

JAMIE'S

POKER NOTES



for Kez and Katie

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BASICS



POKER-HAND RANKINGS

A poker hand always consists of 5 cards. The player with the winning hand shown wins *the pot*. The exact combination of the player's cards and shared cards (*community cards*) used to make the poker hand depends on the poker game (see the Poker Games section). The highest hand is the hand that is in the highest poker-hand category.

Poker-hand categories are ranked in order from highest to lowest as follows:

#	POKER-HAND CATEGORY	EXAMPLE
1.	Five of a Kind Five cards of the same rank (possible with one or more wild cards).	
2.	Royal Flush Five cards of the same suit, in the sequence A-K-Q-J-10.	
3.	Straight Flush Five cards of the same suit, in sequence. An ace can be high or low.	
4.	Four of a Kind Four cards of the same rank.	
5.	Full House Three cards of the same rank, plus a pair.	
6.	Flush Five cards of the same suit in any order.	
7.	Straight Five cards of any suit, in sequence. An ace can be high or low.	
8.	Three of a Kind Three cards of the same rank.	
9.	Two Pair Two sets of two cards of the same rank.	
10.	One Pair Two cards of the same rank.	
11.	High Card The highest card among the five.	

A poker hand consists of the main cards and *kickers*. Kickers are cards which don't contribute to the poker-hand category. For example, the hand 3♣ 3♦ 3♥ A♠ K♥ is a three-of-a-kind. The main cards are the 3♣, 3♦ and 3♥, and the two kickers are the A♠ and K♥.

Ties are broken as follows:

- For five-of-a-kind, four-of-a-kind, three-of-a-kind and one-pair, the main cards are compared first, followed by kickers. Aces count as high.
- For two-pair, the higher pair is compared first, followed by the lower pair, then kicker. Aces count as high.
- For full-house, the three-of-a-kind is compared first, followed by the pair. Aces count as high.
- For straight-flush and straight, the highest card is compared. Aces count as high in A-K-Q-J-10 and low in 5-4-3-2-A. For royal-flush, it will always be a tie.
- For flush and high-card, the highest card is compared first, followed by the second highest card, then third highest card, and so on. Aces count as high.

There is no rank of suits. If there is still a tie, the pot is split equally.

In *high games*, the highest hand wins. In *low games*, the lowest hand wins. In *hi/lo games*, the pot is split between the highest and the lowest hand (see the Poker Games section).

WILD CARDS

Wild cards are cards which can substitute for other cards in a poker hand.

Serious poker games usually don't include wild cards. Casual games such as Five Card Draw and Dealer's Choice often have wild cards (see the Poker Games section).

A wild card can be a true wild card (fully wild) or a *bug*. A fully wild card can act as any card. A bug (often a joker) can only act as an ace unless it is used to complete a royal-flush, straight-flush, flush or straight. When wild cards are used, the highest possible hand is five-of-a-kind, which beats a royal flush.

Some commonly used wild cards are:

- One or two jokers added to the deck
- *One-eyed jacks* (J ♥, J ♠)
- *One-eyed cards* (J ♥, J ♠, K ♦)
- Twos (also called *deuces*)



CASH GAMES VS TOURNAMENTS

There are generally two types of poker games: cash games and tournaments.

In cash games, chips are equivalent to money. Players buy chips according to their cash value. Any chips a player wins or loses correspond to money won or lost. After the game, players exchange their chips back into cash and can assess their game by how much money they won or lost.

In tournaments, chips don't represent money – instead they represent tournament points or tournament dollars. Players enter the tournament by paying an entry cost and receiving a predetermined starting stack of chips. The starting stack amount has no relevance outside the tournament. As the tournament progresses, players lose all their chips. When this happens to a player, they are out of the tournament. Eventually one player wins all the chips. This player is the tournament winner. The person who was last to go out has 2nd place, and so on. Players earn money through cash prizes, for 1st place, 2nd place, 3rd place, etc. The prize pool comes from the entrance fees minus overhead costs.

Hard time limits can be put on both cash games and tournaments if needed.

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

Poker can be played by 2 to at least 6 players depending on the game. For example Texas Hold'em has a maximum of 11 players and Seven Card Stud has a maximum of 8 players.

For tournaments, the number of players is only limited by the facilities available. Players are divided up into *tables* (10 players per table for Texas Hold'em tournaments). As players from each table are eliminated, the winners from different tables are combined together into new tables and so on until there is only a single table left where the overall winner is determined.

EQUIPMENT

The following equipment is needed to play poker:

- A 52-card deck of playing cards (plus joker(s) if using joker wilds) – two alternating decks speeds up the game.
- Poker chips.
- A dealer button.
- An alarm/timer/stopwatch/app when using blind levels and/or time limits.
- Big blind and small blind buttons (optional).
- An all-in button (optional).



THE DEALER

The dealer is the player who, in principle, deals cards and is dealt cards last.

At the start of a game, the dealer is determined randomly. The dealer has a *dealer button* (or simply called *the button*) in front of them which indicates this role (see the Equipment section). After each hand, the dealer role moves to the next player in clockwise order.

In home games, the dealer is responsible for handling and dealing cards, mucking cards, managing gameplay and handling chips for the pot. In casinos and professional games, cards and chips are actually handled by a *croupier*: a trained person who doesn't play, but carries out the duties of dealing on behalf of the player who has the dealer button.

