

# 10 TIPS TO INCREASE YOUR WIN RATE

IN NO-LIMIT HOLD'EM CASH GAMES

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10 Tips to Increase Your Win Rate  
in No-Limit Hold'em Cash Games

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## Introduction

Welcome! I am excited to share with you 10 tips to master no-limit hold'em cash games. This ebook is not meant to be a complete guide on how to play cash games. It is instead designed to ensure you do not commit the common mistakes that many small and medium stakes players regularly make that result in them having almost no chance of winning. For a full, in-depth guide on how to crush cash games, check out my Cash Game Masterclass in [PokerCoaching.com](https://PokerCoaching.com). Much of this content comes from my extensive book 100 Essential Tips to Master No-Limit Hold'em. If you like this ebook, you will love that book!

## **Play Tighter Ranges with no Ante and a Rake**

In most cash games, the casino takes a rake out of each pot. When that is the case, you should play quite tightly because the amount you are battling for in each pot will be diminished. Even though the rake may not be too much in terms of dollars, it may be a lot in terms of big blinds to the point that you should alter your strategy substantially.

For example, in a \$1/\$3 cash game, if you raise to \$9 from the button and only the big blind calls, the pot “should” be \$19, but after rake, it may be only \$17 (or even \$16 or \$15). The casino’s \$2 is roughly 1/10<sup>th</sup> of the pot, which is also .67 big blinds. Given most hands cannot expect to profit .67bbs on average, this forces you to play quite tightly. As the casino rakes more and more, you should play tighter and tighter.

Many cash games also do not feature an ante (while many tournaments do feature an ante). If there was an ante, the amount in the pot would be larger, allowing you to play looser, but with no ante, you should again play tightly.

So, with no ante and a rake taken from each pot, you are forced to play tightly, which is the exact opposite of what many small stakes players do, which results in the game being quite profitable if you have the discipline to play relatively tight preflop ranges.

Suppose the button raises to 2.75bbs out of their 80bb stack and everyone folds to you in the big blind. With no ante and a rake (in a typical cash game), you can only profitably defend with 41.8% of hands (the hands in red), whereas with a 1bb ante and no rake (in a typical tournament), you can profitably defend with 83.7% of hands (the hands in red and blue).

AA	AKs	AQs	AJs	ATs	A9s	A8s	A7s	A6s	A5s	A4s	A3s	A2s
AKo	KK	KQs	KJs	KTs	K9s	K8s	K7s	K6s	K5s	K4s	K3s	K2s
AQo	KQo	QQ	QJs	QTs	Q9s	Q8s	Q7s	Q6s	Q5s	Q4s	Q3s	Q2s
AJo	KJo	QJo	JJ	JTs	J9s	J8s	J7s	J6s	J5s	J4s	J3s	J2s
ATo	KTo	QTo	JTo	TT	T9s	T8s	T7s	T6s	T5s	T4s	T3s	T2s
A9o	K9o	Q9o	J9o	T9o	99	98s	97s	96s	95s	94s	93s	92s
A8o	K8o	Q8o	J8o	T8o	98o	88	87s	86s	85s	84s	83s	82s
A7o	K7o	Q7o	J7o	T7o	97o	87o	77	76s	75s	74s	73s	72s
A6o	K6o	Q6o	J6o	T6o	96o	86o	76o	66	65s	64s	63s	62s
A5o	K5o	Q5o	J5o	T5o	95o	85o	75o	65o	55	54s	53s	52s
A4o	K4o	Q4o	J4o	T4o	94o	84o	74o	64o	54o	44	43s	42s
A3o	K3o	Q3o	J3o	T3o	93o	83o	73o	63o	53o	43o	33	32s
A2o	K2o	Q2o	J2o	T2o	92o	82o	72o	62o	52o	42o	32o	22

Action

Hands

Defend with No Ante and a Rake

41.8%

554 / 1110

49.9%

Defend with an Ante and No Rake

41.9%

556 / 1110

50.1%

Fold

16.3%

216 / 1326

All charts in this ebook (and many more) are available to PokerCoaching Premium members on the website and in the mobile app. From the small blind, your strategy will be quite different when there is a rake and no ante compared to when there is an ante and no rake. With no ante and a rake, when someone raises before you, you should only 3-bet (re-raise) or fold. You should not call with any hand from the small blind because you are not closing the action and a piece of the pot will be raked away. Calling also entices the big blind to call, resulting in you having the worst position in a 3-handed pot. By 3-betting, you win the pot before the flop some portion of the time (and thus pay no rake in most venues) and when you get called, you will usually be heads-up and the pot will be large such that the rake is more negligible (assuming the rake is capped).

As the rake becomes a larger percentage of the pot, you should further tighten your ranges because the pot you are fighting for is smaller. In games with an uncapped rake (which is the case in many private cash games), you should play extremely tightly. Despite this, you will witness many players in these games seeing every flop to try to make a strong hand. These players are close to guaranteed to lose because their money is being consistently raked away. The only way to beat a game with a large rake is to play an extremely tight strategy such that you rarely actually pay the rake and you win most of the pots you enter.

Simply put, as your pot odds get worse, you must play tighter ranges.



## **Play Tighter Ranges when Facing Larger Raise Sizes**

While most tournament players usually raise to between 2bbs and 3bbs when they are first to enter the pot, it is quite common to see small and medium stakes cash game players use much larger raise sizes, sometimes as much as 10bbs when they are folded to.

