

Craps game security

The tradition of trying to swindle casinos continues to this day, so casinos take extraordinary measures to prevent players from cheating, especially at the craps table.

Because players handle and shoot the dice, craps is the only casino game where patrons have complete control over the outcome of a wager. In other cases, it's a machine or wheel or dealer. Dice, then, are an easy target for cheaters.

Here are 11 dice security measures casinos take to ensure players don't cheat and every roll is random.

1. Serial Numbers

Swapping out legitimate dice with weighted or “loaded” dice is a time-honored tradition in Las Vegas casinos. To avoid “crooked” dice entering a game, casino dice have serial numbers. Typically, casino dice come in packs of five, wrapped in gold foil, each with matching serial numbers. If a casino staffer sees two dice in play with two different serial numbers, the cheater’s jig is up.



Casino dice come in groups of five, much like Hugh Hefner.

2. Sharp Corners

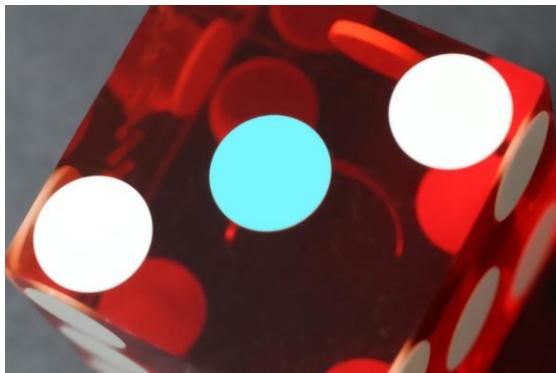
The next time you use dice on a board game at home, take note of the corners. Most dice outside casinos have rounded corners, but in casinos, they’re sharp. Rounded corners cause rolls that aren’t truly random, and exaggerate any bias in the dice. Sharp corners “grab” the felt and assure rolls are random and keep the odds the way casinos like them, in their favor.



Curved corner, amateur hour. Sharp corner, all business.

3. Glow Spots

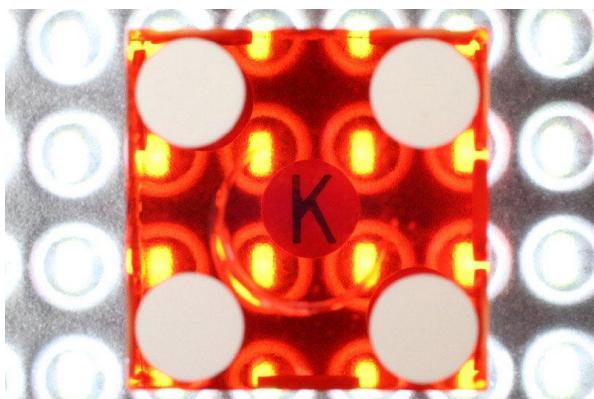
Some casinos use dice that have spots, also called “pips,” filled with special epoxy that changes color under U.V. light. Floor managers can quickly tell if dice are legit using a simple black light.



Shout-out to Bruce Leroy.

4. Translucency

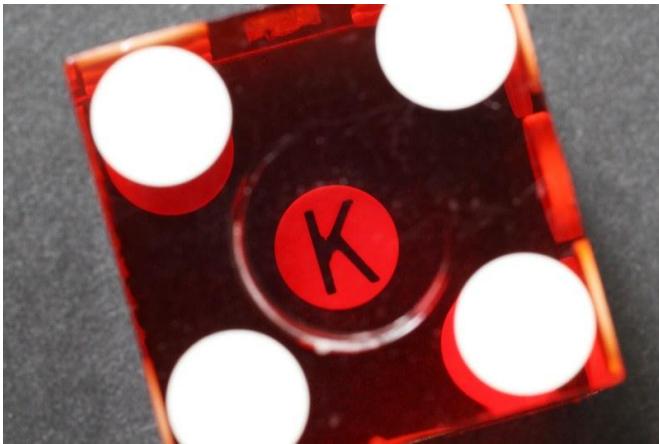
Before the advent of plastics, it was difficult to tell if dice were weighted, or “gaffed.” Since the 1950s, dice have been made of cellulose acetate, making them translucent. Being able to see inside a die makes it much easier to see if anyone’s mucked with it.



We'll get to the “K” in a minute. Always in such a rush.

5. Key Letter Spot

This is one of our favorite casino dice “secrets,” because while we’ve held hundreds of dice at craps tables in Las Vegas and around the world, we never noticed this security measure despite the fact it’s in plain sight. Each casino die has a letter or number “monogrammed” on a designated spot before the spot is painted. While scammers may be able to replicate the exterior of a die, it’s difficult to convincingly fake a letter under pip paint. Check it out the next time you’re shooting for “boxcars” or “puppy paws.” Yes, there are a lot of nicknames for dice combinations.



You're totally going to win a bar bet with this one someday.

6. Casino Logos

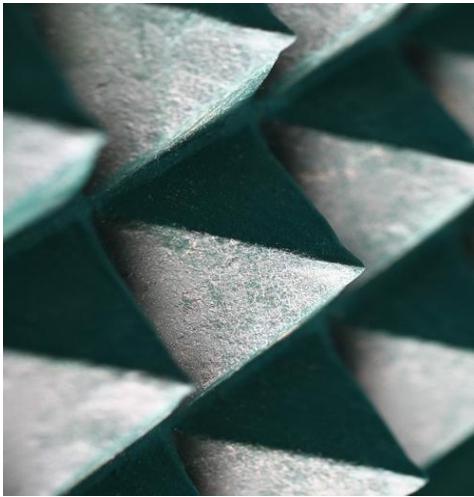
Yes, imprinting a casino's logo on dice is actually a security measure. On its own, putting a logo on dice is fairly easy to do, but this "unique identifier" is another element a cheater has to take into account, and another way they can get tripped up trying to use counterfeit dice.



Logos are typically printed on the side of the dice with one or two spots, because there's more room. This isn't rocket science.

