

# Systematic Poker

Solid, unemotional poker. Helping you consistently win at online poker.

## No Limit Sit-n-Go Texas Holdem System

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# I. Introduction

Welcome to the Sit-n-Go No Limit System – Core Rules. By the time you are done with this strategy guide, you should have a solid understanding of the system we use to crush online sit-n-go's. Through this system and all follow on systems, remember these key things – that poker is a game of luck, skill and above all DISCIPLINE and knowledge. The project of producing a winning and simple Holde'm system is no easy task. The amount of time and money spent perfecting this system is vast and the knowledge it represents is provided at an extremely low price. Marketed through various means, this manual is a guide for the "aspiring to be profitable" poker player.

Allow me to introduce you to the flow of this manual. Initially some basic poker wisdom is shared, next a general introduction to Sit-n-Gos is revealed, then we go through the key stages of sit-n-go tournaments and finally the advanced concepts of our sit-n-go system. If you are entirely new to Texas Holde'm, get a basic understanding of the game and betting sequences before tackling this system (Intro to Poker). We also recommend if you are new to start with the Limit system we offer. The sit-n-go's are No Limit and while this system provides the information you need to win, it helps and will make it easier to learn if you already are familiar with hands, hand sequences, potential threats, etc.

I would recommend reading the entire manual before starting to play. You must be able to understand the key concepts involved in sit-n-gos. This includes the early, middle and late stages, the in the money stage and all other concepts in the advanced section. Furthermore, initially you should play one table at a time at the play limit tables, until you are comfortable with the strange situations that can occur and how the system instructs you to deal with them. As you get more comfortable, start adding tourneys. If you have never played 3-4 tourneys at once, things happen fast. You must use the check/fold buttons, raise any, etc. As hands are dealt, if you see they don't meet the betting requirements, simply check the fold box and look at the next hand being dealt at the next table. As soon as you are in a hand, you'll have some time to look at the table and see what's going on. As you start getting a solid feel for the system, then we recommend playing one table with real money. As you start getting used to the play on real money as opposed to play money you can start adding tables.

If there are things in the manual that are unclear, simply email me and I will respond as soon as possible. Also, the results of this system are great, however, why limit ourselves to these great gains only. If you have ideas on better ways to handle different situations, email me and we can discuss your ideas. I do not wish to come off as some arrogant "know it all" concerning poker. I have played for quite some time now and am very studied in poker, however part of being a winning poker player is knowing when your wrong or when there is a better way of doing something and then adjusting. To think that this system is at its most maximized potential would be foolish, THERE IS ALWAYS ROOM TO IMPROVE (in all things). So, with your questions, theories or problems, simply email me and I'll get back with you as soon as possible.

Again, good luck in these things, and may you reap success in all you do.

## **Don't Play When...**

Poker is a fun game, it can also be profitable (only about 10% of all players actually are however). There are also some negatives about poker. For one, it can cause harm to a family and be the source of many arguments if not properly kept in check. If poker is a problem for you please do not play. Simply forget that poker exists and move on with playing video games or hanging out with your family. If you need help with this, please email me and I will attempt to help wherever I can. Other don'ts:

- ◻ Don't play with money you can't loose.
- ◻ Don't play because you are losing and want to make it back.
- ◻ Always recognize the weakness of your hand.
- ◻ Always be looking for a reason to fold.
- ◻ Family ALWAYS has priority.

## **What is the Sit-n-Go No Limit System?**

The system involves numerous concepts that must be understood in order for it to be effective. The WASP system is designed to be simple to follow, algorithmic in nature- that is, a robot could play it, and to be profitable. The system can look complex at first examination however after understanding the flow and the why's of the system, playing it should come natural.

The following steps are taken when implementing this system:

1. Sit-n-Go Theory
2. Sit-n-Go Terms
3. Overview of our system
4. Phase I "Core Rules"
5. Phase II "The Bubble"
6. Phase III "In The Money"
7. Closing Comments

## **My Results**

The results seen on [www.systematicpoker.com](http://www.systematicpoker.com) were played at all hours of the day. We started playing the \$10+1 early on and as we refined our system, started moving up in levels. Overall, we noticed that play between \$10 and \$30 sit-n-gos (SNG) doesn't change much. It is true that people play tighter on the bubble and in late stages are generally better, however there really isn't that much difference. We recommend playin the \$5+1 or \$10 + 1 until you have a long term ROI (return on investment) of over 20% and are ITM (in the money) at least 37-40%.



## **II. Sit-n-Go Theory Explained**

### **Common Terms Used**

The following terms are used quite a lot throughout the system documentation.

#### **SNG**

Sit-n-Go. Sit-n-Go's are short tournaments that are played in 30 minutes to 1 hour depending on the initial buy-in and site you're playing on. These tournaments usually have only 9 or 10 players and the 1st, 2nd and 3rd place finishers win part of the prize pool (Finish In The Money -ITM). Typically they are paid 50%, 30% and 20% of the total prize pool respectively. So if you are playing a 9 man \$55 buyin sit-n-go, the total prize pool is  $9 \times \$55 = \$495$ . The first place finisher wins \$247.5, second place \$148.5 and third wins \$99. The cost per tourney is usually about 10% of the buy-in. For the \$55 tourney it might be \$5. So the total cost to you is \$60. This must be deducted from the total winnings. So if you finish 4th place, your net loss is \$60. If you finish 1st, then the net gain is \$187. When people discuss SNG's they typically will call them 50+5's or 10+1's. The first number is the buy-in amount \$10 or \$50 and the second number is the cost to play. So if you play a \$10+1, you will have \$11 deducted from your account.

#### **ROI**

Return on Investment. This is the return you make on average. This term is used by winning players to judge how well they are doing. Common convention says that its possible to make 15-20% ROI at lower stakes SNG's. At the upper stakes (\$50 and above), this number drops down to around 10-15%. While the ROI is lower, the buy-in is bigger so you typically can still make more. Many people grind out big profits part time staying at the low limits. They play up to 10 tournaments at a time (max we recommend is 6-8). Since late

stage play is so horrible, many times a tight tournament with selected aggression can consistently win.

## **ITM**

In the money. In most 10 person sit-n-gos, the top 3 finishers are paid. If you are in 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup>, you have finished ITM.

## **All players being equal....**

Here's the deal. All things being equal, if you play ten 10 person \$50+5 SNGs. And all players are playing the same and are at the same skill level, here's what will happen - in the long term:

1 <sup>st</sup> place finish - 1X	(\$250 X1) - \$50	= \$200
2 <sup>nd</sup> place finish - 1X	(\$150 X1) - \$50	= \$100
3 <sup>rd</sup> place finish - 1X	(\$100 x1) - \$50	= \$50
4 <sup>th</sup> - 10 <sup>th</sup> place - 7X	(\$0 x1) - (\$50 x7)	= - \$350

TOTAL = 0

It's a wash. You are totally break even. Everyone just wasted 7-10 hours of their day. Now, notice we were missing something in our calculation?

## **With Rake/Buy-in Deducted**

Yep.. you got it. The initial cost to play. This is the "rake" the house gets. The following table shows the total with rake included:

SNG Finish	# Tourneys	Win/loss	Rake (buy-in)
1	1	200	-5
2	1	100	-5
3	1	50	-5
4	1	-50	-5
5	1	-50	-5
6	1	-50	-5
7	1	-50	-5
8	1	-50	-5
9	1	-50	-5
10	1	-50	-5
Totals	10	0	-50
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>-50</b>

So – in reality, you lost! That sucks. You lost \$50 bucks and so did everyone else. This tells us something very important about sit-n-gos. In order to be a winning player, you must have an edge over the other players. You can't play the same basic poker that everyone else is playing and expect to make money playing sit-n-gos.

## Case Analysis on Winning Players

Here are some other key details to look at when looking at the facts surrounding SNGs.

Lets say you finish ITM 40% (4 out of 10) but that extra win is only a 3<sup>rd</sup> place finish (no 10<sup>th</sup> place finish). Here's what the numbers look like now:

**Extra 3rd Place Finish**

SNG Finish	# Tourneys	Win/loss	Rake (buy-in)
1	1	200	-5
2	1	100	-5
3	2	100	-10
4	1	-50	-5
5	1	-50	-5
6	1	-50	-5
7	1	-50	-5
8	1	-50	-5
9	1	-50	-5
10	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>-50</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>\$50.00</b>

Now we're talking... That extra third place finish bumped us into the making money zone – granted, its not a lot but its some.

Lets look at the other cases as well, extra second place and extra first place:

**Extra 2nd Place Finish**

SNG Finish	# Tourneys	Win/loss	Rake (buy-in)
1	1	200	-5
2	2	200	-10
3	1	50	-5
4	1	-50	-5
5	1	-50	-5
6	1	-50	-5
7	1	-50	-5
8	1	-50	-5
9	1	-50	-5
10	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>-50</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>\$100.00</b>

### Extra 1st Place Finish

SNG Finish	# Tourneys	Win/loss	Rake (buy-in)
1	2	400	-10
2	1	100	-5
3	1	50	-5
4	1	-50	-5
5	1	-50	-5
6	1	-50	-5
7	1	-50	-5
8	1	-50	-5
9	1	-50	-5
10	0	0	0
Totals	10	250	-50
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>\$200.00</b>

So, as you can see it definitely pays to get that extra first place instead of a 3<sup>rd</sup> or even second place. The difference is about \$50 vs \$200. This is an important principle to remember. A fairly large difference between first and third place. About 3 buy-ins in fact. This will be important when we look at ITM strategies and even bubble play.

## Losing Player – Too Tight

If you can hit a 40% ROI, you should do well. There are some exceptions though. Look at the following table:

### Too Tight - ITM 40% though

SNG Finish	# Tourneys	Win/loss	Rake (buy-in)
1	1	200	-5
2	1	100	-5
3	10	500	-50
4	10	-500	-50
5	3	-150	-15
6	1	-50	-5
7	1	-50	-5
8	1	-50	-5
9	1	-50	-5
10	1	-50	-5
Totals	30	-100	-150
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>-\$250.00</b>

The person from the above table played super tight. Their super tight play helped them get to the bubble quite often. The only bad thing is that once they got on the bubble – they were terrified of getting knocked out of the tourney and played way too tight – got blinded away and missed their coin flips when forced to play a hand. Even if they did make it ITM, by the time they got there – they were so short on chips that they usually went out in 3<sup>rd</sup> place. Key point here is that even though they were ITM 40% of the time, they still are a net loser!

## Losing Player – Too Aggressive

So what if you play super aggressive – like 20% ITM and get half of your wins in 1<sup>st</sup> place? This super aggressive style might look as follows:

**Too Aggressive -Lots of 1st place though!**

SNG Finish	# Tourneys	Win/loss	Rake (buy-in)
1	3	600	-15
2	2	200	-10
3	1	50	-5
4	5	-250	-25
5	3	-150	-15
6	0	0	0
7	1	-50	-5
8	2	-100	-10
9	6	-300	-30
10	7	-350	-35
Totals	30	-350	-150
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>-\$500.00</b>

The person from the above table played super aggressive. They picked the absolute wrong spots to put their money in and played almost every hand like a mad man. As you can see, sometimes it worked and they got lucky with huge stacks making easy first place finishes. Other times though – they busted out early in the tourney. Overall, they lose big. Super aggressive play rarely works since you are given so many coin flips. Against a big audience, you eventually get caught.

## The Perfect Style

ITM 40%+ and ROI 15% or better. This is the ideal and is what this system will focus on teaching you. Using our system you should have an equal distribution of 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place finishes. So using the spreadsheets, it might look as follows:

**Just Right**

SNG Finish	# Tourneys	Win/loss	Rake (buy-in)
1	4	800	-20
2	4	400	-20
3	4	200	-20
4	3	-150	-15
5	4	-200	-20
6	5	-250	-25
7	3	-150	-15
8	1	-50	-5
9	1	-50	-5
10	1	-50	-5
Totals	30	500	-150
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>\$350.00</b>

We had an equal distribution of 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place finishes and played 30 tourneys. This is a very common graph. In reality, you could get your 1<sup>st</sup> place distributions slightly higher and have a slightly higher ITM. Especially at the lower limits!

## Multitabling

This brings me to the final point of this section. You should plan on learning to multitable once you are a winning player and can show a consistent profit.

**Important Principle (IP) IP: THIS IS A DISASTER IF YOU ARE NOT A WINNING PLAYER. ONLY MULTITABLE IF YOU ARE A LONG TERM WINNER.**

The reason why multitabling is important to do is that you can make more money and reduce your variance because of the lack of bad play. This is why all the successful online SNG pros do this. If you play 30 SNG's one at a time, you will take about 20 hours to finish. Now, this is not bad earnings for 20 hours work. A couple bad beats and you will think that the world is out to get you. This can affect your play and can make you lose confidence. Your variance will probably increase because of your irrational and inconsistent play. You'll lose a couple

coin flips and be convinced that you can't win. Next thing you know, you'll be at the black jack table tilting away 2 weeks worth of work.

Multitabling is not too hard – you'll get use to it. **MAKE SURE YOU ARE WINNING FIRST THOUGH!!!**. Initially start with one table and then try two. Before you know it, playing one SNG will be boring and you'll be comfortable with 2. Then you can look at adding another. I would stop at about 3 and make sure you play lots of SNG's (at least 100) and are still winning long term. If you are, start adding more until you hit about 6-8. This is the max we recommend. I've played 15 at a time and it gets very hard. You make crazy mistakes on the bubble which ends up costing you. Even with 10, it's pretty rough. 8 is my typical number. I usually knock out 30 tourneys in 2.5 to 3 hours. This gives a very nice hourly win rate – even for the lower limit SNGs. It also lets you see how variance equals itself out in the long term. It is possible to lose 8 in a row – but it is very unlikely.

## **Hand Odds - General**

A very common misunderstanding that most novices confuse is the power of aggression vs. playing passive. Aggression is good as long as there is fold equity. Fold equity is a way of saying that if you raise with a hand, there is a chance the opponent will fold. So your odds of winning a pot if you raise or make the first bet, is the fold equity + the chance you will actually win if you are called. This is very important for the SNG player. Remember, you need an edge. If everyone plays the same ABC poker, you will lose on average 1 buy-in per tourney played.

The second issue most players have is a misunderstanding of the decent strength of any 2 cards. What do I mean by this? Basically 72o vs AK is not that big of an underdog. This is a very important concept to understand to be a winner at SNG's. I'm not saying its not an underdog – just that its not as big of an underdog as many players think. People think that if someone pushes all-in with 72o, and they get called by someone with AKo, that the AK is a gaurunteed winner. Sure enough the 7/2 comes and the guy with AK is babbling about how online poker is rigged. AK has an edge but not that big of an edge. So – before you go raising all-in with 72o– remember that I'm not recommending this. In fact in our strategy there are occasions



when this is ok – but these will be addressed. Don't take this too the extreme and start playing super aggressive. That is dumb and you will lose in the long run. We only bring this up because many players would NEVER go all-in or call all-in with 72o. You must start to understand odds and how these affect your decisions. For starters, you must understand these initial odds for common drawing hands and all-in type hands.

To be a success at SNG you must understand a couple key things concerning hand odds. Here they are:

## **Drawing Odds**

### Flush draw 35%

If you have a 4 card flush draw after the flop, you have a 35% chance of hitting your flush if you stay in until the river.

### Full house draw 33%

If you have a set or trips (3 of a kind), you have a 33% chance of hitting a full house if you stay in until the river.

### Open ended straight draw 31%

If you have an open ended straight draw, you have a 31% chance of hitting your straight if you stay in until the river.

Don't worry too much about knowing the exact percentages. Just remember with these three drawing hands, you are about 30/70 to hit.

## **All-In Related Odds**

We play No Limit. In many ways, this makes our system easier than a Limit system. The reason why is that most of the time when odds are important, we are only going to be heads up. This simplifies life greatly. Also, when we hit certain points in the tourney, we are pushing All-In or coming over the top (reraising) ALL in or perhaps just calling an all-in.

When we do this, it is important to remember the following:

Dominated - e.g. AK vs AQ (very important - 70/30)

If you have AQ and your opponent has AJ, KQ, QJ, A2 he is dominated. He basically has three outs with two cards coming. This is easy to remember - think 75/25. The guy who has the upper hand (you - with AQ) will win about 70-75% of the time, while the other guy will in 25-30% of the time. Like wise, if you have AQ and your opponent has AK, he will win about 75% of the time. You will have to catch a Q to win without him hitting a K.

Pair vs. Overcards e.g. AK vs 22 (very important - 45/55)

This is another big one. You have AK and he has 22. You will win around 45% of the time and he will win about 55% of the time. This is the coin-flip case that we'll talk a lot about. Overall its about

Overcards vs Undercards e.g. AQ vs 89 (very important - 60/40)

About 60/40. The further apart, the better for the underdog. Suited helps as well. In general however, look at this as about 60/40. The AQ will win 60% and the 89 40%. This is very important! Many are surprised that this is so close.

IP: Many times it comes down to who ever pairs up is going to win. Usually someone will pair up - its even odds on who actually does. This makes AK vs 89 almost a coin flip.

Overpair vs underpair eg. 99 vs 55, AA vs KK (Important 80/20)

80/20. Wow! This is the best situation you can be in with two more cards coming.

Chance of pairing a card after the flop comes (You have AK, what are the odds an A or K will come on the flop? 30/70)

Wow! This means that you will only hit your flop 30% of the time. This is huge. So when someone makes a preflop raise, and then places a continuation bet after the flop - there's a decent chance they are bluffing. Don't do anything about it though. Don't reraise just because there's a chance they missed the flop. Remember that they could have had a pair as well. We bring this up more to caution you

on playing AK,AQ type hands too aggressively before the flop (early stage).

Chance of hitting a set if you have two paired cards. (You have 22, what are the odds the flop will have another 2 on it? 1/7)

So if you limp in with 22, you will hit a set on the flop about 12% of the time. This is important because when someone raises behind us after we've limped in with a small pair, we typically will fold. The reason why is that we really don't have odds to call. We will have to hit a set to have a low risk/ high reward situation. Even if we hit a set, there's no guarantee that the raiser will pay us off. We limp in hoping everyone else limps in. More details later.

## **Putting It Together**

Overall, if you are new to poker, this will be shocking for you. You are used to thinking that if you have AK and he has AJ – you are a guaranteed winner. This is not the case at all – in fact, you will only win on average about 70% of the time. While this is good, don't be surprised when you get rivered by that J even though you have him dominated. Also, we're used to thinking that two overcards and you are practically guaranteed a winner. AK vs 72o. Well, the bad and good news is that you are not a guaranteed winner. In fact, you will probably only win about 65% of the time. He will win about 1 of every 3 times this happens. If its AK vs 89 its even better for the 89 – basically a coin flip for all intensive purposes.

Note: in our odds calculations, you have other outs typically as well. These usually cross themselves out though. The reason why is that your opponent also has these funky outs. Sure you might hit trips on the last two cards coming – he might too though.

## **Getting ITM 40%+**

SNG's must be thought of as follows:

*"You are allowed ONLY 1 coin FLIP per Sit-n-Go you play (assuming equal pot sizes). If you are going to hit that 40% ITM or better, this has to be the case. For example, if you have 1000 chips and your opponent does too, you go all-in he calls. AK vs 22 – coin flip. If you win, you have 2000 (chances of finishing ITM are better but still not*

*gaurunteed). **If you lose YOU ARE OUT!** No more tourney. You will lose 50% of the time. If you do win, and then end up in another coin flip situation against another 2000 chip stack, you again have only a 50% chance of winning. So, in general, you want to avoid these UNLESS... your stack is huge compared to theirs, or there is some extra gain to be had by winning the coin flip (increase in prizes once ITM)."*

So, this means that we need another important principle to follow: **IP: AVOID COIN FLIP CONFRONTATIONS IF YOUR OPPONENT CAN KNOCK YOU OUT OF THE TOURNEY (You will lose these 50% of the time and be knocked out. If you win, you still aren't guaranteed to finish ITM – unless you were on the bubble obviously).**

You want to avoid clear coin flips and look for cases where you are fairly sure you have your opponent dominated or you have overpair to his under pair. Of course, this is the tricky part. Knowing when to do this and when to take your risks. Following our system should help put you in this position (in most cases).

