Poker Reads: Exploiting Opponents for Maximum Profit

This briefing document summarizes key strategies for making "reads" in live poker, enabling players to exploit opponents and maximize their winnings. The insights are derived from "How to Make Perfect READS in Live Poker" by Maron, a seasoned poker player with over seven figures in winnings. The core principle is to observe opponent tendencies and adjust one's own strategy accordingly, moving beyond standard play to exploit specific leaks.

I. Exploiting Specific Actions (Detailed Reads)

The source details five specific in-game scenarios and how to exploit them based on observed opponent behavior:

Read 1: Opponent Snap Calls the Turn

* **Observation:** A player quickly calls a turn bet without hesitation or considering a raise or fold.
* **Interpretation:** Such a snap call typically indicates a medium-strength hand (like top pair) or a draw. It almost never signifies the very top of their range (e.g., a strong flush or set), as strong hands would at least consider raising.
* **Exploitation:With a Bluff:** On the river, bet very large. Since the opponent likely holds a medium-strength hand, a big bet will often induce a fold, especially if they are not planning to play for all their chips.
* **With Value:** If you have a strong hand (e.g., a nut flush), bet small on the river to entice a call from their medium-strength hands. This maximizes value by making it easier for them to call with hands like Ace-Jack, King-Jack, or Queen-Jack.
* **Quote:** "when villains snap call you can immediately take away the very top of the range because if they did have a very very strong hand they would at least consider raising so usually when villain snap call they have hands that are going to be medium strength hands like we saw on that last hand or draws"

Read 2: Opponent Checks Back Top Pair on a Wet Board

* **Observation:** A player checks back a strong hand like top pair with a good kicker (e.g., Ace-Jack) on a board with many drawing possibilities. This indicates a desire for "pot control" rather than aggressively building a pot.
* **Exploitation:When You Have a Strong Hand:** Bet out yourself immediately and aggressively. Since they are prone to checking back strong hands, they are unlikely to fold if you bet consistently. "If they have a hand like Ace Jack I would just come out and bet pocket kings myself." This puts them "in the blender right away."
* **When You Have Draws/Semi-Bluffs (and they check):** Check back on the flop to realize free equity.
* **When You Have Draws/Semi-Bluffs (and they bet after you check):** Check-raise a relatively small size. This opponent's betting range is likely polarized (nuts or air) because they check back medium-strength hands. A check-raise can fold out their air and put pressure on draws.
* **Delayed Gratification/Max Fold Equity (when flop checks through):** If the flop goes check-check, check again on the turn. This player will likely bet their top pair on the turn, allowing you to execute a large check-raise, which maximizes fold equity. "Remember the reason they're checking back the Flop is because they don't necessarily want to play for all the money so if we are going to run the bluff let's run the line with Max fold Equity."

Read 3: Opponent Cold Calls a Three-Bet

* **Observation:** A player cold calls a three-bet (meaning they call the three-bet after another player opened and a third player three-bet) with hands as strong as Ace-King, Jacks, or Queens. This suggests they are hesitant to four-bet these hands.
* **Exploitation:When You Are the Original Raiser:4-Bet Bluffs:** If the opponent avoids playing for all the money with strong hands and you are deep-stacked, four-bet bluff much wider (e.g., with A6s, K8s).
* **Value 4-Bets:** If the opponent *will* call off with Ace-King, Queens, or Jacks, then four-bet thinner for value (e.g., with AKs, AKo, QQ).
* **When You Have a Strong Hand and They Cold 4-Bet:** This is the crucial inverse. If they cold call with Ace-King, Jacks, or Queens, then when they *cold four-bet*, their range is almost exclusively ultra-premium hands like Aces or Kings. Therefore, fold hands like Pocket Kings against a cold four-bet from this player. "If they are cold calling with hands like Ace King pocket Queens what does that mean when they cold forbat they just have Aces or Kings right... this would be one of the spots where I would fold pocket kings."