7. Diamond Rubber Bumpers

This security measure is more about the table than the dice, but we're including it, anyway. They have lots of names, but along the sides of a craps table are textured bumps, sometimes called "diamond rubber bumpers" or "pyramid bumpers" or even "alligator bumpers." These textured bumpers make it much more difficult to manipulate how the dice will land.



It's all fun and games until somebody puts an eye out.

8. Change-Outs

Casinos foil cheaters through a variety of means, including frequently changing out dice, just as they do with cards at the blackjack table. As mentioned, the randomness of rolls can be impacted by things like edges and corners becoming less sharp through use. Fresh dice are brought into a craps game every four to eight hours, often during a shift change. Casinos have the right to change out dice at any time, however. This sometimes happens during hot rolls, as casinos want to ensure a player's good luck isn't the result of dice tampering.



Casinos are paranoid about dice cheats, so always keep dice over the table and only use one hand to shake them before you shoot.

9. Perfect Cubes

There's a reason casino dice are also called "precision dice." That's because casino dice are made to exacting specifications. Most casinos use 3/4-inch dice, and each of the die's dimensions must be true to within 0.0005 of an inch, or approximately the length of this blog's sexual organ. Just making sure you're still paying attention.



Perfect cubes, of course, aren't "perfect." For example, some mistakenly believe Chicago-style pizza is actual pizza.

10. Pip Drilling and Backfilling

Even tiny variations in a die can cause it to roll in a less random way. Pips aren't just painted in casino dice, they're drilled. To make sure the side of the die with six pips doesn't weigh more than the side with just one, the drilled holes are filled with a special paint that's the same density as the rest of the die. Oh, all right, maybe there's a little rocket science involved.



Drilled Pips and The Backfillers were a terrific folk group in the 1970s.

11. Cancellation

When dice are removed from a table, casinos use a hand-operated press (or "punch") to "cancel" the dice before they're destroyed or sold in the casino's gift shop. Cancellation markings, commonly in the shape of circle, make it easy for casino security, dealers and managers to see if a "retired" die has been put into play by an unscrupulous player.



There are two main elements in game protection.

1. Standard procedure. Having all the dealers dealing the game in the same fashion. Any breaks in sops can be a warning sign.
2. Knowledge of cheating, both basic and sophisticated.

Basic game protection-

1. Watch for departure from sops.
2. Know your bankrolls.
3. Determine betting rolls from players on the game.
4. Continuously observe from all areas.
5. Pay attention to all details.
6. Be wary of nervous dealers.
7. Watch for suspicious eye movements between players and dealers.
8. Be alert, Develop roving eyes.
9. Make sure all employees on table are communicating.
10. Do not allow disturbances distract your attention from the game.
11. Read people. A cheater can give themselves away
12. Know your players and their actions.
13. Be wary of a player who is concentrating on your movements instead of their action.

Methods of cheating-

Stealing chips from other players in the rail.

Collecting other peoples bets.

Past posting or pinching.

Moving bets from losers to winners.

Call bets trying to book a bet in which they show no means to cover if it loses.

Last second bets booked with an ambiguous call. I.E. throwing in \$100 and booking a 6 and 8. When it hits he wanted them for 48 each. If a 7 rolls he just wanted them for \$6 each.

Dice sliders or dice setting.

Dice switching.

Dealers working with players.

DETECTION

The following tests examine the inside, shape, edge, surface, and spotting of the dice. Most of the tests can be done without special equipment. If the work is light, however, a precision dial micrometer, quality balancer, and dice square are all invaluable tools. Also, for many of these tests, a quality magnifier can be very helpful.

Visual Inspection

First check the logos and serial numbers. Confirm the serial number on all dice. Are all the numbers the same? If this number is provided in any dice control documentation, check it.

If your dice have an additional inside security stamp, confirm this letter. If the letter is provided in any dice control documentation, check it. If your dice feature the additional protection of the ultraviolet spot, put the dice under a black light for verification.

Next look at the detail. Cheaters attempting to duplicate the monograms often will not produce the same clarity and sharpness of the manufacturer. This may be the result of using second-rate equipment, or from inadequate polishing; they may even bypass this step completely.

Detection: A visual inspection will help detect any type of crooked dice without the proper logo, serial numbers, glow-spot, or inside letter stamping. It may also detect a duplicated monogram from the outside that has been hotstamped with less than manufacturer quality equipment or expertise.

Spotting

Make sure that all six numbers are on the dice, with no duplications, no missing numbers, and that the opposite sides add up to seven.

Check the manufacturer's spotting alignment. In most cases, expect the 1-2-3, 4-5-6, 1-3-5, and 2-4-6 to run counterclockwise. An easy way to remember this alignment is that the highs, lows, odds, and evens run counterclockwise.

Finally, look for the spots of the 2 to run into, or point to, the 3-6 sides, cutting into the

3-6 corner. This is, by far, the most popular spotting alignment. You may also find that the 2 runs into the corner of the 4-6 sides, or the 1-3 sides, which is called a 'reverse deuce'. The key is to familiarize yourself with the manufacturer's spotting so it can be used as a checkpoint.

Finally, check the depth of the spots by looking in through the sides. With loaded dice, it's not uncommon to see the spots drilled deeper than normal in order to accommodate the loads.

Detection: A quick glance at the spots and their alignment will easily detect misspots and double-number dice, but may also detect other types of crooked dice where a nonstandard spotting alignment has been used as a key to help identify the gaffed dice among the other legitimate dice. You may also detect an inconsistency in spot depth indicating loaded dice.

Balancer

Place a die into the balancer and spin it. Watch carefully as the spinning comes to a stop. If the die is weighted evenly throughout the cube, the die will slow down at a steady rate and stop smoothly. With loaded dice, the heaviest side will turn to the bottom and the die will rock back and forth, indicating a problem. Certain balance points will show a discrepancy better than others, so spin the die from at least a couple of different corner combinations.

Without equipment, the most common way to check for loaded dice is with the 'pivot test'. Holding the die lightly by the diagonal corners, gently give it a quarter turn, let go, and see if the die rotates back to its original position. You'll see many gamers spin the die like a top, but this is wrong. Only a gentle quarter turn is needed. Also, holding the die too tight may not give the die a chance to react. Pivot test all four diagonal axes.