There are some exceptions however. There are times when you know you have a coin flip, but because of stack sizes and blinds sizes, you will call or push all-in – even though there is a 50% chance you will be knocked out. We'll address these as they come up.

The key point in this section however is to understand that if you have 2 coin flips, and losing any one of them means your out of the tourney, it should be obvious that you will only finish ITM about 25% of the time on average. As opposed to the 40% or better we're shooting for. So – the moral of the story is avoid coin flips if your opponent can knock you out.

## **Section Summary:**

- Finishing 1<sup>st</sup> is equivalent to having about 4 3<sup>rd</sup> place finishes.
- Too tight will not help you get the big 1<sup>st</sup> place finishes you need
- Too aggressive will not help you get ITM enough
- Play just right. Fairly tight with selective aggression
- Avoid coin flips if you will be knocked out or incapacitated if you lose (happens half the time)
- Remember basic odds.

- Remember you are normally not that bad off! With any two cards. Exception is having an underpair to an overpair (22 vs 33). In this case, you really are bad off 20% chance of winning.

# III. Basic Sit-n-Go Terms

## Our general SNG theory

The general tournament theory we use at systematic poker is to play tight but add selective aggression when the odds say it's ok. Normally this is more of a function of our stack size compared to the blind size – as opposed to what hands we get. A system might be able to be designed that would all together ignore the hands you get and instead play only position, blind size and stage of the tourney. Of course we don't recommend this but it would be an interesting experiment. You must be familiar with the basics of odds to apply our system successfully. Don't overcomplicate things – you can use numbers like 70/30 or 60/40 – don't sweat a couple % points here and there.

The system can be used at \$5+1 through \$50+5. The lower the limits, the better it will work in general. At least – it will be easier to apply.

## The importance of M

**This is another key section.** M is used to represent your stack size compared to the blinds and antes. In our system, we focus on sit-n-gos (9 or 10 man). Usually these don't have antes so it usually doesn't mater too much whether you add these or not – by the time they do come, the blinds are so high anyway that they make no real difference in our decisions.. We are interested in a very simplified version of M. Much has been written on the subject of M – if your interested, visit 2+2 forums and search for "M sitngo" or something similar. You can also check out Harringtons book on tournaments. He has a very detailed section on M and how he applies it in MTT's.

**Basically, we only use M in the following way:**

**"To keep track of where we are at in a tourney – how much firepower we have – how desperate of a situation we are in"**

To compute M, simply add up the total of the blinds and antes, and divide your current stack size by this number. For example, if blinds are 20/40, and your stack is 2000, your M is  $2000/(20+40) = 33$ .

The following table looks at some examples of M computation for your reference. These were picked because they are all fairly common situations you can find yourself in.

Stack Size	Big Blind	Small Blind	M
2000	20	10	67
2000	100	50	13
2000	200	100	7
2000	400	200	3
1500	20	10	50
1500	100	50	10
1500	200	100	5
1500	400	200	3
1000	20	10	33
1000	100	50	7
1000	200	100	3
1000	400	200	2
500	20	10	17
500	100	50	3
500	200	100	2
500	400	200	1

## Basic SNG Tourney Structure (typical structure)

Every site you play on has different sit-n-go structures. Some start you with 2000 chips, some with 1500 chips, others with 1000 chips. The blind structures change as well. The good news is that they all are very similar. I've picked a very common format to base the system on. It consists of 3 early stages, followed by two middles, two lates and one do or die stage. The stages are color coded to help. The way the stages are determined is as follows. Assuming your stack size doesn't change throughout the tournament, but the blinds continue to go up, your M will gradually drop. Early stage is the stage when your M is  $> 20$ . Middle is between 6-13. Late is between 4-5 and Do or Die (DOD) is between 2-3. You should be able to make a similar table for any site you play on. Also, if blinds/starting chips/ levels change, you don't need an updated manual – you can adjust as needed.

Here is the format we use in this manual:

### Basic Tourney Structure: (starting stack 1500)

Lvl	Stack Size	BB	Small Blind	ante	Players Left	M
1	1500	20	10	0	10	50
2	1500	30	15	0	9	33
3	1500	50	25	0	8	20
4	1500	100	50	0	7	10
5	1500	150	75	0	6	7
6	1500	200	100	0	6	5
7	1500	200	100	25	5	4
8	1500	400	200	25	4	2

Notice the level is the blind level – each level lasts typically 5-10 minutes. I’ve also added the players left column. On average, the number shown provides details on how many people will typically be around. Notice on the DOD stage (red) the players left is 4. This is typically where the bubble begins. We keep the DOD stage in the Stage 1 section because there are many times when there will be 5 or more people around still at the DOD stage. Don’t get hung up on the number of players left – this is more of a reference for showing the average number of players that will still be in.

## Key Terms Used in Discussing Rules of System

Hands:

- o A - Ace
- o K – King
- o Q –Queen
- o J – Jack
- o T- Ten
- o ATs – Ace Ten Suited
- o ATo – Ace Ten offsuited
- o AT – Ace Ten (suited or offsuited)
- o Ax – Ace plus ANY card. Typically used to refer to some other card less than Ten. For example A2 – A9 could be called Ax.



- ◻ TT+ - Ten Ten or better. This is TT, JJ, QQ, KK or AA. Likewise 99+ would be any pocket pair, 99 or better.

#### Other Terms:

- ◻ **IP: blah blah blah** : IP (Important Principle). This is a very important point that we don't want you to overlook. These are highlighted to stand out.
- ◻ Continuation bet: This is a bet made after someone has raised pre-flop. Usually if someone raises before the flop, they will make a continuation bet after the flop – whether they have a hand or not.
- ◻ “all-in pushbot” style of play: This refers to the style of play most popular in SNG's where you go all-in once M's have reached a certain level. The idea is that you remove any chances of making mistakes, and leave yourself at the mercy of your odds alone. This is good for later stages since blinds get so huge and any timid play is gone after aggressively. We hit certain stages in the tourney when your only move is all-in. You also remove the option of your opponent possibly bluffing or drawing out on you with some crazy hand. It still happens, but he is less likely to call if you pushed all-in. You want maximum fold equity most of the time (exception is if you have AA or are slow playing).
- ◻ “play passive” This term is used to refer to your play after the flop. If you are instructed to play passive, you should check and fold if someone makes a bet at the pot (unless the bet is 10-20 chips or some other ridiculously low amount).

### **Other Clarifications**

Sometimes we say stuff like the following:

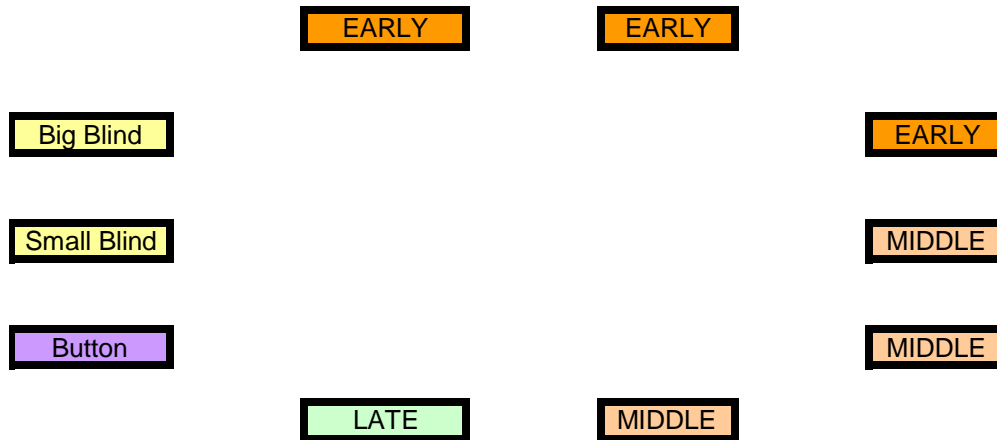
“If you have 22-88 you should limp in. If you don't flop a set, you will fold to any bet after the flop.”

Now, in some cases it might be ok to call a bet. For example, if your M is 20+, and the bet to call is only a big bet (40 chips and you have 2000 for example). In this case, its ok to call the 40 chip bet. You might still get lucky and hit a set. He could be slow playing AA and in this case, you will double up. So in some cases, if the amount to call is ridiculously low, go ahead and call. If the call is about 50-100 chips then you get into the grey zone where folding is probably ok.

## Position

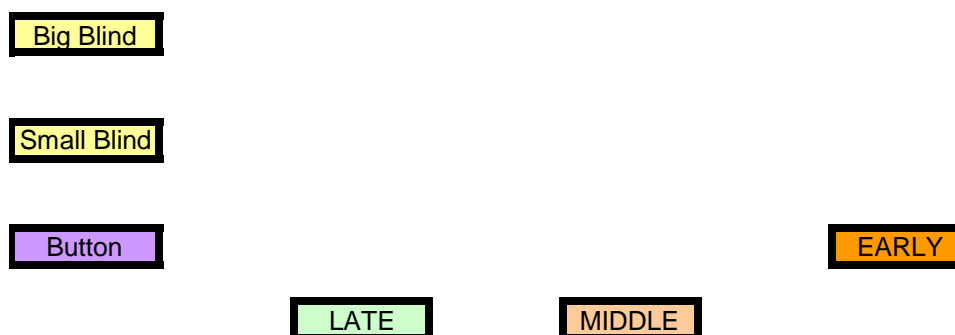
If we say raise from early position, the use the following guide to know if you are in early/mid/late/button/etc:

### Position - 10 Man



Generally speaking, as people are knocked out, you adjust the positions by removing early and then middles.

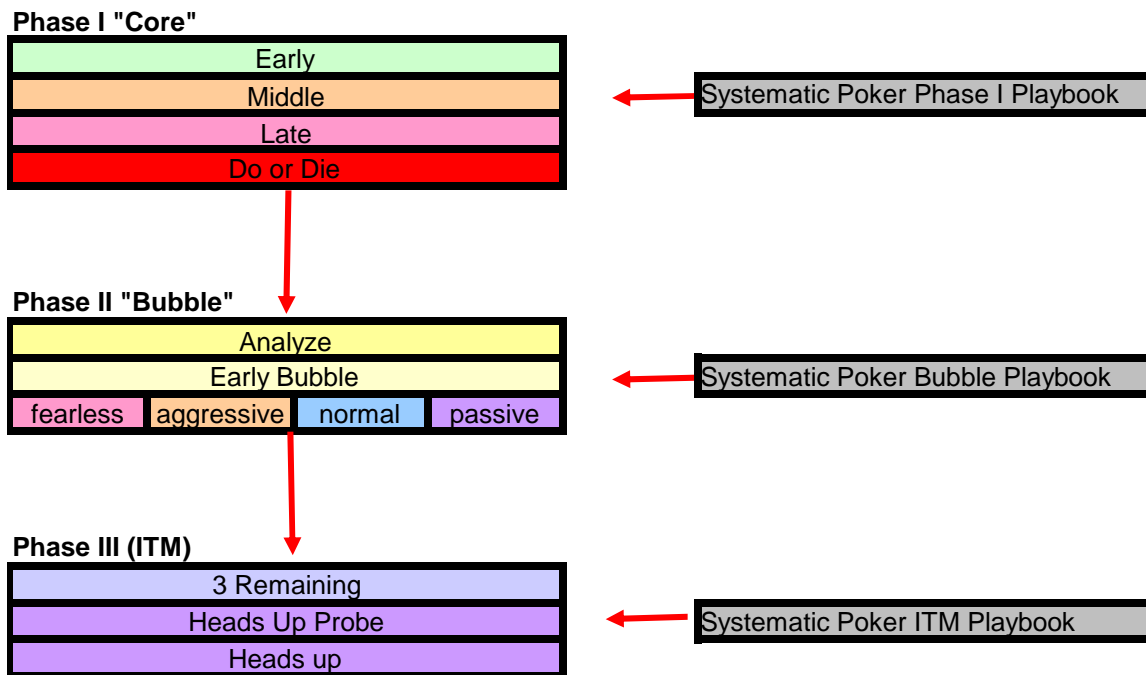
### Position - 6 Man



# IV. Sit-n-Go Phases

In order to present our system in a very simple and easy to follow way, we have come up with the concept of Sit-n-Go Phases. Our style of play changes multiple times throughout a Sit-n-Go and we must have ways of describing these inflection points so that you can properly switch gears.

The following diagram shows the 3 basic Phases of our No Limit Sit-n-Go System:



As the tournament progresses, you jump through different stages within each phase. You are given exact details on how to play for each stage, along with which plays from our playbook you can use and exactly when to use them.

## Phase I "Core"

Core Stages:

Phase I "Core"

Early
Middle
Late
Do or Die

Key features:

- o 51+ pages describe this section of play
- o Broken into 4 stages. Each stage is defined exhaustively – you'll know exactly what stage you are in for every possible case.
- o Your play will vary within each stage depending on your stack size. Exact details are given telling you when to raise, when to call, when to go all-in, for every single possible combination you can be in – within each Stage!
- o You are given easy to follow sections that tell you what hands to play for each stage, for each condition (facing a raise, first to enter, facing reraise), for each position (late, early, middle, button, small blind, big blind).
- o After the flop play is described in a similar way as the preflop section. Details for each stage, position and hand strength are given. You are instructed what to do if you flop garbage, top pair, over pair, set, flush draw, etc.
- o You are told exactly when to use a play from the "Phase I Play Book"
- o Lots of other comments and rules are provided. Color graphs are used to help convey the points we are making as simply as possible.

## Systematic Poker Phase I "Core" Playbook

Key features:

- o 10 + plays are named and defined
- o The reasons why we need each play are given
- o Step by step details are provided on how to use the play
- o Used in the Phase I – they help provide the extra edge we need to consistently win 40% or more of the SNG's we play.
- o Examples of usage are provided along with tons of other details!
- o We teach you the why's along with the hows'
- o Lots of cool plays! Not the basic stuff ... you'll learn new ways to steal blinds, defend your blinds and many other incredible plays. You're told exactly when to use each play.

## Phase II "Bubble"

Bubble Stages:

### Phase II "Bubble"

Analyze			
Early Bubble			
fearless	aggressive	normal	passive

Key features:

- o One of the most difficult phases of any tournament. You are one of four people left, only the top three get paid. You are given the edge you need to consistently finish ITM!
- o Broken into 3 stages. Each stage is defined exhaustively – you'll know exactly what stage you are in for every possible case.
- o Details are provided for each stage – just as in the phase I section.
- o For the final stage, you are instructed how to play based on four possible bubble situations. Each case is defined – you will know at all times what the condition of the bubble is.
- o For any situation you might be in on the bubble, rules are provided taking into account your stack size, your position, are you the short stack and many other rules. Once you know the situation you are in, you are given a playing style. Either fearless, aggressive, normal or passive. Your play will depend on your stack size, your opponents stack size, your position and the current hand dynamics (raised, checked, first in, etc).
- o You are told exactly when to use a play from the "Phase II Bubble Playbook"
- o Bubble play is optimized to give you the best possible odds for finishing In The Money.

## Systematic Poker Phase II "Bubble" Playbook

Key features:

- o New bubble plays are given
- o The reasons why we need each play are provided.
- o Step by step details are provided on how to use the play
- o Used in the Phase II only – they help give the edge you need to finish ITM. We hate getting bubbled out... I'm sure you do to. Our rules give you the best possible odds for not bubbling out.
- o Examples of usage are provided along with tons of other details!
- o We teach you the why's along with the how's

## Phase III "In The Money"

In The Money Stages:

### Phase III (ITM)

3 Remaining
Heads Up Probe
Heads up

Key features:

- Broken into 3 stages. Each stage is defined exhaustively – you'll know exactly what stage you are in for every possible case.
- Just as in the previous sections, all details are provided for all possible cases you could be in. Color charts are used whenever possible to help make things as clear as possible.
- You are told exactly when to use a play from the "Phase III Play Book"
- Lots of other comments and rules are provided. Color graphs are used to help convey the points we are making as simply as possible.
- We focus on maximizing your potential gain. Your strategy will update to reflect the best return on investment possible for the current state you are in!
- Rules for 3 people remaining. Most systems skip this stuff – we don't let up. Exact hands to play are given – when to raise, fold, check, call! You will have the edge to avoid being knocked out in 3<sup>rd</sup> place.
- Heads up probing stage provides extra moves you can use to determine the playing style of your opponent once heads up. Is he too tight, too aggressive, a pro?
- Once you determine his playing style, your play will adjust accordingly. If he's really good, you won't know. That's ok.. rules are provided for this case as well.
- You will be equipped to win heads up hold em. Detailed rules are given. Nothing is left out!! Exact hands, when to bluff, when to trap, etc.

## Systematic Poker Phase III "In The Money" Playbook

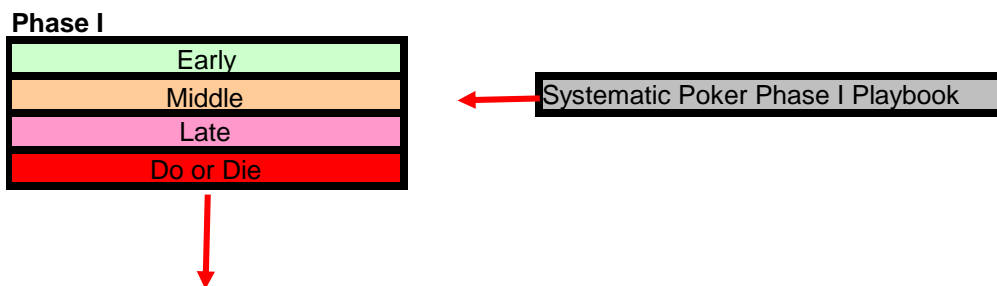
Key features:

- Key plays to use when In-the-Money
- Just as in phase I and phase II playbooks, you are provided details, examples and the whys behind each play
- You will know when to apply each play – when heads up and when 3 remain

Many systems have been developed by different poker professionals and businesses. Our Focus is purely on the 9-10 person SNG. This dedicated focus allows us to go into much more detail than any other book that covers Sit-n-Gos.

## V. PHASE I "Core"

Phase I is the meat of the system. If you can get past Phase I you will be one step closer to finishing ITM. Phase I is also the hardest phase to follow – mainly because of all the different situations you can encounter.



Phase I has been broken down into four stages. These stages are early, middle, late and DoD (Do or Die). Each stage represents the actual levels in a SNG as described in the previous chapter. Early is typically levels 1-3, middle 4-5, Late 6-7, DoD 8 and beyond.

We also have a Systematic Poker Phase I playbook. We will start with the play book details and then describe each stage of phase I. This section/chapter is probably the most complicated to master. There are lots of situations that you can run across. Reread and study this section to understand the whys of each play.

### Systematic Poker Phase I Playbook

The following plays are standard plays that we will use on occasion. We explain them in this section. If they are allowed to be used in any of the tourney stages, we mention them at that point (highlighting the play in Red to help it stand out).



## Total Bluff

The first play is the easiest! You have nothing after the flop and push all-in in an attempt to steal it pot- **IP: NEVER - NEVER - NEVER USE THIS PLAY.** They don't pay off in the long run. The only exception is if we are pot committed. For example, we have 300 chips and the blinds are 200/100. The blind is on us, now we only have 100 chips left, 200 are committed to the pot leaving us only 100 left. We are committed to the pot at this point. After the flop, we are not folding under any circumstance. If we fold, we need 3 double ups in order to get back into a decent position. If we stay in and get lucky on the turn or river, we are back in the tourney. We are committed and must stay in if someone bets.

## Semi-Bluff

This is when we have a drawing hand and make a fairly strong bet – representing a made hand. This is done usually after the flop when we have an open ended straight draw or a four card flush draw or AK and we missed the flop. We are betting about ½ the pot to the full size of the pot in an attempt to take it down immediately. If someone calls, we play the rest of the rounds passively unless we hit our hand. This is very important since it allows us to win even if we don't hit our hand. We almost always will make semi-bluff bets if our M is high and we have a decent drawing hand – especially if we are heads up after the flop.

## Check Raise

We check raise as often as we can in all stages. Check raise is when you have a very good hand (top pair/top kicker) and you check knowing that a preflop raiser will make a continuation bet. You check to them and they bet. You now raise them and put incredible pressure on them. They will fold almost always. Early in tourneys, our check raises might be about 3BB, later on it will be all-in only (as M goes down).

