Detailed Briefing: Playing Poker Out of Position - The Ultimate Guide (2024)

This briefing summarizes key strategies for playing poker "out of position" (OOP) as presented in "Playing Poker OUT OF POSITION: The Ultimate Guide (2024)." The core philosophy emphasizes exploiting common mistakes made by in-position (IP) live poker players.

Core Principle: Exploiting Opponent Mistakes

The fundamental concept is to "putting your opponents in situations where they make the biggest mistakes." This underpins the entire OOP strategy presented in the guide.

Flop Strategy: Universal Check (Check-Raise Focus)

The overarching flop strategy when playing OOP is to **check your entire range**. This includes:

* **Sets**
* **Top Pair**
* **Draws**
* **Air**

**Rationale for Universal Check:** Live poker players in position (IP) generally make more mistakes against a check than a bet. These mistakes include:

1. **Over-stabbing for protection:** IP players "just stab way too much for protection" with hands like Jack-X, 9x, or pocket 10s on wet boards.
2. **Telegraphing hand strength with bet sizing:** IP players "have way too many strong hands when they bet big and way too many weak or marginal hands when they bet small or medium."
3. **Not protecting their check-back range:** IP players "almost never check back monsters... and when they do check back this is going to mean our Bluffs are going to be insanely profitable across turns and rivers."

Responding to IP Stabs on the Flop (Check-Raise Strategy)

The response to an IP stab (bet) on the flop depends heavily on the opponent's bet size. The guide advocates for "ridiculous check-raise sizes somewhere between 6 to 10x."

**Why Huge Check-Raise Sizes (6-10x)?**

* "In a vacuum our opponents just play worse against these huge sizes than they do against the standard 3 to 4X check rays."
* Opponents are "inelastic here with their good hands and good draws whether we go 3x or whether we go 10x they're calling to one raise one time no matter what."
* Live players make significant theoretical mistakes:
* They are supposed to fold hands like Ace-King or Ace-Queen to an 8x check-raise "100% of the time in equilibrium," but "that just doesn't happen."
* They are supposed to fold Ace-Deuce (top and bottom pair) "more than 50% of the time."
* They are supposed to fold a set (e.g., pocket deuces) "25 to 30% of the time" to an 8x check-raise, which "just isn't happening."
* **Size Variance:Bigger (closer to 10x):** "If the board is wet and dynamic or if we are super deep."
* **Smaller (closer to 6x):** "If the board is dry or static or if we are a bit more shallow."
* The guide acknowledges the potential for a small check-raise size to fold random bluffs, but prioritizes a "simple strategy executed well" over a complex one.

Response to Big Flop Stabs (e.g., $35 into $47 pot)

* **Raise:** "Very best hands" (e.g., Jack-9 suited, Pocket 9s, Pocket Deuces – hands that can "cooler them") and "very best draws" (combo draws like Queen-10 of Spades, King-Queen of Spades).
* **Call:** "Good hands" (Pocket Queens, Jack-X), "decent hands" (9x), and "rest of our draws that aren't combo draws" (Ace high flush draws, open-ended straight draws).
* **Fold:** "Low Equity draws," "Showdown value hands" (Pocket 7s, Pocket 4s), and "Complete Air."

Response to Small Flop Stabs (e.g., $20 in $47 pot)

* **Raise (more frequently):** "Very best hands" and **now also "good hands"** (Pocket Kings, Pocket Queens, Pocket Aces, Ace-Jack+). **Crucially, "all of our draws"** (even naked gutshots) are raised because "when they stab small they just have too much weak and marginal crap that just can't hold on."
* **Call:** "Anything with Showdown value" (Pocket 7s, Pocket 4s, Ace-Queen offsuit with good Ace-high showdown value).
* **Fold:** "Pure air" only.
* **Reasoning:** When IP players stab small, they have more weak/marginal hands, increasing fold equity for OOP raises. "The more fold Equity we have the actual less equity in our hand we need."

Turn Play After Check-Raise Flop (and IP Calls)

Once IP calls the big check-raise, their range is stronger.

Low Equity Bluffs (less than 8 outs)

* **Give Up:** Generally check and give up. "We just don't have that much Equity to improve if we have less than eight outs to make our hand." (Note: Does not mean giving up on the entire hand if it goes check-check on turn).