HANDS AND BETTING ROUNDS

Poker is played in *hands* (also called *plays*). Before the hand begins, certain players may have to put in forced bets (antes and/or blinds) depending on the poker game. Then a number of *betting rounds* take place where players bet that they have the winning poker hand using *chips*. Chips bet are put in the middle of the table called *the pot*. Finally a showdown takes place where players reveal their poker hands to determine who wins the pot.

Before each betting round, some dealing takes place. This dealing may involve the initial deal, players receiving more cards, cards being laid down in the center, or players exchanging cards for new ones. The exact details of the betting rounds depends on the poker game (see the Poker Games section).

In a betting round, players place bets. The player to act first is determined according to the rules of the particular poker game for that particular betting round. (see the Poker Games section). Then each player can act in turn going clockwise from the first player to act. Play continues until the current bet is called or until all but one player folds. (see Actions section). A player wishing to remain in play must match the same contributions that other players have made towards the pot. As each betting round finishes, the chips bet are added to the pot. At the end of each betting round, all players still in play will have contributed equal amounts to the pot.

After all betting rounds have finished, the *showdown* takes place: players lay down cards to see which player has the winning poker hand. The winner takes the chips from the pot. If there is only one player left still in play, they take the pot without having to reveal their cards.

After the showdown and payout, the dealer role passes to the next player to the dealer's left and a new hand begins.

BETTING LIMITS

A poker game typically has one of three betting limits: *fixed limit*, *pot limit* or *no limit*.

Fixed Limit

A player can only bet or raise by a given fixed limit. It is common to have one fixed limit in earlier betting rounds called the *small bet* and one fixed limit in later rounds called the *big bet* which is double the small bet (e.g. a “\$5-\$10 limit” has a small bet of \$5 and a big bet of \$10).

There is usually a *maximum number of raises* of 3 (sometimes 4). The maximum number of raises is based on the fixed-limit for that round, so if the fixed limit is \$5, then the betting cannot go above \$20 (\$5 bet + \$5 × 3 raises). The bet and three raises are named: *the bet*, *the raise*, *the re-raise*, and *the cap*. After this, only calls can be made. This rule may also be expressed as a *maximum number of bets* of 4. When there are only two players left at the start of the betting round (a *heads up*), the maximum-number-of-raises rule is usually not followed as either player can stop the raises anytime by calling. There is a variation on fixed-limit betting called *spread-limit* which allows bets within a fixed range.

Cash games usually have fixed-limit betting.

Pot Limit

A player can make any bet or raise equal to or higher than the current bet (when opening, this is a given *minimum bet*), but cannot raise by more than *the size of the pot* or their stack size (*table stakes*). The size of the pot is calculated as the total amount in the pot now plus the amount required to call the current bet/raise. There is no limit to the number of raises. There is a variation on pot-limit betting called *half-pot-limit* based on half the size of the pot.

No Limit

A player can make any bet or raise equal to or higher than the current bet (when opening, this is a given *minimum bet*), but no more than their stack size (*table stakes*). There is no limit to the number of raises.

Tournaments usually have no-limit betting.

BLINDS

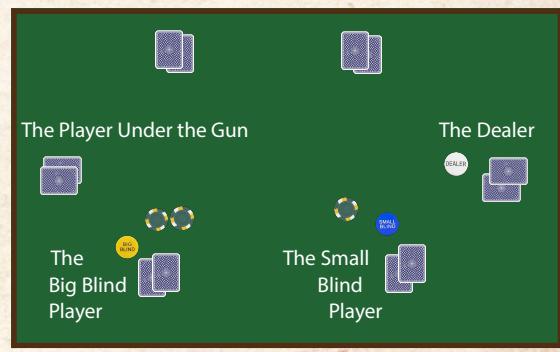
Some games use *blinds*: forced bets that are made before the dealing begins.

There are usually two blinds: *the small blind* and *the big blind*. The big blind is the *minimum bet/small bet* and the small blind is half of the big blind rounded down. A blind of “25/50” means the small blind is 25 and the big blind/minimum bet/small bet is 50. For example, in a \$10-\$20 fixed-limit cash game, the blinds are \$5/\$10. In a \$5-\$10 fixed-limit cash game, the blinds are \$2/\$5.

The small blind is assigned to the player to the left of the dealer and the big blind is assigned to the player to the left of the small blind. For two players (*head-to-head*), the dealer is assigned the small blind and the other player is assigned the big blind. Blind buttons can be used to identify players if helpful.

At the start of the hand before dealing, the small blind and big blind players must put in their respective amounts.

In the first round of betting, the person to the left of the big blind (the player *under the gun*) acts first. They cannot check as there is a current bet (the big blind). The big blind is the amount needed to call the bet. For two players, the dealer (the small blind player) acts first.



Blinds and positions using a “25/50” blind

The small blind player only needs to add the extra chips on top of their small blind to call the big blind.

If the big blind player is initially called at the end of the first turn around the table (i.e. no raises by other players), they have the special options to: *raise* (continues the round) or *check* (ends the round using an effective call of zero).

Blinds are only applicable on the first round. On subsequent rounds, there are no blinds: typically the person to the left of the dealer acts first and *checks* are allowed.

ANTE

For some games, an *ante* is used: a starting bet needed to play the hand. All players that wish to play the hand, must put in the ante before dealing begins.

Tournaments usually don't have an ante at the start, but may have one in later levels.



