Short vs. Deep Stack Poker: A Comprehensive Study Guide

This study guide is designed to review your understanding of the provided poker strategy material, focusing on the differences between playing at 100 big blinds (shallow stack) and 200 big blinds (deep stack).

I. Key Concepts and Adjustments by Stack Depth

**A. Pre-Flop Strategy**

1. **Open and 3-Bet Ranges:**

* **200 Big Blinds (Deep):** Prioritize suited and connected hands. Continue wider from in-position when facing 3-bets. Generally use larger open and 3-bet sizes. Focus on hands that can make straights and flushes, as top pair is less often good enough for all the money.
* **100 Big Blinds (Shallow):** Prefer high cards over suited and connected hands. Continue tighter from in-position when facing 3-bets. Generally use smaller open and 3-bet sizes. Top pair is significantly more important and often good enough for all the money.

1. **4-Betting Strategy:**

* **In-Position:200 Big Blinds (Deep):** Polarized strategy (very top of range for value, worst continuing hands for bluffs). Avoid 4-betting the upper-middle of your range (e.g., Pocket Jacks, Ace Queen) as they play better as calls due to positional advantage. Bluffs are not "absolute trash" but selected from the bottom of the continuing range.
* **100 Big Blinds (Shallow):** Polarized strategy. Composition of bluff hands may shift slightly (e.g., King Jack off, Ace 10 off) to prioritize blocking properties over playability, as 4-bets are often effectively all-ins.
* **Out-of-Position:200 Big Blinds (Deep):** Linear strategy (only 4-betting very strong hands like Pocket Tens, Jacks, Ace Jack suited, King Queen suited, Ace Queen suited). Focus on hands with post-flop playability that can out-pivot opponent's continuing range.
* **100 Big Blinds (Shallow):** Polarized strategy (top of range for value, blocker hands for bluffs like King 10 suited, Ace 9 suited, Ace Queen off). 4-bets are often for a large size or all-in, making fold equity and blocking properties more important than linearity.

**B. Flop Strategy**

1. **In-Position:**

* **200 Big Blinds (Deep):** Use larger Continuation Bet (C-bet) sizes. Continue wider to check-raises. Have more options and room to maneuver post-flop, allowing calls with weaker hands (e.g., garbage gut shots) due to implied odds and ability to extract value later. May employ overbet/check strategy on dry, static boards, planning to triple barrel bluff with bottom pair to fold out top pair.
* **100 Big Blinds (Shallow):** Use smaller C-bet sizes. Continue much tighter to check-raises due to low SPR (Stack-to-Pot Ratio) and lack of implied odds. On dry, static boards, generally avoid overbet bluffing, preferring to check back for showdown value or bluff later once opponent caps their range.

1. **Out-of-Position:**

* **200 Big Blinds (Deep):** Generally prefer to check range. When check-raising, be less "thin for value" to avoid value-owning yourself. Checking strong hands (e.g., Pocket Kings) allows opponents to stab and then be check-raised for a larger pot. Checking draws/semi-bluffs provides information about opponent's hand strength, allowing for better bluffing/calling decisions.
* **100 Big Blinds (Shallow):** Bet strong hands directly (bet-bet-bet strategy) to get all the money in easily. Still check semi-bluffs and weaker hands to gain information. Can go "thinner for value" with check-raises. Check-raising with strong hands is less incentivized as direct betting can achieve the same goal without increasing fold equity as much. Checking draws/air still allows for profitable bluffs if the opponent checks back.

**C. Turn and River Strategy**

1. **General Principle:** The most significant adjustment: **Do not try to get opponents to fold top pair at 100 big blinds.**
2. **200 Big Blinds (Deep):**

* **Turn:** Opponents are generally inelastic (not folding) with many hands (top pair, good kicker, draws). Empty the clip with large sizes, planning to bluff strong on blank rivers.
* **River (Opponent Capped):** Opponents become elastic (price-sensitive). Bluffs should generally be larger to leverage this elasticity and fold out even strong hands like top pair. Value bets should be smaller to ensure calls.

1. **100 Big Blinds (Shallow):**

* **Turn:Against capped opponents (without top pair):** Can empty the clip aggressively.
* **Against opponents with top pair (common scenario):** Either go small on the turn to keep opponent's range wide (and later target weaker folds on the river) or go big to fold out draws that brick.
* **River (Opponent Capped):** Opponents are generally inelastic (not folding strong hands). Bluffs should be small, targeting busted draws or weak showdown value. Value bets should be larger to extract maximum value from strong hands that won't fold.
* **River (Opponent Uncapped - brings flushes, pairs, etc.):** Bluffs should be small. Value bets almost always small, as opponents will raise strong hands and call with weak.