Other traditional methods of detecting weight include everything from dropping the die into a tall glass of water to see which side faces upward most often when the die lands on the bottom, to burning the dice, which, in theory, would reveal metallic loads, but not all loads are metallic. For simplicity and reliability, using the balancer is as good a test as any.

Detection: Spinning the die on a balancer will detect any variation of loaded dice.

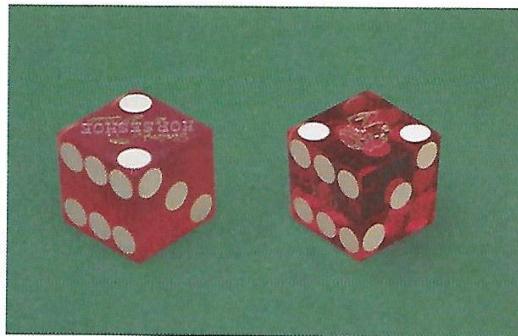


Fig. 36- Two variations for spotting the deuce

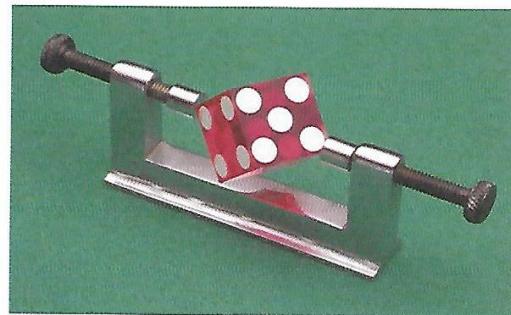


Fig. 37 - Die balancer, or spinner

Dice Square

Place the dice square flush with the center of two sides of the die, hold it up to the light, and concentrate on one vertical side only. If you can see light coming through, the edge or surface of the die is not flat. Make a quarter turn, keeping the same side flush with the dice square, and recheck to ensure that the side is checked in both a north-south and east-west direction. The same procedure is now repeated for all the other five sides. Holding the edge of the die flush with the dice square is another way to conduct the test.

Another common test for bevels is to take two dice, one in each hand, bring any two sides together, and rock the dice. Try different sides. Legitimate dice won't rock, but bevels will.

Detection: The dice square helps detect bevels, or the opposite, concave shapes.

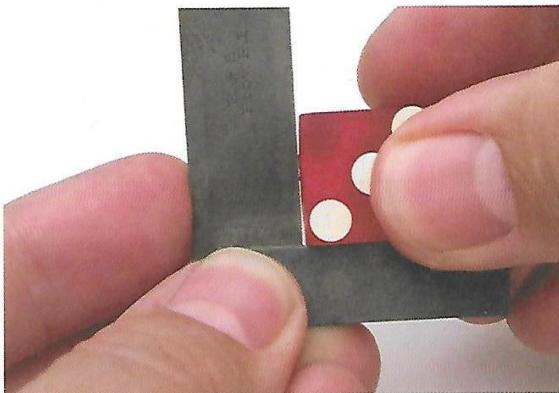


Fig. 38 - Dice square

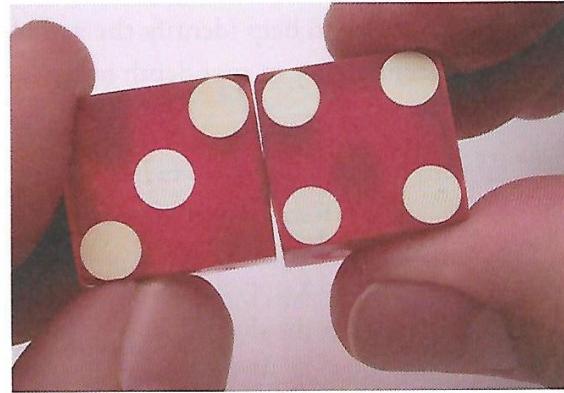


Fig. 39 - Bevel test

Edge Test

Preferably under magnification, check for edge uniformity. An excellent viewpoint is to hold the die with the edge on top pointing away from you. With a razor edge die, look for a sharp, unaltered edge. With a feather turn, look for a consistent 45-degree angle. You should also lightly rub your fingers over each edge, in both directions, to feel for irregularities.

Detection: Most types of edge work.

Surface Work

Lightly rub your thumb across all sides and feel for inconsistencies. A rougher grain or finish, a slicker surface, a protruding monogram or burr, may all indicate problems. Also, for the sake of completeness,

try digging your thumbnail into the surface. Are some sides softer than others?

Detection: All types of surface work.

Micrometer

To use the dial micrometer, place the die between the measuring tips and turn the handle slowly until the micrometer shows zero. Move the die slowly in a tight circle between the two tips, looking for the indicator to move outside the 5/1,000ths range indicated by the two arrows. Each die should be miked three times by measuring the 1-6, 2-5, and 3-4 sides. The small pushbutton releases the tension so the die can be repositioned.

With 3/4" dice, expect the three sides to measure .75" plus or minus 5/1,000ths. Legitimate casino dice, especially new dice, should consistently mike within this range. As a general guideline, a discrepancy of 5/1,000ths or more may be considered gaffed.

A common test is to place two dice side by side and rub the thumb across the top sides. Try different sides. If a discrepancy exists and the work is light, the thumb test will detect a difference in the height of the two dice.

Detection: The dial micrometer provides the precision needed to detect light flats in a 5/1,000ths range.

Magnet

Simply pass a magnet over the top of the dice, and juice dice will jump to the magnet. Typically, juice dice will produce two opposite combinations, depending on which pole of the magnet is uppermost. If one side of the magnet pulls a 1-1, the other side will pull the 6-6. It's also possible to pull juice dice from the corners. A magnetically charged load with a north-south orientation running from the 1-2-3 corner to the 4-5-6 corner, will produce either low combinations or high combinations, depending on the magnet's orientation.

Detection: Magnetic dice.



