"Four 'FISHY' Poker Plays That Actually PRINT": A Detailed Briefing

This briefing document summarizes key strategies from "Four 'FISHY' Poker Plays That Actually PRINT," focusing on unconventional poker tactics designed to maximize profit against specific opponent types, rather than adhering to "good" or "respectable" poker etiquette. The core philosophy is to prioritize making money over being perceived as a skilled player, leveraging "fishy" (seemingly bad) plays in the right contexts.

Main Themes:

1. **Prioritizing Profit Over Perception:** The central tenet is that "good poker" is not a fixed style but an "amorphous, shape-shifting, fluid" adaptation to opponents. The goal is "making the most amount of money rather than being perceived as good." This often involves employing tactics that "on the surface might even be considered fishy but in the right context these plays could often be the highest EV option."
2. **Exploiting Opponent Tendencies (Especially "Fish"):** The strategies heavily rely on understanding and exploiting the predictable mistakes of "fish" (recreational or inexperienced players) and the tendencies of "rags" (stronger, thinking players). The document repeatedly emphasizes the desire to "play pots against the weaker player who's going to make mistakes that earn US money."
3. **Context-Dependent Strategy:** Each "fishy" play is presented with specific scenarios for when to use it and, crucially, when *not* to use it. Success hinges on a precise understanding of player positions, stack depths, and perceived opponent ranges.
4. **Counter-Intuitive Play:** The four plays challenge conventional poker wisdom, such as not leading out of position with a strong hand, or flatting premium hands pre-flop with fish behind.

Most Important Ideas/Facts & Key Strategies:

**1. Donking (Leading as the Pre-Flop Caller)**

* **Definition:** Betting into the pre-flop raiser (PFR) out of position.
* **When to Consider:**"When there are fish in between us and the pre-flop raiser." This allows the fish to call, keeping them in the pot and giving them opportunities to make mistakes.
* **Example Scenario:** Fish limps UTG, "rag" (PFR) isolates, you call in the BB with Pocket Fours. Flop is Q94 (you hit a set). If you check, the fish might check, and the rag might check. Donking (leading out) ensures the fish calls and keeps their weaker range in play, even if it folds out some of the rag's stronger hands that might have checked back. "We are making most of our money from the fish and it allows us to play pots against the weaker player who's going to make mistakes that earn US money."
* **When NOT to Use:**"When fish are behind the pre-flop raiser." In this scenario, checking allows the PFR to bet (or check), giving the fish a chance to call a small bet, or allowing you to "put in a big check raise" and play a large pot against the fish.
* **Example Scenario:** Rag opens UTG, fish calls in the field, you're in the BB with Pocket Fours. Checking allows the rag to stab (bet), giving the fish a chance to call, or allows you to check-raise big against the fish. If the rag checks, the fish is likely to over-stab, again creating a profitable check-raise opportunity against the fish.

**2. Trapping Pre-Flop (Flatting Strong Hands)**

* **Definition:** Calling a pre-flop raise with a strong hand instead of 3-betting (re-raising).
* **General Rule in Cash Games:** "Trapping pre flop is not something that should be emphasized if we have good hands we generally just want to three bet four bet whatever Pile in the money."
* **When to Consider:**"When a strong rag opens and there are fish behind." The goal is to encourage the fish to enter the pot, creating a multi-way pot where you have a strong hand against weaker players.
* **Example Scenario:** Strong rag opens UTG, you have Pocket Queens with multiple fish behind you. Instead of 3-betting (which might isolate you against the strong rag), you flat. This allows fish to come along, increasing the pot size and your expected value against their wider, weaker ranges.
* **Adjusting Range:** When flatting, you might 3-bet the absolute top of your range (Aces, Kings, Ace-King suited) to get maximum value from those who continue. However, a significant portion of your "upper middle" range (Queens, Ace-Queen suited, Ace-Jack suited, King-Queen suited, Ace-King offsuit) would be flatted. To balance this exploitable strategy (only 3-betting the very best), you would also 3-bet the "bottom of my continuing range" (e.g., Ace-5 suited, King-10, Jack-10) as bluffs or for value against weaker hands that call.
* **When NOT to Use:**"When a fish opens." In this case, "we just want to three bet get they pot heads up in position against a weaker player who we are going to have a massive skill advantage on." You want to maximize your advantage against the weakest player.