CHIP VALUES

The following are recommended values for chip colors using standard poker chip set colors:

TOURNAMENT GAMES		
Color	Chip	Tournament Value
Green		25
Navy/Black		100
Purple		500
Yellow		1,000
Red		5,000
Light Blue		25,000
White		100,000

CASH GAMES			
Color	Chip	Casino Cash Value	Low-Stakes Cash Value
White		\$1	1¢
Red		\$5	5¢
Light Blue		\$10	10¢
Green		\$25	25¢
Navy/Black		\$100	\$1.00
Purple		\$500	\$5.00
Yellow		\$1,000	\$10.00

The cash-chip colors that casinos use for values vary, but the most common colors used are: white for \$1, red for \$5, light blue for \$10, green for \$25, navy blue or black for \$100, purple for \$500 and yellow for \$1,000. Higher values vary widely.

Casinos and professional tournaments don't use their cash chips for tournaments. Instead they have a different set of tournament chips. Tournament-chip colors are usually similar to casino-chip colors for 25 to 1,000, and use orange for 5,000. Higher values vary widely and even vary in the same tournament from year to year.

TOURNAMENT STRUCTURE

At the start of a tournament, each player pays the *buy-in* cost and receives tournament chips of the predetermined starting stack size. The prize pool is the buy-ins of all the players minus any expenses. This prize pool breakdown is predetermined for 1st place, 2nd place, 3rd place, etc.

Some common breakdowns for the prize pool are:

NO. OF PLAYERS	NO. OF PRIZES	PRIZE POOL BREAKDOWN
2	1	100%
3-6	2	75%, 25%
7-10	3	50%, 30%, 20%

NO. OF PLAYERS	NO. OF PRIZES	PRIZE POOL BREAKDOWN
11-15	4	40%, 30%, 20%, 10%
16-20	5	40%, 25%, 20%, 10%, 5%
21-27	6	36%, 22%, 16%, 12%, 8%, 6%

Tournaments are played in *levels*: timed play periods usually 10 minutes, 15 minutes or 20 minutes long. Breaks can be scheduled (e.g. a break after every three levels). The small blind/big blind amounts increase for each level in accordance with a *blind structure* (see the Blind Structures section). When the level time is up, any hand still in play is completed before moving to the next level (a hand begins when the first card is dealt).

The starting stack size is usually between the starting big blind $\times 50$ and the starting big blind $\times 100$ (e.g. for starting blinds 25/50, the starting amount is between 2,500 and 5,000). The higher the starting amount, the longer the tournament.

Re-buys may be allowed for players who lose all their chips or if their chips fall below the starting amount before a predefined allotted time (e.g. before the first break). The player pays the buy-in cost again and receives a new starting stack. They may have to forfeit any chips they had before. Re-buys are normally limited to one per player. For casual tournaments, re-buys might be free and might be a smaller amount (e.g. half the starting amount).

BLIND STRUCTURES

In tournaments, it is common to have a blind structure which determines the blinds at any given time. The following are commonly-used blind structures for 10 levels. The faster the blinds increase, the shorter the tournament.

TOURNAMENT CHIPS (BLINDS STARTING AT 25/50)				CASH CHIPS (BLINDS STARTING AT \$1/\$2)		
	Gradually-Increasing	Steadily-Increasing	Rapidly-Increasing	Gradually-Increasing	Steadily-Increasing	Rapidly-Increasing
1	25/50	25/50	25/50	\$1/\$2	\$1/\$2	\$1/\$2
2	50/100	50/100	50/100	\$2/\$4	\$2/\$4	\$2/\$4
3	75/150	75/150	100/200	\$3/\$6	\$3/\$6	\$5/\$10
4	100/200	100/200	200/400	\$4/\$8	\$5/\$10	\$10/\$20
5	125/250	150/300	500/1,000	\$5/\$10	\$7/\$14	\$25/\$50
6	150/300	200/400	1,000/2,000	\$6/\$12	\$10/\$20	\$50/\$100
7	175/350	300/600	2,000/4,000	\$7/\$14	\$15/\$30	\$100/\$200
8	200/400	500/1,000	5,000/10,000	\$8/\$16	\$25/\$50	\$250/\$500
9	225/450	800/1,600	10,000/20,000	\$9/\$18	\$40/\$80	\$500/\$1,000
10	250/500	1,500/3,000	20,000/30,000	\$10/\$20	\$75/\$150	\$1,000/\$2,000

It is common to assign breaks within the blind structure (e.g. a break after every three levels).

Having a hard time limit or maximum number of levels in addition to the blind structure may be useful to guarantee that the tournament doesn't go overtime. The player with the most chips at the end wins in such cases.

Managing a blind structure can be as simple as using a blind structure table and a stopwatch/alarm, but there are also poker-blind-structure apps available for smartphones.



DEALING

Seating and first dealer is determined randomly. The dealer receives the dealer button. A professional *croupier* may carry out all dealing on behalf of the dealer.

The dealer shuffles the deck at least four times, then gives the deck to the person to the right to *cut the deck*. The dealer puts the deck back together and deals the initial cards.



Any time when more cards are needed from the deck, the dealer *burns a card* first (to prevent reading marked cards). To burn a card, the dealer places it face down on the table in *a burn pile* either in front of them or under the pot. Burn cards are placed in the burn pile such that they are spread out enough for players to be able to count all the burn cards.

Sometimes *community cards* need to be dealt face up. The dealer does the following:

1. The dealer politely taps the table twice to let the players know that the betting round has finished and the new community cards(s) are about to be dealt.
2. The dealer burns a card (see above).
3. If a single community card is to be dealt, the dealer deals it face up. If multiple community cards are to be dealt together (e.g. the flop), they deal the cards face down in a single straightened pile, then turn them face up as a single straightened pile, then spread them out in a single action.

