Poker Bet Sizing Strategy: A Question-Based Approach

This briefing document summarizes key strategies for poker bet sizing on the flop, turn, and river, emphasizing a single guiding question for each street. The core philosophy centers around extracting maximum value from opponents while effectively executing bluffs.

I. The Flop: "What's the biggest size where they raise their strong shit but still call with their weak shit?"

**Core Principle:** On the flop, the ideal bet size aims to induce raises from strong hands (allowing you to extract more value when you have a monster) while simultaneously encouraging calls from weaker hands (allowing you to continue with bluffs or draw out more value later).

**General Recommendation:** "Usually in single raise pots heads up I like to start off with just around half pot on the Flop."

**Rationale (for both Value and Bluffs):**

* **Value Hands (e.g., Pocket Nines with middle set on a Jack-Nine-Deuce board):**A half-pot bet encourages opponents with strong hands (like pocket twos, Jack-nine suited, or even Ace-Jack) to "raise off" the top of their range, building a larger pot for you.
* It also allows opponents to "continue with a bunch of stuff that we have essentially drawing dead hands like pocket eights pocket sevens Ace 10 of clubs," ensuring you get action from weaker holdings.
* **Bluff Hands (e.g., Seven-Six of Clubs airball):**Betting the same "relatively small" size ensures consistency in your range.
* When opponents raise their strong hands, you can fold.
* Crucially, when they check-call, their range becomes "much weaker capped," as their strongest hands would have raised. This sets up a profitable bluff opportunity on later streets, especially if "the board Runs Out blank blank."
* "The best Bluff is the bluff where our opponents call The Flop Call the turn and fold the river." Betting small on the flop facilitates this by keeping weaker hands in the pot.

**Factors Influencing Bet Size Adjustment:**

* **Go Bigger If:** Deep stack, wet/dynamic board, super passive player.
* **Go Smaller If:** Shallow stack, dry/static board, super aggressive player.

**Exceptions:** This strategy may be less effective on "super dry static boards like ace7 deuce rainbow or Ace Jack 4 rainbow" because opponents might not fast-play strong hands in such locked-down scenarios.

II. The Turn: "Are they capped? If yes, bet big; if no, bet small."

**Core Principle:** The turn bet sizing hinges on whether your opponent's range is "capped" (meaning they don't have many very strong hands left because they would have raised earlier).

**A. Scenario 1: Opponent is Capped (Bet Big)**

* **Identification:** If your opponent would have raised off their strongest hands on the flop (e.g., pocket twos or Jack-nine suited), then their range on the turn is "capped," with their best hands likely being something like Ace-Jack.
* **Rationale (for both Value and Bluffs):Value Hands (e.g., Pocket Nines on a blank turn after a capped flop):** Since your opponent doesn't have many strong hands to put in more money if you bet small, you should "bet big here and just target the inelastic portions of their range that are going to continue as a call whether we bet one/ third pot or whether we bet 15% pot." Hands like Ace-Jack, King-Jack, Queen-Jack, flush draws, and straight draws are unlikely to fold regardless of bet size.
* **Bluff Hands (e.g., Seven-Six of Clubs airball):** Similar to value, opponents aren't folding their inelastic holdings. Therefore, "we may as well Pile in more money on this turn with our Bluffs to get the value from the portion of his range that's always going to call turn and then going to do a lot of folding on the river." This sets up a larger river bluff.

**B. Scenario 2: Opponent is Not Capped (Bet Small)**

* **Identification:** If the board allows for new strong hands (e.g., a flush completing on the turn) or if players tend to play passively with draws on the flop (allowing them to reach the turn with strong holdings), their range is "not capped."
* **Rationale (for both Value and Bluffs):Value Hands (e.g., Pocket Nines when a flush completes):** By betting small, you "target hands like Ace Jack King Jack Queen Jack" and ensure they "don't want those hands to fold." If your opponent does raise with a flush, "we have enough stack depth behind to call here and try to pair up and cooler them on the river." This also applies when you have the strong hand (e.g., Ace-Five of Spades flush) – you capture value from weaker calls and induce raises from other flushes.
* **Bluff Hands (e.g., Seven-Six of Clubs airball):** When opponents are not capped (and may have strong hands like flushes), betting small with a bluff allows you to "just say bye-bye" if they raise. More importantly, when they call, "they're just going to have a lot of Jack X pocket eights or pocket sevens with a spade Queen 10 with the 10 of Spades so our opponents are just going to get to the river wide weak and capped." This sets up a highly profitable river bluff.

III. The River: "What would I do with the inverse?"

**Core Principle:** On the river, bet sizing for value hands should mirror what you *wouldn't* do with a bluff, and vice versa. This seemingly counter-intuitive approach ensures your bluffs are effective and your value bets extract the most from your opponent's remaining range.

**A. Scenario 1: Value Bet Wants to Go Big, Bluff Wants to Go Small**

* **Context:** Typically occurs when a previous wet board or draws "brick" (don't complete) on the river, leaving opponents with strong one-pair hands that are hard to fold.
* **Value Hand (e.g., Pocket Nines on a blank river after an overbet turn):**Ask: "What would I do in this spot if I had a bluff?" If you wouldn't go all-in with a bluff like Seven-Six because "I don't think our opponent is folding Ace Jack," then your value bet with pocket nines "should be going all in to Target Ace Jack King Jack hands that we don't think are folding."
* **Bluff Hand (e.g., Seven-Six of Clubs airball):**Since your value bet wants to go big, "your Bluff size probably wants to go small."
* Betting small makes hands like "Ace X of Spades King X of Spades Queen X of Spades Queen 10 suited 108 suited" fold, turning your bluff into "instant print," even if you lose to Jack-X occasionally.

**B. Scenario 2: Value Bet Wants to Go Small, Bluff Wants to Go Big**

* **Context:** Typically occurs when a strong draw (like a flush) completes on the turn, and the river is blank, making one-pair hands feel weaker.
* **Value Hand (e.g., Pocket Nines after a small turn bet and a flush completing):**Opponent's range is heavily weighted towards one-pair hands like Ace-Jack, King-Jack, etc., as flushes would have raised earlier.
* Ask: "What would I want to do as a bluff?" If you'd "go absolutely huge here" with Seven-Six of Clubs to get Ace-Jack to fold (because it feels weaker when the flush hit), then "with pocket 9ines we should probably go relatively small to target hands like Ace Jack King Jack" and ensure they "don't fold."
* **Bluff Hand (e.g., Seven-Six of Clubs airball):**Since your value bet wants to go small, your bluff here wants to go big.
* With the opponent's best hand being Ace-Jack (which you believe you can make fold), "let's just put in the big boy Bluff here go for the massive overb and get our opponent to fold almost every single hand they have here."

**Important Note on Bet Size Variation:** The source explicitly states that "you can't have your bluff size and your value size two different sizes" is a misconception. "It's not like this is some one-size all strategy where you're going to be doing the same thing on every river." The goal is to make the "right exploits" against opponents.