Poker Strategy: Adjusting to Stack Depth (100 BB vs. 200 BB)

This briefing document summarizes key strategic adjustments in No-Limit Hold'em poker when playing with different effective stack depths, specifically comparing 100 big blind (BB) and 200 big blind (BB) strategies. The core idea is that the deeper the stack, the more emphasis is placed on implied odds and multi-street play, while shallower stacks prioritize immediate equity and top-pair hands.

I. Pre-Flop Adjustments

The initial adjustments begin before the flop, influencing open-raise and 3-bet ranges, as well as continuation strategies when facing 3-bets.

A. Open and 3-Bet Ranges

* **200 Big Blinds (Deeper Stacks):Open Wider:** Players are encouraged to open more "suited and connected type cards" (e.g., 65s, 76s, 87s).
* **Prioritize Implied Odds:** The deeper stack allows for more playability and the pursuit of straights and flushes, as "top pair is usually not going to be good enough to play for all of the money."
* **Larger Sizing:** Generally prefer larger open and 3-bet sizes.
* **Offsuit Hands:** Tend to open very tight on offsuit high cards (e.g., King Queen, Ace Jack, Ace Queen, Ace King).
* **100 Big Blinds (Shallower Stacks):Prefer High Cards:** Shift towards opening more "High cards than suited and connected" (e.g., Ace 10o, King Jacko, Queen Jacko).
* **Prioritize Top Pair:** When shallow, "it's just so much more important to make top pair" because "when we make a good top pair we're generally just playing for all the money."
* **Smaller Sizing:** Generally open and 3-bet for smaller sizes.

B. Facing 3-Bets In Position

* **200 Big Blinds:Continue Wider:** "We're just continuing very very wide in position to a small blind three bet." The deeper stack provides more room to maneuver post-flop.
* **100 Big Blinds:Continue Tighter:** "We are just continuing much much tighter." The low Stack-to-Pot Ratio (SPR) means "we just don't really have implied odds" for speculative hands. This range is described as "our pretty good hands."

C. 4-Betting Strategy

4-betting strategy changes significantly based on stack depth and position.

* **In Position (Both 100 BB and 200 BB):**
* **Polarized Strategy:** The general approach is to "go with a polarized strategy." This means 4-betting the "very top of our range" (Aces, Kings, Ace King suited, Pocket Queens) and "a few hands plucked from the bottom of our continuing range" (worst King-X and Ace-X suited varieties like Ace 8s, Ace 6s, King 9s) as bluffs.
* **Avoid Middle of Range:** Hands like Pocket Jacks, Pocket Tens, Ace Queen work better as calls due to positional advantage.
* **100 BB Nuance:** While still polarized, the bluffing component might shift to "more like King jack off Ace 10 off type hands blocking our opponent having Ace King pocket kings Aces that type of stuff." This is because a 4-bet at 100 BB is often close to an all-in, reducing the importance of post-flop playability and increasing the value of blockers.
* **General Call Preference:** "Generally the same strategy we want to be calling a lot when we are in position even at 100 big Linds we're going to have positional Advantage so we don't really have incentive to kind of for bet the middle of our range."
* **Out of Position (200 BB vs. 100 BB):**
* **200 Big Blinds (Linear):Linear Strategy:** "We want to go very very linear." This means 4-betting "our very very good hand" for value (e.g., Tens, Jacks, Ace Jack suited, King Queen suited, Ace Queen suited).
* **Playability Post-Flop:** The goal is to have hands that "have playability post flop and are going to be able to outand our opponents when they continue as a call" because opponents are likely to call due to significant stack depth remaining.
* **100 Big Blinds (Polarized):Polarized Strategy:** "We're going quite polar once again." The top of the range (Jacks+, Ace King off/suited) is 4-bet for value, and bluffs come from "blocker hands King 10 suited Ace 9 suited Ace Queen off type stuff."
* **All-in Sizing:** At 100 BB, a 4-bet often leads to an all-in. "We don't really want to be going linear because in general our opponents aren't going to be doing a lot of calling when we Jam so we just kind of want the top of range and then some Bluffs to to kind of hopefully generate some folds."