Read 4: Opponent Checks from Out of Position with Top Pair Top Kicker on the River

* **Observation:** An opponent checks the river from out of position with a strong hand like top pair, top kicker (e.g., Ace-Jack), implying they intend to check-call rather than bet for value.
* **Exploitation:When You Have Value (and they check):** Bet absolutely massive. Since they are not planning on folding, you can extract maximum value from their check-calling range, which includes hands like King-Jack, Queen-Jack, or Jack-Ten. "When villain checks this River they are not planning on folding unless you put in an absolutely monstrous sized bed so this is a spot to get greedy."
* **When They Bet the River:** Their range is highly polarized (nuts or air). They are unlikely to bet single pairs.
* **With a Bluff (that beats little of their air):** Min-raise. Their "air" (like Ace-High or King-High flush draws) will fold to even a small raise. "our Bluffs in the spot when villain's polar wants to just click it."
* **With the Nuts:** Go all-in. They are unlikely to fold their two pair or sets.
* **With a Medium Hand (that beats their air):** Call lightly. If you have a hand like Ace-Ten of Spades that beats a lot of their bluffs (e.g., busted flush draws), calling is a strong option.

Read 5: Opponent Check Calls with a Set on a Wet Board

* **Observation:** A player check-calls on the flop with a strong hand like a set, even on a very wet board (where fast-playing is common). This indicates a trapping strategy.
* **Interpretation:** This player is "uncapped" on the turn, meaning their range still contains very strong hands like sets or two pair.
* **Exploitation (when you have a strong hand):Flop:** C-bet for around half-pot to induce raises from their strong hands and calls from weak ones.
* **Turn:** Bet small again. The goal is to give them another chance to check-raise, which they are inclined to do with their trapped strong hands. "The reason why we want to go with a smaller size on the turn if villain does have a hand that we cooler like Jack n or pocket's well now they're going to raise on the turn."
* **Facing a Turn Check-Raise:** Since their check-raise range is very strong (sets and two pairs), do not bluff re-raise. Go all-in for value with your strong hands.

II. Quick-Hitting General Reads

The source provides ten quick observations and their immediate exploitations, focusing on identifying recreational players (fish) versus pros and their general tendencies:

1. **Buys in for less than max in a cap game:** Almost always a recreational player/fish. Exploit them aggressively with "hard exploits."
2. **Chooses to sit out bomb pots:** Usually a conservative player who "is not going to be on the gambl side." They likely under-bluff and avoid playing for large pots with marginal hands.
3. **Limp calls:** Almost always a recreational player/fish. When they **open-raise** after limping, their range is very strong (as their weak hands are in their limping range). Be cautious three-betting them.
4. **Limp-raises pre-flop:** A recreational player/fish. When they **open-raise** instead of limp-raising, they do not have their very strongest hands (AA, KK, QQ, which they would limp-raise). Three-bet them "with impunity" especially from early position.
5. **Varies open sizing (e.g., opens 8x-9x and shows a medium pair):** When they open to a very large size, they are not planning to fold. Do not make standard three-bets. If you have a hand that beats their strong-but-not-premium range (e.g., 99-JJ), put in a "monster three-bet" (6-8x) to get all the money in. "they're announcing telling you Hey sir I am not going to fold this hand."
6. **Calls three-bets too wide out of position (e.g., ATo, KJo):** Three-bet them "very very linearly" (i.e., with a strong, uncapped range) and use "much larger sizes" when three-betting pre-flop.
7. **Buys in with cash instead of chips/box:** More likely a recreational player/fish than a pro.
8. **Buys in with chips/box:** More likely a pro than a recreational player.
9. **Lines up all chips perfectly:** Indicates a conservative player who isn't getting involved much, under-bluffing, and unlikely to play for all the money.
10. **Refuses to straddle when the table is straddling:** Suggests "scared money." This player is likely conservative, under-bluffing, and unwilling to play for large sums with marginal hands.

Conclusion

The core message is to be an active observer at the poker table. By identifying specific tendencies in opponents, especially their deviations from theoretically optimal play (e.g., slow-playing strong hands, showing strong hands in specific bet lines, or unusual pre-flop actions), players can adjust their own strategy to maximize value with strong hands, induce folds with bluffs, and avoid costly mistakes against premium holdings. The goal is to move beyond generic strategies and tailor play to exploit individual opponent "tells."