The dealer also *mucks* cards (puts cards in a face-down discard pile). The dealer takes any cards discarded by players (which are always put and remain face down) and puts them in the muck pile next to them, but not with the burn pile or their own cards.

After the final round of betting and showdown, the player to the left becomes the new dealer and takes the dealer button.

ACTIONS

During a round of betting, when it is a player's turn to act, they have some of the following actions:

Fold

A player forfeits their hand by placing the cards face down on the table. Tossing their cards to the dealer for easy mucking is fine as long as the cards remain face down and don't land on the community cards.

Check

When there is no current bet (blinds count as a current bet), a player stays in play without betting any chips: effectively a bet of zero. They say "Check" or tap twice on the table to signal this.

Bet

When there is no current bet, a player places chips in front of them as the new current bet. This player now becomes *the last aggressive player* (see the Showdowns section). Betting must abide by any betting limits being used.

Call

When there is a current bet, a player places chips to match the bet.

Raise

When there is a current bet, the player places chips that exceed the current bet: this becomes the new current bet. The amount raised must be at least equal to the previous bet or raise. This player now becomes *the last aggressive player* (see the Showdowns section). The raise must abide by any betting limits being used.

If a player doesn't have enough chips to make a bet or raise, they can go *all-in*: betting all their chips even if it doesn't match the minimum-bet requirements. If the bet is a raise by the minimum bet or more, this player now becomes the last aggressive player (see the All-ins section).

During showdown, when it is the player's turn to act, they can do one of the following:

Show

A player places all of their hole cards face up. This is compulsory for the player who was called (the last aggressive player) or the first player to check when all players checked.

Muck

A player places their hole cards face down for mucking as they would when folding. In such a case, they forfeit any claims to the pot(s). This is not allowed in a tournament all-in situation.

ONE-CHIP RULE

During a betting round, once a bet has been made, if a player acts by placing out a single chip which is above the call amount (i.e. a raise amount) without verbally indicating a raise, the placement is not treated as a raise. It is treated as a call with a request to receive change from the over-sized chip.



It is not necessary to use this rule for breaking down chips: a player can always obtain change by verbally requesting it before placing chips.

ALL-INS

An *all-in* bet is when a player puts in all their chips as a bet.



Once the all-in bet is made, the pot, which is now called *the main pot*, is only used for this bet together with the corresponding matching bets from the other players. Any proportion of bets that exceed the all-in bet are kept in another pot called *the side pot* which the all-in player is not entitled to (even if they win the main pot). The all-in player doesn't participate in any further betting, but waits until showdown to possibly win the main pot. If they don't win, they are out of the game.

In fixed-limit and pot-limit games, an all-in bet is only allowed if it doesn't exceed the current betting limit.

An all-in bet is allowed even if it is not enough to call the current bet. If a player cannot make a blind or ante, the all-in bet is allowed as a nominal blind or ante. In short, any time a player needs to act but doesn't have enough chips to continue, they can continue using an all-in bet and that player wins the main pot if they win the showdown. The proportion of previous bets that are above the all-in bet are immediately placed into the side pot. If this side pot only belongs to one player and there are no other active non all-in players available to possibly call the side-pot bet, that player takes the side pot immediately. If there are other active players who haven't called, then betting continues and they must call or raise to stay in: the chips are proportioned towards the main pot and the side pot appropriately.

An all-in bet is allowed even if it is a raise by less than the minimum amount needed for a raise (i.e. not a *full bet*). In such a case it is not counted as a true raise, but rather treated as a call. Any subsequent active players who would not have been entitled to raise (if the all-in bet had not been made), are still not entitled to raise, but can only add the extra chips to maintain their calls (this goes into the main pot). This is known as the *full bet rule*. Some games use a *half bet rule* instead: an all-in bet which is a raise of at least half the required minimum bet counts as a true raise.

If the all-in bet is a raise and is above the minimum raise, it is counted as a normal raise and all subsequent active players can call or re-raise normally.

During an all-in situation, if another player then goes all-in, the same procedure happens for that player and the side pot becomes the new main pot: it is now used as their all-in pot, and a new pot is created as the new side pot. An all-in player can only win their main pot and any previous main pots. In other words, no player can win a pot that they didn't contribute to.

Any player who folds, forfeits all of their claims to all of the pots.

At the end of any betting round, if there is only one or no player who is not all-in, then no more bets are possible. In such a situation, the showdown begins straight away without doing any more betting rounds. In a tournament, all players *open* their cards immediately (no mucking allowed) even if there are still community cards to be tabled. Community cards not yet tabled are then tabled (cards are burned in the usual way) to determine the winner(s) of the pot(s).

SHOWDOWNS

At the end of all betting rounds a showdown takes place to see which player wins the pot.

For an all-in situation even before the last betting round, if at the end of any betting round, there is only one or no active non-all-in player, then further betting is not possible and the showdown takes place immediately. In tournaments, all active players must *open* their cards straight away, to prevent tournament collusion. The remaining community cards are tabled (cards are burnt normally when dealing them out). Finally the winner of each pot is determined and paid out.

In tournaments with an all-in situation, all players must table their cards: mucking cards is not allowed. This rule is in place to prevent tournament collusion in the form of chip dumping. In cash games with an all-in situation, having players open their cards together is not usually done. Players reveal their cards normally (see below). Any players involved in side pots reveal first, followed by those involved in the main pot.