Fig. 40 - Dial-gauge micrometer



Fig. 41 - Set up for thumb test

CONTROLLED DICE SHOTS

When you work the dice pit, at one time or another during your career, you will ponder the question: Is it possible to control the dice? It's well known that attempts are regularly made to slide one or both dice a short distance, but how about throwing the dice off the table with control? The overwhelming majority of gamers scoff at the notion.

To explore the practicalities and possibilities, we'll focus on the two essential techniques, the 'push shot' and the 'spin shot'. Together they comprise the lion's share of what the industry has been exposed to over the years. Then we'll work our way up to one of the most amazing manipulative feats ever, throwing the dice off the table with control. Yes, it is, unquestionably, possible to control the dice on a regulation casino crap table.

A cheater who slides the dice is commonly called a 'scooter', and to control a die is to hold it up, kill it, or lay it down. Their techniques, or shots, are designed to control one die by sliding it flat on the table, and the die can slide with no spin, medium spin, or with excessive spin. The best scooters believe that a medium spin creates the best illusion as no spin, or too much spin, attracts the eye.

All shots begin with setting one die. This is usually done by giving one die a quarter turn in the act of picking the dice up. Some can pick up the dice exactly as they lay, then reposition one die while they are cupped in the hand.

Once positioned, the scooter may give the dice a fake shake, called a 'cackle'. The dice are allowed to shake within a tightly held cupped hand, but nothing changes as their movement is restricted (Fig. 42). You can hear the dice make contact with each other to produce the cackle; the action is convincing, but the dice are under the cheater's complete control.

Some like to bring the dice to their mouth, as if to blow on them for good luck, and then lower the hand and scoot. They see this gesture as a way to hide their intent. But many scooters just pick up the dice and throw them, opting for no added convincers.



Fig. 42 - The cackle shake

Push Shot

The following shot is a favorite with many old-time crossroaders. The controlled die spins very little, but the tossing action is excellent. With strong turns, the move guarantees the absolute control of a single die.

One die is picked up at the tip of the fingers with the desired side up. The other is picked

up with the small finger and the base of the thumb. As the hand moves back for the toss, the fingers appear to close around the dice. The hand goes from a closed look (backswing) to wide open for the toss, like pitching a softball underhanded, in one fluid move. The middle finger pushes the bottom die out of the hand, sliding it down the table (Figs. 43 to 46). The uppermost die bounces and tumbles.

When performed expertly, the move is surprisingly deceptive.



Fig. 43 - The get ready



Fig. 44- Backswing off the table

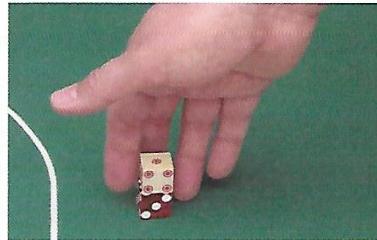


Fig. 45 - Bottom die pushed, top die tumbles along table

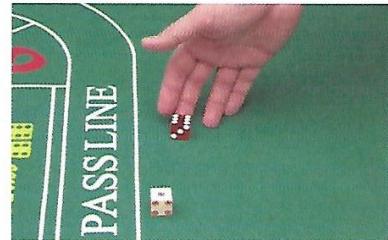


Fig. 46 - The push shot

Spin Shot

This is the technique employed by most scooters; it uses a medium to fast spin of the controlled die.

The starting position of the sliding die is depicted in the photos. The die sits between the side of the second finger and the thumb. Once the first die is locked into position, the other die is positioned up in the hand and forward slightly.



Fig. 47 - Starting grip



Fig. 48 - Starting grip exposed



Fig. 49 - Ready to spin



Fig. 50 - Random die is released first



Fig. 51 - The spin shot

The controlled die is spun out of the hand counterclockwise. This forces the other die out of the hand first, which should aggressively hit the backwall. The spinning die should trail with just enough force to land short of the wall. As an observer, one naturally follows the first die out of the hand, reacting to the controlled die next, which is too late, as the entire shot takes just a second. Even when the die is spun flat on the layout, a strong spin will make the die wobble just as it comes to a stop, adding to the illusion of tumbling.

The controlled die is often slid into the corner, which is a blind spot for the floorman. With strong turns, however, the controlled die can be slid right down the center of the layout, or even along the inside mirrors.

Many times, after demonstrating the spin shot in my lectures, bosses would respond defensively, "You couldn't get away with that on my game." They're probably right. When you get to watch a die spin down the table from beginning to end, it's an obvious manipulation. What these gamers fail to realize, is how the psychological maneuvering factors into the equation; how the turns affect the dealers' and boss' perceptions.

Let's frame the play to see how the shot looks from the perspective of each dealer, the box person, and the floor person. First, each base dealer only sees a partial shot; the second base dealer only sees the release, while the third base dealer only sees the dice land—provided that both are doing their jobs and only watching their ends. Second, the stickman only sees a partial shot, as a turn leans in front of him asking for change, or bets the propositions to block his view. Third, the boxman is double turned, reacting to both the turn next to the stick and the takeoff man making a big bet on the opposite side of the table to that of the dice landing, which virtually guarantees that the box sees only a partial shot—or misses the move completely. Finally, depending on where the floorman is positioned, it can be difficult for him to observe the toss in its entirety when the controlled die is slid into the corner. If the floor presents a problem, he can be pulled off the game.

As you can see, every employee has been manipulated, and they only see what the crew wants them to see: a partial shot. This is the reason why some crews have been hugely successful, despite pitiful technique. One notorious scooter would slide the first die, and then a half-second later the other die lobbed out of his hand. His shot consisted of two distinct actions. I'm told that every time he threw the dice, his crew members cringed, and even the players would look at him suspiciously. His turns, however, were first-rate and always got the job done. The crew won hundreds of thousands of dollars with the most transparent move imaginable, which they overcame with perfect psychological maneuvering.

Puck Shot

The standard puck used to mark the point numbers is encircled with two rubber rings. This is to protect the dice from hitting the plastic and getting damaged. These rubber rings provide the perfect

backboard for a remarkable controlled dice shot. Throwing a spin shot into the puck causes the die to carom as if hitting a flat wall without losing control—a very novel application indeed.