II. Quiz

**Instructions:** Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. How do open and 3-bet ranges typically differ at 200 big blinds compared to 100 big blinds in terms of hand selection?
2. Explain the primary difference in 4-betting strategy when out of position at 200 big blinds versus 100 big blinds.
3. Why is continuing wider to check-raises in-position on the flop more viable at 200 big blinds than at 100 big blinds?
4. Describe the preferred flop C-bet sizing for in-position play at 200 big blinds versus 100 big blinds, and briefly explain why.
5. When playing out of position on the flop at 200 big blinds, what is the general strategy with strong value hands like pocket kings, and why?
6. What is the "one huge adjustment almost every player misses" when transitioning from deep to shallow stack play?
7. At 200 big blinds, how do opponents' tendencies change from the turn to the river, specifically regarding elasticity?
8. When is it appropriate to empty the clip (bet large on turn and river) at 100 big blinds, according to the source?
9. If playing out of position on a dry, static board, when might a player at 200 big blinds attempt a large check-raise bluff on the turn, and why would this differ at 100 big blinds?
10. At 100 big blinds, when an opponent is capped on the river, should bluffs be large or small, and why?

III. Quiz Answer Key

1. At 200 big blinds, open and 3-bet ranges lean towards suited and connected hands, emphasizing straight and flush potential. At 100 big blinds, ranges shift to prefer high cards and off-suit varieties, as making top pair is more crucial.
2. Out of position, at 200 big blinds, the 4-betting strategy is linear, focusing on very strong hands with good post-flop playability. At 100 big blinds, it becomes polarized, combining top value hands with blocker bluffs, as 4-bets are often for all-in amounts.
3. Continuing wider to check-raises in-position at 200 big blinds is viable due to the deeper stack depth, which provides more implied odds and room to maneuver post-flop. At 100 big blinds, the low SPR limits implied odds, necessitating a tighter continuation range.
4. In-position, C-bet sizing at 200 big blinds is generally larger (e.g., half pot) to extract more value and put pressure. At 100 big blinds, C-bet sizing is smaller (e.g., one-third pot) to leave more room for maneuver across later streets.
5. At 200 big blinds, playing out of position with strong hands like pocket kings, the general strategy is to check the entire range. This allows the opponent to stab, setting up a large check-raise to get all the money in over two streets against draws or strong single pairs.
6. The "one huge adjustment almost every player misses" is that at 100 big blinds effective, players should generally not try to get their opponents to fold top pair, unlike at 200 big blinds.
7. At 200 big blinds, opponents are generally inelastic on turns (not folding easily to large bets) but become elastic on rivers (more price-sensitive and willing to fold strong hands like top pair).
8. At 100 big blinds, it is appropriate to empty the clip when it is highly confident that the opponent does not have top pair in their range. This usually occurs when the opponent has checked back on a wet, dynamic board.
9. At 200 big blinds on a dry, static board, a player might attempt a large check-raise bluff on the turn when the opponent has checked back, as they believe they can fold out weak top pairs by the river. At 100 big blinds, top pair is stickier, so this specific bluff would generally be avoided.
10. At 100 big blinds, when an opponent is capped on the river, bluffs should generally be small. This is because opponents are inelastic and not folding strong hands, so small bets target busted draws or very weak showdown value that might still fold to a smaller price.

IV. Essay Format Questions

1. Compare and contrast the strategic considerations for opening and 3-betting ranges at 200 big blinds versus 100 big blinds. Discuss how the value of different hand types (suited connectors vs. high cards) changes with stack depth.
2. Elaborate on the reasoning behind employing a polarized 4-betting strategy in-position, regardless of stack depth, and a linear 4-betting strategy out-of-position at 200 big blinds. How does this shift to a polarized strategy out-of-position at 100 big blinds, and what factors drive this change?
3. Analyze the significant differences in flop play, both in-position and out-of-position, when transitioning from 200 big blinds to 100 big blinds. Discuss how C-bet sizing, response to check-raises, and overall post-flop aggression change.
4. The source highlights a crucial adjustment regarding attempting to fold top pair at different stack depths. Explain this adjustment in detail, providing examples of how turn and river bluffing strategies change at 200 big blinds versus 100 big blinds, especially when the opponent is capped.
5. Discuss the role of "elasticity" and "inelasticity" in poker strategy, as described in the source. How do these concepts influence turn and river betting decisions, particularly concerning bluff sizing, at both 100 and 200 big blinds?