As the raise size you are facing becomes larger, you should continue with a tighter range due to your substantially decreased pot odds. It is important to note that most players who use gigantic raise sizes do not use anywhere near what the GTO strategy would be if it was forced to have only one gigantic preflop raise size. When forced to use a gigantic raise size, the GTO range would be quite tight because when you use a gigantic size, you are risking a lot to win a little. Raising large is a poor strategy because all your opponents have to do to play well is to continue tightly, which is what most players naturally end up doing.

Suppose in a \$1/\$3 live cash game the lojack raises to \$9 and everyone folds to you in the big blind. Here is roughly the GTO strategy:

AA	AKs	AQs	AJs	ATs	A9s	A8s	A7s	A6s	A5s	A4s	A3s	A2s
AKo	KK	KQs	KJs	KTs	K9s	K8s	K7s	K6s	K5s	K4s	K3s	K2s
AQo	KQo	QQ	QJs	QTs	Q9s	Q8s	Q7s	Q6s	Q5s	Q4s	Q3s	Q2s
AJo	KJo	QJo	JJ	JTs	J9s	J8s	J7s	J6s	J5s	J4s	J3s	J2s
ATo	KTo	QTo	JTo	TT	T9s	T8s	T7s	T6s	T5s	T4s	T3s	T2s
A9o	K9o	Q9o	J9o	T9o	99	98s	97s	96s	95s	94s	93s	92s
A8o	K8o	Q8o	J8o	T8o	98o	88	87s	86s	85s	84s	83s	82s
A7o	K7o	Q7o	J7o	T7o	97o	87o	77	76s	75s	74s	73s	72s
A6o	K6o	Q6o	J6o	T6o	96o	86o	76o	66	65s	64s	63s	62s
A5o	K5o	Q5o	J5o	T5o	95o	85o	75o	65o	55	54s	53s	52s
A4o	K4o	Q4o	J4o	T4o	94o	84o	74o	64o	54o	44	43s	42s
A3o	K3o	Q3o	J3o	T3o	93o	83o	73o	63o	53o	43o	33	32s
A2o	K2o	Q2o	J2o	T2o	92o	82o	72o	62o	52o	42o	32o	22

Action

Hands

3-bet

5.0%

66 / 286

23.1%

Call

16.6%

220 / 286

76.9%

Fold

78.4%

1040 / 1326

This range is already much tighter than most small stakes players defend from the big blind. Suppose instead you were facing a \$25 (8.3bb) raise, which is not too uncommon in small stakes games. Against this gigantic raise, you should play

substantially tighter due to your decreased pot odds, forcing you to fold many hands that would be playable against a normally sized raise.

All the non-premium suited Aces and connectors become unplayable due to their lack of implied odds. Small and medium pairs are in a tough spot because they are barely getting the correct implied odds, especially if your opponent will not automatically double you up whenever you make a set. A-Qo, A-Jo, and K-Qo also become far weaker.

Some of your opponents who make it 8.3bbs preflop may be doing so with a relatively loose range. Despite this, you cannot get too out of line because you are out of position, your pot odds are terrible, and you have to beat the rake.

If your opponent is raising to a gigantic size with too wide of a range, you can potentially crush them by 3-betting to 22bbs (or an amount they will fold to with their non-premium hands) with a wide range of blocker hands that flop well enough, such as A-xs and K-xs, and then continuation betting for roughly 25% on most flops. This strategy is high variance, but if your opponents think you will play in a straightforward manner, they will drastically over-fold preflop and on the flop.

If your opponent is using an extremely tight strategy where they raise gigantic with perhaps only 8-8+, A-J+, and K-Q, you can 3-bet exactly A-A and K-K with the intention of getting all-in while calling with the rest of your super tight playable range. Small and medium pairs go up in value against an overly premium raising range because when you flop a set, you are highly likely to double up.

Whatever you do, do not make the mistake of calling gigantic raises with marginal offsuit hands that are severely dominated and suited hands that are not getting the proper implied odds. When someone uses a gigantic raise size, all you have to do to crush them is to sit back and wait for a strong hand because they are risking so much to win so little.

## **Start with GTO Ranges**

When most players start learning how to play cash games, they often think a reasonable strategy is to play decently strong preflop hands and then try to get their money in, or to splash around preflop looking to flop a strong hand and then get their money in. The problem with these strategies is that all your opponents have to do to crush you is to fold whenever it is clear you want to get your money in. If you rarely get paid off with your strong hands, you will have a difficult time winning. So, you have to figure out how to logically and profitably add bluffs to your strategy. Using the well balanced, fundamentally sound GTO (game theory optimal) strategy will accomplish this.

