

PLAYING TEXAS HOLD'EM ONLINE

THE PROFESSIONAL'S GUIDE

A.J. Mills 2004



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AN INTRODUCTION TO ONLINE POKER THINKING AND INSIDERS SECRETS

"I discovered the secret recipe to KFC Chicken 15 years ago and I have been hooked on 'Insiders Secrets' ever since."

H

ave you ever been to a party or a bar where you've met someone for the first time who told you an insiders secret to their business or work? Maybe I'm just a good listener

but this happens to me all the time. We all know these insider kinds of details about our own little world. For example, if we worked at Cadbury, the Cadbury Secret would be one of the first things we would learn about on the job (even if it wasn't officially part of the training program). There are other kinds of insider knowledge - how something is really made at the plant we work at, how certain products are marketed, where an idea really came from, or how you can make a product yourself for one-tenth the

price.

Don't you wish you could talk to an insider at the plant where the car you are considering buying is made? Or someone who really knows the scoop on the mortgage industry when it's time to get re-financed? How about talking to the guy who programmed the VLT machine you play everyday at lunch? Would that help you win more?

Everybody we have talked to about Texas Hold'em has said that what they really want is more than just a book that tells them the rules to the game. They want something new. Something fresh that will give them an edge over the other players. Something exciting.

So we talked to the insiders. How does the system work? How are the cards shuffled (what's the randomizing algorithm)? Has anyone done any studies on what cards really pay the best? What tables play the best? Are there systems that work online better than others? What do the insiders know about cards to play? Can we really make money at this game?

From this feedback we develop this book concept. Then we hunted down the facts. In the end, this has been a lot of fun and quite profitable. We love the game of Texas Hold'em but now we have the tools to win more games. As usual, if you have the insider

'stuff', you are better armed to succeed. Pretty much one of those simple rules to live your life by if you ask me.

I believe that winning in life, love, business and sports – and yes, poker, is all about three dynamics I like to call the CSI's.

- Contingency** (chance or luck)
- Self-awareness** (know your strengths and weaknesses)

□ **Intelligence** (or 'street smarts')

We have divided this book into these three key areas for a very good reason. When you play online poker for real money for

the first time you will find it difficult just to survive. Your stack (your personal chips) will disappear like an umbrella in a typhoon. If you have what it takes to stick it out through this initiation (and the

expendable cash to last), you will next discover that what you are lacking is real technical knowledge. You will soon realize that you need to play this game more with 'field intelligence' than instinct. That is, if you want to win consistently.

Finally, as you progress into larger pot games, the real test will be your ability to be mentally tough, disciplined and aggressive. Our last section on self-awareness discusses the philosophy of great poker players.

There are dozens of books available today on poker. I've read most of them. They tend to focus on one or more of the following areas:

- Analysis of odds and strategy
- History and actual play examples
- Techniques on 'tells' or how to read the other players
- Mental preparation for the game itself

Not even the best books cover all of these areas or attempt to bring these different practices together in some meaningful way. This is our goal with *Insider's Guide*; to link strategy and intelligence and mental preparation in a way that will ramp you up to be successful at the best game in the world in the shortest possible time.

What's new about this book? First, unlike most of the books on the market, this volume is NOT based on fifty years of writing around

the traditional 'bricks and mortar' game of Poker. Our focus is specific to the new online versions of Texas Hold'em Poker, played by over 20,000,000 people worldwide over the Net every single day. Anyone who has played online poker knows this is quite a different animal indeed.

Secondly, we present the *Food Chain Theory*, a new system of play based on the results of three major research programs carried out by computer simulations on Texas Hold'em Poker. If you follow the system religiously, you will find your winnings increasing - gradually at first, and then substantially.

All the research shows that aggressive play is the key to winning monster pots; aggression at the right time and based on a solid body of knowledge. We will show you the process and outline the steps to being a true 'card shark'. But you must follow the rules. When we run 'labs' on the Cage Food Chain Theory we find that players get caught up in the game and bend the rules of the system, letting their emotions rule their play. Or they go by gut feeling on a decisive hand instead of considering pot odds and card odds. The online casinos love that kind of play - it makes them millions every month. It won't however put any extra money in your bank account. You've got to stop playing by 'gut' feel.

Of the three dynamics, we start with the 'intel' section and contingency data first; this is where the rubber hits the road for most players and we wanted to get you started with an exciting new system of playing that will give you a first-hand advantage.

What's Intel? - typical 'military speak' for 'field intelligence' - or relevant knowledge. What you need to know, now. In the covert world of spies and agents, having the right nugget of information available when required can save your life or someone else's. In Poker, it means making the win when others wouldn't and adding a few points to your odds. This is different from lifetime

experience - which you can only gain from playing the game thousands of times.

Field intel helps you parachute in to a situation and be competent and savvy in a big hurry.

The *Food Chain Theory of Poker* condenses dozens of schools of thought on Poker into an easy to digest program that you can begin using immediately. The goal of this technique is to get you out of the 'fish' category and in to the 'shark' category before you get eaten alive. Pardon the food puns but the speed and aggressiveness of real money online poker can spin your head around. You will need to be armed and ready.

In many areas of this book we deal with the latest in research on 'contingency', another word for 'odds'. Why not just call it 'luck'? Because contingency is a far broader and more elegant term. Luck is not a 'thing' you can buy or create and you certainly cannot attract it or capture it (or chase it away). What we as humans see as 'luck' is really just chance circumstance playing out before us.

The best way to visualize contingency is to imagine a fork in the road. Which then leads to another fork. And still another. Each requires a decision and each decision can lead to very different conclusions. That's what contingency is all about. Sometimes we choose the path without knowing where it will take us and other times we don't get to choose at all.

In Poker, we can use math to better understand the odds of certain combinations occurring in your game. Really understanding the odds in Poker is one of the keys to success; not only because it helps you to better understand the possibilities but because it teaches us the expected monetary value of our hand as well. What's the good in knowing that the chance of pulling another

Queen is 1:7 if we don't know how to translate that information into a practical betting decision?

Recent computer simulations of Texas Hold'em have taught us quite a bit about real game odds and strategy. What they've also shown us is that it takes several lifetimes to average out the odds between matched players. So you need a powerful advantage to win against others with similar skills and preparation. That advantage is better self-awareness.

Assume that you and another player are perfectly matched in card skills. You play each other every week. But one of you has had lifetime wins of several times the other based on pulling better cards. How long do you have to keep playing before the win nings even out? **About 250,000 years according to computer research.**

So how does a better player gain advantage if they don't have a few thousand lifetimes at their disposal? By being significantly better than the other players. You need huge advantage to be a consistent winner. You need to know the other players and you need to gain this advantage as quickly as possible. You need to understand betting odds better. You need to know yourself. And you need to be very aggressive when the time is right.

That's the essence of a shark. Skilled. Aggressive. Knows the environment. Knows the prey. Undaunted.

Have fun and best of luck at the tables.

A.J. Mills

WHY IS ONLINE TEXAS HOLD'EM POKER SO DIFFERENT?



Texas Hold'em Poker has become the fastest growing game on the Internet. Play it a few times and you will understand why. It's addictive. Fast. Entertaining. Colorful. And there you are, playing live with people from all over the globe, a great virtual

casino experience - and real money is being won by people just like you and me. What's not to like?

Well, you say, "I would like to win more often . . ."

Like the people who play slots or video poker terminals (VLT), most people just play poker online for fun. Don't get me wrong.

They would love to win; they just aren't prepared to do the homework necessary to get really good at the game and win consistently. Who has time for that?

The Pro's do, that's who!

And the Pro's like Online poker. Unlike VLT's, the odds are not stacked so much in favour of the house and players can actually make consistent profits -

if they understand the game well enough.

I have an uncle who is famous in our family. He has an unusual career. He has made a great living playing professional poker for over 40 years. (He was known in the trade as a 'rounder' -

for details see the dictionary at the end of this book.) And he has made more than just a decent living -

he has several homes and a yacht he moors in Florida. He's an interesting character and he has taught me a lot. Much of this book is based on his advice and teaching.

My uncle says there are two major differences between casual players and professionals.

One - Professionals always know exactly whom they are playing with.

Don't be deceived. When you play poker you are not playing against the cards -

you are playing against the other players. Great poker players never forget this. The goal of our book is to teach you how to better understand the guy or gal sitting across from you at the virtual poker table. A better understanding of the dynamics between humans at the table alone will dramatically improve your chances of winning.

Two - Pro's understand the odds.

This book will teach you how to calculate odds using actual game examples and give you shortcuts that will help you to increase your chances of winning every time you play.

“Odds don't tell you how to play, they tell you how to bet.”

First you need to understand why reading about the conventional 'brick and mortar' game of Texas Hold'em (the kind you play in a real casino) certainly won't hurt –

but it will definitely not prepare you for the unique experience of playing the game online.

WHY IS ONLINE POKER SO DIFFERENT?

Online poker adds several interesting wrinkles to the game of Texas Hold'em. So much is changed in fact, that there are a whole new set of game strategies. The odds of winning the online version of this game are now stacked even more in the favour of the better-educated players. This is one of the secrets to real success at the virtual table.

1. YOU CAN WATCH.

If you walk into a bricks and mortar casino tomorrow and decide you would like to just watch a game of Texas Hold'em to better understand how it's played, security will soon hustle you out of the building. Poker is not a spectator sport at casinos. If you want to learn the game - you need to play. And playing when you're a rookie (or as the pros call it – a 'fish') can be a very expensive learning experience.

On the other hand, online, you can watch a real game as long as you want, for no cost and for no risk. Watching a table can teach you a lot about the players and their betting style and the game in

general. Watching players for 'free' is one of the great advantages of online poker.

Taking notes is another great strategy in Online Poker.

There is nothing wrong or unethical about keeping notes on other players. Some Online Poker rooms even provide a feature that allows you to take notes online while you play. This feature facilitates the building of a database around the playing styles of consistent players. Our advice is to record what kinds of hands they play, how quickly they react, and to record detail on betting and raising behaviour.

In the heat of the game, you may not always have time to go through all of the details. But one day, a regular player will join your table with a healthy stack of chips and you will appreciate knowing everything you can ahead of time about their playing style.

2. YOU KNOW EXACTLY WHAT'S IN THE POT?

At a regular card game, you need to do some rough guessing at pot totals. (The other players rarely encourage you to go digging through the pot to come up with a tally). Online, the total is calculated for you to the penny. This makes calculations about how much to bet very accurate. Why is this important?

You will learn later that one of the keys to winning is a system used by pros for decades called Pot Betting. The more accurate your knowledge of the pot, the better able you are to know exactly how much you should be betting on a given hand. Online Poker is a Pot Betting dream come true. Sharpen up your math skills a bit, and you are on the road to making money.

3. YOU HAVE MORE TABLE AND BETTING CHOICES!

Have you ever walked into a real casino looking for a seat at a card game? You may be lucky to find a few dozen. Which one is the best for your playing style? You won't know until you sit down and play a number of hands. And if you don't like your company at that table? You move to another table and try again.

There are thousands of online casinos with dozens or hundreds of tables at each one for you to choose from. You can pick from a wide-range of betting options and from an infinite variety of different player combinations – combinations you will have observed before putting down your hard-earned money. And you can do this in a matter of minutes right from your computer screen.

Never have there been so many options for the poker player willing to learn. Remember, you are not just playing against

the odds, you are playing against other players and in a mathematical sense, the table as a whole. This is the real key to winning. Look for a table with the greatest number of weaker players and you will have an automatic advantage.



FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO JUST WANT TO GET STARTED NOW!

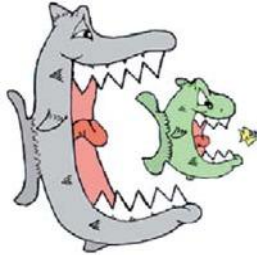


If you are anything like me, you just want to get to the good stuff. So let's jump right into the game and the *Food Chain* system.

Sure, there are rules to learn and techniques to understand - and all kinds of interesting tips on betting and odds. This book is full of strategy and background.

But I just want to jump into the game itself as a starting point. How can you be a winner? OK! Let's start with an example of how this system works. Then you can learn about the details more at your leisure.

The 'Food-Chain Theory' of Online Texas Hold'em Poker!



Fish, as they are called in Texas Hold'em, are prey.



Fish are the losers - and the beginners - and the sloppy players who get eaten everyday by the bigger fish. In nature they are called 'prey'. Thank goodness for the

fish. They sustain the entire poker 'food chain'. Without fish, there would be no monster pots or big paychecks and the game would not be nearly as interesting nor as profitable.

Don't get me wrong. Everyone is a 'fish' in the beginning and there is no way around this essential truth. Everyone gets burned and eaten repeatedly when they start to play poker. Everyone loses on even the best 'nuts' hands.

This book is about how to get out of the 'fish' category as quickly as possible and start taking money home.

A note about the research that backs this book.

The book you are reading, unlike most of the poker books available on the market today, is not based on anecdotal examples and table stories told by the 'old pros', a few lucky winners or

guys who have spent decades learning the ropes; the majority of them playing the old fashioned 'bricks and mortar' version of the game.

I am a Computer Programmer with an intense love for Poker (and other games) where there is a strong component of skill involved. This book is all about the science of Poker.

CardShark, our research team, has gone through millions of lines of code, data results and analysis on billions of played hands of Poker. A good percentage of this research was sourced from the same online casinos you and I play at everyday. The rest came from reputable sources such as Carnegie-Melon University where grad students have been running computerized Texas Hold'em simulations for years. Our theories are based on solid mathematics, proven odds calculations and the results of some very interesting computer studies.

At least three major research studies over the past three years have generated over 5 billion virtual hands of Texas Hold'em poker.

You would have to play poker every day for several million years to experience that many hands. (I know you're trying to live a healthier lifestyle but I'm not betting on anyone's chances to make it that far!)

Most of the strategy in this book is based on this new exciting research PLUS some good old-fashioned table sense based on over 20 years of reading great card players.

You may be surprised by what this new research shows. I know I was.

The better the information you have about what is really happening with the cards and the table, the faster you will get out of the 'fish' category and into the winning zone. We open up the big black online poker box and show you the insides. What could be more fun?

Here's the question we hear every day. How much money can you make? Again, based on recent surveys, a good player can make \$40,000 to \$50,000 per year playing medium \$3-\$10 stake games.

A real expert, a SHARK, can make \$100,000 or more per year – and hundreds do.

Let's start with the results of a recent computer analysis.

Imagine what we could learn about this game if we created a 'virtual' 10-player Texas Hold'em table, programmed the players in different ways –

and then just let them play for a few thousand years.

With some of the test runs we would use very aggressive player behaviours just to see how that type of combination of players effects winning and losing. In other examples we would use a very tight and conservative group of players to see how that affects the game over a period of time. **Billions of hands were then played and analyzed again and again over several months. More than many lifetimes of play.**

Here is the simplest form of the results of this research based on your chances of winning with the first two hole cards.

Player Type	Play	Threshold
Fish	11%	Top 24 pocket cards
Barracuda	20%	Top 40 pocket cards
Shark	45%	Top 80 pocket cards



Player Type – If you are a beginner, you are fish. If you are more interested in playing than winning, you are fish. If you don't do your homework and completely

understand how the odds affect your chances then – yes Virginia, you are a fish.

But even good players can become fish during play. Tournament play is a good example where the game can change radically depending on the number of players left in the game. If you start to panic or get short-stacked, you may unintentionally revert to

'fish' tactics. As a beginner you will tend to 'act' like a fish – you may stay in the pot longer than your hand would justify. You may raise when your cards are not that strong. Fish are typified by

a playing characteristic called 'loose'. Looseness implies a disregard for card odds and a general lack of knowledge about the other players. Combine this looseness with aggressive behaviour

and you have one of the most interesting creatures at a Poker table – a 'maniac'.

To survive and make money, fish need to play a very tight game. As knowledge and table smarts improve, they can increase their aggressiveness, bold with fresh winnings.

The best guide to beginner card play is to use the Fish Rule as stated in the Player Type Chart. Based on the latest computer

research, fish should only stay in the hand if they have one of the top 24 pocket cards dealt.

Why? Because if they have one of these hands, regardless of the type of talent at the table, they will have an excellent chance of winning. They will also begin to understand the discipline of a

'tighter' playing style, which is based on knowing the odds and reading the table.

Betting tactics should not be an issue here and neither should the reading of 'tells' or even player position (which we will discuss in detail later).

Here are the top 24 pocket hands in any Texas Hold'em game (out of a possible 169).

AA	KK	QQ	JJ	AKs	TT	AQs	AJs
KQs	AK	99	KTs	QJs	KJs	ATs	AQ
A9s	KQ	QTs	JTs	88	K9s	T9s	A8s

Let's start off with the top of the hit parade. (The 's' refers to cards in the same suit.)

The big Top 4 – AA, KK, QQ, JJ –

are ridiculously profitable at any table. Always raise and re-raise with these cards. They don't come along often, so take advantage. Not raising on these cards is a sign of foolishness. Being aggressive here is a no-brainer.

The top 16 ranked starting 2- card Hold'em hands (or pocket cards) are fundamental to winning play. They make up only 7% of all hands dealt, so it's unlikely that you will get rich by

limiting your play to just these card combinations. But you need to know what they represent when they do come along.

If you compare this chart to older books on Poker you may notice an obvious variation. The latest research has shown that the overall power of AKs is slightly greater than that of KQs

— especially in games where few players are left after the river.

In fact, with six players after the river, AK places 10th, while in a game with 6 players, it places 5th. This revelation was first discovered in the R&D being done using the latest computerized poker simulations in the late 90's.

JJ is another example of hole cards that vary greatly depending on the type of game they are played in. They have been highlighted on the chart for the following reason-

At a large table of 6 or more players, JJ is ranked 4th in power. In a situation where there are fewer players, the power of this pair goes down to 9th.

Game rank with only TWO players after the river (Top 10)

AA	KK	QQ	AKs	AK	AQs	AJs	KQs	JJ	TT
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Game rank with SIX players after the river (Top 10)

AA	KK	QQ	JJ	TT	KQs	AKs	AQs	AJs	AK
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The key decision any Hold'em player makes is whether or not to play the starting 2-card hand they are dealt with. And if they do play, how do they play smart through the hand.

“I you are a FISH, never bet on anything but the top ranked 24 pocket cards.”

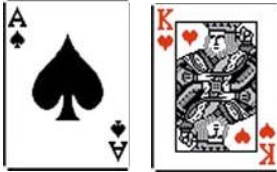
Insider Secret

We would also suggest that you **ALWAYS** raise on the **Top 10**.

Raise on the Top 16 - unless you think the raise is not likely to drive out other players in a very loose game.

Under very tight table conditions, only the **Top 5** should be raised before the flop.

However, our advice would be if you find yourself at a very tight table, you should probably get up and go find better playing conditions elsewhere.



AK is a good example of hole cards that only do really well in a short-handed game – so you need to raise and drive out other players right away. If you can't, you will have lost most of the power and advantage of these cards.



TT on the other hand drops dramatically in power with fewer players so raising to push out weaker hands is a poor strategy.



Barracuda – The next level up from the Fish category is Barracuda. You're not the biggest and meanest fish in the sea, but you have experience and you've survived. And you're making money when you play.

The **Barracuda Player** can safely play the **Top 40** pocket cards as listed next

AA	KK	QQ	JJ	AKs	TT	AQs	AJs
KQs	AK	99	KTs	QJs	KJs	ATs	AQ
A9s	KQ	QTs	JTs	88	K9s	T9s	A8s
Q9s	J9s	AJ	A5s	77	A7s	KJ	A4s
A3s	A6s	QJ	66	K8s	T8s	A2s	J8s

You are now in the land of the medium-suited connectors - KQs, QJs, JTs, T9s - which do very well in small-stake games as well as the biggish offsuit aces - AQ, AJ.

Barracuda Tip:



Pick your 10-player table carefully. Look for players who seem to be having fun, and where at least half of them stay in to see the flop. Picking the right table

is a major determinant of how well your hands will hold up in the long run.

When other players know what you're holding, you suffer tremendous disadvantage. Just playing good cards is not enough as a Barracuda. Raising **AA** and **KK** is clearly not enough. You need a carefully planned but hard to read raising strategy as well. At the Barracuda stage you begin to experiment with more aggressive play. As you will read later, timing your aggressive strategy is the key. Being aggressive with a large number of players at the table, unless they are all very conservative, will not work most of the time. And no matter how aggressive you are, if you are surrounded by sharks, you will be chum.

As a Fish you were focused on the top 10-16 pocket cards dealt. You need to expand this now in two ways.

One, you need to be more aggressive before the flop on a wider range of cards.

Two, you need to mix up your betting strategy. As you will see later, the best player type is 'tight-aggressive'. This characterization is based more on how the other players see you and less on your own strategy. In poker, perception is everything. You need to be seen by your opponent as someone who's style is slightly hard to read and occasionally unpredictable. Then

when you do raise aggressively, your opponents will take you seriously and surrender the pot.

Be aware that in online Poker, because players come and go constantly, it's more difficult to build a reputation at the table. It's like performing on the stage; you need to exaggerate your moves a bit more than you would on a one-to-one basis. Because it's easier

to be aggressive online, your aggression needs to be clear – that means pushing up the bets more than you would at a real table. Slow play can have its advantages here too. It tends to catch the attention of other weaker players anxious to donate to the pot. Even if you know exactly how much you plan to raise, slow down. Let the counter click off. This is a great attention-getting device. If after stalling, you fold, you communicate indecision. On the other hand, if you raise heavy, you've made the move quite clear – and you've got the other players thinking. Mental toughness is one of the keys to success as you move up the poker food chain. Being mentally tough means ignoring the other players concerns about how fast you play.

Mr. Slow Play

One of the toughest tournaments I've played in had one player who constantly ran up to the last few seconds of their available time on every turn. At first it looked like they were distracted, or playing another game online at the same time. Virtually every time it came to their turn, they would stall until the count down. Soon, other players began chatting about the slow play. Name-calling began. One player suggested taking aggressive action against this player as a group, simply because of the shared aggravation. Which is exactly what happened. At one point, one player bet aggressively against **Mr. Slow Play** and went all in and lost. Who won the tournament? Mr. Slow Play. What a great strategy. He rattled almost all of the other players with his slow determined pace. He went right down to the last few seconds on the clock dozens of times. The more the other players complained, the more he hesitated.

Because he was slow on every play, it was very tough to read his actual playing style. He was consistent. He also got a lot of attention. When he won, no one missed it. He managed to control the table in a way. Table control is clearly a goal of the consistent winner.

The Shark Player will have 80 hands in their play list (see chart following) knowing that they are good hands if the flop is good flop, that your opponents will generally discount the likelihood you'll be holding them, and that they will have the will to fold on as many rounds as it takes when the flop doesn't go in their favor.

AA	KK	QQ	JJ	AKs	TT	AQs	AJs
KQs	AK	99	KTs	QJs	KJs	ATs	AQ
A9s	KQ	QTs	JTs	88	K9s	T9s	A8s
Q9s	J9s	AJ	A5s	77	A7s	KJ	A4s
A3s	A6s	QJ	66	K8s	T8s	A2s	98s
J8s	AT	Q8s	K7s	KT	55	JT	87s
QT	44	22	33	K6s	97s	K5s	76s
T7s	K4s	K2s	K3s	Q7s	86s	65s	J7s
54s	Q6s	75s	96s	Q5s	64s	Q4s	Q3s
T9	T6s	Q2s	A9	53s	85s	J6s	J9

As a gambler, with these cards, the real magic is getting the right flop cards.

Based on using the Shark play list you would on average, participate in about 1/3rd of all pots at your table.

The actual number will fall in the range of 25% to 33% depending on the raising by other players.

Again, if your goal is to win, please stay away from very tight tables because no matter how well you play, only the house wins when everyone is good.

Authors **Sklansky and Malmuth** (S&M) have authored one of the most popular poker book to date called *Hold'em for Advanced Players*. Our pre-

flop recommendations differ in many ways.

S&M has always advised raising with your strongest hands and limping (calling) with your weakest. But this a major mistake in tighter games, since your strongest hands are worth much more than the blinds, while your weakest hands are worth much less than the blinds. Folding is the wisest choice.

Also, S&M advises not raising with hands like **KT** after several loose limpers. The newest research however indicates you should usually raise since your hand is likely to be best and will win more than your fair share of pots (though usually not much money). S&M's argument is that fish will call correctly with gutshots

(drawing one card to a straight) and pairs on the flop if you raise preflop, and you will suck more players into the pot. Raising will not greatly reduce your chance of your winning the pot, so if you will win more than your fair share of pots, you should generally raise.

Stats from a number of online casinos have revealed another S&M myth - that you should raise with baby pairs like **33** even if you know the blinds will call. The odds are that you will flop a thrip more then 1 in 9 times but you will win the pot less than 1 in 9 times. Since you will win the pot less than your fair share, you should not raise.

PLAYING THE PROGRAM STEP-BY-STEP



Let's start with an example hand. If there are terms here you don't understand, you can check the *Dictionary* in the back or the *Introduction To The Game* chapter.

Ready?

The three basics you need to understand before you bet one cent on any Texas Hold'em game.

1) Check out the other players! Are they good or lousy? Check out the section called *'Watch Who You Play With'* and then make

notes on the strength of each player. I have supplied a system you can use to determine their ability to play.

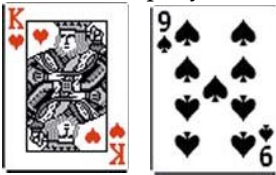
2) Decide on the right spot at the table. Very important. Probably one of the most important decisions you will make in the game. You will find a lot of tips in the chapter on *"Table Position"*.

3) Make sure you have enough chips. Stack size does matter in this game. You will find tips on how to decide on how much to play with this later in the book.

OK! You're seated. You have 'read' the table and the other players. You have enough chips to win. Now what?

From this point on, just follow our system.

In this example you are dealt a King and a nine.



Your first question will be – **how good is my hand?**

Well, we'll tell you. Refer first of all to the **Opening Odds Chart** at the end of this book.

Look up K9 from the chart (which you will keep by your side when you play.)

The odds of winning with these two cards is 14%.

Now look at the pot. What is the total now? This is easy because the computer keeps track of this for you to the penny.

Let's say the pot total is \$80.

14% of \$80 is \$11.20. (This is our Pot Odds calculation. This tells you how much you should bet based on what you have.)

So you match the bet of \$10 and you are in. (Ten dollars is less than your \$11.20 limit. You 'underpaid' to stay in the game.

Now the others keep betting. It gets back to you again and the pot is now \$120.

What's 14% of \$120? Around \$17.

You've already bet \$10. That leaves \$7. (Your first bet on that round plus \$7)

You need another \$10 to stay in.

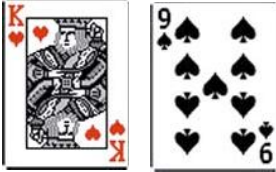
According to my rules then, you should fold.

Now the \$3 difference is not much. You might decide to go to the \$20 if necessary. **But don't go any further.** The odds are against you and you are over-paying for the cards you have yet to see. Now you are playing scientifically and based on well-understood odds. This is how the pro's play. They watch the other players. They watch the other cards. And they know the math.

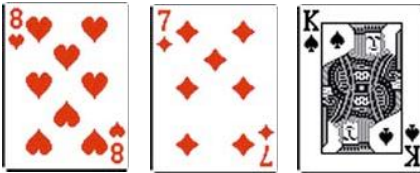
"The secret to winning Texas Hold'em? Beat the odds by knowing the odds."

You need to beat the other players by knowing the odds better than they do. Now let's learn more about the secrets of online poker.

Let's get back to our two pocket cards.



Here's the FLOP.



Now you're pretty excited. You just ended up with a pair of Kings. Is a pair of Kings good enough to win? Are you ready to bet the farm? Do you have the Nuts?



"50% of Texas Hold'em pots are won with a pair of 9's or better."

Insider Tip

So that sounds good. Except there is a partial straight on the table.

At this point, after the FLOP, there are THREE things to consider.

What do the other players have (Tells)?

What are my odds of getting a winning hand?

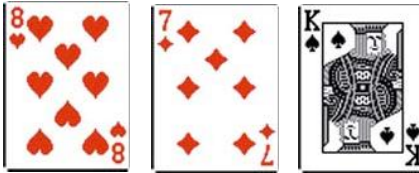
What will it cost me to see the next card?

Back to the first point.

What do the other players have? Short of those x-ray glasses they used to advertise in the comics when you were a kid, how will you know? This is the art of the 'tells' – evaluating the other player's cards.

First, look at the odds for the other players.

In our game, there is a 2 card straight on the table. Another player needs to have a 56 or 69 or 9T in any suit and they are close to a straight. (Later on we will show you exactly how to figure out the exact odds.)



It is very likely that someone at the table is 1 or 2 cards from a straight. And they still have two more cards to fill that straight.

Clearly, you need three-of-a-kind to stay in the game. Another King.

As far as you know, there are 2 other Kings in the deck (you never count what you think someone else has in their down cards).