V. Glossary of Key Terms

* **100 Big Blinds (100bb):** Refers to a "shallow stack" in poker, where a player has 100 times the size of the big blind in chips. This stack depth significantly impacts implied odds and the value of certain hands.
* **200 Big Blinds (200bb):** Refers to a "deep stack" in poker, where a player has 200 times the size of the big blind in chips. This stack depth allows for more post-flop playability and implied odds.
* **Big Blind (BB):** A mandatory bet placed by the player two positions to the left of the dealer button, serving as a baseline for betting amounts.
* **Blocking Properties:** The effect of holding specific cards in your hand that reduce the probability of your opponent holding certain strong hands, making bluffs more effective.
* **Capped Range:** When an opponent's hand range is limited to weaker holdings, typically because they would have acted more aggressively with stronger hands earlier in the hand.
* **Check-Raise:** A strategic move where a player checks their turn to act, then raises after an opponent bets.
* **Continuation Bet (C-bet):** A bet made on the flop by the player who initiated the pre-flop raise, regardless of whether they hit the flop.
* **Elastic/Inelastic (Opponent):** Describes how sensitive an opponent is to bet sizing. An "elastic" opponent is price-sensitive and will fold to large bets. An "inelastic" opponent is less price-sensitive and will call even large bets.
* **Empty the Clip:** To bet aggressively on multiple streets (e.g., turn and river), often with the intention of bluffing or extracting maximum value.
* **Fold Equity:** The portion of the pot you expect to win by getting your opponent to fold.
* **Four-Bet (4-bet):** The fourth bet in a sequence; typically, an initial raise, followed by a re-raise (3-bet), followed by another re-raise (4-bet).
* **Implied Odds:** The potential future winnings from a hand if you hit your draw, beyond the current pot size. Deeper stacks generally offer better implied odds.
* **In-Position:** When a player acts last on a given street of betting. This provides a significant strategic advantage due to having more information about opponents' actions.
* **Linear Strategy:** A betting or raising strategy that includes a wide range of strong hands, from medium-strength to very strong, but typically few or no bluffs.
* **Lowjack (LJ):** A poker table position, typically one of the earliest positions to act after the blinds.
* **Off-suit Hands:** Poker starting hands where the two cards are of different suits.
* **Open (Open Raise):** The first bet made in a betting round.
* **Out-of-Position:** When a player acts before their opponents on a given street of betting. This puts them at a disadvantage as they have less information.
* **Overbet:** A bet that is larger than the current pot size.
* **Polarized Strategy:** A betting or raising strategy that consists of only very strong hands (for value) and very weak hands (as bluffs), avoiding the middle strength hands.
* **Post-flop:** The stages of a poker hand after the flop (the first three community cards) has been dealt, including the turn and river.
* **Pre-flop:** The stage of a poker hand before any community cards have been dealt, where players make initial betting decisions based on their hole cards.
* **River:** The fifth and final community card dealt in a poker game, followed by the final betting round.
* **Semi-Bluff:** A bet or raise with a hand that is not currently the best but has a good chance to improve to the best hand on a later street (e.g., a strong draw).
* **Showdown Value (SDV):** The likelihood that a hand will win if it goes to showdown without improving further.
* **Small Blind (SB):** A mandatory bet placed by the player immediately to the left of the dealer button.
* **SPR (Stack-to-Pot Ratio):** The ratio of the effective stack size to the current pot size. A low SPR implies less room for post-flop maneuvering.
* **Static Dry Board:** A community board texture with little connectivity and few drawing possibilities (e.g., Ace-7-4 rainbow), where hands are less likely to improve significantly.
* **Suited and Connected Hands (Suited Connectors):** Starting hands where the cards are of the same suit and close in rank (e.g., 7s8s). These hands have high potential for straights and flushes.
* **Telegraph Hand Strength:** When a player's actions or bet sizing inadvertently reveal information about the strength of their hand.
* **Three-Bet (3-bet):** The third bet in a sequence; typically, an initial raise followed by a re-raise.
* **Top Pair:** Having one of your hole cards match the highest-ranking community card on the board.
* **Turn:** The fourth community card dealt in a poker game, following the flop and preceding the river.
* **Value-Owning (Value Betting Thin):** Making a value bet with a hand that is likely to be beaten, leading to a loss or only getting called by better hands. When "going thin for value," it means betting with hands that are only slightly better than what you expect to be called by.
* **Wet Dynamic Board:** A community board texture with many drawing possibilities (e.g., Jack-9-Deuce with two suits), where hands can improve significantly.