actual hand, I checked and gave up the pot to a bet from the cutoff.

5. It's a $1-$2 game with $200 stacks, six-handed. You are dealt A♠ K♦ Q♠ J♥ UTG, and open with a raise to $7. Only the button calls. The flop comes 7♠ 7♦ 3♠, giving you the nut-spade draw. Do you check or bet?

Answer: Check-call, sometimes bet. Betting is always an option when you are in a heads-up pot. That said, you have the nut flush draw and a full slate of overcard outs. Moreover, checking on these paired boards does not necessarily signal weakness -- in fact, if your opponent is at least moderately competent, he is more likely to give you credit for A-A-x-x if you check and then call a bet.

I like checking and calling any bet and seeing what your opponent does on the turn. If your opponent checks the turn, then you can go ahead and bet the river unimproved, either check-call or bet if you pair up, and probably value bet if you make the flush. This would be a form of semi-bluff reverse float.

Checking and calling in this situation is a little bit more palatable than in the previous hand, if only because you are heads up rather than three way.

Special Insert: Playing in Deep-Stack Ante Games

In the year since *APLO Volume I* was published (June 2009), deep-stack ante games have sprung up on some of the bigger online poker sites. These games generally feature 200BB max buy-ins and antes of varying size, depending on the stakes and the site. For example, a $0.50-$1 blind game might have $0.20 antes and a 200BB max buy-in, while a $1-$2 blind game might have $0.30 antes along with a 200BB max buy-in.

Because of the dead money in the pot, these types of games strongly favor the loose-aggressive pre-flop player -- these games are tailor made for the primary LAG tactic, which is opening fire on the blinds in position, as well as attacking the limper in position. Meanwhile, the deep buy-ins allow for deep-stack 3-betting, as opposed to low-SPR Pump-and-Shove type 3-betting.

Basically, these types of games favor LAG players who understand the fundamentals of deep-stack play -- big-pot science, the straight draws, SPR, floating, and the positional advantage -- or basically, exactly the type of player who has been reading what I have been writing thus far.

Blind LAG players who do not understand the fundamentals and just LAG it up because aggression is easy to justify will get killed. Tight, passive players may not get killed, but won't get very far. Meanwhile, players who defend their blinds liberally or 3-bet out of position are committing suicide.

Adjustments for Playing in Ante Games The first adjustment that should be made when playing in ante games is to favor opening fire on the blinds, as opposed to openlimping with marginal hands. For example, if you are dealt J♣ 6♦ 4♣ 3♦ on the button -- very much a Small Ball hand -- and everybody has folded to you, you might openlimp on the button in a standard $1-$2 blind game with no ante. But in a $1-$2 blind game with $0.30 antes, you might be more inclined to put in a raise and open fire on the blinds.

Not only does the dead money from the antes provide an extra incentive to put in a raise and try to pick up the blinds and antes, but the antes also provide leverage to knock out the blinds -- the extra money means a bigger pot, which means that a pot-sized raise is going to be bigger, which means that you are no longer raising to 3.5x the big blind when you open with a pot-sized raise, but rather more than 4x the big blind, depending on how many players posted antes.

In a six-handed $0.50-$1 game with $0.20 antes, for example, a pot-sized raise is to $4.70 or 4.7x the big blind, rather than $3.50 or 3.5x the big blind, as would be the case in a standard game. In a five-handed $0.50-$1 game with $0.20 antes, a pot-sized open would be to $4.50 (with one fewer player and one fewer $0.20 ante, a pot-sized open would be reduced by $0.20).

Openlimping is still OK, but you now have more incentive to put in a raise.

In addition, you have both more incentive and more leverage to attack limpers for the same reasons -- the dead money adds incentive, while allowing you to make bigger raises to discourage the blinds from defending.

It is important to note however, that you should probably still exclude dry pairs when opening fire on the blinds, as they still typically result in flopping a small-pot hand (one pair) after the flop.

PLO Tip: The dead money from the antes provides extra incentive to open fire on the blinds and attack limpers, while also providing extra leverage to encourage the blinds to fold.

Non-Adjustments for Playing in Ante Games Another key concept is that the only time there is dead money in the pot is *before the flop*. In other words, *post-flop play in ante games is identical to post-flop play in standard games*. This is because a pot-sized bet after the flop is still a pot-sized bet, rather than a sub-pot-sized bet with an overlay.

This is in stark contrast to limit poker games, where extra dead money often provides an overlay, and can cause changes in post-flop strategy by virtue of the extra money in the pot.

This is a very important idea, as it is easy to figure some players trying out ante games and wildly overplaying their hands after the flop because of the dead money in the pot before the flop.

PLO Tip: In ante PLO games, the only time there is dead money in the pot is before the flop.

PLO Tip: Post-flop play in ante games is identical to post-flop play in standard games.

The second non-adjustment you need to not make is to start defending your blinds liberally on account of the dead money. As in a

standard structure game, this is inviting disaster. It's a trap.

Again, a lot of players will look at the dead money as providing an overlay, but that overlay only exists before the flop. Meanwhile, the more you defend your blinds (or 3-bet out of position!), the more you will be playing in deep-stack situations out of position, situations which by default have little upside and a lot of downside.

Instead, what you need to do is sit tight in the blinds, but unleash fury on the blinds when in position yourself.

PLO Tip: Don't start defending your blinds liberally.

Deepstack ante games will be covered towards the end of each of the walkthrough chapters in this book.

Part III: Opening Fire on the Blinds

The most basic element of LAG play.

Opening fire on the blinds is the most basic element of LAG play. Part III: Opening Fire on the Blinds, deals with situations in which you will open with a raise and have the positional advantage after the flop. Most of these hands are from the button or cutoff seat, whether playing three-to six-handed, while some are from the hijack seat or UTG in five-or six-handed play.

A few of the hands are contrasting examples where openlimping and playing Small Ball may be the better option.

Note that situations in which you open with a raise and wind up playing out of position after the flop are covered in Part V: Playing Out of Position.

Hand #1: Delayed Semi-Bluff Float The game: $ 2-$4 online (6-max), five-handed
My position: Button
My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($521.20) open with a raise to $14, and only the small blind ($400) calls.

A standard open with a premium-class hand from the button.
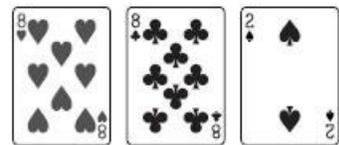
Flop ($32): My opponent bets $24. I call.

A standard/semi-standard float. In a heads-up pot, the first bet is always suspect. There's no rule that says you *have* to float here, and you probably should avoid *always* floating here. That said, I expect my opponent to have air here much of the time, unless he is an utterly complete nit. Moreover, I think my opponent is more likely to attempt to check-call with an overpair, or check-call or check-raise with trips-or-better, so his bet here seems particularly fishy. In addition, if my opponent is in fact betting light -- say with either a medium pair or air -- then I should have either the best hand and/or a fistful of overcard outs.

I'll take one off and see what happens on the turn.

Turn ($80): My opponent checks.

This is an interesting card in that I picked up the nut flush draw to go with my overcards. I *could* go ahead and bet here and attempt to pick up the pot, but having picked up the flush draw, I'm going to do something more circumspect and go ahead and check and take the free card.

Action: I check.

This is, in effect, a sort of pot-control check -- by doing so, I am essentially dictating that there will be one bet or less left in the hand. The plan is to call virtually any bet if I improve (i.e. I pair up or make a flush), fold (or raise depending on how I feel) to a bet unimproved, and bet unimproved if my opponent checks the river. I will most likely check down if I pair up and my opponent checks, though I will leave the option open to put in a value bet if I do in fact pair up and/ or make the flush.

Note that the action I've taken thus far is consistent with the way I might play A-A-x-x, which is one of the main reasons why checking behind on the turn works.

River ($80): My opponent checks. I bet $44 and my opponent folds.

Hand #2: Top Pair The game: $2-$4 online (6-max), six-handed

My position: Hijack

My hand:

Pre-flop: The UTG player folds. I ($439.20) open with a raise to $14, and only the big blind ($583.30) calls.

This is a standard open with a premium-class rundown hand.
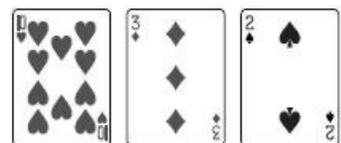
Flop ($30): My opponent checks. I check.

I could have gone either way with this hand. I chose the pot-control check.

Turn ($30): My opponent checks.

I picked up an openended straight draw. That said, in the face of two checks, the coast appears clear for a bet.

Action: I bet $30 and my opponent folds.

Hand #3: Getting 3-Bet, Nut Gutshot and Nut Flush Draw The game: $2-$4 online (6-max), three-handed

My position: Button

My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($651) open with a raise to $14.

A standard open from the button with a more marginal, Small-Ball type hand.

Action: The small blind ($400) reraises to $46, and the big blind ($599.80) calls.

I'm not folding on the button for one more bet.

Action: I call.
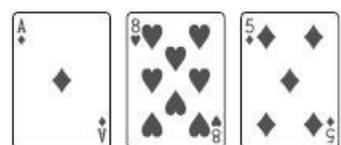
Flop ($138): I have the nut flush draw and a nut gutter.

Action: The small blind bets $100, and the big blind folds.

I am not going anywhere, and in a low-SPR situation, if I intend to play, I should shove and give my opponent a chance to fold.

Action: I raise and set the small blind all-in for $354 total, and he calls, showing A♠ Q♣ J♠ 8♠ for top two pair.

Sometimes he has air in this spot, sometimes he doesn't. Either way, I could not be in bad shape regardless of his holding. As it is, I have 44% equity, which is dead on for a low-SPR situation of 4, but well over par equity in this SPR 2.6 situation.

Turn ($846):

River ($846): I win.

Hand #4: Double Barrel, AceHigh Flop The game: $2-$4 online (6-max), six-handed
My position: Hijack
My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($400) open with a raise to $14, and only the big blind ($402.80) calls.

This is a loose open from the hijack. With loose players behind me, K-8-7-5 with a suit would probably be a fold.

Flop ($30): My opponent checks. I bet $20, and my opponent calls.

Astandard c-bet on a board in which I have no hand, no draw, and little-to-no chance to improve.

Turn ($70): My opponent checks.

Now I have a real decision to make. I basically am not winning this hand if I check. The question is whether or not I can make my opponent fold to a bet, which in turn depends on whether or not he is on the draw.