The odds are simple to calculate.

There are 17 cards dealt (based on 3 down and 7 players with 2 cards each).

You need 2 out of 17 cards = 11.7% odds.

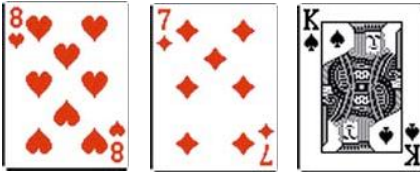
The betting starts and you can see the pot is \$180 when it gets to you.

How much can you bet?

11.7% of \$180 = \$20.

If you know that you need another King to win, the most you should bet to see the next card (based on what you know) is \$20. You have one other very valuable bit of information at this point. You can see how others are betting. This should give you a good sense, combined with your reading of the table before you started, of what kind of hands they have.

Let's see the next card – the **TURN** card – a six of hearts.





WHAT WOULD YOU DO AT THIS POINT IF YOU KNEW THAT ONE OF THE OTHER PLAYERS ALREADY HAD A STRAIGHT?

You would fold. Right? Well - never bet on 'the come'.



"A cardinal rule in poker - if they've got you beat and you know it, fold now."

Insider Tip

Yes, you may get a card to improve your hand but so can they, so unless you can see the next card for free, don't waste your money. The question is, how do you know what the other player has? Are you making the determination based on how they are betting? Maybe they're bluffing.

You know you can't beat a straight with a thrip (three of a kind).

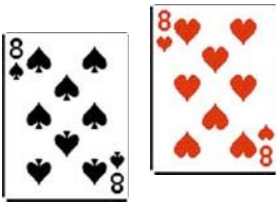
On the other hand, beside the PAIR of KINGS, you have four cards in a straight - 6,7,8,9.

Why you should not play anything below AT off suit? Why it's best to have A5s and below or ATs and above over something in the middle like A8s?

Any Ace unsuited hand below AT can be big trouble in any kind of game.

Some people might even consider AT and AJ difficult hands too but for the games you are going to be playing in they are adequate starting hands.

The reason A8, A7, A5 all suck is because you really can't hit much to win. Take A8 for example.



Your kicker isn't that great, the 8, and you have no chance of hitting any straights or flushes. The only way you can win really is to hope that they have a weaker Ace than you do and you catch one.

Playing poker is like investing in the stock market.

You want to put your money into great stock that has a chance to deliver a good return. A8 isn't that kind of stock.

Now to answer the question of ATs and above and A5s and below versus A9s A8s A7s A6s.

The first ones work because you can also make a straight with them. I would take A5s over A8s because the A and the 5 can work together to make a straight, unlike the A8s.

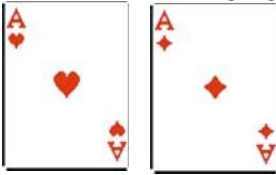
When you play weak Aces though like A5s, you have to be extra cautious if you catch an Ace on the flop.

You won't be sure if your kicker is good or not so you'll have to give the next step some thought. Playing these only in later positions can help you make better decisions because people

will check most likely if they don't have the A or that hand beat.

Why do hands like AA, KK, QQ, AK, AQ work best at smaller tables?

Imagine a scenario where everyone is in the hand, and you look down and see two gorgeous red Aces?



Your pulse starts to race. Then you look up to see that everyone has already called. At this point you have to know that your chances of winning are slim.

Power hands like this rarely win when there are that many people calling pre-flop. Why?

How do you improve this hand?

In big all-in pots two pair rarely wins against flushes and straights. So what do you do?

There's only one tactic left. You could check raise on the flop instead of betting right now. The idea would be to try to force

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32 Red

some of the other players to leave. Limiting the field would increase your chances to win.

Why are hands like KT's, QJ's JTs, 89s,79s, and 46s better when you have a full table of players in?

You can almost never get into trouble with these kinds of pocket cards. If you hit something, it's likely to be quite strong. If you don't get the cards you want, it's easy at this point to fold.

Try that with a pair of Aces! With those kinds of cards you are married to the pot – usually to the bitter end. A hand like **JTs** and **89s** are ideal for playing against big all-in pots. Our advice is to always raise to build the pot.

The reason these favour big pots is because they are always drawing to flushes and straights.

Make your hand . . . and you will be hard to beat.

SUMMARY FOR THE BEGINNER

- Read the table.
- Play very tight, especially in the beginning.
- Start with enough chips.
- Bet based on what the pot odds are (never over-bet the pot)
- Watch the odds for upcoming cards.



EVERYTHING YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW (AND MAYBE DIDN'T) ABOUT ODDS, PERMUTATIONS AND RETURN ON INVESTMENT

WHAT ARE CARD ODDS?

If you haven't already noticed, probability is a huge factor in Texas Hold 'em. For example, there are **2,598,960** possible hands in a 52-card deck but only **4** Royal Flushes. If the average serious poker player is dealt 100,000 hands in their lifetime, they will never hold

(on the first five cards) more than 4 percent of all the possible hands. And likely a lot less.

Figuring out straight card combinations for the purpose of this text are called **Card Odds** (you will be introduced to other kinds of odds later). Card Odds can reveal some quite interesting information.

For example, how many pat straight flushes will you see in your lifetime? To determine that number, the expected number of hands that could be dealt during your lifetime is estimated by the following calculation:

$$10 \text{ complete poker hands / hr.} \times 5 \text{ hrs. / game} \times 50 \text{ games / yr.} \\ \times 40 \text{ yrs. / poker life} = 100,000 \text{ hands of poker per lifetime.}$$

This is a pretty aggressive estimate, as most people will never come close to this number of complete hands in Texas Hold'em. Based on this level of play, the number of pat (on the first five cards) poker hands that you should get during your lifetime is calculated from the card odds and tabulated as follows:

Cards Dealt	<i>Number of Pat Hands</i>
No pair	
50,000 One pair	
40,00 Two pair	
5,000 Three of a kind	
2,000 Straight	
400 Flush	
200 Full house	
170 Four of a kind	
25 Straight flush	1.4
Royal straight flush	0.15

So statistically, you should see a pat straight flush on your first five cards **once or twice during your lifetime**. Most average poker players will never see even one.

Card players often talk about having a 'lucky streak' or a 'run'. Mathematically, 'streaks' don't exist. But suppose you did have an amazing run of cards one evening. What would the odds be of having five consecutive straight flushes in a row?

Royal Flush	4	.000015391
Other Straight Flush	36	.0000138517
Four of a kind	624	.0002400960
Full House	3,744	.0014405762
Flush	5,108	.0019654015
Straight	10,200	.0039246468
Three of a kind	54,912	.0211284514
Two Pairs	123,552	.0475390156
One Pair	1,098,240	.4225690276
Nothing	1,302,540	.5011773940
Total	2,598,960	1.0000000000

In every 1.7×10^{24} deals . . . or once in every 700,000,000,000,000,000,000 years. You'd have to read those cards in the dark though, because our sun will be long gone by that time.

Players use card odds to make playing decisions. A decision made without taking into account card odds makes poker a guessing game. The chances of finishing a flush or a straight, the probability of getting an *over card* (face card), the percentage of times you're going to flop a card to match your pocket pair - are all extremely important factors in Texas Hold'em.

Knowledge of these statistics is key to winning.

Here are some other basic probabilities that you should know about:

- You need one more heart to make your flush on the turn or river - **35%**
- Probability of hitting an open-ended straight draw (i.e. 4 straight cards, need one on either end to hit on turn or river)- **31.5%**
- Probability of being dealt suited cards: **23.5%**
- Probability of hitting a three or four of a kind at the flop when you hold a pocket pair: **11.8%**
- Probability you will make a pair at the flop, holding two unpaired cards in the hole: **32.4%**
- Probability of being dealt AA: **.45%**
- Probability of no one holding a specific card, by number of players, assuming you do not have that card, by number of total players.

2 - 84.5%

3 - 70.9%

4 - 59%

5 - 48.6%

6 - 39.7%

7 - 32.1%

8 - 25.6%

9 - 20.1%

10 -15.6%

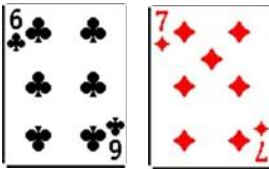
- Probability someone else does not have an ace, assuming you do have an ace, by total number of players:

- 2 - 88.2%
- 3 - 77.5%
- 4 - 67.6%
- 5 - 58.6%
- 6 - 50.4%
- 7 - 43%
- 8 - 36.4%
- 9 - 30.5%
- 10 - 25.3%

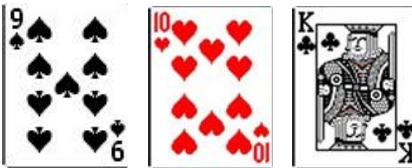
HOW ARE THE ODDS CALCULATED?

Lets look at the example of having 4 **outs** (four cards you need to make your hand). Say you're holding 6c 7d and the flop comes 9s 10h Kc. In this case you need an 8 to make the straight. Since there are four 8's in the deck, you have 4 outs.

YOUR POCKET



THE FLOP



ODDS WITH ONE CARD TO COME

Calculating the odds with one card to come is relatively straightforward.

When you're looking to make the inside straight, you have four outs. There are a total of 46 unknown cards (52 minus the 2 cards in your hand minus the 3 cards for the flop and the 1 turn card). 42 of the cards don't make your hand and four do. 42:4 or 10.5:1 = about 9%. I prefer to use the percentage as it helps when calculating **Pot Odds** (to come later).

ODDS WITH TWO TO COME

To calculate the appropriate odds with two cards to come, you must first determine the total number of two-card combinations possible after the flop.

The easiest way to calculate this is by multiplying the number of cards available for the turn (47) by the number of cards available for the river (46) and dividing that number by 2 (because a card can't match itself). $47 \times 46 / 2 = 1081$.

A certain number of these 1081 two-card combinations will have eights in them. To determine odds properly, you need to calculate two more figures.

EIGHTS ON BOTH THE TURN AND THE RIVER

One of the four eights can appear on the turn. And if one does, there will be three left for the river. If you multiply 4 by 3 and divide by 2 (because a card can't match itself) you see that there are six unique pairing of 8s.

EIGHTS ON THE TURN OR RIVER

If an eight comes on the turn, there are 46 unseen cards remaining. But you're no longer interested in the three remaining eights, so you can subtract those. This leaves 43 unseen cards that will make a unique pair with one of the eights. Multiply 4 (the number of 8s in the deck) by 43 (the number of unseen cards) to arrive at 172.

FINISH THE CALCULATION

172 plus 6 comes to 178 -- the total number of two-card combinations that have at least one eight in them and as many as two eights.

Out of 1081 possible two-card combinations on the turn and river, 178 of those combinations help us make our hand. Subtract 178 from 1081 to find the number of combinations that don't make the straight ($1081-178=903$).

The odds against making a straight by the river are: 903:178, or 20%.

What About The Cards The Other Players Are Holding?

Ever wonder why we never factor the opponents' cards or the burn cards when figuring out how many cards are left?

The reason is that we only consider "unseen cards". If you saw what the burn cards were, or an opponent showed you his hand, you would know that those cards are not going to be drawn and could use that. We typically do not know what they have, so we don't even think about it when talking about odds.

For instance, take a standard deck of 52 cards, remove 2 Aces and burn 25 of them. If you drew the next card, what are the chances of it being an Ace? It would be $2/50$ (2 Aces left out of 50 unseen cards). It would NOT be $2/25$ just because you burned half

the deck. Okay, do the same thing again, but this time you get to look at the burn cards. Let's say that of all the cards you burned, none were an ace. Now your odds are $2/25$ because there are still 2 Aces and now only 25 "unseen cards".

You will find that you can easily remember a few of the most common situations for outs such as the **four flush** or **straight draw** but there has to be an easier way than memorizing the figures for every number of outs. The good news is that there is a way to get a good estimation of the odds without the heavy math and you can also use handy odds charts.

WHAT HANDS WILL WIN THE POT?

The following are the most valuable starting hands in Texas Hold'em. This chart assumes a medium to loose \$5-10 Texas Hold'em game. The results are based on a computer simulation of

5,000,000 played hands. The percentage shown indicates how many times in typical game that these hands win the pot.

- 2 Pair
- 31% Pair
- 27% Three of a kind
- 12% Straight
- 9% Flush
- 9% Full house
- 9% Bust (nothing)
- 2% Four of a kind
- 1% Straight flush
- <1% Royal flush
- <1%

This is interesting data – but here's the kicker – look at the power of two pairs and single pair hands. It's not only higher than the

WHAT ARE MY CHANCES OF WINNING?

What are my chances of winning a hand with a given set of pocket cards? What are the odds of filling a straight?

Hole Cards Dealt	Dealt	Percent	Expected	Percent
Suited Starters	680,351	23.56%	679,596	23.53%
Connected Starters	454,220	15.73%	453,064	15.69%
Suited Connected Starters	114,304	3.96%	113,266	3.92%
Paired Starters				
AA Dealt	13,010	0.45%		
KK Dealt	13,182	0.46%		
QQ Dealt	13,122	0.45%		
JJ Dealt	13,069	0.45%		
TT Dealt	12,886	0.45%		
99 Dealt	13,092	0.45%		
88 Dealt	13,046	0.45%		
77 Dealt	13,111	0.45%		
66 Dealt	13,130	0.45%		
55 Dealt	13,173	0.46%		
44 Dealt	13,015	0.45%		
33 Dealt	13,075	0.45%		
22 Dealt	13,076	0.45%		
All Paired Starters	169,987	5.89%	169,899	5.88%
AK Suited Starters	8,717	0.30%	8,713	0.30%
AK Offsuit Starters	26,051	0.90%	26,138	0.90%
All AK Starters	34,768	1.20%	34,851	1.21%

How much you can expect to profit from these starting hands?

The starting hand average win for each time played based on medium to loose Texas Hold'em Poker games with a \$5/\$10 limit.

AA

\$34.19 **KK**

\$24.13 **QQ**

\$17.36 **JJ**

\$12.08 **AK suited**

\$11.63 **AK offsuit**

\$ 8.65 **AQ suited**

\$ 8.32

10 10

\$ 7.72 **AJ suited**

\$ 5.69 **AQ offsuit**

\$ 5.47

POCKET CARD ODDS

Hole Cards Odds

Any Pair	16 : 1
Suited Cards	3 : 1
A-K	82 : 1
Suited Connecting Cards	24 : 1
A-A or K-K	110 : 1
A-anything	5.3 : 1
Any two cards J's or Higher	10:1

After the Flop

Pair J's or Higher	55 : 1
No Pair improving to a Pair	2.7 : 1

Pair improving to 3 of a Kind 8 : 1

Flop being 3 of a Kind 391 : 1

The River (5th Street)

A-K hitting an A or K by the River 1:6 : 1

Q-Q vs A-K (A or K hitting) 1.5 : 1

Hitting 5th card to complete a Flush 1.6 : 1

Completing an Open Ended Straight 2.9 : 1

Three of a Kind improving to Full House 2.7 : 1

Pocket Pair improving to 3 of a Kind after the Flop 12 : 1

Hitting a Backdoor Flush 33 : 1

More Interesting Texas Hold'em Odds

5 Players, there's an A on the flop. Chances a player has an A in their hole. 1.7 : 1

4 Players, there's an A on the flop. Chances a player has an A in their hole. 2.1 : 1

3 Players, there's an A on the flop. Chances a player has an A in their hole. 2.9 : 1

2 Players, there's an A on the flop. Chances a player has an A in their hole. 4.3 : 1

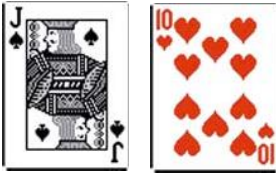
WHAT ARE POT ODDS?

Pot odds are the odds you get when analyzing the current size of the pot vs. your next call or bet. Pot Odds help you make important call, raise or fold decisions.

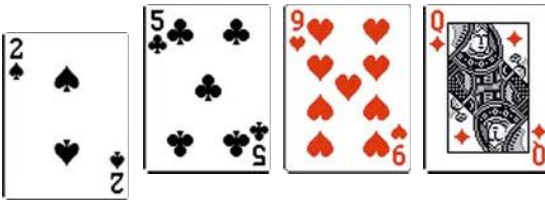
Example 1: There is \$200 in the pot and a final \$10 bet coming at you. You are looking to fill in your 4-card flush. Based on needing

one of four suits, the short-cut math is 1:4 chances or 25%. Winning consistently is about beating Pot Odds and not over-

betting. If your Card Odds are 25% (you have four hearts and need another to win) and you only need to bet 5% of the present pot (\$10 as a percentage of the \$200) to see the last card, you are in great shape. Based on **Pot Odds** for this hand you could go as high as 25% of the pot based on your odds to pull a heart on the river.



Example 2: You are in a \$5/\$10 Hold'em game with Jack-Ten pocket cards and one opponent left on the turn.



You have an outside straight draw with a board of 2-5-9-Q, and only the river card left to make your straight. Any 8 or any King will finish this straight for you, so you have 8 outs (four 8's and 4 K's left in the deck) and 46 unseen cards left. 8/46 gives you a 6:1 chance or a 17% chance of getting the win. Your opponent bets \$10.

6/1 = 17% Pot Odds

If you take a \$10 bet you could win \$100. Your bet is then 10% of the final pot. The 10% bet is smaller than the 17% odds, so you are in good shape from an investment point of view.

Whenever your call or bet (in this case 10% of the pot) is smaller than your odds of getting the winning hand (17%) you are buying the next card at a discount. The key is looking at the odds of a winning hand, not building a part of a winning hand.

Too many beginners just play good cards and just toss bad ones - or if they have the prospect of straight or a flush - they will just draw and draw with little consideration to anything else.

Unless you have the NUTS (nuts = the very best possible hand) every time there is a certain degree of risk when you put your money in the pot.

In the heat of the battle you may not always have time to get out your calculator and do the number crunching. You can look at Pot Odds in a much simpler way -

just ask yourself if there is enough money in the pot to justify the risk?

If there is a big pot - unless you just know you are beat, or it simply costs too much to call (which means your pot odds may not be so great after it's all said and done) -

try to get some action. Even if you knew you were a long shot - would you bet \$25 or \$50 on a chance to win \$500 or \$1000 or more? While you may be a long shot - it's not a bad bet if there is a reasonable chance you could win.

On the flip side, and this is important, you may have a decent hand -

and it may even be the winner, (use your opponent or 'tells' knowledge) - but if it's going to cost you \$250 to call and you stand

to only win a few hundred then your pot odds are not so great and is probably not worth the risk.

Pot odds ratios are a useful tool to see how often you need to win the hand to break even.

If there is \$100 in the pot and it takes \$10 to call, you must win this hand 1 out of 11 times in order to break even. The thinking goes along the lines of: If you play 11 times, it'll cost you \$110, but when you win, you get \$110 (\$100 + your \$10 call).

The usefulness of card odds and pot odds becomes very apparent when you start comparing the two. As we know now, in a flush draw, your *card odds* for making your flush are 1.9 to 1 or 35%. Let's say you're in a hand with a nut flush draw and it's \$5 to you on the flop to call. Do you call? Your answer should be: *What are my pot odds?*

If there is \$15 in the pot plus a \$5 bet from an opponent, then you are getting 20:5 or 4:1 pot odds – 25%. This means that in order to break even, you must win 1 out of every 5 times. However, with your flush draw, your odds of winning are 1 out of every 3 times! You should quickly realize that not only are you breaking even, but you're making a nice profit on this too. Let's calculate the profit margin on this by theoretically playing this hand 100 times from the flop, when is then checked to the river.

Total Cost to Play = 100 hands * \$5 to call = -\$500
Pot Value = \$15 + \$5 bet + \$5 call = **\$25**

Odds to Win = 1.9:1 or 35% (From the flop)

Total Hands Won = 100 * Odds to Win (35%) = 35 wins

Net Profit = Net Cost to Play + (Total Times Won * Pot Value)

$$\begin{aligned} &= -\$500 + (35 * \$30) \\ &= -\$500 + \$1,050 \\ &= \$550 \text{ Profit} \end{aligned}$$

As you can see, you have a great reason to play this flush draw, because you'll be making money in the long run according to your **card odds** and **pot odds**. The most fundamental point to take from this is:

If your Pot Odds > Card Odds, then you are making a profit.

So, even though you may be faced with a gut shot straight draw at times, which is a terrible draw at 5 to 1 hand odds, it can be worth it to call if you are getting pot odds greater than 5 to 1. Other times, if you have an excellent draw such as the flush draw, but someone has just raised a large amount so your pot odds are 1:1 for instance, then you obviously should not continue trying to draw to a flush, as you will lose money in the long run. In this situation, a fold or semi-bluff is your only solution, unless you know there will be callers behind you that improve your pot odds to better than break even.

Your ability to memorize or calculate your card odds and figure out your pot odds will lead you to make many of the right decisions in the future. Just be sure to remember that fundamental principle of playing drawing hands when your pot odds are greater than your card odds.

Another good rule to follow - a lot of players want to somehow factor in money they wagered on previous rounds. With the last example, you probably had already invested a significant portion

of that \$200 pot. Let's say \$50. Does that mean you should play or fold because of that money you already have in there? \$50/\$200?

That's a big no.

That's not your money anymore! It's in a pool of money to be given to the winner. You have no "stake" in that pot. The only stake you might have is totally mental and has no bearing on hard statistics.

The next step is to use **bet odds** and **implied odds**. That's tougher, because it involves predicting reactions of other players. With bet odds, you try to factor in how many people are going to call a raise. With implied odds, you're thinking about reactions for the rest of the game. One example on **implied odds** . . .

Say it's another \$5/\$10 Hold'em game and you have a four flush on the flop.

Your neighbour bets, and everyone else folds. The pot is \$50 at this point. First you figure out your chance of hitting your flush on the turn, and it comes out to about **19%** (about 1 in 5). You have to call his \$5 bet vs. a \$50 pot, so that's a 10x payout. 1/5 is higher than 1/10, so bet odds are okay, but you must consider that this guy's going to bet into you on the turn and river also. That's the \$5 plus two more \$10 bets.

So now you're facing \$25 more till the end of the hand. So you have to consider your chances of hitting that flush on the turn or river, which makes it about 35% (better than 1 in 3 now), but you have to invest \$25 for a finishing pot of \$100. \$100/\$25 is 1 in 4. That's pretty close.

But there's more!

If you don't make it on the turn, it'll change your outs and odds! You'll have a **19.6%** chance of hitting the flush (little worse than a 1 in 5), but a \$20 investment for a finishing pot of \$100! \$100/\$20 is 1 in 5. So the chances could take a nasty turn if you didn't hit it! What's makes it more complicated is that if you did hit it on

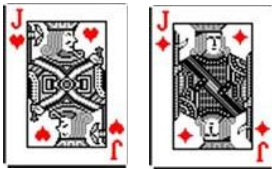
the turn, you could raise him back, and get an extra \$20 or maybe even \$40 in the pot.

Once you've mastered simple outs and pot odds, bet and implied odds are just a longer extension of these equations. If you think about these things while you play, they will eventually become second nature to you.

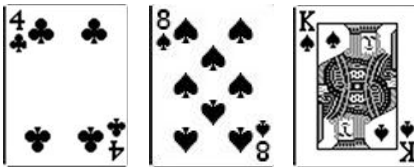
More Odds Examples: A pocket pair

You start with a pair of Jacks in the pocket. Not too shabby. The flop however, doesn't contain another Jack.

YOUR POCKET



THE FLOP



Lesson 1: What's my chance of getting a Jack on the turn? You need to just figure out the number of outs and divide it by the number of cards in the deck. There are 2 more Jacks. There's 47 more cards since you've seen five already. The answer is $2/47$, or .0426, close to **4.3%**.

Lesson 2: No luck on the turn, how about the river card? Still 2 Jacks left, but one less card in the deck bringing the grand total to 46. What's $2/46$? That's .0434, which is also close to **4.3%**. Your chances didn't change much.

Lesson 3: Forget just getting just one Jack! I want them both! What are my chances?

Since we're trying to figure out the chances of getting one on the turn AND the river, and not getting one on EITHER the turn or river, we don't have to reverse our thinking. Just multiply the probability of each event happening. Chances of getting that first Jack on the turn was .0426, remember? The chance of getting a second Jack on the river would be $1/46$, because there'll only be one Jack left in the deck. That's about .0217, or 2.2%.

To get the answer, multiply them. $.0426 \times .0217$ is about **.0009!**

That's around one-tenth of a percent. I wouldn't bank on that one.

Lesson 4: Hey, what were my chances of getting a pair of Jacks anyway?

To figure that out, think of it as getting dealt one card, then another. What are your chances of the second card matching the first one? There will be 3 cards left like the one you have. There's 51 cards left in the deck. $3/51$ is .059 or **5.9%**. What the chance that

it'll be Jacks? Well, there are 13 different cards. So, $.059/13$ is about .0045, a little less than half a percent.

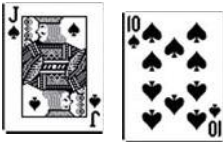
Lesson 5: What were my chances of getting a Jack on the flop? Now you do have to "think in reverse" as in the previous example. Figure out the chances of NOT getting a Jack on each successive card flip. First card you have a $48/50$ chance (48 non-Jack cards left,

50 cards left in the deck), second card is $47/49$, third card is $46/48$. Those come out to .96, .959, and .958. Multiply them and get .882, or an 88.2% chance of NOT getting any Jacks on the flop. Invert it to figure out what your chances really are and you get .118 or

11.8%. This will be your chance to get one or two Jacks.

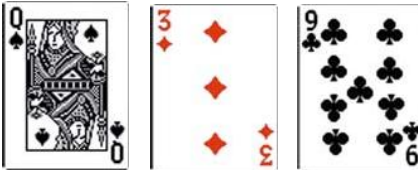
Example #2 "The straight draw"

THE POCKET



You start with a Jack of Spades and a Ten of Spades. You get a rainbow flop with a Queen of Spades, a Three of Diamonds, and a Nine of Clubs. You've got a straight draw.

THE FLOP



Lesson 1: What are my chances of hitting it on the next card? Same as before, but with different outs. A King or an Eight will complete your hand. There is presumably four of each left in the deck. You've got 8 outs. The chance of getting one of them on the turn is 8 over 47, because there's 47 cards left in the deck. That comes out to about .170, or around 17%.

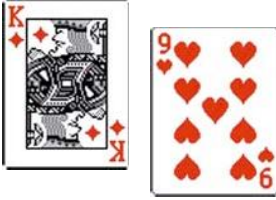
Lesson 2: I didn't get it on the turn! What are my chances now? There are still 8 cards left in the deck that'll help you, but 46 cards left in the deck. That's 8 over 46. It changes to .174. It's improved to a whopping 17.4%!

Lesson 3: I should of thought about my total chances first, I'm such an idiot. What are my chances of getting that card on the turn OR the river?

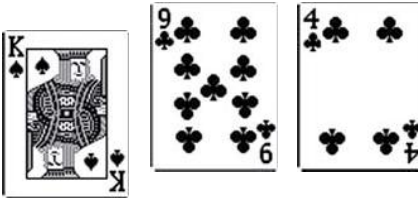
Once again we'll have to calculate the chances of a King or Eight NOT appearing, so we can do it like the last problem (in this case, $\{39/47\} \times \{38/46\}$). Or, since we've already figured out our chances in the previous two lessons, we can just invert the probabilities and multiply them. You had a .170 chance on the turn, and a .174 on the river. By inverting, I mean subtracting them from one. Now we've got .830 and .826! Multiply and get .686! That's our chance of NOT hitting our card at all. So invert it again and get .314, or 31.4%.

Example #3 "Top two pair"

THE POCKET



THE FLOP



You get dealt a King of Diamonds and a Nine of Hearts. The flop is looking' pretty good for you with a King of Spades, a Nine of Clubs, and a Four of Clubs. Top two pair!

Lesson 1: What are my chances of getting a full house on the turn?

To get a full house, you need another King or Nine to pop up. There is two of each left in the deck. So you've got 4 outs. After the flop there's always 47 cards unaccounted for. $4/47$ is around .085 or an 8.5% chance of you getting the Full House.

Lesson 2: What are my chances of getting a full house on the river?

If it didn't happen on the turn, your chances usually don't change all too much, but let's check. You've still got 4 outs and now 46

unseen cards left. $4/46$ is about $.087$ or around an **8.7%** chance of hitting it on the river. A $.2\%$ difference.

Lesson 3: How about the chances of getting the boat on the turn OR the river?

Like the previous examples, to figure your chance of something happening on multiple events, you need to calculate the chance of it NOT happening first. On the turn it won't happen $43/47$

times. On the river it won't happen $42/46$ times. $43/47$ is $.915$, and $42/46$ is

$.913$. Multiply them and get $.835$, or **83.5%** chance of it not happening. Invert that and you get a **16.5%** of getting at least a full house by the showdown.

Lesson 4: What do you mean by "at least" a Full House?