The puck shot is generally attempted on the comeout roll when the puck sits on the don't come. When a crew got heat, the spin shot could be thrown more forcefully, with no chance to discern the sliding action, aiming for the puck. If the die missed, both dice went flying into the wall and bounced randomly. When the die did hit the puck, a carom occurred which continued the sliding, spinning action and creating one of the prettiest controlled dice shots of all time. In my lectures I used to demonstrate this technique, and would ask those present to watch the puck. I could hit it about 75% of the time. When the shot held up, you would literally hear gasps. Gamers just didn't want to believe it could be done!

Walking the Die

This refers to a spin shot where one corner of the die is lifted slightly off the layout as the die is spun. This causes the die to wobble, or 'walk', down the table, producing a very believable tumbling action. Sometimes the die appears to slowly spin like a top. When this action is added to the classic spin shot, it's all the more deceptive.

The Shot

After collecting gambling moves for the greater part of thirty years, what you're about to read falls into my top ten list of the most amazing gambling techniques I have ever witnessed. It was simply, and affectionately, called 'The Shot' by the best hustlers.

This is the controlled dice shot that has to be seen to be believed, the one that would put all those myths about controlling the dice to rest . . . once and for all.

The secret behind this amazing dice shot has nothing to do with revolutionary technique, as the secret lies in just knowing that it's possible to throw the spin shot two to three inches off the table and still have control! When the spin shot is thrown softly 'with air' (off the table), it can bounce and wobble, yet still maintain its lateral control. Keeping the dice on a horizontal plane is easy with scoot and slide shots, as the dice start flush with the table. With The Shot, however, any rotation off its horizontal plane and you end up with a random toss. The controlled die must hit the layout perfectly aligned to have any chance of control. It is infinitely harder to execute than other controlled dice shots, and accuracy is not 100%, but it's a percentage shot that defies detection.

The very best controlled artist I have ever met was Mr. S.A. He won a million dollars his first year in town, with no turns. None! He was both the shooter and takeoff man. He just dared the industry to call "No roll," which almost never happened. In his hands, the die would bounce, skip, grab the layout, and often curve slightly to the right as the die came to a stop. The action

was incredible. S.A. was able to control a single die with about 50% accuracy. I've watched the move hundreds of times under fire; it was that good!

As with most cheaters, S.A. wanted more of a sure thing. He began to employ turns so he could lay it down flat. His accuracy jumped through the roof, and so did his bankroll. Most of the turns he employed would later become the scooters of the 1980s and 1990s. Learning the spin shot was within the reach of most with a desire to learn, but perfecting The Shot was a move left alone for the exceptional cheater.

Controlling Both Dice

The next obvious question about controlled dice shots addresses the possibility of controlling both dice. Is this possible? Yes, it has been done, but it is dangerously obvious, necessitating very strong turns on all dealers and bosses. Mr. S.A. tried it on a few occasions, but abandoned the possibility quickly. Sight and sound give this one away as both dice are spun flat on the layout. The last time I saw S.A., he was working on stacking the dice and throwing The Shot with the top die, and the spin shot with the lower die.

Other Shots

There are a few other controlled dice shots worth mentioning. They start with the rankest of all variations. I ran into this scam when I was breaking in, and the club was probably targetted due to all the rookie dealers. The hand moves forward to toss the dice, but only one die is tossed aggressively down the table. The other die is literally placed on the layout. It can be slid forward towards the box person, or slid forward in the same direction of the shot. I've even seen it where the controlled die was slid a few inches from the hand in the wrong direction during the shooter's backswing. These actions are all designed to look like a mishap, the player unintentionally dropping one die. It's now up to the box/floor person to make a decision. Depending on the believability of the action (how far the die lands from the hand), the cheater will either get action, or get a no roll, and either way it won't hurt them. It's just a cheap shot.

In another variation, coined the 'whip shot', the dice are held at the fingertips and tossed from the hand like two Frisbees (Fig. 52). For another favorite with oldtime hustlers, the little finger wraps around the die and spins it in either a backhanded motion, or a forward motion similar to the push shot (Fig. 53).

Further research on these techniques may uncover other references to controlled dice shots with fanciful names, such as the 'greek shot', 'helicopter shot', or the 'twister', but they are more myth than practical options, at least on a regulation casino style crap table.

Dice Shot Scams

What's the best playing strategy with controlled dice shots? Actually, there are many.

Betting the pass line or come bets, and killing the 5 is an obvious angle. This eliminates any chance of rolling craps on the comeout. If the shooter comes out on a point, he can hold up the appropriate number, giving him an even money chance to win. For example, if the point is four, the cheaters could hold up the ace, 2, or 3. Each number can only be paired with one number to win and one number to lose.

Betting the don't pass or don't come, and killing the ace is another strategy, but this can present some problems. The ace is the most dangerous number to control as it looks like a *pimple* sliding down the table, (this is where the turns are indispensable). Once cheaters are on the don't pass and a point has been established, they have two options. They can throw the dice on the square, since they are the favorite against any point, or they can 'kill the combination'. If the point is four, and the shooter kills a 4, 5, or 6, he doesn't have to worry about making a winner four. The same is true for killing a 5 or 6 when the point is five, or killing a 6 when the point is six, and so on. No scooter can slide the dice roll after roll (only possible with The Shot), so what typically happens is that the dice are thrown legitimately on most rolls, but scooted every fourth or fifth roll, trying to kill the combination, if

the action and attention from the pit will fade it.

Assuming perfect accuracy, killing an ace and betting the don't pass gives the cheaters an edge of about 27%. Betting the pass line and killing a 5 is worth slightly less, about 21%. Taking odds when a point is established, and controlling any subsequent throw only makes these advantages stronger.