## Slow Play

If you flop a set, trips or two pair **you are allowed to slow play** **If and only If the following condition is met: The flop must be rainbow (all different suits) and the flop can not have any two connected cards or be paired (flop: 722).** If the flop does have two same suit cards (or more) OR two connected cards (KQx) OR is paired, you will not slow

play. Slow playing is rarely done therefore. In each stage exceptions to this are given if needed. If the system says to slow play, then you will check on the flop – trying to look weak. Hopefully, your opponent sees weakness and bets. If he does, you call immediately. After the turn card comes, your opponent has one more card to look forward to. If you are first to act, make a big bet - **MAKE SURE YOU OPEN FIRE(bet) BEFORE HE GETS HIS LAST CARD.** He'll know he was slow played but we want him to think he has a chance of outdrawing you. Don't wait until the river to bet– this is too late. Only slow play immediately after the flop, betting on the turn. If you are not first to act, hopefully he will bet again into you. If there were no real scare cards on the turn, push all-in or bet the pot. You want to trap him BEFORE the river. Let him draw for his 3 outer – he'll pay to see the river card.

### **Blind Defense: 3BB Reraise (Big Blind vs. a calling Small Blind only)**

This play is **ONLY VALID IF YOU ARE IN THE BIG BLIND AND SOMEONE FROM THE SMALL BLIND CALLS YOUR BLIND AND NO ONE ELSE HAS ENTERED THE HAND.** For example, you are in the middle stage of a tourney and in the big blind. Blinds are 100/50. Everyone folds. Small blind calls 50 to see the flop (pot now has 200). You can either check or raise.

**Here's the move: You will RAISE 3x the blind with any 2 cards.** The only exception is if your M is super low (7 or less) – in which case you'll reraise ALL. In each stage of the tourney we mention if you can do this just to be clear. This is a very high probability play. You will take the small blinds bet plus keep your blind about 60-75% of the time. This makes it well worth it. Usually, people calling your blind are wanting to see a cheap flop and are hoping to get lucky. Sometimes they are slow playing a monster. If they call after you raise 3BB– be weary (scared). If they reraise your 3x raise – definitely FOLD unless you have AK or TT+. The other advantage to this move, is that next time this happens, the Small blind will more than likely fold to you– instead of calling your blind. **IP: ONLY USE THIS PLAY IF THE SB IS CALLING YOUR BLIND (not raising). ALSO, IT MUST BE THE SB – not the button. Furthermore, there can't be anyone else in the pot – you must be heads up. Clear?** Early on, this doesn't happen too often however at some tables it starts happening a lot in middle stage (as people are tightening up).

## **Any two cards Call (your stack is huge compared to his 7X)**

Sometimes during a tournament, you will have a huge stack compared to someone else who is about to be wiped out. In these cases, you should call his all-in bet with any two cards if given the chance. Remember – in most cases, you will not be that big of an underdog (70/30 worst case). The potential gain is very high though. The reason why is that you can knock him out of the tourney if you get lucky. If you lose there is no risk (except that he is doubled up now and could pose a threat later). This isn't really that bad given your other options however. Allowing the small stack to take the blind is even worse, because now he's growing his stack for free. You should call if your stack is 7X his (in some cases this number can be 5x, other times 10x). You need to understand the principle behind the play – then it will become clear when to use it.

## **Blind Defense: Reraise ALL-in**

If someone in either the button, one off the button (late position) or the small blind raises your blind about 3BB and you have AK or JJ+, in most cases you want to do a Reraise all-in blind defense. Sometimes this is ok with any pair and even AQ. Details are given in each section where this is mentioned. The idea is that you have some fold equity with the reraise plus a decent chance you have him dominated or over paired even if he calls. This is a very good play long term that will help give you some good double ups. Of course, sometimes you're unlucky and he out draws you or actually has a better hand which wins. You will see that this play is a big winner. If they FOLD you're happy (just won blinds and their raise), if they call you are generally ok with it (since you should have him dominated at least). Get comfortable with this "all-in pushbot" style of play.

## **Standard Reraise: ALL-in**

This play is similar to the blind defense version, however now instead of being in the blind, you can be in any position. The requirement is that someone makes a raise of around 3bb in an attempt take down the blinds. We really only use this in the middle stages and beyond, when blinds have increased and are worth stealing. You reraise ALL-IN with QQ+ or AK in most cases. This is another great play since usually you have him either dominated or over-paired. You also have some fold equity since you're showing great strength. Typically your reraise will cause any border line hands to fold and you will be placing

huge pressure on the raiser who was just trying to keep his stack size up and steal a blind. This is another good play that you need to take whenever the opportunity is available. Key point here is that this is only good if the blinds are fairly big. Early stages, this play isn't as good since you are only winning 100-200 chips but risking your entire stack. The small chance that he has AA/KK will eventually hit and you'll be out. Gaining 100/200 chips doesn't help increase your odds of finishing ITM so the risk reward is not there. Good play for middle stages and beyond though!

### **Blind Steal: 1.5 X BB**

During the later stages of the tourney, the system lets you do raises of 1.5 X big blind to steal the blinds (example: blinds 200/100, raise 300 to steal the blinds). Typically this is done only if you have any pocket pair or AT+. This is allowed in later stages because you need to try and hold onto chips as much as possible and you need to make some moves when given the chance. If the blind reraises you, you will typically only call if you have AK or 99+. Also, you really only want to do this if you are in Late position, Button or small blind.

### **Semi-Bluff: Big Stack Continuation Bet**

This is another great play but only is used if you have a huge stack. **Here's the situation:** you have 4000 chips and your opponent has only 1000. You might limp in to a pot with any pair in some situations (looking for a set). If the set comes, you're good. If it doesn't then you are still in decent position if your stack is huge compared to your opponents. If he checks to you, you should almost always make a bet of about 1/2 the pot to try and steal it. You might have him beat or you might not. He will not risk his tourney on a bottom pair or middle pair so many times you will take it down without a fight. You were probably beat, but because of your stack size, your opponent was scared to call or reraise you. If he does call or reraise, assume you're beat and play passive unless your hand improves. He is showing great strength by calling because he knows if you have a hand, you will push him all-in without thinking twice (since your stack is so big you could afford to do this with any top pair or even drawing hand).

### **Small Blind Play: Call any half bet from small blind if one or more limpers exist.**

If you are in the small blind, another common play we use is to call any half bet to see a cheap flop. You usually do this early and middle stages of tourneys when the 1/2 bets are still relatively cheap (50 chips

or less typically). The idea behind this play is that with any hand – worst case you are usually around 1:5 favored to lose. It's actually better if you are heads up. In our case, there are others in the pot, so you are very unlikely to win with any two random cards. You see the flop if its cheap by calling the limpers and the big blind. You already had ½ a bet in the pot so another ½ bet plus the other peoples chips gives good odds usually. You are looking to trap a slow playing premium hand with a miracle flop (trips, two pair, weird straight, etc). If the flop comes and you don't have (trips, two pair, straight) then you will not play it further – you will play passive. If you have top pair but its junk, play passive. Check and only call very small bets made into you. Only bet aggressive if you have 2 pair or trips.

## Other Key Topics For PHASE I

### Drawing hands – checking pot odds

Some times in the early stages of the tourney you have a choice of either staying in the hand with a drawing hand, or folding. Your actions depend on the pot odds (implied). Here is an easy way to compute your odds – from our limit system:

*"One simply method to calculate pot odds is to determine how many outs you have. If you have 2 overpairs –AK and a gutshot str8 draw and the pot has \$10 and someone bets, another person calls what should you do? Calculate your outs A (3 outs) or K(3 outs) plus the str8 gutshot card (4 outs). The pot has \$10 plus the \$2 just added – or \$12.00. The odds of you hitting one of your hands is  $3+3+4 = 10$  outs. Double this and you have 20. You can estimate that you have a 20% chance of hitting one of your cards with one card coming. Since calling only costs \$1 you have great odds (calling \$1 to win possible \$12 and you have a 20% chance of hitting a winning card). So add your outs and double that number for a %. This is a rough way to calculate your odds but can be helpful. Remember that just because you might hit an out- doesn't mean you will always win. If you hit the A, someone else might have 2 pr and you lose. Use this as an estimate. To account for this- you can use partial outs. Perhaps only count 4 or 5 outs instead of the full 6 for the AK draws. Using this system using pot odds is beneficial in times where the correct call is unclear.*

*The other concept is implied odds. You calculated odds for the current pot. Your actual odds are a little better because once you hit your hand, you should get more bets in. This is implied odds. You can use this if you are sure the opponent will call. I normally won't use implied odds – I'll stick to normal pot odds and if its even I make the call since I know in reality I'm getting a little bit more with the implied odds."*

In the No Limit system, we only use pot odds for our drawing hands – either a flush draw or straight draw. In both cases, odds of hitting are about 30%. So if the pot has 200 and someone bets 100, its ok to call since you only have to put in another 100 for the chance to win 300. Implied odds make it worth it since if you hit on the turn, you can always raise and hope he has an overpair he won't let go of. In the same example, say the pot had 200 and he bet 200 (the pot). Its not quite as good now. You have to put in another 200 to try and win 400 (2:1). I would only call if I had a flush draw and it was the nut or second nut flush draw. I would also like to have another out in the form of the Ace or King. This is a tough call but probably ok as long as your M is high. Lets say the pot has 200 and he bets 400. Now you have horrible odds and it's an easy fold. You would have to bet 400 to try and win 600 (almost 1:1).

The other subtle concept when checking your odds on drawing hands is to make sure you are not going to pot commit yourself and be forced to hang out. You want to always have around 60-75% of your start chips at all times. So in a tourney starting with 2000 chips, you only mess with draws if in doing so, your stack won't shrink too much. This is why its ok to play draws early (when blinds/bets are low) but not good later in the tournament. If you have 1500 chips after the flop, the pot has 500 and someone bets 300, you might have decent odds to call, however in this case I would probably not make it. The reason why is that if you miss the turn you will only have 1200 (getting in the red zone). He will probably push all-in the next hand and you will either have to call or fold. Neither case looks good when you are drawing on the river. So, beware and don't get too attached to drawing hands.

### **Unnecessary Risks (risk/reward)**

You must be careful to not take unnecessary risks if the gain is small. Good example is calling a raise with AQo in an early stage of a SNG. You don't need to risk 10% of your stack to grow it by 5%. It is more important early on to keep your stack big than to risk getting into a

low M situation because you missed the flop or made a continuation bet and someone reraised all-in.

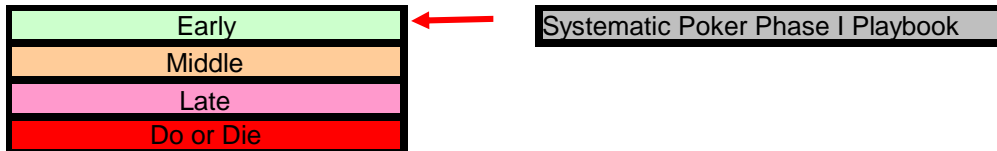
Put another way, if a certain action won't improve your odds of finishing ITM, but there is a chance you will get knocked out or placed in a position that will greatly affect your ability to finish ITM, then you shouldn't take the action. For example: "Early stage of tourney. You have 1200 chips. You have AQs and limp in. Someone reraises 50. You call the raise. Flop comes and it is 27K rainbow (pot has about 130 chips). The raiser checks to you. You see weakness – what is your move? Answer: " you should check back. There is very little to gain, with a fair amount to lose. Here's why. You have about 1100 chips. If you take a shot at the pot (bet the pot) you might win 130 – giving you 1230 chips. If you bet and he calls or reraises, you will now have to fold and will have less than 1000 chips. Not a good situation to be in at all. Especially since the blinds are coming and when they're done with you you'll only have about 900 left. So, there was little to gain, but a lot to lose. In this case, checking would be the correct move. Our system tries to take all these situations into account but you must understand the whys in order to be able to act fast. Just think "what is the gain, and what is the potential lost?". If you do this when there are questions, you should be ok.

## **Keeping Your Stack above 1000 chips**

A very difficult concept contained in this system is that you should under most circumstances, do every thing you can to keep from allowing your stack to go below 1000 chips. The reason why is that once you are below 1000 chips, you become extremely vulnerable. Not only from bigger stacks, but also the blinds. You are getting crushed and the doors are closing in real fast when your stack hits about 1000 and the blinds are getting big. In the middle and late stages of the tourney we address this issue as needed – but basically what the system instructs you to do is to push all-in before the blinds take you below 1000 chips. Of course you can't push in with any hand – you still are selective. The key is that your standards drop significantly once you are about to drop below 1000 chips. It is much better to do a coin flip with 1000 chips than it is to do one with 600 chips. The reason why is that in the first case – if you win – you are immediately back in the tourney. In the later case, you need to win two coin flips to get back to the initial point of being in decent position for the tourney. Again, this issue is discussed as needed in the appropriate sections. This is just a preview.

## Early Stage Rules

Here's the chart showing where we are at:



### Early Basics

Note: the basics section is just a general overview. Depending on the M status we are in, the actual play could change.

This is the start of the tourney. Your stack is still pretty huge compared to the blinds. You will always start the SNG in this spot. Some tourneys you will go through the entire early stage without playing a single hand. This is ok. There is not much to gain but a lot to lose typically. Blinds are small and not worth stealing. Don't need any coin flips yet. Its ok to play drawing hands since we might get lucky and double up.

Tight play:

- ◻ We are not getting involved in many pots.
- ◻ We are preserving our stack for later stages.
- ◻ We take pot shots at lucky flops on occasion and only risk the tournament with premium hands.
- ◻ We avoid coin flips.
- ◻ We look for cheap ways to see flops to get luck.
- ◻ Overall, we don't see too many flops (maybe 15%)
- ◻ Playing drawing hands is ok as long as we have odds
- ◻ Blinds are too small to worry about stealing

**For all M's in early stage the following play is allowed: Any two cards Call (your stack is huge compared to his 5X)**



## Early, M: 20+

Early M: 20+						
Lvl	Stack Size	BB	Small Blind	ante	Players Left	M
1	1500	20	10	0	10	50
2	1500	30	15	0	9	33
3	1500	50	25	0	8	20

### Description:

Excellent position. We have the chips to play drawing hands and to make probe bets if needed. Don't waste your chips though. For our tourney structure, we start with 1500 chips. It is good if you can keep this many chips before leaving for the middle stage. If your M is 20+ in the early stage, you probably have not been unlucky. Maybe you doubled up with AA/KK or hit a set or a nice drawing hand that paid off.

### Raising 3BB or All-in?:

You are definitely raising 3BB. Blinds are too small to justify an all-in.

### Pre-flop Starting Hands:

#### Limping Hands – all positions

**AT, AJ, AQ:** You are limping with these hands from all positions early on. You don't want to get trapped against AK or some other hand. The amount you have to gain is very small compared to the blinds. You need to keep an edge. By limping in, it will help you identify any big hands behind you – and give you the chance to escape. If someone raises behind us, after we've limped in, we only call if we had ATs or better. The Ace + Ten or better must be suited for us to call. Otherwise, we assume they have AK and fold. Again, early on, risking our stack is not worth it. The blinds are small and therefore the risk/reward is not positive for us.

**22-88:** We limp in with these low pairs. We are hoping to flop a set and have an easy double up. After the flop, if there is no set, we are letting go of the hand against any decent bet. Other wise we check it down. If someone raises us after we've acted we fold. Odds of hitting a set are only 12% so we don't want to risk much in the hope that we hit a miracle set.

**Any two face cards suited:** We limp in with JTs, JQs, KTs, JKs, KQs, etc. Any two face cards which are suited. We are doing this with the hope that we will hit a miracle flop (made straight or

*made flush or open ended straight flush draw, two pair, or trips).*  
*If someone reraises after we've limped in, we fold. Don't get involved against any type of aggressive play with these hands early on.*

*Raising Hands (don't want an all-in)*

**AK, 99-QQ:** *We will raise about 3X the big blind with these hands. We don't want to risk our entire stack so will more than likely fold to an all-in reraise by someone acting behind us. Since we are in the early stage, we don't want to risk the tourney yet for a small potential gain. If someone makes a small raise against us after we've raised, we will call and hope for a very positive flop.*

*Raising Hands (we want an all-in)*

**AA and KK:** *We raise about 3BB and are hoping someone reraises. If they do, we push all-in and hope they call.*

*Facing a raise (you haven't acted yet)*

**AK or 99+:** *Call*

*Facing a raise (you have acted already)*

**ATs, AJs, AQs 99+ and AK:** *Call*

**AA or KK:** *Reraise all-in and hope they call.*

*Blind Stealing (button or one off button)*

***Blind stealing is not done in the early stages.***

*There's a couple reasons why:*

- 1. The risk / reward is definitely not worth it. The blinds are small relative to our stack so gaining 60 chips won't make any difference on the final tourney results. At the same time, we could get trapped and lose if we're unlucky. So don't steal blinds in early stage.*
- 2. We don't want the guy in the blind to think that we steal blinds. We will steal blinds later – when its worth it or we*

are forced to because of an X state. We want maximum fold equity when we need it. Right now, we don't need it so don't start labeling yourself as a blind stealer.

Blind Defense (from big blind – small blind is stealing)

**You are allowed to use the Blind Defense: 3BB Reraise.** You want to establish yourself as a blind defender early on if possible.

Other Pre-Flop Plays/Comments

Early on, the reraise all-in moves are really not worth it. You don't have much to gain since the blinds are tiny. The risk is high since on occasion you will run into AA/KK types of hands.

**You are allowed to make the Small Blind Play: Call any half bet from small blind if one or more limpers exist.** You are hoping to trap someone and get a lucky double up.

### **Post-flop Play (flop,turn,river):**

You have nothing

Check it down, fold to any aggression. Happens a lot since we limp in with AT – AQ, and any suited face cards.

You have AK and missed the flop (happens 70% of the time)

If you raised post-flop and had only one caller, make a continuation bet of about 1/2 the pot. Otherwise check it down.

You have a drawing hand (4 card flush draw, open ended straight)

**You are allowed to use the Semi-Bluff play:** This is always done. It is good because you might win the pot immediately and if you don't, you're growing the pot with a decent shot at winning it. For the turn, check and only call a bet if you have good pot odds. Don't call a bet that can knock you out of the tourney unless you're pot committed (half of your original stack is in the pot).

You're facing a bet and have a drawing hand

Check out the **pot odds section** for rules on calling or folding. Generally speaking, if the bet is small you call (1/2 the pot or less), if its big (3/4 the pot or more) you fold.

You have a middle pair

Play this passively early on. You should check and fold to any bets. After the turn card comes, you can make a small bet if you are last to act and everyone else checked again. People like to check raise a lot in the early stages. This is why we only bet if everyone has checked twice and we are last to act.

You have a top pair (kicker average)

Check and if someone in last position bets, make a small reraise. This is a probe bet. You want to see where they are at. Most of the time if the guy in last position bets after everyone checked to him, he will fold if reraised.

**You are allowed to use the Check Raise play:** small check raise is ok as a probe bet. Don't get too carried away here. If you are unsure about this, you can ignore the probe bet.

You have a top pair (top kicker)

**You are allowed to use the Check Raise play:** Only if you didn't raise – someone else did before the flop. You should expect them to bet again to try and win the pot. Check to them and let them bet into you so you can check-raise. If someone reraises you, make another small reraise just to let them know you have a hand. If they reraise you again, you are probably beat by a set or overpair – if they are now all-in its ok to FOLD here.. If they only call, then assume you have them beat and make another bet after the turn card comes.

You had a big pair and an over card hit the flop (JJ,QQ,KK, flop is A2T)

This sucks. If you are heads up make a bet of about 1/2 to pot size. You are hoping he folds obviously. If he calls, you're beat. Play passive and fold to any aggression. Many times you will win though. Lots of people call bets with pocket pairs (looking for sets). Your bet will convince him you have AK or something similar. He will only call if he has AQ/AK/AJ/AT(maybe). In which case you are beat.