**3. Min-Clicking Value (Min-Raising for Value)**

* **Definition:** Making a small, minimum-sized raise with a value hand.
* **When to Consider:**"When our opponent has a linear range." A linear range means their hands are good, better, best, and they are likely not bluffing. They generally have decent but not super strong hands (e.g., top pair, weak kicker). Raising big would fold out these hands.
* **Example Scenario:** You have top pair on the river. Your opponent bets a small size in position. This indicates a linear range, as they aren't bluffing (they'd check back to avoid embarrassment if they missed) and they aren't betting very strong hands (they'd size up due to greed). Their range is likely "a ton of Queen X here." Min-clicking here allows them to call with hands like Ace-Queen or King-Queen that would fold to a larger raise.
* **When NOT to Use:**"When our opponent has a more polar range." A polar range means their hands are either very strong (e.g., two pair+) or bluffs. Min-clicking here is ineffective because your value hand either loses to their strong hands or beats their bluffs, and a small raise won't get more value from strong hands nor fold out bluffs any better than a call.
* **Example Scenario:** You have Ace-King and have been range betting/checking back. On the river, your opponent bets over half-pot. This usually indicates a polar range (strong value or a bluff). "Min clicking here just doesn't accomplish a whole lot because our opponent's range just does not have a lot of hands like single pair King X in it that's going to call a raise here in this spot."
* **Bonus (Min-Clicking as a Bluff):**Against a polarized range, if you have a bluff (e.g., Ace-Queen with no showdown value), min-clicking can be effective. Many "villains at these Stakes will just come out and monkey bet on the river when they have a hand like pocket sixes or five six because they don't know what to do." A small bluff can fold out these inexplicable bluffs without risking too much against actual strong hands.

**4. Small Bet in Position on the River**

* **Solver Perspective:** Solvers rarely prefer small bets in position on the river because they don't like reopening action thinly and allowing check-raises. They prefer medium to big bets.
* **When to Use (Against Live Opponents):Thin Value Targeting a Weak Range:** "We have top pair and our opponent just doesn't have very many strong hands so we want to bet small to ensure they can call with worse."
* **Example:** You have Ace-5s, flop a combo draw, bet big on turn when opponent is capped, river is an Ace. You have top pair, but opponent's range is weak (e.g., King-Jack, Queen-Jack) and downgraded by the Ace. A 1/3 pot bet gets calls from these weaker hands.
* **Bluffs Targeting a Strong Range:** "Let's say our opponent gets to the river with either top pair Plus or busted draws and we have seven High... we just get them to fold their busted draws and we're going to lose the minimum when they have top pair."
* **Example:** You have 7-6s, turn an open-ended straight draw, bet big when opponent is capped, river bricks. Opponent checks. Their range is strong (e.g., Ace-King, King-Queen) or busted draws. A very small bet (breathing on the pot) can fold out busted draws like Ace-Jack of Spades or Queen-Jack, without losing maximum when they have King-X. "We can just get a much better price on our Bluff."
* **When NOT to Use:Thick Value Targeting a Strong Range:** If you have a monster (e.g., a set) and your opponent has a lot of strong hands (e.g., two pair), you want to bet big to extract maximum value. "We don't want to go small we just want to win the max there."
* **Bluffs Targeting a Weak Range:** If your opponent's range is very weak and you have a bluff, you likely want to use a big size to get a "range fold." A small bet implies weakness and might encourage them to call.
* **Example:** On a flush-completing river, your opponent's range is weaker because they would have raised with two pair, sets, or flushes earlier. If you're bluffing (7-6s, missed), you want to bet big to get weaker single-pair hands (like King-Queen or King-Jack with a spade) to fold, as they are less likely to call when the flush comes in. "We are targeting a weak range and we'd probably not want to use the small bet we want to use the big bet here on the river."

In conclusion, the document advocates for a highly adaptable and exploitative poker style, urging players to shed the desire for "respect" and instead embrace "fishy" plays that are strategically sound in specific contexts, particularly when playing against less experienced opponents. The ultimate goal is to "start stacking that money to the ceiling."