II. Flop Play Adjustments

Flop strategy shifts in terms of continuation betting (c-bet) sizes and how players respond to check-raises.

A. In Position Flop Play

* **200 Big Blinds:Larger C-bet Sizes:** Generally use "larger cabet sizes" (e.g., around half pot). This aims to "raise off their strong stuff and call with their weak stuff."
* **Continue Wider to Check-Raises:** Even with speculative hands like a "crappy gut shot," calling a check-raise is viable due to "a lot of options" and "room to maneuver."
* **Overbet Bluffing:** On dry, static boards (like Ace-high), a player might "run it planning a triple barrel Bluff" with a bottom pair, confident they can get opponents to fold strong hands like top pair by the river, especially when blockers are present. "At 200 big blinds deep having bottom pair where I may just run it planning a triple barrel Bluff because I do think I can get our opponent to fold hands as strong as Ace Queen Ace Jack Ace 10 by the river."
* **100 Big Blinds:Smaller C-bet Sizes:** "Just sizing down when we see bet" (e.g., one-third pot) to "leave us a little bit more room to maneuver across turns and rivers."
* **Continue Tighter to Check-Raises:** With limited stack depth, a "crappy gut shot" that would be called at 200 BB would typically be folded at 100 BB. "Just not much room to maneuver so if we do have kind of a crappy gut shot here whereas a 200 big blinds we'd be continuing at 100 big blinds here I would just be folding."
* **Avoid Overbet Bluffing:** Generally "not going to be doing pretty much any overb bluffing." Instead, prefer to "check back to see what my opponent does on the turn" and only bluff if the opponent checks, indicating a capped range. "We don't need to bloat the pot we don't need to turn bottom pair into a bluff when we're 100 big blinds deep because our opponent is not going to be folding top pair."

B. Out of Position Flop Play

* **200 Big Blinds:Check Range Heavily:** "Generally just a fan of checking my range from out of position because Live players in general tend to over stab and Telegraph their hand strength with their bet sizing."
* **Check-Raise for Value and Bluffs:** With strong hands, check-raising aims to "get our opponent to play for all of the money." With draws or semi-bluffs, checking provides information: if the opponent checks back, it's a "bluffing impunity;" if they bet small, a check-raise applies pressure; if they bet big, simply call. This allows for "playing perfectly."
* **Careful with Thin Value:** "We need to go a little bit less thin for Value we need to be careful about value owning ourselves when playing for all the money."
* **100 Big Blinds:Bet Strong Hands:** "I'm just coming out and betting my strong hands myself because we can get all the money in by just going bet bet bet." This is often easier than a check-raise to get all the money in by the river without overbetting.
* **Check Semi-Bluffs and Weak Hands:** Still check "a lot of my semi Bluffs and weekends" to gain information and set up profitable bluffs on later streets if the opponent caps their range.
* **Thinner Value:** "We can just go a lot thinner for value at 100 big blinds when we're playing for all the money."

III. Turn Play Adjustments

Turn strategy hinges on the opponent's elasticity (willingness to fold) and the overall goal of the hand.

A. General Concepts

* **200 Big Blinds:Empty the Clip:** "We generally just want to empty the clip." Opponents are "inelastic on turns" with strong draws and good top pairs, meaning they won't fold to large bets. However, they become "elastic on Rivers," meaning top pairs and bricked draws will fold. The goal is to build a large pot on the turn to take down on the river with a big bluff.
* **100 Big Blinds (Crucial Adjustment):"Do not try to get your opponents to fold top pair."** This is highlighted as "one huge adjustment almost every player misses."
* **Empty the Clip Only Against Non-Top Pair:** "We're only really emptying the clip at 100 big lines if our opponents do not have top pair in their range."