100bbs deep against a 3bb preflop raise from the cutoff, a straightforward, honest player may use this strategy from the button:

AA	AKs	AQs	AJs	ATs	A9s	A8s	A7s	A6s	A5s	A4s	A3s	A2s
AKo	KK	KQs	KJs	KTs	K9s	K8s	K7s	K6s	K5s	K4s	K3s	K2s
AQo	KQo	QQ	QJs	QTs	Q9s	Q8s	Q7s	Q6s	Q5s	Q4s	Q3s	Q2s
AJo	KJo	QJo	JJ	JTs	J9s	J8s	J7s	J6s	J5s	J4s	J3s	J2s
ATo	KTo	QTo	JTo	TT	T9s	T8s	T7s	T6s	T5s	T4s	T3s	T2s
A9o	K9o	Q9o	J9o	T9o	99	98s	97s	96s	95s	94s	93s	92s
A8o	K8o	Q8o	J8o	T8o	98o	88	87s	86s	85s	84s	83s	82s
A7o	K7o	Q7o	J7o	T7o	97o	87o	77	76s	75s	74s	73s	72s
A6o	K6o	Q6o	J6o	T6o	96o	86o	76o	66	65s	64s	63s	62s
A5o	K5o	Q5o	J5o	T5o	95o	85o	75o	65o	55	54s	53s	52s
A4o	K4o	Q4o	J4o	T4o	94o	84o	74o	64o	54o	44	43s	42s
A3o	K3o	Q3o	J3o	T3o	93o	83o	73o	63o	53o	43o	33	32s
A2o	K2o	Q2o	J2o	T2o	92o	82o	72o	62o	52o	42o	32o	22

Action	Hands		
3-bet for Value	8.1%	108 / 330	32.7%
3-bet as a Bluff	0.3%	4 / 330	1.2%
Call	16.4%	218 / 330	66.1%
Fold	75.1%	996 / 1326	

Notice that when they 3-bet, they almost always have a strong hand, and when they call, they have a marginal hand. While you often want to 3-bet with your

best hands, the GTO strategy for hands like A-Js and A-Qo is to just call because when you get 4-bet, you will be in a tough spot with a hand that would otherwise be in excellent shape against an initial preflop raising range. These hands play excellently in small pots but horribly in large pots. Calling with all marginal hands also sets you up to get crushed by a 3-bet from a player yet to act.

When someone who uses this face-up strategy happens to 3-bet, all the initial raiser has to do to beat them is fold hands that are likely to be dominated, call hands that are getting the correct implied odds to try to outdraw the strong 3-betting range, and 4-bet hands that are strong enough to get all-in profitably against the strong 3-betting range. When the logical counterstrategy is simple and obvious, most players will quickly find and implement it.

Instead of playing this straightforward, honest strategy, here is a much better strategy (which is much closer to the GTO strategy):

AA	AKs	AQs	AJs	ATs	A9s	A8s	A7s	A6s	A5s	A4s	A3s	A2s
AKo	KK	KQs	KJs	KTs	K9s	K8s	K7s	K6s	K5s	K4s	K3s	K2s
AQo	KQo	QQ	QJs	QTs	Q9s	Q8s	Q7s	Q6s	Q5s	Q4s	Q3s	Q2s
AJo	KJo	QJo	JJ	JTs	J9s	J8s	J7s	J6s	J5s	J4s	J3s	J2s
ATo	KTo	QTo	JTo	TT	T9s	T8s	T7s	T6s	T5s	T4s	T3s	T2s
A9o	K9o	Q9o	J9o	T9o	99	98s	97s	96s	95s	94s	93s	92s
A8o	K8o	Q8o	J8o	T8o	98o	88	87s	86s	85s	84s	83s	82s
A7o	K7o	Q7o	J7o	T7o	97o	87o	77	76s	75s	74s	73s	72s
A6o	K6o	Q6o	J6o	T6o	96o	86o	76o	66	65s	64s	63s	62s
A5o	K5o	Q5o	J5o	T5o	95o	85o	75o	65o	55	54s	53s	52s
A4o	K4o	Q4o	J4o	T4o	94o	84o	74o	64o	54o	44	43s	42s
A3o	K3o	Q3o	J3o	T3o	93o	83o	73o	63o	53o	43o	33	32s
A2o	K2o	Q2o	J2o	T2o	92o	82o	72o	62o	52o	42o	32o	22

Action	Hands		
3-bet for Value	3.3%	44 / 270	16.3%
3-bet as a Bluff	5.4%	72 / 270	26.7%
Call	11.6%	154 / 270	57.0%
Fold	79.6%	1056 / 1326	

This strategy is quite strong because when you 3-bet, your opponent will not know if you have a premium hand that you are happy to play a large pot with or a bluff. This polarized strategy is ideal when you are in position against a preflop raiser who plays well.

Of course, if your opponent plays poorly, you should adjust your strategy so that you exploit the specific mistakes they are likely to make. If your opponent usually folds to 3-bets, 3-bet more often with bluffs (especially with an Ace or King, which blocks your opponent's continuing range). If they call 3-bets every time, 3-bet with a strong, but decently wide linear range of only the best hands that crushes their junky calling range. In order to win as much money as possible from poker, you must constantly adjust to the mistakes your opponents are making.

Whatever you do, when playing against competent opponents, do not play in a face-up, honest manner. If you do, they will steal all the small and medium pots when you have non-premium hands, and they will almost never pay you off when you actually have the nuts (the best possible hand), which will make it impossible for you to win in the long run. That said, do not play in an overly fancy/tricky manner either. Simply start with fundamentally sound GTO ranges and then adjust to exploit whatever your opponents do incorrectly.



## Use Intelligent Preflop Raise Sizes

While some players mix up their preflop raise sizes based on the strength of their hole cards, their position, or in some other way, I recommend you use the same preflop raise size based on the effective stack depth (the shortest stack likely to be involved in the pot) and your position.