Since we figured the chances to NOT get dealt a full house, the chances are built in if the turn and river are two Kings, two Nines, or a King and a Nine. If you are dealt two cards both of either King or Nine, it'll be four-of-a-

kind and not a King and Nine **33%** of the time. Think of it as being dealt one card then the other. What are the chances of the first card matching the second? Whether it's a King or Nine, there will be only one unaccounted for, but two of the other. That's $1/3$, or **33%**.

Lesson 5: Then what are my chances of getting four-of-a-kind?

This one requires a little more thought. It doesn't matter which card we're hoping for. We need to first get a full house on the turn. According to lesson #1, the chance of that happening is $.085$.

The chance of getting the same card we got on the turn is $1/46$. There's only one out, and the usual 46 unseen cards. $1/46$ is around $.022$, or

2.2%. Multiply the two probabilities ($.022 \times .085$) and get $.002$ or

one-fifth of a percent. It will be Kings half of the time and Nines the other half

Is this making any sense? If you really want to be a master of calculating odds, you need to see these calculations in action, over and over. Like anything else, practice makes perfect. In online games especially with very few if any *tells* (shown cards), statistical knowledge becomes the main factor when choosing whether to bet, call, or fold.

If you do have a hand that you know can't lose – you have the *nut*. Bet like crazy.

While there is a lot more to Texas Hold'em poker than this - this should open your eyes to more things about the game of poker than just the cards and their statistics.

Yes -

You DO need to know your general chances of pulling what types of hands - but if you learn to study your opponents, they will tell you their hands and you'll be able to beat them without even knowing yours.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT (ROI)

When the stakes required to play a game of Texas Hold'em increase, there is not a proportional increase in the average winnings or money flow because most players, especially at the start of play, play tighter at higher stakes.

Here's how that works.

Higher stakes cause players to be more cautious. Pots do not grow proportionately as the stakes and blinds increase. Your return on investment will therefore decrease as the minimum blind goes up.

Max Bet	Pot Size
\$ 2 Max	28 - 37
\$ 4 Max	25 - 35
\$ 6 Max	20 - 22
\$ 10 Max	10 - 28
\$ 20 Max	6 - 7
\$ 50 Max	12
\$ 60 Max	7.6
\$ 100 Max	6.11
\$ 200 Max	5.5

Most major online casinos release data on hands played (for a price) on a regular basis. A recent study (June 2004) from one of the largest online casinos, based on several million actual hands of Poker played, revealed that the return on investment varies quite a bit based on the maximum bet.

In the \$2 games, the value of the winning pot varied from 28 to 37 times the Big Blind (BB) –

the most you would have to invest to see the flop (short of raises). The average pots were in the \$60 range. With the right cards, you could expect a return of 3000% on a winning hand.

As you can see in the chart above, this ratio falls as the Blinds go up. In the \$200 game, with pots averaging \$600-1200, the ratio averages 5.5:1. Sure, greater overall winnings - but much greater risk based on the investment you have to make to see the flop.

Also notice the volatility or variance of this ratio. On the high stakes tables, play is very tight and often passive, so the ratio remains very narrow – pots are predictably 5-6 times the Big Blind. At the smaller stakes tables, there is considerably more volatility, indicative of a lot of looser players and more aggressive playing styles.

The \$1/\$2 tables are the loosest with pots ranging from 28-37 times the Big Blind.

Are Low Stake Tables Faster?

Not necessarily. Texas Hold'em is the king of fast play. Several \$1000 plus pots were played in less than a minute and ranged as long as 6 minutes –

the same range for the small stake tables. Over all, the average length of an online Poker game today is just over one minute or 50-60 hands per hour.

In higher stakes games, one thing is quite clear. There are a higher percentage of tighter and aggressive players at these tables than at the small stake games. That means there are more sharks at the big tables and a much better chance that you will be one of the fish. The smart thing to do here is to say away from these kinds of tables.

Given the fact that the return on investment is lower at the high stake games, that the average level of play is much more aggressive and that a much larger stake is required, there is

very little opportunity to be a consistent winner on tables with \$50 and up blinds.



“All of the recent research points to \$5/\$10 Limit tables as ideal combination of risk and reward.”

Insider Tip

FACT! When the average loose gambler loses, he or she keeps on playing in an attempt to recover the loss. This is irrational and unplanned play and can be very expensive.

On the other hand, when most innate gamblers win, they forget all about their losses and conclude incorrectly that they have finally learned how to win - or that their luck has finally changed. They express what is an irrational optimism at this point - a totally unfounded and undeserved optimism that keeps them in the game until they revert back to a losing streak.

Sharks exploit this irrational playing style in gamblers to generate a continuous income.

POCKET CARD ODDS

Hole Cards Dealt	Dealt	Percent	Expected	Percent
Suited Starters	680,351	23.56%	679,596	23.53%
Connected Starters	454,220	15.73%	453,064	15.69%
Suited Connected Starters	114,304	3.96%	113,266	3.92%
Paired Starters				
AA Dealt	13,010	0.45%		
KK Dealt	13,182	0.46%		
QQ Dealt	13,122	0.45%		
JJ Dealt	13,069	0.45%		
TT Dealt	12,886	0.45%		
99 Dealt	13,092	0.45%		
88 Dealt	13,046	0.45%		
77 Dealt	13,111	0.45%		

66 Dealt	13,130	0.45%		
55 Dealt	13,173	0.46%		
44 Dealt	13,015	0.45%		
33 Dealt	13,075	0.45%		
22 Dealt	13,076	0.45%		
All Paired Starters	169,987	5.89%	169,899	5.88%
AK Suited Starters	8,717	0.30%	8,713	0.30%
AK Offsuit Starters	26,051	0.90%	26,138	0.90%
All AK Starters	34,768	1.20%	34,851	1.21%

THE RULE OF FOUR-TWO

The rule of four-two is an easier way to figure the odds for any situation where you know your outs. It is not completely accurate but it will give you a quick "ballpark" figure of your chances for making a hand.

Here is how it works.

With two cards to come after the flop you multiply your number of outs by four. With one card to come after the turn, you multiply your number of outs by two.

This will give you a quick figure to work with.

If you have a four-card flush after the flop you have nine outs. With two cards to come, you multiply the nine by four and you get **36 percent** chance of making the flush.

The chart shows the true odds at **35 percent**. With one card to come you multiply nine by two and get **18 percent**. The chart shows that the true figure is **19.6**. It is not completely accurate but it is pretty close, and it is an easy calculation to do in your head

How to calculate hand odds (the longer way):

Once you know how to correctly count the number of outs you have on a hand, you can use that to calculate what percent of the time you will hit your hand by the river. Probability can be calculated easily for a single event, like the flipping of the

river card from the turn. This would simply be: Total Outs / Remaining Cards. For two cards however, like from the flop to the river, it's a bit more complicated. This is calculated by figuring the probability of your cards not hitting twice in a row. This can be calculated as shown below:

$$\text{Flop to River \%} = 1 - [((47 - \text{Outs}) / 47) * ((46 - \text{Outs}) / 46)]$$

$$\text{Turn to River \%} = (47 - \text{Outs}) / 46$$

The number 47 represents the remaining cards left in the deck after the flop (52 total cards, minus 2 in our hand and 3 on the flop = 47 remaining cards). Even though there might not technically be 47 cards remaining, we do calculations assuming we are the only players in the game. To illustrate, here is a two overcard draw, which has 3 outs for each overcard, giving a total of 6 outs for a top pair draw:

$$\text{Two Overcard Draw} = 1 - [(47 - 6) / 47 * (46 - 6) / 46]$$

$$= 1 - [(41/47) * (40/46)]$$

$$= 1 - [0.87 * 0.87]$$

$$= 1 - 0.76$$

$$= 0.24$$

$$= 24\% \text{ Chance to Draw Overcards from Flop to River}$$

However, most of the time we want to see this in hand odds, which will be explained after you read about pot odds. To change a percent to odds, the formula is:

$$\text{Odds} = (1 / \text{Percentage}) - 1$$

Thus, to change the 24% draw into an odd we can use, we do the following:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Odds} &= (1 / 24\% \text{ Two Overcard Draw}) - 1 \\ &= (1 / 0.24) - 1 \\ &= 4.17 - 1 \\ &= 3.17 \text{ or approx } 3.2 \end{aligned}$$

ANALYZING PROBABILITIES IN DEPTH

You may want to skip this section and go back to it later. Some of this is pretty deep. But important!

Getting a handle on the probability of being dealt various poker hands is one of the most important and valuable skills a player can have. We present a number of different ways to do these calculations, from a rough guesstimate system called the 2-4 Rule to the actual combination math.

The first odds calculation that must be made is to determine the total number of possible poker hands in a deck.

As we've shown, a poker hand consists of 5 cards drawn from a deck of 52 cards. Therefore, the number of combinations is $\text{COMBIN}(52, 5) = 2,598,960$.

If you use *Microsoft Excel*, you can duplicate these calculations using the COMBIN factor. COMBIN returns the number of

combinations for a given number of items. To find the COMBIN factor in Excel go to INSERT . . . FUNCTION . . . MATH & TRIG.

For each of the above "Number of Combinations" we divide by this number to get the probability of being dealt any particular hand.

For the calculations, we will first split out the "No Pair" hands which include Royal Straight Flushes, Straight Flushes, Flushes, Straights, and "Nothings". Then, we will look at all combinations that have at least 1 pair.

The cards in a hand without any pairs will have 5 different denominations selected randomly from the 13 available (2, 3, 4...Ace). Also, each of the 5 denominations will select 1 suit from the four available suits. Thus the total number of no-pair hands will equal:

$$\text{COMBIN}(13, 5) * (\text{COMBIN}(4, 1))^5 = 1287 * 1024 = \mathbf{1,317,888}.$$

A Straight Flush is made up of 5 consecutive cards in the same suit and may have a high card of 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, Jack, Queen, King, or Ace for a total of 10 different ranks. Each of these may be in any of 4 suits. Thus there are 40 possible Straight Flushes. An Ace high Straight Flush is a Royal Flush. Since there are only 4 different suits there are only 4 possible Royal Straight Flushes. When we subtract the 4 Royal Straight Flushes from the total of 40 Straight Flushes we are left with 36 other Straight Flushes that are King high or less.

A Flush consists of any 5 of the 13 cards from a particular suit. There are 4 possible suits. The number of possible Flushes

is: $\text{COMBIN}(13, 5) * 4 = \mathbf{5,148}$. However, this includes the 40 possible

Straight Flushes. When we subtract these out, we are left with:
 $5,148 - 40 = 5,108$ possible ordinary flushes.

A straight consists of 5 cards with consecutive denominations and may have a high card of 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, Jack, Queen, King, or Ace for a total of 10 different ranks. Each of these 5 cards may be in any of the 4 suits. Thus there are $10 * 4^5 = 10,240$ different possible straights. However, this total includes the 40 possible Straight Flushes. Thus we subtract 40, which leaves us with **10,200** possible ordinary straights.

Finally, we come to the "nothing" hands which are basically all the left over garbage. This is simply the total number of "No Pair" hands minus all the good stuff. This gives us: $1,317,888 - 4 - 36 -$

$5,108 - 10,200 = 1,302,540$ "nothing" hands.

How about the odds of getting 1 pair or better?

A hand with just 1 pair has 4 different denominations selected randomly from the 13 available denominations. 3 of these denominations will select 1 card randomly from the 4 available suits. The 4th denomination will select 2 cards from the available 4 suits. Finally, the pair can be any one of the four available denominations. Thus the calculation is:
 $COMBIN(13, 4) * (COMBIN(4, 1))^3 * COMBIN(4, 2) * 4 = 1,098,240$ possible hands that have just one pair.

The calculation for a hand with two pairs is similar. We will have 3 random denominations taken from the 13 available. Two of these denominations will use 2 of the four available suits while the third denomination selects 1 of the four available suits. The singleton card may be any one of the three denominations. Thus, the calculation becomes:
 $COMBIN(13, 3) * (COMBIN(4, 2))^2 * COMBIN(4, 1) * 3 = 123,552$ possible hands with 2 pairs.

Three of a kind is calculated in a similar manner. There will be 3 different denominations from the 13 possible denominations. One denomination will select 3 of the 4 available suits while the other two denominations select 1 card from each of the 4 possible suits. Finally, the three of a kind can be in any of the three denominations. The calculation becomes: $\text{COMBIN}(13, 3) * \text{COMBIN}(4, 3) * (\text{COMBIN}(4, 1))^2 * 3 = 54,912$ possible hands with 3 of a kind.

The next calculation will be for a Full House. A Full House only uses 2 of the 13 denominations. One of these will select 3 cards from the 4 available while the other selects 2 cards from the 4 available. Finally the denomination that has 3 cards can be either one of the 2 denominations that we are using. This gives us: $\text{COMBIN}(13, 2) * \text{COMBIN}(4, 3) * \text{COMBIN}(4, 2) * 2 = 3,744$ possible Full Houses.

The final calculation is for 4 of a kind. Again, we will select 2 denominations from the 13 available. One of these will select 4 cards from the 4 available (Obviously the only way to do this is to take all four cards.) while the other denomination takes 1 of the available 4 cards. The denomination that has 4 of a kind can be either one of the 2 available denominations.

Thus, the calculation becomes: $\text{COMBIN}(13, 2) * \text{COMBIN}(4, 4) * \text{COMBIN}(4, 1) * 2 = 624$ different ways of being dealt 4 of a kind.

Poker Odds From The Turn

Many players who really understand Hold'em odds still tend to forget that the 'turn' can change their odds dramatically. It's true that for a flush draw, the card odds are 1.9 to 1 from the flop to the river. However, this is a theoretical situation where it assumes

there is no additional betting on the turn. Typically this is not going to be the case so you will need to recalculate your card odds and pot odds.

We will use the flush calculation example again and run through it 100 times assuming there was \$20 in the pot on the flop with two \$5 bets. On the turn, this leaves \$30 in the pot, plus a \$10 bet from your opponent to call.

Cost to Play = 100 hands * \$10 to call on turn = -\$1,000

Pot Value = \$30 + \$10 bet + \$10 call

Odds to Win = 4.1:1 or 19% (From the turn)

Total Hands Won = 100 * Odds to Win (19%) = 19 wins

Net Profit = Net Cost to Play + (Total Times Won * Pot Value)

= -\$1,000 + (19 * \$50)

= -\$1,000 + \$900

= -\$100 Profit

Now, you can see that what was a very profitable draw on the flop suddenly turned into a not so great draw on the turn. This is because by not hitting your flush by the turn, it lowered your chances of making a flush by the river. The odds thus increased to

4.1 to 1 instead of 1.9 to 1. So even though the pot odds remained the same at 4:1, because the card odds went down, this flush draw has now become unprofitable.

Realizing the dynamic changes in your odds is extremely important so that you don't go making incorrect draws based on odds from the flop. Just remember that your odds

essentially double from the flop to the turn, so adjust your play accordingly.

Playing Texas Hold'em Online - The Professional's Guide 71

Each entry in the following table is the result of 1,000,000 simulated hands of Texas Hold'em played to the showdown and represents the percentage of pots won (including partial pots in the case of splits) by the indicated hand against the indicated number of opponents holding random hands.

The study shows a very clear correlation between your odds of success against the number of players. Notice the **JJ, TT, 99** anomaly where the power of these cards increase dramatically over perceived better pocket cards - depending on how many players are left. The hands indicated in BOLD can have impressive results but require aggressive raising to force out weaker players.

Opponents:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Hand									
AA	85.3	73.4	63.9	55.9	49.2	43.6	38.8	34.7	31.1
KK	82.4	68.9	58.2	49.8	43.0	37.5	32.9	29.2	26.1
QQ	79.9	64.9	53.5	44.7	37.9	32.5	28.3	24.9	22.2
Aks	67.0	50.7	41.4	35.4	31.1	27.7	25.0	22.7	20.7
AQs	66.1	49.4	39.9	33.7	29.4	26.0	23.3	21.1	19.3
JJ	77.5	61.2	49.2	40.3	33.6	28.5	24.6	21.6	19.3
KQs	63.4	47.1	38.2	32.5	28.3	25.1	22.5	20.4	18.6
AJs	65.4	48.2	38.5	32.2	27.8	24.5	22.0	19.9	18.1
KJs	62.6	45.9	36.8	31.1	26.9	23.8	21.3	19.3	17.6
ATs	64.7	47.1	37.2	31.0	26.7	23.5	21.0	18.9	17.3
AK	65.4	48.2	38.6	32.4	27.9	24.4	21.6	19.2	17.2
TT	75.1	57.7	45.2	36.4	30.0	25.3	21.8	19.2	17.2
QJs	60.3	44.1	35.6	30.1	26.1	23.0	20.7	18.7	17.1
KTs	61.9	44.9	35.7	29.9	25.8	22.8	20.4	18.5	16.9
QTs	59.5	43.1	34.6	29.1	25.2	22.3	19.9	18.1	16.6
JTs	57.5	41.9	33.8	28.5	24.7	21.9	19.7	17.9	16.5
99	72.1	53.5	41.1	32.6	26.6	22.4	19.4	17.2	15.6

AQ	64.5	46.8	36.9	30.4	25.9	22.5	19.7	17.5	15.5
A9s	63.0	44.8	34.6	28.4	24.2	21.1	18.8	16.9	15.4
KQ	61.4	44.4	35.2	29.3	25.1	21.8	19.1	16.9	15.1
T9s	54.3	38.9	31.0	26.0	22.5	19.8	17.8	16.2	14.9
A8s	62.1	43.7	33.6	27.4	23.3	20.3	18.0	16.2	14.8
K9s	60.0	42.4	32.9	27.2	23.2	20.3	18.1	16.3	14.8
J9s	55.8	39.6	31.3	26.1	22.4	19.7	17.6	15.9	14.6
A5s	59.9	41.4	31.8	26.0	22.2	19.6	17.5	15.9	14.5
Q9s	57.9	40.7	31.9	26.4	22.5	19.7	17.6	15.9	14.5
88	69.1	49.9	37.5	29.4	24.0	20.3	17.7	15.8	14.4
AJ	63.6	45.6	35.4	28.9	24.4	21.0	18.3	16.1	14.3
A7s	61.1	42.6	32.6	26.5	22.5	19.6	17.4	15.7	14.3
A4s	58.9	40.4	30.9	25.3	21.6	19.0	17.0	15.5	14.2
A6s	60.0	41.3	31.4	25.6	21.7	19.0	16.9	15.3	14.0
A3s	58.0	39.4	30.0	24.6	21.0	18.5	16.6	15.1	13.9
KJ	60.6	43.1	33.6	27.6	23.5	20.2	17.7	15.6	13.9
QJ	58.2	41.4	32.6	26.9	22.9	19.8	17.3	15.3	13.7
77	66.2	46.4	34.4	26.8	21.9	18.6	16.4	14.8	13.7
T8s	52.6	36.9	29.0	24.0	20.6	18.1	16.2	14.8	13.6
K8s	58.5	40.2	30.8	25.1	21.3	18.6	16.5	14.8	13.5
AT	62.9	44.4	34.1	27.6	23.1	19.8	17.2	15.1	13.4
A2s	57.0	38.5	29.2	23.9	20.4	18.0	16.1	14.6	13.4
98s	51.1	36.0	28.5	23.6	20.2	17.8	15.9	14.5	13.4
K7s	57.8	39.4	30.1	24.5	20.8	18.1	16.0	14.5	13.2
Q8s	56.2	38.6	29.7	24.4	20.7	18.0	16.0	14.4	13.2
J8s	54.2	37.5	29.1	24.0	20.5	17.9	15.9	14.4	13.2
KT	59.9	42.0	32.5	26.5	22.3	19.2	16.7	14.7	13.1
JT	55.4	39.0	30.7	25.3	21.5	18.6	16.3	14.5	13.1
66	63.3	43.2	31.5	24.5	20.1	17.3	15.4	14.0	13.1
QT	57.4	40.2	31.3	25.7	21.6	18.6	16.3	14.4	12.9
K6s	56.8	38.4	29.1	23.7	20.1	17.5	15.6	14.0	12.8
87s	48.2	33.9	26.6	22.0	18.9	16.7	15.0	13.7	12.7
K5s	55.8	37.4	28.2	23.0	19.5	17.0	15.2	13.7	12.5
97s	49.5	34.2	26.8	22.1	18.9	16.6	14.9	13.6	12.5
T7s	51.0	34.9	27.0	22.2	19.0	16.6	14.8	13.5	12.4

K4s	54.7 36.4 27.4 22.3 19.0 16.6 14.8 13.4 12.3
76s	45.7 32.0 25.1 20.8 18.0 15.9 14.4 13.2 12.3
55	60.3 40.1 28.8 22.4 18.5 16.0 14.4 13.2 12.3
K3s	53.8 35.5 26.7 21.7 18.4 16.2 14.5 13.1 12.1
Q7s	54.5 36.7 27.9 22.7 19.2 16.7 14.8 13.3 12.1
44	57.0 36.8 26.3 20.6 17.3 15.2 13.9 12.9 12.1
J7s	52.4 35.4 27.1 22.2 18.9 16.4 14.6 13.2 12.0
33	53.7 33.5 23.9 19.0 16.2 14.6 13.5 12.6 12.0
22	50.3 30.7 22.0 17.8 15.5 14.2 13.3 12.5 12.0
K2s	52.9 34.6 26.0 21.2 18.1 15.9 14.3 13.0 11.9
86s	46.5 32.0 25.0 20.6 17.6 15.6 14.1 12.9 11.9
65s	43.2 30.2 23.7 19.7 17.0 15.2 13.8 12.7 11.9
Q6s	53.8 35.8 27.1 21.9 18.5 16.1 14.3 12.9 11.7
54s	41.1 28.8 22.6 18.9 16.5 14.8 13.5 12.5 11.7
Q5s	52.9 34.9 26.3 21.4 18.1 15.8 14.1 12.7 11.6
96s	47.7 32.3 24.9 20.4 17.4 15.3 13.7 12.4 11.4
75s	43.8 30.1 23.4 19.4 16.7 14.8 13.4 12.3 11.4
Q4s	51.7 33.9 25.5 20.7 17.6 15.4 13.7 12.4 11.3
T9	51.7 35.7 27.7 22.5 18.9 16.2 14.1 12.6 11.3
A9	60.9 41.8 31.2 24.7 20.3 17.1 14.7 12.8 11.2
T6s	49.2 32.8 25.1 20.5 17.4 15.2 13.6 12.3 11.2
Q3s	50.7 33.0 24.7 20.1 17.0 14.9 13.3 12.1 11.1
J6s	50.8 33.6 25.4 20.6 17.4 15.2 13.5 12.1 11.1
64s	41.4 28.5 22.1 18.4 15.9 14.2 12.9 11.9 11.1
Q2s	49.9 32.2 24.0 19.5 16.6 14.6 13.1 11.9 10.9
85s	44.8 30.2 23.2 19.1 16.3 14.3 12.9 11.8 10.9
K9	58.0 39.5 29.6 23.6 19.5 16.5 14.1 12.3 10.8
J9	53.4 36.5 27.9 22.5 18.7 15.9 13.8 12.1 10.8
J5s	50.0 32.8 24.7 20.0 17.0 14.7 13.1 11.8 10.8
53s	39.3 27.1 21.1 17.5 15.2 13.7 12.5 11.6 10.8
Q9	55.5 37.6 28.5 22.9 19.0 16.1 13.8 12.1 10.7
A8	60.1 40.8 30.1 23.7 19.4 16.2 13.9 12.0 10.6
J4s	49.0 31.8 24.0 19.4 16.4 14.3 12.8 11.5 10.6
J3s	47.9 30.9 23.2 18.8 16.0 14.0 12.5 11.3 10.4
74s	41.8 28.2 21.7 17.9 15.3 13.5 12.2 11.2 10.4

95s	45.9	30.4	23.2	18.8	16.0	13.9	12.4	11.3	10.3
43s	38.0	26.2	20.3	16.9	14.7	13.1	12.0	11.1	10.3
J2s	47.1	30.1	22.6	18.3	15.6	13.7	12.2	11.1	10.2
T5s	47.2	30.8	23.3	18.9	16.0	13.9	12.4	11.2	10.2
A7	59.1	39.4	28.9	22.6	18.4	15.4	13.2	11.4	10.1
A5	57.7	38.2	27.9	22.0	18.0	15.2	13.1	11.5	10.1
T4s	46.4	30.1	22.7	18.4	15.6	13.6	12.1	11.0	10.0
63s	39.4	26.5	20.4	16.8	14.5	12.9	11.7	10.8	10.0
T8	50.0	33.6	25.4	20.4	16.9	14.4	12.5	11.0	9.9
98	48.4	32.9	25.1	20.1	16.6	14.2	12.3	10.9	9.9
A4	56.4	36.9	26.9	21.1	17.3	14.7	12.6	11.0	9.8
T3s	45.5	29.3	22.0	17.8	15.1	13.2	11.8	10.7	9.8
84s	42.7	28.1	21.4	17.4	14.8	13.0	11.7	10.6	9.8
52s	37.5	25.3	19.5	16.1	14.0	12.5	11.4	10.6	9.8
T2s	44.7	28.5	21.4	17.4	14.8	13.0	11.6	10.5	9.7
A6	57.8	38.0	27.6	21.5	17.5	14.7	12.6	10.9	9.6
42s	36.3	24.6	18.8	15.7	13.7	12.3	11.2	10.4	9.6
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J8	51.7	34.2	25.6	20.4	16.8	14.1	12.2	10.7	9.5
K8	56.3	37.2	27.3	21.4	17.4	14.6	12.5	10.8	9.4
94s	43.8	28.4	21.3	17.3	14.6	12.7	11.3	10.3	9.4
87	45.5	30.6	23.2	18.5	15.4	13.1	11.5	10.3	9.3
73s	40.0	26.3	20.0	16.4	14.0	12.3	11.1	10.1	9.3
Q8	53.8	35.4	26.2	20.6	16.9	14.1	12.1	10.5	9.2
93s	43.2	27.8	20.8	16.8	14.3	12.5	11.1	10.1	9.2
32s	35.1	23.6	18.0	14.9	13.0	11.7	10.7	9.9	9.2
A2	54.6	35.0	25.2	19.6	16.1	13.6	11.7	10.2	9.1
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K7	55.4	36.1	26.3	20.5	16.7	13.9	11.8	10.2	9.0
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K6	54.3	35.0	25.3	19.7	16.0	13.3	11.3	9.8	8.6

T7	48.2	31.4	23.4	18.4	15.1	12.8	11.0	9.7	8.6
72s	38.1	24.5	18.4	15.0	12.8	11.2	10.1	9.2	8.5
65	40.1	26.7	20.0	15.9	13.3	11.5	10.2	9.2	8.5
K5	53.3	34.0	24.5	19.0	15.4	12.9	11.0	9.5	8.3
86	43.6	28.6	21.3	16.9	13.9	11.8	10.4	9.2	8.3
54	37.9	25.2	18.8	15.0	12.6	11.0	9.8	8.9	8.2
J7	49.9	32.1	23.5	18.3	14.9	12.4	10.6	9.2	8.1
K4	52.1	32.8	23.4	18.1	14.7	12.3	10.5	9.1	8.0
Q7	51.9	33.2	24.0	18.6	15.1	12.5	10.6	9.2	8.0
75	40.8	26.5	19.7	15.5	12.8	11.0	9.7	8.7	7.9
K3	51.2	31.9	22.7	17.6	14.2	11.9	10.2	8.9	7.8
96	44.9	28.8	21.2	16.6	13.5	11.4	9.8	8.7	7.8
K2	50.2	30.9	21.8	16.9	13.7	11.5	9.8	8.6	7.6
Q6	51.1	32.3	23.2	17.9	14.4	12.0	10.1	8.8	7.6
64	38.0	24.7	18.2	14.4	12.0	10.3	9.2	8.3	7.6
Q5	50.2	31.3	22.3	17.3	13.9	11.6	9.8	8.5	7.4
T6	46.3	29.2	21.2	16.5	13.4	11.2	9.5	8.3	7.3
85	41.7	26.5	19.4	15.2	12.4	10.5	9.1	8.1	7.3
53	35.8	23.3	17.1	13.6	11.4	9.9	8.8	8.0	7.3
Q4	49.0	30.2	21.4	16.4	13.3	11.0	9.4	8.1	7.1
J6	47.9	29.8	21.4	16.5	13.2	11.0	9.3	8.0	7.0
Q3	47.9	29.2	20.7	15.9	12.8	10.7	9.1	7.9	6.9
Q2	47.0	28.4	19.9	15.3	12.3	10.3	8.8	7.7	6.8
74	38.6	24.5	17.9	13.9	11.4	9.7	8.5	7.6	6.8
43	34.4	22.3	16.3	12.8	10.7	9.3	8.3	7.5	6.8
J5	47.1	29.1	20.7	15.9	12.8	10.6	8.9	7.7	6.7
95	42.9	26.7	19.2	14.8	12.0	10.0	8.5	7.4	6.6
J4	46.1	28.1	19.9	15.3	12.3	10.2	8.6	7.5	6.5
63	35.9	22.7	16.4	12.8	10.6	9.1	8.0	7.2	6.5
T5	44.2	27.1	19.3	14.8	11.9	9.9	8.4	7.2	6.4
J3	45.0	27.1	19.1	14.6	11.7	9.8	8.3	7.2	6.3
J2	44.0	26.2	18.4	14.1	11.3	9.4	8.0	7.0	6.2
T4	43.4	26.4	18.7	14.3	11.5	9.5	8.1	7.0	6.2
52	33.9	21.3	15.3	12.0	10.0	8.6	7.6	6.8	6.2
84	39.6	24.4	17.5	13.4	10.8	9.0	7.8	6.8	6.1

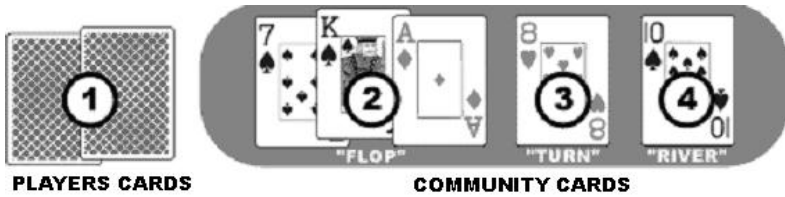
T3	42.4	25.5	18.0	13.7	11.0	9.1	7.8	6.8	6.0
42	32.5	20.5	14.7	11.5	9.5	8.3	7.3	6.6	6.0
T2	41.5	24.7	17.3	13.2	10.6	8.8	7.5	6.6	5.8
73	36.6	22.4	16.0	12.3	9.9	8.4	7.2	6.4	5.7
94	40.7	24.6	17.3	13.2	10.5	8.7	7.3	6.4	5.6
32	31.2	19.5	13.9	10.8	8.9	7.7	6.8	6.1	5.6
93	39.9	23.9	16.7	12.7	10.1	8.3	7.1	6.1	5.4
62	34.0	20.7	14.6	11.2	9.1	7.8	6.8	6.0	5.4
92	38.9	22.9	16.0	12.1	9.6	8.0	6.8	5.9	5.2
83	37.5	22.4	15.7	11.9	9.5	7.9	6.7	5.8	5.1
82	36.8	21.7	15.1	11.4	9.1	7.5	6.4	5.6	4.9
72	34.6	20.4	14.2	10.7	8.6	7.2	6.1	5.4	4.8

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE RULES OF TEXAS HOLD'EM

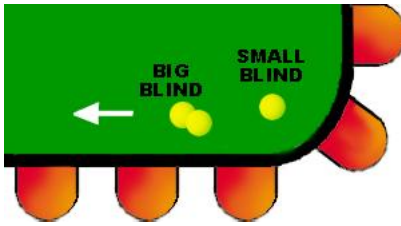
So you're new to Texas Hold'em poker? Not a problem.