A lot of times, players will check-call with a bare A-x-x-x or maybe A-3-x-x for top-and-bottom two pair -- and sometimes even A-Q-x-x or Q-Q-x-x or 3-3-x-x on this flop. That said, this type of opponent may be willing to give up the small pot to a legitimate second barrel in the face of possibly having to call a third bet on the river with a marginal hand.

And if my opponent is instead on the draw -- perhaps with some kind of combo flush/straight draw -- he might call the turn, but checkfold the river if he misses, a sequence that generally favors the player firing away (me).

Action: I bet $70 and my opponent folds.
Hand #5: Triple Barrel, AceHigh Flop The game: $2-$4 online (6-max), four-handed
My position: Button
My hand:

Pre-flop: The UTG player folds. I ($400) raise to $14, and only the big blind ($543) calls.

Standard.
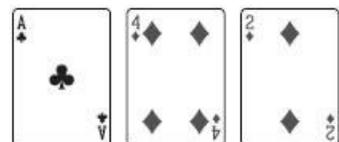
Flop ($30): My opponent checks. I bet $18, and my opponent calls.

Standard. No hand, no draw, acehigh flop -- just like the previous hand.

Turn ($66): My opponent checks. I bet $66, and my opponent calls.

As before, roughly a two-thirds pot c-bet followed by a pot-sized follow through -- only this time I got called.

River ($198): My opponent checks.

Now is not the time to stop firing.

Action: I bet $120, and my opponent tanks and calls, showing 9♣ 4♥ 3♠ 2♥ for bottom two pair.

Sometimes, they don't give up.
Hand #6: Trip Aces The game: $2-$4 online (6-max), four-handed
My position: Button
My hand:

Pre-flop: The UTG player folds. I ($432) raise to $14, and only the big blind ($695) -- the same opponent from the previous hand -- calls.

This is an OK open. I have a suited ace with some high and low straight potential.
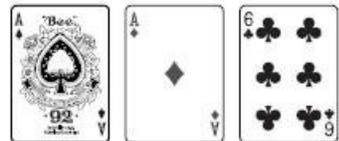
Flop ($30): My opponent checks. I check.

A pot-control check with dry over trips, and little in the way of improvers. This is a small-pot hand.

Turn ($30): My opponent checks.

I should bet now.

Action: I bet $20, and my opponent folds.
Hand #7: Top Pair The game: $2-$4 online (6-max), five-handed
My position: Cutoff
My hand:

Pre-flop: The UTG player folds. I ($405.50) raise to $14, and only the big blind ($826.10) -- the same opponent from the previous two hands -- calls.

An OK open with a marginal hand from the cutoff. I got the action I wanted -- heads up against the blinds.
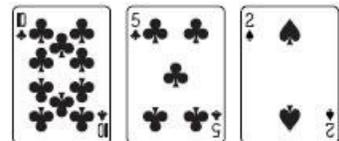
Flop ($30): My opponent checks.

I shouldn't check every top pair. That said, this hand is a good one to bet, as it is easily outdrawn. I would be more comfortable checking A-J-T-9 than J-T-9-3.

Action: I bet $30, and my opponent calls.

Turn ($90): My opponent checks.

Having bet the flop, I must continue to bet -- turning top two pair is a bonus.

Action: I bet $90, and my opponent calls.

River ($270): My opponent checks.

I have enough to show down, but little more.

Action: I check. My opponent shows A♣ K♣ 9♥ 7♣ for a pair of nines and a busted flush draw. I win.

Hand #8: A-A-x-x The game: $2-$4 online (6-max), six-handed
My position: Hijack
My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($509.80) open with a raise to $14. It gets folded to the small blind ($1,289.80), who calls. The big blind ($449.30) reraises to $56.

I should 4-bet here with my doublesuited aces. Not only do I have position, but if I raise the full pot to $182, there will be at least $378 in the pot if I get called, and thus less than one pot-sized bet left to play, given my $509.80 stack.

Action: I reraise to $182. The small blind folds. The big blind calls.
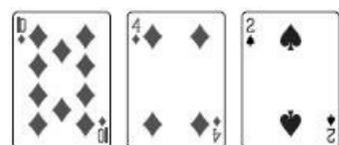
Flop ($378): This is a great flop for me, giving me the nut flush draw with an overpair.

Action: My opponent checks. I bet $327.80 all-in, and my opponent calls all-in for $267.30, showing J♥ T♣ 9♥ 8♠ for a pair of tens.

I am a 76%/24% favorite.

Turn ($912.60):
River ($912.60): Figures.

Hand #9: Getting 3-Bet from the Blinds The game: $2-$4 online (6-max), five-handed
My position: Button
My hand:

Pre-flop: It gets folded to me, and I ($440.50) open with a raise to $14. The small blind ($283.80) reraises to $44, and the big blind folds.

This is mostly standard. I could have limped in with this hand as well, but once I raise and get reraised, I am not going anywhere when I have position.

Action: I call.
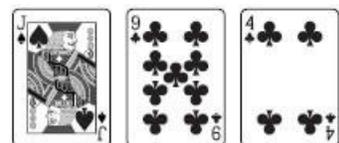
Flop ($92): My opponent checks.

I have to take at least one shot at this.

Action: I bet $92, and my opponent folds.

Hand #10: Getting 3-Bet from the Blinds The game: $2-$4 online (6-max), four-handed
My position: UTG
My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($400) open with a raise to $14. The button folds. The small blind ($396) reraises to $46, and the big blind folds. I call.

Standard. I am not raising and then folding for one bet when I have position. Worrying about pre-flop domination in heads-up pots is way overrated.
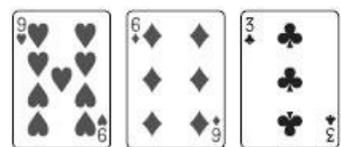
Flop ($96): My opponent checks.

We have a low-SPR situation (SPR 3.6). That said, Pump-and-Shove goes both ways: The play here is to bet my top pair plus gutshot and commit if raised.

Action: I bet $96, and my opponent folds.

Hand #11: Getting 3-Bet from the Blinds, Flopping Top Pair The game: $2-$4 online (6-max), four-handed
My position: UTG
My hand:

The small blind is the same opponent from the previous hand.

Pre-flop: I ($442) open with a raise to $14. The button folds. The small blind ($408) reraises to $46, and the big blind folds. I call.

I don't see why I would do any different this time.
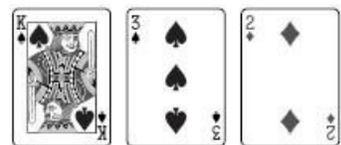
Flop ($96): My opponent bets $88.

Again, a low-SPR situation (SPR 3.8). The play is to shove top pair.

Action: I raise to $360, and my opponent folds.
Hand #12: Gutshot, SecondNut Flush Draw The game: $2-$4 online (6-max), four-handed
My position: Button
My hand:

Pre-flop: The UTG player folds. I ($400) open with a raise to $14, and only the big blind ($554) calls.

This is a bit on the looser side. It's not on the recommended list, but I am doublesuited. I thought I'd give it a shot.

Incidentally, my opponent is the same player from the previous two hands.
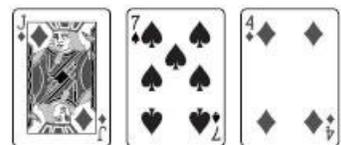
Flop ($30): My opponent checks.

I have a nut gutshot and king-high diamonds. I might bet against some of my weaker opponents, but the standard play should be to

check and take the free card.

Action: I check.

Turn ($30): My opponent bets $30. I call.

This is a stopping call, the kind which you make on principle. I don't have so much draw that I *have* to call -- I don't even have the *nut* flush draw -- but the looser I call (or the looser I *appear* to call), the less likely my opponent is to take stabs in the future when I check the flop, as he knows he will always have to make more than one bet to steal, thus making it more risky for him to try to steal on me.

River ($90): My opponent bets $40. I fold.

The flip side is that I don't give up many pots, and sometimes it looks good to give one up here and there so that my opponents don't think that I *never* have it.

Hand #13: Getting 3-Bet from the Blinds The game: $2-$4 online (6-max), five-handed
My position: Button
My hand:

Pre-flop: It gets folded to me, and I ($413) open with a raise to $14. The small blind ($453.85) reraises to $43.45, and the big blind folds. I call.

Standard open, standard call.
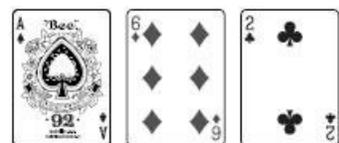
Flop ($90.90): My opponent bets $38.45. I fold.

I can't float them all, and like I said before, sometimes I have to fold just to make it look good. This one is OK to give up, as I have no nut outs.

Hand #14: Getting 3-Bet from the Blinds The game: $2-$4 online (6-max), six-handed
My position: Cutoff
My hand:

Pre-flop: It gets folded to me, and I ($453) open with a raise to $14. The button ($627.85) calls. The small blind ($160) reraises to $60, and the big blind folds. I call, but the button folds.

These small blinds never give up. This worked out in that now I have the button.

Flop ($138): My opponent bets $100 all-in.

I have trip queens.

Action: I call. My opponent shows K♦ 6♦ 3♠ 2♠.

I'd like to see whatever book these guys are reading.

Turn ($338):
River ($338): I win.

Hand #15: Check Down on Flush Board The game: $2-$4 online (6-max), three-handed
My position: Button
**My hand:**

Pre-flop: I ($517.30) open with raise to $14, and only the big blind ($162) calls.
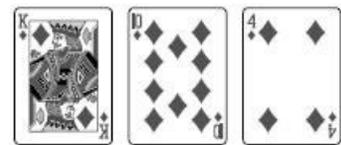
Flop ($30): My opponent checks. I check.

Flush flops are easy c-bet boards, but also easy check-raise bluff boards. That said, I have some potential value in a 13-card wrap. I could have gone either way here.

Turn ($30): My opponent checks. I check.

I picked up a pair, and some additional straight outs.

River ($30): My opponent checks.

I made the straight. I can show this down.

Action: I check. My opponent shows A♥ T♥ 9♦ 7♣ for two pair, and I win with the straight.
Hand #16: J-J-x-x, The Betting Machine The game: $2-$4 online (6-max), four-handed
My position: UTG
My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($644.60) limp in UTG, and the button folds. The small blind ($254) limps in, and the big blind ($362) checks.