When playing with fewer than 100bbs in a cash game, when everyone folds to you and you want to raise, raise to 2.5bbs. With 100bbs or more, raise to 3bbs. Just because other players in your game may use larger raise sizes does not mean you have to. By using these reasonable sizes, you will keep your opponents in with lots of marginal hands while giving yourself plenty of room to extract lots of value postflop.

When facing a limper, add 1.5bb to the previously recommended raise size. So, if you have 100bbs and someone limps before you, make it 4.5bbs. Against multiple limpers, you should add 1bb more for each additional limper beyond the first. So, with 100bbs when three players limp before you, make it  $4.5 + 1 + 1 = 6.5\text{bbs}$ .

When facing a raise, when you want to 3-bet, make it 3x the raise when you are in position against the initial raiser and 4x when you are out of position against the initial raiser. So, if someone raises to 4bbs out of their 100bb stack and you want to 3-bet from the button, make it 12bbs. If you were instead in the small blind, make it 16bbs.

When there is a raise and a call before the action gets to you and you want to 3-bet, add an amount equal to the initial raise to your previous multiple for each caller. So, if you are in position and there is a 4bb raise and 2 callers, make it  $3 \times 4 + 3 + 3 = 18\text{bbs}$ .

Similar to when facing a 3-bet, when you raise and get 3-bet, or when there is a raise and a 3-bet before you, when you want to 4-bet, make it 2.75x the 3-bet amount from in position and 3.5x from out of position. If any bet would put in more than 35% of your stack, you should usually go all-in instead.

The main time you should adjust your preflop raise size is when your opponents will play especially poorly in a way that you can predict. If you know your opponents will fold far too often to small raise sizes, raise smaller with a wider range of non-premium hands, especially from late position. If you know your opponents will call any amount they do not think is “too much”, perhaps you should raise to 6bbs (or even more) with all your premium hands and to the

above recommended amount with your playable, but non-premium hands. Of course, when you use two obviously different raise sizes with hands of very different strengths, your range becomes face-up, which could result in your opponents counter-exploiting you. Also, be careful that you do not make these adjustments incorrectly because if your opponents start folding all their marginal and junky hands because you used a large raise size, you will lose substantial value with your premium hands.

## **Play Tighter in Multi-Way Pots**

Many players incorrectly think they should loosen their ranges when someone raises and multiple players call because they are then getting excellent pot odds. However, they fail to consider that they are far more likely to be dominated, resulting in them having a much more difficult time realizing their equity.

Suppose 100bbs deep, the lojack (the first player to act at a 6-handed table/the third player to act at a 9-handed table) raises to 3bbs and everyone folds to you in the big blind. Here is roughly your GTO strategy:

AA	AKs	AQs	AJs	ATs	A9s	A8s	A7s	A6s	A5s	A4s	A3s	A2s
AKo	KK	KQs	KJs	KTs	K9s	K8s	K7s	K6s	K5s	K4s	K3s	K2s
AQo	KQo	QQ	QJs	QTs	Q9s	Q8s	Q7s	Q6s	Q5s	Q4s	Q3s	Q2s
AJo	KJo	QJo	JJ	JTs	J9s	J8s	J7s	J6s	J5s	J4s	J3s	J2s
ATo	KTo	QTo	JTo	TT	T9s	T8s	T7s	T6s	T5s	T4s	T3s	T2s
A9o	K9o	Q9o	J9o	T9o	99	98s	97s	96s	95s	94s	93s	92s
A8o	K8o	Q8o	J8o	T8o	98o	88	87s	86s	85s	84s	83s	82s
A7o	K7o	Q7o	J7o	T7o	97o	87o	77	76s	75s	74s	73s	72s
A6o	K6o	Q6o	J6o	T6o	96o	86o	76o	66	65s	64s	63s	62s
A5o	K5o	Q5o	J5o	T5o	95o	85o	75o	65o	55	54s	53s	52s
A4o	K4o	Q4o	J4o	T4o	94o	84o	74o	64o	54o	44	43s	42s
A3o	K3o	Q3o	J3o	T3o	93o	83o	73o	63o	53o	43o	33	32s
A2o	K2o	Q2o	J2o	T2o	92o	82o	72o	62o	52o	42o	32o	22

Action	Hands		
3-bet	4.7%	62 / 310	20.0%
Call	18.7%	248 / 310	80.0%
Fold	76.6%	1016 / 1326	

You may be surprised as to how tight you should defend in this spot, but remember, you have to account for the fact that your opponent's initial raising range should be tight from the lojack and you have to overcome the rake. If the lojack uses a smaller raise size or raises with a range that is too wide, you can defend a bit wider, but even then, don't get carried away and call with hands like A-6o, J-9o, and 8-4s.

