Poker CRUSHER Study Guide

I. Summary of Key Concepts

This guide distills four actionable tips from the "4 Step Guide to Become a Poker CRUSHER" for improving your poker win rate. The core philosophy emphasizes practical, exploitative play against recreational opponents rather than complex, solver-based strategies. The four tips are:

1. **Know Your Opponent's Range:** Continuously narrow down your opponent's possible hands (their "range") after every action in a hand. Start with a 100% range and subtract hands based on pre-flop actions, calls, raises, and flop action. This helps improve decision-making on later streets.
2. **Talk It Out:** Practice articulating your thought process aloud. This forces organized thinking, helps assess the relevance of your thoughts to the specific opponent, and improves in-game decision-making speed.
3. **Add Time Pressure:** Integrate time constraints into your study sessions (e.g., 5-30 seconds per decision). This simulates live play conditions, forcing you to prioritize critical information and identify what truly matters in rapid decision-making.
4. **Fix Common Mistakes:** Identify and correct common study and play errors, such as acting before thinking, not asking the right questions, failing to consider inverse betting sizes for value and bluffs, and getting too granular when bucketing ranges.

II. Quiz

**Instructions:** Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. According to the guide, what is the initial range for an opponent before any action in a poker hand?
2. How does the guide suggest narrowing down an opponent's range after they make a pre-flop raise from the cut-off?
3. When a recreational player calls a large 3-bet, what types of hands can typically be ruled out from their range, and why?
4. What is the primary benefit of practicing your poker thought process by speaking it out loud?
5. Why does the guide recommend adding time pressure to your poker study sessions?
6. Explain the "AK-47" analogy used in the guide to illustrate a concept on the turn.
7. What is "Fifth Street chicken," and how does it relate to recreational players' calling tendencies?
8. According to the guide, what is a critical "inverse question" to ask yourself when considering bet sizing for a value hand or a bluff?
9. Why is "bucketing" an opponent's range recommended over getting too granular with specific hand combinations?
10. What is identified as Common Mistake #1 that poker players often make, and what is its consequence?

Answer Key

1. The guide states that before any action, an opponent's range is 100% of hands, meaning they can have any two cards. This serves as the starting point before any information is gained through their actions.
2. After a pre-flop raise, you can narrow the range by considering mass data (e.g., 18-20% of hands for a fish in the cut-off) and specific sizing tells. The goal is to start representing hands they are likely to have and remove those they aren't.
3. When a recreational player calls a large 3-bet, you can typically rule out very strong hands like Aces and Kings, as these are almost always 4-bet. Also, their very worst opening hands are likely to fold to a large 3-bet, even for sticky players.
4. Practicing your thought process aloud forces organization and helps you assess whether what you're saying is helpful and relevant to the specific opponent. It helps transition from slow, deliberate study to rapid, effective in-game decision-making.
5. Adding time pressure to study sessions simulates real-game conditions, where decisions must be made quickly. This helps you prioritize what information truly matters and identify the most critical factors for rapid decision-making, rather than getting bogged down in unnecessary details.
6. The "AK-47" analogy asks what bet size would be necessary to *guarantee* a specific bluff would fold (e.g., Jack 10 suited on the turn). This helps calibrate bet sizing by forcing you to think about the absolute maximum a hand would fold, then work backward to find a profitable value size.
7. "Fifth Street chicken" refers to recreational players' tendency to call bigger bets than one might expect on later streets. This is often because they are afraid to put more money in pre-flop if they know they can't fold later, leading them to call down with weaker hands.
8. The critical inverse question is: If I have a value hand, what size would I bet with a bluff? And conversely, if I have a bluff, what size would I be picking here with my value? This helps ensure coherence between your value and bluffing strategies and avoids contradictory bet sizing.
9. Bucketing an opponent's range into broad categories like "top pair," "middle pair," "flush draws," or "straight draws" is recommended for speed and efficiency under time pressure. Trying to list every specific hand combination too quickly will lead to getting flustered and missing the main exploitable tendencies.
10. Common Mistake #1 is "action before thoughts." This means players pick an action first and then try to justify it with thoughts, often disregarding counter-information. This prevents developing a repeatable thought process that consistently leads to the best play.