Texas Hold'em poker is by far the best game for a beginner to learn. Instead of other poker games like **Omaha High** or **7 card stud** which entail a great many more possibilities for calculating odds and perhaps even trying to count cards, **Hold'em** can be learned in a few minutes by anyone, and you can be playing fairly well with a few hours practice. In order to learn the game, however, you must play and you must play fairly often. All Online Poker Casinos today offer a wide variety of play money tables for beginners to practice their skills until they're ready to move up to the fun at real money tables.

A Texas Hold'em poker game goes as follows:



1. The betting structure can vary, but most games start with two players placing out a predetermined amount of money so there is an initial amount to play for. This is called *posting the blinds*. These players are the two to the left of the dealer.
2. The dealer shuffles up a complete deck of 52 playing cards.
3. Each player is dealt two cards face down. These are called your *hole* or *pocket* cards.
4. Then there is a round of betting starting with the guy to the left of the two who posted the blinds. This round is usually referred to by the term *pre-flop*.
5. The amount betted depends on the table stakes, which are posted before you join the table.
6. Much like most games of poker, players can check, raise, or fold.
7. After the betting round ends, the dealer discards the top card of the deck. This is called a *burn card*. This is done to prevent cheating.



8. The dealer then flips the next three cards face up on the table. These cards are called *the flop*. These are communal cards that anyone can use in combination with their two pocket cards to form a poker hand.

9. There is another round of betting starting with the player to the left of the dealer.

10. After the betting concludes, the dealer burns another card and flips one more onto the table. This is called the *turn* card. Players can use this sixth card now to form a five-card poker hand.

11. The player to the left of the dealer begins another round of betting. In many types of games, this is where the bet size doubles.

12. Finally, the dealer burns a card and places a final card face up on the table. This is called the *river*. Players can now use any of the five cards on the table or the two cards in their pocket to form a five-card poker hand.

13. There is one final round of betting starting with the player to the left of the dealer.

14. After that, all of the players remaining in the game begin to reveal their hands. This begins with the player to the left of the last player to call. It's called the *showdown*.

15. The player with the best hand wins!

LEARNING HOW TO PLAY

It's difficult to learn to play **Texas Hold'em** in the traditional setting of a casino's poker room without losing to experienced gamblers. Thankfully, you can practice all you want for free with online poker rooms such as [Pacific Poker](#) or [PartyPoker](#).

The only way to learn the game is to play. And pay attention. Check out Online Casinos to get a feel for the action. Play all you want for free, and start playing for real money when you feel ready. They have both low limits (betting) for newer players as well as high stakes tables. Since we mention betting, let's look at the basics.

THE BASICS OF BETTING?

A bet is a declaration that either -

a)"I have the best hand and I'll wager money on it"

or

b)"You have a poor hand, and you will fold if you are forced to wager on it".

Typically, players are *supposed* to bet when they have a good hand. Players who don't have good hands are *supposed* to fold.

Of course, if this was the case, we all might as well wager on flipped coins. Most players play contrary to this idea, attempting to be clever or deceptive. **Don't fall into this trap when you are just learning to play.**

Keep it simple. Don't be clever. Bet when you think you will win and fold when you can't. But there are going to be situations where you should bet even if your cards aren't the best.

Here are some situations you should start looking at to improve your game.

BLIND STEALING

Texas Hold'em is unique because the two blinds are 'in' whether they want to or not.

As a result of being forced to bet, they are also less committed than a player who really believes they can win - but since they have to bet, they would be fools not to stay in the game.

Now imagine you are the dealer, and only you and the two blinds are still in. In this situation, if you raise against them, your raise is called "blind-stealing". Why? Your raise is forcing the blinds into a situation where they may fold.

Remember, they are only in the hand because they have to be.

It's easy to push players in this situation out of the game. It's likely that if you didn't raise and just called, the blinds would probably check. You can make money this way, especially if the blinds are loser players. It's also a way to get the hand over so you can go on to the next game.

THE STEAL RAISE

The choice spot in a betting round is the 'cat-bird seat'. You are the last in sequence to bet so you get to see what the other players are up to. If all the other players have checked to you, and you bet

(regardless of your hand), you can often force the other players to fold. Taking the pot in this situation is called **steal-raising**. Obviously, if you try this every time, the better players will be onto you and see through your tactic. It's a great idea to steal raise when you have a good drawing hand such as a flush draw.

THE CHECK RAISE

Most Texas Hold'em tables will permit raising after you have checked.

Check raising is a technique to build the pot. If you have a winning hand and you bet right away, you may chase away players who could add to the pot. So let's say you check. Another player sees an advantage, assumes you are uncertain about your hand and raises. Now you can raise their bet again. It's unlikely at this point that they will fold having committed to the round by raising the bet.

THE OPENER

This is a very traditional bluffing move. The first person following the blinds in the round raises aggressively, making all other players call both the blind and the raise. The only reason a player would do this so early in the game is to limit the number of players. Usually you will see a number of players fold. The ones left though will have great hands or will refuse to be intimidated by this tactic. Some people call this move '*betting for in formation*'. This only works with small groups of players.



HOW TO WIN MONEY IN TEXAS HOLD'EM BEFORE THE FIRST CARD IS EVEN DEALT



Decisions, decisions, decisions. Poker is a game of constant decisions. They range from the critical to the mundane and they occur at a dizzying pace; often dozens of times per minute. Online card play is especially fierce and the pressure can be intense. Do I raise? Do I stay? Do I call? Do I fold? Even

when a loss attributed to a wrong decision is small, it eventually adds up. Making the best decisions based on the information

you have at hand is the key to beating your opponents.

A great example of a critical decision in Texas Hold'em that happens on almost every hand is the problem associated with defending a small blind. Suppose that while playing online in a Texas Hold'em game, with \$1 and \$2 blinds, a player always defends their small blind – stays in even with a garbage hand because they've already invested the \$2. Based on the random distribution of cards, you're typically dealt such a throwaway hand about one-third of the time.

At 50 - 60 hands per hour - a typical pace in online card rooms - the average player is dealt the small blind six times every 60 minutes. If they always call, they wind up calling twice each hour when they should be folding. That's \$6 per hour minimum. If you play ten hours per week, at the end of the year you've given away over **three thousand dollars**. Ouch.

That's only one example of the kind of 'big picture' thinking that can make the difference between being a winner or a loser over the long haul.

All the latest research (from the online casino's themselves) show quite clearly that over 50% of your winnings at the online poker table will be determined BEFORE YOU ARE DEALT

A SINGLE CARD (some would suggest it's even higher than 50 %).

Here are the Ten key non-card based 'decisions' you must make in Texas Hold'em poker to be successful. Few of these have anything to do with the bricks and mortars version of the game. After the summary, we will go into more detail. But even if you never read the follow-up, if you adopt these simple basics your winnings will increase dramatically.

1. SELECT A CASINO. Rule number one. Be a member of no less than six online casinos so you can rotate and move around from casino to casino during play. Select only well-known casinos with excellent reputations for paying quickly and maintaining industry-accepted randomizing algorithms (more on this later).

2. SELECT A BETTING LIMIT. But only if it's \$1/2, \$2/4 or \$5/10 blinds. This section will discuss the research, the math, and the studies on human nature that prove conclusively that high-stake limit tables are not the place to make money. They are however an excellent place to lose large amounts of cash in a big hurry. The return on investment (ROI) is best at medium limit tables.

3. SELECT YOUR STAKE. No decision here if you're smart. You must have 50 to 100 times the Big Blind. Any less and your chances of making money nose dive. More will only improve your table 'cred' and help to intimidate weaker players.

4. SELECT A TABLE. Spend at least 15 minutes watching the play at each table. Review your notes if recognized players are present. Check out at least three tables before you start. Then select the loosest table. To win at Texas Hold'em Poker you must play tight in loose games and play in loose games only. If all the tables are tight, run. Go back to Step 1.

5. SELECT A POSITION AT THE TABLE. Watch for the tightest player at the table. Pick a spot to that player's left. We have dedicated an entire chapter later on to table position strategy.

6. TAKE NOTES ON PLAYERS. Record playing styles. Do they raise before the flop? Do they fold before the flop? What's the size of their stake? Do they react quickly or slowly when their turn

comes up? What kind of cards did they play on? Everyone should take player notes at casinos like *Party Poker* where they offer the feature. Don't know how to take notes? Just right-

click on the avatar (picture) of the target player and click "Player Notes". That feature is there for a very good reason – use it.

7. TURN OFF CHAT. It's distracting and rarely valuable. If you want to chat, use MSN –

but never while you're playing for money.

8. TURN OFF TV's, MUSIC, OTHER DISTRACTIONS. Now is not the time to catch the score on your favorite game or consume a bucket of chicken. If anyone's going to be distracted, it should be your opponents. Let them miss cues, watch their stack disappear and wonder what happened.

9. PLAY TIGHT. Follow the *Food Chain Theory*. Learn the rules. Understand the odds. Bet like a 'shark', not a 'fish'.

10. PLAY FOR ONE HOUR –

then take a break, regardless of whether you're winning or losing. This will keep you sharper than the other players who are hanging on for that one last win.

And there you are. Ten steps that will make you thousands, maybe a lot more over time. Interested in understanding the machinery behind these basic rules? Read on.

Never Start Short Stacked!

One of the keys to winning Poker is having enough chips. You need to be able to weather a streak of bad cards and be there when the cards finally turn in your favour.

So what would we suggest for a minimum buy in? If you are playing a \$2 -

\$4 game, start with at least \$400 to \$800 (roughly 100 times the big bet). The degree of variation accounts for your style of play. A super aggressive player should bring more to the table than a tighter player.

Bigger stacks tend to get bigger respect as well. Especially from new players. So keeping a decent amount of chips in front of you not only improves your chances of winning, it provides an intimidation factor. However, you should always have enough chips available in your bank to jump into a different game. If you keep your whole bankroll in front of you, you can't buy-in to second game without cashing out of the first.

The Awesome Power of Short Playing Sessions

One big difference between the Internet and live bricks and mortar play is that players are constantly moving in and out of games. The accessibility of the Internet allows players to just sit down and play a few hands, a few minutes, or maybe just an hour. In a live game, you generally are playing with the same opponents for at least a few hours and maybe even up to seven or eight hours. This rarely occurs on the Internet. How does this affect strategy?

Your opponents will not have a very long time to evaluate your play. This means that you should play more straightforward

and less deceptively than you would in a live game. One of the benefits of playing deceptively or trying a bluff is the advertising value you receive on future hands when your opponents think you are a loose wild player. A loose table image can help you earn more chips later when you hold strong hands that your opponents call because they think you might be bluffing. On the Internet, you

may not be sitting with the same opponents long enough to benefit from this image.

Against regular opponents, you still need to mix up your play on the Internet, but overall, you should mix it up less than you would in a live game. Against new opponents, the best strategy is to simply play a straightforward tight game without worrying too much about how your table image might affect future hands.

Some Useful Online Bluffing Tips

On the Internet, you are dealing with names and avatars, not faces. Some of the most powerful cues used in poker are no longer available to us. This psychological part of poker makes for

a different type of game on the Internet. For example, there seems to be more bluffing on the Internet compared to live games. Players feel far more anonymous on the Net and are therefore prone to wilder, less cautious moves.

Another reason why players may tend to bluff more online than in a casino is the ease in which you can bluff. Online you just have to click your mouse. In a live game, you have to physically move your chips and stare down your opponents at the table. Chips are popular in casinos because they remove us emotionally from the concept of real money. Studies have shown that players are more reckless with chips than with real cash. Online, we are even more removed from the idea that this is real money (they are

virtual chips) so the average bluffs are larger and more common.



“Overall, if you look at the data, players tend to be more deceptive online than in a live game. “

Insider Tip

This impacts online strategies in two ways. First, you can't assume your opponents are bluffing all the time, but you will need to call and raise a little more often against those opponents who are trying to win every pot.

On the other hand, you should probably bluff a little less often since your opponents will tend to call you a little more. They also realize that players online bluff a lot, so they will tend to call more even with weak hands. They will also find it easier to just click the mouse to call compared to physically moving their chips in a live game.

Remember! Early Decisions Matter Most

Early choices in Texas Hold'em usually mean more than later ones because of their impact on subsequent decisions. Whenever you make an incorrect move up front, you run the risk of rendering each subsequent decision incorrect as well. That's why your choice of starting hands is usually much more critical than how you play on future betting rounds.

- Pre-flop:** The person with the best two hole cards is most likely to win at showdown.
- After the flop:** The player currently holding the best five-card hand is most likely to win at showdown.
- After the turn card is dealt:** The player currently holding the best five-card hand is most likely to win at showdown.
- After the river card is dealt:** The player currently holding the best five-card hand has won at showdown.

What have we learned from this? The value of your present cards is always much greater than the expected value. If your opponent has you beat now and you know it, calling heavily for a card to

come is not tight play. Evaluating the hands of your opponents will only help your game if it helps you to avoid unreasonable risk.

Working The Lobby

Don't rush through the lobby of your favorite online casino. Spending some time there can be as important as the time you spend playing the game itself. Take a walk around the room. Check out the games and the limits being played. The online lobby offers a wealth of valuable information that is only a click away: info on the number of players seeing the flop, the average pot size, number of hands played per hour, names of the players in each game, who is on the waiting list, and how many games of a particular limit are in play.

This information is essential to choosing the right game and limit. Some folks prefer wild games. Some prefer more passive ones. Some like full games; some like short-handed. Players who

are nearly equally competent in all games can choose between a dozen or more games at the limit of their choice.

Game and table selection is a critical part of casino poker. Fundamentally, it is even more important online. At first glance it might seem that table selection is less important online because it is extremely easy to move from one game to another.

This is not the case. The tools are available for players to be constantly aware of where the good games are. Constant vigilance is a price of winning online.

When signing up for games, never choose the "any game" at this limit option. This takes away your ability to manipulate your position on each sign-up list. For instance, if you've signed up for any \$15/30 Hold'em game, and your name comes to the top of the

list in a game filled with players you don't want to play with, if you pass this game, you are removed from all the \$15/30 lists automatically. Likewise, if you rise to the top of the list on a game that doesn't look good now, but has potential because of others behind you on the waiting list, you may want to un-join that list and then rejoin again at the bottom -- perhaps when your

name, now sixth, rises to the top, the game will be good. If you've signed up for "any game," that option is not available to you. You simply will be put at the bottom of every single list you are on!

At the most popular online card-rooms, you have greater options - and a lot of information to use in choosing. Don't restrict yourself.

Keep several card-rooms on your computer to choose from. Look for the games that fit with your style. When your game style evolves and improves, cruise the lobby for a better fishing hole. Keep constantly vigilant. Field intelligence is the key to winning.

Look For Distracted Players

Many players assume that strategy for online and live games is the same. After all, you still receive two down cards, five community cards, and play against nine opponents. However, there are several characteristics unique to Internet play that requires subtle adjustments including playing shorter sessions, adjusting your playing environment, and avoiding distractions at home. Let's discuss these unique characteristics in a little more detail and the impact they may have on your strategy.

You'd be surprised how many players play two poker tables at one time, read e-mail, watch television, or even talk on the telephone while playing online poker. Those delays we all experience waiting for someone to take their turn is often caused

by something other than a complex odds calculation. Based on all of these distractions, some of your opponents may not be aware of all the action that is taking place. This is yet another reason to use less deception in your game, since some of your opponents will not even see some of your plays so that you can gain some future value out of them.

Since players move in and out of games a lot, can't see your face, and are distracted by many other things, they tend to notice

less that you are playing a tight game. In a live game, if you sit there a couple of hours without playing a hand, don't expect a lot of action when you decide to bet or raise. On the Internet, you

can play a straightforward tight game for a long time and still get good action when you bet since opponents either do not notice or have not had enough time to realize that you are such a tight player

On the other hand, if you don't play many hands in a live game, your chances for pulling off a successful bluff are high, while on the Internet I doubt this gives you much of an advantage. A bluff on the Internet is usually only profitable by the merits of the play of the particular hand, not by table image.

So remember, table image is not as important online as in a live game. Play a more straightforward game with fewer bluffs and protect your hands against those opponents who try to win every pot by bluffing too much.

Look Around For Awhile

Once you have a solid low limit game plan, this becomes extremely important for becoming a profitable online player. What good is being a good player if you only play against other good players? Everyone will shuffle his or her money back and

forth and the house will rake it all. Fortunately there are many easy games online. Find games with players playing 50%+ hands pre-

flop, most sites keep statistics of this on their table lists. Many sites also have note-keeping systems; you can flag a player as a fish. Every time you see players making poor decisions, mark them. If you spend enough time on a given site you'll notice many players have been marked as poor. Join the games with these players. Look out for players with large (800\$+) bankrolls playing very low limit games (1-2\$). These are usually tight aggressive players.

Monitor Their Stack Sizes

Keep a very close eye on the exact size of the short stacks of the other players. *Paradise Poker* has a very poor rule where a bet of any size below a full bet does not constitute a raise. For instance, playing \$10/20, on the turn you check with the intention to check raise. A player bets all-in for \$19, and another calls. Your plan is screwed. All you can do is call. On the other hand, if you know that player has \$21, you will be able to check raise. In bricks and mortar casino poker, you very often can't tell how many chips a player has left. Online you know within \$1.

Another thing to consider is be careful about completing bets. If two people check, then somebody bets \$19 all-

in, you better have a super-monster to make it \$20. Those first two

players can't check raise the \$19, but they can check raise you when you make it \$20. Likewise, a player behind you can raise it to \$40 if you make it \$20, but can only raise it to \$20 if you just call.

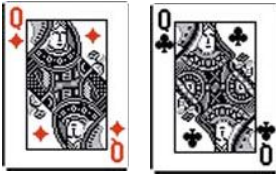
While everyone has his or her favorite sites, it's best to spread yourself around. Having six different online poker accounts makes it easy to find soft games at any given time. Don't miss out on profitable games because you have confined yourself to one site.

There are plenty of soft games online, you just have to do a little searching!

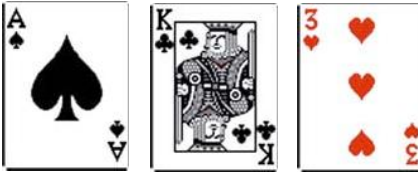
Stay Extra Cool When Playing Tournaments

Because of the nature of tournaments and the escalating betting limits, your bankroll is the key to your ability to win. If you become short-stacked, try to stay calm and play as tight as possible. Only bet on high-ranking pairs (the Fish 40), and only continue playing the hand if the flop has improved your hand.

Example: You are dealt Q, Q as your hole cards.



The flop comes with A, K, 3.



If some one bets I would fold the hand immediately.

Why? Because you have not built on your pair and the betting is going to get expensive.

Some players make it a habit of playing loose during the first couple of rounds hoping that they can catch up later. There is no

logic for this kind of play in a tournament and can reduce your stack and push you into panic mode. An example would be to go all-in on a hand like J9 suited. Even if you see that you will likely be short on coming blinds, this is a bad move. Wait.

Play Like A Rock

As long as you have chips in front of you, you have a chance of winning. Wait, wait and wait longer if need be, but never panic. You have time. In limit games, patience is supremely important.

You may go an hour or two before you get a playable hand. This is normal. This will set up two things for you. Credibility and more playing time. Why do you want credibility? One word, bluffing. The more you fold or take pots with an extremely strong hand and the better you lay the groundwork for a bluffing situation.

You

will become known as a *rock* (A rock is an extremely tight player). The tighter the player, the harder it is to win against that player.

In poker perception is everything. Be patient, It Will Pay Off!

Turn Down The Music But Turn Up Your Sound

Researchers now that we learn faster and engage our brains better when we use more of our senses. The online casinos supply plenty of color but make sure you take advantage of the sound as well. Turn up the sound effects. Sure, it may get annoying sometimes listening to all those clinks, shuffles and chip sounds but they help us tune into the game and out of those things going on around us. You are much less prone to make mistakes when you can hear and see what people are doing, as opposed to just seeing it.

Click between game tabs to refresh your table listings. This trick is useful mainly for tournaments, which are notoriously quick to fill up. Many times, you'll see "Wtng for 5 players" as the table status,

but when you click on the game, it will have already started. This is due to the table status not updating quickly, which you can force by clicking between tabs. Of note however, is that *Party Poker* has recently upped the refresh rate of the tables substantially, so this isn't a major issue like it used to be.

How To Get Hand Histories

Your opponent didn't show don't show their cards? Here's a great *Party Poker* trick. Click on the hand number at the top right of the screen and request the hand history for that game via email. Depending on how busy *Party Poker* is at the moment,

you should get an email with the history in a matter of minutes.

Scroll to the bottom of the history and you can instantly find out what the other player was holding. You can do this in conjunction with player notes to get a good idea of what a player is willing to play with on a river. Showdown information is always the most critical, as you can analyze their decision making process from the ground up.

Get Caught Bluffing Once In A While

Once in a while this is not a bad idea. It is a way to vary your play and not be too predictable. You win pots that you don't deserve when your bluff works. You lose a few chips when it doesn't work but it will get you calls from weaker hands down the line when you have a strong hand and need the action.

Bluff With Caution In Low Limit Games

One should be *extremely careful* in efforts to bluff playing low limit online poker. You will find many players will call you just to "keep you honest" even if their hand doesn't warrant a call. For the most

part, you should forget about it until you are already a very successful low limit online player. When you do bluff it should be done with careful attention to pot/IMPLIED odds: "I estimate I have a 1 in 10 chance of winning this bluff, do I get better than 10-1 return?" Since these estimations can be even harder to make online since there are few tells to go by, it's a difficult play.

Never Let Them See You Sweat

I think this is a significant tip because when you lose a big pot, it's easy to let your emotions show – even online. Don't let the cards defeat you. And never boost the confidence of the other players by letting it get to you.

If you want to keep your psychological edge; it helps to take away their. Never give them a reason to be able to feed off of you, even if you are losing (by the way everyone loses and has bad beats. No one can win 100% of the time; never give them the edge, even if you are fuming.)

Get Up And Stretch

Taking a small break will help you to focus. While you are on break don't think about the game. it will only hurt your session as time goes on.

Stay Away From Alcohol

Do we need to even say this? Nothing can alter your thinking more than alcohol. You need to be aware and focused at all times. I have no idea how many online players are drinking or doing something else while they are playing but I can tell you that focus is everything. There is a lot going on in a game of online poker and it's happening at warp speed. You really need to stay clear.

Keep Accurate Player Records

If you don't keep records of your Texas Hold'em Poker playing, start now. Make a form in MS Word or MS Excel that you are comfortable with. Develop something you can use to track

and update notes while you play online. If you have the software, even better, set up a database that you can search on and create reports. If none of this works for you, at least get a fold-flat notebook that you can use while you play. Accurate play records will tell you a lot about yourself, your strategy and your opponents.

Everyone falls into a losing streak, it's normal. What you want to avoid is having this negatively affect your play and attitude. You'll be asking yourself - am I playing too tight? Should I change my strategy? Am I playing too loose? Will I ever win again?

Look over your play records. You'll find the answers there. A good set of records is the best thing I know for a poker player's peace of mind and a good night's sleep.

Your play records should include the date of each session, start and stop times, hours played, wins or losses, running totals and an hourly win rate. You'll also want to have totals in terms of big bets. If you play in Hold'em games of various limits then big bets per hour is a better indicator of how you are doing than dollars per hour. Your play records should have notes about your play, your opponents, tells you've noticed and other information that might be useful. At the very least, your play records should be good reading later.

Texas Hold'em Poker is enjoyable. Winning is great. Keeping play records is unexciting at best, but the information in good play records is essential if you want to win. Without play records you

won't know if changes in your strategy have had a positive or a negative effect. You won't know if you're getting better or worse or why. In fact, if you don't keep records, you don't even know if you're winning or losing in the game and you certainly don't know how much.

Learn How To Know When You're Done

This is really just a general poker tip, but it still nabs even the poker pros at times. If you find that you are being outplayed, outclassed or just unlucky at the table, it's ok to leave. Don't think about getting your money back or getting revenge on the bastard that rivered you for the 3rd time now. If you are losing money at your table, you do **NOT** have good table image no matter what you might think. Not only are you not in a good mood, which puts you on tilt (admit it or not), but other players will be more likely to make plays against you. This makes your game harder in more ways than you want. With so many tables at Party Poker, just get up and go, it's that easy.

If the game gets short-handed (6 or less players) and you are not familiar with short-handed play, get out. This is an easy way to lose a lot of cash if you don't know what you are doing. I see this happen all the time, when a table breaks up and players are stuck with two tight players and three fish who don't realize they are about to get run eaten alive. Don't be 'chum' when all it takes is a single click to safer waters.

When you feel yourself slipping and playing too loose or having trouble focusing on the game, gather your chips and go home.

It should not matter if you are up or down, leave the table. If you are up, why risk your winnings? If you are down, why risk more

of your bankroll? There is not a good reason. Get some sleep. Playing when you cannot focus is a recipe for losing.

Don't Let The Rake Beat You

Why do online casinos make so much money? Because they make a profit from every single poker pot that is played – often millions of pots per month. The more games you play, the more the casinos make. Their profit from each pot is called the *rake*. The rake is a percentage or a flat fee that the casino charges you to play. No matter how good a poker player you are, the house has an edge on you. The rake is built in so that the house takes money from you in small, unnoticed amounts. There are a few guidelines you can go by to minimize this.

Some poker rooms will only rake the pot once it has reached a certain amount, so you want to play opposite the style of the table in these cases.

If the rake is a set percentage (usually 4% to 10%), the tactics for an aggressive player won't be as successful as if the rate was a flat fee.

Every failed attempt at blind-stealing, for example, is going to be raked, and all bluffing is now 4%-10% less worth it.

You have to be a better player to overcome that percentage, and once you get to that point, you shouldn't be too preoccupied with the rake. If you are a beginner, play tighter than usual.

Most online casinos charge a percentage of the winning pot.

Example: The winning pot is \$125. The casino or the 'house' takes a minimum of \$1 and 5% of the balance.

Total rake is \$7 or 5.6%. That leaves 94.4% for the winners. Compare that to 60% on most lottery games. The less the rake is the more money you can win and the better your return on your investment.

The size of the pot and the betting limit can have a huge effect on your chances of winning.

Let's apply the same rules to a game where the maximum bet is only 2\$.