Instead suppose the lojack raises and then the button and small blind call. Here is the GTO strategy from the big blind. Now you should defend even tighter, perhaps with this range (depending on the callers' strategies):

AA	AKs	AQs	AJs	ATs	A9s	A8s	A7s	A6s	A5s	A4s	A3s	A2s
AKo	KK	KQs	KJs	KTs	K9s	K8s	K7s	K6s	K5s	K4s	K3s	K2s
AQo	KQo	QQ	QJs	QTs	Q9s	Q8s	Q7s	Q6s	Q5s	Q4s	Q3s	Q2s
AJo	KJo	QJo	JJ	JTs	J9s	J8s	J7s	J6s	J5s	J4s	J3s	J2s
ATo	KTo	QTo	JTo	TT	T9s	T8s	T7s	T6s	T5s	T4s	T3s	T2s
A9o	K9o	Q9o	J9o	T9o	99	98s	97s	96s	95s	94s	93s	92s
A8o	K8o	Q8o	J8o	T8o	98o	88	87s	86s	85s	84s	83s	82s
A7o	K7o	Q7o	J7o	T7o	97o	87o	77	76s	75s	74s	73s	72s
A6o	K6o	Q6o	J6o	T6o	96o	86o	76o	66	65s	64s	63s	62s
A5o	K5o	Q5o	J5o	T5o	95o	85o	75o	65o	55	54s	53s	52s
A4o	K4o	Q4o	J4o	T4o	94o	84o	74o	64o	54o	44	43s	42s
A3o	K3o	Q3o	J3o	T3o	93o	83o	73o	63o	53o	43o	33	32s
A2o	K2o	Q2o	J2o	T2o	92o	82o	72o	62o	52o	42o	32o	22

Action	Hands		
3-bet	4.8%	64 / 242	26.4%
Call	13.4%	178 / 242	73.6%
Fold	81.7%	1084 / 1326	

Notice how much tighter you have to defend. The weakest suited hands become unplayable, as do almost all offsuit hands. Also, your 3-betting range becomes almost entirely linear, with your “bluffs” coming primarily from A-Qo.

This big blind defense range against a raise and two callers is far tighter than most players use, which is why many players squander a ton of chips in multi-way pots. While you can defend a little bit looser if you know the button and small blind are calling too loosely, you cannot get too out of line due to your complete lack of position and high likelihood of being against decently strong ranges that crush your weak hands.

This concept holds true when you are in position too. For the most part, when there is a raise and a call before the action gets to you, suited Kings, suited gappers, and offsuit hands go way down in value and you should usually 3-bet with a much more linear range.

## Crush Straightforward Players on the Flop

Many of your opponents will make more frequent and more costly mistakes as you progress to the later betting rounds. While most players know how to play decently well preflop (they simply follow preflop GTO charts), they often make numerous mistakes on the flop, and even more mistakes on the turn and river. Because of this, it is crucial to observe and exploit their frequent and costly errors.

In most small and medium stakes games, many players play a little too straightforwardly such that they fold a little bit too often to continuation bets on the flop in heads-up pots. To be clear, a continuation bet is when you raise preflop and then make a bet on the flop. While the GTO strategy is usually to not continuation bet every time in a heads-up pot, if your opponent will fold even a little bit too often, you should adjust your strategy to continuation bet way more often. This is even more true if your opponent will compound their flop error by folding a little too often on the turn and or by not raising often enough.

This chapter only pertains to heads-up pots. As more players see the flop, you must proceed more cautiously because as more players see the flop, someone is more likely to have flopped a strong hand. If you continuation bet too often in multi-way pots, you will quickly lose your bankroll.

If your specific opponent or the players in your games in general continue against flop continuation bets only when they have either a pair or a draw, they will fold to a continuation bet 40% of the time or more (depending on how the flop connects with their preflop range). If they will fold to a continuation bet that is 30% of the size of the pot when they fail to connect, you will immediately profit because your bet only needs to win the pot 23% of the time.

To determine how often a bluff needs to succeed, divide the amount you are risking by the amount you can win plus the amount you are risking, so  $30/(30 + 100) = 23\%$ . This presumes your hand will never win at the showdown, which will obviously not be the case because you will have at least some equity on all flops, and sometimes you will have a lot of equity. To make matters worse for your opponent, most players do not check/raise often enough (especially as a bluff), allowing you to realize your equity with your marginal and weak hands that would have to fold to a check/raise.

Here is a chart listing how often a total bluff needs to succeed in order to immediately profit, which is  $\text{bet}/(\text{bet} + \text{pot})$ , as well as your opponent's



minimum defense frequency ( $MDF = 1 - \text{bet}/(\text{bet} + \text{pot})$ ), which is how often your opponent has to call or raise in order to not allow you to immediately profit with a bet:

Your Bet Size	Required Success %	Opponent's MDF
If you bet 10% pot	$1/1.1 = 9\%$	$1 - .09 = 91\%$
If you bet 25% pot	$.25/1.25 = 20\%$	$1 - .20 = 80\%$
If you bet 33% pot	$.33/1.33 = 25\%$	$1 - .25 = 75\%$
If you bet 50% pot	$.50/1.50 = 33\%$	$1 - .33 = 67\%$
If you bet 67% pot	$.67/1.67 = 40\%$	$1 - 40\% = 60\%$
If you bet 75% pot	$.75/1.75 = 43\%$	$1 - .43\% = 57\%$
If you bet 100% pot	$1/2 = 50\%$	$1 - 50\% = 50\%$
If you bet 133% pot	$1.33/2.33 = 57\%$	$1 - 57\% = 43\%$
If you bet 150% pot	$1.5/2.5 = 60\%$	$1 - 60\% = 40\%$
If you bet 200% pot	$2/3 = 67\%$	$1 - .67\% = 33\%$
If you bet 300% pot	$3/4 = 75\%$	$1 - .75\% = 25\%$

It is worth noting that the minimum defense frequency should not be stringently followed because you will naturally under-realize your equity when you are out of position and when your opponent has a much stronger range than yours. To be perfectly clear, you do not always have to defend at the minimum defense frequency whenever you are facing a bet!