For normal showdowns, once betting has finished, the person who was called in the last round of betting (the *last aggressive player*) must table their cards first. If the last round involved all checks, this is the first checking player. A player in this situation must table their cards face up and cannot muck (there are house rules that allow mucking in this situation, but common practice is that the called player must show and must show first). Other active players may muck their cards without tabling them first if they don't want to claim the pot. If a player mucks during showdown, they forfeit their right to winning even if they have the best hand.

Some players think it is good etiquette for a player with a very strong hand to show first even if they are not first in the show order to allow any other players to muck. Other players think the show order should always be followed.

Some players think it's okay to let the player first in the showdown order muck their cards. Other players think this player should always show their hand as players have called (paid) to see their hand.

In determining the best hand: "*The cards speak for themselves.*" The winner is determined by the best hand showing regardless of whether the player has verbally identified the hand correctly or incorrectly. If a player shows a winning hand, but mistakenly concedes, they still win. When a player shows, all hole cards must be tabled even if not used as part of the five-card poker hand.

Side pots are paid first, followed by the main pot to avoid confusion.

COLORING UP

In tournaments with increasing blinds, after a number of levels, it may be convenient to *color up*: to remove the lowest-value chips from the tournament and bring in new highest-value chips. This is best done in the breaks or when combining tables.

At each table, a player with a large stack size, buys up lowest-value chips from the other players and exchanges these chips combined with some larger chips for some new highest-value chips. The deck is shuffled and cut for the *chip race* to see which players get to have their remainder lowest-value chips exchanged up.

To begin the chip race, all players with remainder lowest-value chips, receive one card face up from the deck for each such chip. All the remainder chips from all players are then gathered up and changed into the next-higher-value chips with any remainder chips rounded up if they are at least half the next chip value, or otherwise just removed. These next-higher-value chips are then distributed to the chip-race players in the order determined by each player's highest card showing in rank and suit (suit ranking: ♣, ♦, ♥, ♠), but only allowing each player to receive, at most, one such chip.

Some casual tournaments don't bother with a chip race. Instead, all players with remainder chips just have these chips exchanged for one higher-value chip.

ETIQUETTE



When players are learning how to play poker, it's understood that mistakes will be made. However, Hollywood and other media often contain misinformation about how poker is played.

Good etiquette occurs when players signal their intent verbally using words “check”, “call”, “raise”, “fold” and/or signal their intent physically by tapping the table (a check), placing the current bet in front of them (a call), placing the raise in front of them (a raise) or placing their cards face down for mucking (a fold).

SPLASHING THE POT

Throwing bets into the pot is not allowed. This is known as *splashing the pot*. Players should calmly place their bets in front of them. Placing chips such that they spread out is fine as long as they don't go into the pot.

STRING BETTING

Putting chips out as a bet or raise in a series of actions is not allowed. This is called *string betting*. This includes calling and then raising together (e.g., “I call your \$50 and raise you \$100”). A warning may be given to the player and the action is treated as a call because the first words were “I call...”. In such a situation, the player takes back the raise amount.

Any chips presented as a bet, call or raise should be placed out together in a single action to avoid *string betting*. If a player feels they need to place the bet in two or more separate actions, they must verbally announce the bet/raise/call first.

HOLDING CARDS AWAY FROM THE TABLE

Holding hole cards away from the table is not allowed in professional games. This includes holding them up at the chest. Cards must be on the table at all times. When they are read, they must remain at the table. Professional players keep their cards in front of them face down. To read the cards, they slightly turn up the cards with their hands surrounding them and lean in to peek without revealing to people behind them.

Unattended hole cards can be left on the table with a card protector or chip placed on top of them to avoid being mistakenly mucked by the dealer during play.

SLOW ROLLING

Making a spectacle during showdown that slows up the showdown procedure is considered very bad etiquette. This is known as *slow rolling*. This includes deliberately showing cards slowly or showing cards one-by-one. Instead players should place their cards on the table normally without delay. However, a player can and should wait before showing if another player is higher in the showdown order and has not showed or mucked yet.

ANGLE SHOOTING

When a player makes moves which are deliberately confusing or deceptive, this is called *angle shooting* and is considered very bad etiquette. This includes trying to see other player's hole cards, deliberately acting out of turn, concealing high-value chips, pretending to do one action while doing another and deliberately and falsely calling a winning hand at showdown.

TABLE STAKES

The most a player can bet, even in no-limit betting, is the chips they have at the table. Throwing in the keys to a car, or a house or tickets for the Titanic are not allowed. A player never needs to fold because they don't have enough chips to match the bet (see the All-In Section).



TEXAS HOLD'EM

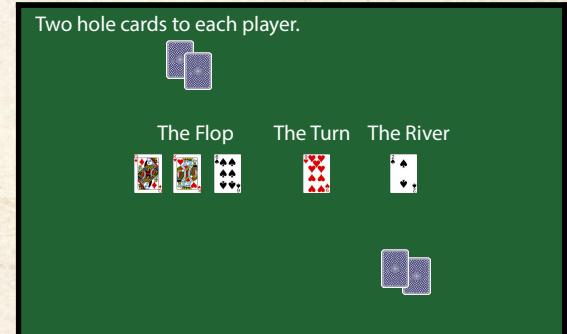
In tournaments, there is typically no-limit betting with increasing blinds. In cash games, there is typically fixed-limit or pot-limit betting and with fixed blinds.