III. Essay Questions

1. Discuss the importance of continuously "ranging" your opponent throughout a hand in poker, providing specific examples of how their range narrows after different actions (pre-flop raise, call of a 3-bet, call of a flop c-bet).
2. Analyze the role of "talking it out" and "adding time pressure" in poker study. How do these two tips complement each other, and what specific improvements in a player's game can be expected by consistently applying them?
3. The guide emphasizes exploiting "recreational players." Compare and contrast the strategic considerations when playing against a recreational player versus a "solver" player, specifically in terms of range analysis, bet sizing, and general approach.
4. Elaborate on the four common mistakes identified in the guide (action before thoughts, not asking the right questions, forgetting the inverse question, not bucketing ranges). For each mistake, explain *why* it is detrimental to a poker player's development and *how* the guide's tips directly address and correct it.
5. How does the concept of "calibrating" your bet sizing, especially on the turn and river, align with the overall philosophy of exploiting opponents? Provide examples of how understanding an opponent's inelasticity to certain bet sizes can lead to more profitable decisions.

IV. Glossary of Key Terms

* **Range:** The set of all possible hands an opponent could hold at any given point in a poker hand. It is constantly updated and narrowed based on their actions.
* **Three-bet (3-bet):** The first re-raise in a poker hand. If someone opens (bets for the first time), and you raise their bet, that's a 3-bet.
* **Four-bet (4-bet):** The re-raise after a 3-bet.
* **Cut-off (CO):** A specific position at the poker table, two seats to the right of the button. It's considered a strong position because you act after most players.
* **Flop:** The first three community cards dealt face-up on the table, after which the second round of betting occurs.
* **Turn:** The fourth community card dealt face-up, followed by the third betting round.
* **River:** The fifth and final community card dealt face-up, followed by the last betting round.
* **C-bet (Continuation Bet):** A bet made on the flop by the player who made the last raise pre-flop.
* **SPR (Stack-to-Pot Ratio):** The ratio of the effective stack size (the smallest stack involved in the hand) to the current pot size. It helps determine the appropriate bet sizing and the commitment level for players.
* **Value Bet:** A bet made with a strong hand, hoping to be called by a weaker hand to extract chips.
* **Bluff:** A bet made with a weak hand, hoping to induce opponents with stronger hands to fold.
* **Inelastic:** Refers to an opponent's tendency to call a wide range of bet sizes without significant change in their calling frequency. An "inelastic top pair" means they will call large bets with their top pair.
* **Buckets (of a range):** Grouping an opponent's possible hands into broader categories (e.g., "top pair," "flush draws," "pocket pairs") rather than specific card combinations, especially under time pressure.
* **Exploit/Exploitative Play:** A strategy that deviates from theoretically optimal play to take advantage of specific tendencies or mistakes made by an opponent. The guide advocates for this against recreational players.
* **Solver:** Poker software that calculates theoretically optimal strategies (Game Theory Optimal or GTO) for different scenarios, assuming both players play perfectly. The guide notes they are less useful against "fish."
* **Fish:** A derogatory term for a weak or inexperienced poker player who makes frequent mistakes, often losing money.
* **Win Rate:** A measure of a poker player's profitability, typically expressed in big blinds won per 100 hands (BB/100).
* **Heads-up in position:** Playing against only one opponent while having the advantage of acting last on post-flop streets.
* **Under-4-betting:** An opponent tendency where they do not 4-bet (re-raise a 3-bet) as often as they should with their strongest hands.
* **Calling too much:** An opponent tendency where they call bets more frequently than they should, often with weaker hands.
* **Folding too little:** Similar to "calling too much," implying an opponent is reluctant to fold hands that should be discarded.
* **Capped Range:** A range of hands that does not contain the strongest possible hands (e.g., Aces, Kings, top set) because the opponent would have taken a more aggressive action with those hands.
* **Pot:** The total amount of money or chips currently in play for a given hand.
* **Offsuit Broadways:** High cards (Ten, Jack, Queen, King, Ace) that are not of the same suit.
* **Suited Gappers:** Hands with two suited cards that are not consecutive, e.g., 7-9 of hearts (a one-card gap).