I've raised with a lot of marginal hands thus far, but dry pairs is where I really draw the line. This hand is basically a limp-or-fold in this spot -- a limp if the player behind me is passive, but a fold if he is a maniac.

Flop ($12): Both blinds check. I bet $12, and the small blind folds. The big blind calls.

I took a stab at the acehigh flop and got called.

Turn ($36): My opponent checks.

I am probably not going to win the hand if I check, while my opponent might fold a weak ace to a second barrel.

Action: I bet $36, and my opponent folds.

The Betting Machine.
Hand #17: Getting 3-Bet from the Blinds, Floating The game: $2-$4 online (6-max), five-handed
My position: Button
My hand:

Pre-flop: It gets folded to me, and I ($410) open with a raise to $14. The small blind ($630.50) reraises to $24, and the big blind folds. I call.

I've never raised with this hand before.
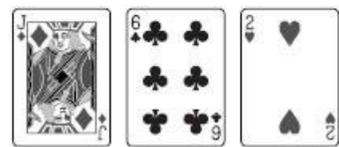
Flop ($52): My opponent bets $24. I call.

A weakstab float with the pair of sevens and backdoor nut hearts and straight potential.

Turn ($100): My opponent checks. I bet $100. My opponent raises to $400, setting me all-in. I fold.

Just a friendly reminder that floating does not always work, as sometimes you run into the bet-flop/check-raise turn sequence.
Hand #18: Getting 3-Bet, Facing a Token C-Bet on a Paired Board Flop The game: $2-$4 online (6-max), six-handed
My position: Cutoff
My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($1,268.50) open with a raise to $14.

This is a loose raise from the cutoff. The button needs to be tight.

Action: The button ($334) and small blind ($150.80) both call. The big blind ($522.15) reraises to $70. I call, but the other two players both fold.

It's possible I could have folded to the 3-bet with a player behind me. But it worked out for the best, as now I am heads up with the positional advantage.

Flop ($168): My opponent bets $32.

I gotta say that I really like that token c-bet, because it is much harder to float the token bet on the paired board than it is to float a more legitimate bet of around half to two-thirds of the pot. Because now if I call here, it's almost as if no action occurred, as my call is meaningless. If I want to win this pot against what is likely A-A-x-x, I have to put in a raise, which is riskier when I figure to get called at least once. And then my only play is to hope my opponent checkfolds the turn.

Basically, my opponent's token bet makes it riskier to bluff-raise him, as in order for me to be successful I have to assume a parlay -- that my opponent will call the raise but then checkfold the turn to a second barrel -- which heightens the risk profile of the play.

Action: I fold.

Hand #19: Top Pair, Top Two Pair The game: $2-$4 online (6-max), four-handed

My position: UTG

My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($1,168.30) open with a raise to $14, and only the big blind ($536.30) calls.
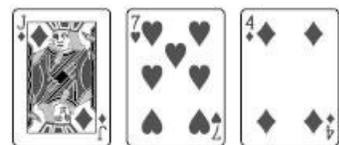
Flop ($30): My opponent checks. I check.

I chose to check back top pair this time. I could have gone either way.

Turn ($30): My opponent bets $30. I call.

A standard pot-control stopping call with top two pair.

River ($90): My opponent checks.

I have enough to show down.

Action: I check. My opponent shows A♣ J♥ 9♦ 7♣, having flopped two pair. I win with the new top two.

Hand #20: Bottom Two Pair on Straight Flop, Combo Float The game: $2-$4 online (6-max), five-handed

My position: Cutoff

My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($809.80) open with a raise to $14, and only the big blind ($560.70) calls.

Flop ($30): My opponent checks.

If I bet, I am going to have a tough time getting action from a hand worse than bottom two pair with a sucker gutshot. I think I am better off checking behind.

Action: I check.

Turn ($30): My opponent bets $24.

A possible steal bet. So far, all my opponent has seen me do is check behind the flop. The turn didn't change much, though it did make another possible straight.

This is an interesting spot in that it requires some flexible thinking. I mean, I *might* have the best hand. But then again, I might not. And if I don't, there are two possible flush draws that I could represent, or the board could pair and I can either fill up or simply act like I did.

Action: I call.

River ($78): My opponent checks.

The situation is a bit clearer. If my opponent has anything whatsoever, it probably beats me. At the same time, the board paired and flushed up as well.The safe play is to bet.

Action: I bet $52 and my opponent folds.

Hand #21: Middle Set on Straight and Flush Board The game: $2-$4 online (6-max), six-handed
My position: Cutoff
My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($615.70) open with a raise to $14. The button folds. The small blind ($693.20) reraises to $30. The big blind folds. I call.

Standard. I'm not 4-betting here just to pray my opponent doesn't have A-A-x-x.
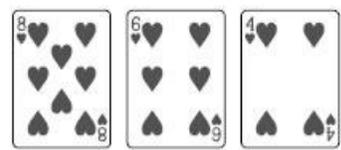
Flop ($64): My opponent bets $24.

I can't fold middle set in this spot, and raising is wrong where I could be blowing myself out of the pot should I get reraised.

Action: I call.

Turn ($112): My opponent checks. I check.

Pot-control check. There is little value in betting.

River ($112): My opponent bets $21.

Ooh. I hate that. It looks like a token value-bet or a blocking bet, which probably means that I am beat.

There's an outside chance that it is two pair -- which I can beat -- but I should probably fold.

Action: I call. My opponent shows Q♠ J♠ T♣ 9♣ for a straight.

I had to see it. $21 was my price.

Hand #22: Getting 3-Bet, Top-and-Bottom Two Pair, Low-SPR

The game: $2-$4 online (6-max), six-handed
My position: Button
My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($1,009) open with a raise to $14. The small blind ($271) -- a maniacal 3-bettor -- reraises to $46. The big blind folds. I call.

Standard raise, standard call.
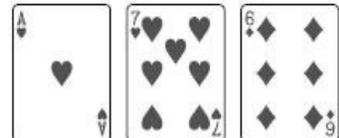
Flop ($96): My opponent bets $96.

I have a decision to make. I have top-and-bottom two pair without much in the way of improvers, and it is a low-SPR (SPR 2.3) situation. I feel like in this spot, unless my opponent has to have A-A-x-x, then I have to go with it. He is far from a nit, so…

Action: I raise and set my opponent all-in for $225 total. My opponent calls. My opponent shows 8♥ 7♠ 6♣ 4♠ for bottom two pair and a gutshot.

Turn ($546): I win.

River ($546):
Hand #23 Small Ball, Flop Wheel and Flush Draw The game: $2-$4 online (6-max), five-handed
My position: Button
My hand:

Pre-flop: It gets folded to me. I ($1,308.60) limp in. The small blind folds. The big blind ($345.25) checks.

My hand's not even really playable. I kind of just wanted to see a flop. That said, rather than bloat the pot with a raise, I chose to limp in and play Small Ball.
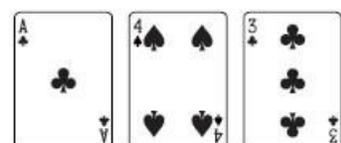
Flop ($10): Bingo. The nut straight with a gutshot improver and a straight flush draw.

Action: My opponent bets $10.

There's no slowplaying this. The play is to raise and try to freeroll my opponent if he has the wheel, or to get him to pay up with whatever he has if he doesn't.

Action: I raise to $40, and my opponent folds.

Maybe next time.

Hand #24: Check Down The game: $2-$4 online (6-max), five-handed
My position: UTG
My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($560.70) open with a raise to $14, and only the big blind ($160) calls.

With a suited ace and 13-card nut wrap potential, this kind of hand is an acceptable open from two off the button.

Flop ($30): My opponent checks. I check.

I generally should go ahead and bet this without much in the way of improvers.

Turn ($30): My opponent checks. I check.

Pot-control check. At this point, the hand is basically a one-street affair.
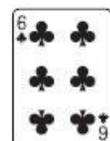
River ($30): My opponent checks.

This would be a thin value bet.

Action: I check. My opponent shows K♥ 9♥ 8♦ 7♥ for air, and I win.

Hand #25: The Nuts with ReDraws The game: $2-$4 online (6-max), three-handed
My position: Button
My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($598) open with a raise to $14, and both the small blind ($400) and big blind ($602.80) call.

Flop ($42): Jackpot. The nut straight with a flush re-draw, right out of Chapter 1, Book One.

Action: Both opponents check. I bet $32, and only the small blind calls.

Well, I wasn't checking it.

Turn ($106): My opponent checks. I bet $106, and my opponent folds.

You might notice my bet pattern here, which is that I am OK c-betting less than the size of the pot at times on highly polarized flops -- flops where I basically either have a strong hand or I have nothing to put in a c-bet -- but if I get called, I am back to betting the full pot on the turn.

Hand #26: Small Ball, Value-Betting the River The game: $2-$4 online (6-max), three-handed
My position: Button
My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($400) limp in on the button. The small blind ($1,112.20) limps in, and the big blind ($1,317.75) checks.

5-4-3-2 with a suit is another hand that is typically unplayable, but I felt like playing it three-handed on the button. That said, rather than bloat the pot with a raise, my preference is to limp in and play a small pot.

Flop ($12): Sometimes you get really lucky and flop something decent. I have bottom pair with a wheel wrap and a straight flush draw.

Action: The small blind checks. The big blind bets $12. I call, and the small blind calls.

I'm not sure why I didn't raise, which I probably would do in this spot about 9 times out of 10. I guess I might have been concerned about running into a Broadway wrap with a bigger flush draw, or something like that.

Turn ($48): Bingo. I have the nut straight with two pair and a flush redraw. Ram and jam.

Action: Both opponents check.

Typical.

Action: I bet $48. The small blind calls. The big blind folds.

River ($144): My opponent checks.

The Broadway wrap card hit. That said, I still think this is a good value-betting opportunity, where my opponent can call with something like two pair or a set. My hand is still fairly well disguised given all of the possibilities on the flop. The play is to bet and fold to a raise.

Action: I bet $106, and my opponent calls with K♥ 5♦ 5♥ 4♠ for a set of fives.

Hand #27: Getting 3-Bet from the Blinds The game: $2-$4 online (6-max), three-handed
My position: Button
My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($655) open with a raise to $14. The small blind ($878.20) reraises to $24, and the big blind folds. I call.