The maximum number of players is 11.

Fixed-limit betting consists of a *small bet* and a *big bet* (e.g. \$5-\$10 limit). There is usually a maximum number of raises of 3. The small blind is usually half (rounded down) of the small bet and the big blind is the small bet (e.g. for a \$5-\$10 limit, the small bet is \$5, the big bet is \$10, the small blind is \$2, the big blind is \$5). In such a case the limit is “\$5-\$10 limit” and the blinds are “\$2/\$5 blinds”). There is sometimes (not usually) a small ante (e.g. for \$5-\$10 limit, the ante is \$1).

No-limit betting means the minimum bet is the big blind for all betting rounds. The small blind is half (rounded down) of the big blind (e.g. for 25/50 blinds, the small blind is 25 and the big blind/minimum bet is 50). There is usually no ante, but in tournaments, there may be an ante in higher levels.

After posting blinds/ante, play proceeds as follows:



Texas Hold'em dealing

1. Two hole cards are dealt face down to each player one at a time.
2. The first round of betting takes place known as the *preflop bet*. The player to the left of the big blind acts first. If the big-blind player's blind is called, they have the special raise/call options.
In fixed-limit games, any bet or raise (apart from the forced small blind) must be the small bet. The maximum number of raises is based on the small bet.
3. A card is burned and then three cards are tabled face up. This set of cards is known as *the flop*. These cards are the first three of five *community cards*.
4. The second round of betting takes place known as the *postflop bet* starting with the player to the left of the dealer.
In fixed-limit games, any bet or raise must be the small bet. The maximum number of raises is based on the small bet.
In no-limit games, the minimum bet is the big blind.
5. A card is burned and then one card is tabled face up with the flop. This card is known as *the turn*.
6. The third round of betting takes place known as *the turn bet* starting with the player to the left of the dealer.
In fixed-limit games, any bet or raise must be the big bet. The maximum number of raises is based on the big bet.
In no-limit games, the minimum bet is the big blind.
7. A card is burned and then one card is tabled face up with the flop and turn. This card is known as *the river*.
8. The forth and final round of betting takes place known as *the river bet* starting with the player to the left of the dealer. Betting is as per the previous betting round.
9. The showdown and payout(s) take place. Highest hand wins. Each player tabling cards has a hand that constitutes the highest hand possible using any five cards from the pool of their holes cards and community cards.

OMAHA

Omaha is typically played as a pot-limit betting game.

The play is the same as Texas Hold'em, except for the following differences:

- Each player receives four hole cards face down instead of two upon the initial deal.
- Each player's hand must consist of exactly two of their hole cards and exactly three of the community cards.

Four hole cards to each player.



The Flop

The Turn

The River



Omaha dealing

OMAHA HI/LO (OMAHA/8)

The play is the same as Omaha, except for the following differences:

- At showdown each player can build two hands instead of one: their *high hand* and their *low hand*. As per Omaha, each hand must consist of exactly two of any of their hole cards and exactly three of any of the community cards.
- The same cards are allowed to be in both the high hand and the low hand.
- In the low hand, aces count as low. In the high hand, aces counted as high or low depending on which gives the best result. An ace that is in both hands can be high in the high hand even though it is low in the low hand.
- In low hands, a royal-flush, straight-flush, flush or straight doesn't count and therefore doesn't ruin a low hand. This means an A-2-3-4-5 is the best low hand possible (any suits).
- Only an eight-high-card hand or lower qualifies as a low hand. Thus the highest, but still qualifying hand possible is 4-5-6-7-8 (any suits) where as 5-6-7-8-9 doesn't qualify because it is a nine-high-card hand.
- At showdown, all pots are split 50/50 between two hands: the highest hand and the lowest hand (remainder chips go to the highest hand).
- If a single player at showdown has both the highest hand and the lowest hand, they *scoop the pot*: they get all of it.
- If there are no qualifying low hands shown, i.e. no player has an eight-high-card-hand or lower for their low hand, the best showing high hand scoops the pot.

FIVE CARD OMAHA

The play is the same as Omaha, except each player is dealt five hole cards instead of four. Like Omaha, each player's hand must consist of exactly two of their hole cards and exactly three of the community cards.

SEVEN CARD STUD

This game is typically played as a cash game with fixed-limit or pot-limit betting and no blinds, but can be played as a tournament with no-limit betting.

The maximum number of players is 8.

This game has a forced bet called the *bring-in* that is used in the first betting round. The *bring-in bet* is equivalent to a *small blind*, but unlike the small blind, the bring-in player can bet more than the bring-in bet.

Fixed-limit betting consists of the *small bet* and the *big bet*. The *ante* is usually a small fraction of the small bet. The bring-in bet is half (rounded down) of the small bet. There is usually a maximum

Two hole cards and a door card to each player.



4th Street
to each
player



5th Street
to each
player



6th Street
to each
player



The River
to each
player



Seven Card Stud dealing

number of raises of 3. For example, in a \$5-\$10 fixed-limit game, the small bet is \$5, the big bet is \$10, the bring-in is \$2 and the ante is \$1.

In tournaments with no-limit betting and increasing bring-in/minimum bet, a blind structure can be used where the small blind and big blind values can be used as the *bring-in bet* and *minimum bet* respectively. For example, when the blinds are 25/50, the bring-in bet is 25 and the minimum bet for all betting rounds is 50.