High Equity Bluffs (8+ outs)

* **Exceptions for Giving Up:** "If the turn pairs the board or the turn brings in a oneliner to a straight we are just going to check and give up." These are "bad cards for us to continue barreling" as opponents gain elasticity with top pairs.
* **General Action: Continue Barreling (Jamming vs. Three-Street Play):** The goal is to "maximize fold equity."
* **Two-Street Game (Jam Turn):** If the Stack-to-Pot Ratio (SPR) is less than 2, "I like to play a two Street game." Jamming maximizes fold equity to get weak Jack-X hands to fold, as there isn't enough behind for a big river bluff.
* **Three-Street Game (Bet Turn, Big River Bluff):** If deeper (e.g., $1400 effective instead of $800), OOP can play a three-street game. "The best Bluff... is a bluff where they call the Flop Call the turn and fold the river." The goal is to bet a size on the turn that keeps Jack-X and draws in, then have a "big scary overbet behind" for the river.

Value Hands (Sets, Top Two Pair, etc.)

* **Decision Based on Vulnerability:Go Big (Needs Protection):** If the hand needs protection (e.g., Pocket 9s that can be outdrawn by combo draws or Ace-high flush draws), "put the money in now." This might involve a slightly larger check-raise on the flop (e.g., 10x for value vs. 8x for bluffs) to set up a favorable SPR for the turn (closer to 1:1) to encourage calls.
* **Go Small (Invulnerable/Doesn't Need Protection):** If the hand is "invulnerable" (e.g., Pocket 9s on a board that pairs, making Ace-Jack almost drawing dead or flush/straight draws dead), go small. This is to "keep in their draws" as live players become more elastic when the board pairs. Same logic for hitting a flush on the turn.

Turn Play After Check-Check on Flop

This is a "favorite part of this strategy."

* **Opponent's Check-Back Range:** Consists of Showdown Value (SDV) hands (e.g., Pocket 6s, 5s, 8s, 9x, 10s) and a lot of air.
* **Why Check Again on Turn Blanks:** If OOP bets, IP folds air and calls with SDV. If OOP checks, IP will "stab a lot of the time with their Showdown value" (to protect, thinking OOP has Ace-King) and their air (as they were already reluctant to 3-street bluff). Therefore, on turn blanks, "we are going to want to do a lot of checking."

Responding to IP Stab on Turn (After Flop Check-Check)

* **Raise (Aggressively):**"Good hands": Top pair top kicker+ (Ace-Jack, Pocket Queens, Pocket 9s, Pocket Deuces, Jack-9 suited).
* **"All of our draws":** Both combo draws and naked gutshots. The rationale is that IP, after checking the flop, "just don't have any super super strong hands," so they "don't have many hands that can call us down" after a turn check-raise and a river all-in. "The best Bluff is the bluff where they call the turn and then fold the river."
* **Check-Call:** "Decent hands in Showdown value" (weak top pair, 9x, Pocket 8s, 7s, 6s).
* **Fold:** "Complete air."

Turn Play After Check-Call Flop (and IP Double Barrel)

This covers situations where OOP check-called IP's flop bet.

After IP Stabs Big on Flop & Double Barrels Turn

* **Continue:** "Top pair plus" and "high Equity draws." (Since OOP only raised best hands/draws on flop, they have many good hands here).

After IP Stabs Small on Flop & Double Barrels Turn

* **Continue:** "Middle pair plus." (Many draws were raised on the flop). If a draw somehow remains, it should continue.

River Play Nuance: Donking When Hitting Draws

* **Highly Exploitative Tactic:** If OOP check-called a big stab on the flop, check-called the turn with a draw (e.g., Ace-high flush draw), and hits on the river: "I'd recommend being super exploitative and just donking when we hit with our draws here."

1. **Reasoning (Exploiting Live Player Mistakes):Don't bet Rivers thinly enough:** IP players won't bet hands like Jack-X themselves.
2. **Don't triple barrel Bluff enough:** IP players won't bluff missed hands like King-Queen or Queen-10.

* **Benefit of Donking:** Targets hands like Jack-X that won't fold to a reasonable donk bet but would never bet themselves. Avoids missing value from bluffs, as IP rarely triple barrels.
* **Exception:** Do NOT donk against "a strong player who is capable of value betting thinly and is capable of bluffing."

Conclusion

The guide emphasizes simplifying strategy for human players and constantly evaluating how to put opponents in "nodes where they make the biggest mistakes" to maximize profit.