This is a loose open; I am doublesuited with two hold'em hands. Again, not on the recommended list, but I don't mind trying to expand my horizons.
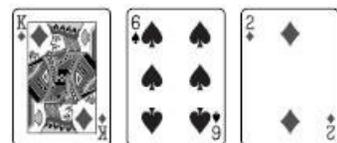
Flop ($52): My opponent checks. I bet $52, and my opponent calls.

I flopped top two pair.

Turn ($156): My opponent checks.

This is a tough choice here, given that the flush card hit. I would be more likely to bet with one pair, or basically anything with no outs. That said, I think two pair for a full house draw dictates taking the free card.

Action: I check.

River ($156): My opponent checks. I check. My opponent shows A♠ A♥ Q♥ 7♦ for aces up.

If I had known he had that, I would have bet the turn. Unfortunately, I don't get to see my opponent's cards.

Hand #28: Bottom Two Pair The game: $2-$4 online (6-max), three-handed
My position: Button
My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($789.10) open with a raise to $14, and only the big blind ($1,241.75) calls.

Flop ($30): My opponent checks.

I have bottom two pair without much in the way of improvers. This should be bet.

Action: I bet $30 and my opponent folds.

Hand #29: Getting 3-Bet from the Blinds The game: $2-$4 online (6-max), three-handed
My position: Button
My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($400) open with a raise to $14. The small blind folds. The big blind ($413) reraises to $44, and I call.

This is fairly standard, though I could just as easily have limped in with this speculative wrap hand from the button.
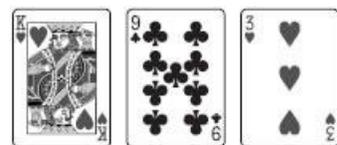
Flop ($90): My opponent checks.

I have bottom pair and a flush draw in a low-SPR situation. My problem with betting is that I would likely have to fold to a raise, where my flush draw may have value if I check.

Action: I check.

Turn ($90): My opponent checks. I check.

Ditto.

River ($90): My opponent bets $90. I fold.

It sucks checking two streets and then having to fold to a bet on the river, but you can't win them all.

Hand #30: Getting 3-Bet from the Blinds The game: $2-$4 online (6-max), five-handed
My position: UTG
My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($444.30) open with a raise to $14, and only the big blind ($656.80) calls.

Standard. I prefer a suited ace to open UTG five-handed, but I am OK with this hand if I can consistently get this result.

Flop ($30): My opponent checks.

This is kind of a tricky spot. I have top two pair, which is likely the best hand, and I also have the nut spade blocker.

The problem with betting is that I am unlikely to get called by a worse hand, whereas I may be able to induce a bluff later in the hand if I check. The plus side to betting is that I am unlikely to get check-raised by an actual flush, considering that I have the nut spade card myself.

Action: I check.

Turn ($30): My opponent checks.

Well, I can go ahead and put in a bet and *maybe* show down the river unimproved, if called.

Action: I bet $20, and my opponent folds.

Hand #31: Nut Flush Draw, Check Down The game: $2-$4 online (6-max), four-handed
My position: UTG
My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($1,106.70) open with a raise to $14, and only the big blind ($1,340.40) calls.

This is an OK open UTG four-handed with the suited ace and connectors.

Flop ($30): My opponent checks.

The standard play with the bare nut flush draw is to check.

Action: I check.

Turn ($30): My opponent checks.

I am still in checking mode.

Action: I check.

River ($30): My opponent checks.

I have enough hand to show down with my two pair.

Action: I check. My opponent shows Q♣ 8♦ 7♣ 2♦ for a pair of queens, and I win.

Hand #32: Flush Draw, Double-Nut Gutter The game: $2-$4 online (6-max), six-handed
My position: Hijack
My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($549.70) open with a raise to $14, and only the big blind ($824.30) calls.

This is a little looser open from the hijack. I am doublesuited, though!
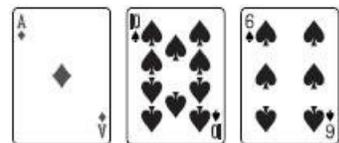
Flop ($30): My opponent checks.

I have the third-nut flush draw, but a double-nut gutshot straight draw to go with it. I can probably stand a check-raise. This must be bet.

Action: I bet $30 and my opponent calls.

That's fine.

Turn ($90): My opponent checks. I bet $60 and my opponent folds.

The Betting Machine.

Hand #33: Checking Top Pair, Combo Float The game: $0.25-$0.50 online (6-max), five-handed
My position: Cutoff
My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($179.05) open with a raise to $1.75. Only the big blind ($52.95) calls.
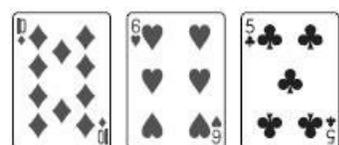
Flop ($3.75): My opponent checks.

I have top pair with some overcard two-pair draws, and a backdoor nut heart draw. I could go either way.

Action: I check.

Turn ($3.75): My opponent bets $3.

This is interesting. I now have middle pair with a gutshot, heads up with the positional advantage, facing a possible weak stab steal bet. Perhaps a combo float is in order?

Action: I call.

River ($9.75): My opponent checks.

I have the dry K♣ blocker against the nut flush, but I also have two pair now to show down.

Action: I check. My opponent shows A♠ J♥ J♦ 8♥. I win.

Hand #34: Check Down The game: $0.25-$0.50 online (6-max), six-handed
My position: Hijack
My hand:

Pre-flop: The UTG player folds. I ($50.20) open with a raise to $1.75, and only the big blind ($54.50) calls.

This is an OK open from the button and the cutoff, but probably a loose raise from the hijack. It worked out OK in this hand, but if you are playing with loose players behind you who are liable to call your raise, then you are better off limping in or folding than raising.
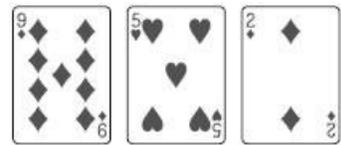
Flop ($3.75): My opponent checks.

I could go either way here. That said, there are a lot of cards that can bring legitimate help on the turn, including any heart, any king, queen, jack, ten, or eight. This is as good a spot as any to take the free card.
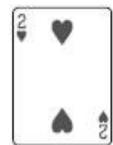
Action: I check.

Turn ($3.75): My opponent checks.

I picked up a heart draw to go with my overcards.

Action: I check.

River ($3.75): My opponent checks.

I paired up, but value-betting doesn't seem like a strong proposition, where I am unlikely to get called by a worse hand, and at the same time if my opponent actually has a king and calls a bet, I am liable to get outkicked. Checking and showing down is the play.

Action: I check. My opponent shows A♣ 7♥ 6♣ 4♥ and I win.

Hand #35: Nut Flush Draw, One Pair, Two Pair The game: $0.25-$0.50 online, five-handed
My position: Button
My hand:

Pre-flop: The first two players fold. I ($53.50) open with a raise to $1.75, and only the small blind ($27.50) calls.
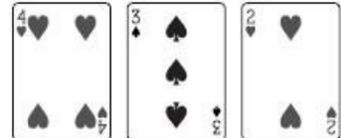
Flop ($4): My opponent checks.

The standard play is to check back the bare nut flush draw.

Action: I check.
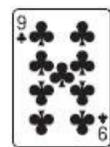
Turn ($4): My opponent bets $4.

I made top pair. I can't fold here for one bet, particularly when I have the nut flush draw as well.

River ($12): My opponent bets $12.

I made top two pair, and really what this comes down to is that I either believe my opponent or I don't. Basically, he either has the straight or he doesn't, because I would expect that my opponent would be more likely to check something like two pair or a set, and probably even a non-nut straight as well. I have reasonable doubt, and so I can't fold top two pair in this sequence.

Action: I call, and my opponent shows A♦ A♠ A♣ Q♦ for a pair of aces.

Hand #36: Getting 3-Bet from the Blinds The game: $0.25-$0.50 online (6-max), five-handed
My position: Button
My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($54.65) open with a raise to $1.75. The small blind folds. The big blind ($52.55) reraises to $5.50. I call.

Flop ($11.25): My opponent checks.

I have middle pair and a nut gutshot on a board with a possible straight on it. There's little value in betting this, as I don't rate to get action from a hand/draw worse than mine. At the same time, I have enough hand and draw that I don't necessarily need to bet as a bluff, unless I think my opponent has to have A-Ax-x here.

I could probably go either way here.

Action: I check.

Turn ($11.25): My opponent checks. I check.

Ditto.
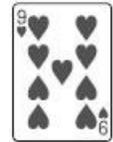
River ($11.25): My opponent bets $7.50.

This is a judgment call. I have a hard time folding for one bet, particularly given the lack of action. I can beat a bluff, and I have to figure my opponent would check and try to show down if he had a king or a smaller pair. He could be value-betting A-A-x-x, or there is a remote possibility that he filled up.

But there is enough doubt in my mind that I have to call.

Action: I call. My opponent shows 5♦ 5♠ 3♦ 2♠. I win.

Hand #37: QQ66 Blocker Bluff Raise The game: $0.50-$1 online (6-max), five-handed
My position: Button
My hand:

Pre-flop: It gets folded to me, and I ($100.35) open with a raise to $3.50. Both the small blind ($74.25) and big blind ($67.45) call.

I like these double-paired hands.
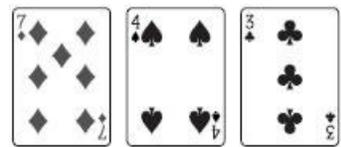
Flop ($10.50): The small blind checks. The big blind bets $10.50.

I have an overpair and blockers to the straight. I could fold. I could call (float). Or…

Action: I raise to $42, and both opponents fold.

All standard, really.

Hand #38: Getting 3-Bet from the Blinds, Top Pair The game: $0.50-$1 online (6-max), five-handed
My position: UTG
My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($234.05) open with a raise to $3.50.

J-9-8-6 with a suit is a good enough open, again, assuming the players behind me are tight enough to let me play with the blinds. Otherwise, I might be better off limping in (if the players behind me are loose but passive), or folding (if they are aggressive).

Action: It gets folded around to the big blind ($192.80), who reraises to $11. I call.

Standard.
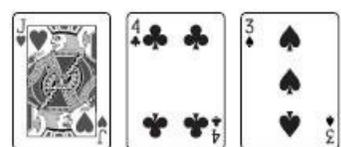
Flop ($22.50): My opponent checks. I check.

With middling cards in my hand, this hand probably should have been bet, because now any overcards are liable to beat me. When you have A-K-Q-J, on the other hand, there are no overcards.