After posting ante/blinds, play proceeds as follows:

1. Two *hole cards* are dealt face down to each player one at a time and then one card face up (*the door card*) to each player.
2. The first round of betting takes place. The player with the lowest door card acts first. If there are two cards of the same rank, the lowest card is determined by the lowest suit. The suit ranking from lowest to highest is: ♣, ♦, ♥, ♠ (the same as in bridge and alphabetical order). Aces count as high. All-in players (i.e. players who went all-in to pay the ante or blind) aren't included as they can't open up betting.

The bring-in player must bet (a forced bet) and it must be the bring-in amount or higher. If the bring-in player bets the bring-in bet, the next player can call by betting the bring-in amount or bet higher.

In fixed-limit games, the bring-in player can only bet the bring-in amount or the small bet. If the current bet is at the bring-in amount, other players can only call the bet with the bring-in amount or *complete the bet* with the small bet. Once the current bet is at the small bet, players can call or raise by the small bet. The maximum number of raises is based on the small bet.

In no-limit games, the bring-in player must bet the bring-in bet or *complete the bet* using the minimum bet or bet higher. If the current bet is at the bring-in amount, other players can only call the bet with the bring-in amount or *complete the bet* with the minimum bet or bet higher than the minimum bet.

3. A card is burned and then a card is dealt face up to each player called *the forth street*.
4. A second round of betting takes place. The player with the highest showing hand acts first. In ties, the tied player who was dealt the first card acts first. All-in players aren't included as they can't open up betting.

In fixed-limit games, any bet or raise must be the small bet unless there is a pair showing. In such a case, any player at any time can use the big bet. If the big bet is used, the maximum number of raises is based on the big bet, not the small bet.

5. A card is burned and then a card is dealt face up to each player called *the fifth street*.
6. A third round of betting takes place. The player with the highest showing hand acts first. All-in players aren't included as they can't open up betting.

In fixed-limit games, any bet or raise must be the big bet. The maximum number of raises is based on the big bet.

7. A card is burned and then a card is dealt face up to each player called *the sixth street*.
8. A forth round of betting takes place. Betting is as per the previous betting round.
9. A card is burned and then a hole card is dealt face down to each player called *the river*. The players can put the river card with their other hole cards.

If there aren't enough cards left to deal each active player a river card, then all remaining cards plus mucked cards plus burned cards are reshuffled. The deck is then only burned if there is a card spare for this. The remaining river cards are then dealt out.

If there are still not enough river cards, then no player has their own river card. Instead all river cards, muck cards, and burned cards are reshuffled. A card is burned and then a single card is tabled face up in the center which acts as the community river card which all players can use.

10. The fifth and final round of betting takes place. Betting is as per the previous betting round.
11. The showdown and payout(s) take place. The highest hand wins. Each player tabling cards has a hand that constitutes the highest hand possible using any five cards from their three face-down cards and four face-up cards.

RAZZ (SEVEN CARD STUD LOW)

The play is the same as Seven Card Stud, except for the following differences:

- The lowest hand wins, not the highest. Note that unlike Omaha Hi/Lo, there is no eight-high-card-hand-or-lower qualifying rule. Any hand can be in the running for the lowest hand.
- Aces count as low.
- A royal-flush, straight-flush, flush or straight doesn't count and therefore doesn't ruin a low hand. This means an A-2-3-4-5 (a five-high-card hand) is the best low hand possible (any suits).
- The bring-in player is determined by the highest card, not the lowest card. For ties, the highest suit wins. The suit ranking is the same: the suits from lowest to highest are: ♣, ♦, ♥, ♠.
- The opening player on second and subsequent rounds is determined by the lowest hand not the highest hand. In ties, the tied player who was dealt the first card acts first.
- In fixed-limit games, on the fourth-street bet, the bet for the round is fixed at the small bet. The pair-showing rule to bump the fixed bet up to the big bet is not used.

SEVEN CARD STUD HI/LO EIGHT OR BETTER (STUD/8)

Stud/8 combines Seven Card Stud and Razz. Follow the dealing and betting rules in Seven Card Stud, but at showdown use the same rules as for Omaha Hi/Lo for determining the highest and lowest hands (including the eight-high-card-hand-or-lower qualifying rule for low hands) and splitting the pot.

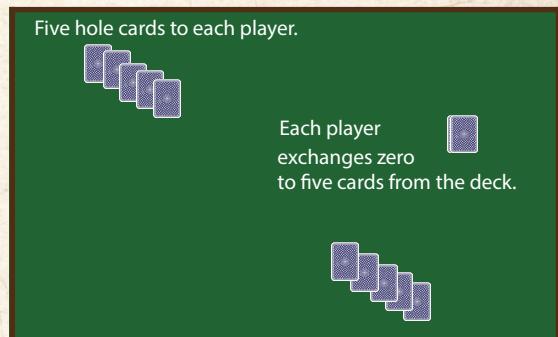
FIVE CARD DRAW

This game is typically played as a cash game with fixed-limit or pot-limit betting and no blinds, but can be played as a tournament with no-limit betting and increasing blinds.

Fixed-limit betting consists of *the small bet* and *the big bet* (e.g. \$5-\$10 limit). There is usually a maximum number of raises of 3. The *ante* is usually a small fraction of the small bet (e.g. \$1).

No-limit betting with blinds means the minimum bet is the big blind. The small blind is half (rounded down) of the big blind (e.g. blinds 25/50 means the minimum bet for all betting rounds is 50).