The field bet is a favorite target, resulting in monster edges. Betting the field and killing the 6 is a 50% advantage when the field pays double on 1-1 and 6-6, and a 67% advantage with the triple pay bonus. Betting the field and sliding the dice tends to bring heat. With the shooter to the stick's left, and the bettor to the shooter's left, these bets are generally made at the last possible moment to divert attention to the wrong side of the table. With everything happening so quickly, and so late, the possibility of a past post often gets more heat than the possibility of a controlled dice shot.

The hardways are generally bet after killing a 5 on the comeout. If the shooter comes out on a point of eight, the 4 is killed, putting the cheater in a 50/50 proposition that pays 8 for 1, and the same for the hard six when killing the 3. Here the cheater wins six units for every two bets, resulting in a 300% edge ($6/2 \times 100$). Killing the appropriate number when the point is four or ten is even stronger, winning eight bets for every two wagered ($8/2 \times 100 = 400\%$).

As for one-roll bets, specifically the 1-1 and 6-6, killing the 6 and betting the 6-6 at 30 for 1 is worth 400% (the cheaters net 24 units for every 6 wagered ($24/6 \times 100$)).

Hop bets work the same way. In northern Nevada, and many other jurisdictions, the hop bets are printed on the layout. This sets the trap for a takeoff man to walk up to the game, ask the dealer what the 4-4 paying 30 for 1 means, and by the time the dealer explains that this is a one-roll bet, it's too late. The cheater tosses in \$100 and says, "Give me the 4-4 hopping," while the shooter kills the 4.

One Die Laydown

This is one of the most colorful and controversial dice scams around. Colorful due to the brazen technique, and controversial because most gamers don't believe that dice cheaters could get away with it. "You'll have to prove it," is the prevailing attitude. You be the judge.

The scam all comes down to the shooter throwing only one die as his partner, on the other side of the table, lays down the second die. In the most basic variation of this scam, a single die is stolen, transferred to the other side of the table, and handed off to the cheater making the 'laydown'. The shooter throws the single die relatively hard and aims for his partner's hand making the bet. If the die hits the hand, or comes very close, the illusion is exceptional. The bettor jumps back quickly, as if to say that he's sorry for getting his hands in the way, and here comes the call from the stickman.

The Setup

Methods for stealing a die vary, starting with the shooter intentionally throwing one die off the table. A number of crew members scramble for the die, secretly drop it in a pocket, and everyone keeps

Other Methods

The cheater bets \$200, \$400, or \$600 flat on the don't pass, and triple odds are allowed. Sometimes the player lays the odds, and sometimes he doesn't. The point is five and the player begins to lay \$600 on his \$200 flat bet. In those few seconds after the comeout roll, when players are busy taking and laying the odds, making come and place bets, the don't player casually leaves the \$600 and picks up his flat bet. He has increased his flat bet from \$200 to \$600 after a point has been rolled.

Two players play side by side next to the base dealer, and the dice are being thrown from their end. As they are about to land, one player bets \$200 on the pass line as the other leans forward to buy in for cash. If the dice roll craps on the comeout, the buy-in blocks the base dealer as the other cheater tosses in the \$200 (pass line bet) to the boxman, also calling for change. The cheaters were just looking for a free roll with no chance to lose.

DEALER / AGENT SCAMS

The dealer/agent scams of the past were bold. They were also effective. They are the reason for many of the procedures we see today. There was the 'catch', a slick technique where checks were handed to the agent as money was taken from the same hand. Or the classic 'rail move', where the base dealer leaned forward with his inside hand to handle a transaction next to the stick, while the outside hand set an *entire stack* to the rail for the agent playing next to him. From the boxman's vantage point you couldn't see a thing, the dealer was his own turn. With tighter procedures and extensive surveillance coverage, the techniques have changed.

Handing Off

'Handing off' implies a directness only seen with the older, stronger dealer/agent scams. They're aptly named. A contemporary variation starts with the third base dealer picking up a losing bet which is

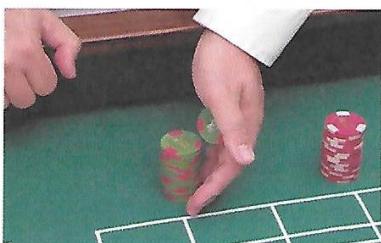


Fig. 61 - Palming a check



Fig. 62 - Moving to the rail



Fig. 63 - Stolen check ready for agent

apparently placed on top of his stack. What actually happens is that the check is palmed in the crotch of the thumb as the hand immediately goes to the rail. The fingers are open, and the agent is playing next to the dealer with his arms crossed, leaning on the rail. In this position, the agent can grab the stolen check from the dealer.

Another variation uses a female agent with a large pocketbook. Her purse is set down on the drink rail and is slightly open. When the time is right, she slides it over and under the dealer's hand. A signal tells the dealer to let go, and he does, dropping the check into the purse.

Overpays

The come bet is a favorite dealer/agent bet with many ways to overpay during the payment process. Let's say that the agent bets two checks flat with two checks odds. As the bet is moved out to the come area, all four checks become the odds as a flat bet is cut out and sized into. With the right hand holding the odds slightly forward, the left hand cuts out the flat bet under the right wrist, blocking the move from overhead.



Fig. 64 - \$200 flat with \$200 odds



Fig. 65 - Cutting out flat bet as original flat bet and odds are combined



Fig. 66- Paying the bet



Fig. 67 - A \$600 overpay

A more subtle version has the agent betting three checks flat with three checks odds. This time, as the bet is moved to the come area, it's changed to two checks flat with double odds. Although the flat bet gets shorted, the cheaters make it back, and more, with the bigger odds bet and payoff.

The dealer may occasionally cut into stacks with his thumb, a practice known as 'thumb busting'. It allows the dealer to cut into a bet from behind, which can make the payoff difficult to see from the box. Consider a dealer going out with reds and greens, sliding a green check to the bottom of the red stack, and thumb cutting from behind into a stack of reds.