Example: The winning pot is \$22. The reason for the lower pot is the low betting limit. Now let's apply the same rake to the pot. Minimum of \$1 and 5% or \$2.10. This doesn't sound like a lot but it's actually 9.5%. The amount left to the winners in this game is now 90.5%. It may not seem like much, but the house can now pull from the table an entire pot every 10 games. That's a pot you can't win so your odds of winning are much lower.

The opposite of this effect is to play a very high maximum game – for example a \$50 maximum bet. This could create a \$1000 pot or more. Sure, the percentage will now be even lower, but can you afford to play these high stakes?

A rule of thumb is to have 100 times the maximum bet with you when you start the game. A \$50 maximum bet would mean having \$5000 with you when you start. A maximum bet of \$5 would allow you to play for \$500. Quite a difference.

For most players, a \$1-2 maximum bet is too low. The rake just becomes too high as a percentage of each pot.

The ideal game range is the \$5-10 maximum bet range. This range will give you the best odds at winning and will not require that you mortgage your house to get into a game.

What happens if I start playing a \$5-10 maximum bet game with only \$100?

The problem is you may need several hands before you get the right cards to win. With too small a bank, you may run out of money before you get a betting hand. Years of experience

have shown that the 100x rule works. Having more certainly won't hurt. The 50x is a minimum requirement to play to win.

Playing Texas Hold'em Money Games For Free

Betting in **Texas Hold'em** is dictated by the big and small blinds. When it becomes your turn to place the blind (the initial bet) you can pass. This means you can see two cards without any cost unless you are down card from the dealer.

The only problem is you can't come back into the game until the deal passes you again. That mean in a game with 10 players you have to sit out three hands per turn.

In a game with six players, you would only be able to play for free in three out of the six games.

It may not sound like much fun – but you can play for free and it's totally legal and within the rules.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TABLE POSITION IN TEXAS HOLD'EM



Position is the most overlooked aspect of games like Texas Hold'em by beginners. And that's a huge shame. It costs these players a lot of pots.

Insider Tip

Your position at the table is based simply on your position in relation to the dealer. The dealer is at the most advantageous position, as he/she gets to see how all the other players at the table react before making their own decision.

The chances of your hand being a winner increase as more and more people fold their hand.

Yes -

if you have say **KQs** and are going up against 1 other player, your chances are not bad - but if you're going up against 8 or 9 others who feel they too have a hand worth betting - your **KQs** is not nearly so strong.

Now -

if you are in an early position (meaning you are among the first who has to bet) then you have no idea how many players will be playing this hand when it's time to bet or fold your hole cards.

On the other hand -

if you are in a late position (meaning you are among the last to call) you not only have the knowledge of who and how many players are in on this hand - but if anyone has made aggressive bets. If you are in a late position and hold an OK hand - say a small pair or a **KJ** -

if everyone before you has folded - you've got a strong hand - but if everyone before you has called or raised - you know you've got a weak hand.

As you see - this has little to do with your hand - but more the circumstances in which it is played.

The person to the left of the dealer is not only the small blind (SB), but must act first after the flop.

The person to the left of the small blind is the big blind (BB). This person is already obligated to the game and is in another early position.

The person to the left of the big blind acts first before board cards are dealt. This is often referred to as "being under the gun". The clockwise motion of play allows those who act later (in late position) to be at an advantage. As a result, those in late position can play weaker hands or "gambling hands" with less fear of financial obligation or loss.

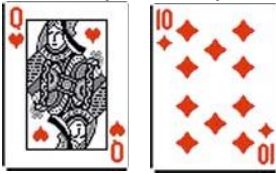


The blind positions . . . and the player under the gun needs to be very selective with their hands. They don't have the privilege of watching other players

betting/raising before they must decide if they want to stay in themselves.

Insider Tip

For example, lets say you're *under the gun* (first to act). You have Jack-Ten, unsuited. The player to bet after you raises, and everyone but you folds. Now you're in a jam.



Chances are good that this player has a better hand than you, with at least an ace or a pocket pair. Unfortunately, you've already bet, because you had no idea or no way to tell what other players at the table had in the pocket.



You will always . . . throughout the game, be acting before this player. This positional advantage will continue throughout this hand.

Insider Tip

On the other hand, being in the dealer's position not only gives you the benefits of observing how the other players are betting, but it also gives you the ability to adjust the size of the pot.

After all other players have bet, a raise by the player in the dealer's position could potentially double the size of the pot (assuming no one folds). Since the players have already committed to one bet, it's easier to commit to a second (or a third or fourth!).



If you watched a poker table over a space of many days, you would begin to notice that the winning hand tends to move around the table in a clockwise position.

Long-term studies have shown that over time, the win tends to move in that direction.

Insider Tip

Why? Because your knowledge of the hand increases your chance of winning.

The blinds and player 'under the gun' have the least knowledge. As the play moves around the table, each player gains more knowledge about what the other players are doing. Are they in? Are they hesitating? Are they raising? Are they folding? The last player to bet has the maximum knowledge and therefore the best position – they are in what is sometimes called the 'cat-bird seat'.

Knowing how money moves around a table can give you a sense of the importance of position at the table.



One of the little-understood benefits of last position at the table is that you get a lot of free cards as well.

Insider Tip

When you get a free card, you're taking a free ride. If nobody bets during a round, you get that opportunity at zero cost. That's what a free card is. Fine. A governing concept of free cards is that you

get lots more of them when you're last to act than when you're first to act. Even better, when you're last to act, you get control over whether or not you take a free card. You can accept the opportunity, or you can bet and deny the same opportunity to your opponents.

Befriend players to your left; declare war on players to your right.

PLAYER PROFILING OR WATCHING WHO YOU PLAY WITH!

H

ere's some advice that will improve your game as much as i
t'll have a positive impact on your wallet or purse. If
you watched the movie, *The Beautiful Mind*, you'll be famil
iar

with the Mathematician John Nash and his discovery of
Game Theory. Game Theory is a fascinating concept that turns
game relationships, opponents and players, into mathematical func
tions that can be 'crunched' and computed. Playing styles
can be analysed and defined. In fact, the best Texas Hold'em
computer simulations focus on playing styles more than just
odds to study how the values of cards change depending on the
betting style
of the other players. Playing style has a much larger influence on th
e outcome of the game than most of us realized until the last
few years.

Based again on these computer studies, four basic types of playing styles have been identified:

Loose-passive	Loose – Aggressive
Net Loser	Low - Moderate Wins
Tight-Passive	Tight-Aggressive
Moderate Wins	Maximum Wins

Loose-

passive: Often referred to as "calling stations", these players tend to call any bet as long as they have even the remotest chance of winning the pot. Interestingly, loose-passive players often will not raise when they have a good hand (that's the passive side of their unique personality). By the same token, they'll also not

fold when they have a garbage hand. They tend to stay in the majority of hands unless pushed hard to call.

Loose-aggressive: Loose-aggressive players will make often and inappropriate raises. They will not always have the best hand when they raise, and will even raise with garbage hands. Loose players tend to bet irrationally – first they raise, then they stay, then they raise and then they fold. That uncertainty is a dead giveaway. Due to their inconsistent and irrational play, loose-aggressives are often called "maniacs". Playing against maniacs can be profitable, but they can also be expensive to play against, due to the number of wild raises you'll have to call.

Tight-passive: These players are known as "rocks". Tight-passive players play fewer hands than most and play them very cautiously. This is the preferred style of 'fish' play when starting out according to the Food Chain Theory of play. When a tight-passive player does raise though - watch out, it's more than likely that they have the "nuts". Playing tight-passive will

keep you from losing money, but it won't make you rich either.

Tight-aggressive: Tight-aggressive players also play few of the hands dealt to them, but will be much more varied in the way they play. If a tight-aggressive player raises, you'll never know if they have a good hand or if they're bluffing. And that's exactly the point. Tight-aggressive players are selectively aggressive. They will bet very cautiously on good hands to try and

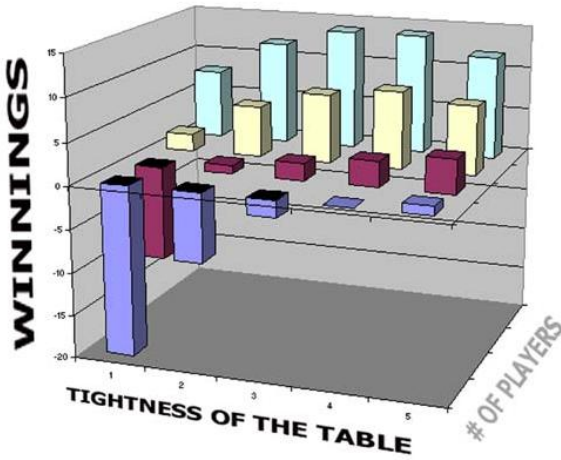
trap players with lesser hands into betting later and building the pot. They will raise to create an expectation in other players that they have a great hand in order to push weaker players out of the hand. And this is very important, as you understand how reducing

the number of players in the hand can dramatically increase the power of your hand. Tight-aggressive is the standard that you should aspire to.

To practice your ability to 'read' player types, find a mid-sized game. This size of game allows you more of a choice of who to sit by. Watch everyone play. Get a feel for who's playing tight, who's aggressive, and who sucks. Note who check-raised, bluffed or semi-bluffed. Count the number of times each player bets on the pre-flop or folds. These are key indicators to player type. If you can label each of the players in this way, you will have advanced your ability to win by leaps and bounds.

The first thing you need to decide as you observe is whether these players are clearly better than you. Always avoid games where you see a lot of early pre and post flop raises, and avoid games

where it looks like one or two strong players are cleaning up on everyone else at the table. Very aggressive players will take over a table and cause a lot of grief. Steer clear of these tables if you consider yourself a fish or a barracuda. Even as a shark, usually one or two aggressive players at a table is enough eliminate easy wins. Increasing the overall tightness of a table only benefits the house, which will make more money from the rake than you will ever make from the pot.



How effective is aggressive play in online Texas Hold'em? Now, no guessing here. I want the facts.

A very detailed study carried out by **Carnegie-Melon University** showed the precise value of aggressive play. For the sake of this exercise, they had their computer-simulated player come out playing aggressively on every hand, regardless of pocket pair quality, against a varied field of opponents. There were two very

distinct scenarios (and only two) where this was a winning strategy.

One – against a loose table, very aggressive play was a winning strategy. In the case of our experiment, betting pre-flop on every single hand added up to moderate winnings. In a real online game, betting like a maniac on every hand may diminish the power of this strategy because other players will pick up on your strategy - but we suspect, not by much in online play.

Again, the secret is finding the right table. Imagine the joy of sitting down at a large table full of new players and yours is the biggest stack. Like

'shooting fish in a barrel' as they say. This is the kind of table you are searching for.

Two – against three or less players, this aggressive approach was also a net moneymaker. **As soon as you go to four players or better, the technique started to haemorrhage serious money.** All of our research shows that bluffing at full or near full tables is a waste of money, and this study supports that. At the end of this chapter we have included a complete chart on the pocket hands that successfully take the pot based on number of players at the table. You will see quite clearly that strong hands double in power and relatively weak cards can become big winners. Narrow the field and you can pump up the power of your cards.



An excellent indicator of playing style is that the bankrolls of tight players tend to go down in small amounts incrementally, and periodically go up in mid

and large amounts. Watching stacks can give you valuable information about player style.

Insider Tip

Loose Players Have Bigger Swings.

Money tends to move clockwise around the table because it's easier to read players to the right. When that really loose player is about to take a negative swing, you want to be at a positional advantage over him or her.

Even more, you want a maniac on your right. Maniacs eliminate players with okay and drawing hands. Twenty year-old

high school students are more readable, and you profit from being able to act directly after them

Here's a question then – would you prefer to sit down card from a great player or a poor player?

Sitting in late position (next in sequence) from a poor player does not give you much of an advantage. You really need to know as much as possible about the best players, the one's most likely to take your money.

A loose player, someone who plays only for fun and doesn't really understand the game, is like an old car. He or she will wander all over the road, their steering is wobbly and they can't be depended on to play according to their cards. Watch for and appreciate loose players. They are great contributors. They tend to bet more than they win and build pots for the rest of us.

While different players prefer different styles of play, the general consensus is that the ideal table is **loose-passive**. That means lots of callers and few raises, especially before the flop. You will also want to play at tables where most, if not all of the players are worse than you. You will make most of your profit from other player's mistakes.

Tight players on your left will more likely call a bet than re-raise even though they might have a decent hand. You can more easily scare them into thinking you've got the nuts and buy more free cards despite the fact that they've got a positional advantage on you.

Research shows that lots of pre-flop raising reduces your potential profit. It also becomes more expensive to see the flop overall, which negatively affects your bankroll all those times when the flop doesn't hit you.



It is always better to have six players calling one bet than three players calling two bets. Even though the pot size in both cases is the same, in the first situation you will make a profit of 5:1, whereas in the raising situation you will only make a profit of 2:1. Simply put, the more players there are putting money into the pot, the more profit there will be when you win.

Insider Tip

A tighter game, where fewer players are calling before the flop and staying until the showdown, can also reduce your overall profit. But some players prefer a tight-passive table, since tight-passive opponents are rather predictable. A tight-passive table gives a player the opportunity to steal more pots, since you can often make other players fold with a well-timed raise.

Fishing For Loose Players

If you sit at a table of ten and at least half of the players are better than you, you will lose. If one or two of the players are better than you, you have a fair chance of taking some money home but this is

still not an ideal situation. **Your profit is going to be determined more by the composition of the table than the types of cards you are dealt. You can't control the cards – you can pick your table and move if it gets ugly.**

How do you know?

As we have been preaching, the great advantage of online poker is that it allows you to observe the table before you play. Once you have chosen what appears to be a fairly loose table, you begin to carefully observe. The best recommendation I can give you is, if you want to be a winner, spend at least 15 minutes. **Many would suggest spending at least 30 minutes - before beginning play.** This may seem like a lot of time to invest – but once you begin to play, you will have a clear idea of who you need to beat and who you need to milk to win.

The Table Rating System

Here's a simple rating system we use to evaluate how 'winnable' a table is.

We assign each player a number from 1-10.

Ten (10) is the loosest player – a beginner, someone who bets wildly and show poor cards at the showdown.

One (1) is for the tightest player. Someone who plays and wins consistently, can't be bluffed, has accumulated substantial winnings, makes reasonable decisions, doesn't play every hand.

Assign each player at the table a number from 1-10.

If you are not sure from observation what their score is, score them higher than you would guess. They are probably better players.

On a piece of paper or in your head, mark the table with these numbers.

When you get a chance to, always play down card from the two best players on the table. This is a winning position.

Now add up the numbers and divide by the total players.

$$1+3+7+4+5+1+1+10+9 = 4.5$$

If the average of the table is 6 or better, don't play. There are too many good players for you to be a consistent winner. Even

an average of 5 can reduce your chances. What you are looking for is a table where most of the players are looser than you. The lower the number the better.

The Casino Giveth Sometimes

Players who never fold on the first two cards even when it costs them, are loose. A higher percentage means a much looser game. Most online poker rooms, such as [PacificPoker](#), list the percentage of players who are seeing the flop. Players who fold often on the first two cards tend to be tighter players.

All online poker rooms also list the average pot size. You do not necessarily want to play at the table with the highest average pot size, since this may indicate a lot of raises going into the pot.

For loose-passive games, choose a table with a relatively high flop percentage and a reasonably average pot size.

Another factor to consider is the number of players at the table. Most online tables are ten-handed, which means you'll have to play relatively tight. You should take position into account and call before the flop with premium cards or good drawing hands. More players means more competition, so you'll have to show down better hands.

At a six-handed table, you can play considerably looser than you can at a ten-handed table. The side effect of this is that you'll experience more variance (the swings in your bankroll will be greater). Some players prefer short-handed tables because you get to see the flop more often, and thus have more chances at winning the pot.



Aggression in poker has far more power at a short-handed table.

Insider Tip

It will take some experience to learn what type of table is best for you. While you can't go wrong with a loose-passive table full of mediocre players, you may find that a loose-aggressive or tight-passive table suits you best. If you find yourself at a table

where you are struggling to make a profit, don't hesitate to leave and join another table.

Raises in Loose Games

All new poker players will generally start out in loose, low limit games. While most experienced players prefer the sort of loose-

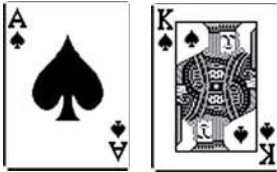
passive play present at a low limit table, others may have difficulty playing against opponents who repeatedly "suck out" and win

with garbage hands and bad plays. A common complaint among low limit players is that opponents will not always fold to appropriate raises, and occasionally, mediocre low limit players will make incorrect raises. Knowing when to raise, and how to interpret an opponent's raise is covered below. The following information assumes that you have made an appropriate table selection, and are not playing at a table that is overly aggressive or tight.



If you've got a great starting hand, especially a high pair (JJ or higher), don't hesitate to raise and re-raise before the flop.

Insider Tip



One of the most common complaints among low-limit players is that opponents often suck out with inferior hands against a solid hand such as **AA**. The best way to win with these hands is to play them fast and aggressively.

Raise before the flop, and keep on betting after the flop. Unless the game is ridiculously loose (and your opponents are ridiculously bad), almost all of your opponents will fold to your aggressive betting. You won't always win with **AA** or **KK**, but if you play them aggressively, the majority of the time you will.

Again, the research shows that aggressive play will drive down the number of players in the hand and increase your odds of winning.

Since many low limit players will play incorrectly and call bets and raises with just about any half-

decent hand, you need to make sure that you are raising when you think you have the best hand. If you do have what you believe is the best hand at that point, then you need to raise to get other players out of the pot, who may draw out on you with a garbage hand. If you are repeatedly winning and showing down the best hands, then other players will start to respect your raises and get out of your way.

If you've flopped a decent hand (top pair with good kicker, two pair, etc.) and are betting on it, don't be scared off if someone raises it to two bets.

Although you could very well be beaten, experience shows that bad players will sometimes raise with any decent pair, a draw or even overcards. Call the bet, and be prepared to call to the river unless the board looks scary or the action gets too intense. If

you fold every time you get raised with a decent hand, then you'll lose out on some pots that you would have won, had you shown the hand down.



Utilize pot odds to determine whether the payoff is big enough to justify putting in more bets. Then observe opponent play to see if the raise is valid.

Insider Tip

On the other hand, if an opponent re-raises it to three bets, be very concerned. Generally, a mediocre low limit player will not re-raise unless they have a great hand. Take time to study the board to

determine what your opponent might have. You might be tempted to follow the above advice and call him to the river, hoping that he is bluffing. But time and time again, they will turn up a superior hand. Don't re-raise unless you have the nuts, and if you don't have the absolute nuts, be prepared to call to the river.

Playing Tighter

If everyone at the Texas Hold'em Poker table plays loose then no one can win.

The players will trade pots back and forth while the casino slowly rakes all their money. The better Hold'em players will lose less, but in the long run, no one can win.

"No one can win if everyone plays tight. Only the house wins."

Insider Tip

The tight players will trade smaller pots back and forth while the casino rakes all their money. The better Hold'em players will lose less, but no one can win.

If everyone at the Texas Hold'em Poker table plays the same, no one can win. Learning Hold'em only by simply playing Hold'em is player's folly. If you learn to play Texas Hold'em poker like everyone else plays, you cannot have a long run edge.

To win at Texas Hold'em Poker you must play tight in loose games and play in loose games only.

There is no other way. You have no edge in a tight Hold'em game and you only have an edge in a loose game if you play tight. It

might be possible to play loose and win in the long run if all the other players are complete idiots, but nature does not provide enough complete idiots who play Hold'em poker.

As players come and go during a Hold'em poker session the game will sometimes get tighter. You'll see more players folding on the first round. The pots will be smaller. If your Hold'em game gets too tight, find a better game or don't play at all.

You want to be the only tight player in a loose Hold'em poker game, but often there are one or more other tight players at the table. Sometimes loose players tighten up their play for whatever reason, but that's usually temporary. You'll have to take a ll of this into consideration when evaluating a Hold'em poker

game. There's no exact way to measure it, but you can develop a feel for it.

The Law Of Big Numbers

Most of us are impressed with big numbers – like the size of Bill Gate's fortune. But what about small numbers that give you a huge advantage?

Let's say that you improve your odds of winning by 5%? So instead of winning 10 in every 100 pots (on average) you could increase that to 15. Doesn't sound like much does it?

Ten in 100 pots for 10 players really means you are getting back the money you bet less the house rake. Start with \$100. Play

100 hands of Poker. The rake is \$1 per pot. That's \$100 the house takes from all the winnings leaving you \$90 at the end of the night. The played all night and lost \$10. Write that off to entertainment.

With 15 pots – that little 5% advantage means a lot.

You are now up, just based on average play, \$115 for the night.

Small numbers make huge differences. Play three times a week for a year and you are up \$18,000 based on your 5% advantage.

Never Sequence Bet

A sequence bet is a bet based on the idea that “Well, I’ve put in so much money on this lousy hand, I might as well see it through.” Never change future strategy based on a past hands. So you got lucky and drew on an inside straight? You should have

folded. Not only will that luck not return, it will make you a looser player. We will tend to use the experience to modify future play.

Show the avatars (people in chairs), but don't stereotype them. This is probably the most debatable tip I'm guessing, because if you've turned them off, you probably really don't like the

avatars to begin with. And if you do like avatars, well, they're probably on already. I just want to get my two cents in about this Party Poker tip by saying that even though avatars are computer graphics, it's again human nature to easily identify faces. That means

we can more easily associate a personality to a face, so it makes it easier to remember how someone is playing when we can attach a face to a playing style.

That being said, I'm sure there is some negative influence of these faces as well, because we probably tend to associate a certain avatar with a playing style. For instance, I'll admit that I used

to mentally associate one of the avatar pictures with bluffing. I think this was caused by a long string of coincidences, when different players using that avatar would constantly bluff, so I just starting

linking that specific avatar with bluffing. Don't let this happen to you.

If you are a 2 or a 3 – how do you get to be a 7 or an 8?

Playing Poker Solitaire

Human psychology is very interesting. Research has shown that the average gambler tends to underestimate the cards of their opponents and overvalue their own. One of the best ways to understand this tendency is to play Solitaire Poker.

Play out 6-

10 hands of Texas Hold'em, evaluate your card odds for the flop, and then look at the other down cards. You will be surprised at the number of opportunities to win you will see in the competition's hands.

Be hard on your hand. Sure you could draw a card that will help you but so can all of the other remaining players.

One of the best exercises in an actual game is to try and guess the other players two down cards based on their playing style and betting. The better you become at this, the better your game will become. In the end, isn't this really the point of the game?

Reading Your Opponents

Online Poker eliminates visual and verbal clues ('tells') from the game. You can't see the faces of the other players (their real faces, in any case). This limits your ability to read the other players. The rules in online poker compensate for this by giving us a wealth of information in other ways.

- How the other players react to the bets?

- How quickly do they respond?
- What's their betting style?
- How often do they raise and when?
- Are they consistent – stay, raise, raise?
- Or raise, stay, raise, fold?

Wait a Full Table Rotation Before Posting the BB

Online 'Tells' - The in-turn buttons lead to the most obvious tell unique to online poker. If the blinking light representing a player acts immediately, it's likely this person has clicked the box of an in-

turn action. It is usually easy to determine when a player has a no-brainer hand. The immediate "check" is often incredibly revealing. If you are first to act, and for some reason take a moment before checking, and your three opponents immediately check behind you like rifle fire, this is a tell as big as Texas. They haven't got a thing.

Another common situation . . . the first player takes a moment, and then finally checks. You have the "bet/raise in turn" button checked, so your bet appears, but instantly the player next to you raises. Uh-oh, he had the bet/raise button checked too, and didn't care what you or the first player did. That tells a lot more than a just normal raise would -- an awful *lot* more.

Besides the speed of action resulting from using the buttons, other online tells can be discerned from how slow a player commonly acts on their hand. Players who are consistently super-slow (rude human speed bumps) are likely not paying attention to the game, either because they are playing two games and are not competent at it, or because they are doing other work at home. Either way, if all of a sudden this person plays a hand crisply and promptly and aggressively... well, they just woke up because they've got something.

The "Stall" is a common tell among average or slightly below average players. When the last card in Hold'em or Omaha makes a coordinated board (making a nut hand like a flush), the mediocre player pauses as if thinking, and then finally bets. This pause almost always means "powerhouse" or at least that the better thinks he has a killer hand. Some would call it reverse psychology, but more often than not, it's true.

PRE-FLOP STRATEGY

Before you start betting like a madman when you get two eights in the pocket, you need to carefully consider all factors involved in a solid pre-flop strategy.

The factors to consider are the number of players, how aggressive/passive the players at the table are, your bankroll, your position, and how much risk you are willing to entail.

THE RIGHT NUMBER OF PLAYERS

With 10 people in the game, it's much more likely that someone else has a strong hand in the pocket than in a short-handed game. Also, you'll need to be more cautious in larger games, as the chances of someone's pre-flop hand fitting the flop will be much better. More competition means stiffer competition.

HOW AGGRESSIVE ARE THE OTHER PLAYERS

Assuming you've been playing with a few people for several hands, and you noticed some jackass is raising every hand pre-flop, you'll want to play tighter. Let the guy win the blinds (big deal) and nail him to the wall when you have a solid hand in the pocket pre-flop.

Your Bankroll

If you have \$2 left, you'll want to play extremely carefully and select one hand to bet on, hoping to get as many players involved as possible for a larger pot. You'll want to be all-in before the flop is dealt. On the flip side, if you have \$1000 at a \$1/\$2 table, you can take the high-risk, high-payout bets. If you are worried about losing your money, you should stop playing poker, switch tables or take a break. Second reason to buy more than is necessary, is for intimidation factor. Opinions may differ, but faced off against a big stack, my feelings are that a good amount of players (but not all) show a bit more respect (read: fear) and will play accordingly - which is to your benefit. Now, don't read this as buying in for \$1,000 in a \$1/2 game, because then people will think you are just nuts, but \$400. Now we're talking.

Buy-in More Than Necessary At The Poker Table

If you've been doing your homework, you'll know that you should always sit in with at *minimum* 50 times the big blind at any poker table. In the realities of online poker, this should be more along the lines of at least 100 times the BB. You should think about doing this too. Why? First, don't ever be in the position of holding the nuts and not having enough money to raise the pot. I've seen this happen too many times, where a guy will have flopped a full house in a \$3/6 game, but only have \$12 in his bankroll. He could have made a killing if it weren't for the fact he was playing with a small stack.

CHEATING, BLUFFING AND SEMI- BLUFFING

"Trust everybody, but cut the cards." - Finley Peter Dunne

No, we are not going to teach you how to cheat. Our topic is spotting cheaters. And of course, our focus will largely be on online cheating.

Online poker rooms are probably the safest place to play at right now. Did your mother ever tell you to "never trust a stranger"? Well, playing online limits the number of sneaky people you could potentially be dealing with. The dealer is a program. Programs don't cheat. You don't have to worry about any sort of ill egal card handling. There are no "cards" online.

Some people worry about hackers.

It's been many, many years since the last major instance of hacking affected anyone wagering money in an online Hold'em game. Since then we've had breakthroughs like the SSLv3/TLSv1 encryption algorithms and multi-layered random number sequencers. Not only do we have these very technical

advances, but all the ones you would expect in a real casino.

The most common form of online cheating is player collusion.

That's when two or more players reveal to each other what cards they hold. This form is more difficult to pull off in a live game, but playing online gives players the chance to have a fellow player on the phone with them, or sitting next to them at another computer.

Fortunately most of these players are the ones who have no idea how to use that advantage. These two must coordinate well together, which takes practice. Online poker rooms not only look for telltale signs of collusion, but check to see if two players always play at the same table together. They would have to use "hit and run" tactics when using this form of cheating. Colluding players would have to hit up a high-limit table, then flee to another online poker room with their winnings and never look back.

It is barely worth it to try collusion. But just in case, here are some things to look for –

1. A team of players who try to "steamroll" other players out of the game. This means re-raising each other to make non-colluding players call multiple bets at once.
2. Players who never play fast pre-flop. That's the time to talk about what they hold. Watch whoever is under the gun and be mindful of reaction time.

3. A group of players who hike up bets by re-raising with someone in between them. This gets the maximum amount of bets out of a third party. The alarm should really go off if one of those re-raising players has a poor hand, or if one of them folds with one bet to go despite a massive pot. There's a time to bluff and a time to fold and most people have an idea when that is, so be on the lookout for players who exercise horrible judgement like that. Identify that person as a potential goldmine for yourself or a potential cheater.

Once again, it's VERY rare for someone to even attempt these sort of things. Still, never accuse anyone of cheating. Either contact the poker room's administrators or just get up and leave

BLUFFING

"You can fool some of the people all the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all the time."

Abraham Lincoln

A Key Element In Poker Is Deception.

Bluffing is the quintessential trick in poker. Of course, the reasoning for a bluff is to deceive the other players into thinking you have a better hand when you actually do not. For a bluff to work, you need the other players to think you actually have that better hand.

