Poker Bet Sizing: A Strategic Study Guide

I. Quiz

1. **Flop Bet Sizing Question:** What single question does the "ONE QUESTION" hack suggest asking on the flop to determine the ideal bet size? Explain how this question guides the decision.
2. **Flop Bet Sizing Parameters:** List three factors that would lead a player to bet a little bigger on the flop, and three factors that would lead them to bet a little smaller.
3. **Purpose of Small Flop Bets:** When holding a strong value hand like a set, why does the strategy advocate for a relatively small bet on the flop (e.g., half pot)?
4. **Bluffing with Small Flop Bets:** How does betting a relatively small size on the flop benefit a player who is bluffing (e.g., with an airball)?
5. **Turn Bet Sizing Question:** What single question is proposed for determining the perfect turn bet size?
6. **"Capped" Range on the Turn:** Explain what it means for an opponent's range to be "capped" on the turn, and why this frequently occurs after a small flop bet.
7. **Big Turn Bet Justification (Capped Range):** When an opponent's range is capped on the turn, why does the strategy suggest betting big with both value hands and bluffs?
8. **Small Turn Bet Justification (Uncapped Range):** When an opponent's range is *not* capped (e.g., they can have flushes), why does the strategy suggest betting small with both value hands and bluffs?
9. **River Bet Sizing Question:** What "inverse" question is asked on the river to determine the appropriate bet size for both value and bluffing hands?
10. **Divergent River Bet Sizing:** The guide suggests that river value bet sizes and bluff bet sizes are often *not* the same. Explain why this seemingly counter-intuitive approach is advocated.

II. Answer Key

1. **Flop Bet Sizing Question:** The question is: "What's the biggest size where they raise their strong shit but still call with their weak shit?" This guides the decision by aiming to maximize value from strong hands (by enticing raises) while also keeping weaker hands in the pot (by not scaring them off).
2. **Flop Bet Sizing Parameters:** A player would bet bigger if they are deep-stacked, the board is wet/dynamic, or the opponent is super passive. They would bet smaller if they are shallow-stacked, the board is dry/static, or the opponent is super aggressive.
3. **Purpose of Small Flop Bets:** Betting small (around half pot) on the flop with a strong value hand like a set encourages the opponent to raise their very strong hands (e.g., an Ace-Jack or two-pair), allowing the player to get more money into the pot. It also keeps a wider range of weaker hands in the pot, which are often drawing dead.
4. **Bluffing with Small Flop Bets:** When bluffing, a small flop bet allows the opponent to raise off their strong hands, which means when they do call, their range is weaker and "capped." This sets up highly profitable river bluffs, as the opponent won't have many strong hands that can call multiple streets.
5. **Turn Bet Sizing Question:** The question is: "Are they capped?"
6. **"Capped" Range on the Turn:** An opponent's range is "capped" on the turn when they would have raised their strongest hands (e.g., sets, two-pair) on the flop but chose to just call. This means the strongest hands remaining in their range are typically one-pair hands or weaker draws.
7. **Big Turn Bet Justification (Capped Range):** When an opponent is capped, they lack very strong hands to raise with. Betting big targets the "inelastic" portion of their range (one-pair hands, draws) that are unlikely to fold regardless of bet size, maximizing value from these hands and also allowing large bluffs to put pressure on a weaker range that will fold on the river.
8. **Small Turn Bet Justification (Uncapped Range):** When an opponent's range is not capped (e.g., a flush draw came in, and they likely flat-called flush draws on the flop), betting small encourages them to continue with a wider range of hands, including those strong draws. For value hands, it extracts calls from weaker hands, and for bluffs, it avoids immediately folding to a strong raise (flush) while keeping a wide, weak, and capped range for the river.
9. **River Bet Sizing Question:** The question is: "What would I do with the inverse?" This means if you have a value hand, you ask what size you'd bet as a bluff, and if you have a bluff, you ask what size you'd bet for value.
10. **Divergent River Bet Sizing:** The strategy advocates for divergent river bet sizing (e.g., big value, small bluff; or small value, big bluff) because the goal is different for each. With value, you want to extract maximum chips from hands that will call. With bluffs, you want to get folds from specific hands that are most vulnerable. The "inverse" question helps determine the most effective size for each, as what works best to get a call might not work best to get a fold, and vice versa, depending on the board and opponent's perceived range.