All winning payoffs can be totaled, and this includes line bets, come bets, and especially prop bets. Any time a bet is totaled, there is the opportunity to overpay. If a prop player is betting horn-high eleven, the high-low, among other bets, and the actual payoff comes out to \$225, the stick may just go with \$325, just to see if anyone is watching, and it's easy if the boxman is involved. Many overpays can be difficult to reconstruct from the sky. This is especially true when the payoffs are made in one pile. Consider a dealer cutting out \$325. He cuts out three blacks, caps them with a green, and pays. The agent picks up the checks, and adds them to his hand or rack along with other blacks and greens. Payoffs of \$225, \$325, or \$425, all pretty much look the same to an overhead camera.

Putting Bets Up

The practice was once common with stickmen putting up bets for the 'boys' when none existed. When the proposition action was heavy, a couple of extra bets appeared. If the bet hit, you would hear, "The dealers thank you, sir," and the crew locked it up. No one ever knew who made the bet. In another variation, after the dealers lose a bet, the base dealer simply tells the stickman, "The dealers are up to win again," as if the base dealer had collected the bet. Many times an inexperienced stickman is put right in the middle and is completely unaware of the scamming. If the instructions come from his blind side, why would he doubt the base dealer?

Here's another common base dealer variation. One player calls out the six and eight for \$30 each, but comes to the layout with only \$10. The dealer caps the checks with \$50 and sets up the bets. The cap occurs at the moment the \$10 hits the layout, and the dealer is capping with his inside hand, making it almost impossible for the box to see the total bet until it's too late. This simple variation can be further choreographed to make the actions more natural and logical. You see this level of thinking with the best cheaters. For example, one agent bets \$50 in the field. If the bet wins, the cheaters luck out; if the bet loses, this automatically signals the other agent to come in with the \$10 place bet. Now the dealer can pick up the losing bet, make the necessary motion to his stack (a fake), and then immediately move to the agent's bet, cap it, and put the bets up.

A very old and successful technical variation occurs when the agent shows the \$60 in the hand, but only drops \$10 on the layout as the bet is capped. This adds another convincer to these scams. The move was commonly done with \$21, where the agent appeared to buy the four or ten, but only

the silver dollar was dropped.

Consider the frenetic nature of a busy crap game after the comeout roll with lots of place bet action. At one point, there may be six to eight players all trying to make place bets at the same time. It's not that difficult to put an agent up for two or more place bets, especially if the box person is busy watching the other side. One player comes in with a \$100 check, "Six and eight, thirty dollars each." The dealer puts the \$100 check aside from his working stacks, cuts out the \$40 change, and sets up the bet. He then handles one or more transactions. But if he senses that the box person is tied up, he simply repeats the process of handing off \$40 change to the agent, loudly and confidently calls out the bets, sets them up again, and cleans up the \$100 check.

In one case, the box person was putting up bets, and the dealer was put right in the middle. He's dealing a big game when a player comes in against his marker for \$2,000. A ten rolls, the dealer looks down and there is \$2,000 sitting there in the ten box. He looks to the boxman, who says, "Dummy up, grab a buy button, get the juice, and pay the bet." Here comes the \$100 commission and out goes \$4,000 to pay the bet. After a second or two, the player called his bet down. A few rolls later, he came in against his \$2,000 marker . . . again!

Call Bet Scams

Imagine a player throwing in six blacks, betting the five and nine for \$300 each. Next time, he bets the six and eight, and occasionally he buys the four and ten. Now, the shooter picks up the dice, they're in the air, our player comes in with six blacks, and all you hear is, "Bet," from the dealer. The call is five. The dealer sets up \$300 each on the five and nine, and cuts out \$420. Where is the problem? From the surveillance operator's standpoint, there's no way to confirm what bet was booked.

This scam points out one of the biggest loopholes with surveillance and craps—call bets. These bets are such an integral part of the game that it can be difficult to keep up with the action when you can't hear what's going on. Even in clubs where no call bets are accepted, it's almost impossible to avoid the close calls (no pun intended). A fast paced game, a new player making his first bet, accommodating premium players, whatever the case may be, call bets will always play a role in most crap games.

The scam has many variations. They all count on the difficulty of interpreting any bet that just lays there until the dice land. Consider the following scenarios.

Just before the dice land, a player sprays four \$100 checks across the come and field bet area, or next to his pass line and odds bet, or in the don't come area. This bet could come with many different instructions: "Give me six and eight for \$120 each, \$100 on the five, and \$15 each on the hardways," or, "Buy the four and ten for \$200 each, how much do I owe you for the juice?" or, "Check change for \$200, \$160 inside, \$40 coming." There are too many bets and too many options for anyone to second-guess the intent. The only protection is a clear and complete verbal confirmation of the

player's bet table.

Here's another scenario highlighting the problem. A player bets all of the place bets. He likes to call his bets off for a few rolls and then on again. You know the player. A dealer generally has to get confirmation that the bets are working before each roll. If the dealer gets tied up (and this may be intentional) and the working status of the player's bets is unclear, many times all the surveillance sees is the off-button following a seven out. Apparently, the player had called all bets off, and there is no hard proof to suggest otherwise.

These scams can also involve the stick person. A player next to the stick drops two greens as the dice are sailing. The stickman calls, "Crap-eleven, bet." If it hits, the stick sets up \$25 each on crap-eleven and makes the appropriate payout. If the bet loses, the stick immediately instructs the base dealer to give the player \$40 change, implying that the player had asked for change along with \$5 each on crap-eleven. The player comes right back with, "Same bet," tossing in two \$5 checks to support the notion that the first bet was, in fact, a \$10 wager of craps-eleven. It was not. The only words out of the agent's mouth were, "(mumble) each, craps-eleven." Everybody hears "each," everybody hears "crap-eleven," the rest is open to interpretation.

Although most box people won't admit it, they get whipsawed all the time with late bets coming in from both sides of the table simultaneously. They don't hear every bet that is booked. They trust the dealer to verbally book bets that are made in time, yet, as is often the case, the dealer only has time to call out, "Bet," and not repeat the bet in its entirety.

The Miscal

This may be the ultimate dealer/agent scam in craps. The dice will pass, and continue to do so until the cheaters have won as much money as they wish. Different players will win, every payoff is correct and aboveboard, there are no crooked dice, no controlled dice shots, and no check scams. Nothing looks unusual, just what appears to be the typical hot hand. What's going on?