You have an overpair (99-KK, flop is 72T)

Make a big bet. You don't want an Ace to come and beat you on the turn). Bet at least the size of the pot to discourage people from staying in.

You have an overpair (AA)

Make about a pot sized bet. In this case, you don't mind if someone stays in – you are a strong favorite and should try to get all of his chips in the pot.

You have two pair or a set

If a flush/straight threat exists, bet about 1/2 the pot. If you are reraised, push all-in. You should be way ahead in this hand. Even if someone has a flush/straight, you have about a 30% chance of hitting a full-house.

**You are allowed to Slow Play:** OK to slow play early on if no threat exists as described in the slow play rules.

You have flush/straight

**You are allowed to Slow Play:** OK to slow play in early stage. If you have a straight and there is a flush draw out there, don't slow play. Make him pay to draw out on you.

You have four of a kind or better

**You are allowed to Slow Play:** No matter what – you will win. Open fire after the turn card comes (hopefully he has something and will call or reraise!)

## Early, M: 10-19

### Early M: 10-19

Lvl	Stack Size	BB	Small Blind	ante	Players Left	M
1	500	20	10	0	10	17
2	500	30	15	0	9	11
3	750	50	25	0	8	10

### Description:

Bad position. You somehow managed to lose over half of your chips. To be in this spot in the early phase means that you probably got real

unlucky. Perhaps you had AK, flop came Axx. You bet someone reraised and you called- both checked it down. They had 2 pair and cut your stack in half. This will happen however it is really a case of bad luck in the early stage. This should not happen too often. If it does, reexamine your starting hand requirements. You are probably seeing the flop way too much!

### **Raising 3BB or All-in?:**

At this stage, you can still get away with raising 3BB. Be prepared to have to call an all-in though. At this point you will need to double up again at some point in the tourney to get back into it. You still have lots of time though. The blinds are still small M:10-20 so you don't need to rush anything. Play solid and tight still.

### **Pre-flop Starting Hands:**

Limping Hands – all positions

**AT, AJ, AQ:** Same as M: 20+

**22-88:** Same as M: 20+

**Any two face cards suited:** Same as M: 20+

Raising Hands (don't want an all-in)

**AK, 99-QQ:** Same as M: 20+

Raising Hands (we want an all-in)

**AA and KK:** Same as M: 20+

Facing a raise (you haven't acted yet)

**AK or 99+:** Reraise all-in. Our stack is fairly small now and we need an easy double up. Since our stack is small, the raiser will probably call your all-in. We have FOLD equity and the chance we'll win if he calls (hopefully he is dominated or we have an overpair on him).

Facing a raise (you have acted already)

**ATs, AJs:** Call.

**99+, AQs, AK:** Reraise all-in. More than likely they are calling.

Blind Stealing (button or one off button)

Don't do it: Same as M: 20+

Blind Defense (from big blind – small blind is stealing)

**You are allowed to use the Blind Defense: 3BB Reraise.**

You want to establish yourself as a blind defender early on if possible. Your stack is lower, but they will still probably fold. If they reraise all-in, call with AT+, 99+.

Other Pre-Flop Plays/Comments

Same as M: 20+

**You are allowed to make the Small Blind Play: Call any half bet from small blind if one or more limpers exist.** You are hoping to trap someone and get a lucky double up.

**Post-flop Play (flop,turn,river):**

Same as M: 20+ Rules

\*No difference

**Early, M: 6-9**

Early M: 6-9

Lvl	Stack Size	BB	Small Blind	ante	Players Left	M
1	275	20	10	0	10	9
2	250	30	15	0	9	6
3	425	50	25	0	8	6

**Description:**

Very Bad position. You somehow managed to lose almost all of your chips. To be in this spot in the early phase means that you got real unlucky. Perhaps you had KK, pushed all-in and a shorter stack than you called with AA. You should not be in this position too often.

**Raising 3BB or All-in?:**

At this stage, there is no more raising 3BB. You are going all-in or not playing.

## **Pre-flop Starting Hands:**

Limping Hands – all positions

**AT, AJ, AQ:** Limp in with these, hoping to get lucky on the flop.

Raising Hands (we want an all-in)

**AA and KK:** Make a 3BB Raise, hoping to look weak so you can double up. You need to triple up in reality so if you can get other callers in the pot, this will help.

Facing a raise (you haven't acted yet)

**AK or any pair:** Reraise all-in.

Facing a raise (you have acted already)

**77+, AQs, AK:** Reraise all-in. More than likely they are calling.

Blind Stealing (button or one off button)

Don't do it: Same as M: 20+

Blind Defense (from big blind – small blind is stealing)

**You are allowed to use the Blind Defense: 3BB Reraise.**

You want to establish yourself as a blind defender early on if possible. Your stack is lower, but they will still probably fold. If they reraise all-in, call with AT+, 99+.

Other Pre-Flop Plays/Comments

Same as M: 20+

**You are allowed to make the Small Blind Play: Call any half bet from small blind if one or more limpers exist.** You are hoping to trap someone and get a lucky double up. Blinds are still cheap so a call is ok to make on the chance you'll get lucky. In this spot, you can play any top pair more aggressively. Again, you are needing to make a move and top pair with a junk kicker is a decent spot to take a stand.

## **Post-flop Play (flop,turn,river):**

You have nothing



*Check it down, fold to any aggression.*

*You have top pair*

*Winning the pot will grow your stack by about 30% at least. You could double up also if called. You should check and expect your opponent to bet with anything. You will then come over the top and reraise all-in.*

*You have middle pair*

*If your opponent checks to you, push all-in. If he bets, only call if you are pot committed (most of the time this will be the case). If your not sure – call. Normally, you will be committed at this point.*

*You have a drawing hand*

**You are allowed to use the Semi-Bluff play.** Make a semi-bluff by pushing all-in.

*You have a set, two pair or better*

**You are allowed to Slow Play:** Check on the river. Check on the turn also. Hopefully he will bet on the river and you can reraise all-in. You are trying to trap him here. While there is a chance he will out draw you, you desperately need to double up. Give him every opportunity to hit a pair so that your set/2 pair will pay off.

## Early, M: 2-5

Early M: 2 - 5

Lvl	Stack Size	BB	Small Blind	ante	Players Left	M
1	150	20	10	0	10	5
2	100	30	15	0	9	2
3	300	50	25	0	8	4

### Description:

You are toast. Very small chance you'll win or place the tourney. You need to triple/quadruple up.

### Raising 3BB or All-in?:

At this stage, there is no more raising 3BB. You are going all-in or not playing.

### Pre-flop Starting Hands:

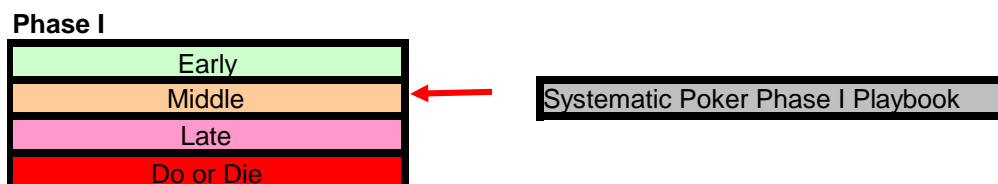
*Your play at this point is less a function of your hands and more a function of the number of people in the pot. You need to pick a spot and go with it. The best is a premium pair – you can limp in and hope lots of people call. Flop comes you can push all-in and hope your hand holds up. The next best is to wait until you have a hand like AK or KQ or any two face cards suited or AXs. If this happens and there are a couple limpers, limp in with them. You are in need of a big win – not just a double up. So... pick a spot and go for it. Preferably a spot with other limpers.*

### Post-flop Play (flop,turn,river):

*You pushed all-in to get here. No play required for post-flop.*

## Middle Stage Rules

Here's the chart showing where we are at:



### Middle Basics

Note: the basics section is just a general overview. Depending on the M status we are in, the actual play could change.

Things start to get tricky here. This is the hardest stage of the tourney to play in many ways. The reason why is that the blinds are

starting to get big but still aren't big like you prefer in order to push all-in on steal/raise attempts. Plus, you are forced to make very tough decisions. We'll examine each M condition in the Middle stage just like we did for the early stage. Depending on your M value, drawing hands are not played as much any more. We start playing a little more aggressively with some key hands. If you've gotten unlucky and missed some draws in early stage or perhaps had to fold a top pair because of aggressive betting, you are probably going to be in the all-in zone before you know it.

Normally, since you will have played tight and conservative in the early stage - you'll still have most of your original stack at this point in the tourney. You might have doubled up as well or perhaps won a decent pot that pushed you into the 2000 range.

Tight play (Slightly tighter than in early stage). We are not getting involved in many pots. Since the blinds are bigger now, it's a little more difficult to limp in. Drawing hands are not liked at all since it will cost us about 10% of our stack or more to see the flop.

Tight play (slightly tighter than in early hand –selection wise):

- We are not getting involved in many pots.
- Since the blinds are bigger now, it's a little more difficult to limp in.
- Drawing hands are not liked at all since it will cost us about 10% of our stack or more to see the flop.
- We still avoid coin flips in most cases.
- Overall, we don't see too many flops (maybe 15%)
- Our image should be tight at the table. This is good since we'll need to have fold equity built up for the next stages (late and DOD).
- Playing drawing hands is ok as long as we have odds
- Blinds are too small to worry about stealing in most cases.  
However, if someone raises, there are some good spots to reraise all-in in an attempt to take down the pot.

**For all M's in middle stage the following play is allowed: Any two cards Call (your stack is huge compared to his 5X)**

## Middle, M: 20+

Middle M: 20+						
Lvl	Stack Size	BB	Small Blind	ante	Players Left	M
4	3000	100	50	0	7	20
5	4500	150	75	0	6	20

### **Description:**

You are in excellent position. We have the chips to play drawing hands and to make probe bets if needed. Don't waste your chips though. To have this many chips in the middle stage of the tourney means you definitely had at least one good double up. Perhaps AA vs QQ or you hit a set and it paid off, you drew to a nut flush and won, etc. Since your stack is huge compared to most other peoples, start looking for the following play:

**Any two cards Call (your stack is huge compared to his 5X):  
Again, you are looking to grow your stack without risking much of it.**

Special Note: In middle stage, if your M is 20+ you have a very nice sized stack. You'll notice we play these stacks fairly aggressively. We like to take advantage of the general passiveness that exists in middle stage SNG's. Many people are just trying to survive. They will not want a confrontation with you. If they do put up a fight, you should fold. You don't want to waste chips. You do however want to grow your stack at the expense of too tight novices. This is only true for large M.

### **Raising 3BB or All-in?:**

You are definitely able to raise 3BB. You want to avoid confrontations with big stacks. A big stack is defined as anyone who has about the same number of chips as you do. The big stack will be doing the same. Because of this, if he shows aggression, you must believe him. Don't second guess the big stack. Let him bully you around during this stage. Its ok - if he continues, he'll eventually lose his stack as it dwindles away. **IP: AVOID CONFRONTATIONS WITH BIG STACKS!**

### **Pre-flop Starting Hands:**

#### *Limping Hands – all positions*

**AT, AJ, AQ:** *You are limping with these hands from all positions early on. You don't want to get trapped against AK or some other hand. If someone raises behind us, after we've limped in, we only call if we had ATs or better. The Ace + Ten or better must be suited for us to call. Otherwise, we assume they have AK and fold. In middle stage with a big stack, someone raising us has definitely got a decent hand. Don't start calling just because you have the chips. The only exception is if you're stack is 5X his and he is all-in. See special play: **Any Two Cards Call***

**22-88:** We limp in with these low pairs. We are hoping to flop a set and have an easy double up. After the flop, if there is no set and we are heads up, we bet anyway if our opponent checks to us. Since our stack is huge, we will usually take it down if he missed the flop. With a big stack, you can make more semi-bluffs and more big-stack bets. **You are allowed to use the Semi-Bluff: Big Stack Continuation Bet play:** Do this if you are against a small stack and he checks to you or shows general weakness.

**Any two face cards suited:** We limp in with JTs, JQs, KTs, JKs, KQs, etc. Any two face cards which are suited. We are doing this with the hope that we will hit a miracle flop (made straight or made flush or open ended straight flush draw, two pair, or trips). If someone reraises after we've limped in, we fold. Don't get involved against any type of aggressive play with these hands while in middle position. Even with a big stack, we don't want to lose it all on some weak draw.

Raising Hands (don't want an all-in)

**AK, 99-QQ:** We will raise about 3X the big blind with these hands. If someone reraises us, our action depends on the raiser's stack size. If it is small (1500 or less) we can call with the JJ, QQ and AK. If it is small (1000 or less) we can call with the 99, TT also. If his stack is big (same as ours or close to it), we only call if we have QQ. AK is not good to call with since we probably have a coin flip. We don't want coin flips vs. big stacks that can knock us out.

Raising Hands (we want an all-in)

**AA and KK:** We raise about 3BB and are hoping someone reraises. If they do, we push all-in and hope they call. We do this no matter what their stack size is. We want an all-in no matter what.

Facing a raise (you haven't acted yet)

**AK or 99+:** **You may use the Standard Reraise: ALL-IN play if his stack size is about 1/2 the size of yours or less.** If his stack is equal to yours (another big stack) only call. See the flop and only bet aggressive if you have top pair top kicker or an

over pair or set. If you flop an overpair, its ok to play aggressive and push all-in with TT+.

Facing a raise (you have acted already)

**JJ+ and AK: You may use the Standard Reraise: ALL-IN play if his stack size is about ½ the size of yours or less.** If his stack is equal to yours (another big stack) only call.

**ATs, AJs, AQs:** Call. If your stack is 5x his, push all-in.

**AA or KK: You may use the Standard Reraise: ALL-IN play under all cases. No matter how big his stack is.**

Blind Stealing (button or one off button)

**You are allowed to use the Blind Steal: 1.5X BB.** This should be easy money since your stack is so huge. If he reraises all-in, call with anything if your stack is 5x his.

Blind Defense (from big blind – small blind is stealing)

**You are allowed to use the Blind Defense: 3BB Reraise.** If your stack is 5X his, reraise ALL-in with any two cards – **only if it's the small blind raising your big blind and no one else is in the pot!** Make sure you follow these rules.

Other Pre-Flop Plays/Comments

Early on, the reraise all-in moves are really not worth it. You don't have much to gain since the blinds are tiny. The risk is high since on occasion you will run into AA/KK types of hands.

**You are allowed to make the Small Blind Play: Call any half bet from small blind if one or more limpors exist.** You are hoping to trap someone and get a lucky double up. After the flop, you can use the **Semi-Bluff: Big Stack Continuation Bet play:** Do this if you are against a small stack and he checks to you or shows general weakness.

**Post-flop Play (flop,turn,river):**

You have nothing

You can use the **Semi-Bluff: Big Stack Continuation Bet play**: Do this if you are against a small stack and he checks to you or shows general weakness. Otherwise if his stack is big or he is betting into you, FOLD.

You have AK and missed the flop (happens 70% of the time)

If you raised post-flop and had only one caller, make a continuation bet of about 1/2 the pot. Otherwise check it down.

You have a drawing hand (4 card flush draw, open ended straight)

**You are allowed to use the Semi-Bluff play**: This is always done. It is good because you might win the pot immediately and if you don't, you're growing the pot with a decent shot at winning it. For the turn, check and only call a bet if you have good pot odds. Don't call a bet that can knock you out of the tourney unless you're pot committed (half of your original stack is in the pot).

You're facing a bet and have a drawing hand

Check out the **pot odds section** for rules on calling or folding. Generally speaking, if the bet is small you call (1/2 the pot or less), if its big (3/4 the pot or more) you fold.

You have a middle pair

Play this aggressively if you have a big stack vs a small stack. Bet into them but fold if they reraise all-in or show some aggression (of course if the call is only a couple hundred chips you should call their reraise).

You have a top pair (kicker average)

Check and if someone in last position bets, make a small reraise. This is a probe bet. You want to see where they are at. Most of the time if the guy in last position bets after everyone checked to him, he will fold if reraised.

**You are allowed to use the Check Raise play**: small check raise is ok as a probe bet. Don't get too carried away here. If you are unsure about this, you can ignore the probe bet.

You have a top pair (top kicker)

**You are allowed to use the Check Raise play**: Only if you didn't raise – someone else did before the flop. You should expect them to bet again to try and win the pot. Check to them

*and let them bet into you so you can check-raise. If someone reraises you, make another small reraise just to let them know you have a hand. If they reraise you again, you are probably beat by a set or overpair – if they are now all-in its ok to FOLD here.. If they only call, then assume you have them beat and make another bet after the turn card comes.*

*You had a big pair and an over card hit the flop (JJ,QQ,KK, flop is A2T)*

*This sucks. If you are heads up make a bet of about ½ to pot size. You are hoping he folds obviously. If he calls, you're beat. Play passive and fold to any aggression. Many times you will win though. Lots of people call bets with pocket pairs (looking for sets). Your bet will convince him you have AK or something similar. He will only call if he has AQ/AK/AJ/AT(maybe). In which case you are beat.*

*You have an overpair (99-KK, flop is 72T)*

*Make a big bet. You don't want an Ace to come and beat you on the turn). Bet at least the size of the pot to discourage people from staying in.*

*You have an overpair (AA)*

*Make about a pot sized bet. In this case, you don't mind if someone stays in – you are a strong favorite and should try to get all of his chips in the pot.*

*You have two pair or a set*

*If a flush/straight threat exists, bet about ½ the pot. If you are reraised, push all-in. You should be way ahead in this hand. Even if someone has a flush/straight, you have about a 30% chance of hitting a full-house.*

***You are allowed to Slow Play:*** OK to slow play early on if no threat exists as described in the slow play rules.

*You have flush/straight*

***You are allowed to Slow Play:*** OK to slow play in middle stage. If you have a straight and there is a flush draw out there, don't slow play. Make him pay to draw out on you.

*You have four of a kind or better*



**You are allowed to Slow Play:** No matter what – you will win. Open fire after the turn card comes (hopefully he has something and will call or reraise!)

## Middle, M: 10-19

**Middle M: 10-19**

Lvl	Stack Size	BB	Small Blind	ante	Players Left	M
4	2000	100	50	0	7	13
5	2200	150	75	0	6	10

### Description:

Good position to be in. You have managed to grow your stack beyond the initial 1500 you started with if you hit the middle stage and have M > 10. Good job! In this position, you play very similar to the M:20+ middle section. The big difference is that now, you can't be bullying people around. You are vulnerable to losing and people won't be that afraid of you. They know that you are vulnerable and might be hesitant to push all-in with a mediocre hand. Because of this, we tighten up and don't use the semibluff plays. Still look for easy opportunities to take out a small stack though.

**Any two cards Call (your stack is huge compared to his 10X):**  
**Again, you are looking to grow your stack without risking much of it.**

### Raising 3BB or All-in?:

At this stage, you can still get away with raising 3BB. You don't need to rush anything but will need to maintain your stack if possible. Don't rush it however. You are in good position. You really shouldn't worry until your stack gets to be around 1200 with the blinds at 200/100. At this point you need to make a move. With big M's like you have, you are ok. Play solid and tight.

### Pre-flop Starting Hands:

Limping Hands – all positions

**AT, AJ, AQ:** Same as M: 20+ No more Semi-Bluff: Big Stack Continuation Bet play: OUR Stack is not big enough to do this anymore.

**22-88:** Same as M: 20+ No more Semi-Bluff: Big Stack  
Continuation Bet play: OUR Stack is not big enough to do this  
anymore.

**Any two face cards suited:** Same as M: 20+ No more Semi-  
Bluff: Big Stack Continuation Bet play: OUR Stack is not big  
enough to do this anymore.

Raising Hands (don't want an all-in)

**AK, 99-QQ:** Same as M: 20+ , No more Semi-Bluff: Big Stack  
Continuation Bet play: OUR Stack is not big enough to do this  
anymore.

Raising Hands (we want an all-in)

**AA and KK:** Same as M: 20+

Facing a raise (you haven't acted yet)

**AK or JJ+:** **You may use the Standard Reraise: ALL-IN  
play.** This is hard to do if you are not use to pushing all-in like  
this. You have a lot to gain however. This is a key edge in this  
system. You have fold equity, plus a decent chance at winning  
should you get called.. **Since you still need to grow your stack,  
its ok to make this move even if it means you might lose the  
tourney and get knocked out.** You need to grow your stack still  
and this is a good chance to do it. Most of the time, the raiser  
will fold. If he calls, hopefully he's dominated. Should this  
happen, you will have a very big stack which will help you coast  
into the money.