While continuation betting when heads-up every time for 30% pot is nowhere near the GTO strategy, if your opponent folds too often, you will crush them with this easily implementable strategy, making it an excellent starting point. Even if your opponent will instead call flop bets far too wide, this 100% continuation betting strategy could still have merit if they will fold too often to turn and/or river bets due to having all sorts of junky holdings like unpaired overcards and backdoor flush draws in their range. If your opponent has clear leaks in their strategy, make a point to get out of line and exploit them.

## Do Not Continuation Bet 100% of the Time

While continuation betting with your entire range on most flops using a small size will crush your weakest opponents, it will fail miserably once your opponents start playing well. While there will be times from a GTO point of view when you should mostly bet frequently and small, that will often not be the case.

Suppose 100bbs deep you raise to 3bbs from the button and the big blind calls. The flop comes Js-6h-5d and the big blind checks. In this situation, you should not continuation bet every time because the big blind's preflop calling range contains far more middle cards than your preflop raising range. This forces you to bet with a polarized range of mostly top pair and better made hands, middle pair with an overcard kicker, and a smattering of draws of various strengths, such as 8h-7h for an open-ended straight draw and Kd-4d for an overcard and backdoor straight and flush draw. Your checking range is mostly top pair with a weak kicker and worse made hands plus a few slow plays with sets.

Any time the board does not connect extremely well with your range, you should check with most of your marginal made hands. However, as the board connects better and better with your range, you should bet far more often.

Suppose you raise from the lojack and the big blind calls. On Ks-Qs-10h, you should continuation bet every time because this flop connects amazingly well with your range of mostly high cards while often missing the big blind's range that contains a lot of undercards.

As the preflop raiser on the flop when you are out of position, you should check even more often. For simplicity, you should check almost every time when the board contains three unpaired cards 10 and lower because these boards will rarely favor your range. Even on boards that are excellent for your range (high cards), you should not bet every time because these boards will also line up decently well with the preflop in position caller's range.

## Do Not Lead

A lead is when you bet into the aggressor from the previous betting round. Therefore, the only spot you can lead is after calling a bet on the previous betting round when you are out of position. The GTO strategy only leads when the out of position player's range increases in equity and expected value, which will usually be when that range contains lots of effective nut hands as well as lots of hands in it that want protection that the opponent's range does not contain.

The main problem with leading in cash games is that your range will rarely contain lots of offsuit low cards to the point that the preflop caller's range gets substantially stronger compared to the preflop raiser's range on various flops, turns, and rivers. Also, when you are deep stacked (perhaps 50bbs or more), you should have no leading range on all betting rounds because your hands that may seem to want protection will be unable to continue if you face aggression.

For example, suppose 100bbs deep the lojack raises and you call from the big blind using this strategy:

AA	AKs	AQs	AJs	ATs	A9s	A8s	A7s	A6s	A5s	A4s	A3s	A2s
AKo	KK	KQs	KJs	KTs	K9s	K8s	K7s	K6s	K5s	K4s	K3s	K2s
AQo	KQo	QQ	QJs	QTs	Q9s	Q8s	Q7s	Q6s	Q5s	Q4s	Q3s	Q2s
AJo	KJo	QJo	JJ	JTs	J9s	J8s	J7s	J6s	J5s	J4s	J3s	J2s
ATo	KTo	QTo	JTo	TT	T9s	T8s	T7s	T6s	T5s	T4s	T3s	T2s
A9o	K9o	Q9o	J9o	T9o	99	98s	97s	96s	95s	94s	93s	92s
A8o	K8o	Q8o	J8o	T8o	98o	88	87s	86s	85s	84s	83s	82s
A7o	K7o	Q7o	J7o	T7o	97o	87o	77	76s	75s	74s	73s	72s
A6o	K6o	Q6o	J6o	T6o	96o	86o	76o	66	65s	64s	63s	62s
A5o	K5o	Q5o	J5o	T5o	95o	85o	75o	65o	55	54s	53s	52s
A4o	K4o	Q4o	J4o	T4o	94o	84o	74o	64o	54o	44	43s	42s
A3o	K3o	Q3o	J3o	T3o	93o	83o	73o	63o	53o	43o	33	32s
A2o	K2o	Q2o	J2o	T2o	92o	82o	72o	62o	52o	42o	32o	22

Action

Hands

3-bet

4.7%

62 / 310

20.0%

Call

18.7%

248 / 310

80.0%

Fold

76.6%

1016 / 1326

Suppose the flop comes 6s-3s-2h. You check, the lojack continuation bets 50% pot, and you call. If the turn is a 5 or 4, many players in the big blind feel inclined to lead with their straights, but notice that you do not actually have that many

combinations of them in your range, and while the lojack should not have many combinations of straights, they will have some. Also, hands like Q-6 are not good enough to bet for value because they will have to fold if raised. This forces you to check with everything.

This situation would be very different if your preflop range was wider and stacks were shallower. If you were instead playing 40bbs deep in a tournament with an ante in play, allowing you to call preflop with all suited hands and offsuit hands as weak as 5-4o, you would then have far more straights in your range than the lojack on the turn, allowing you to lead with your entire range.