Many beginning poker players love this idea of bluffing and often misuse it. The value of the bluff increases under certain general circumstances that often have a lot to do with information you assume about the other players. This vagueness makes it difficult to give definitive reasons or places to bluff. Some less generalized times to bluff and some advice are given below. The bottom of the

page gives some more ideas and perspectives on deception in poker.

Some typical reasons to bluff . . .

A. When there aren't many other players in a pot.

Simply put, it's easier to trick a couple people than a crowd.

With fewer hands out there, chances are better that no one has made a reasonable hand. This is fairly common though, so many players won't believe you. Some will stay in the hand just to "keep you honest", so sometimes this needs to be a persistent bluff over a period of two or three betting rounds. That can be costly if they don't fall for it. You need to know the players before you use this type of bluff.

B. When you're up against fairly tight players.

Those that tend to fold easily are the biggest targets of a bluff.

Bets will be put out just as a form of information gathering on this player's hand. If you bluff early (pre-flop, flop) against a very tight player and they don't buckle, you should think twice about trying it again on a future round. They have something. Your job is to determine whether they have a made or drawing hand. Once again, you need to know the players.

C. On the river.

Especially if apparent drawing hands missed. That's when players react to rule #1 "the moment you know you can't win, throw in your cards". It is often a good idea to bluff with a weak hand, like ace-high or lowest pair with these kinds of bluffs, because some

players will stay in just because of pot odds. If you do that, it is actually semi-bluffing.

D. You're in late position and everyone else checked.

This one you'll have to gauge for yourself. It will most likely force some players out, but not all. This is a pretty common bluff once again, and many players will stay in just because of bet odds, and/or to once again "keep you honest". This is another example of a bluff that needs to be more persistent over a couple betting rounds.

E. You bet pre-flop and missed.

That's because they don't know you missed! This can be dangerous, and you really have to evaluate to board before you get into this one. Sometimes it's good to bluff when AK misses, sometimes when 99 misses. You have to really feel this one out.

F. You have given other players "the fear".

It's about how other players perceive you. If you just won a hand through good play, the players who say "nice hand" are the ones who now respect you. They will more likely fold to your bluff if you play it right. The trick is to play the hand exactly the same way you played the other winning hand. Give it the "here we go again" act.

G. When the flop isn't so great.

Some players will fold automatically if all they have is an over card. With a rainbow flop of 2, 6, 9, not many players will have much. This is another example of a bluff that can go horribly a wry.

I wouldn't be too persistent in this case, unless only more low cards pop up. Once again, know your players.

H. Pre-flop on the button, and everyone else has folded.

This is usually best used with tight players to your left. It's good because it can change from a bluff to a deceptively good hand with luck and the right flop.

I. When there is a pair on the board.

This is especially useful when the pair is 88 or lower. Chances are that these cards might have been folded or are still in the deck. This is one situation where you want to evaluate the hand

very carefully if they do call though. This is a great situation to read the tells of the players who are NOT involved in the game. It's much easier to give away the fact that you HAD a card than if you HAVE it.

Keep in mind that these are pretty common reasons to bluff. Many players know these reasons. Most of the time it just won't work. The main thing is always to know your players and to not do it so often that it never works.

SEMI BLUFFING

Semi-bluffing is a sort of bluff where you have a poor hand or a drawing hand that can possibly improve.

Against players with nothing it functions a lot like a bluff. Against players with something it functions as a form of aggression. It is a powerful tool, as it can lead to a deceptively powerful hand if the

cards come to you. It can also be a source of great loss if overused or misused.

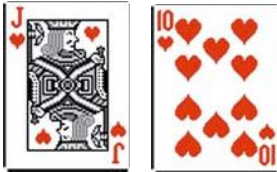
Semi-

bluffing in Texas Hold'em is used best in bluffing situations. Its usefulness comes from the fact that players who recognize a bluff won't necessarily recognize when you make your draw. It is more useful (and preferable) against a lot of players, as opposed to outright bluffing, since the odds tend to be better. Other than that, you'll want to use semi-bluffing in late position, usually on the flop or turn, against mediocre flops, and against poor players.

Let's look at two examples of semi-bluffing from a perspective of odds and from a perspective of bluffing:

1. You have a Jack of Hearts, and a Ten of Hearts.

THE POCKET



The pre-flop betting round concludes with six players investing two bets each. The flop is Ace of Hearts, Queen of Spades, Seven of Hearts.

You are in a middle position, and decide to semi-bluff. Why?

You've got draws, that's why! Any Heart or King will give you a hand. Whenever you have multiple draws like that, start thinking of what would be ideal. If a Heart pops up you have to worry

about a higher flush draw, so you probably want the King of Hearts, as he is the most likely to be in someone's hand. A Queen of Hearts would be dangerous for you, since you'd be looking at a royal flush draw vs. a potentially made full house.

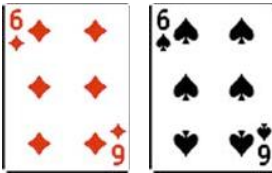
Ideally you want a non-Heart King and the straight. That would be the nuts.

For simplicity's sake let's say that in your evaluation, either a flush or straight will give you a winning hand.

You have twelve outs (don't count the King of Hearts twice). That's a little better than a 25% chance of hitting a winning card on the turn. Even re-raising or check-raising would be a good idea in this position based purely on odds. Even if you miss on the turn, it would be in your interests (based on players reactions) to continue to bet it right out.

2. You have a pair of sixes in the pocket.

THE POCKET



Pre-flop eliminates all but you and another player who was in early position before you.

You get a rainbow flop of Four, Five, Ten.

Semi-bluff!

In this case you have to think of it more as a bluff. If this only player played a hand in early position, they probably have some over-cards in this case. You want the pot right then and there. Most players will bluff back at you in this case with just an Ace in the pocket. Stick to your resolve. Bluff.

Your chances of getting that six are pretty slim, and not worth the odds.

You only have to worry about your opponent having over-pairs and matching the Ten. So you really have to evaluate the player, as opposed to the math in this case.

Try To Be On The Aggressive.

You need information about your opponents hand. Betting is a real good way to get information. Also, a casual semi-bluffing check-raise can be all you need to scare another player if you think they'll bluff at the pot.

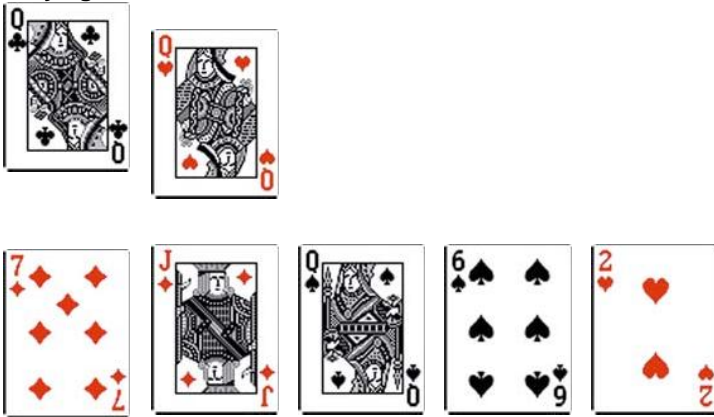
How To Tell If You Have A Texas Hold'em Nut Hand

W

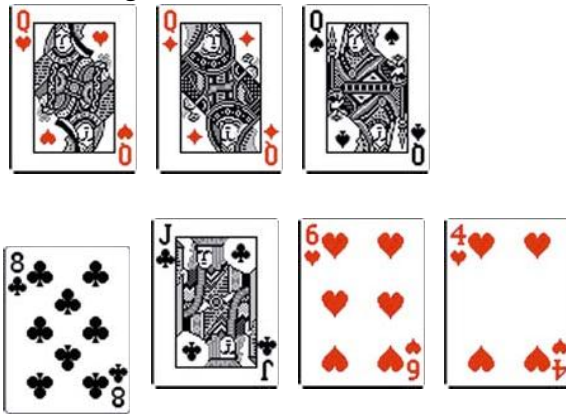
Want to have a Texas Hold'em hand that no one can beat? With a little practice, you can learn to read the table and determine the hole cards necessary to make the *nut* hand. Most of the time no one actually has the nuts, but when someone raises, take time to study the table carefully. Do they have what it takes? It pays to know the difference between a probable winner and the absolute nuts.

A nut set is **three of a kind** with a **pair in the hole equal to the highest card on the board** and **no possibility of a straight or a flush**. The smallest possible nut set on the river is a set of queens

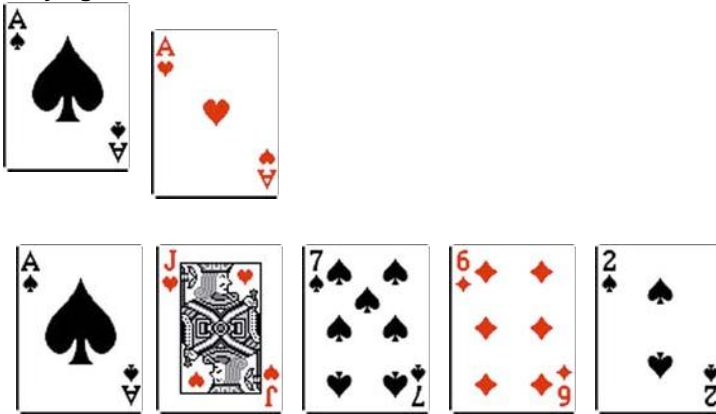
(see example)



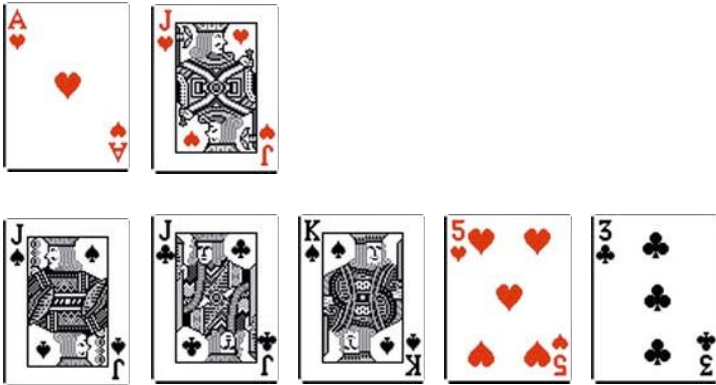
This set of queens is the nuts. There is no possibility of a higher set, a straight or a flush.



In this hand, one or more players could have 10,9 in the hole and this top set of queens could then be sandwiched between nut straights. Even 7,5 in the hole would make a straight.



The nut hole cards are king-anything of spades. **Any two spades in the hole would beat this set of aces.**



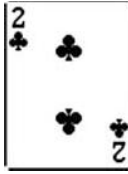
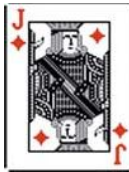
Three-of-a-kind with a pair on the board is trips not a set. Trips cannot be the nuts. Kings, fives or threes in the hole would beat these trip jacks.

Texas Hold'em Poker Nut Hands - Four Of A Kind

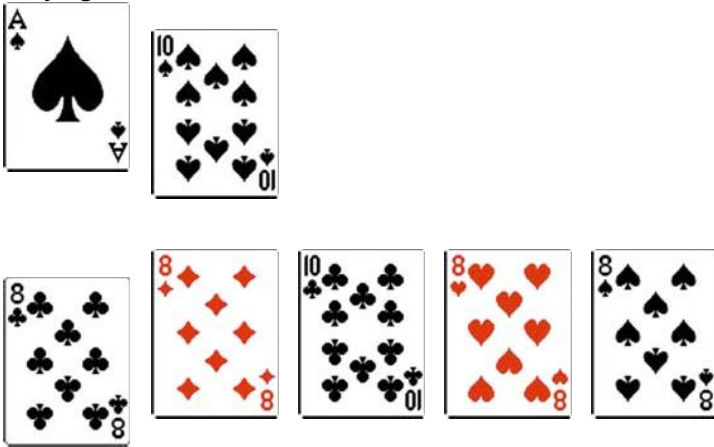
You have the nut four of a kind if you have at least one of the four cards in the hole and there is no higher pair on the board and no possibility of a straight flush.

You have the nuts if the four of a kind is on the board and you have the nut kicker in the hole. If the four of a kind is Kings or less, the nut kicker is an ace. If the four of a kind is aces, the nut kicker is a King. At the showdown you will split the pot with any other players who also have the nut kicker.

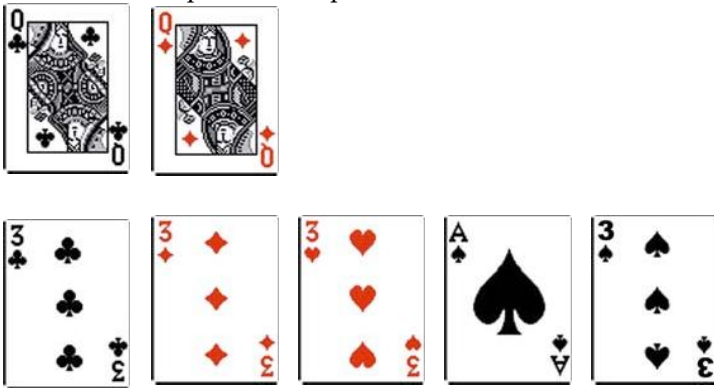
If the four of a kind and the nut kicker are on the board, you will split the pot with all the players who are in the hand at the showdown.



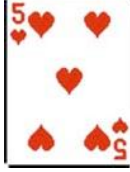
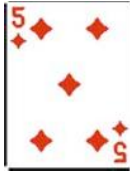
This is a nut hand. There is no higher pair on the board and no possibility of a straight flush. Hope like mad you get some action from pocket aces, pocket deuces or a heart flush.



The four eights are on the board, but the ace kicker in the hole makes this hand the nuts. If any other players have an ace in the hole, the pot will be split.



Four threes and the top kicker are on the board. All the players who are in the hand at the showdown will split the pot.



These quad fives could lose to a higher four of a kind. The nut hole cards are pocket sevens



The jack-ten of spades in the hole would make a royal flush.

Three-of-a-

kind with a pair on the board is trips not a set. Trips cannot be the nuts. Kings, fives or threes in the hole would beat these trip jacks.

Texas Hold'em Poker Nut Hands - Flushes



The nut flush is an ace high flush with the highest possible flush card in the hole, no pair or better on the board and no possibility of a straight flush.

Insider Tip

Sometimes, there is a flush on the board and it might be the best hand, but there cannot be a nut flush on the board.

In Texas Hold'em Poker there can be only one nut flush. If the winning hand is a flush, it wins the entire pot.

Texas Hold'em Poker Nut Hands- Full Houses



You have the nut full house in Texas Hold'em Poker when there is only one pair on the board that is higher than the other upcards and equal to your high hole card and the next highest upcard is equal to your other hole card and there is no possibility of a straight flush.

Insider Tip

You have the nut full house in Texas Hold'em Poker when there are two pairs on the board that are higher than the fifth upcard and each pair is equal to one of your hole cards and there is no possibility of a straight flush.

There cannot be a nut full house on the board. If there's a full house on the board, the nut hand is four of a kind.



You cannot have a nut full house with a pocket pair.

Insider Tip

The Pre-Flop Winning Odds System

These charts are based on 400,000,000 Texas Hold'em Poker hands dealt to 10 players.

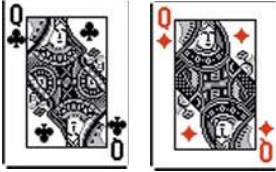
This is my favourite table. It sits by my mouse during every online game I play. And here's why.

#	Hole	Hands Won	Percentage
1.	AA	558,246	31.00%
2.	KK	468,381	26.02%
3.	QQ	395,997	22.03%
4.	AKs	238,934	20.19%
5.	JJ	342,172	19.09%
6.	AQs	220,049	18.66%
7.	KQs	213,327	18.08%
8.	AJs	205,651	17.47%
9.	KJs	200,865	17.05%
10.	TT	301,312	16.83%
11.	AK	592,106	16.67%
12.	ATs	195,008	16.63%
13.	QJs	194,900	16.58%
14.	KTs	189,465	16.14%
15.	QTs	185,659	15.84%
16.	JTs	185,301	15.78%
17.	99	274,597	15.29%
18.	AQ	526,561	14.87%
19.	A9s	171,359	14.60%
20.	KQ	511,328	14.43%

HOW TO BET PRE-FLOP

Example - You are dealt two queens. Time comes to match or raise a bet. The chance of winning the hand is 22% (see chart). The pot is \$50. Based on a 22% chance of winning, your pot odds would indicate a safe bet of \$10 at the pre-flop (22% x \$50). Then somebody goes crazy and starts betting. Do you know what kind

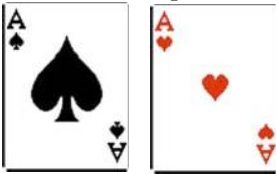
of a player they are? Do they have a pair of 9's? Over 50% of the pots are won by a pair of 9's or better.



Tight players never deviate from these rules unless they are playing with a very weak table.

When you start out, if you follow these guidelines you will lose less while you are learning and you will start to win more consistently.

Another example –



You are dealt a pair of aces in the pocket.

The odds of winning with 2 aces is 31% - the best odds in the game. Pre-flop you have a massive advantage. The only choice at this point what should the maximum bet be.

Estimate the total of the pot at the end of the betting round and bet no more than 31%.

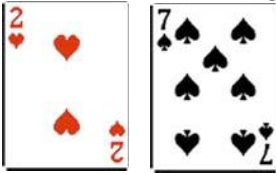
If you estimate the pot to be \$150 the maximum bet you should take is 31% of \$150 = \$31.

Question – If the bet to stay in is much lower, should you raise? For example if the bet to you is \$20 do you raise?

There are two considerations here. With an average hand, you may want to see players leave the game and improve your odds of winning. Raising to the maximum could have that effect.

On the other hand, having the nuts means you want to build the pot at the early stages. Anything can still happen – you don't have a lock on the win remember. You only have a 31% chance of winning.

Our advice – win as much as you can when you have the right cards. In this example, raise the bet to \$30 if you have a lot of weak players and see who stays in. Bet slightly less - \$15 – \$20 if the table is stronger.



Example – You draw a 2 and a 7.

This is the worst pocket hand you can be dealt based on the odds of winning. It should be clear why.

You have no higher cards to build on. You have no flush potential and no chance of developing a straight.

You have a 4% chance of winning the pot (see the charts at the end of this book). Should you stay in?

Only if the cost to stay in the game and see the flop is less than 4% of the total pre-flop pot.

Estimate the pot at \$100 that would mean a maximum bet of \$4. Based on a game where the blind is \$5/\$10 you would need at least a 10% chance of winning. Get out fast.

What if you fold and see a 2 and a 7 in the flop –

two pairs? This can happen and you may be beating yourself up over it. But if you let a bad example of odds modify your play and betting, over the long haul you will be suckered in by long shots and your style of play will suffer. The odds are the odds.

As you can see from these examples, a simple rule is - the larger the pot, the better the cards you would need at the pre-flop to stay in the game.

REASONS NOT TO BLUFF

Bluffing should probably not be an automatic reaction. Many times it takes a feel for a table to make you want to bluff. When doing it keep in mind that everyone else is also looking for an opportunity to bluff. Maybe you spot them bluffing in a common situation or they spot you. It only works when you get away with it, so you must use it sparingly.

Here are some times when you outright should not bluff.

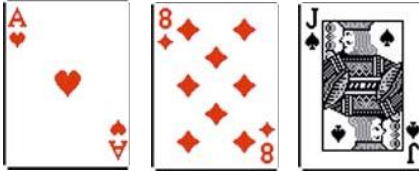
A. When players expect you to.

Don't be the fish. Revealing your playing style can be bluffing in telltale situations against players who know them. That's a common money-maker for the other players. Always consider this rule before attempting a bluff.

B. When you've been caught bluffing recently.

You've been labelled as a poor bluffer already. Ride it out. Let them forget that hand. Start rebuilding a reputation as a straight player so you can eventually try a bluff again later (and hopefully not screw it up again)

C. Against a dangerous flop.



If the flop has an Ace, chances are that someone has a pair of aces. Aces tend to make it beyond pre-flop. Also, players tend to continue to play their Aces. Don't bluff against Aces.



You also wouldn't want to bluff against a flop like **K,Q,9**. Chances are someone has something they'll stick with.

D. Against lots of players.

Chances are that someone has something that they'll stick with. By bluffing in this situation, you just become an agent of that player. From an odds perspective, this is never worth it.

E. Against bad players.

As much as they love to bluff, they love to catch someone in a bluff. They're much more likely to "keep you honest" because they don't realize what a money-loser that is. It's much more profitable to play straight up in these games. Bluffing is only effective from a "fear" perspective in this case.

F. You just lost a big hand.

Not only might you be on a bad run, but other players will expect you to be on a bad run, and will more readily call you.

G. You are in a blind position.

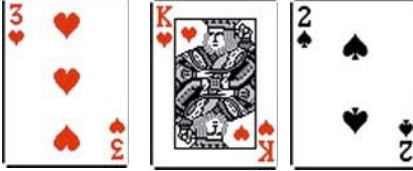
You really have to evaluate the flop, but generally other players will think you have a poor hand and expect you to bluff.

Using Odds During a Bluff

It's always good to look at poker from a mathematical perspective, and that even applies to bluffing.

You can determine finite amounts and percentages that can tell you if it is a financially feasible good time to bluff. This is particularly useful when there are only one or two players and the pot is rather large.

It's good to do these calculations with potential straights or flushes that appeared on the river, that you were going for but you didn't make.



It's nice with a flop that starts with Heart, Heart, Spade, and ends with Spade, Spade. You had two Hearts. Or a flop like Five, Seven, Eight, and ends with Ten, Jack. You had a Six. It's also good because they might have been on the same draw, which leads them to believe (also from an odds perspective) that you were not on that draw.

Let's say that one of the above cases occurred in a \$5/\$10 game and on the river there is \$140 in the pot. Your only opponent checks to you.

If you check, you know you've lost.

So you bluff. The reasoning is that if you invest another \$10, you're getting 14 to 1 odds. As a percent that's around 7%. If they fold more than 7% of the time, you make money in the long poker game of life. If not, it's a losing venture.

You still have to evaluate the player, but from a purely mathematical standpoint, you get the picture. You can

also evaluate it by reasoning that they missed their draw more than 7% of the time and will fold.

If two players were involved in the pot, it cuts the odds in half. With three, it becomes 1/3rd of 7%, etc. You can see why you want to bluff against fewer players.

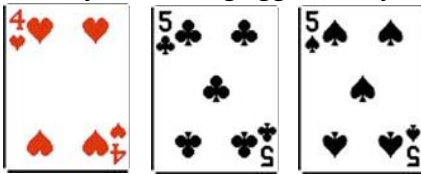
This can be unreliable though, as some players will stay in purely based on pot odds. So when bluffing you cannot ever use just odds. Get a feel for your opponents, and act accordingly.

HOW TO KNOW WHEN THEY'RE BLUFFING?

This isn't about reading tells. This is about the situations where bluffing is plausible, and when other players will do it. You

can generally look at the reasons YOU should bluff and apply them to other players. Of course, you also have to know the player, and evaluate it from there, but here are some ideas.

A. They are betting aggressively despite a poor flop.



If they bet pre-

flop from a poor position, and the flop is something like 4, 5, 5, they are probably just trying to keep momentum going and bluff their way out of this hand. They probably have genuinely zero drawing chances with over-cards or maybe an over-pair, but a re-raise could have them rethink that strategy. It might also give you a betting round or two to try and make YOUR hand.

B. Pot Odds are in their favor.

If everyone folds on the turn with a big pot, like when an obvious draw was missed, expect a bluff. It's almost certain that anyone will bluff against a big pot. With the pot odds the way they are, you probably want to stay in those hands also.

C. It's between you and them.

The most common time to bluff is when you CAN pull it off. It's very easy to trick just one person. Use your skills at evaluating the previous rounds and the board to determine what they might have.

D. The flop doesn't have any draws.

Sometimes someone will bet in this case to eliminate the ability to acquire a draw, sometimes because they have a good hand. You really have to know the player in this case.

E. They bet on the Flop, checked on the turn.

If there was a draw, and it didn't hit, they are probably just buying a free card. Bet back against them and take the initiative.

F. Bet on the flop, bet on the turn, checked on the river.

Same as before, but they bought another turn. Might as well bet back at them.

G. They bet and tell you to "save your money".

If they really wanted you to save your money, they wouldn't have bet. Sometimes players say that just to create the opposite image, so look out. Few are that crafty though, so tell your opponent that he's bluffing and re-raise.

HOW TO ATTACK A WEAK PLAYER



The most successful players are not always the tightest ... and you can't win anything when you fold.

Insider Tip

Pros add to their hourly win rate by finding times to play hands that are small losers in the hands of lesser players. They do this both by playing those hands especially well and by playing them when a bad player is already in. **That's why knowing your table is so important.**

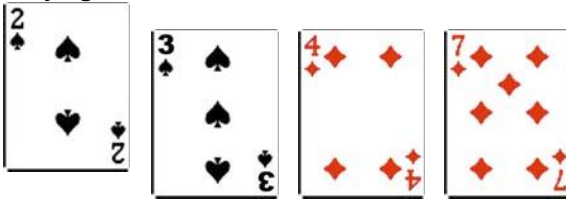
The secret to beating online poker can be where you get a lot of tight passive players sitting on their hands while a successful player (or two or three) eats an awful player (or two) alive.

Most people play backwards. They play loose and see a lot of flops in the early rounds, then absurdly tighten up later. Unless you are one of those rare players who simply can't play without a big stack, don't fritter away your chips in the early rounds on marginal junk. Those chips can be very useful once the important rounds begin.

Sitting around waiting for good cards to play against the tight players is fairly pointless. There is zero point to playing in a game with decent players.

The only reason to be in this game is to play with the fish.

BAD HANDS THAT LOOK GOOD



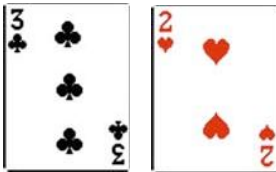
This hand makes me think of the data a major Casino put out about the actual results of all Hold'em hands for the first six million games played on their site.

The hands that lost the most money were not the "worst" hands possible. The biggest money loser (not coincidentally) is 32s. It lost more than 32s or 72s. Then also, A2s lost more than 32s.



Most players overvalue garbage cards. It's the kiss of death.

Insider Tip



Hands that should do better than other hands (32s should do better than 32o) end up doing markedly worse because people play them and think they "have" something.

23 is the single most costly Hold'em holding in the hands of 90% of the players . . . and it holds that distinction by far. 234 is a big improvement, adding the 7 helps, and adding a suit does too, but

anyone who thinks this is a "good" hand is surely going to lose a lot of money with it.

Again, this scenario is about the best possible for the hand (besides a free ride in the blind of course), but the hand is still highly speculative and will be a money loser for non-good players. Contrast this to A347 and even a non-good player will have a profitable hand on the button.

The pursuit of available information, even if it takes a bit of work, is largely what separates winning (and breakeven) players from losing players.

Certainly most players lose, but the combination of the winning players and the smallish losers is in the ballpark of half the players. "Bigtime losers" is a smaller percentage -- especially among players who play more than five sessions in their life. Also, the whole concept of "bigtime losers" is fallacious because

while plenty of players lose 100% of what they deposit that 100% is often \$100.



LIMIT TEXAS HOLD'EM TOURNAMENT GUIDE

M

uch of the popularity of Texas Hold'em recently is based on televised Texas Hold'em Tournaments. If you've followed the *Food Chain Theory* of regular game

play, you will be happy to know that Tournament play progresses in a very familiar fashion – from 'fish' to 'barracuda' to 'shark' as the betting limits increase.

In the beginning, the rule is to play very conservatively. Play very tight Fish level rules. Some players become very reckless in the beginning of tournaments, feeling they need to build their stack. This is completely wrong. A very conservative style will keep you alive longer.

Playing Limit Tournaments

First off, all advice on tournament play here should be taken with a grain of salt. I don't claim to be some tournament guru, because

if I were, I'd probably be somewhere making much more money. However, I do seem to be placing in the money in half of the single-table tournaments I play, so maybe there's something to be said for that.

The next chapter is for you if you've already played a few tournaments

and want to figure out why you are ending up short stacked into the mid levels (3-5) and then end up getting ran over by the loose betters who seem to hold nothing. If you're a maniac and find yourself loosing more often than not, you may find this section useful too.

Remember – players are eliminated when they run out of chips. That's the key survival technique at this stage. Make it to the six- player level by holding on to the chips you have.

At mid-

point in the game, once the table is reduced to six players, revert to a **Barracuda** strategy. Follow the pre-flop strategy carefully.

Once you are down to three players, **Shark** strategy is the rule of the day. Aggressive play is an absolute requirement to win in tournaments.

