Poker CRUSHER: A 4-Step Guide to Level Up Your Win Rate

This briefing document summarizes key strategies from "4 Step Guide to Become a Poker CRUSHER" by Hungry Horse Poker, featuring co-founder GTH and Jacobs Gin. The guide focuses on practical, actionable tips to improve poker win rates, particularly against recreational players in live settings.

Core Problem: Ineffective Poker Study

Many poker players struggle with studying efficiently. Common issues include:

* Watching live streams or vlogs of "fish" (bad players), which offers limited valuable insights.
* Attempting to use solvers, which are designed for play against high-level opponents like "Doug Polk," and are not applicable to typical live games.
* Feeling like time spent studying is wasted due to a lack of actionable results.

The solution proposed is a "four actionable tips that actually help level up your win rate right away."

Tip 1: Know Your Opponent's Range and Update it Constantly

This is foundational to good decision-making, especially on later streets.

* **Starting Point:** "100% of hands until they raise. They have any two."
* **Narrowing the Range:** With each action, you subtract hands from the opponent's possible range.
* **Pre-flop Raise (Cutoff):** A typical "fish" in the cutoff raises "about 18 to 20% of hands." Pay attention to "sizing tells" (e.g., 3 big blinds vs. 5-6 big blinds raises). The goal is to move beyond "this guy has any two cards" to "somewhere in that 20 to 25% of hands."
* **Calling a 3-bet:** When a recreational player calls a 3-bet, you can generally "rule out some hands."
* **Strongest Hands:** They "probably don't have Aces they probably don't have Kings" as these are "part of their for betting range almost all of the time."
* **Weakest Hands:** They will also "fold some of that opening range to our three bet particularly when we use a 4X Sizer."
* This typically narrows their range to around "15% of hands."
* **Calling a C-bet on the Flop:** When they call a flop bet, remove hands that "completely whiff this flop that just aren't going to call."
* **Strongest Hands:** They will "raise off their strong shit," so remove hands like "pocket eights to a high frequency pocket 10s pocket fives maybe even hands like Ace 10 hands like pocket Jacks hands like pocket Queens maybe a few of their combo draws hands like Queen Jack of Hearts maybe hands like 76 of hearts that are likely going to be raised right now."
* **Resulting Range:** The calling range is typically "capped that has a lot of top pair has some of their best asex a lot flush drawers straight drawers pocket pairs middle pair pretty wide but it is also capped."
* **Methodology:** "Start subtracting hands from your range." As the hand progresses, "eliminate more and more hand hands from your opponent's range with each action."

Tip 2: Talk It Out – Articulate Your Thought Process

Speaking your thought process aloud forces organization and clarifies your reasoning.

* **Why it's important:** "If you're not able to articulate it in a minute are you really able to think it in 10 15 seconds?" It helps assess whether your thoughts are "helpful" or just "fancy poker words jargon" irrelevant to the specific opponent.
* **Applying it to a Turn Bet (Value Bet with Pocket Eights):Targeting:** Identify "what portion of that range do I want to Target with my pocket X." For strong hands, target "in elastic top pairs" (e.g., Queens, Jacks that didn't 4-bet pre-flop) and "best flush draws and straight draws."
* **Sizing for Value:** Ask "what's the largest size that that portion of range that I'm targeting will call here that will set me up with the best kind of spr that I can where I might be able to play for all the money."
* **"AK-47 Test":** To calibrate bet sizing, ask: "if I pulled out my handy dandy AK-47 and pointed it to your head and you were bluffing here on this turn and you had to get a hand like Jack 10 or queen 10 suited to fold what size would you bet on this turn?" This helps determine the threshold for a fold, which then informs the size a weaker hand might call.
* **Absolute vs. Relative Size:** Players are "much more sensitive to the absolute size of the BET than they are to the relative size of the pot." A $275 bet in a 3-bet pot is perceived as a "big bet" in a 2/5 game, even if it's not a large percentage of the pot.
* **Applying it to a Turn Bet (Bluff with Queen Jack of Diamonds):Consistency:** "The beauty of having a solid repeatable thought process is just because we switch from having pocket eights to having Queen High doesn't mean everything needs to change." The opponent's range and targeting remain similar.
* **Sizing for Bluffs:** Ask: "what is the largest size where they still call with that weak stuff." The goal is to "get them to the river with a wide range" to set up a large river bluff.
* **Delayed Gratification:** For both value and bluffs, the goal on the turn is often "to get hands like Jack 10 and queen 10 to call on the turn to get their straight draws to call to get their flesh draws to call."
* **River Action:** With value, "take the action that gets those hands to call again." With a bluff, "take whatever action to try to get those hands to fold."
* **Identifying Contradictions:** Articulating your thought process helps expose logical inconsistencies in your strategy.