When you are deep stacked, when you check/call a bet on the previous betting round, you should check on the next betting round every time unless you are attempting to exploit an egregious flaw in your opponent's strategy. If you expect your opponent to call a lead far too often, you should lead with a range that is entirely for value. If you expect your opponent to fold to a lead too often, such as when they have worse than a set on (6-3-2)-5, you should lead entirely as a bluff.

## **You are Playing No-Limit**

Do not forget that you have all bet size options at your disposal on all betting rounds! Your options are not only 50% pot or 100% pot. If you only use a few specific bet sizes in all situations, you are certainly leaving money on the table.

For example, on the river, the GTO strategy will sometimes bet tiny (especially when out of position with a range of mostly marginal made hands when the turn checks through) and other times bet gigantic (especially when your range is extremely polarized). While river strategy will not be discussed in this ebook, it is important to realize that when you decide to make a bet, if you always bet the same amount, you are making a blunder.

Exploitably, you should make the bet that will result in your opponent playing poorly. For example, on the river, if you think your opponent will always call a pot sized bet with their one pair hands but fold them to a 1.5x pot bet, you should simply bet pot when you have a strong value hand and bet 1.5x pot with all your bluffs. Of course, if your opponent figures out this blatantly straightforward strategy, they will adjust to calling your 1.5x pot bets every time, but given you will not play too many large pots on the river against each specific opponent, you can usually exploit each specific opponent many times before they catch on. Just be sure your assessment of your opponent's tendencies is correct. If you do not actually know what your opponent does incorrectly, default to the GTO strategy.

# Cash Game Bankroll Management

All you have to do to win at poker is find a game you can beat, play it a lot, and keep a proper bankroll. If you do that, you will win. If you do not, you are gambling and are quite live to lose in the long run.

Here are how many big blinds you need to keep in your bankroll based on your win rate in order to play cash games that will result in you having a 3% chance of going broke:

Win Rate	Bankroll Needed
3 Big Blinds per 100 Hands	10,000 BBs
5 Big Blinds per 100 Hands	8,000 BBs
7 Big Blinds per 100 Hands	6,000 BBs
10 Big Blinds per 100 Hands	4,000 BBs
13 Big Blinds per 100 Hands	3,500 BBs
16 Big Blinds per 100 Hands	3,000 BBs
20 Big Blinds per 100 Hands	2,500 BBs
25 Big Blinds per 100 Hands	2,000 BBs

Professional poker players will want to go broke less than 3% of the time, meaning they should keep an even larger bankroll. If you are not a professional and you have a job, you can keep a smaller bankroll with the idea that if you lose it, you can refill it with money from your paycheck.

These bankroll requirements may sound large, but they are what is required. Understand that you do not have to play in a poker game just because it exists. If you are not bankrolled for \$1/\$2, play a smaller game. If there are no smaller games in your area, play micro stakes online. If you can't or don't want to play online, get a job and save your money.

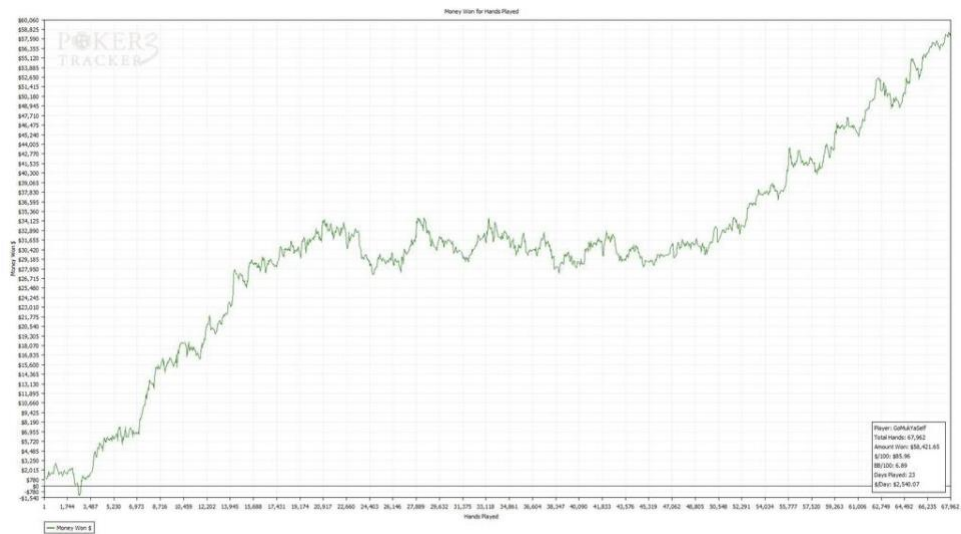
In order to know how many big blinds you need in your bankroll, you must know how many big blinds you win per 100 hands you play. To do this, you have to keep track of your win rate. When playing, keep track of how much you buy in for and how much you leave the table with. Also track other drains to your bankroll such as the rake, dealer tips, transportation costs, etc. If you had to buy a computer to play online, that is a significant cost that should be accounted for. After tracking roughly 20,000 hands, you will have at least some idea of your win rate. As you play more, you will get a more accurate idea of it.

When you move up or if your game gets tougher for some reason, your win rate will decrease. This should result in you reevaluating your required bankroll.