The most important thing to understand about tourney play online is that it is **fast**. I'm not talking about the speed at which players play, but I'm referring to the blinds structure. You only have 10 hands before the blinds go up a level. The limit levels look like this:

- Level 1: 15 / 30**
- Level 2: 30 / 60**
- Level 3: 50 / 100**

- Level 4: 100 / 200**
- Level 5: 200 / 400**
- Level 6: 300 / 600**
- Level 7: 400 / 800**
- Level 8: 500 / 1000**
- Level 9: 600 / 1200**

What this means is that when the deal has gone around the table four times, you're already betting a significant percentage of your starting bankroll (800 chips to start). Let's say you played ultra-tight to level 4, that is like playing a \$1/2 game with \$7, not really fun! But critical to successful play in tournaments.

Level One to Two

There are a lot of theories floating around regarding a play strategy for the early rounds. Some experts claim the secret is to play loose and hope for a monster pot at some point to shore up your stack. (You won't find the word 'hope' in our Poker dictionary at the end of this book – so I can't really help you there.)

All the latest research we have looked at supports playing super tight, staying under the radar and saving all the money you can for the later levels when it really matters. The idea behind the first strategy of seeing as many flops as possible, is based on the sad truth that tournaments go by very quickly. We've all seen the guy who manages to win chips early on with garbage hands based on the fact that the rest of the players are playing very tightly. He obviously ends up in a much better position into the later levels.

In the long run, this person will lose, but in the short run, it can be frustrating to see such loose play rewarded. Don't let these short-term gains affect your style of play. Stay tight. Keep to your plan.

The Food Chain School of strategy says play tight in the early rounds. With 7 or 8 callers in a pot, many of whom are novice players and will draw on you, it's very difficult to win pots in the early rounds with mediocre hands. The top pocket cards are what you need to win. Facing a straight or flush draw, you can almost be sure someone is going to chase after you. Bets to get people out and careful checks on the river will pay off. Note: Bluffing at this stage in the game is nearly impossible. Don't waste your time.

The most important thing you should be doing in the first two rounds is taking notes on your opponents. Note what hands people pre-flop raise with, what hands they play, do they re-raise flush/straight draws, anything that will help you out later. If you do this often enough, you'll find that you'll naturally form your own player profiles and realize how you should play this individual.

If they're tight, then they can be bluffed. If they're a bluffer or liar, you'll want to call down questionable bets or re-raise them if you have anything. Common sense stuff, but most people just hunker down and play their hand. Don't do this! Pay close attention to everyone's betting habits when you're not in a hand. Be

intense about your poker, don't watch TV on your off hands.

Level Three and Four

The big change once the game hits level 3/4 is that bluffing now becomes an option. As the stakes become higher, you'll find your

opponents less willing to draw on you unless they truly are weak players.

This is a double-edged sword as aggressive players will become much more dangerous into these rounds. This is why player observation is absolutely key. Against a tight table, with a major threat on board (possible straight, flush, trips), betting out under the gun or near last position are very possible options. Betting out early usually signifies some kind of strength when tight players do it, so if you have a tight table image (established in the early rounds), most players will respect that and fold.

Remember looking at the pros and cons of bluffing online? In a tournament game, your big advantage is a captive table. (Sure, players are leaving but at least new players aren't coming in.) There is an opportunity here to 'train' the other players and set them up.



For instance, if the board shows Q/Q/6 and you come out betting, most people will figure you for a four of a kind.

Tight players won't want to draw in this situation and fold. If they call, you should figure them for a four of a kind, pocket pair and of course, the possibility of Queens.

A raise should easily make you realize know they have it (or are out-playing you), which in any case should be an easy fold.

The turn is very difficult to play after someone has called your bluff.

You will have to assess it on a case-by-case situation. Another tough decision. If you feel the other person is drawing or has a weaker kicker on his four, then you will want to bet and hope he folds. If it took him a medium amount of time to call your flop, he's probably got a four of a kind, because he's trying to make a decision on if you have a queen or not.

If it took him a long time, you can expect him to have pocket pair (again, has to think about if you have queens or not) or he has Queens and he wants to suck you in. If you do end up betting the turn and don't get re-raised, you pretty much have to check down the river as you can no longer get him out by then obviously.

While on the subject of trips, I have to say that it's better to bluff on **smaller trip threats**. For example: 2/2/J vs J/J/2. Someone is far more likely to be holding a Jack as opposed to a 2, simply because average-strong players will rarely hold a 2 except for A2s, K2s, Q2s. In the SB or BB, this is a good bluff as others will be more apt to believe you are holding a 2. If you bluffed on the button, most people will put you on the Jack for the very same reasoning above.

So in short, bluffs high trips in late position. Bluff the turn if needed, but almost never the river because by then they'll usually call.

Now that bluffing has somewhat been covered, realize that other players will also try to make moves (be aggressive) in these levels. You'll tend to see mid-pairs betting out, or flush draws bet out even. This makes it a perfect time to trap people yourself if you hold a strong hand. Top pairs will usually be reluctant to slow

play in these levels, as they don't want anyone drawing on them. So if the board doesn't have any kind of possible straight/flush threat that can develop, you may just check/call the flop then check-raise the turn. It'll help your image if you win, as others won't be able to bet all over you later in the game, which is important.

In late position, if the board is non-threatening, you may even check it down to give others a free card and hope someone pairs on the turn. Being check raised on the turn after checks on the flop is a really scary scenario for most players. Ideas of two pair and trips usually develop in this situation, as many people automatically don't even begin to think of someone checking over pair on the flop

When you are short-stacked and make a play, players are more apt to call you down on your slow play. They will view your play as a desperation move and are far less likely to believe you.

The rest of the general strategy for these levels is to just play tight, make a few moves when you can, but otherwise hunker down and take cover.

Level Four and Up

Now comes the fun part!

Now that the limit is 200/400 (blinds 100/200), you need to change gears very fast. Half, if not more of the table should be gone now and more will follow quickly. In a short-handed game, semi-strong hands become strong and strong hands become monsters. A9s for example, a playable hand with 10 people becomes very playable with 4 people. K9o, weak in a 10-person game, is very playable with 4 people. The same rules of poker in regard to position still

apply though! The earlier you play, the stronger your hands need to be. The later you play, the less strong it needs to be, as you don't need to worry about it being raised.

However, you should be the one doing the raising!

At this point in the game, you do NOT want to go to showdown with your opponent and should be happy with winning the pot. Blind stealing becomes critical at this point, because each set of SB and BB is worth so much. Strong hands need to be raised and weak hands need to be folded quickly. You need to be able to switch quickly between aggressive and non-aggressive betting. Be the aggressor. Bet the flop when it comes down if you raised pre-flop.

Remember, it's not about what you have, but what your opponent doesn't have!

You hold AQ and the flop comes KT7. You're in last position, but the BB, who bet pre-flop, comes out and immediately bets out 400 on the flop. Do you call? It's a very tough decision because you have to try to figure out what he has. If he's got Kings, you're all but dead as you have a gutshot or overpair Ace draw. Even if he has nothing, is this maniac going to bet 400 on the turn and then another 400 on the river? Are you willing to pay 1200 to see this down?

You don't want to be in this position! You want to be the one putting OTHERS to this decision!

In the above scenario, you may have held A9o and raised the caller. When the flop came, you bet out your high card ace-scary as it is. Guess what? He ends up folding and you won with the weaker hand. That is why taking the charge is vital at the later

levels, because it turns into a mind game instead of a card game. All he has to do is think you are stronger is that he is too weak and you've already won. It doesn't matter what you hold.

You'll find in the lower buy-in tournaments that the solid, tight players make it to the later levels, but most of them will hesitate and fold their way into oblivion to the crazy better. You need to out-aggressive the maniacs at this point in the tournament. Sure, when you're aggressive and in charge, at some point someone **will** make a move against you, whether it be a raise, check-raise, trap or they're stealing back against you. Don't be overly aggressive and raise like a maniac on everything that comes your way. You cannot simply raise your way out of every situation.

Just remember that while tight players can make moves against you, as long as you can make more moves against them, you will win. And when you are the aggressor, you **WILL** make more moves against tight players. That's because you always have more info than your opponent. When they raise into you, you know they have something. When you bet into them, they aren't sure what you have.

Eventually, even they will trap themselves when you **DO** have something and they bet a weaker kicker or pair into yours and you can come right back at them.

I know someone out there is saying: Yeah, this is great and all, but what about when the tight player is on to you and just re-raises everything you have? I can almost guarantee you that it does not happen at the lower levels. Once it has become a mental game, poor/average players are no longer thinking very logically, but with emotions. They will be scared and in most cases do not have the courage to stand up and challenge you with blanks in their hands. If they do indeed just go on tilt and hit bet/raise for every

hand they have, you just need grit it and play right back at them. Re-raise strong hands pre-flop, call with weak hands. Re-raise pairs aggressively, call with A/K high, fold low high cards.

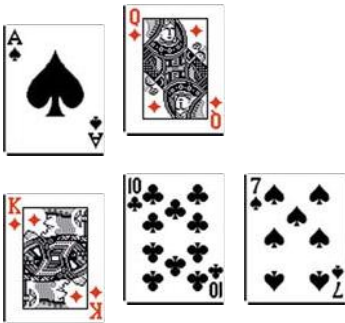


Make more money when you win. Lose less money when you lose.

Insider Tip

You need to be able to take off like a rocket and stop on a dime in terms of your betting. Be the aggressor. Bet the flop when it comes down if you raised pre-flop. Remember, **it's not about what you have, but what your opponent doesn't have!**

Imagine this: *You hold AQ and the flop comes KT7.*



You're in last position, but the BB, who bet pre-flop, comes out and immediately bets out 400 on the flop.

Do you call?

It's a very tough decision because you have to try to figure out what he has. If he's got Kings, you're all but dead as you have a gutshot or overpair Ace draw. Even if he has nothing, is this

maniac going to bet 400 on the turn and then another 400 on the river? Are you willing to pay 1200 to see this down?

You don't want to be in this position! You want to be the one putting OTHERS to this decision! In the above scenario, you may have held A9o and raised the caller. When the flop came, you bet out your high card ace- scary as it is. Guess what? He ends

up folding and you won with the weaker hand. That is why taking the charge is vital at the later levels, because it turns into a mind game instead of a card game. All he has to do is think you are stronger than that he is too weak and you've already won. It doesn't matter what you hold.

You'll find in the lower buy-in tournaments that the solid, tight players make it to the later levels, but most of them will hesitate and fold their way into oblivion to the crazy better. To give you an idea of what your goals should be in the tournament, you should analyze the following:

Jane has been a tight player for the first half an hour. She has taken a few pots and folded most of her hands. Now the blinds are up, the three other players have noticed Jane raise pre-flop nearly half the hands she's in. Knowing she's a tight player, a few hesitantly call her raises. It doesn't slow her down. Most of

the time her opponents fold and Jane ends up taking down most of the pots. Finally, Fred, another tight player, gets his pair of aces, and when Jane pre-flop raises, Fred re-raises her immediately. Jane folds and Fred takes the pot. The next hand, Jane comes out and aggressively pre-flop raises. Fred, not believing any of it, comes back and re-raises. Jane re-raises him right back. Fred hesitates and then folds his hand.

The moral of the story there is that you want to be Jane.

Sure, when you're aggressive and in charge, at some point someone **will** make a move against you, whether it be a raise, check-raise, or they're stealing back against you. Don't be overly aggressive and raise like a maniac on everything that comes

your way. You cannot simply raise your way out of every situation.

Just remember that while tight players can make moves against you, as long as you can make more moves against them, you will win. And when you are the aggressor, you **WILL** make more moves against tight players. That's because you always have more info than your opponent. When they raise into you, you know they have something. When you bet into them, they aren't sure what you have. Eventually, even they will trap themselves when you **DO** have something and they bet a weaker kicker or pair into yours and you can come right back at them.

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but with emotions. They will be scared and in most cases do not have the courage to stand up and duke it with you on garbage. If they do indeed just go on tilt and hit bet/raise for every hand they have, you just need to take a deep breath and play right back at them. Re-raise strong hands pre-flop, call with weak hands. Re-

raise pairs aggressively, call with A/K high, fold low high cards.

Make more money when you win. Lose less money when you lose.

Poker Hand Number of Combinations Probability

<i>Royal Flush</i>	4	<i>.0000015391</i>
<i>Other Straight Flush</i>	36	.0000138517
<i>Four of a kind</i>	624	.0002400960
<i>Full House</i>	3,744	.0014405762
<i>Flush</i>	5,108	.0019654015
<i>Straight</i>	10,200	.0039246468
<i>Three of a kind</i>	54,912	.0211284514
<i>Two Pairs</i>	123,552	.0475390156
<i>One Pair</i>	1,098,240	.4225690276
<i>Nothing</i>	1,302,540	.5011773940
<i>Total</i>	2,598,960	1.0000000000

Poker Hand Number of Combinations Probability

<i>No. Of players</i>	<i>Rake per pot</i>	<i>Max.</i>
2-3	\$0.05 for each \$1.0 in Pot	\$1.00
4-5	\$0.05 for each \$1.0 in Pot	\$2.00
6-9	\$0.05 for each \$1.0 in Pot	\$3.00

HOW TO PICK AN ONLINE CASINO AND A BREIF HISTORY OF ONLINE POKER

Online gambling is increasing at a staggering rate worldwide. Total revenues for online gambling worldwide in 2003 were an estimated \$5 Billion – over 4.3% of all worldwide ecommerce.

The world's first virtual online casino, Internet Casinos, Inc. commenced operation on August 18, 1995 with 18 different casino games and is now publicly traded on NASDAQ. Most of these online gambling companies are located outside of the U.S. to avoid government prosecution. ICI operates out of the Turks and Cayucos Islands and WagerNet is based in Belize. Site users can either send cash through one of the companies offering secure payment systems for the Internet or open an offshore account, a requirement for Americans to use ICI's site. A number of foreign governments have entered the business of online casinos holding their sites out to people worldwide. For instance, the government of Liechtenstein is operating an online international lottery in six different languages, including Chinese. According to *Rolling Good*

Times Online gambling magazine, there are over 1300 gambling-related sites on the net and more are up and running every day.

The economics of the industry are amazing. While it may cost up to \$300 million to build a new bricks and mortar resort casino, most virtual casinos can be developed for between \$1-2 million and will employ only 10 –

20 people as opposed to thousands for a traditional casino. The industry averages about a twenty-five (25%) profit margin, versus the typical U.S. casino, which ranges between eight percent (8%) to sixteen (16%) of each dollar wagered. Interactive Gaming & Communications International handled \$48 million dollars in its first year of operations and has made a staggering profit ever since.

In sum, an estimated twenty million people are currently online with a projected 160 million online by the year 2020. The major online casinos register over 7,000,000 visits per month.

According to surveys conducted by the US government, the majority of gamblers, 83%, play online, however, only a third of that group plays for real money. In other words, the major attraction for online players are casinos that offer free games. In all, 28% of those who gamble do so online for real

money. According to a recent study 73% percent of those who play for real money both online and offline lost money in the past month, while

80% of land-based-only players lost money. Online gamblers, however, lose more money per game. Those who gamble for real money both online and offline lost in the past month more than double what those who gamble exclusively offline lost.

Further, there are more than four-times more high rollers (percentage wise) among the online players than there are among land-based-only players.

If you're wondering how safe your money is at an online casino, there are a number of things to consider. Over the past few years there have been a number of cases of winners at online poker casinos being denied payment. Remember, as online gambling is not allowed in the U.S., you have no legal recourse to recover funds. Our advice is to stay with well-established online casinos with an extensive track record and a reputation for paying out winners. We list ten of the largest, best known in this section. All have excellent track records, use well-established software to deliver the gaming experience and offer a wide range of tables to select from.

You will be tempted sometimes by very generous offers of large player bonuses from online casinos you've never heard of. Think about it – if you started a new casino in a very crowded market, how would you get the attention of potential new players?

Our suggestion is to avoid these casinos. What good would it do to win

\$10,000 and then find you can never claim the money? There are numerous 'systems' being promoted that suggest you can use these bonuses to multiply your winnings – even play for free. That's nonsense. Bonuses, if they are based on the number of hands, will be returned to the house through the rake. Pick your casino based on play quality and the volume of table options. That's the real key to winning.

I often get questions about how fair certain casinos are. One author has written a book claiming that there are dealing errors in one large casino that give players in the know a decided advantage. This writer does not understand the technology behind

the card dealing process at reputable online casinos. Electronic games of all types use random number generator (RNG) software algorithm to determine card outcome, the RNG algorithm is called into play

hundreds of times per second. The RNG has approximately 16,000,000,000,000,000 possible outcomes and, depending of course on the type of game, there will be billions and billions of outcomes that map into any set of cards. This ensures that all game outcomes are completely random. There are no 'hiccups' in the process you can use to beat the virtual dealer. The science of random number generation is well established and impossible to beat.

Here are a number of factors you can use to choose the best online poker room.

Security and Privacy

You want as much reassurance that your credit info is safe, your identity and contact info won't be sold and that game conditions are as safe and as fair as possible (e.g. that the software isn't vulnerable to manipulation; players aren't colluding because a system of checks is in place; etc.). Secure servers are a necessity. Sites should elaborate on the encryption system that they use. All good sites should address the above issues to your satisfaction. Do they discuss issues like their card-shuffling algorithm? Also, what kind of RNG (random number generator) do they use? The best ones increase the level of unpredictability in the cards being played. What other safeguards do they have in place to prevent game-rigging, collusion, hacker intrusions, etc.? You should always read a site's privacy policy, including the small print

Action

How many players log on to the games? Can you get action in the poker game of your choice anytime, day or night? Do they have diverse offerings with enough players to keep tables full? The larger the pool, the more action you'll see in both game play and

cash winnings. We visit the sites at different times to see what the overall action is like as well as the variety of players in all games offered.

Gameplay

If your money and personal info are secure but the ease of game play and visuals suck, then chances are you're not going to come back. We look at the variety of poker games offered and keep a close eye on how well a site creates a good poker environment. How easy is it to play? Converse with other players (or mute them, if you wish)? Are the graphics and sounds fun? Interesting? Can I play even if my system doesn't support the absolutely latest graphics, etc.? Is all the information needed to play easy-to-access and clearly stated? Some sites definitely have more appealing gameplay than others.

Connectivity

How often does the game crash due to server issues at the online poker room's end? How bad are the delays in transfer of info? What about disconnection's? Are they repeated? Anything that disrupts game play on a regular basis is going to be an annoyance and a major problem (at the worst if the stakes are high and you u're on a streak). We realize problems can occur at the player's end (with their computer and their particular ISP) but there's no denying some sites are more reliable and offer less "downtime" and other such irritations than others.

Cashouts

How much money have players won at their poker games? How easy is it to cash out your winnings? Do they credit your credit card? What charges are applied? How long does it take to receive

winnings? You shouldn't have to be a rocket scientist to figure out how to cash out what you've won and whether extra charges, delays, etc. are worth it. Or have the patience of a saint. And we like features such as e-mail confirmations of the withdrawal transactions verifying request, dates, and amounts.

Free Play

Testing out poker game play, environment, percentage, etc. helps to familiarize yourself with what to do in the event of server crashes, how well you've understood the written rules of play at the particular online poker room, and the mixed quality of other players you may encounter.

This is an important feature of any good poker site – playing first for free - although we recognize that people play very differently when they've got real money on the line.

Some sites make it easier than others to identify how to get in on the free play action without submitting heaps of personal information in advance.

Other Features

Some sites will let you choose a character image which becomes identified with you. Others will track your game play statistics for you. Some provide no charges for certain kinds of cash outs. Some track the top players. Some allow you to beta-test new games or poker tournaments in development. Others offer good poker resources in terms of celebrity columns, advice, links, etc. We like both access to quality information that's useful to us in playing poker as well as convenience.

Online casinos offer players bonus incentives to come play at their casinos. These are known as casino bonuses, casino promotion, free chip offers, and although there are several other terms used to describe the free money given to players by the casinos the bottom line is that it's **free money**. Outlined below are a few descriptions of the different types of bonuses offered by online casinos.

No Deposit Casino Bonuses

This type of bonus is offered to players just for trying and downloading and trying the casino's software out. In general this type of casino bonus is in the range of \$10 and \$22.

Online Casino Match Bonuses

With a casino match bonus the casino gives players additional cash to play at the casino upon making a first deposit. If a player deposits \$50 in a 100% match bonus situation the player would get an additional \$50 to play with at the casino.

Alternative Banking Bonuses

Since online gambling transactions made by players may encounter some rejections by credit card companies many casinos have resorted to alternative payment solutions. These include NETeller, FirePay, PrePaidATM and others. Some casinos offer players additional bonuses on top of their existing no deposit bonuses and match bonuses for deposits made through these alternative-banking methods.

PokiBot Poker

There are no money games at this site, only free Texas Hold'em Poker. There's no download, just sign in and play. You'll play

Hold'em poker with artificially intelligent programs - robots that learn. The robots are tough players. Your icon will be a fish. You owe it to yourself to spend some time playing these bots. It's a very interesting game of Texas Hold'em Poker. You can learn a lot from a bot.

The websites listed here invite players to try their poker games absolutely free. If you want to play poker online for money, you should be sure it is legal to do so from your location.

Take advantage of the free poker at these sites and practice, practice, practice!

The Betting Rules for Pot-Limit Texas Hold'em

Minimum eligible raise: The raise amount must be at least as much as the previous bet or raise in the same round. As an example, if the first player to act bets \$100 then the second player must raise a minimum of \$100 (total bet of \$200).

Maximum eligible raise: The size of the pot: The size of the pot is defined as the total of the active Pot (which can be either the main pot or the side pot depending on whether anyone has gone "all-in") plus all bets on the table plus the amount the active player must first call before raising.

As an example, if the active pot is \$200 and the first player to act in the round bets \$150 and the next player calls \$150, the third player has a maximum eligible total bet of \$800. The \$800 total is made up of the \$150 call and \$650 raise.

The \$650 max raise portion is equal to the pot of \$200 + first player's \$150 + second player's \$150 + his own call of \$150.

Pot-Limit and No-Limit Games will be raked according to the chart below:

WHICH CASINO DO YOU TRUST?

You can't go wrong if you select a poker site that has been in business for several years, uses established and accredited gaming software interfaces and has a record of paying big winners in a timely manner. We are not affiliated with any casino or group

of casinos but being objective can be difficult. There are thousands of casinos with new ones opening every day. Great player interfaces are a real attraction for players but in the end, if the casino doesn't offer a multitude of tables and traffic and doesn't pay off bets quickly, what's the point?

Here is a list of casinos that have been in business for several years and are recognized widely as being fair and professional.

Party Poker

Party Poker is now the world's largest online poker room. We have seen over 40,000 players online playing recently and the number is growing every day. The daily average of real money players is around 10,000. Party is presented by the same people that brought you CardPlayer Cruises, including Mike Sexton. They have a big multi-table tournament every year called the Party Poker Million.

The rake at this site is stock standard -

5 per cent capped at \$3 for medium limit games. For lower limit games, a max of \$1 for \$1/\$2 games and 50 cents for \$0.5/\$1 games is taken out of the pot. On high limit games Party Poker offers good value with significantly less than 5 per cent taken out of each pot. One feature missing that we would like to see is the % pre-flop. The site does present the

average pot for the last 20 hands. The Customer Service at this site is first class and very professional. Click here for www.party poker.com

Paradise Poker

Billed accurately as the "World's Premier Online Card room", Paradise offers the standard variety of games, including several tournaments. The site features lots of action every day of the week. Paradise has an excellent game interface with little extras that make things interesting. If you are concerned about security and credibility, Paradise posts card-shuffling reviews by Price-waterhouse Coopers (the world's largest professional services firm) on their site. Click here for www.paradisepoker.com

Ultimate Bet

UltimateBet features up to 7500 players playing during peak times, about 4000 structured games. Percentage pre-flop's can be found above 45% on regular occasions, which leads to good average pots. The games at Ultimate Bet can be quite profitable to the skilled player, particularly in games with \$2/\$5 and \$1/\$3 limits. Ultimate Bet has the backing of a number of big players including: Phil Hellmuth, Annie Duke, and Russ Hamilton.

Planet Poker

Planet Poker is one of the oldest online poker establishments (1998) and is endorsed by Mike Caro, a leading poker authority. Planet Poker is a medium to large poker site in terms of traffic (the site can have up to 500 people online at peak times). There is never trouble getting a game in your limit in Hold'em. The rake is 5% capped at \$3, but the actual rake taken for various limits and pots sizes varies due to rounding but is quite fair. Recent

software upgrades have made Planet Poker software much faster, more reliable and more pleasant to the eye than it use to be.

Jackpot Palace Casino

Jackpot Palace Casino uses software designed by Boss Media, the leading Internet casino software developer and provider. Boss Media started in spring 1997, since then the company has grown considerably, and by the end of 2003, the Group had just over 120 employees. The company's head office is in Växjö, in southern Sweden.

InterCasino Poker

InterCasino has been operating since 1996 and has been voted *Best Online Casino 2001 and 2002 by Top20 Casinos* and *Best Casino 2003* by *Gambling Online Magazine*. InterCasino has some of the highest limits on the net. Players can play real money games for \$100/\$200 in any of the currencies. For the smaller limit players \$1/\$2 games are the smallest that customers can play.

Rake percentages are tough to discern -

about 25 cents on every \$5 until the pot reaches \$60, which is not particularly attractive.

The site generally has from between 100 to 500 players playing and this number is likely to grow as the site becomes better known.

Game play is excellent and the graphics are top-

notch. This site is one of the few sites that has voice options.

Note: probably the fastest games on the net. Click here for www.intercasinopoker.com

OmniCasino

One of the best casinos on the net. Licensed since November, 1997 in Curacao and audited by Pricewaterhouse. Gambling Online

magazine voted OmniCasino as *Top Casino 2003 Honorable Mention* and "*Best Rewards*" and "*Quickest Payouts*" three years in a row from 2001-2--3. They also won Casino Player Magazine's "*Best Payout / E-*

Cash Program" by readers themselves. One of the best features of Omni Casino is their COMP Program -

undeniably the best COMP Program in the business. It was voted "Best Rewards Program" for 2003 by the readers of Gambling Online Magazine.