Facing a raise (you have acted already)

**JJ+ and AK:** **You may use the Standard Reraise: ALL-IN  
play same as above.**

**ATs, AJs, AQs:** Call. If your stack is 10x his, push all-in.

**AA or KK:** **You may use the Standard Reraise: ALL-IN play.**

Blind Stealing (button or one off button)

**You are allowed to use the Blind Steal: 1.5X BB.** If he reraises you, fold unless you actually have a hand. Try to steal a blind though if possible.

Blind Defense (from big blind – small blind is stealing)

**You are allowed to use the Blind Defense: 3BB Reraise**  
This is one of the best plays you can make for maintaining your stack. This is a high probability play.

Other Pre-Flop Plays/Comments

**You are allowed to make the Small Blind Play: Call any half bet from small blind if one or more limpers exist.** You are hoping to trap someone and get a lucky double up. Again, check down/fold if your hand doesn't improve after the flop.

**Post-flop Play (flop,turn,river):**

Same as M: 20+ Rules

*\*Only difference is that we don't use our big stack bluff. This has been mentioned multiple times so it should be clear. Play basic poker when your stack is not enormous (M:10-19)*

**Late, M: 6-9**

**Middle M: 6-9**

Lvl	Stack Size	BB	Small Blind	ante	Players Left	M
4	1400	100	50	0	7	9
5	1300	150	75	0	6	6

**Description:**

Playing Very Tight. This is the average place you'll be in when you get to middle stage. Many times you will actually have a little less. This is also the hardest position/stage to play. Notice the blinds are small but they are still big enough that they will be eating into you very soon. When you hit the 1000 chip level (with a starting stack of 1500), you are starting to get into do or die territory. You don't want your stack to get much smaller than that. This stage, is the stage right before the

late stage when your M is in a danger zone low. You still should play tight and basic poker, but there will be an exception if your stack is about to get under 1000 because the blinds are upon you. More details below..

### **Raising 3BB or All-in?:**

At this stage, there is very little raising 3BB. You are pretty much going all-in or not playing. You can call in some cases, but a 3BB raise will have you pot committed - therefore, you might as well go all-in to increase your fold equity. If you have AA/KK, you might raise but this is a trap play.

### **Pre-flop Starting Hands:**

#### Limping Hands – late position

*No limping (instead of limping, you will either go all-in or raise to steal the blinds)..*

#### All-in Hands (we don't want anyone to call)

*From early position (right after the blinds): Push all-in with AK or 88+. If the blinds are about to take you under the 1000 level, go all-in with Any Ace, any pair and any KQ, KJ, QJ, or suited connector (IP: This is only true if after the BB and SB pass you, you will have less than 1000 chips – starting 1500 chips) . You should have a tight table image so you should be able to pull it off without someone calling. You are doing this for a couple reasons. First off, you can't let your stack get below 1000 without putting up a fight. If you do, it will be much easier for someone to call you when you do go all-in (before the next blind pushes you into the 700 range). A general rule is to not let your stack get below 1000 by having blinds take you out. By pushing all-in, you have a decent chance at taking the blinds down without a fight. Even though you are in early position (there are lots of people to act still). This move becomes much more possible in the next section (M:4-5) but you must be aware of it here as well – just in case you are in an odds situation where you're about to go under 1000. When you do go all-in, and people call – hopefully you have a coin flip at least. This is ok. At some point you need to take a risk. If you do win the blinds without a fight, you will be able to keep afloat (above 1000 chips). Hopefully you'll get a real hand soon that you can call with and actually double up. **NOTE: This is normally not the case. Usually if you are in early position, M:6-9 in the middle stage of the tourney, you won't be knocked under***

**1000 chips after the blinds go by you. If this is the case, you only play the AK and 88+ from early – still pushing all-in. You only play the weak hands (Any A, any pair, KJ,etc) if it means you will NOT go under 1000 chips on the next turn.**

**From middle position :**

Push all-in with AK or 88+. You can also push all in with AQ. Otherwise, don't play. In some rare cases, you can limp in with a pair. You should have a M of around 9 for this to be ok. If it's a small call to see the flop and there are limpers, go ahead and do it with any pair – looking for a set on the flop.

**From late/button position :**

Push all-in with AQ+ or 88+. You are really trying to steal the blinds. Many times, this will end in a coin flip if someone calls. **You are allowed to attempt a Blind Steal: 1.5 X BB with the following hands: AT, AJ, 22-77, KQ.** Make a small raise (1.5BB) and hope everyone folds. If someone calls, push all-in if you made a pair, otherwise check it down or fold. If you raise 1.5xBB and they reraise all-in you have a very tough decision. It is ok to fold if your stack size is still going to be over 900 chips. If after you fold, you will have less than 900, you should strongly consider calling. Especially if you have a pair or if your opponent is a big stack. Big stacks might be trying to bully you so you could have at least a coin flip. If you knew for sure you had a coin flip – you would definitely call. Since you could be dominated or be an underpair to an overpair, you can fold if you will still have some chips left.

**From small blind position :**

If you have A7+ or any pair, push all-in to steal the blinds. Only do this if there are no limpers! **Otherwise, follow same rules as late/button for blind steal: 1.5x BB play: Make this 1.5xBB raise with KQ, KJ**

Facing a raise (you haven't acted yet)

**AK or JJ+:** **You may use the Standard Reraise: ALL-IN play.** This is hard to do if you are not use to pushing all-in like this. You have a lot to gain however. This is a key edge in this

system. You have fold equity, plus a decent chance at winning should you get called.. **Since you still need to grow your stack, its ok to make this move even if it means you might lose the tourney and get knocked out.** You need to grow your stack still and this is a good chance to do it. Most of the time, the raiser will fold. If he calls, hopefully he's dominated. Should this happen, you will have a very big stack which will help you coast into the money.

Facing a raise (you have acted already)

**JJ+ and AK: You may use the Standard Reraise: ALL-IN play same as above.**

**ATs, AJs, AQs: Call.**

**AA or KK: You may use the Standard Reraise: ALL-IN play.**

Blind Stealing (button or one off button)

See comments from above.

Blind Defense (from big blind – small blind is stealing)

**You are allowed to use the Blind Defense: Reraise ALL-in**

This play is more risky, however you need to make a move and preserve your stack. This is a good way to do this...Using a high probability play. Since your table image should be tight, he should fold.

Other Pre-Flop Plays/Comments

**You are allowed to make the Small Blind Play: Call any half bet from small blind if one or more limpers exist.** You are hoping to trap someone and get a lucky double up. Again, check down/fold if your hand doesn't improve after the flop.

### **Post-flop Play (flop,turn,river):**

Most of the time at this stage post-flop, you will have pushed all-in. Because of this there are no rules for post-flop play. Refer to the previous section for details if you find yourself having to make a decision post flop. It is relatively straight forward however. All-in if you have top pair or a good drawing hand. Otherwise – check it down or play passive.

## Middle, M: 4-5

Middle M: 4 - 5

Lvl	Stack Size	BB	Small Blind	ante	Players Left	M
4	800	100	50	0	7	5
5	1000	150	75	0	6	4

### Description:

This is a very tough spot to be in. Unfortunately you'll find yourself here more often than not. If you miss a draw or have to fold for some reason, you can quickly find yourself in this position. At this stage, you are in a very serious danger zone. Many times you will have to push all-in in order to try and stay afloat. **IP: The worst possible thing you can do in this position is to freeze up and play too tight – letting the blinds take you out.** Of course you can't get too aggressive yet since the blinds are still fairly small.

### Raising 3BB or All-in?:

At this stage, there is no raising 3BB. You are either going all-in or folding. You don't have the chips to mess around with raises. If you have 800 chips and you raise 300, you are left with 500. At this point, you are pretty much pot committed. **IP: If you know you will be pot committed, you should make an all-in raise instead!**

### Pre-flop Starting Hands:

Limping Hands – late position

*No limping*

All-in Hands

**From early position (right before the blinds):**

*So here are the hands we push all-in with: Any two face cards, any two suited connectors (89s, 67s, etc), Any pair, Any Ace, Any K4o or better, any Q9o or better and any J9o. This should be about half the hands you will see. . **IP: Remember to do this only if the blinds are about to take you down another level.** The blinds are about to put you in a very serious/bad situation. Worse than you're in now. You are bad off now – but it will be worse if you M hits 3 or less. Because of this, you must push all-in from early with many hands you normally wouldn't. Up until now, you*

should look tight. You've been building fold equity for this moment.

The following table should show why its important to push all-in before you have your stack decimated by the blinds. Notice we are in M:4-5 initially and about to be hit by the blinds. If we fold 89s, we will have only 650/775 after the blinds pass us. At this point we will be pushing in with almost anything first opportunity so we want to avoid getting there if possible. Also, if we do our stack size is so small many good players will be calling us. So we miss out on whatever fold equity we might currently have ( with a stack of 800-1000). If we push all in and get lucky, half the time we will win and double up (coin flip). Suddenly we're back in the tourney. If we double up in the next stage after our stack has dropped another blind level, we are still looking better, but overall we are still in trouble.

**Middle M: 4 - 5 ---- why you push all in when you still have some chips left - before M is 3 or less.**

Lvl	Stack Size	BB+SB	OLD M	Stack Size After Blinds (no all-in)	Players Left	NEW M	Stack Size After You Push All-in (coin flip)	Players Left	NEW M
4	800	150	5	650	7	4	1750	7	12
5	1000	225	4	775	6	3	2225	6	10

Hopefully this makes sense..

**From middle position :**

Push all-in with AT+ and any pair. We know we are about to be eaten up by the blinds (see early above), so we do this to try and keep us afloat.

**From late/button position :**

Push all-in with AT+, KQ and any pair. You are really trying to steal the blinds. Many times, this will end in a coin flip if someone calls.

**From small blind position :**

Push all in with any two face cards, any suited connectors 89s+, any pair. A7+. Again, trying to steal the blinds. Only do this if there are no limpers!



Facing a raise (you haven't acted yet)

**AK or 99+:** **You may use the Standard Reraise: ALL-IN play.** You are taking risks now – you have no choice. You must play your hands aggressively – even if this means you know you have a coin flip.

Facing a raise (you have acted already)

Shouldn't happen since we are pushing all-in only. If someone reraises behind us, we have no decision to make – hope to get lucky!

Blind Stealing (button or one off button)

See comments from above.

Blind Defense (from big blind – small blind is stealing)

**You are allowed to use the Blind Defense: Reraise ALL-in**  
You can use this play only if the SB has about 1000-2000 chips. Otherwise, he will most definitely call you. You don't want him to call. With 1000-2000 chips, he has a decent shot the tourney still and probably won't call. If he has more than this, he'll probably call you. Less than this, he's probably trying to trap you.

Other Pre-Flop Plays/Comments

**You are allowed to make the Small Blind Play: Call any half bet from small blind if one or more limpers exist.** You are hoping to get lucky. Post flop, any medium/top pair you should push all-in. Also, with any bottom pair its ok as long as your opponents are playing passive and checking to you.

### **Post-flop Play (flop,turn,river):**

*Most of the time at this stage post-flop, you will have pushed all-in. Because of this there are no rules for post-flop play. Refer to the previous section for details if you find yourself having to make a decision post flop. It is relatively straight forward however. In this situation, you are probably pot committed so plan on staying in until the river and hoping to get lucky!*

## Middle, M: 2-3

Middle M: 2-3

Lvl	Stack Size	BB	Small Blind	ante	Players Left	M
4	400	100	50	0	7	3
5	500	150	75	0	6	2

### Description:

How did you let yourself get here??!!???! Hopefully you had no control over this. When in this stage you're in big trouble. You need to double up twice now instead of only once to get back in the game. At the same time, the blinds are closing in and you will be eliminated very soon if you don't act.

### Raising 3BB or All-in?:

All-in only.

### Pre-flop Starting Hands:

Limping Hands – late position

No limping

All-in Hands

**From any position(no one entered the pot yet):**

You should push all-in with any K9+, Any pair, Any A8+, any 89s+ , any Axs. You need to get lucky. First chance at betting you should do it. One problem at this stage is that people will still be betting/raising around you. You want to be the first one in so you take any chance you can get to push allin.

Facing a raise (you haven't acted yet)

Call with any AJ+, any pair.

Facing a raise (you have acted already)

Shouldn't happen since we are pushing all-in only. If someone reraises behind us, we have no decision to make – hope to get lucky!

Blind Stealing (button or one off button)

Play as stated above.

Blind Defense (from big blind – small blind is stealing)

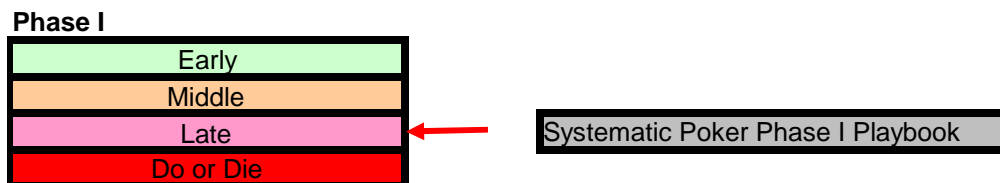
If you are in the big blind, and in this spot, you are committed to the pot. Call any bet made into you. If someone checks, reraise all-in. This is your time to take a stand with any 2 cards. You are pot committed.

**Post-flop Play (flop,turn,river):**

No rules – won't happen. You are allin.

## Late Stage Rules

Here's the chart showing where we are at:



## Late Stage Basics

Note: the basics section is just a general overview. Depending on the M status we are in, the actual play could change.

Another very difficult stage to play. At least now the blinds are bigger which means we are justified in pushing all-in more often. If we have a big stack, we are making more semi-bluffs – putting pressure on the little stacks. If we are a short stack or just average, we are typically pushing all in. One key point in this section is the concept of not letting your stack get below 1000 chips. Many times, you will be about to be blind in the blind and your stack is currently 1100 chips – blinds will make your stack about 800 once they are done with you. Because of this big leap, you are instructed to push all-in right before the blind comes in many situations. Details are provided in the appropriate sections. Normally, since you will have played tight and conservative in the early and middle stages, people will assume you have a hand and fold to you.

Tight play (about the same as middle – without the drawing hands). We are avoiding drawing hands unless our M is huge. We are mostly pushing all-in or folding in this section. We also will come over the top of someone's raise with good hands AK,QQ+ typically. This is a big move that gives us a good edge. This makes our play very aggressive in some cases.

Tight play (slightly tighter than in middle stage):

- We are not getting involved in many pots.
- Since the blinds are bigger now, we pretty much don't limp in.
- Drawing hands are avoided – very few rare cases where its ok – our stack must be huge.
- We are now going to have to play some coin flips – to keep from getting blinded out. It will be more common to raise all-in knowing that you probably will be called. If you think you have a coin flip, this is ok since if you win you will be in a very good spot. You have to start to ratchet up the playing at certain points – like when you are about to go under the 1000 chip mark.
- Our image should be tight at the table. This is the stage where we need this image. Also – for the next stage. Do or Die.

**For all M's in late stage the following play is allowed: Any two cards Call (your stack is huge compared to his 10X)**

**Late, M: 20+**

### Late M: 20+

Lvl	Stack Size	BB	Small Blind	ante	Players Left	M
6	6000	200	100	0	6	20
7	8500	200	100	25	5	20

### Description:

You are in excellent position. We have the chips to play drawing hands and to make probe bets if needed. Don't waste your chips though. To have this many chips in the late stage of the tourney means you definitely had at least two good double ups.

Since your stack is huge compared to most other peoples, start looking for the following play:

**Any two cards Call (your stack is huge compared to his 10X):  
Again, you are looking to grow your stack without risking much of it.**

Special Note: In late stage, if your M is 20+ you are a favorite to win. You should be playing this stack very aggressively – just like the medium stage case. Not as aggressive as you will on the bubble though! Keep the pressure on people but don't waste your chips. There is no reason why you should not land ITM.

### Raising 3BB or All-in?:

You are definitely able to raise 3BB. You want to avoid confrontations with big stacks. A big stack is defined as anyone who has about half the number of chips you do. In this case, you are the big stack. You still don't want to mess with anyone who has about 3000 chips. They could still put a hurting on you.

### Pre-flop Starting Hands:

**Same as middle M: 20+**

**You are allowed to use the Semi-Bluff: Big Stack  
Continuation Bet play:** Do this if you are against a small stack and he checks to you or shows general weakness.

## Post-flop Play (flop,turn,river):

**Same as middle M: 20+**

**You are allowed to use the Semi-Bluff: Big Stack Continuation Bet play:** Do this if you are against a small stack and he checks to you or shows general weakness.

## Late, M: 10-19

Late M: 10-19

Lvl	Stack Size	BB	Small Blind	ante	Players Left	M
6	3000	200	100	0	6	10
7	4500	200	100	25	5	11

### Description:

Very Good position to be in. You have managed to grow your stack beyond the initial 1500 you started with if you hit the late stage and have  $M > 10$ . Good job! In this position, you play very similar to the M:10-19+ middle section and even the M:20+ late section. More than likely you are the big stack still so if you are, play aggressive as you would in the previous section M:20+ late. The big difference between the two sections is that now, you have to be a little more careful. You can't waste your chips and you will be calling much less often. There are more stacks out there that can hurt you – against them you play your regular tight game.

Still look for easy opportunities to take out a small stack though.

**Any two cards Call (your stack is huge compared to his 10X):  
Again, you are looking to grow your stack without risking much of it.**

### Raising 3BB or All-in?:

At this stage, you can still get away with raising 3BB. You don't need to rush anything but will need to maintain your stack if possible. Don't rush it however. You are in good position. You really shouldn't worry until your stack gets to be around 1500 with the blinds at 200/100. At this point you need to make a move. With big M's like you have, you are ok. Play solid and tight.

Another key thing to look out for here is the following: Many people with mediocre stacks (1500 – 2000) will reraise you all-in if you make a 3BB raise (600). They know you might be weak and in most acases are probably very weak themselves. YOU'll start to see this move a lot (we don't recommend it though – for us we do this move but only if we have a very good starting hand AK+,QQ+typically). So.. be careful of making 3BB raises. If someone comes over the top with all-in, you will be in a very tough spot. Pretty much having odds to call, but not really wanting to since if you miss, you are now in a just average situation or even worse since blinds will be increasing soon.

### Pre-flop Starting Hands:

*Same as M:20+ Late. Be more careful however. Its ok to pass up a hand that you're not comfortable with. Your stack is big and the blinds won't affect you for a while yet.*

*YOU Should be doing lots of the following plays: **Blind Steal: 1.5 X BB** . You can do this against a weak stack but beware against a bigger one. Also, this level you will be in for a while. If you do this 2x in a row, wait and don't do it for a couple rounds (unless you have a pair or AT+). He will catch on and reraise all-in to defend. By the time he does this, hopefully you had a hand. Use this play to help grow your stack.*

### Post-flop Play (flop,turn,river):

*Same as M: 20+ Rules*

### Late, M: 6-9

Late M: 6-9

Lvl	Stack Size	BB	Small Blind	ante	Players Left	M
6	1800	200	100	0	6	6
7	2400	200	100	25	5	6

## **Description:**

Not a bad spot to be in. You have kept your stack big and should make it to the bubble as long as you don't do anything dumb. Now that the blinds are 200/100, we can move all-in more often making many rules simpler to follow.

## **Raising 3BB or All-in?:**

You really shouldn't raise 3BB at all in this stage. If you do, you are pot committed. Your move will be all-in or don't play. The only exception is if you're in the SB or making a 1.5 x BB steal attempt.

## **Pre-flop Starting Hands:**

### Limping Hands – late position

*No limping (instead of limping, you will either go all-in or raise to steal the blinds)..*

### All-in Hands (we don't want anyone to call)

**From early position (right after the blinds):** Push all-in with AK or JJ+.

### **From middle position :**

Push all-in with AK or TT+.

### **From late/button position :**

Push all-in with AQ+ or 88+.