Turn ($22.50): My opponent checks.

There's nothing ambiguous about top two pair with a flush draw in position against two checks.

Action: I bet $22.50, and my opponent folds.

Hand #39: AAKTds, Check Down The game: $0.50-$1 online (6-max), six-handed
My position: UTG
My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($100) open with a raise to $3.50, and only the small blind ($134.80) calls.

A no-brainer open with premium aces.

Flop ($8): My opponent checks. I check.

A pot-control check with an overpair and nut gutshot on a straight board.

Turn ($8): My opponent checks. I check.

Ditto. Ideally, I'd like to show this hand down unimproved.

River ($8): My opponent checks. I check. My opponent shows Q♥ 8♠ 7♦ 3♥ for a pair of queens. I win.

Hand #40: Double Combo Float, Bluff Raise The game: $0.50-$1 online (6-max), three-handed
My position: Button
My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($100) open with a raise to $3.50, and only the big blind ($123.55) calls.
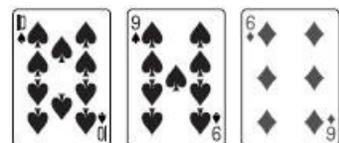
Flop ($7.50): My opponent bets $5.

I have top pair and an openended straight draw against a possible weak stab steal. That said, in a virtual highSPR situation with an SPR near 13, I am hesitant to put in a raise and risk getting reraised off my draw.

Action: I call.
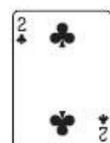
Turn ($17.50): My opponent bets $9.

Well, I could raise. But now I also have two pair. I am conflicted, but I prefer to smooth call and play bluff catcher for the moment.

Action: I call.
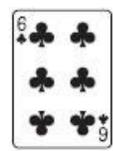
River ($35.50): My opponent bets $15.

Now my two pair has been counterfeited, and I can no longer beat a hand like A-A-x-x or A-T-x-x. Meanwhile, I didn't give my opponent credit for much of hand before; nor do I now.

Action: I raise to $64. My opponent folds.

Hand #41: Getting 3-Bet from the Blinds The game: $0.50-$1 online (6-max), six-handed
My position: UTG
My hand:

Pre-flop: The cutoff posts $1 blind and a dead $0.50 small blind. I ($100) open with a raise to $5. It gets folded to the small blind ($171.05), who reraises to $15. The big blind folds. I call.

Standard open with a premium rundown, and standard call of the 3-bet.
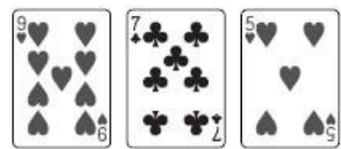
Flop ($32.50): My opponent checks.

I have top pair and a flush draw with a nut gutshot. I like betting just because I like betting when my opponent checks, but the overwhelming consideration here is that it is a low-SPR situation (SPR 2.6), and I have enough hand that I am pot committed when I bet.

Action: I bet $32.50 and my opponent folds.

Hand #42: Jacks Up, Overfull The game: $0.50-$1 online (6-max), five-handed
My position: Cutoff
My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($369.55) open with a raise to $3.50. Only the small blind ($147.40) calls.

Standard.
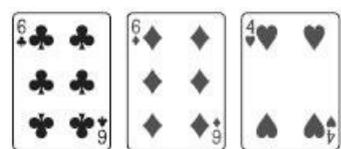
Flop ($8): My opponent checks. I check.

Standard pot-control check with jacks up. In these kinds of spots, I don't rate to get much action from hands worse than mine if I bet, and I don't want to get check-raised and have to guess how good my hand is. The no frills checking approach is often best.

Turn ($8):
Jackpot.

Action: My opponent bets $4.

Obviously, I am not folding. The question is whether or not I call and try to trap, or whether I should raise and try to get as much

money into the pot as possible. And the clear answer is that I need to raise here and hope my opponent has at least a six and try to play for stacks if possible.

Another alternative outcome is that if my opponent has nothing, he may read my raise as a bluff and play back.

Action: I raise to $15. My opponent calls.

Very promising.

River($38): My opponent checks. I bet $38. My opponent calls with A♦ 7♣ 4♦ 4♠ for the underfull.

I'd say the flop check worked out pretty well.

Hand #43: Getting 3-Bet from the Blinds The game: $0.50-$1 online (6-max), six-handed
My position: Cutoff
My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($107.40) open with a raise to $3.50. It gets folded to the big blind ($134.20), who reraises to $11. I call.

Fairly standard, if on the looser side for the open-raise. I'm not folding to the 3-bet in position, however.
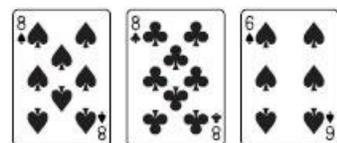
Flop ($22.50): My opponent bets $22.50.

I flopped bottom pair with an openended straight draw. I could easily fold here, unless I think my opponent doesn't have trips-or-better and may fold to a raise.

Action: I raise to $90. My opponent reraises and sets me all-in for $96.40 total. I call. My opponent shows A♠ A♣ 5♦ 3♦ for aces up.

I thought it was worth a shot, anyway.

Turn ($215.30):
River ($215.30):
Hand #44: Combo Float The game: $0.50-$1 online (6-max), six-handed
My position: Cutoff
My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($167) open with a raise to $3.50. Only the small blind ($390.30) calls.

I'd prefer the ace to be suited, but this is good enough to open from the cutoff.
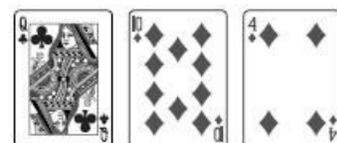
Flop ($8): My opponent bets $4. I call.

This is a sort of combo float with bottom two pair and a nut gutshot straight draw, heads up with the positional advantage against a

weak stab c-bet.

Turn ($16): My opponent checks. I bet $10. My opponent calls.

I bet as planned, but I got called. I have to figure I am beat here.
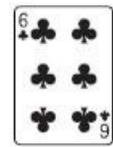
River ($36): My opponent checks. I check. My opponent shows J♦ T♣ 9♠ 4♥ for a smaller two pair. I win.

That's not what I expected to see, but I'll take it.

Hand #45: Getting 3-Bet from the Blinds, Floating The game: $0.50-$1 online (6-max), four-handed
My position: Button
My hand:

Pre-flop: The UTG player folds. I ($126.05) open with a raise to $3.50. The small blind ($213.40) reraises to $12. The big blind folds. I call.
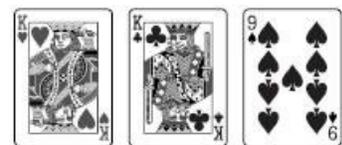
Standard.

Flop ($25): My opponent bets $12. I call.

Float.
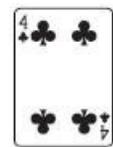
Turn ($49): My opponent checks. I bet $32. My opponent folds.

Standard.

Hand #46: Top Pair, OpenEnded Straight Draw on Paired Board The game: $0.50-$1 online (6-max), six-handed
My position: Cutoff
My hand:

Pre-flop: The first two players fold. I ($259.80) open with a raise to $3.50, and only the small blind ($273.95) calls.

Standard.
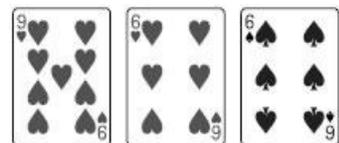
Flop ($8): My opponent checks. I check.

I have top pair with an openended straight draw. I think most opponents would fold most hands here to a bet, which probably in itself dictates that a bet is in order. But I thought I'd try something new while keeping the pot small.
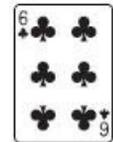
Turn ($8): My opponent checks.

Well, I can't check this now because I am losing to any pair or A-T-high. I can faithfully represent A-A-x-x here, and use leverage -- the threat of a river bet -- to encourage a fold.

Action: I bet $4 and my opponent folds.

Hand #47: Overtrips The game: $0.50-$1 online (6-max), six-handed
My position: Cutoff
My hand:

Pre-flop: Both players fold in front of me. I ($146.85) open with a raise to $3.50. The button folds, but the small blind ($92.55) and big blind ($100) both call.

A-J-8-6ds[1] is not a real premium hand as far as premium hands go in PLO, but it is way more than enough to open fire on the blinds.
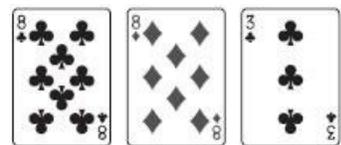
Flop ($10.50): Both blinds check.

Overtrips with a handful of overcard kickers (overcards to the three on the board, that is) should definitely be bet. You want to bet your strong hands in order to build the pot for value.

Action: I bet $7. The small blind folds, but the big blind calls.

Turn ($24.50): My opponent checks. I check.

This is a pot-control check. I am unlikely to get more than one more bet if my opponent has an overpair, and if my opponent has trips or better than I am either going to get check-raised (if my opponent has 8-7-x-x, or maybe less) which I may not be able to stand depending on the size of the raise, or I may be unlikely to get more than one bet of value if my opponent does have trips but with a smaller kicker. Moreover, I did not improve, and the 7 appearing on the turn means that I am less likely to improve _and_ win, because if my opponent has 8-7-x-x, then a six is not an out. On another day, I might have bet again.

1 "ds" is standard notation for doublesuited.

River ($24.50): My opponent checks. I bet $12. My opponent calls with T♥ T♠ 6♣ 2♣ for tens up. I win.

As intended.

Hand #48: Getting 3-Bet from the Blinds The game: $0.50-$1 online (6-max), six-handed
My position: Button
My hand:

Pre-flop: It gets folded to me. I ($178.45) open with a raise to $4.50. The small blind ($113.90) reraises to $11.50. The big blind folds. I call.

By now, it should be apparent that my play here is standard.

Flop ($24): My opponent bets $15. I call.

I have top-and-bottom two pair and position against a possible weak stab c-bet on a board with a possible straight on it, and in a virtual low-SPR situation (SPR 4). Raising is not correct, because I lose my opponent when he is c-betting air and I am not bluffing out anything. My view is that my opponent either has Q-J-x-x for the straight, A-Ax-x for top set, or perhaps air like 9-8-7-6ds.

That said, I don't necessarily believe him for one possible weakstab c-bet heads up. But again, raising is not the play, and so if I am not folding, I am calling.

