Craps is an impressively convoluted system of bets surrounding a pair of six-sided dice.

The gameplay itself is simple enough, and it all starts with “come out” rolls: the shooter throws the dice until a 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, or 10 hits. When that happens, the “point” is then established, and the shooter continues throwing until either the point or a 7 hits. If the then shooter comes out again; but when the 7 hits, all bets on the table are cleared and the dice pass to the next player.

The fundamental bets in craps are the “line” bets, the two key ones being “pass” and “don’t pass”. They’re placed before a come out roll, and pay even money (1:1).

On the come out, a pass bet immediately wins if a 7 or 11 hits, but immediately loses if a 2, 3, or 12 hits. After the point has been established, the pass bet wins if the point hits, and loses if the 7 hits.

A don’t pass bet is almost the opposite; on the come out, it immediately loses if a 7 or 11 hits, but immediately wins if a 2 or 3 hits, and pushes (doesn’t win or lose) if a 12 hits. After the point has been established, the don’t pass bet loses if the point hits, and wins if the 7 hits.

There other line bets in craps are “come” and “don’t come” bets; these work similarly to the pass/don’t pass bets, except they’re placed after the point has been established and they effectively establish their own point that must hit to win, independent of the primary point.

There are a dozens of different single-roll bets; i.e., bets that are played anytime and win or lose depending on what hits. The common ones are:

* Single-number bets that win only if a specific number hits: 2 (pays 30:1), 3 (15:1), 11 (15:1), and 12 (30:1)
* Multi-number bets win if any number in a certain set hits: 2/12 (15:1), 2/3/12 (7:1), 2/3/11/12 (7:1 on 11; 3:1 on rest), 2/3/4/9/10/11/12 (2:1 on 2, 12; 1:1 rest)
* Combination bets win if the dice roll a specific combination of dice: X+Y (15:1) , X+X (30:1)

There are also plenty of multi-roll bets available.

* Hard ways: a bet that a 4, 6, 8, or 10 will hit as an identical pair (e.g. 3+3) before either a 7, or that same number will hit as a mixed pair (1+5, 2+4); this typically pays 7:1 (for 4 and 10) and 9:1 (for 6 and 8)
* Place: a bet that a 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, or 10 will hit before a 7; these pay 9:5 (for 4 and 10) , 7:5 (for 5 and 9), and 7:6 (for 6 and 8)
* Lay: a bet that a 7 will hit before a 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, or 10; while these pay true odds -- 1:2 (for 4 and 10), 2:3 (for 5 and 9), 5:6 (for 6 and 8) -- a 5% commission (rounded to the nearest dollar) is paid on the winnings

And on top of this, there’s the unwritten table etiquette – like never utter the word “seven” – and the plethora of nicknames for various rolls – nina (9), fever (5), yo (11) – and nicknames for various bets – penny ante ($1 on a single-roll 2/3/12), Charlie Sheen’s breakfast (12).

##

For decades, this meant that craps was completely overwhelming and almost inaccessible for new players – and that was half the fun. You’d the house more often than not, but at least you’d feel like you were learning and discovering a system.

But these days, gamblers are able to learn games must faster, and that means craps is quickly starting to lose its “advanced game” appeal. Thus, we need a crappier craps:

* Polyhedral dice: d8, d10, and d12
* Multiple dice: 3 or 4
* Weighted faces: a d8 with 1, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 6

And we need the same (or lower) house edge. In regular craps, the house’s edge comes from pushing on the 12 on line bets, and paying below true odds on other bets.