**You are allowed to attempt a Blind Steal: 1.5 X BB with the following hands: AT, AJ, 22-77, KQ.** Make a small raise (1.5BB) and hope everyone folds. If someone calls, push all-in if you made a pair, otherwise check it down or fold. If you raise 1.5xBB and they reraise all-in you have a very tough decision. In this case however, I would probably fold unless I had a pocket pair.

### **From small blind position :**

If you have AT+ or any pair, push all-in to steal the blinds. Only do this if there are no limpers! **Otherwise, follow same rules as late/button for blind steal: 1.5x BB play: Make this 1.5xBB raise with AT, AJ, 22-77, KQ, KJ, QJ.**

### Facing a raise (you haven't acted yet)

**AK or JJ+: You may use the Standard Reraise: ALL-IN play.**



Blind Stealing (button or one off button)

See comments from above.

Blind Defense (from big blind – small blind is stealing)

See facing a raise.

Other Pre-Flop Plays/Comments

**You are allowed to make the Small Blind Play: Call any half bet from small blind if one or more limpers exist.** You are hoping to trap someone and get a lucky double up. Again, check down/fold if your hand doesn't improve after the flop. Take a stab at the pot if the opponents stack is about 1000 and he's checking to you.

**Post-flop Play (flop,turn,river):**

*Most of the time at this stage post-flop, you will have pushed all-in. Because of this there are no rules for post-flop play. Refer to the previous section for details if you find yourself having to make a decision post flop. It is relatively straight forward however. All-in if you have top pair or a good drawing hand. Otherwise – check it down or play passive.*

**Late, M: 4-5**

Late M: 4 - 5

Lvl	Stack Size	BB	Small Blind	ante	Players Left	M
6	1500	200	100	0	6	5
7	1500	200	100	25	5	4

**Description:**

Very tight but take a chance to steal if you have one. This is the average place you'll be in when you get to late stage. Many times you

will actually have a little less. This stage is actually very similar to the middle M:6-9 stage. Much of it will seem similar. You are trying to keep yourself afloat. You will go all-in from early position with mediocre hands if it means keeping your stack above 1000.

### **Raising 3BB or All-in?:**

You are going all-in or not playing. No raising is allowed!

### **Pre-flop Starting Hands:**

#### Limping Hands – late position

*No limping (instead of limping, you will either go all-in or raise to steal the blinds)..*

#### All-in Hands (we don't want anyone to call)

*From early position (right after the blinds): Push all-in with AK or 88+. If the blinds are about to take you under the 1000 level, go all-in with Any Ace, any pair and any KQ,KJ, QJ, or suited connector (IP: This is only true if after the BB and SB pass you, you will have less than 1000 chips – starting 1500 chips) . You should have a tight table image so you should be able to pull it off without someone calling. You are doing this for a couple reasons. First off, you can't let your stack get below 1000 without putting up a fight. If you do, it will be much easier for someone to call you when you do go all-in (before the next blind pushes you into the 700 range). A general rule is to not let your stack get below 1000 by having blinds take you out. By pushing all-in, you have a decent chance at taking the blinds down without a fight. Even though you are in early position (there are lots of people to act still). This move becomes much more possible in the next section (M:4-5) but you must be aware of it here as well – just in case you are in an odds situation where you're about to go under 1000. When you do go all-in, and people call – hopefully you have a coin flip at least. This is ok. At some point you need to take a risk. If you do win the blinds without a fight, you will be able to keep afloat (above 1000 chips). Hopefully you'll get a real hand soon that you can call with and actually double up. **NOTE: This is normally not the case. Usually if you are in early position, M:4-5 in the middle stage of the tourney, you won't be knocked under 1000 chips after the blinds go by you. If this is the case, you only play the AK and 88+ from early – still pushing all-in. You only play the weak hands (Any A, any pair,***

**KJ,etc) if it means you will NOT go under 1000 chips on the next turn.**

**From middle position :**

Push all-in with AK or 88+. You can also push all in with AQ. Otherwise, don't play.

**From late/button position :**

Push all-in with AT+ or 88+. You are really trying to steal the blinds. Many times, this will end in a coin flip if someone calls. No more 1.5xBB blind steal attempts. You are either going all-in or doing nothing.

**From small blind position :**

If you have A7+ or any pair, push all-in to steal the blinds. Only do this if there are no limpers!

Facing a raise (you haven't acted yet)

**AQ+ or JJ+:** (we added the AQ) **You may use the Standard Reraise: ALL-IN play.** Since there are less people in, you have decent odds of catching someone with AJ or less. Some cases they will have AK, but most of the time they will fold, it will be a draw, or you will be a slight favorite (AQ vs KJ).

Blind Stealing (button or one off button)

See comments from above.

Blind Defense (from big blind – small blind is stealing)

**You are allowed to use the Blind Defense: Reraise ALL-in** This play is more risky, however you need to make a move and preserve your stack. This is a good way to do this...Using a high probability play. Since your table image should be tight, he should fold.

**Blind Defense: Allin Reraise (Big Blind vs. a calling Small Blind only).** If the small blind calls your big blind, push all-in with any 2 decent cards (face cards, suited, any pair). This is another high probability play. They will Fold almost every time.

Other Pre-Flop Plays/Comments

**You are allowed to make the Small Blind Play: Call any half bet from small blind if one or more limpers exist.** You are hoping to trap someone and get a lucky double up. Again, check down/fold if your hand doesn't improve after the flop.

**Post-flop Play (flop,turn,river):**

*Most of the time at this stage post-flop, you will have pushed all-in. Because of this there are no rules for post-flop play. Refer to the previous section for details if you find yourself having to make a decision post flop. It is relatively straight forward however. All-in if you have top pair or a good drawing hand. Otherwise – check it down or play passive.*

**Late, M: 2-3**

Late M: 2- 3

Lvl	Stack Size	BB	Small Blind	ante	Players Left	M
6	1000	200	100	0	6	3
7	800	200	100	25	5	2

**Description:**

Another tough spot. You need to get aggressive now before you get blinded out.

**Raising 3BB or All-in?:**

All-in only.

**Pre-flop Starting Hands:**

Limping Hands – late position

*No limping*

All-in Hands

**From any position(no one entered the pot yet):**

*You should push all-in with any K9+, Any pair, Any A8+, any 89s+ , any Axs. You need to get lucky. First chance at betting you should do it. One problem at this stage is that people will*

*still be betting/raising around you. You want to be the first one in so you take any chance you can get to push allin.*

*Facing a raise (you haven't acted yet)*

*Call with any AJ+, any pair.*

*Facing a raise (you have acted already)*

*Shouldn't happen since we are pushing all-in only. If someone reraises behind us, we have no decision to make – hope to get lucky!*

*Blind Stealing (button or one off button)*

*Play as stated above.*

*Blind Defense (from big blind – small blind is stealing)*

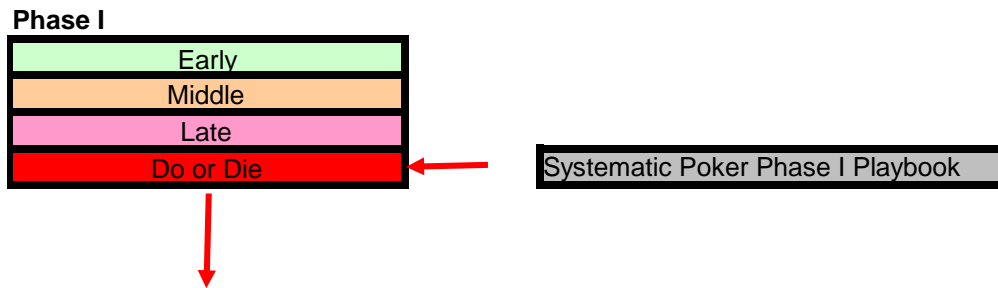
*If you are in the big blind, and in this spot, you are committed to the pot (will only have about 600 chips left if you fold). Call any bet made into you. If someone checks, reraise all-in. This is your time to take a stand with any 2 cards. You are pot committed.*

**Post-flop Play (flop,turn,river):**

*No rules – won't happen. You are allin.*

# Do or Die Stage Rules

Here's the chart showing where we are at:



## Late Stage Basics

Note: the basics section is just a general overview. Depending on the M status we are in, the actual play could change.

You can smell the bubble. Note: this stage might quickly move to the bubble stage. To be in the late stage, there must be at least 5 people at the table still. If there are only 4, refer to the bubble stage rules.

Aggressive play is our style at this point. The blinds are now very big 400/200 and we'll need to pick them up whenever possible.

Aggressive play (slightly looser than in late stage):

- We are now getting involved in more pots.
- Since the blinds are bigger now, we pretty much don't limp in.
- Drawing hands are avoided – very few rare cases where its ok – our stack must be huge.
- We are now going to have to play some coin flips – to keep from getting blinded out. It will be more common to raise all-in knowing that you probably will be called. If you think you have a coin flip, this is ok since if you win you will be in a very good spot. You have to start to racket up the playing at certain points – like when you are about to go under the 1000 chip mark.
- Our image should be tight at the table. This is the stage where we need this image. Also – for the next stage. Do or Die.

**For all M's in late stage the following play is allowed: Any two cards Call (your stack is huge compared to his 10X)**

## Do or Die, M: 10+

Do or Die M: 10+

Lvl	Stack Size	BB	Small Blind	ante	Players Left	M
8	8000	400	200	25	5	11

### Description:

You are in excellent position. If your M is 10+ and there are 5 people left, its just a matter of time before you're on the bubble. The 4 other people are terrified of you and are probably all trying to make it to the bubble.

Since your stack is huge compared to most other peoples, make the following play as often as possible.

**Any two cards Call (your stack is huge compared to his 7X):  
Again, you are looking to grow your stack without risking much of it.**

### Raising 3BB or All-in?:

Everything is ALL-in now. You won't need to raise - just push allin.

### Pre-flop Starting Hands:

***Same as late M: 20+***

### Post-flop Play (flop,turn,river):

***Same as late M: 20+***

## Late, M: 5-9

### Do or DieM: 5-9

Lvl	Stack Size	BB	Small Blind	ante	Players Left	M
8	5000	400	200	25	5	7
8	3500	400	200	25	5	5

#### Description:

Very Good position to be in. Play like you are in the late 10-19 stage. You are probably the biggest stack and will be on the bubble soon.

Still look for easy opportunities to take out a small stack though.

**Any two cards Call (your stack is huge compared to his 10X):  
Again, you are looking to grow your stack without risking much of it.**

#### Raising 3BB or All-in?:

Allin only.

#### Pre-flop Starting Hands:

*Same as M:20+ Late.*

#### Post-flop Play (flop,turn,river):

*Same as M: 20+ Late Rules*

### Do or Die, M: 2-4

#### Do or Die M: 2-4

Lvl	Stack Size	BB	Small Blind	ante	Players Left	M
8	2600	400	200	25	5	4
8	1800	400	200	25	5	2

#### Description:

This is the more interesting situation you will find yourself in. Usually there is one big stack (5000+, two of these types of stacks, and two



small stacks). The objective here is to keep pressure on the small stacks and avoid the big stack if possible. Also, its ok to play against the other medium stack opponent aggressively. He is probably going to fold to most of your raises unless he has an incredible hand. It's the big stack you want to avoid.

### **Raising 3BB or All-in?:**

ALLin only.

### **Pre-flop Starting Hands:**

#### Limping Hands – late position

*No limping (instead of limping, you will either go all-in or raise to steal the blinds)..*

#### All-in Hands (we don't want anyone to call)

*From early – middle - late position (right after the blinds): Push all-in with AQ+, KQ, or any pair. This is aggressive but you need to keep afloat. If no one has entered the pot yet – you must push all in with these..*

#### From small blind position :

If the big blind is the big stack or is about 2x bigger than you. Don't mess with him unless you have a premium hand AK, QQ+. Otherwise, if it's a short stack or middle stack like you, push all in with AT+ or any pair, QJ+.

#### Facing a raise (you haven't acted yet)

**AQ+ or JJ+: You may use the Standard Reraise: ALL-IN play.**

#### Blind Stealing (button or one off button)

*See comments from above.*

#### Blind Defense (from big blind – small blind is stealing)

*See facing a raise.*

### **Post-flop Play (flop,turn,river):**

*Shouldn't have to make any decisions post flop.*

## **Do or Die, M: 1**

**Do or Die M: 1**

Lvl	Stack Size	BB	Small Blind	ante	Players Left	M
8	1000	400	200	25	5	1

### **Description:**

You are in trouble obviously. You need a double up. Attack any player with any hand at this point. In fact, it is best to attack a big stack who is in the blind if you have a decent hand. The reason why is that it is more likely you will be heads up with him. If you attack a small stack (like you), other people will jump on this as an opportunity to take out 2 people with very little risk to their own stack or tournament placing. So.. attack the big stack if possible, otherwise play the first decent hand you have. Once you are in the blind you are committed and need to get lucky.

### **Raising 3BB or All-in?:**

You are going all-in only (obvious right?)

### **Pre-flop Starting Hands:**

#### All-in Hands

*Go allin with any pair, any QJ+, any suited connector 45s+, any You need to get lucky and double up. In many ways the 89s is ideal for this case. The bad thing about Axs is that many people will call with An ace. You wil be dominated in many cases. If you have 89s, you are almost a coin flip vs an Ace. If your domintated its around 30/70 odds for you.*

*Also, if you are in the big blind you play any hand you have no matter what. Reraise all-in and hope for the best. You do this because you are pot commited. If you start with 1000 chips and the blind comes you are left with 600 if you fold. The sb is next so you'll only have 400 by the time its done. You need to take your chance when you still have the big blind in the pot as equity. If you get lucky – BOOM! Your back in the tourney.*

**Post-flop Play (flop,turn,river):**

*No play required here. All-in only.*

# VI. PHASE II “ The Bubble”

The bubble is the phase in a tournament when you are one person away from being paid (ITM). In our SNG’s, this will be when there are four people left. Typically blinds are high and the play is therefore fairly simple.

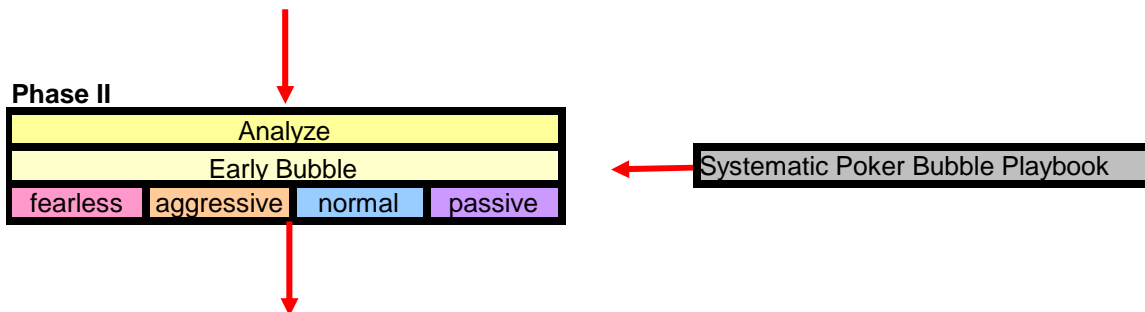
How well you do in phase II - greatly affects your chance of landing ITM. We are careful in our Phase I system rules to help make sure that we have a decent stack size by the time we get to the bubble.

We do this in a couple ways:

1. Our rule that says “if your stack is about to go to 1000 chips, push all-in with mediocre hands” is done to keep our stack size up. We could choose to ignore this and hope that we get lucky later. The problem is that long term, this won’t happen. You need to be aggressive when you have no other choice. When we get to the bubble we don’t want to be a small stack. We want to be at least average.
2. We allow certain draw hands to happen if they are low risk. We do this so that you have increased odds of hitting some miracle hand and doubling up.
3. General strategy is built to be more aggressive as the SNG proceeds in levels. Because of this – and our all-in strategies in late stages, you will either double up – or lose. There usually isn’t really an in between except in rare circumstances when the bubble comes early.

So if you make it to the bubble, you typically should not be a short stack. Of course a lot of times you be a short stack so we do address this as well.

Here is the diagram showing phase II – the bubble.



Phase II has been broken into three stages. The first one isn't even a real stage – its more of a way for us to let you know how you should play during the bubble play. We call this stage the analyze stage. It is here that your general rules are formed for the bubble play stage.

The early bubble stage is an optional stage. This stage exists because sometimes you are on the bubble but the blinds are still way low (200/100 or less – from our tourney structure). In this stage, you are playing basically like you did in stage you just came from.

The bubble play stage is the actual stage when you're playing the real bubble. This is broken down into four sub stages. Each sub stage is used to indicate that how you play, depends on how your opponent is playing.

We also have a Systematic Poker Phase II bubble playbook. This is smaller than the other's however it still has some good points in it.

We start with the play book again:

## **Systematic Poker Phase II Playbook**

The following plays are standard plays that we will use on occasion. We explain them in this section. If they are allowed to be used in any of the tourney stages, we mention them at that point (highlighting the play in Red to help it stand out).

### **Total Bluff**

In bubble play, you are allowed to bluff only pre-flop. Also, only if you are a big stack attacking a weak stack. This is really just an all-in move to steal the blinds.

### **ALL-in**

During normal bubble play – your standard move will either be all-in, or reraise all-in. The blinds are 400/200 and you can't mess around with raises. There are no cases where you should be thinking of raising except one.

## **Min Raise**

This play is made when you want to attack the big blind, but are not that confident in your current hand. You would love to put the big blind all in, but a big stack is still to act behind you and he might call an all-in if you make one. The answer is the min raise. Lets say you have 4000 chips and are in late position. The big blind has 1000 chips. The Small Blind has 6000 chips. You look down and see 55. You want to put the big blind all-in but are scared the small blind might call an all-in and put you out if he has AQ+, or any pair. So you make a min raise of 800 chips. This is enough to put the big blind all-in and allows you to escape if the small blind reraises all-in. You do this and the sb reraises you can fold. Normally, he won't do this unless he has a monster hand. Online SNG pros know how to play and will see what you are doing. They might think you are slow playing though – so they won't reraise all-in unless they really have a hand (probably AK or QQ+). So if they reraise you fold, otherwise you are heads up with the big blind – like you wanted.

Just to mix it up, you can do this min raise if you have AA/KK/QQ. You are now hoping someone calls or senses you are weak. This is a good min raise to use if given the chance.

## **Checking it down..**

This play is probably one of the most common late stage plays which almost everyone uses. There is a standard rule amongst pros that it is good for everyone if you can get ITM (except for the guy who just bubbled). So, if a small stack raises and you have a huge stack compared to his, you call – DON'T RERAISE. You want to encourage other big stacks to attack the small stack. This is good for everyone at the table. Once you call, usually the other big stacks (and even medium stacks) will see what you did and they'll call too. Everyone will now check down the hand with only a couple exceptions. If you have an overpair and winning the pot will put you in a good spot to take on 1<sup>st</sup> place, you can generally make a min raise to get the other caller out. You can then hope for the best. Also – if you have a flush, full house, or some other monster hand and you want to suck a little bit more out of the other caller you can make a min raise. This happens very rarely – he'll know you have a monster hand and will fold. At the low limits, people can be total donkeys. Sometimes, they will reraise all-in (total bluff) to get you out of the hand – even though you are on the bubble and a small stack is all-in. Even though they have nothing!! Crazy. This can be very frustrating when it happens and the all-in

doubles up. It can happen though. JUST MAKE SURE YOU DON'T DO THIS. So, 90% of the time, you will check it down and hope either you or the other big stack takes out the short stack.

## **Other Key Topics for PHASE II (Bubble)**

These theories apply to all stages of the bubble.

### **Unnecessary Risks (risk/reward)**

This term always comes up in bubble and normal play. Again, don't take risks if there is not substantial gain associated with it.