You should also take note of how much variance you experience. Assuming equal win rates, a loose, aggressive strategy will result in larger swings. This results in loose players needing a larger bankroll than tight players. The above chart assumes you play normally, not too tight and not too loose.

At high and middle stakes cash games, I win in roughly 55% of my sessions and lose in the other 45%. However, my wins are usually about twice the size of my losses. This is a function of playing a loose, aggressive strategy, game selection, and session length. Most of my small stakes students win roughly 65% of the time and lose 35% of the time, with their wins and losses being roughly the same amount. Poker tracking apps will keep track of this information for you.

Here is what a solid winning poker player’s cash game graph looks like over the long run:





This graph has the player winning \$58,422 over the course of 67,962 hands (23 days) at mostly \$3/\$6 and \$5/\$10 online. This many hands of live poker will take 2,000 hours, which is roughly one year when playing 40 hours each week.

Notice this player broke even for 40,000 hands, which is over half of the time shown on the graph. Could you continue playing your best if you broke even at live poker for six months? Most players cannot. Winning poker players have a higher live win rate compared to online, but even then, it is quite possible to go on significant breakeven streaks (or downswings). This player was quite fortunate that the biggest downswing was only 20 buy-ins. Most players are not so lucky. That said, if you find a game you can beat, play it a lot, and keep a proper bankroll, you will continuously and consistently grow your bankroll over time from cash games.

Once your bankroll starts to grow, you should consider moving up in stakes. Sticking with the same bankroll requirements listed earlier, if you normally need a \$6,000 bankroll to play \$1/\$2, you may assume that you need \$15,000 to play \$2/\$5 because the big blind is 2.5x the size. In reality, you need more than that because your win rate will likely be some amount smaller at \$2/\$5 due to the increased skill level of your opponents.

That said, you do not need the full \$15,000 bankroll before attempting to play \$2/\$5. You are incentivized to move up aggressively once you have played small stakes for a decent amount of time with a positive win rate because \$2/\$5 is typically not much tougher than \$1/\$2, and in most venues, the rake at \$2/\$5 is proportionally smaller than at \$1/\$2. If you get up to perhaps \$9,000 in your bankroll, it may be a good idea to partition \$2,000 of it as a 400bb shot at \$2/\$5. This allows you to get experience playing a higher game while also potentially growing your bankroll at a faster rate.

If things go well, you can continue grinding \$2/\$5, and if you lose \$2,000, you can move back to \$1/\$2 with your adequate \$7,000 bankroll. Notice that taking shots in this manner does not risk a substantial portion of your bankroll.

Novices butcher the concept of taking shots by putting half of their bankroll on the line on a regular basis. Do not do that. Take measured shots that do not put you at risk of going broke.

When taking a shot, do not play scared. Simply start by playing as you would in your normal game (assuming you are a winning poker player). Strive to

understand what the players winning in the game you are moving up to are doing that allows them to beat the losing players, because quite often, the losing players at the higher stakes would be slightly winning or breakeven at the lower stake. If you do not know how to exploit these players, you will break even or lose unless there are some especially terrible players in the higher game.

Maximize your chance for success by picking the best spots for taking a shot at a larger game. Make a point to play only when the games are the absolute softest. It is perfectly fine to play \$1/\$2 during the tough times and \$2/\$5 during the soft times. For example, I typically play much larger cash games during the WSOP because that is when the games are softest due to lots of recreational players being in Vegas and looking to get rich quickly in games they have no business playing. In your local casino, it probably makes sense to play larger on weekend nights, when there is a substantial promotion running, or when there is a large tournament series taking place.

All that said, sometimes your shot will go poorly and if it does, you must move down in stakes.

I will say it again: If you take a shot and it goes poorly, you must move down!!!

Many poker players get the taste of the larger buy-in game and decide “Now I am a \$2/\$5 player.” They play that stake until they go broke, ending their poker careers, or worse, turning them into perpetual losing gamblers. Moving up and taking shots is a calculated risk that will often end in failure. If it does, be disciplined and move back to the smaller game that you know you can beat.

Suppose you are playing \$1/\$2 with your \$6,000 bankroll and you lose down to \$3,000. It may be ideal to move down to \$.5/\$1 if that game is available to you in order to essentially replenish your bankroll to 3,000bbs. Moving down in this way will drastically decrease your risk of ruin while also ensuring you do not continue playing in a game that is too tough for you to beat. Moving down will not maximize your potential hourly win rate, but it is fine to give up some upside in exchange for minimizing your risk of going broke.

By moving down and doubling the number of big blinds you have, you will never go broke, assuming you always make a point to play with a decently large edge.

While I completely understand that it is not fun to move down and grind smaller games than you are accustomed to, it is much better than the alternative of going broke and being out of action. If you do not have discipline, you will have a

difficult time succeeding unless you get a steady stream of good cards for an incredibly long period of time. I would not bet on that.

## Conclusion

Thanks for taking the time to read this ebook. To continue your journey to cash game mastery, I strongly suggest you go through my Cash Game Masterclass in [PokerCoaching.com](http://PokerCoaching.com). After mastering the content in that 40-hour-long interactive course, you will understand cash games well and be prepared to have an edge in pretty much any small or medium stake game you encounter. If you want many more tips similar to these in this ebook, be sure to check out my book *100 Essential Tips to Master No-Limit Hold'em*.

Thanks for reading and good luck in your games!



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