Turn ($54): My opponent checks.

The T♦ is either a real sweet card, or the card that will cost me a chunk of my stack. Because now I have the underfull, which beats a straight if my opponent had one, but loses to A-A-x-x.

Now if I give my opponent credit for Q-J-x-x, I am probably not getting more than one bet out of him. And if he instead has air, then it does me no good to bet and have him fold, when he may take a stab at the river. And then in the case that my opponent actually has A-A-x-x for the overfull, I am better off checking here and calling a bet on the river than betting and giving my opponent a wide variety of options to try to get more money in the pot.

Action: I check.

River($54): My opponent checks. I bet $15. My opponent folds.

Hand #49: Getting 3-Bet from the Blinds The game: $0.50-$1 online (6-max), six-handed
My position: Button
My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($197.10) open with a raise to $3.50.

This is basically the bottom of my range.

Action: The small blind ($105.70) reraises to $11.50. The big blind folds. I call.

And of course I am not folding to a 3-bet when I get to play heads up with the positional advantage.
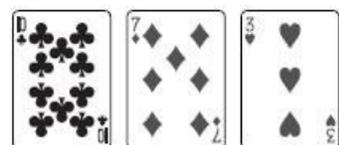
Flop ($24): My opponent bets $24.

I have middle pair and a gutshot in a low-SPR situation (SPR 4), which is basically a shove-or-fold situation. It's probably a marginal decision either way, but I prefer to have top pair or better to shove when the SPR is 4.

Action: I fold.

Having said that, I kind of wish I went ahead and shoved.

Hand #50: Middle Set, Low SPR Against a 3-Bet Pre-flop The game: $0.50-$1 online (6-max), four-handed
My position: Button

My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($117.50) open with a raise to $3.50. The small blind ($89) reraises to $11.50. The big blind folds. I call.

Standard. I have a near-premium-class hand, and with the positional advantage. I don't necessarily mind getting 3-bet, but I don't want to 4-bet because getting 5-bet would be a disaster where I would likely be getting smoked by A-A-x-x, and where if I 4-bet and get called I would be negating my positional advantage by creating a low, low-SPR situation.

Flop ($24): My opponent bets $24.

I have middle set in a low-SPR situation (SPR < 4) against an opponent who 3-bet pre-flop from out-of-position. The situation is basic: I can fold if I believe my opponent has to have A-A-x-x; or if I choose to continue, I am essentially pot-committed, as I am not calling one bet and folding.

Because even if the board flushed or straightened on the turn and my opponent bets, I still have 10 outs to a full house draw, and my opponent is likely to follow through on the turn pretty much no matter what, whether he has two pair, or a straight or flush draw (meaning that combined with my outs, I should still have the best hand often enough on the turn to make calling correct no matter what).

That said, the first question is whether or not my opponent has to have A-A-x-x to 3-bet pre-flop, and in the age of online instructional poker videos -- and from many of the examples we've seen so far in this book -- I would say most players these days who 3-bet from out of the blinds are capable of doing so without A-A-x-x.

So let's say I decide to go with it. Technically, this is shove-or-fold territory, though this (flopping a set in a low-SPR situation) is an exception to the rule. Now as I've just explained, I am still basically pot-committed, but rather than just shoving all-in here, I can call the flop and commit on the turn whether or not my opponent bets and regardless of what the turn card brings. And I like calling here because if I raise and shove all-in, my opponent will fold if he has air, where he might bet light on the turn if I just call him on the flop.

Action: I raise and set my opponent all-in for $77.50 total.

OK, so I didn't call but shoved instead. But in retrospect, I do like calling the flop and committing on the turn here. And we are going to see another similar situation later where calling heads up in a low-SPR situation is correct.

Action: My opponent calls.
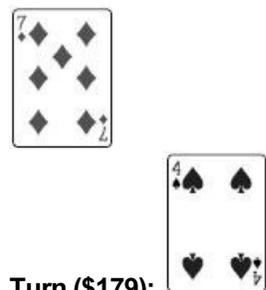
Turn ($179):
River ($179): My opponent shows A♠ A♥ 6♣ 3♦, having flopped a set of aces.

The cost of doing business sometimes.

Hand #51: Undertrips The game: $1-$2 online (6-max, deep), six-handed
My position: Hijack
My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($486.80) open with a raise to $7, and only the small blind ($1,025.10) calls.

K-J-T-8 with a suit is a solid open from the hijack if I can consistently get heads up with blinds, but a loose open with loose players behind me.

**Flop ($16): My opponent checks. I check.**

A pot-control check with undertrips and the openended straight draw.

Turn ($16): My opponent checks.

Time for a value bet.

Action: I bet $8, and my opponent calls.
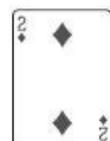
River ($32): My opponent checks.

Having checked the flop, I can safely value bet the river.

Action: I bet $20, and my opponent calls, showing A♣ Q♦ 7♣ 2♣ for queens up, ace kicker.

Mission accomplished with the undertrips, which is generally a two-street hand at best.

Hand #52: A-A-x-x The game: $1-$2 online (6-max, deep), six-handed
My position: Button
My hand:

Pre-flop: It gets folded to me, and I ($477.10) open with a raise to $7. Only the small blind ($159.60) calls.

Standard.
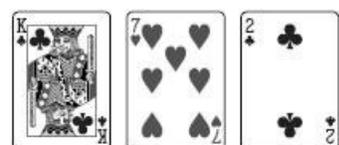
Flop ($16): My opponent checks. I check.

I could just as easily have bet. That said, there is some pot-control merit to checking. For one thing, I deflect any check-raise attempts, as this is an easy check-raise bluff type board. I do have the dry ace of clubs, which may have some value if a club hits. Plus I have backdoor straight draws as well.
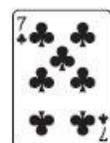
Turn ($16): My opponent checks. I check.

Pot-control check with aces up, and the third club hitting. With aces up, I am not easily outdrawn.

River ($16): My opponent checks.

There is little value in betting. I can show this down.

Action: I check. My opponent shows J♠ T♦ 8♠ 7♠ for trip sevens.

Sometimes you just get beat. This is an outcome you have to deal with in order to play in an overall winning manner.

Hand #53: Floating The game: $1-$2 online (6-max, deep), six-handed
My position: Cutoff
My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($473.10) open with a raise to $7. It gets folded to the big blind ($406.45), who reraises to $22. I call.

Loose open from the cutoff, standard call of the 3-bet in position.
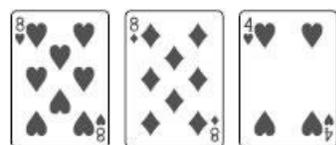
Flop ($45): My opponent bets $30. I call.

Float.

Turn ($105): My opponent bets $70.

This is a tricky spot. Now I have a hand, but am facing a second barrel. I think the most likely hands for my opponent to have here are Q-Q-x-x, Q-8-x-x, or a second barrel of air. I don't expect him to bet again with A-A-x-x, though bare trip eights is a possibility, as is A-Q-x-x.

I have a judgment call to make. My choices here:

1. Fold if I think I am beat, or
2. Call and show down the river if checked to, or otherwise fold to a third bet.

Action: I call.

River ($245): My opponent checks. I check. My opponent shows A♦ A♣ 5♦ 4♠, for aces up.

I didn't expect that, though the fact that he picked up nut diamonds may have encouraged him to bet the turn.

Nobody said that floating was risk free!

Hand #54: Top Pair, Plus The game: $1-$2 online (6-max), three-handed, one blind
My position: Button
My hand:

Pre-flop: The UTG player folds. I ($532.20) open with a raise to $6. The blind ($337.35) calls.
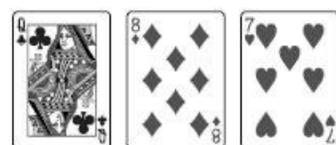
Flop ($12): My opponent checks. I bet $12. My opponent raises to $28.

This is a tricky spot. I have top pair and a nut gutshot with backdoor hearts, and it is not at all clear to me that my opponent isn't raising in response to my c-bet -- in other words, he might be raising light because he expects me to be c-betting light.

Action: I call.

Turn ($68): My opponent bets $40.

This bet looks like a weak follow through. Plus I picked up an openended straight draw with middle pair. This looks like a good spot to make a play.

Action: I raise to $188. My opponent reraises to $303.35.

Whoops. I am virtually pot-committed now.

Action: I call.
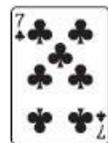
River ($674.70): My opponent shows 9♣ 8♣ 8♠ 6♠ for a full house.

Some players routinely underbet the pot; others don't. Sometimes you just run into players who have games that appear tailor-made to beat you; sometimes you just get coolered. But then again, I might not have raised the turn had I not picked up a bigger straight draw.

Oh well. Shit happens.

Hand #55: Nut Wrap, 3-Betting After the Flop The game: $1-$2 online (6-max), six-handed
My position: Button
My hand:

Pre-flop: Everybody folds to me. I ($195) open with a raise to $7, and both the small blind ($37.50) and big blind ($80) call.
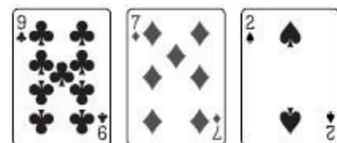
Flop ($21): The small blind bets $6. The big blind raises to $12.

I flopped a 13-card nut wrap with backdoor diamonds, in a low-SPR situation facing a weak stab and a weak stab raise. Perhaps I can get them both to fold to a reraise?

Action: I reraise to $63. The small blind folds. The big blind reraises all-in to $73. I call. My opponent shows A♠ 8♥ 5♠ 4♠ for a sucker gutter and acehigh.

I wonder what game he thinks *he's* playing. He does have the best hand, technically, with his acehigh. However, the game does not end on the flop, and I am a 59%/41% favorite to win the hand.

Turn ($173):

River ($173): I win with the bigger straight.

Hand #56: Flush Draw The game: $1-$2 online (6-max), six-handed
My position: Button
My hand:

Pre-flop: Everybody folds to me. I ($404.60) open with a raise to $7, and only the small blind ($80) calls.

Three middle straight cards with 13-card nut wrap potential, with an overcard kicker. Another one from towards the bottom of my range. I like it.
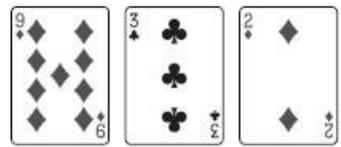
Flop ($16): My opponent checks.