### **Don't be the short stack!**

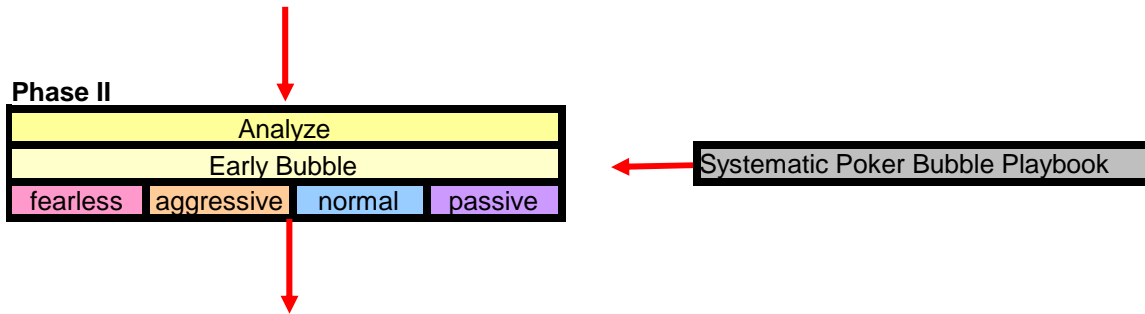
This is another complicated topic to address. This concept is important usually only if you are a medium stack (only 1 other medium stack – the other two are big stacks) or one of a couple short stacks – (CASE3, CASE4 described in next section).

**The idea is that you never want to be the shortest stack** – when there are 2-3 short/medium stacks and maybe 1-2 large stacks. You want to stay a float – keep the pressure on the other guy. Blinds eat up people fast on the bubble and if you play too passive you will not win many SNG's. Sometimes you have to grab your sack and push all-in when you'd really rather not. This is similar to the "stay above 1000 rule" from the previous phase.

If you are about to become the ONLY short stack and are therefore going to be a huge target (with only 1000-2000 chips – or less), but currently have a decent stack, don't be afraid to push all-in with a hand like 89s. You have lots of fold equity since your stack is a decent size. If you don't do this, you get put in a very bad position. Before you know it you are the number one target. You must play aggressive (even crazy wild) when the situation forces you to. For more details on applying this – refer to the last section in this phase – we provide a brief description of how the bubble will work.

# The Analyze Stage

Here's the chart for a reminder...



## Analyze Basics

During the analyze stage, your sole purpose is to determine the situation you have. How big is your stack compared to everyone else? What are the blinds now? Are you the short stack?

There are basically four types of situations the table can be in. For any given case, you could be either of the four players (player A,B,C,D).

CASE 1.

Player	% of total	Total Chips
A	0.5	6750
B	0.2	2700
C	0.2	2700
D	0.1	1350

Case 1 is when you have one big stack, 2 mediums and one short stack. Everyone is trying to get in the bubble – three are clear favorites. The short stack will more than likely bust out. He is the target on everyone's list. He is about to be blinded and will make a stand soon. The big stack can play very aggressive since the other stacks are trying to survive. Medium stacks are probably paranoid. They are close to ITM and can taste it. But they aren't there yet.



CASE 2.

Player	% of total	Total Chips
A	0.25	3375
B	0.25	3375
C	0.25	3375
D	0.25	3375

Case 2 is when everyone is even. This is a tough spot – everyone is at risk. In this case, our rule is to play as aggressive as we can without being a total donkey.

CASE 3.

Player	% of total	Total Chips
A	0.7	9450
B	0.1	1350
C	0.1	1350
D	0.1	1350

Case 3 is when you have one big stack and three little ones. The big stack can play super aggressive obviously. The three littles will play to survive and finish ITM.

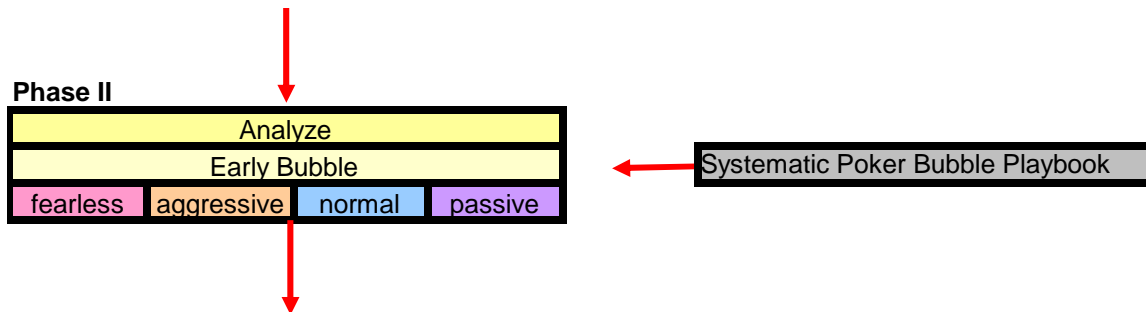
CASE 4.

Player	% of total	Total Chips
A	0.3	4050
B	0.3	4050
C	0.15	2025
D	0.15	2025

Case 4 is when you have two big stacks and two medium stacks. The big stacks can bully the little ones if they choose to. The medium stacks must play normal and aggressive vs. each other to make sure that they don't become the short stack.

## Early Bubble Stage (could be skipped)

Here's the chart for a reminder...



### Basic reason for this stage

This stage exists because some times you'll make it to the bubble and the blinds will still be low. By low, I mean 200/100 or less. Usually the bubble really begins when the blinds are 400/200, 600/300, 800/400 etc. **If the blinds are 400/200 or more, skip the early bubble stage.**

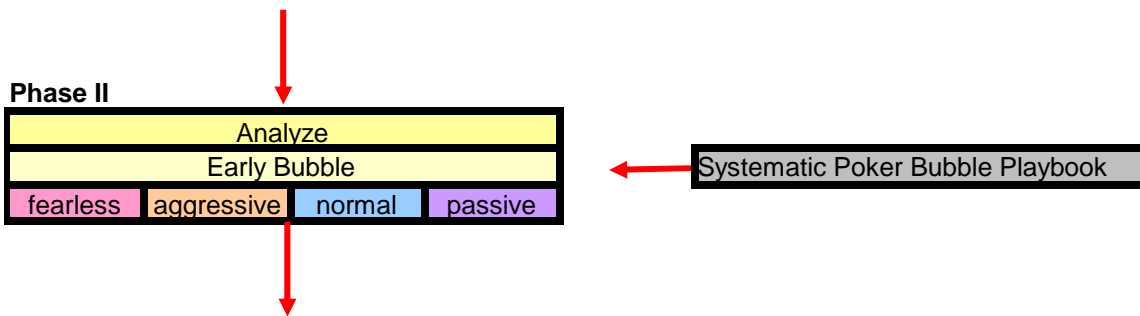
You should use the Late stage rules from phase I - appropriate to the M you currently have. Don't take unnecessary risks if your stack is medium. If its large, feel free to play aggressive - use your semi bluffs when you miss flops. You still should play good poker though. Just because your stack is big - doesn't mean you throw your money away. Play solid, but allow yourself some room with medium pairs vs passive betters, etc.

You should try to stay afloat as well. By this, we mean keeping your stack over 1000 chips. You can't let yourself become the short stack on the bubble. Stick to the Late game rules and you'll do fine in the early bubble stage. Compute your M and play accordingly.

Once blinds jump to 400/200, you need to use the bubble rules. These rules change because the game dynamics will have changed. People generally will be playing tight - so we want to take advantage of this.

### Bubble Play Stage

Here's the chart for a reminder...



This is the real bubble stage. This is where blinds are 400/200 or more (using our structure – adjust for your sites accordingly).

You have analyzed your table and know what situation you're in. The general idea at this point is to try and steal blinds to survive – or get lucky and catch a premium hand AK, QQ+ and call someones all-in.

We will examine each case in detail, describing how you play for each player you might be.

In general, there are 4 playing styles for the bubble. Which one you use depends on many things – in particular your stack size, your opponents stack size and the stack size of everyone else.

**IP: FOR ALL THESE HANDS, NEVER, NEVER, NEVER, NEVER ENTER A RAISED POT UNLESS THE SYSTEM SPECIFICALLY TELLS YOU TO.** For example, you have AT on the button. The guy in late position (first to act) raises all-in. DON'T call his raise unless you are instructed to have a fearless playing style against him. Otherwise, just FOLD your AT. If you have AK on the other hand, you can call (push all-in) in all cases.

The next section discussed the details of each case, providing instructions on which style to use.

### CASE 1. (1 big, 2 medium, 1 small)

CASE 1.

Player	% of total	Total Chips	You are A	You are B	You are C	You are D	
A	0.5	6750	you have 6750	passive	passive	normal	He is A
B	0.2	2700	aggressive	you have 2700	aggressive	normal	He is B
C	0.2	2700	aggressive	aggressive	you have 2700	normal	He is C
D	0.1	1350	fearless	normal	normal	you have 1350	He is D

The way you should use these charts, is to look at the columns on the top and left as a cross reference. For any game, you will be either the

big stack (A), the first medium stack (B), the second medium stack (C), or the short stack (D). If you are player A (the big stack), you will play aggressive versus player B, aggressive vs player C and fearless vs player D. So you do a cross reference to determine how you should play. Likewise, if you are player B, you will play passive vs player A, aggressive vs player C and normal vs player D. If you are player D, you will play normal vs player A, and normal vs players B and C.

Here are the other cases along with their respective playing styles:

CASE 2.

Player	% of total	Total Chips	You are A	You are B	You are C	You are D	
A	0.25	3375	you have 3375	aggressive	aggressive	aggressive	He is A
B	0.25	3375	aggressive	you have 3375	aggressive	aggressive	He is B
C	0.25	3375	aggressive	aggressive	you have 3375	aggressive	He is C
D	0.25	3375	aggressive	aggressive	aggressive	you have 3375	He is D

CASE 3.

Player	% of total	Total Chips	You are A	You are B	You are C	You are D	
A	0.7	9450	you have 9450	passive	passive	passive	He is A
B	0.1	1350	fearless	you have 1350	aggressive	aggressive	He is B
C	0.1	1350	fearless	aggressive	you have 1350	aggressive	He is C
D	0.1	1350	fearless	aggressive	aggressive	you have 1350	He is D

CASE 4.

Player	% of total	Total Chips	You are A	You are B	You are C	You are D	
A	0.3	4050	you have 4050	normal	normal	normal	He is A
B	0.3	4050	normal	you have 4050	normal	normal	He is B
C	0.15	2025	aggressive	aggressive	you have 2025	aggressive	He is C
D	0.15	2025	aggressive	aggressive	aggressive	you have 2025	He is D

So, when we say aggressive, passive, fearless and normal, what do we mean? The following section describes each style in detail.

## Fearless Play

### When is this used?

Fearless play is used when you have an incredible risk/reward ratio. For example, if you are in CASE1 and you are the big stack, you can play fearless against player D. It really is another way of saying the 5x call rule. If he pushes all-in and you have 89s, you can call him. You know he is under pressure so he could be raising with anything in most cases. You are probably a 40/60 underdog and have a chance at growing your stack to be in great position for 1<sup>st</sup> place, and knocking him out – guaranteeing an ITM payment for yourself and the others at the table. Even if you lose, you will still have over 5000 chips (still top

stack and still a threat to all others at the table). So you can therefore play fearless against player D.

**Plays allowed: Total bluff, check it down and allin.**

### **How to play it**

#### General:

You will put immense pressure on this player any time you have the chance. You will call his all-ins, raise his blinds, etc.

#### Call his allin?

You will call his allins with 89o+, any pair, any face card, any two suited. If his stack is 10% of yours or less, you will call him with any two cards (even 72o or 23o).

#### He's big blind, you are small blind

If he is in the big blind, you will raise his blind with any two cards from the small blind. Raise it enough to put him allin.

#### He's big blind, you are late or on the button

You can still raise with any pair, any AT+ or KJ+. You want to put pressure on him at all chances you have. If there is another big stack to act behind you, make a single bet raise. This is common for online players to do. By making this small raise, you can get out if the big stack who needs to act still reraises all-in. You can then fold and let him take out the short stack. Don't get too crazy with trying to attack the big blind (fearless). If others are still to act, make a min raise to try and get him. If the button or small blind don't have a hand, they will gladly let you take out the short stack and fold. If they push back, they really do have a hand – so get out of the way unless you have a monster hand yourself AA/KK.

## **Aggressive Play**

### **When is this used?**

Aggressive play is used when you have very good reason to believe your opponent will not call your bet – for whatever reason. One reason why he might not is because you all have the same stack size and he doesn't need to gamble yet. For example, in CASE2, everyone has an equal stack. You can play aggressive vs anyone else, since they will only call your all-in if they have an AK or JJ+ (most cases). On the bubble you must play aggressive if your opponent is tight. With blinds

as big as they are, you won't survive if you wait for a premium hand or a pair. You must play aggressive and take the fight to your opponent who you suspect is not ready to gamble with a call.

**Plays allowed: Check it down, allin and min raise.**

### **How to play it**

#### General:

You will put pressure on this player any time you have the chance.

#### Call his allin?

You will only call his all-in if you have AK or JJ,QQ,KK,AA. That's it. This is VERY IMPORTANT. PROBABLY ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT RULE OF THE TOURNEY SYSTEM. JJ is even optional. AK, QQ, KK and AA are for sure. I will typically call with JJ also.

#### He's big blind, you are small blind

If he is in the big blind, you will raise his blind with any two cards from the small blind. You will always raise all-in. You only do this if no one else has entered the pot (obviously). Also, you can't do this move every hand. Do it once, and then fold on the second chance if you have the chips (unless of course you have a hand on the second time around). You don't want it to be obvious that you do this all the time with nothing. Again, you don't expect a call from him – but he might take a risk with AT+ or any pair – so be prepared. You need the blinds however so try and take them. So the pattern is that you do it the first chance you get. The second chance you get, you fold unless you have A7+, any pair, KT+, QJ+.

\*another good play is to do the following at a tight table. Raise allin the first chance you get – sb vs. bb. Next time FOLD your sb to his bb. The very next hand, no matter what cards you get- when you are on the button, if he is in the SB and the BB is another equal stack to you, raise ALLin to steal the BB and SB (if the guy in late folds to you). This is a good play because you just folded your sb to his bb. He will believe you have something and shouldn't call unless he has AQ+, JJ+. The bb will think nothing of your move and will only call with premium hand as well.

#### He's big blind, you are late or on the button

You can raise all in with any pair, any AT+ or KJ+ - **IF NO ONE ELSE HAS ENTERED THE POT**, if someone else has entered the pot, say the guy in late raises all-in, you have AJ. If your playing style vs. the raiser is fearless, you can call his all in, and push the rest of your chips all in to attack the big blind as well.

AT+, KJ+ and any pair is fairly standard bubble play. You have to take risks.

**IP: Remember to stay afloat! In some cases, you must play almost any hand just to keep from going under and becoming a big short stack target! You don't want to become the smallest stack with a small chip count.**

## **Normal Play**

### **When is this used?**

Normal play is used when you are in a tough spot usually. Most of the time you are a short stack and are expecting callers (fold equity is zero basically). If you are the short stack, you should not play overly aggressive against anyone unless you have a decent hand or are forced to because the blinds are about to take you out. You don't play aggressive because you typically will be called since your stack is so small.

**Plays allowed: Check it down, all in**

### **How to play it**

#### General:

You will be playing the cards only. You are looking for good hands to take a stand with and hopefully double up.

#### Call his all in?

If you are instructed to play normal against someone, you must think in terms of odds. What might he have vs. what I currently have. You must also think in terms of where you are at in the tourney. If the blinds are going to take you out within 1-2 rounds (normally this is the case), you should consider calling an all in with any pair, any AT+. Things that can affect this are if a medium stack is raising all-in and a big stack is acting behind him. You are the small stack. You must know that he has a good hand – he risked the tourney by going all-in

when he really didn't have to. The big stack could have easily called him. Because of this, assume he has AQ,AK or at least a pair. Make your decision based on your hand – call only if you are completely pot committed, you have AQ+, you have a pair.

#### He's big blind, you are small blind

If he is in the big blind, you will raise his blind with any pocket pair, any A8+, KJ+. He will probably call with any two cards in most cases. This is good since you have a decent shot at doubling up with these good hands.

#### He's big blind, you are late or on the button

You can raise all in with any pair, any AT+ or KJ+ - IF NO ONE ELSE HAS ENTERED THE POT

Also, if the blind is about to take you out on the next turn, raise all-in with J9o+, Q9o+, any king, any ace or any pair. The next hand(when you are in the big blind), you'll be pot committed and will call with any two cards.

## **Passive Play**

### **When is this used?**

Passive play looks pathetic. It actually is. You are voluntarily not getting into hands against certain players – even if you're sure you have good odds. We have this style because some times in a SNG, you will have a very good or average chance of finishing ITM, but can blow your chance with no real gain (except maybe increasing your chance of ITM finish by a little bit). Again, the risk/reward is not there. For example, in case 3, if you are the small stack – and there are two other small stacks – one big stack, you do not want to raise the big stack unless you have a huge hand (AK, QQ, KK, AA). The reason why is that he will probably call, and you DON'T want a coin flip. You don't even want 60/40 – 70/30 is barely ok. In this case, if you win you are still a small stack and still won't be in the money. If you lose, you're out of the tourney. The risk/reward equation makes it not worth it. So if you are passive, you are playing way way way way tight. This only makes sense in tourneys – when not acting can get you placed ITM.



## **Plays allowed: Check it down, allin**

### **How to play it**

#### General:

Against the big stack, you basically will only play premium hands. You want odds of 70/30 or better!

#### Call his allin?

Only with AK, JJ+.

#### He's big blind, you are small blind

AK, TT – raise allin (expect a call and hope it holds)

#### He's big blind, you are late or on the button

Forget it. Well.. not quite. You can raise ALLIN with AK, JJ+.

## **Getting out of the bubble and ITM**

You want to finish the bubble with a big stack and have a decent chance at taking first – ideally. Sometimes, this just isn't possible – you'll settle for at least a third place finish (CASE 3: players B,C,D). If you play as we instruct, you should maximize your odds to make it ITM. If you notice you are barely making it ITM and have lots of 3<sup>rd</sup> place finishes, you probably need to be more aggressive on the bubble. Are you pushing all-in or raising? Are you calling big blinds from small blind? Keep it simple and follow our bubble rules. You can add your own tricks as you see opportunities. You should really be going only all-in when you're on the bubble and blinds are big ( not in the bubble early stage).

### **Typical bubble play example:**

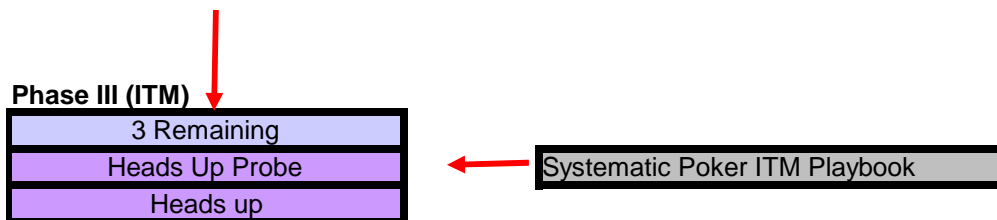
Bubble play will vary wildly. People are generally only raising all-in, mostly stealing blinds. Round you go, like a merry go round. Usually the first person in the pot will go all-in and no one will call. They will pick up the blind. This might happen for what seems like an eternity.

In these cases, the most aggressive player will win. They will keep stealing blinds and slowly become a big stack – CASE 1. They will then continue to beat up on people. You'll not ice that they rarely call though. They raise a lot, but will also fold a lot. This is a good player. When they do call, they either have a huge stack compared to the raiser, or they have AK, JJ+.

The play will go round and round until someone gains a real edge – or someone becomes an easy target. Then the bubble will explode and bullets will start flying. The target is a bad place to be in, this is why you want to never become the shortest stack (with a small stack). It's ok if you are the shortest but everyone has around 3000. So what if you have 3000, everyone else has 3200 or more. This is not what we mean by short stack target. A short stack target will have about 0-2000 chips. They are a target because when they raise all-in, the big blind will normally have good odds to call if they have any semi-decent hand at all (any pair, any two face cards, etc). They will get called eventually and the bubble will either pop – or there will be a new short stack in trouble. This is how it goes. Just make sure you stay afloat and stick to the rules we provide above. When in doubt – don't be afraid to pull the trigger. It is much better to play too aggressive on the bubble than too passive. Good luck on the bubble!