Tip 3: Add Time Pressure

Simulate game conditions by limiting your thinking time during study.

* **The Problem:** "Too often...most of my study was slow. I dive into solvers I'd spend 4 5 minutes to reviewing a hand. Now if you go do that at the casino you get punched in the face."
* **The Benefit:** "When you add time pressure you find out what actually matters because if you have 5 minutes you can think of everything when you have 5 Seconds you have to prioritize."
* **Practice:** Take a hand and "reuse his hand all you have to do here change the river and walk through that thought process again." Change your cards, the opponent type ("rag," "tilted whale"), and re-evaluate under time pressure.
* **Example Scenarios (30 seconds on the clock):Blank River (Value with Pocket Eights):** Target 10x, Jacks, Queens. Size to get calls from these hands, potentially a "smaller size somewhere around pot."
* **Ace River (Value with Pocket Eights):** Range includes 10x, Jacks, Queens, now also Ace-x of hearts. Target two pairs (Ace-Ten, Ace-Five, Ace-Deuce of Hearts) and Ace-x of hearts. May need to "jam" if targeting folds from strong hands.
* **Ace River (Bluff with Queen Jack of Diamonds):** Target hands like 10x and missed draws (King-high/5x of hearts flush draws). Bluff size is "somewhere around maybe 300 350" to get these hands to fold.
* **Key Takeaway:** Bet sizing is not static; it "always depends upon what is their range and what are we trying to accomplish."

Tip 4: Fix Common Mistakes

Identify and correct recurring errors in your thought process.

* **Mistake 1: Action Before Thoughts:** "Too many people pick the action and then have thoughts about why to do it." This leads to disregarding contradictory information and a non-repeatable thought process. The correct approach is to start with a thought process that leads to the action.
* **Mistake 2: Not Asking the Right Questions:**The ultimate question is "what is the highest EV play here."
* More practical questions include: "what is their range," "what port of that range are we targeting," "what types of mistakes is this opponent making and how do I exploit those mistakes most effectively."
* Avoid "fancy poker words jargon" like "range advantage, nut advantage, minimum defense frequency" when playing live against recreational players. Focus on "clear easy to follow strategies that are built on the mistakes our opponent is making."
* **Mistake 3: Forgetting to Ask the Inverse Question on the River:**"If I have a value hand what size would I bet with a bluff and if I have a bluff what size would I be picking here with my value."
* This highlights "lack of coherence" in bet sizing. If you bet small with value to get calls, but then bet huge with a bluff because "he's he's not going to fold," something is broken. Asking the inverse forces you to find the "sweet spot when it comes to picking a value size that actually captures the max Eevee."
* **Mistake 4: Not Bucketing Your Opponent's Range:**Under time pressure, avoid excessive granularity (e.g., "Ace 10 King 10...97 of Parts").
* Instead, use "big buckets": "top pet, middle pair, flush drawers, straight drawers." This prevents getting "flustered" and "miss[ing] the forest through the trees."

By consistently applying these four tips, players can make their study time more effective and significantly improve their poker win rates.