III. Essay Format Questions

1. Analyze how the "ONE QUESTION" framework for flop bet sizing aims to exploit different types of opponent hands (strong vs. weak). Discuss the specific benefits for both value betting and bluffing when employing a relatively small flop bet.
2. Compare and contrast the strategic rationale behind betting big on the turn when an opponent's range is capped versus betting small when their range is not capped. Provide examples from the text to illustrate each scenario.
3. The river bet sizing strategy relies on asking "What would I do with the inverse?" Explain this concept in detail and discuss how it leads to different optimal bet sizes for value hands and bluffing hands on the same board.
4. Discuss the role of "range capping" in the provided poker strategy across different streets. How does the concept of an opponent's range being capped (or not capped) influence bet sizing decisions on the flop, turn, and river?
5. Critically evaluate the claim that "99% of poker players still wouldn't make the right exploits against you" even if they knew this strategy. What aspects of poker gameplay and human psychology support or contradict this claim?

IV. Glossary of Key Terms

* **Airball Bluff:** A bluff made with a very weak or worthless hand, having no real equity or chance of winning at showdown.
* **Bet Sizing:** The amount of chips a player wagers in a given betting round. Optimal bet sizing is crucial for maximizing profits and applying pressure.
* **Big Blind (BB):** The forced bet made by the player two seats to the left of the dealer button; represents the minimum bet size.
* **Board:** The community cards dealt face-up on the table, shared by all players. In Texas Hold'em, this includes the flop, turn, and river.
* **Button:** The position on the poker table that determines the order of betting. The player on the button acts last in all post-flop betting rounds.
* **Capped Range:** An opponent's range of possible hands that does not contain their strongest possible holdings, usually because they would have acted more aggressively with those hands on a previous street.
* **Check-Call:** To check when action is to you, and then call a subsequent bet from another player in the same betting round.
* **Check-Raise:** To check when action is to you, and then raise after another player bets in the same betting round.
* **Cooler:** A situation in poker where a player has a very strong hand, but an opponent has an even stronger, often rare, hand, resulting in a large loss for the player.
* **Deep-Stacked:** Having a large number of chips relative to the blinds, allowing for larger and more complex strategic plays.
* **Dry Board:** A poker board that offers few opportunities for players to make strong draws (e.g., flushes or straights).
* **Effective Stack:** The smallest stack size between two players involved in a hand. This determines the maximum amount that can be won or lost in that hand.
* **Equity:** A player's statistical share of the pot, based on the probability of their hand winning at showdown.
* **Flop:** The first three community cards dealt face-up in a poker hand.
* **Flush:** A poker hand consisting of five cards of the same suit.
* **Flush Draw:** A hand that needs one more card of a specific suit to complete a flush.
* **Heads-Up:** A poker hand played between only two players.
* **Inelastic Hands:** Hands in an opponent's range that are unlikely to fold regardless of the bet size, within a reasonable range.
* **Inverse (River Strategy):** Refers to asking what you would do with a bluff when you have a value hand, and vice versa, to determine the optimal bet size.
* **Jack X (J-X):** A poker hand containing a Jack and any other card.
* **Middle Set:** Flopping a set (three of a kind) with the middle card on the board. For example, if the board is J-9-2 and you have pocket nines, you have middle set.
* **Open-Ended Straight Draw:** A hand that needs one specific card at either end of a sequence to complete a straight.
* **Overbet:** A bet that is larger than the current pot size.
* **Pocket Nines (99):** Holding two nines as your starting hole cards.
* **Pocket Twos (22):** Holding two twos as your starting hole cards.
* **Rainbow Board:** A flop where all three cards are of different suits, meaning no flush draw is possible on the flop.
* **Range:** The set of all possible hands an opponent could hold given their actions.
* **Raise Off:** To make a raise, often implying a strong hand that wants to build the pot.
* **River:** The fifth and final community card dealt face-up in a poker hand.
* **Shallow-Stacked:** Having a small number of chips relative to the blinds, limiting strategic options and encouraging more all-in play.
* **Single Raise Pot:** A pot where there has only been one raise pre-flop.
* **Static Board:** A board that is unlikely to change significantly with subsequent community cards, offering few new draws or strong hands.
* **Straight:** A poker hand consisting of five cards in sequential rank.
* **Turn:** The fourth community card dealt face-up in a poker hand.
* **Value Hand:** A strong poker hand that is likely to be the best hand at showdown and from which a player wants to extract chips.
* **Wet/Dynamic Board:** A poker board that offers many opportunities for players to make strong draws (e.g., multiple flush draws, straight draws, or strong two-pair/set possibilities).
* **Wider Range:** A range of hands that is broader and includes more diverse or weaker holdings.