## VII. PHASE III "ITM"

Once you make it ITM, you are getting paid! Congratulations. But, before you go popping the Champaign bottle, remember that landing ITM isn't that uncommon (35-45% for a winning player). What you want is a 1<sup>st</sup> place finish. Remember the first couple chapters we discussed the importance of having 1<sup>st</sup> place finishes. Review those charts if you are confused. In order to get the first place finishes – you must be pushing all-in on the bubble. The times you get lucky and double up are the times when you are positioned well for a first place finish. Still not a guarantee though.



Once you are in the money, you will go through three stages. The "3-Remaining" stage is first. In this stage, you'll take notes of any super donkeys (pushing all-in way too often, calling raises with bad hands). You'll use this information to gauge how aggressive you will play while in this stage.

If you make it out of this stage intact, you will be heads up. Hopefully at least with an even stack. When heads up, you initially have a probe stage – where you try to gain information on your opponents style. This is an easy thing to do – low limit heads up SNG's. Many pros play the same way (myself included) which can make their heads up style predictable. Note: You aren't studying their play for another days tournament – the information is used while you are playing the current SNG.

As you learn your opponent's style, you'll start applying moves to try and trap or finish the tourney off with super aggressive play. Hopefully you win! The key is patience!

# **Systematic Poker Phase III Playbook**

The following plays are standard plays that we will use on occasion. We explain them in this section. They are fairly basic moves and can be used in almost all stages. We've highlighted them as needed.

## **Total Bluff**

ITM you do this more often. It is actually allowed. You bet after the flop even though you have nothing at all.

## **ALL-in reraise**

During normal ITM play – your standard move will either be all-in, or reraise all-in. The blinds are over 400/200 and you can't mess around with raises. There are no cases where you should be thinking of raising except one.

## **Checking it down..**

Just like on the bubble – you call an alin from the short stack and the two big stacks check it down. Hopefully one of them win and they can battle it out for 1<sup>st</sup> place. Only violate this rule if you are clearly going to win (nut straight – nut flush – full house –set).

## **Other Key Topics for PHASE III (ITM)**

### **Common Errors**

Many novices get to the bubble and its almost like a huge sigh of relief is echoed into the stratosphere while the donkey starts donking away his stack to come in a nice 3<sup>rd</sup> place. All the built up pressure of folding, stealing blinds to survive has culminated and now all they can do is push all-in with anything and call with weak hands. This is very very common in the lower limit SNG's. Don't make this mistake. Understand that you can not relax until you hit 1<sup>st</sup> place. Remember

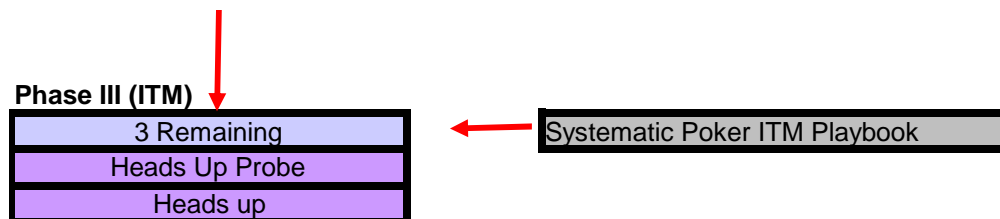
one 1<sup>st</sup> place finish is equivalent to about 4 3<sup>rd</sup> place finishes! This is crazy if you think about it...

### **Don't be the short stack!**

This concept applies to ITM play as well. You don't want to be the target for third place – if at all possible.

## **The “3 Remaining” Stage**

Here's the chart for a reminder...



### **The Basics**

Usually, when you get ITM, you'll be in one of four situations. These are self explanatory and are very similar to the bubble cases from the previous chapter.

CASE 1.

Player	% of total	Total Chips
A	0.5	6750
B	0.35	4725
C	0.15	2025

CASE 3.

Player	% of total	Total Chips
A	0.33	4455
B	0.33	4455
C	0.33	4455

CASE 3.

Player	% of total	Total Chips
A	0.7	9450
B	0.15	2025
C	0.15	2025

CASE 4.

Player	% of total	Total Chips
A	0.5	6750
B	0.25	3375
C	0.25	3375

In the above situations (CASE 1-4), your play will can vary a little bit (not quite as much as the bubble). The concepts behind our strategy is the same as it's always been. Take risks when forced to (don't want to be the short stack - like in CASE 1). Better to take a shot at the blinds with an all-in than to be blinded away. The advantage to taking a shot is that if you get lucky (or win the coin flip), you are in great position for first place. If you do nothing you'll get third after being blinded away. You must act **before** this happens.

Initially when you start the ITM phase, you should be carefully observing the other two players. Notice that this is the first time in our entire SNG where we ask you to do this. When you observe their play, take note if they seem to be impatient or are playing tired. This is a state that a new player can get into when they get ITM (pros can have this happen as well!). You are probably about 30-45 minutes into the SNG and just got passed the most stressful part of the SNG – the bubble. A sense of relief comes over you and before you know it, you are a super aggressive (tilt-like) donkey. Raising the BB from SB with any hand, calling raises, limping in, crazy play. When this happens, you should pay attention because in some cases you will

take advantage of it by playing overly aggressive against this player or by playing extremely passive and letting the big stack take him out.

## Hands to Play

While in this stage, you should be playing normal poker. Basic poker for three person pots (late in tourneys), is to do the following:

### No-one in the pot yet

Raise ALL IN from any position (assuming no-one is in the pot yet) with: 22-AA, A8s+, KJs+, ATo+. This is pretty much the top 10% of all hands (plus any pocket pair). You are hoping to steal the pot.

### Someone has already entered the pot (raised or is all-in)

If someone has raised already, reraise all-in with the following: TT+, AT+, KQ+

### If you are about to become the lone short stack – or are the short stack and about to be blinded out

Raise ALL IN from any position with: Any pair, any Ace, K7+, any two face cards, Q8+, J9+ This is pretty much the top 30% of all hands (plus any pocket pair). You are hoping to steal the pot or if you're called to get lucky and win.

### Key Idea to maximize profits.

In some cases, the odds of you getting first place are extremely slim, but the odds of a second place are about even. CASE 3.

CASE 3.

Player	% of total	Total Chips
A	0.7	9450
B	0.15	2025
C	0.15	2025

When in this case, you should try as hard as you can to not go against the big stack (with premium hand its ok – otherwise don't risk it unless you have no choice – pot committed). You are wanting to get your money in against the other short stack. The reason has to do with the risk/reward equation again. If you go against the big stack on a coin flip (most hands are really just coin flips or coin flips +/- 10%), you will win 50% and lose 50%. If you lose, you have 3<sup>rd</sup> place. If you win, your placing doesn't change. Sure, its more likely that you'll get 2<sup>nd</sup> or maybe even 1<sup>st</sup> – but your real placing hasn't changed. If you

go against the other short stack on a coin flip, if you win, you have 2<sup>nd</sup> place in guaranteed. If you lose you still have 3<sup>rd</sup>. So it should be clear that it is in your best interest to go against the other short stack if given the choice. Things happen fast and usually you can pick your battle against the player you want to pick it against. If you are in the SB and the other short stack is in the BB, blinds are 400/200, I'll go all-in with pretty much any 2 cards just because of the fold equity + the chance I'll win + the jump in placing if I do win. I'll make that bet every time. Of course if it's very clear that you will have a huge edge against the big stack, you should still call their raise or bet to steal their blind. Just be aware that the ideal is to do this against the short stack.

### **Typical "3 remaining" example**

Basically with three people left, it will look a lot like the bubble looked. People betting with anything when their stack count starts to get in danger. People only calling all-ins with very good starting hands. If all players are decent, the results of this stage will really end up being that whoever gets lucky and wins a coin flip- will become the favorite for coming in first. The unlucky loser of the coin flip will find himself in 3<sup>rd</sup> place.

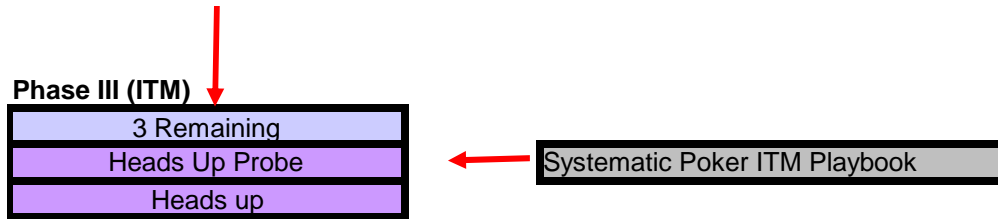
If one player is playing way too many hands, you can tighten up and either watch him get knocked out, or go ahead reraise him all-in with KJ/KQ or some other hand and watch him fold. Loosing all the blinds he just stole. Or he might call and actually have a hand. Lots can happen. You must focus on solid poker at this stage. If he's in a lot of pots, lower your standards. Look for a chance to come over the top – reraise all-in with any pair, any two face cards, etc.

Eventually someone will go all-in with pocket pair and an AK will call. Coin flip happens and boom – you're heads up or out in third place.



# Heads up Probe Stage

Here's the chart for a reminder...



## Basic reason for this stage

Heads up comes down to a very simple approach. Do the opposite of what your opponent does. In order to know what he's doing, you must use a couple tricks to figure him out.

## Basic Play for this Stage

Since you are heads up, your playing style will depend on a couple different things.

While you are trying to figure out your opponents style, play the following basic way:

### **From SB:**

*Raise with any pair, J9o+, Q8o+, K4o+, any ace, 89s+, Q6s+, any K.*

*Call the big blind with any other hand – hoping to get lucky and build a trap.*

### **From BB:**

#### Facing a raise:

*Reraise allin with Any pair, A3s+, K8s+ QTs+A7o+, KTo+, QJo+.*

*Call the raise if it is relatively small (with any 2 cards) or if your stack is huge. You are looking for a good opportunity to trap your opponent.*

#### Facing a Call:

*Reraise allin with any pair, any Ace, any two face cards.*

*Check with anything else.*

## **Classifications**

As you grind through the heads up tourney, take note of how your opponent is playing. If you can determine a playing style, it will help you win the tourney. It will give you a slight edge.

### 1. Way Too Tight (easiest to beat):

- a. This person will fold his small blind to your big blind more than half the time.
- b. This person will rarely raise before the flop.
- c. After the flop, if this person checks to you and you bet, they will fold almost every time. Every once in a while – they will reraise you allin.
- d. Every once in a while, the flop comes and they will bet. If you call or reraise, they will push all-in.
- e. They will never really bluff against you. If you check on the flop, turn card comes – if you bet they will almost always fold.
- f. If you raise their blind 3BB – they will fold almost all the time.
- g. If they do call your blind, and you reraise them 3BB, they will almost always fold.

### 2. Way too loose (about average to beat)

- a. This person will always at least call your big blind – he will never fold sb to bb. (this is actually a good move)
- b. This person will raise often before the flop. In fact, many times they will go all-in.
- c. After the flop, if you check – they will make a bet almost every time. (usually they miss the flop – remember 70% of the time – you will miss the flop – its clear that they can't be hitting the flop every time – they are definitely bluffing)

- d. After the flop, if you check and they check, turn comes and you bet, they reraise all-in (they flopped a monster hand and are trying to trap you)
  - e. As the heads up session progresses, they will go all-in more and more. It is clear that they are looking tired and bored – just want to end it.
  - f. Many times if they raise before the flop (they do this a lot) if you come over the top all-in, they will fold often.
  - g. After the flop, you'll notice that they will call your bets if they have middle pair vs. your top pair. They will rarely fold if they have any piece of the flop. They will almost always stick around to see the river.
  - h. If they do call your blind, and you reraise them 3BB, they will almost always call.
3. Very good player (tough to beat)
- a. This person will always at least call your big blind – he will never fold sb to bb. (this is actually a good move)
  - b. This person will raise/call the flop about an equal number of times. No real pattern.
  - c. After the flop, if you check – they will make a bet only some of the time (maybe 50%) – they are mixing up their steals with real hands apparently
  - d. After the flop, if you check and they check, turn comes and you bet, they reraise all-in only part of the time. Some times they will actually fold.
  - e. As the heads up session progresses, If you start going all-in a lot, they will adjust and start calling your all-ins.

### **Making a decision (if possible)**

There are really three type of players (too tight, too loose, tough-good). You need to see if you can identify your opponents playing style and experience level. If you can't identify them clearly – then don't sweat it. In time, their play should become apparent and you will at least have a general feel for their style of play.

There are some specific ways you can try to discern their style:

Pre flop

- Take note of what he does when you raise 3BB. – if he folds most of the time – he's probably tight.

- o Take note of what he does when you call his blind – if he mostly checks he’s playing tight. If he seems to reraise you almost all the time, he’s loose.
- o If he pushes allin a lot he’s loose. This is another big give away. Especially if he gets to a point where all he does is go allin – stops raising all together.

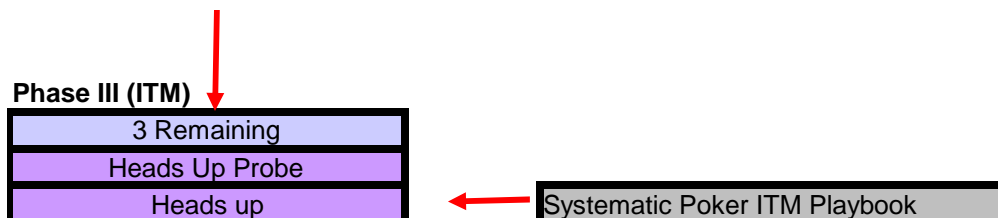
Post flop

- o After the flop, comes go ahead and check to him. If he bets almost every time you do this, he’s playing loose. If he usually checks back, he’s tight.
- o If you make a hand, go ahead and check after the flop. If he bets, reraise him. If he folds, you know he likes to bluff after the flop – loose. If he doesn’t ever bet into you (you can never check raise) you know he’s playing tight. This is a big dead give away. Your check raises never work. He just checks and a new card comes.

It can be very hard to gauge how a player is playing. But you must try. This is a key to being a consistent / winning heads up player.

## Heads up Probe Stage

Here’s the chart for a reminder...



## Apply what you’ve learned

After some time, you should be starting to get a feel for how your opponent plays. Many players will play a basic tight game. These are the easiest to beat. Others will play too loose. These are tougher but still easy enough to beat. The last kind is a pro – these are tough to beat. They mix it up. You never really know where they are at.

## **Playing against “too tight” players heads up**

You'll know your opponent is too tight, because he will never be caught bluffing against you. Anytime you see his hand, he always has a decent one.

If you bet, he will fold about 70% of the time. The times he does call, he plays the hand strong. If you do a small reraise – you can see what he has on occasion. He'll bet after the flop and you can reraise a small amount. He will call and then check it down. He'll flip over top pair and you'll lose with your garbage.

If you raise all-in he will rarely call you. In fact, you could do it 5 times in a row and he won't call. When he does call he has AT+ or pocket pair.

To beat a tight player it's actually fairly easy. Here's what you do:

Play the basic heads up strategy from the head up probe stage. After the flop, always make a small bet to steal the pot. See as many flops as you can. If you flop the top pair – slow play it – hoping to trap him with a weak kicker or perhaps middle pair. Since he's tight, your best bet is to put pressure on him by going all-in with any raising hand. He should fold most of the time. Play aggressive – as blinds continue to grow, keep the all-ins coming. He will be reluctant to call your all-ins unless he has a very nice starting hand.

When he does bet – you believe him. Fold if he does a big reraise after the flop.

Play basic poker and believe his bets. When you have decent starting hands as defined in the probe section, you will be going all-in. Once the blinds hit about 1200/600, you will go all-in every hand from the SB.

## **Playing against “too loose” players heads up**

It should be obvious your opponent is too loose when he goes all-in way too often. He will do this almost all the time as blinds increase. If you call the BB from the SB, like clock work – he'll reraise all-in.

The key to beating these players is to wait for a decent hand and then instead of raising – just check and then reraise all in when he raises you. You need to trap them. They will steal lots of your blinds, but

one decent reraise all-in will get them all back. So don't sweat it if he's stealing a couple of your blinds.

The best way to deal with a loose player – is to push all-in anytime you have a top 30% hand. If you have a premium hand AQ+, TT+, you try to trap him by checking and letting him raise you. Many times its quite amazing how often people will actually take the bait. Set a trap and catch him off guard.

Also – remember that typically what this person is doing, is going all-in with pretty much any single face card. Remember this –since you can call with Any two face cards – hopefully you'll have him dominated when you do call his all-in finally!

### **Playing against very good players heads up**

The best way to play a player that you sense is quite a bit better than you, is to just push all-in instead of playing tricky. You won't be able to trap these players typically. They won't fall for it. They will bluff you, but as soon as you try to trap them, they will not call the all-in, or reraise your all-in . The donkeys will do this, the pros are much more difficult to trap. You almost need a set or full house to get them. So – instead of dinking around all day trying to trap them, you are better off just going all-in with the top 30% of all hands. This is outlined in the probe section.

Go all-in and hope to get lucky. It should take them a couple blinds before they realize what you're doing. Once they do – look out. They will start calling your all-ins with any top 30% hand. They won't keep giving their chips away. This is the mark of a good player in heads up. They react to your play as you react to theirs.

### **Summary**

Of all the sections in any SNG tourney – the heads up is by far the most complicated to use a system with. There are so many variables that can affect your play. A basic set of rules is not going to work. You need to be adaptive, take note of what they do – do they bluff(if so provide an opportunity for them by checking to them when you have a hand), do they check raise (if so trap them, make a weak looking continuation bet when you actually have the nuts, let them reraise you, then push all-in with your 2pr or set).

For further study, do more research on ITM play. In particular Heads up. This is a very interesting subject. In many ways it should be the easiest. To be good at heads up – you must be very well studied and very patient. You must understand odds – that even with AK, you're really only about a 60/40 favorite to two undercards. Because of this, play super aggressive if your opponent is tight. If he is playing super aggressive or loose, set up a trap for him and reraise all-in with any pair – or even any face card.

For heads up play – if you play aggressive you generally can't go too wrong. You will naturally grow your stack. By the time your opponent takes a stand – you will hopefully be about a 2:1 stack favorite.

As far as technical details go for the system – that is it!

# VIII. Follow Up

## Take notes

Take notes on what works and what doesn't. You should be constantly looking to improve and find your leaks. I know I have some – therefore this system probably has some 😊. Help find those leaks and get them plugged.

The two trickiest parts of this system are knowing when to go all-in while in late position and you want to preserve your stack. You have 89s – and the blind is upon you. Should you go all-in now, or wait one more round – letting the blinds knock me down another couple M's. This is tough stuff! If it were easy – I guess everyone would be making some cash. Try to err on the over aggressive side of things initially. If you find that it just doesn't seem to work right, reread the section and see if you mis-understood something.

You should read and reread this system multiple times. If you see inconsistencies or things don't seem to make sense, email me. I'll respond as quickly as possible!

## Start your own blog

Share your results with the world. Let me know your blog address and fill me in on how its going. Blogs are easy to set up, simply go to [www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com) and follow the directions.

## Keep in touch

Let me know how it is going. Also, if you have any questions or suggestions email me at [info@systematicpoker.com](mailto:info@systematicpoker.com).



## **IX. On a Final Note....**

I want to thank you for expressing interest in this system. This system is extremely hard to come by and can't be reproduced. This makes the systematic poker players a unique group in the online poker realm. Not many people use this system. If you have interest in playing limit games (small 10 person tourneys that last 30minutes to an hour), we have a system for them as wel. The low limit system (this system) is ideal for the new comer to poker who needs to get hands in and taught the basics. It teaches a discipline that can be used to start building a bankroll. Refer to all of our different systems related to poker for more details! Also, since you purchased products from us in the past, use the following promo if you decide to buy more of our products:

**PROMO30 – this will give you a 30% discount on all of our products.**

Systematic Poker is an educational experience. It is somewhat flying in the face of traditional poker education that says you must play the person, not the cards.

The SNG system has more detail than any other system out there today. I can tell you that the information contained on these pages is the result of years of playing and experience. Conveying this information in a clear and consistent way is a big challenge. Hopefully this manual helps you. If you have suggestions on ways to improve it or perhaps things that need more clarification – please let me know.

Thanks again for reading and best of luck in all that you do (not just poker).

Take care and regards....