Poker Room

Poker Room.com is one of the few sites that doesn't require you to download their software. They use JAVA technology so you can get playing right away. The software runs very smoothly although JAVA style software does not have the gloss of its downloadable counterpart. Extra features that Poker Room offer include expected value statistics, whereby you can type in a starting hand and the software calculates the historical expected value of that hand over 6 million real time playing hands. The top 50 all time winners are given at the web site so you can avoid getting in a game with these players. Percentage pre-flop games of above 40% are easy to find. The site can have upwards 100 to 800 real money players online. Tends to have many loose games. Click here for www.pokerroom.com

Empire Poker

Another feature that is missing from this site is the % pre-flop. However, the site does present the average pot for the last 20 hands, which is useful. Typically the games are first class

here, with juicy average pots for all limits. For example it is common to see average pots for \$3/\$6 games over \$40 and for \$5/10 games over \$70. The Customer Service at this site is first class and very

	Hole	Hands Won	#	Hole	Hands Won	#	Hole	Hands Won
1	AA	558,246 31.00%	21	88	254,083 14.16%	41	J8s	146,552 12.47%
2	KK	468,381 26.02%	22	K9s	166,456 14.15%	42	AT	437,198 12.43%
3	QQ	395,997 22.03%	23	T9s	165,249 14.07%	43	Q8s	145,929 12.42%
4	AKs	238,934 20.19%	24	A8s	162,974 13.89%	44	K7s	143,461 12.23%
5	JJ	342,172 19.09%	25	Q9s	162,684 13.82%	45	KT	430,258 12.23%
6	AQs	220,049 18.66%	26	J9s	162,280 13.80%	46	55	217,922 12.15%
7	KQs	213,327 18.08%	27	AJ	474,808 13.45%	47	JT	426,911 12.13%
8	AJs	205,651 17.47%	28	A5s	156,550 13.43%	48	87s	141,565 12.02%
9	KJs	200,865 17.05%	29	77	239,528 13.36%	49	QT	422,273 11.99%
10	TT	301,312 16.83%	30	A7s	156,275 13.35%	50	44	214,977 11.94%
11	AK	592,106 16.67%	31	KJ	465,172 13.18%	51	22	215,514 11.93%
12	ATs	195,008 16.63%	32	A4s	154,015 13.17%	52	33	213,782 11.86%
13	QJs	194,900 16.58%	33	A3s	153,087 13.07%	53	K6s	138,641 11.84%
14	KTs	189,465 16.14%	34	A6s	151,530 12.97%	54	97s	138,078 11.74%
15	QTs	185,659 15.84%	35	QJ	454,744 12.89%	55	K5s	135,432 11.57%
16	JTs	185,301 15.78%	36	66	228,909 12.77%	56	76s	135,345 11.47%
17	99	274,597 15.29%	37	K8s	150,243 12.77%	57	T7s	134,449 11.47%
18	AQ	526,561 14.87%	38	T8s	149,383 12.73%	58	K4s	133,874 11.40%
19	A9s	171,359 14.60%	39	A2s	148,984 12.69%	59	K2s	133,058 11.27%
20	KQ	511,328 14.43%	40	98s	148,797 12.63%	60	K3s	132,326 11.26%

#	Hole	Hands Won		#	Hole	Hands Won		#	Hole	Hands Won	
61	Q7s	131,710	11.20%	81	K9	349,902	9.93%	101	A5	311,959	8.92%
62	86s	131,563	11.16%	82	J5s	115,615	9.86%	102	A7	309,424	8.83%
63	65s	131,199	11.13%	83	Q9	346,418	9.81%	103	73s	103,753	8.75%
64	J7s	130,583	11.12%	84	43s	116,378	9.81%	104	A4	305,645	8.72%
65	54s	128,653	10.90%	85	74s	114,918	9.74%	105	32s	103,648	8.70%
66	Q6s	127,456	10.85%	86	J4s	114,595	9.73%	106	94s	102,514	8.70%
67	75s	126,143	10.69%	87	J3s	112,770	9.57%	107	93s	100,897	8.53%
68	96s	125,439	10.65%	88	95s	112,529	9.56%	108	J8	299,539	8.50%
69	Q5s	123,722	10.55%	89	J2s	112,133	9.50%	109	A3	298,919	8.50%
70	64s	123,192	10.44%	90	63s	112,662	9.49%	110	62s	100,659	8.48%
71	Q4s	122,805	10.43%	91	A8	331,019	9.42%	111	92s	99,994	8.46%
72	Q3s	123,086	10.42%	92	52s	109,702	9.25%	112	K8	297,316	8.45%
73	T9	365,337	10.38%	93	T5s	108,265	9.23%	113	A6	293,748	8.39%
74	T6s	121,148	10.31%	94	84s	107,974	9.14%	114	87	295,178	8.36%
75	Q2s	121,338	10.28%	95	T4s	106,970	9.11%	115	Q8	291,830	8.28%
76	A9	359,004	10.20%	96	T3s	106,630	9.06%	116	83s	97,213	8.23%
77	53s	120,441	10.18%	97	42s	107,055	9.02%	117	A2	287,791	8.18%
78	85s	119,327	10.12%	98	T2s	105,830	8.97%	118	82s	95,981	8.11%
79	J6s	118,362	10.10%	99	98	316,851	8.97%	119	97	280,933	7.96%
80	J9	352,006	9.99%	100.	T8	313,990	8.93%	120	72s	93,665	7.91%

#	Hole	Hands Won		#	Hole	Hands Won		#	Hole	Hands Won	
121	76	278,478	7.88%	141.	Q5	220,228	6.26%	161.	73	175,424	4.94%
122	K7	276,172	7.86%	142.	43	219,439	6.17%	162.	T2	172,419	4.88%
123	65	267,716	7.57%	143.	Q4	216,060	6.13%	163.	62	167,909	4.72%
124	T7	264,946	7.53%	144.	Q3	213,700	6.05%	164.	94	164,287	4.65%
125	K6	262,195	7.46%	145.	74	211,068	5.96%	165.	93	159,717	4.51%
126	86	261,508	7.40%	146.	Q2	210,829	5.95%	166.	92	158,674	4.47%
127	54	260,212	7.36%	147.	J6	208,826	5.94%	167.	83	153,207	4.33%
128	K5	250,325	7.13%	148.	63	203,506	5.73%	168.	82	148,915	4.20%
129	J7	249,952	7.10%	149.	J5	198,067	5.63%	169.	72	143,307	4.04%
130	75	247,475	7.01%	150.	95	197,527	5.60%				
131	Q7	245,212	6.97%	151.	52	197,253	5.56%				
132	K4	244,726	6.95%	152.	J4	193,849	5.50%				
133	K3	242,091	6.87%	153.	J3	190,957	5.41%				
134	96	238,923	6.77%	154.	42	192,268	5.40%				
135	K2	239,200	6.76%	155.	J2	188,249	5.33%				
136	64	239,038	6.75%	156.	84	185,828	5.25%				
137	Q6	231,369	6.58%	157.	T5	183,174	5.22%				
138	53	232,800	6.57%	158.	T4	177,317	5.04%				
139	85	222,535	6.30%	159.	32	179,115	5.02%				
140	T6	220,617	6.28%	160.	T3	174,528	4.95%				

How To Think Like A Winning Poker Player

S

ocrates once said that the unexamined life is not worth living. So let's give some thought and examination to how we as card players process information and respond to decision-making pressures. These are important areas to consider as we work to improve our poker success – and be more successful in life generally.

There is a science around the study of body language and human communication called *Neuro-Lingusitic Programming* (NLP). NLP is both an interesting and valuable area of study to understand. What NLP has shown is that if we can 'mirror' another person who has achieved success in a certain area, we can dramatically speed up our ability to learn the same skills. In a nutshell, if we act exactly like a successful poker player, move, sit, walk, talk, learn to adopt the same thinking styles – we can leap ahead in learning. A pro may have spent 20 years learning the secrets of the game but

by mirroring their behavior and thought, we can learn to 'become' a pro in a much shorter period of time.

Now you're probably pretty skeptical of this whole approach and I don't blame you. You've been taught in school that you need to study for years and slowly work your way towards expertise to gain what we would call 'expert knowledge'. But if you saw the examples of this process at work, as I have over the years, you would have a whole new understanding of how to propel your abilities to an amazing new level in a matter of days.

For the sake of this chapter, I am going to keep this simple. There are dozens of books written on NLP and we are not going to be able to cover all of that ground here. Let's just take a quick look at how great poker players think and try to understand how to be more like them.

Pros step into the poker game with confidence. They have such a wealth of playing experience that they can make tough betting decisions in a very timely manner. That means that they give the odds proper consideration, keep appraised of the other players, and make their play. This is the persona you need to adopt when you play.

To be a shark you need to act the part.

Sit up straight like a professional. Clean the area around your computer desk and stay organized. Prepare. Have any note taking material handy. Plan your game play on a tight schedule. Start at a precise time; review the casinos and tables for a pre-determined period of time before you play. Be observant. Start play when you are certain you have the right table in your sites. Watch the other players carefully and make notes. Never be sloppy about your playing time.

Remember, you are a shark, play at the pace of a shark. You scull through the water, your eyes alert. You make thoughtful and purposeful moves. You appraise your environment. Occasionally, when the time is right and your prey is unprepared, you strike aggressively and purposefully. You raise and re-raise. You push out weaker players. You gain respect from all of those around you. Your opponents know only one thing about you – that you have a significant stack in front of you and you seem to know everyone's cards before they are shown.

You are never rattled even by a string of bad beats. They mean nothing in the big picture to you. You play to win over the long haul. Small bad breaks have no consequence for you. If you become tired or you're just not happy with the table, you leave. And then after exactly one hour, you finish playing regardless of your status and take a break. You then carefully polish your notes regarding how you played and what you have learned – and record your wins and losses. That's one of your secret weapons .

You must keep detailed financial records. A business cannot be successful without detailed financials and neither can you. You must know exactly how much you have won or loss every time you play. Be precise. If you won \$102.50, then make that your answer if anyone asks. Or maybe you lost \$45.75. Get in the habit of being exacting. That's the key to tight play.

I started playing weekly Poker games with a group of friends about 10 years ago. I always enjoyed poker but never had the opportunity to play more than a few times a year. I enjoyed the group we played with, the food was good and it was great entertainment for the price. When I lost I always justified the money as part of the entertainment cost.

I was a typical weekend poker player. I had a few drinks, never really studied the rules in too much detail – and was never

too worried about the losses. What was \$50 or \$100 among friends? Of course I never knew exactly how well I did although I had a sense that I was losing more than most of the other players. I wrote this off to the superior playing ability of a few of the other guys.

Then I read an article one day about gamblers. The study showed that weekend players always remembered and talked about their winnings - but rarely focused or discussed when they lost.

I always had a sense that was true. But why?

It's called selective reasoning. Your brain is focusing on a few positive experiences, which reinforces continued playing. And blanks out on the negatives. Not a very reasonable approach to real learning.

That's why they say that 'people who keep track, stay on the track'.

People who track their expenses in detail typically spend less money and save more.

People who track their winnings and losses on the stock market in detail on a daily basis make more intelligent decisions and end their trading days and months with bigger wins.

People who track calories and fat while on a diet lose more weight. The more detailed the tracking, the greater the success of the diet.

How successful do you want to be at cards? If you want to make money then start tracking your efforts, your wins, your losses.

Pros know exactly how much they won at a given table – and they know exactly how much they lost.

A sign of a pro? How much did you win on Wednesday night, you ask? \$128. Not over a hundred. Or about a hundred. They know to the penny. Same if they lose. They will tell you they were up \$545 but finished up the night down \$62.

You need to sound like a Pro to be a pro.

What does a Pro look like, sound like, talk like, play like?

A Pro plays the game with intention. They focus. They don't play Poker online while watching TV or eating or having a conversation.

A Pro talks about the game with clarity. Knows exactly what you won or lost – or says nothing at all. Lack of clarity is a very bad habit for success in anything. Sloppy language means a sloppy approach. It's not cool to be sloppy about technique or practice in any field of endeavour.

A Pro takes notes during play and spends time following the game to evaluate mistakes, to understand the game better, the review what they have learned. Take clear and concise and useable notes.

A Pro studies the game, knows all the odds and the rules. They practice using Poker software simulations. They play the game with intention. And the review their play following the game by keeping detailed notes on wins, losses, and the things they've learned.

What's the secret to being a great golfer? Study, practice, play, evaluate.

What's the secret to being a great musician? Study, practice, and play. Evaluate.

What's the secret to being a successful day trader? Study, practice, play the market, evaluate.

See a pattern here?

Why does this process work?

I met a Sales person years ago that was one of the best in the business. I spent the day with her to see how she worked.

First, she spent half an hour preparing to meet the customer. Most sales people – no, all the sales people I had ever known – just grabbed their sales kit and charged in. Then she practiced her presentation on one of her staff. Most people thought she was a little unbalanced. Practice your presentation before hand?

Then she went in and met with the customer.

Finally, when we got back in the car, instead of driving off to lunch, she thought about the meeting and made notes regarding what she could have done better.

She was coaching herself. Think about it. She was doing what you would hire a coach to do.

Why do most people need executive coaches, mentors, managers and trainers? Because it increases their productivity. It's a proven technique. We have hundreds of years of data on this subject.

So Coach Yourself.

If you want to do something well, then be your own coach. Do you see the value of this kind of thinking? It puts you in 'the zone'. Poker is a game of mental toughness. There are a hundred factors that can come into play to rattle you, make you mad, take away your confidence, push you to tilt. Pros don't tilt. They are above the concerns of each hand. Focusing on how you want to play the game for a few minutes before each game can help to improve your game significantly. Athletes use this process every day to visualize their event, their performance and the end result. They are not 'wishing' their way to a great performance, they are simply preparing their body and their mind to perform at peak efficiency in exactly the way they have seen the best results.

Before a game close your eyes for a few minutes and relax. Breathe deeply and slowly three times. Visualize your stack and the table. See yourself acting calmly, intentionally. See the cards in front of you. See yourself dealt a nut hand. Stay calm. Breathe deep again. Play at the same pace you would if the cards were garbage. Keep an even pace of play.

A great example of the opposite of positive visualization is the kind of thinking we often see in players at bricks and mortar gambling casinos. I spoke to one manager in a casino who said most players said the same thing about their plans for playing.

"I brought \$100 to lose, and that's when I'll quit." He said he rarely heard, "I've brought \$100 dollars and I'm going to win."

You are casino fodder before you ever get started with that losing approach. If you surrender to the card gods even before you start to play, your playing style will be affected and you will have the outcome you prepared your brain for. To lose.

Prepare yourself to win. Visualize your success at the table. This means more than just winning because sometimes the cards won't co-operate. That's not important though because you are seeing the big picture. You're improving everyday. Your game is getting better by the hour and you are winning more often. You are definitely feeling more confident at the table as well.

And you thought playing online Texas Hold'em poker was fun before? To quote Al Jolsen - You ain't seen nothin' yet.

A.J. Mills 2005

"Best of luck at the virtual poker tables."

TEXAS HOLD'EM ONLINE POKER DICTIONARY

3-Bet - The first re-raise (putting 3 bets in).

Absolute Nuts - The best possible hand, based on the board cards. Sometimes simply called 'the nuts'.

Action - the amount of money wagered by a player during a playing session. In poker, the placing of money into the pot.

Active - one who is still in the pot.

All Blue (or All Pink) - A flush.

All-In - To push all of your remaining chips into the pot.

Anchor -

the player sitting in the last position at a poker table before the dealer. This is the person who makes the final decision, thereby anchoring the game.

Ante -

a term usually used in poker to refer to the first money wagered on a hand, or the minimum amount that each player is required to put into the pot before a new hand can begin.

American Airlines - A pair of Aces.

Angling -

Taking action or talking when it is not your turn in order to mislead your opponent. Some consider this to be cheating, others consider these tactics to be a part of the game.

Animal - Nickname for a player that is loose-aggressive. Animals are involved in too many hands and will almost always bet and raise when given the opportunity, often with garbage hands. Also known as a maniac.

Baby - A low-ranked card (usually 2 through 5).

Back Into - To make a hand that is different than the hand you were originally trying for.

Backdoor – An unfinished hand that requires help from both the turn and river in order to win. Also known as a runner-runner hand.

Backdoor Flushes: Even worse than the gutshot is the backdoor flush. This is when you need two perfect cards of the same suit to complete your hand.

Bad Beat -

To have a hand that is the clear mathematical favourite lose to a heavy underdog (especially if that hand should not have been involved in the pot).

Bankroll - the total amount of money a player has for a gaming session.

BB - An abbreviation for Big Blind.

Belly Buster - A draw to fill an inside straight, aka a "gutshot".

Bet – a wager or gamble

Betting Limits - the minimum and maximum that can be wagered on one bet.

Big Blind - The position two to the left of the button, who is forced to pay a full small bet prior to the hole cards being dealt in Hold'em.

Big Chick - In Texas Hold'em, an Ace and a Queen (suited or unsuited) as your hole cards.

Big Slick - An opener of A-K suited

Blind Bet - a bet that certain poker players are required to make as a result of their betting position.

Bluff - in poker, players bluff when raising a weak hand in the hope of driving out players with a stronger hand.

Bump - to raise

Burn Card - any card placed in the discard rack without being entered into play. After the deck is shuffled and cut, one card is burned.

B&M - Brick and Mortar; a real-life casino (as opposed to an online casino).

Big Slick - In Texas Hold'em, an Ace and a King (suited or unsuited) as your hole cards.

Blank - A card that appears useless. Also known as a rag.

Board - The community cards.

Boat - Full house.

Bonus Whoring -

Belonging to several online poker sites and always taking advantage of each deposit bonus offered. See www.BonusWhores.com for updated info.

Bounty -

A reward given in a tournament to someone who meets certain criteria. Some examples of these criteria from Zoo tournaments are: knocking a certain person out of the tournament, winning with a certain hand, and finishing the tournament in a certain position.

BR - An abbreviation for bankroll.

Broadway - An ace-high straight.

Bubble -

Finishing a tournament in the spot nearest the money. Example: In a 60-person tournament, if the top 8 spots pay, finishing 9th would be finishing on the "bubble".

Bullets - A pair of Aces.

Bump It - To raise.

Bust Out - To lose your buy in.

Button - The disk that represents the dealer in a given hand.

Buy In - The amount of money that is necessary to play a particular game, or the amount of money that you to play a game.

Buy the Button -

Betting or raising in order to make any players between you and the button fold. If successful, you are now last to act on any subsequent rounds of betting.

Buy the Pot - To bluff bet or raise in order to win the pot.

Chips - tokens used at gaming tables in lieu of cash.

Chop - To return the blinds to the players who posted them and move on to the next hand if nobody calls the blind.

Chopping the Blinds -

When 2 players agree to take back their blind bets if there is no action ahead of them. Note that once you agree to chop the blinds with your neighbour, you are expected to always chop the blinds with them.

Chum - bait that is used to attract hungry sharks and send them into a feeding frenzy. Don't be chum.

Cold - a player on a losing streak.

Cold Call - To call more than one bet at a time. Note that this is not the same as calling a bet, then calling a subsequent raise since you are calling 2 single bets.

Complete Hand - a poker hand that is defined by all five cards. That is a straight, flush, straight flush, or a full house.

Cut - the dealer divides the deck of cards into two parts and then inverts them after they have been shuffled.

Color Down - Exchanging chips for those of a lower denomination.

Color Up - Exchanging chips for those of a higher denomination.

Come Hand - A drawing hand. Example: An open-ended straight is a come hand.

Complete the Bet - When the small blind chooses to call by putting in the chips necessary

Connectors - Consecutive suited or unsuited cards that assist in making a straight. .

Counterfeit -

When your hand loses value because a board card duplicates it or a board card gives others a similar hand. Example: You hold A-4 and the board is A-7-4. You have 2-pair, which is now ahead of A-K. The turn is a 7. Your hand has just been counterfeited, since your 2-pair is no longer as valuable as it was prior to the turn.

Cowboys - A pair of Kings.

Cripple (an opponent - To win a critical hand in a tournament, leaving your opponent very short-stacked.

Cripple the Deck - Your hand contains most or all of the beneficial cards that could be used in conjunction with the board.

Crying Call - To call with no cards to come, while expecting to lose.

Cutoff - The person to the right of the button.

Dark -

Taking action, such as checking or betting, without seeing your hole cards. This is also used when the person who is first to act takes action prior to the next board card being revealed.

Dead Money - Money that has been put in the pot by people who are no longer in contention to win the pot.

Dealer - a casino employee who deals the various games.

Drop Box - on a gaming table, the box that serves as a repository for cash, markers, and chips.

Dominated Hand -

A hand that contains 3 or fewer outs against another hand. Example: AK dominates AQ, since AQ needs one of the remaining 3 Queens in the deck in order to beat AK. I believe this term is credited to Abdul Jalib.

Double Up - In no-limit, winning a heads-up pot when you have gone all in (thus, doubling your chip total).

Ducks - A pair of Twos.

Dump - To fold a hand.

Edge - the casino's advantage over the player in any game. Also known as house edge.

EMP - An abbreviation for "Early Middle Position".

EP - An abbreviation for "Early Position".

EP cold - Called UTG's raise.

Face Cards - the king, queen or jack of each suite.

Family Pot - A pot in which many players are involved in the hand.

Fast - Used to describe playing a hand aggressively

Fish - A poor poker player, relative to their competition.

Flash - To show one or more of your cards, usually when it is not required.

Flat Call - To call one or more bets without raising, when you are quite sure that you have the best hand. See also smooth call.

Floor - Shortened form of "Floor Person"; a casino employee who helps to seat players and makes rules decisions when a dispute arises.

Flush - a hand consisting of five cards of one suit.

Fold - when a player declines a bet and drops out of the hand.

Four Of A Kind - four cards of the same rank. Also known as quads.

Full House - a hand consisting of a three of a kind and a pair

Forced Bet - A mandatory bet.

FPS -

"Fancy Play Syndrome". Playing tricky when you probably should have played straight-

forward. [personal note: I think this should also stand for "F#cking Poor Strategy"]

Free Card Play -

Betting or raising in late position on the flop in the hopes that the other players will check to you on the turn, give you the option of seeing the river card for free.

Free Ride - A round in which no one bets.

Free Roll -

Having a lock on half the pot, but also having a chance to win the whole pot. Example: Player X holds Ks-Qc, and player Y holds Kd-

Qd and the flop comes Kc-7d-

4d. Both players are tied for the high hand, but Player Y is free rolling because he could win the entire pot if a diamond comes.

Freeze Out - tournament that only ends when one person has won all of the tournament chips.

GrannyMae - nickname for having Qs5s as your hole cards. This is credited to long-time 2+2 forum poster GrannyMae.

Gutshots: A gutshot is a straight draw where only one card makes your hand.

Gutshot Straight – A straight that requires an inside card to complete. Also known as a Belly Buster.

Hand History - Records of games played at online sites that show all of

Hit - When the flop cards are helpful to your hand.

HL - An abbreviation for "High-limit".

Hold Up - When a hand that is leading manages to win the pot at showdown.

Hole - Your unique cards that are hidden from everyone else. Also known as pocket.

Hooks - A pair of Jacks.

Image - The perception that other people have of your playing style.

Inside Straight -

A straight that requires an inside card to complete, as opposed to an open-ended straight. Also known as a belly buster or gutshot.

Jam - Lots of action, especially raising.

Kicker - A card used as a tie-

breaker when 2 hands are nearly identical. For example, if 2 hands contain a pair of Tens, the hand that has the highest card in addition to the pair of Tens would win. This card is called the kicker. Thus, a pair of Tens with an Ace kicker beats a pair of Tens with a Queen kicker.

Kill (or Kill Game) - A hand that is played for double-stakes based on the previous hand meeting certain criteria.

Kill Button - A button that is placed in front of the player who is responsible for a kill game.

Knuckle - To check (as in knocking on the table).

Kojak - Having a King and a Jack as your hole cards.

LAG - An abbreviation for Loose Aggressive.

Lay Down - To fold a hand.

Limp In - To enter the round by calling a bet, rather than raising.

Long Odds - A low probability of a certain thing happening.

Maverick - starting hand of Q-J.

Maniac - Nickname for a player that is loose-aggressive. Maniacs are involved in too many hands and will almost always bet and raise when given the opportunity, often with garbage hands. Also known as an animal.

Marry - To become too attached to a hand, usually seeing a showdown when it was clear that you should have folded earlier.

ML - An abbreviation for "Middle-limit".

Monster - A superior hand that is unlikely to lose.

NL - An abbreviation for "No limit".

Nut - The best possible type of hand, such as "nut flush" or "nut straight"; this is not necessarily the absolute nuts.

Nuts - The best possible hand, based on the board cards. Sometimes called the absolute nuts.

Offsuit - Cards that are not of the same suit.

Open Raise - Raising as the first one in the pot preflop (rather than simply calling the bet).

Option - The choice given to the player in the big blind, allowing them to call or raise.

Orbit - One complete rotation around the table.

Outkicked - To lose to another hand with a better kicker than yours.

Outrun - To beat a hand that you were losing to on an earlier street.

Outs - Cards remaining in the deck that will help your hand win a pot.

Overcall - Calling a bet after at least one other person has already called.

Overcard - A pocket card that is higher than the highest board card.

Overpair - A pocket pair that is higher than the highest board card.

Paint - Another term for a face card.

Pass - to not bet, to fold.

Pay Off - To call a river bet when the prior action leads you to believe that you are beat, but the pot is big enough to make the call reasonable.

Peel One Off - Deciding to see the turn or river when the odds don't quite justify a call.

PF - An abbreviation for "pre flop".

Pocket - Your unique cards that are hidden from everyone else. Also known as hole.

Pocket Rockets - Another term for 2 aces as your hole cards.

Pop - To bet or raise.

Post -

To pay the blind(s) when not in the big blind position, often done when first sitting at a table or when you sat out and missed your turn to pay the blinds.

Poster - Someone who posted during the current hand.

Pot - the amount of money that accumulates in the middle of the table as each player antes, bets, and raises. The pot goes to the winner of the hand.

Presto - Holding a pair of 5's as your hole cards in Texas Hold'em.

Puck - button.

Push (a hand) - To play a hand aggressively.

Put - To suspect that someone has a certain hand.

Quads - Four of a kind.

Rag - A card that appears useless. Also known as a blank.

Ragged - A board containing cards that don't appear helpful.

Railbird - Game observers. Railbirds should not comment on game play.

Rainbow - A board that contains all different suits, making it impossible for a flush on the next card.

Raise - a player raises by matching the previous bet and then betting more, to increase the stake for remaining players.

Rake -

the money that the casino charges for each hand of poker. It is usually a percentage (5-10%) or flat fee that is taken from the pot after each round of betting.

Rainbow - Three of four cards of different suits

Rank - the worth of a set of cards.

Ring Game - A game that is played for actual stakes, as opposed to a tournament game. Also known as a live game.

Rivered -

Losing a hand on the river, while you were ahead and the clear favorite on the turn. Can also be used to describe a hand being made using the river card.

Rock -

A tight player who is normally only involved in hands in which he/she is the heavy favorite to win. A rock will generally only bet or raise with top-notch hands.

Rock Garden - A game comprised of many rocks.

Rockets - Another term for 2 aces as your hole cards.

ROI - An abbreviation for "Return on Investment".

Rounder - A professional poker player.

Rounders - A movie released in 1998 that portrays Matt Damon and Edward Norton as poker players.

Royal Flush - an ace-high straight flush; the best possible hand.

Runner-Runner - A come hand that requires help from both the turn and river in order to win. Also known as a backdoor hand.

Running Bad - Losing for a period of time.

Sandbag - Another term for slow playing.

SB - An abbreviation for small blind.

Scare Card -

A board card that can easily turn a winning hand into a losing hand. The classic scare card example is when you hold KK and board flops a n Ace.

Scoop - Winning an entire pot, usually (but not necessarily) by having a hand that is both the high and low hand in a split game.

Scouting - Giving someone a small amount of chips when you win a pot. Also called horsing.

Sell a Hand -

Playing a very strong hand weakly in order to disguise your strength and keep other players from folding. Also known as slow playing.

Semi-Bluff -

A term coined by David Sklansky. To bet or raise with more cards to come when you believe your hand is currently beaten, but has a fair chance of improving into the best hand.

Session - A period of time spent playing in a poker game, normally measured in hours.

Set - Three of a kind when you hold a pair in your hand and a third shows on the board.

Short Stack - A relatively small amount of chips (as compared to the other players at the table). Also used to identify the player who

Side Pot - The extra pot that is created when someone goes all-in. The person who went all-in is only eligible for the main pot, not the side pot(s).

Singleton - a card that is the only one of its rank.

Slow Down - To stop playing a hand as aggressively as it was played on earlier streets.

Slow Play -

Playing a very strong hand weakly in order to disguise your strength and keep other players from folding. Also known as sandbagging.

Small Bet -

In a limit game, the smaller of the two bets in the betting structure. Therefore, in a 10/20 game, each \$10 bet is considered a small bet.

Small Blind -

The position one to the left of the button, who is forced to pay a fraction (usually 1/2 or 2/3) of a small bet prior to the hole cards being dealt in Hold'em.

Smooth Call - To call one or more bets without raising, when you are quite sure that you have the best hand. See also flat call.

SNG - An abbreviation for a "Sit and Go" tournament, as opposed to a scheduled tournament.

Spike - For the next board card to be a specific rank that you need to help your hand.

Splash - Tossing your chips into the pot, rather than placing them on the table in front of your cards. Splashing the pot is frowned upon.

Spread - For a casino or poker room to offer a certain poker game.

Stack - The amount of money you currently have at the table.

Steal - to win the pot by bluffing.

Steal the Blinds - Preflop open-betting from the cutoff or button in the hopes that everyone following you will fold.

Steaming - Playing recklessly, usually as a result of a bad beat (real or perceived). Also known as tilt or tilting.

Straight - in poker, a hand consisting of five cards of consecutive ranks.

Straight Flush - a hand consisting of five cards of consecutive ranks of the same suit.

Straddle -

An optional raise by the person to the immediate left of the big blind, declared before the cards are dealt. Also known as a "live straddle", because the same person then has the option to re-raise.

String Bet -

A raise that is not done in one single motion (this is not allowed in any casino, to my knowledge). The purpose of string betting is to call a bet, quickly gauge your opponents' reactions, then decide that you'd like to raise instead.

Stuck - Losing, often in regards to a certain amount of chips.

Suck Out -

To win a hand with a hand that was a heavy underdog. This implies that the winner should not have been in the hand, and was very lucky to win the pot.

Sweat - Observing all or part of a session that one player is involved in, with their consent.

TA - An abbreviation for Tight Aggressive.

Table Coach - The table know-it-all who likes to tell everyone how he or she should be playing their cards.

Tap Out - Losing all of your money.

Tells -

A "tell" in poker is when you pick up on the behaviour of another player that gives you a strong sense of the strength or weakness of their hand.

Three-Bet - The first re-raise (putting 3 bets in).

Three Of A Kind - three cards of the same rank.

Thrips - Three of a kind.

Throwing a Party - When several loose or amateur players are making significant monetary contributions to the pot.

Tilt - Playing recklessly, usually as a result of a bad beat (real or perceived). Also known as steaming.

Trap - When one player is caught between 2 (or more) bettors / raisers, and is unlikely to win the pot.

Two Pair - a hand consisting of two sets of pairs and a singleton.

Under the Gun - The first player to act in a given round of betting.

Underdog - A hand that is unlikely to win the pot.

Underpair - A pocket pair that is lower than the lowest board card.

Value Bet -

A bet in which you wish for your opponent(s) to call. This could be because you have the best hand or because you have enough outs in order to make this bet profitable in the long run.

Walking Sticks - A pair of sevens.

Wheel - A 5-high straight, also known as a bicycle.

Wired Pair - Holding a pair in the hole.

Whale - a high roller.

WPT - An abbreviation for the "World Poker Tour".