B. In Position Turn Play (Examples)

* **200 Big Blinds (Bloat Pot for River Bluff):**When the opponent's range is capped (e.g., from checking back a flop c-bet), a "very very large size" is used on the turn, "planning to empty the clip on blanks" on the river. The rationale is that "on a lot of blank Rivers... the best hand our opponent is going to have is going to be top pair type hand and those hands just don't want to play for all the money of 200 big blinds."
* **100 Big Blinds (Two Options):Option 1: Go Small on Turn:** "We could go quite small on this turn again to keep our opponent's range even wider." This entices calls from weaker hands (eights, sevens, gutshots), which will then fold to a river bluff.
* **Option 2: Go Big on Turn:** Similar to 200 BB, go big to get value from draws. However, "at 100 big blinds we may size down on Rivers not trying to get our opponents to fold top pair just trying to get them to fold those big draws that called the big bet on the turn but are now going to fold on a lot of brick Rivers."

C. Out of Position Turn Play (Examples)

* **200 Big Blinds (Check-Raise for Max Fold Equity):**After checking the flop and the opponent checking back (capping their range to air and showdown value), the turn is a spot for a "massive check raise." "We can go for this massive check just knowing our opponent does not have top of range here." This sets up a "big boy jam on the river and get our opponent to fold almost everything."
* **100 Big Blinds (Overbet when Opponent is Capped):**If the opponent checks back on a wet, dynamic board, indicating they don't have top pair, then "we have free reain to empty the clip even at 100 big blinds because we're not trying to get our opponent to fold top pair they don't have top pair right we're just trying to get them to fold everything else." This can involve a "big boy overbet here and if our opponent calls we go for another overb on the river."
* **Nuance on Dry Boards:** On dry, static boards where opponents *might* check back some top pair (e.g., Ace-high, but not a Jack-high board), the strategy changes. "We can't really rule out our opponent having top pair here so when we're 100 big blinds effective this would not be a situation where I just blast the turn and blast the river." Instead, check again, and if the opponent checks back, *then* a large river bluff might be appropriate, knowing they don't have top pair.

IV. River Play Adjustments

River strategy depends on whether the opponent's range is "capped" (no very strong hands) or "uncapped" (can have strong hands due to river cards).

A. When Opponents are Capped (River Doesn't Change Nuts)

* **200 Big Blinds:Elastic Range:** Opponents are "mostly they're going to be elastic with a lot of their range which means they might fold some strong hands."
* **Larger Bluffs, Smaller Value:** "Generally our Bluffs are going to want to be larger and our value is going to want to be smaller." The goal is to make top pair hands fold. "If we move all in when our opponent is capped getting to the river when we are 200 Big lines deep we are just putting the money in because our opponents are going to be elastic on Rivers."
* **100 Big Blinds:Inelastic Range:** Opponents are "going to be quite in elastic getting to the river which means they're not going to fold strong hands."
* **Smaller Bluffs, Larger Value:** "Generally our Bluffs are going to want to be small at 100 big blinds and our value is going to want to be larger." The aim is to get better draws to fold, not top pair. "We're not trying to fold top pair we're just trying to get them to fold hands like their busted draws their dece X their pocket sixes that are going to be quite elastic to a triple barrel don't need to go big to make that happen."

B. When Opponents are Uncapped (River Changes Nuts)

* **100 Big Blinds (General Guideline):**"Our Bluffs are going to want to be small at 100 big blinds and our value almost always wants to go small because our opponents will raise their strong hands and call with their weak hands."

V. Key Takeaway: The "One Huge Adjustment"

The most emphasized distinction between 100 BB and 200 BB play is:

* **100 Big Blinds: "Do not try to get your opponents to fold top pair."** At this stack depth, top pair hands are often "inelastic" and will not fold for any size, even a river jam, because the absolute dollar amount is not terrifying enough. Bluffs should target weaker parts of the opponent's range (e.g., busted draws, weak pairs).
* **200 Big Blinds: You CAN get opponents to fold top pair.** Deeper stacks allow for larger bets that truly put fear into opponents, making them "elastic" with single-pair hands on the river.

In summary, playing 200 BB poker demands a multi-street strategy focused on implied odds, positional advantage, and aggressive bluffing to exploit an opponent's elasticity on later streets. Conversely, 100 BB poker requires a more direct, equity-focused approach, prioritizing strong immediate hands and understanding that top pair is generally a calling hand that won't fold to river aggression.