I have a flush draw, with some outside straight help possibilities. I want the free card.

Action: I check.

Turn ($16): My opponent checks. I check.

I probably should have bet this, having hit the middle pair with my opponent checking a second time.

River ($16): My opponent checks.

I have something to show down.

Action: I check. My opponent shows Q♠ J♦ 7♥ 2♠ for a pair of deuces, and I win.

Hand #57: Top Pair, Top Two Plus The game: $1-$2 online (6-max), six-handed
My position: Hijack
My hand:

Pre-flop: The UTG player folds. I ($237.85) open with a raise to $7, and only the big blind ($594.50) calls.

This is an OK open from the hijack if you have tight players behind you, but in a loose or aggressive game -- or with strong players behind me -- I would prefer to limp in (or maybe even fold, though I don't remember the last time I folded this hand for one bet!) and keep the pot small and multiway pre-flop.

In a looser game, I would prefer to restrict my raises from here to premium-class hands.
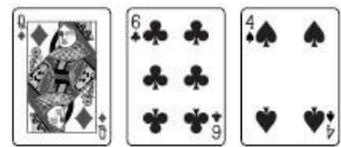
Flop ($15): My opponent checks. I check.

Again, I could have gone either way with top pair and a full set of draws to top two pair. But then again, if I had bet and my opponent had folded, then I wouldn't have anything to write about.

Turn ($15): My opponent bets $7.50.

I now have top two pair and a flush draw, and we are in a highSPR situation with an SPR of 15. The best play is probably to smooth call and play small-pot poker. If I raise here and get called, I am probably not far ahead; and if instead I get reraised it probably means I am smoked perhaps by a slowplayed Q-Q-x-x. And if instead my opponent has nothing but air, I only gain his bet if I raise, whereas I could possibly earn another bet on the river if I just smooth call.

I think in the grand scheme of things, raising here is a mistake.

Action: I raise to $37.50. My opponent calls.

River ($90): My opponent checks.

A possible straight appeared, and if my opponent was drawing with something legitimate like A-J-T-x for a nut wrap, then he hit it. If instead he was on the flush draw and missed, then there is little value in betting. I have enough to show down.

Action: I check. My opponent shows T♥ T♦ 7♥ 5♥ for a pair of tens. I win.

Well, I don't like my opponent's play, either. He basically had an underpair and a nut openended straight draw but without a flush draw. With his hand, I probably fold to the raise on the turn; or, having failed to do that, I would at least have bet the blockers on the river.

Hand #58: Heads Up The game: $1-$2 online, heads up
My position: Small Blind/Button
My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($293.45) raise to $6. The big blind ($200) calls.

Standard open heads up from the SB/Button.
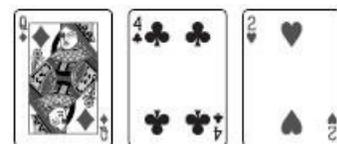
Flop ($12): My opponent checks. I bet $12, and my opponent calls.

I'll give my opponent credit for a queen here.

Turn ($36): My opponent checks.

I paired the ace, and picked up a flush draw. I could check and take the free card if I give my opponent credit for 3-5-x-x; but if I bet, I give my opponent a chance to fold a queen -- which has outs against me -- or maybe a smaller two pair.

Action: I bet $36 and my opponent calls.
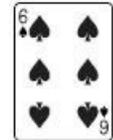
River ($108): My opponent checks.

I'm not really sure where I am at, but I have enough to show down.

Action: I check. My opponent shows A♠ T♣ 4♠ 3♣ for two pair.

**Well, nice hand. It is what it is. Can't win them all.**

**Hand #59: Standard The game: $1-$2 online (6-max), five-handed**
My position: UTG
My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($275.80) open with a raise to $7. Only the small blind ($151.70) calls.

Standard open with a premium hand.
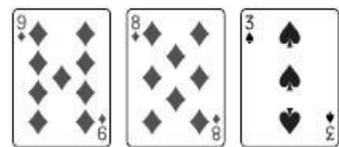
Flop ($16): My opponent checks. I bet $16, and my opponent calls.

I decided to follow through with a c-bet this time with top pair and overcards.
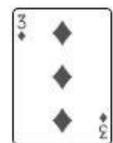
Turn ($48): My opponent checks. I bet $30, and my opponent calls.

Standard follow through with the board pairing and the flush card appearing. Having gotten called, I am pretty much done with the hand.

River ($108): My opponent checks. I check. My opponent has J♦ 5♦ 5♣ 2♠ for a flush.

In chess literature, my opponent's play pre-flop and on the flop would be marked with a "?" for "dubious." His hand should definitely be folded out of the small blind. I don't like his call on the flop, either, though I suppose I've done worse myself. I'll give him credit on the turn because he did have the best hand.

I suppose he played the river right, too.

Hand #60: Overtrips, Heads Up The game: $1-$2 online (6-max), heads up
My position: Small Blind/Button
My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($200) raise to $6. My opponent ($254.50) calls.
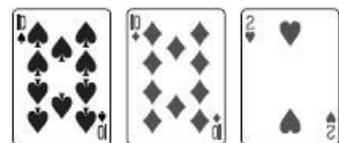
Flop ($12): My opponent checks. I bet $8, and my opponent calls.

Standard. Overtrips should be bet.

Turn ($28): My opponent checks. I check.

A pot-control check. The king appearing hurts the strength of my hand, and turns my hand into a one-bet hand. Because if I bet, I am only likely to get more than one street of action if I am up against trips or better, which I am either a small favorite or now a big dog; moreover, my opponent is likely to fold most any hand that does not contain trips, whereas he might be willing to call another bet on the river if I check.

The latter case is key, because I think it is most likely that my opponent does not have trips.

Had I filled up or an undercard (like a three or a four or a deuce) appeared, I would almost certainly have bet again.

River ($28): My opponent checks. I bet $16, and my opponent folds.

I'm not sure what that means -- it might have been something like Q-Q-x-x or J-J-x-x.

Hand #61: Top Pair The game: $1-$2 online (6-max), five-handed, one blind
My position: Button
My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($601.20) open with a raise to $6. The big blind ($74) calls.

This is on the looser side. I am doublesuited, though.
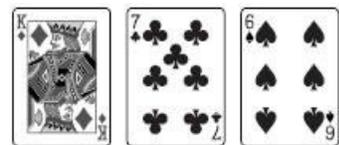
Flop ($12): My opponent checks.

I have top pair and a nut gutshot with two backdoor flush draws in a low mid-SPR situation (SPR *5.7). I could probably go either way here. The answer I think depends somewhat on my opponent (i.e. How often does he check-raise?), and somewhat on how comfortable I am shoving if I get check-raised.

Action: I bet $12, and my opponent calls.
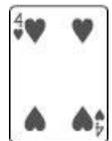
Turn ($36): My opponent checks.

I have little reason to believe that card hit my opponent. That said, the play is pretty much to fire away and probably go ahead and go with it if I somehow get check-raised.

Action: I bet $36 and my opponent folds.

Hand #62: Small Ball The game: $1-$2 online (6-max, deep), five-handed
My position: Button
My hand:

Pre-flop: Both players in front of me fold. I ($461.90) limp in. The small blind folds. The big blind ($464.95) raises to $7. I call.

I didn't even realize that the hand wasn't suited at the time, or I might not have played it.
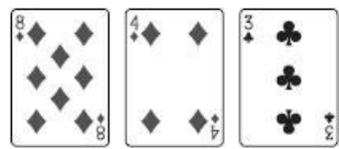
Flop ($15): My opponent checks.

With the nut openended straight draw, the play is to bet the hand through.

Action: I bet $15, and my opponent calls.
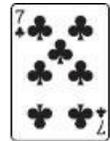
Turn ($45): My opponent checks. I bet $45, and my opponent calls.
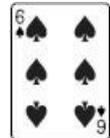
River ($135): My opponent checks.

At this point, my best play is to check and show the hand down.

Action: I check. My opponent shows Q♠ J♣ T♣ 8♠ for a pair of eights.

*It's tough playing out of position, as it causes you to call down with hands like that.*

Hand #63: K-K Blocker Play The game: $1-$2 online (6-max, deep), four-handed
My position: UTG
My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($200) open with a raise to $7, and only the small blind ($244.95) calls.

I don't typically raise with sub-premium kings (anything other than kings with rundowns or single-gapped rundowns and a suit, as in K-K-Q-J or K-K-Q-T with a suit, or double-paired kings like K-K-Q-Q), but I thought I'd try it this time. I am doublesuited with gapped connectors.
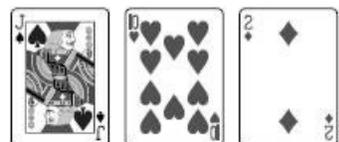
Flop ($16): My opponent bets $6. I call.

A stopping call/combo float with the overpair and double-sucker gutshot.

Turn ($28): My opponent checks.

I have the blockers to the straight.

Action: I bet $28, and my opponent calls.

River ($82): My opponent checks.

The play is to follow through.

Action: I bet $61. My opponent calls, showing 9♠ 8♦ 7♣ 4♣ for a straight.

My opponent read my hand perfectly and called the turn bet with the intention of betting the river unimproved. Either that, or he could just be a donkey.


Hand #64: AirM

The game: $1-$2 online (6-max, deep), five-handed
My position: Cutoff
My hand:

Pre-flop: The UTG player folds. I ($200) open with a raise to $7. The button folds. The small blind ($318.85) and big blind ($364.20) both call.
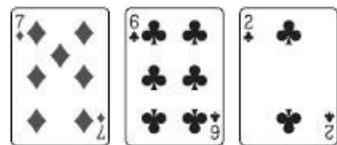
Flop ($21): The small blind checks. The big blind bets $10.50. I fold, and the small blind folds.

I had to show at least one of these. I didn't want you think I make a play every time.

Deep Stack Ante Games

The remaining hands in this chapter are from deep-stack ante games ranging from $0.50-$1 with $0.20 antes to $2-$4 blinds with $0.75 antes.

Hand #65: Floater The game: $0.50-$1 online with $0.20 ante online (6-max, deep), five-handed
*My position: Button*
My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($509.25) open with a raise to $4.50, and only the big blind ($292) calls.