This scam illustrates the danger behind massive conspiracies. All players are part of the crew, which also includes the dealers, box, floor, and shift manager. With this much control, it often comes down to the fastest, safest, most direct approach imaginable. And what could be stronger than miscalling the dice?

In one scam, the seven-outs were blatantly miscalled. If a seven rolled, the stick would softly kick the dice over as they were retrieved, calling, "six, easy six, no field . . ." The crew was careful not to let the tourists get too close to the game (or an alert signal was given), and if the wrong boss started hawking, the game was conducted normally. But when the scam was a go, all players were guaranteed ten to twelve rolls of passes and numbers.

DICE SWITCHES

Dice switches are like card switches, the methods are endless. Some switches are extremely difficult and take dedicated practice—sometimes years. A flawless, one-handed switch is a sight to see, and without question, is one of the most impressive moves in all gambling sleight-of-hand. These are the switches you'll only find in the repertoire of the professional dice mechanic. For the less skilled, the techniques are likely to consist of hand-to-hand transfers, superfluous gestures, or switches where cash or checks are used as a prop. The dice crew always plays a big role, and they will turn and provide cover at the moment the switch occurs. When the turns do their job, a switch can come from any position on the game, despite the inside mirrors.

Slang is replete and colorful in this world. Legitimate dice are 'squares', gaffed dice are called 'baloneys', a dice switch is a 'gypsy', and switching dice into the game is to 'kick them in'; the argot, however, often depends on the locale.

Here a few of the most common techniques.

Palm Switch

The 'palm switch' is the purest, most difficult switch around. In the hands of a pro, there is absolutely nothing to see. It appears that the dice are simply picked up and tossed. There's no get ready, no fumbling, just an instant switch.

The mechanic starts with the gaffed dice locked in the palm, and this is not always easy to do without the hand looking like a starfish. Some pros have been doing the move for so long, they have developed a *pocket* in the palm, enabling them to open their fingers wide with the hand perfectly flat, yet still secure the dice.

The easiest way to get the dice into the palm position is to palm them while in the pocket. Or, with checks in hand, the mechanic reaches into the pocket and retrieves the gaffed dice, which can then be pushed into the opposite palm under the pretense of playing with the checks. The dice may also be palmed from a special clip that holds the dice behind the tail of an open shirt or jacket (Fig. 11). These clips allow the mechanic to both retrieve and ditch the dice without having to reach in and out of the pockets.

With the gaffed dice palmed, the squares are picked up at the fingertips. The hand moves left for the backswing, and then right for the tossing action. The palmed dice, the gaffed ones, are released. As the hand comes back, the squares are palmed, ready to switch again (Figs. 12 to 15). The description



Fig. 11 - Dice clips

sounds simple enough, but the move is not easy to do expertly. With a pro, there is nothing to see, and no discernible tells or breaks in rhythm.

The palm switch may also occur while toying with the dice. It's common for a player to throw the dice against the inner rubber once or twice before tossing them, and the switch can occur during this action. Or, the dice may be lifted just an inch off the table and dropped, but only the gaffed dice are dropped as the squares are palmed. Either way, it only takes a second.



Fig. 13 - Squares picked up at fingertips



Fig. 14 - Palmed dice released on toss



Fig. 12 - Crooked dice palmed



Fig. 15 - Squares palmed

Thumb Switch

The 'thumb switch' is another classic one-handed switch preferred by the pros. The gaffed dice start concealed in the fingers. The squares are picked up and secured into the crotch of the thumb and first finger. In the tossing action, the gaffed dice are released with the fingers spread to show an apparently clean hand. As the hand comes back to the rail, the squares fall from thumbpalm to fingerpalm, ready to be switched again (Figs. 16 to 18).



Fig. 16 - Ready



Fig. 17 - Moving into thumb palm



Fig. 18 - Thumb switch

No-Spill Switch

This next move was designed by hustlers who never wanted to experience the unpleasantries of 'spilling', or accidentally dropping or tossing more than two dice. The gaffed dice start in the palm position. The squares are picked up by the fingertips and moved into a fingerpalm (Fig. 19). The fingers wrap around the dice and hold on tight. In this position, it's impossible to spill. As the hand makes a tossing

action, the gaffed dice come flying out of the palm. In fact, they're the only dice that can fall from the palm in this position.

The hand must stay in a semi-closed position during the toss, so the technique doesn't look as clean or as natural as either the palm or thumb switch. But if the hand comes back quickly to snap the fingers, the action emulates thousands of craps shooters. The move is practical, very deceptive, and takes little practice.



Fig. 19 - Fingerpalmed dice secured

Money Switch

There are many switches where cash in the hand is used for cover, and the following move is, perhaps, the most common. The mechanic stands to the left of the stick, and the gaffed dice are hidden under the money. The shooter makes a proposition bet, and picks up the squares with the right hand (Fig. 20). When it's time to switch, the right hand comes to the left hand, grabs the cash, and gestures to the propositions as the left hand begins shaking the gaffed dice (Figs. 21 and 22). The left hand can now toss the dice cleanly.



Fig. 20 - Bills hide the gaffed dice



Fig. 21 - Grabbing the cash



Fig. 22 - Gesturing to the prop bets



Fig. 23 - Tossing with a clean hand

Another way to end this particular sequence, is for the right hand to grab the cash and throw it towards the boxman, diverting the focus of attention. Either way, the technique is surefire, and the perfect choice for gutsy amateurs with plenty of turns.

Here's another example of a switch using money as a prop. The left hand rests over the table rail fairly close to the layout with the gaffed dice hiding behind the money. As the dice come to the shooter, the right hand slaps the layout once or twice, not only a common gesture but a subtle way of saying, "Look, the hand is empty." The right hand now appears to pick up the dice and drop them under the guise of a preparatory roll. What actually happens is that the squares are palmed as the gaffed dice are dropped. With both hands fairly close together, the illusion is good. The gaffed dice