After posting ante/blinds, play proceeds as follows:



Five Card Draw dealing

1. Five *hole cards* are dealt face down to each player one at a time.
2. The first round of betting takes place.

If blinds are used, the player to the left of the big blind starts otherwise the player to the left of the dealer starts.

In fixed-limit games any bet or raise is the small bet. The maximum number of raises is based on the small bet.

3. Each player starting from the player to the left of the dealer, can exchange between zero and five cards. The dealer burns a card and deals out the replacement cards face down to the player. This continues around until the dealer has also replaced any desired cards.

If the dealer runs out of cards when replacing a player's cards, all discarded (mucked) cards and burned cards are reshuffled. This doesn't include the discarded cards of the current player waiting to receive the replacements. The dealer burns a card and continues on.

4. A second and final round of betting takes place. The player to the left of the dealer starts.

In fixed-limit games any bet or raise is the big bet. The maximum number of raises is based on the big bet.

5. The showdown and payout(s) take place. The highest hand wins.

2-7 TRIPLE DRAW

2-7 Triple Draw is a low-hand poker game typically played with fixed-limit betting and blinds.

For fixed-limit betting, there is only one bet limit (not a small bet and big bet limit)

The maximum number of players is 6.

After posting ante/blinds, play proceeds as follows:

1. Five hole cards are dealt face down to each player one at a time.
2. The first round of betting takes place. The player to the left of the big blind acts first. Betting follows the same rules as Texas Hold'em.
3. A card is burned and then the first exchange takes place: each player can exchange from zero to five of their hole cards.
4. The second round of betting takes place starting with the player to the left of the dealer.
5. A card is burned and then the second exchange takes place: each player can exchange from zero to five of their hole cards.
6. The third round of betting takes place starting with the player to the left of the dealer.
7. A card is burned and then the third exchange takes place: each player can exchange from zero to five of their hole cards.
8. The fourth and final round of betting takes place starting with the player to the left of the dealer.
9. The showdown and payout(s) take place. The lowest hand wins. Aces count as high. A royal-flush, straight-flush, straight or flush does count and so ruins a hand.

PINEAPPLE, CRAZY PINEAPPLE AND LAZY PINEAPPLE

For Pineapple, the play is the same as Texas Hold'em, except for the following differences:

- Players receive three hole cards instead of two.
- After receiving hole cards, each player must then discard exactly one hole card face-down beginning with the player *under the gun*. Then the preflop bet begins.

For Crazy Pineapple, the play is the same as Pineapple, except for the following difference:

- Players don't discard one of their three hole cards until after the postflop bet: before the turn card is tabled, each player still in play must discard one hole card beginning with the player to the left of the dealer. Then the turn card is tabled and play continues.

For Lazy Pineapple, the play is the same as Pineapple and Crazy Pineapple, except for the following difference:

- Players don't discard one of their three hole cards until after the river bet just before showdown.

SIX PLUS HOLD'EM (SHORT DECK)

The play is the same as Texas Hold'em, except for the following differences:

- The deck only consists of 36 cards, with the twos, threes, fours and fives removed.
- There is only one blind (the big blind) posted by the dealer. Antes are also used.
- A flush beats a full-house, but not four-of-a-kind.
- In a straight-flush or straight, an ace can be low (acting as a 5) as in 9-8-7-6-A or high as in A-K-Q-J-10.

BADUGI

This game is typically played as a cash game with fixed-limit betting using a small bet and a big bet. It also uses blinds. The big blind is the small bet. For example a \$5-\$10 limit game would have blinds "\$2/\$5".

The game play is like draw poker with three card exchanges between four betting rounds. The small bet is used in the first two betting rounds and the big bet is used in the final two betting rounds with blinds posted before the first betting round begins. Upon initial dealing, players are dealt 4 cards instead of 5 cards. Players only exchange an equal number of cards, and so will remain with exactly 4 cards.

At showdown, the winning hand doesn't follow normal high or low poker hand rules:

- The hand consists of 4, 3, 2 or 1 of the player's cards: the more cards, the better. So a 4-card hand is better than a 3-card hand, and so on.
- The hand cannot have two or more cards of the same rank, or two or more cards of the same suit. Cards must be discounted from the hand, so as to satisfy this rule for all cards in the hand.
- For hands that have the same number of cards, ties are broken by the highest card in the hand, whereby the higher, the worse. Aces count as low. If the high cards from each hand are the same, the next highest cards are compared and so on.

From the above rules, the best hand possible is a 4-card hand consisting of 4-3-2-A of 4 different suits. The next best hand is 5-3-2-A of 4 different suits. Any 3-card hand will lose to any 4-card hand and so on. A 1-card hand is the worst possible hand: the higher the card, the worse.

DEALER'S CHOICE

Dealer's Choice is often played in casual cash games. The dealer chooses the type of poker game to be played and what cards are to be wild if any (see Wild Cards section). The choice of poker game is usually taken from a predetermined list of options. Players can decide if they want to play by putting in the ante or sitting out for the hand.

There are usually no blinds used.

HORSE

H.O.R.S.E. is typically played as a cash game with fixed-limit or pot-limit betting and no blinds, but can be played as a tournament with no-limit betting and increasing blinds.

It consists of cycling through the following games that spell the acronym H-O-R-S-E: (H) Texas Hold'em, (O) Omaha Hi/Lo, (R) Razz, (S) Seven Card Stud, and (E) Seven Card Stud Hi/Lo Eight or Better.