This is definitely on the looser side as far as suited ace hands go. A-5-4-3 is not typically on the playable list, which runs down to A-6-5-4, A-6-5-3, A-6-5-2, and A-6-4-3. A-5-4-3 cannot physically flop a 13-card nut wrap, or a nut straight with a nut straight re-draw.
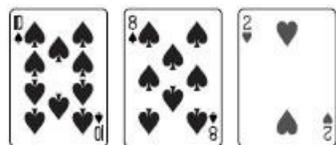
Flop ($10.50): My opponent bets $10.50. I call.

A semi-bluff float. I flopped the nut flush draw, and hit the pivot wheel wrap card as well.

Turn ($31.50): My opponent checks. I check.

The typical play when floating on the flop is to bet when checked to on the turn. The board pairing on the turn presents a tricky scenario, where my opponent is more likely to follow through with a bet with most of his range, but may sometimes check if he has, say, a set and filled up.

This time, I chose to take the free card rather than bet.
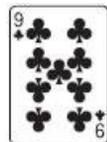
River ($31.50): My opponent checks.

The fact is I can't win by checking.

Action: I bet $18, and my opponent folds.

This is in part what the positional advantage does, particularly against weaker opponents. I cannot take credit for making a brilliant play -- I simply made the only play that was available to me. And with position, I had the luxury of having my opponent check the river after checking the turn as well.

Hand #66: A-A-x-x The game: $0.50-$1 online with $0.20 ante online (6-max, deep), five-handed
My position: Cutoff
My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($200) open with a raise to $4.50, and only the big blind ($1,159.20) calls.

I have a suited ace and a wheel card, with another straight possibility as well. This is an OK raise in position. Meanwhile, the presence of the antes pushes the decision towards a raise.
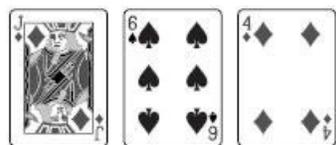
Flop ($10.50): My opponent bets $10.50.

I can fold for one bet, but I probably shouldn't.

Action: I call.
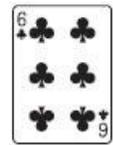
Turn ($31.50): My opponent bets $31.50. I call.

It's much harder to fold when the board pairs the middle card.

River ($94.50): My opponent bets $47.25.

Hmmm. I have a tough choice to make. My opponent should know that I have to have something in order to call on the turn after the board paired. In that case, for my opponent to bet again on the river, I should expect to be beat here.

Action: I call. My opponent shows 9♦ 7♦ 6♥ 3♥ for trip sixes.

I had to see it, if only for future reference.

Hand #67: Delayed Float The game: $0.50-$1 online with $0.20 ante online (6-max, deep), six-handed
My position: Hijack
My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($215) open with a raise to $4.70, and only the small blind ($171.40) calls.
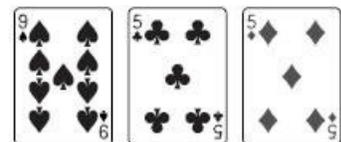
Flop ($11.60): My opponent checks. I check.

I flopped a gutshot. Checking is not as weak as it often appears, as I can legitimately represent A-A-x-x later on in the hand on these paired board flops.

Turn ($11.60): My opponent bets $5.80. I call.

Semibluff float. I picked up the diamond draw. The plan is to check and show down the river if I improve and my opponent checks, or bet if I don't improve. If my opponent bets again on the river, I'll have to use judgment to determine the best course of action.

This is gray, gray area. There's nothing wrong with folding. I just don't like giving up.

River ($23.20): My opponent bets $23.20.

So far, I've pretty well represented A-A-x-x. That said, my opponent's pot-sized bet here somewhat polarizes his range between air and something like 9-9-x-x, 5-5-x-x, and T-T-x-x.

Obviously, I have nothing to call him with, as I literally have the worst possible hand (it's not every day that happens in PLO!). However, I don't feel strong enough that I am compelled to attempt a bluff raise.

Action: I fold.

Hand #68: Getting 3-Bet from the Blinds, Semi-Bluff Raise The game: $0.50-$1 online with $0.20 ante online (6-max, deep), six-handed
My position: Button
My hand:

Pre-flop: It gets folded to me, and I ($383.80) open with a raise to $4.70. The small blind ($114.10) reraises to $15, and the big blind folds. I call.

Standard.
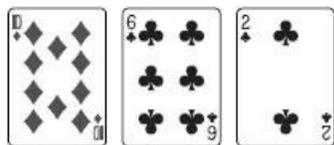
Flop ($32.20): My opponent bets $19.

I flopped the nut gutshot with a flush draw in a low-SPR situation. I could fold here and think nothing of it tomorrow, as my hand could be easily clobbered by a bigger flush draw. Or I could make a play on this possible weakstab c-bet.

Action: I raise to $89.20, and my opponent folds.

Note that one of the effects of SPR is that being in a low-SPR situation limits my downside in making this play. In a highSPR situation (SPR ≥ 13), it would be incorrect to make this raise without the nut flush draw, as I do not have strong enough a hand to withstand a reraise.

That said, in a highSPR situation, the better option is to smooth call and float, rather than raise on the semi-bluff.

Hand #69: A-A-8-7, Backdoor Nut Straight The game: $0.50-$1 online with $0.20 ante online (6-max, deep), five-handed
My position: Cutoff
My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($428.95) open with a raise to $4.50, and only the small blind ($218.15) calls.
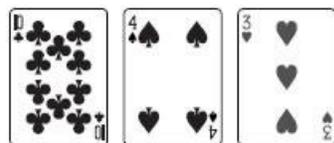
Flop ($11): My opponent checks.

I could go either way here.

Action: I bet $11, and my opponent calls.

Turn ($33): My opponent checks.

Having picked up the double-nut gutshot to go with my overpair, betting again is the clear best play.

Action: I bet $33, and my opponent calls.
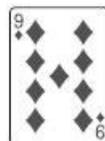
River ($99): My opponent checks. I bet $99, and my opponent calls, showing T♠ 7♥ 4♣ 2♥, having flopped top two pair.

Well, he got what he deserved for calling pre-flop from the small blind holding garbage. I'm just lucky I didn't get check-raised on the flop.

Hand #70: Getting 3-Bet from the Blinds, Double Barrel The game: $0.50-$1 online with $0.20 ante online (6-max, deep), six-handed

My position: Cutoff
My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($529.80) open with a raise to $4.70. The button folds. The small blind ($215.10) reraises to $16.30. The big blind folds. I call.

This isn't a real premium hand with the top gap and small pair, but I am open to trying new things.
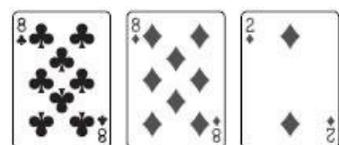
Flop ($34.80): My opponent checks.

I think my sixes need to be bet, as I am too easily outdrawn.

Action: I bet $17.50, and my opponent calls.

Turn ($69.80): My opponent checks.

Chances are I am beat. That said, I probably cannot win this hand by checking down. I could either give up now, or fire one more shot and see if I can make my opponent fold something like A-A-x-x, K-K-x-x, or J-J-x-x, T-T-x-x, or 9-9-x-x, or maybe even a weak flush.

Action: I bet $37, and my opponent folds.

Hand #71: Bottom Pair, OpenEnded Straight Draw, Check Down The game: $0.50-$1 online with $0.20 ante online (6-max, deep), five-handed
My position: Button
My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($200) open with a raise to $4.30, and only the small blind ($201.95) calls.
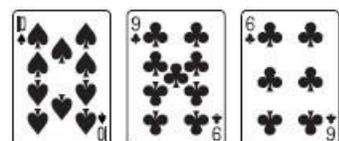
Flop ($10.60): My opponent checks. I check.
I decided to take the free card with my nut openended straight draw. I do have bottom pair to go with it.

Turn ($10.60): My opponent checks. I check.

Betting here wouldn't be wrong, either.
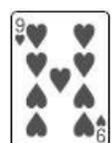
River ($10.60): My opponent checks.

I have something to show down with my sixes up.

Action: I check. My opponent shows A♦ Q♣ 7♣ 4♥. I win.

*Hand #72: A-A-x-x The game: $1-$2 online with $0.30 ante online (6-max, deep), four-handed*
My position: UTG
My hand:

Pre-flop: I ($400) limp in UTG.

Without suits, this is not a premium AA hand.

Action: The button folds. The small blind ($404.85) limps in. The big blind ($321.50) checks.
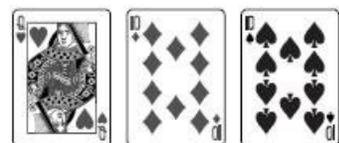
Flop ($7.20): The small blind checks. The big blind bets $7.20.

I've gotta call at least one bet with my aces up.

Action: I call, and the small blind folds.

Turn ($21.60): My opponent bets $21.60.

Judgment territory. I could either fold, or call one more bet and try to show down the river.

Action: I call.

River ($64.80): My opponent checks. I check. My opponent shows K♦ T♥ 8♣ 3♠ for trip tens.

Could I have folded the turn? Maybe. Am I usually beat there when he bets the pot on the turn? Probably, but I don't really know.

*All I know is that I probably would have played his hand differently.*

Hand #73: The Betting Machine The game: $1-$2 online with $0.30 ante online (6-max, deep), five-handed
My position: Button
My hand:

*Pre-flop: I ($400) open with a raise to $8.50, and only the big blind ($272.60) calls.*

This is basically the bottom of my prescribed range. I might sometimes open limp with this hand on the button as well. That said, the presence of the antes may push this hand towards a raise.
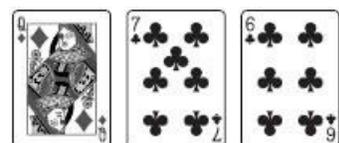
Flop ($19.50): My opponent checks.

Bottom two pair should probably be bet.

Action: I bet $19.50, and my opponent calls.
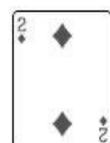
Turn ($58.50): My opponent checks. I bet $58.50, and my opponent calls.

Standard procedure.

River ($175.50): My opponent checks. I bet $95, and my opponent folds.

To tell you the truth, I didn't realize at the time that I had flopped bottomtwo pair. I actually misread my hand while multi-tabling; at the time, I thought I had just the middle pair.

Had I known that I had the two pair, I more likely would have checked and showed down the river rather than followed through.

Hand #74: Delayed C-Bet The game: $2-$4 online with $0.75 ante online (6-max, deep), five-handed
My position: UTG
My hand: