

Advanced Texas Hold'em

A Detailed Guide

For No Limit and Limit Hold'em Poker

Strategies

By David Stam



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Winning at Poker

I would say that being an aggressive and tight player, that is, someone who plays good starting cards and notices the different opportunities to play mediocre starting hands such as suited connectors; and furthermore, knows when they are in the lead during a hand and makes other players pay for having the second best hand. In small stake games there are many players who do not know what this means. They have read what it means but they ignore it or they have never experienced it.

How do I know that there are players who do not understand this concept? I know this because when a player raise's into me and I do not have, at the very least, a 55% chance to win the hand, I will fold most of the time. When a player witnesses this maybe one or two times they think they can run over me by over betting the pot or coming over the top of my pre-flop bet. They usually become bolder and looser in their play against me, thinking they can push me around, and that I am a passive player. Instead, I have stayed tight, waiting for the advantage, for the edges. When you do get the edge, you know it and decide how to extract the most amount of money from the other opponents. Most of the time your opponent does not heed your aggressive play past the Turn and think they can still run over you. So these loose players bet and even re-raise on each progressive street thinking you will crumble under the pressure until THEY are the ones that are pot committed (have most of their money in the pot); at that point they are unable to Turn back with their 2-Pair when you have a set or a Full House.

After all those times you were driven off the pots, for a half hour, or an hour, losing five or 10 percent of your money, this one hand will make up for it ten fold. This pattern can go on for hours; you take two or three people down, and your table image will get stronger as your session gets longer. You will find that the other players will start to respect your bets, run from your raises and you will win pots with just a bet instead of going to a showdown. Then you can begin to bluff the table and win some small or even large pots because your opponents have seen you only play good hands.

Try this strategy:

Play tight poker, play premium hands at the beginning, and do not chase draws. Forget your ego and need for action. Lay down anything you cannot play like a stone cold killer. Players will think you play tight/weak and will try to run over you. However, watch for the loose players that bet too much on their weak hands. When you do have a strong hand then re-raise back into your opponent and see how they react. Good players will fold but poorer players will keep throwing money into the pot. This is dangerous because poor player will draw out on you more often because they just do not know when to fold.

Other things to look for are the loose players that may heed your raise after the Turn and fold. But, when this happens a few more times to them, where the once tight/weak player is chasing them off a pot every so often, they will think you are bluffing too much or that they cannot control the need for action They might even feel the need to protect their ego. When you pull

down the huge pot, they will either have no money left, be on tilt, or just avoid playing to a showdown against you.

This is the difference between good players and poor players; the ability to lay down a good hand when you think you are beat. Poor players fall in love with their hands and cannot lay them down. If you can lay down a good starting hand when the betting/board indicates you are beaten and your hand has not improved, then you will be playing good poker.

Then there is the Doyle Brunson way of playing poker, which is always applying pressure with bets and raises. I have seen this work well, but it does take a high level of skill. Knowing when to muck a hand is important. If you were trying to steal the pot with betting/raises or with a semi bluff, or even a mediocre hand and someone plays back at you, then you have a decision to make. Players try to challenge aggressive players and I have seen this happen at the wrong time when the aggressive player actually had a strong hand against a mediocre hand. The challenger's whole stack becomes the aggressive players increased bankroll. This strategy works best when you can isolate players, which is done with large bets to eliminate other opponents.

I have also adopted the style of being loose and aggressive at the beginning of a session. Sometimes I even show my mediocre hands at the showdown. I usually do this play with a semi-bluff or a total bluff and it portrays the table image of a loose player with money to give away. This is called advertising and it tries to depict you as a bad or loose player. Then I change gears, play only the premium starting cards, most of my opponents never notice this

change in strategy. Some of my opponents think I am still playing mediocre hands and will even be emboldened to raise the pot with their mediocre hands. So in the long run, I will win the money I originally lost and most of my opponents buy-in. Players that are more observant will wise up to this strategy and notice it for what it was, advertising a bluff to induce action.

However, in online poker, there are more poor players than observant players and you see so many different players they do not have a good read on you from previous sessions.

Remember, Hold'em is a showdown game. By playing tight and aggressive you can assure yourself a better than 50% chance of winning at the showdown. That is what all poker players try to achieve, getting the odds in our favor most of the time. If you have the better hand and you know it, you can bet with more authority, control the pot and essentially finish the session with a profit.

To be a tight aggressive player you need:

Patience

The ability to observe and remember your opponent's tendencies to take advantage of them later on

You need a good understanding of the probability and odds.

The skill to read your hand and other players hands in comparison with the board cards

The skill to stay focused and centered regardless of the outcome of the cards

Be able to read the table and players so you can apply a passive or aggressive type game according to opponent type also called changing gears or varying your play

These rather obscure skills are difficult to learn. Some people say you have to have talent. One idea that is widely accepted is that good poker players are very intelligent. This book will teach you these skills and many more to become a winning poker player.

Winning Low Stakes No Limit Hold'em Poker

I often think about poker theory and applying it to the game. I have read that a person has to be patient, stay tight and aggressive, and that one or two big hands an hour is doing well. You make up what you invested into the antes and a profit. But, as you play no limit Hold'em online you will see large pots being won all the time, and many times from loose players. It makes you think that any two cards can win. Well, that is not the truth and I bet if you watched that player for a long period of time, say a month or so, you would find that that player you lost the \$25.00 pot to lost that money to someone else and much more.

What makes that player act so loose at small ante tables? I have read that they are just looking for action; some do not care if they lose the money, and they are just looking for a thrill. Yes, there are probably many players out there just looking to blow off a little steam. However, if you are like me, you are looking for the best way to play for profit.

I have another theory as to why the players act so loose, take too many chances, and eventually the \$100 they won while being a cardholder one night was lost the next night twice as fast. That is because they do not understand the expectation of win percentage compared to the table's blind amount. They expect the same cards to be hitting their hand and the same type of opponents to bet into them the same way. It usually does not happen,

they do not adjust their game for the next night and it spells doom. There are adequate discussions about the expected hourly rate of a good player on the internet. How much money should a player expect from a certain table?

When many players sit down at a \$.25/\$.50 or a \$2/\$4 table, they experience that exhilaration when someone bet all in against their flopped A 6 Full House. You can make a smooth \$10 to \$200 dollars in a quick couple of minutes. This does not happen very often in a session and you should savor it like a fine wine. Figure this might happen every week, or on a good night two or three times. Regardless, in between these miracles from the poker Gods, real poker players grind out a few dollars here and a few dollars there.

What is a good night when you have to grind it out all night, with no made nut hands to lean on, and you walk away from the table with a profit from pure poker skill? I would say that 10 to 40 times the big blind would be a good night at the poker table. This is a wide margin, but I am not trying to categorize what a good night is, I am just trying to give all you players out there some perspective, something to keep you in your best game and always come out ahead. So understanding the expectation of a game can keep your mood even.

Playing within the level of the blinds is a more important standard to evaluate then calculating your hourly rate. If you calculate your bets and your bankroll holdings in comparison to what blind level you are playing at, you will see a dramatic change in your game. You will not expect to see that huge swing in cash sitting in front of you, but it will happen, and most likely, it will be a positive integer instead of a negative one.

When I realized, after a long night of poker that I had increased my initial \$25 - 60 times the blind level I was playing at, a different perspective occurred. I never hit a Full House the whole night and had only two Flushes, two big money making hands, but I could still say my night was profitable. Therefore, whether you play \$.25 cent big blinds or \$10, the number of big blind bets you walk away with is a good way to judge your game.

I will give you an example of a loose player in a hand I played. I had Q 6 in the big blind and the flop came 2 6 9. I bet with my Pair of 6's and everyone folded but me and another player. The Turn card was a 6 giving me trips, so I raise and this other guy goes all-in, 10 times the pot. Well, he could have been bluffing but more likely, he hit a Full House. Nevertheless, the bet was not proportional to the pot or the blinds. I folded and he won the pot. However, within ten hands this other player busted out with that same type of loose play mentality when he did bet into someone else's nut boat. I could have easily had a better hand and he was playing very loose, but risking my bankroll was not worth it.

The hourly rate for the penny tables on a good night should be \$2 to \$4 dollars an hour if you play this way. Not much, but, you have not gambled that much. Over a month of playing say all 30 days with a \$10-20 win average would give you \$300 to \$600 a month. Trust me, it works; play patient and be a tight aggressive poker player. You will win in the end if you keep your perspective.

If you are playing at a no limit table, this gives you the chance of doubling up in one hand. It may take three hours to find that one hand; it may take all week but it can increase your hourly rate in one fell swoop.

I suggest reading Zen and the Art of Poker to help you stay centered in your game and Lou Krieger's "More Hold'em Excellence" for perspectives on being a poker player and bankroll management.

Let me give you some advice regarding the calculation of your hourly rate. Do not do it day by day or even every week. Keep records and do it at the end of the month. I always think a person should stay centered and balanced; if you are worrying about or trying to increase your hourly rate, then you will not be playing a solid game of poker. You are more concerned about the money than the game. The money is how players keep score but you have to concentrate on playing correctly without worrying about your money (unless you are short stacked in a tourney or bankroll). Remember, poker is a lifelong game and should be calculated in those terms. You make your profit from other player's mistakes.

Why the First Two Cards are Important

Essentially this should help you see that any two cards can win, BUT the better cards will win on the flop and to the showdown more often. Flopping a good hand is hard enough. If you do flop one, you want it to be a strong hand. I have flopped 2-Pair of 5 2 in the blinds only to be hit by someone who has a better 2-Pair of face cards when the board Pairs and they were holding a larger Pocket Pair. It is very hard to lay it down that little 2-Pair on the flop, and you usually want to protect it with a big bet, but have the skill to lay it down if the board and if the betting indicates you could be beat. For example, if your starting hand was a 5 2 pre-flop where the flop was a 2 5 Q with two suited cards and someone also paired their Queens you are holding a troubled hand my poker reader. Your opponent with Top Pair will have nine outs on the River to beat your hand. In my example, the opponent got a second card for 2-Pair and their 2-Pair was better than mine was. Onto some numbers:

A Pocket Pair Flopping:

Four of a Kind .245 % - Full House .980 %

Three of a Kind 10.77 %

2-Pair 16.16 % - 1-Pair 71.84 %

Suited Connector AKs Flopping:

Straight Flush .005 % - Four of a Kind .010 %

Full House .092 % - Flush .837 %

Straight .321 % - Three of a Kind 1.57 %

2-Pair 4.04 % - 1-Pair 40.40 %

You see that flopping one pair will occur most often, especially if you already hold that Wired Pair. What do you want that pair to be, a pair of 5's or holding A Qs and having one of those pair up? Having a strong kicker is important and this is one of the two reasons. Because you are trying to flop at least Top Pair and if you flop 2-Pair then you have a real strong 2-Pair.

Hand	Occurs/Wins	Hand	Occurs/Wins
High card	17.41%/0.00%	Straight	4.62%/33.36%
One Pair	43.83%/1.67%	Flush	3.03%/46.88%
2-Pair	23.50%/8.92%	Full House	2.60%/52.46%
Trips	4.83%/33.56%	Quads	0.17%/86.27%

The real reason strong starting hands are essential is; if you are going to win on a pair or 2-Pair, they need to be high cards. They need to have that good kicker when you have just one Pair at a showdown. You will not want to invest too much money in a hand holding top pair and a weak kicker even if it is the best hand. Therefore, you will not be able to get full value for your having the best hand or be able to protect that best hand. If you have a good kicker then you will win more often than the average loose player. In tight and most typical games, the kicker is important and against a loose player, it

is essential. Another concept to consider from this chart is that 2-Pair occurs almost one fourth of the time but a small 2-Pair is vulnerable. If the board pairs a higher card than your 2-Pair or someone already holds a pair that is higher than your small 2-Pair.

When you are holding small suited connectors, you are looking to flop a Straight, Flush or a set that you can chase with the correct odds. This is possible if you are in late position and will only be faced with a small probe or continuation bet on the Flop. When there are many players that limp in to see a flop this is a common occurrence. Usually after the small bet on the Flop, most players fold, revealing one or two hands that have a draw and a made hand. On the Turn the made hand will bet a larger amount in an attempt to push the other players off the drawing hand.

Finally, the reason starting with a strong hand is essential is that most important axiom of poker. It is not about winning pots, it is about winning money. I would rather keep throwing hands an hour or two and then get that killer hand that wins me someone else's bankroll than win a series of small pots. If you are just winning many small pots then you are probably seeing too many flops and those small pots eventually all go back into the pot when you call to see the flops.

Starting Hand Values

I am only going to look at the top ten starting hands. Most books talk about starting hands extensively and you can find more discussions about it on the internet. I have a detailed pre-flop equity chart in **Appendix II** for all the starting hands that you can evaluate and incorporate into your own style.

Table 1

Starting Hand	Occurs	Wins	Splits	Notes
AA	0.45%	31%	0.49%	Dealt 220/1 16/1 another PP
KK	0.45%	26.02%	0.61%	Odds of being dealt AA or KK 110/1
QQ	0.45%	22.03%	0.76%	Holding QQ and no A or K by River; 5 to 1
AKs	0.30%	20.19%	1.88%	AK heads up vs. QQ, 2/1 that A or K by River

These are the four most powerful hands and usually deserve a raise of three to four times the big blind; if there are limpers and it is a loose board then I add their bets plus the raise. For example, if there are three limpers that acted before me then I raise three to four times the big blind plus some or all of what is already in the pot. Mostly this is determined by how loose the players are, how strong my hand is and how many players I want to see in the pot. Look at it like this:

Say there are three limpers who put in \$2 each plus the \$1/\$2 blinds. There is \$9 in the pot when it is my turn to bet. If I bet three times the big blind (\$6) then there is \$15 in the pot and my opponents have to risk \$6 to get \$15 (1.5 to 1 pot odds). That is not poor enough odds for many players to turn down in a loose low stakes game considering the expected value of hitting the flop or busting my hand. Someone with two over cards or even suited connectors who like to gamble will call that bet online. For every player that does call it will entice more players to call the raise because they are getting even better odds. Furthermore, the big blind only has to call another \$4 and those are great odds. I am not saying their play is correct, I am just saying you have to determine how much to raise and what effects the raise is going to have. If I raised five times the big blind, then fewer players would call the raise or I may even take the pot down right there. Therefore, an \$8 to \$10 raise is not out of the ordinary in a small stakes game to cut down the field with the best hand.

One reason the hands in Table 1 are so powerful is that they can win without any improvement from the flop or further streets. You know you can control the field and continue to dominate the betting if the flop does not look scary.

For example, if you hold A A, you are a 4 to 1 favorite over any one opponent's hand when played to the River. With a rainbow flop of 2 7 9, you can assume with confidence that most players did not improve. There are no obvious Straight draws or Flush Draws. The only hands you must be wary of are pocket 2's, 7's and 9's, a straight draw if someone is holding T 8, or some crazy freak playing a 2 7 and hitting the 2-Pair. So depending on how many people are in the pot, bet an amount that destroys the opponent's pot odds

for drawing to a Straight or just bet enough to feel out the field. A pot sized to half the size of the pot will usually work on the Flop. If someone plays back at you then you have a decision to make that could cost you your whole buy-in. Are they on a draw or did they hit the 2-Pair/set? On the Turn, your Pair of Ace's is favored over the Straight draw 63.131% to 36.869% (according to Poker Stove).

This type of decision comes with experience. If there is a large field of people then the chances that the flop would hit someone's hand to make a better hand than yours is higher but unlikely. If there are only one or two people seeing the flop you have to think they have Pocket Pairs or suited connector over-cards. Either way, your Pocket Pair of Ace's looks good and you want people to chase. You are Ace will win almost two out of three times. Anyone chasing is just giving money away. These are pre-flop Pot Equity percentages enumerated on Poker Stove against some of the most common trapping hands.

Starting Hand vs. AA/Win %	JTs – 21.7%
76s/65s – 23%	JJ – 19.5%
89s – 22.6%	TT – 19.92%
54s – 21.6%	QJs – 19.71%

Another reason the Table 1 hands are so powerful is the percentage that an over-card to your Pocket Pair will appear after the Flop. The higher the Pocket Pair the less likely someone will get Top Pair above you.

Ace	00% that a higher card will appear on the Turn or River
King	17% that an Ace will appear on the Turn or River
Queen	32% that an Ace or King will appear on the Turn or River

So if you hold K K, there is only a 17% chance that an Ace will appear after the Flop to ruin your hand. Add this to the thought that perhaps no one has an Ace in his or her hand if you raised enough to make anyone with Ace little fold. Usually if someone called your raise pre-flop, you should expect them to have an Ace but this may not always be the case; many times, it is someone with another Pocket Pair or suited connectors. The higher the stakes you play the less likely someone called your pre-flop raise with a speculative hand. The less people in the pot the more likely no one has an Ace. If they did not Pair their Ace on the flop then they are chasing a long shot and you need to ruin their pot odds.

One event that should slow you down after the flop, besides someone re-raising you, is when the board Pairs on the flop. The more opponents seeing the flop, the more likely someone has hit trips. The less players seeing the flop, the less likely someone was actually holding that one card. This is another reason not to let people draw against you when you hold a big Pocket Pair pre-flop. It is not correct to slow play big Pocket Pairs so there will be more money in the pot. You only slow play the big Pocket Pairs when you are sure one or two players are going to see the flop. If you are in the cutoff seat (one seat to the right of the button) then a smaller raise may be the best option or if someone has made a big raise before you and you hold a good hand. Why push them out when you have position? Three

opponents are the most I can face and be somewhat confident in my hand standing up at the showdown.

A Ks (Big Slick) is a completely different monster than the three Wired Pairs just discussed. It could win just by being the most powerful Ace because of the King kicker. Usually it needs some help on the draw. Since it is suited, it can win by completing a Flush but this only increases the win potential by three percent. It is the highest connector so it can win as a nut Straight and it can win as an over-pair if an Ace or King hits.

If you hit a King on the flop, you can feel safe that you have Top Pair with the best kicker and bet out to see if someone hit a set, 2-Pair or a drawing hand. If you are in late position and someone bet a probe bet then you should think about re-raising to see how strong his hand actually is. He may be drawing to a better hand or looking to pair the kicker.

Same type of thinking if an Ace slides off the deck, you have the best kicker to beat anyone else's Ace and do not want drawing hands to get free cards. Someone could chase the 2-Pair so if an Ace or King flops you want to be aggressive. Some flops can get tricky with A K though.

I remember getting A K suited and unsuited in a Limit Hold'em game eight times in one hour. The interesting point is that my A K lost the first five times in a row to opponents who hit a weak 2-Pair or one smaller pair. However, the next three times I won the hands, which made up for all the losses and brought me back to even.

If the flop comes K 10 5 or A Q 7 you may have been outdrawn. Why? Because K T and especially A Q are hands that people will call big opening raises (with K T being a loose call). Someone may have flopped 2-Pair. If there was a raise before your raise and they called your raise then you should consider that that person might have A Q or a Wired Pair. You need to be careful and feel out the board with a bet. If someone raise's back into you then it is decision time. Some things to consider are, that someone is drawing to a Straight instead of having a made hand and betting that the flop missed others and they are trying to win the pot right there, or that someone has a K Q and thinks their K kicker is best. There is a reason A K is called big slick. You have a strong possibility that plays best heads up but gets much weaker if the Flop is scary.

Then you have to ask yourself:

Does this player usually play very loose?

Does this opponent put this much money into the pot with a hand consisting of Top Pair and a low kicker? If he is a tight, rock like player, then you are probably beat, but if this person is a loose aggressive and chases most of the time, take his money for betting Top Pair with a worse kicker.

Table 2

Starting Hand	Occurs	Wins	Splits	Notes
JJ	0.45%	19.09%	0.92%	45% chance of over card after flop
AQ	0.30%	18.66%	2.17%	Is essentially a drawing

				hands
KQs	0.30%	18.08%	2.09%	Is powerful if no one is holding an Ace
AJs	0.30%	17.47%	2.46%	Another drawing hand with a weak kicker
KJs	0.30%	17.05%	2.36%	Just call a moderate re-raise
TT	0.45%	16.83%	1.12%	57% chance of an over card after flop
AKos	0.91%	16.67%	1.97%	See what the flop brings with many limpers

A Qs is considered a dominating starting hand if it is not against the hands from the first table. Consider the following numbers when A Qs is up against a more powerful hand. You will see how much of an underdog a dominated hand can be. Enumerated by Poker Stove.

A-A: 82 percent vs. A-Q suited, 86 percent vs. A-Q off suit
K-K: 68 percent vs. A-Q suited, 72 percent vs. A-Q off suit
Q-Q: 66 percent vs. A-Q suited, 70 percent vs. A-Q off suit
A-K suited: 71 percent vs. A-Q suited, 75 percent vs. A-Q off suit
A-K off suit: 70 percent vs. A-Q suited, 74 percent vs. A-Q off suit

You are always in need of a miracle draw when the better starting hand dominates your hand. That is the problem with most of the starting hands from Table 2. They are good to open with in many positions and even throw in a raise to narrow the field in later positions. You have plenty of equity if, for instance, you try to steal the blinds with a raise and they call you or even re-raise you. Just be careful after the flop. If nothing came close to hitting your cards, depending on how many players stayed in the pot, you should

not continue calling large bets with just an over card draw. You need to consider the pot odds, number of players and types of players if the flop threw you blanks. What you are looking for if you do call is an opponent who will play a medium Pocket Pair, 2 over cards or a Straight/Flush Draw.

One of the hardest starting hands to play in Hold'em is a Pocket Pair of Jacks. It is the fourth or fifth best starting hand (depending if you are looking at money won or actual win percentage) but also causes the most amount of confusion in regards to how to play it successfully. It is a starting hand that will tax all of your skills pre-flop and after the flop. I always like to look at the probabilities when I talk about a starting hand, but reading an opponent and even a whole table is very important when playing this hand. Jacks can be very profitable if you go through the correct thinking process. This article will start with the odds you must be aware of then some basic thinking processes to make certain plays that will increase your overall probability to win more money and lose less money.

On the flop, there is a 43.04% chance that no over card to the Jacks will flop.

There is the same percentage that one over card will flop, 43.04%.

Two over cards will flop 12.80% of the time and three 1.12% of the time.

There is a 56.96% of a chance that two over cards will flop, making your Jacks look very vulnerable.

If these numbers are not sobering enough then how about these:

At a Ten player table there is a 6.2 to 1 chance that someone has a better Pocket Pair than you do, with Aces, Kings or Queens.

If all players go to the River, your Jacks will win 22% of the time.

After the flop, there is still a 45% chance that an over card will appear so you will have to play your cards with optimal skill.

JJ appears in your hand with the probability of any Pocket Pair 0.45%. If you are playing heads up against one person, it will win 75% of the time. When two people stay in to see the flop, the win rate falls to 59%. That is a huge difference when you consider the ability to extract the most amount of money. When three opponents stay in the hand to see all the streets, your Jacks will win 49% of the time. When four opponents see all the streets the winning percentage of Jacks fall to a miserable 40% of the time.

These probabilities should help you see some optimal lines of play for winning the most amount of money in the end. Tossing in a pre-flop raise to eliminate players and get heads up against one or two hands at the most is a good strategic play. If small cards fall on the flop then you should toss out a good-sized continuation bet, especially if everyone before you checked to the pre-flop bettor. Let us look at how your Jacks will do against a number of different hands.

JJ (2 outs) vs. AKos (6 outs) pre-flop is a 56.8% vs. 43.1% race. (2 over cards)

JJ vs. AQs pre-flop is a 54% to 46% race (2 suited over cards)

JJ vs. ATos pre-flop is a 71.2% vs. 28.7% 3 to 1 odds. (1 over card)

JJ vs. AA pre-flop is an 18.18% to 81.82% or 1 to 4 dog.

JJ vs. 99 is an 82.29% to 17.71% favorite or a little better than 4 to 1 favorite.

JJ vs. any random hand is 77.47% to 22.5% favorite or better than 3 to 1

Here are some more numbers that I found Roy Cooke espousing upon when eight players see the flop:

Jacks, no over cards flop: Wins 20.5% of the time; eight of the other hands win 9.9% of the time.

Jacks, one over card flop: Wins 14% of the time; each of the eight other hands wins 10.75 percent of the time.

Jacks, two over cards flop: Wins 9.6% of the time; each of the eight other hands wins 11.25 percent of the time.

Jacks, three over cards flop: Wins 12.9 percent of the time; each of the other hands wins nearly 11 percent of the time.

It is interesting that when three over cards flop then the Jacks get a better win percentage. You have the key card to making a Straight if the fourth card, usually a Ten, appears. Actually, Jacks do a little better against over cards for this reason. They can make a Straight up and down while blocking someone with two over cards from completing their Straight. Even if one over card does appear to your Jacks, it does not mean you are beat. It depends on how many opponents are still playing against you and the type of

hands they will play. Many players will call a raise and even bet out/re-raise with an under Pair to gain information.

In this next section, I want to look at your Jacks against different types of hands on the flop. I applied the hand of 8 7s for running these probabilities on Poker Stove.

If you have a set on the flop but there is also a three Flush on the board and it completes a Flush for someone else you are a 3 to 1 dog to lose the hand.

If you have a set and your opponent has a two Flush and open ended Straight draw (15 outs) you are a favorite 57.88% to 42.12%.

If your opponent has a Gut-Shot Straight draw and a two Flush Draw to your set, your win percentage goes up a bit to 65.25% to 34.75%.

If your opponent only has a two Flush Draw and a backdoor Straight draw to your set, you are a large favorite: 73.54% to 26.47% an almost 3 to 1 favorite.

The odds are about the same if your opponent has an open-ended Straight draw to your set: you are a 3 to 1 favorite.

If your opponent has a Gut-Shot Straight draw to your set, you are a 4.5 to 1 favorite to win the hand.

Finally, if you made a set and your opponent has made 2-Pair with smaller cards, he is essentially drawing dead. Any pair on the board that makes his Full House (if his 2-Pair are an under Pair to your Jacks) makes you a larger Full House.

Of course, this assumes you make your set on the flop. You will hit your set on the flop 10.78% of the time. You will make a Full House 0.98% of the time and quads .245% of the time.

One reason that Jacks are difficult to play is the decision making process after the flop. If you do make your set then the decisions are a little bit easier for you. If you do not make your set then things can get more difficult for you. Let us look at some basic pre-flop thoughts.

Jacks are most profitable when you play them heads up or against two other players at the most. Your job is to decide how to do this most effectively. Many people suggest making a larger than usual pre-flop raise to discourage anyone from playing Ace-little. As we saw before, you are a 3 to 1 favorite against one over card. Therefore, you want your pre-flop bet to make someone calling with just a big card worse than 3 to 1 odds. If you are on the button and no one has entered the pot you want the big blind (any random hand) to have to call a bet that is worse than 3 to 1 odds (if you make the odds worse than 3 to 1 for the big blind then the small blind will also have even worse odds). This is rather standard and does not take into consideration player types.

If there are many limpers or an early position raise and a few players who called the raise before you had a chance to act then you have a different decision to make. Once again, without considering player types, you have to deduce that at least one player has two over cards to your Pair. You have two choices; call and see what the flop brings or re-raise to find out the types of hands you are playing against and thin the field. If you just call the blind or a pre-flop raise then you are looking for a small flop where your Jacks are still an over pair or you get a great flop that helps your hand with a draw/set. Eventually you will have to see what type of a hand you have compared to your opponents with a bet or a re-raise.

The earlier you are in terms of position the more likely your decision should be to raise pre-flop to define your hand and make people pay to draw out on you. Remember, you will have Top Pair pre-flop six out of every seven times you have Jacks. If you are at an aggressive table where pre-flop raises are the norm, limping then re-raising a substantial amount (no limit) and making it wrong for your opponent to call with anything but the top ten hands is also a viable strategy. Remember, you always want to change up your plays so no one can get a read on you. This can be the more expensive play in terms of variability to your bankroll but because you will have to re-raise at least three times the amount of the pot to eliminate poorer hands. Nevertheless, if you are looking at the big picture the Jacks will hold up more often with fewer opponents seeing the flop.

The bottom line is to get your Pocket Pair of Jacks heads up as often as possible so that if one over card does flop it will be less of a threat to you. Even if two over cards appear on the streets it still does not mean you have

lost, it means put the brakes on. You did your best to maximize your chances to win and that is just poker.

Here are some other considerations to look at before throwing your money around. All examples are for a ten-player table:

If you hold KK the chances someone has AA are 19.5 to 1.

If you hold QQ the chances someone holds AA or KK are 9.5 to 1.

If you hold AKos the chances someone holds AA or KK are 19.7 to 1.

If you hold JJ the chances someone holds AA, KK, QQ are 6.2 to 1.

If you hold TT the chances someone has a better Pocket Pair are 4.5 to 1.

If you hold AQos the chances someone has a better Pocket Pair are 4.4 to 1.

If you hold 99 the chances someone has a better Pocket Pair are 3.5 to 1.

If you hold KQos the chances someone has a TT and above are 2.7 to 1

Look at the **Appendix II** to see the win expectations for each hand compared to how many players are involved. Most Pocket Pairs increase in value when they are up against fewer players. All big cards increase in value but with Pocket Pairs from 10's and above, a raise is considered a good play if you can get less players to see the flop. Then again, nothing is set in stone when you consider a poker game. You must know your opponents and this is one of the x-factors.

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Table Types and Starting Hands

Look at the chart in Appendix II to see what your starting hands should be against a certain number of opponents. The chart gives the winning percentages of every two starting hands against up to nine opponents. I believe this chart should indicate when it is appropriate to make a pre-flop raise and in what position.

Once again, big Pocket Pairs have the best chance against one or two opponents and goes down to almost a 50/50 gamble from there. I like having above a 60% chance of winning a hand, especially in no limit when my whole stack is in danger. Raising with big cards is optimal. In high stakes play you will not get as many people calling your raise (sometimes it is correct to slow play a big Pocket Pair if you are going to get only one or two callers or is it is at an extremely tight table), but in low stakes poker you will often have many opponents calling almost anything.

This next section deals with game types since this will determine how you play your cards. You can look for two different situations. If the table is loose and players regularly call large pre-flop raises or tight and most players fold. Knowing your table dynamics and the individual play of each opponent is one of the most important edges that will help you take home more money in your poker career.

Remember, losing your stack once with a pair of aces but doubling up two times is profiting within probability. You are playing correctly even if you

lose a few times in a row. It may not feel like it but these things ALWAYS even out. Of course, knowing when your pocket Aces are beat after the Flop and tossing them in the muck is the best play. However, we cannot always determine when someone has a better hand if the flop throws off rags. It is amazing how many players online go with 4 5 suited against a big raise trying to trap someone.

A loose game is one with six or more players regularly seeing the flop with sparse or no pre-flop raises. Essentially, you need at least a 15% chance of winning the hand if you are going to play the more speculative hands. That is assuming another hand does not dominate your cards or someone is not limping with a very strong hand. I would actually want cards that have a 15% minimum to 20% win percentage (6+ players) to play a speculative suited connector hand. Many loose players will play even poorer cards so you will be slightly ahead. Of course, you cannot always determine if you will get the correct pot equity up front in early position so limp in with speculative hands only in the later positions.

A typical game is three to five people seeing the flop with one out of every four hands having a pre-flop raise. You have to consider the reality of pre-flop raises cutting into your bottom line. If one out of every four times you are run off your hand by a pre-flop raise then you should consider only going in with cards that have a 20% minimum (five players) or 33% minimum (three players) chance of winning at the showdown compared to the number of players limping in. One question to ask before limping into the pot is, "Would I call a raise with these cards?" If the answer is no most

of the time then do not even put in that first bet. Save that money for the times when you have the strong starting cards and you want to raise the pot.

Consider the table a tight game when one or two people are seeing the flop and there is a pre-flop raise three out of every four hands. Furthermore, there are very few contested pots and a player that bets on the flop usually takes down the pot. You want cards that have at least a 33% chance of winning at the showdown to break even before considering a pre-flop raise. So with two players seeing the flop I would feel more comfortable having cards that win 40%+ of the time because you essentially have a 33.3% chance of winning without considering the actual cards. Of course, this is all relative to the actual strength of your opponents cards to your own cards.

One more note about this hand chart; if you are in a tight game in middle to late position and there was two to three bets with a raise mixed in there, pre-flop, before getting to you then ignore the chart and just use the top 10 hands on the chart. This is true especially if you are a beginner trying to learn how to play and have played less than 5000 to 10,000 hands. Some players, including myself, will go in with a suited connectors if there are two to three people in a tight game raising pre-flop. Why? Let us look at a few numbers.

Four people including you seeing the flop:

	Pre-flop odds
you have - 5c6c	41.704 %
player 1 - AdKh	32.122 %
player 2 - AsQs	19.783 %

player 3 - KsQd

6.392 %

So what is going on here? Do any two cards have an equal chance of winning? Well, no, not at all. Since two people have an Ace, the value of the aces goes down as well as the Queens and Kings. There is no made hand here so all the hands need help. You have a better shot because as far as you know there are six outs to make a pair, all the Flush outs and an open-ended Straight draw. The A K, A Q or K Q does not have that same Straight possibility. Of course, if an over cards falls on the flop or later then your cards are probably worthless and should typically be thrown away. Even if you do get your 2-Pair on the flop, do not become too brash. Someone may have one pair on the flop, say with a flop of 5 6 Q. You have the best hand but if an Ace or King Slides off the deck on the Turn or River then someone else will have a better 2-Pair. It has happened to me more than I would like to remember. If someone made hand like A A to 9 9 you are already in trouble so try to understand who is doing the pre-flop raising. Are they pushing small edges with over-card draws or do they usually only raise with a pair?

Here is a real life example of how 2-Pair is still vulnerable. It was a \$.50/\$1.00, \$100.00 buy-in passive pre-flop Hold'em table. I had not been getting any good cards and the table was typical with few pre-flop raises so I decided to venture out with a 4 5 suited in early position and limped in. Some experts say you should raise pre-flop with a weak speculative hand in early position such as A Js to bluff out some of your opponents but I was looking to increase the pot equity with a few late position limpers. Two other players limp in after me along with the small blind but the big blind

raises 4 times the big blind. This made the pot is \$8 and I was first to act after this raise.

I put the big blind on a high Pocket Pair such as Aces, Kings or Queens though a lower Pocket Pair, or A K suited could have also been an option. This is a common move by the big blind with four limpers, raising to try cut down on the number of opponents with your good hands. Either it can be a steal move or an authentic starting hand that has us all beat pre-flop. At least two players called the pre-flop raises and sometimes all of the limpers throughout the session at this table but there were never any re-raises.

Therefore, even though I was in early position I figured calling the raise would not be so bad because everyone behind me would call the raise and I would be getting the correct odds to see the flop. One person folded and four opponents saw the flop so I was short in getting the correct odds to see this flop. However, since this is a hero's story of course the flop hit me with a T 5 4 rainbow giving me 2-Pair. It was a hand that can bust any big Pocket Pair and I decided to take down the pot right there. The big blind checks and I bet out the size of the pot, which makes everyone behind me fold.

However, the big blind does not fold, he sits and thinks and then bets out with what essentially put me all-in. If the board pairs, I have to realize that my opponent may have a better 2-Pair that can beat my vulnerable 2-Pair. So on the Turn my opponent has five outs and on the River eight outs or equal to an open-ended straight draw. Well, I cannot pass up these types of opportunities; suited connectors only bust Pocket Pairs one time for every four times it loses or around 20% of the time. Therefore, I call the bet and go all-in. I am not sure if my opponent thought I was bluffing or had only hit a draw and was semi-bluffing or if he even thought that I hit 2-Pair (a set is

also applicable here) and all he needed was the board to Pair. The board never paired and my opponent showed his pocket aces while I raked in the pot with my lucky 2-Pair. This was definitely a loose play from start to end and a long time probability loser unless you are getting the pre-flop odds and the large amount of expected value if you do hit the hand; but it also shows why my hand was vulnerable throughout because of my small 2-Pair.

If you look at the chart above, you will see that Wired Pairs are very powerful; the higher the Pair the better it plays against more players. A A pays off 44% of the time with six players. Therefore, you are risking one seventh of the money but getting a much better percentage chance to win.

Call this pot equity and the better your cards the higher your positive Expected Value is. Therefore, the Pair of Aces has a 44% share of the pot equity compared to the other six opponents who have a share of the remaining 66% of the equity. So limping in with a Wired Pair of Aces is actually an incorrect play because you are undervaluing your current holdings and allowing other players to share in your pot.

Many professionals play what is called “pair poker” and push that small edge trying to isolate one or two players. If you look at the Wired Pair of 9 9 you see that it wins 71% of the time against one player. That is excellent odds compared to the money in the pot. Even against two other players you could possibly (depending on your opponent’s hands) be wagering only one third of the money while getting 52% of a chance to win the pot. It is a race against two players but the money wagered is in your favor. Once again these are static numbers and do not represent all situations but your job as a

poker player is to identify those times when you could have better odds than your opponents.

Therefore “pair poker” is pushing as many hands out of the pot as possible and isolating one player with a drawing hand. I hope that they will not have two over cards to your Pair, which makes it almost a 50/50 race. Here are some numbers of Pocket Pairs against a hand that has two and then only one over card to it.

JJ vs. AKos pre-flop is a 56.8% vs. 43.1% race. (2 over-cards)
99 vs. AKos pre-flop is a 54.8% vs. 45.1% race. (2 over-cards)
JJ vs. ATos pre-flop is a 71.2% vs. 28.7% race. (1 over-card)
99 vs. T8os pre-flop is a 70.2% vs. 28.7% race. (1 over-card)

These are some other poker skills to try out and add to your bag of knowledge:

When it is best to drive other players out of a pot? You have a clear advantage against one to three opponents starting hands. The more opponents staying to see the flop the worse your pot equity and ultimate win percentage becomes. You must recognize when you have the better pre-flop hand and bet/raise accordingly.

When it is best to limp in with certain hands? You can limp in with suited connectors or even one gap when four to six opponents limp into the pot behind you. Two big over cards like A T or K 9 or K J can pay off well if there are many players, no pre-flop raises and you have position on them.

What types of cards do you need against various table conditions? This next section contains a starting hand chart for different table conditions. For loose table conditions, it is recommended that you tighten up while tight table conditions require a player to loosen up. Not all poker players agree with this and some say you should loosen up at a loose table but be prepared for larger bankroll swings. By loosening up you can catch some good cards that nobody would have expected you to have, like flopping a 7 2 Full House and letting other loose aggressive players drive the betting.

Recognizing when the odds are correct and even creating the conditions to have the odds in your favor is an advanced poker skill that will increase your profit tenfold.

Starting Hand Chart

I have tried to put together a simple starting hand chart for quick reference with the template being the hands strength based on winning percentage. I separated the games into three categories, loose, typical and tight. A loose game is one with six to ten players regularly seeing the flop with sparse or no pre-flop raising. A typical game is two to five people seeing the flop with one out of every four hands having a pre-flop raise. A tight game is where there are two to three people seeing the flop and there is a pre-flop raise three out of every four hands.

In the notes section unless it is specified then all is assumed. For example, if it says “all positions” then you can play this in any position in any type of game. “All positions (25% early 50% mid tight)” means that in loose and typical games you can play this in all positions. In tight games, it specifies when to play in early position and in middle position. Another example is “Early (loose) Middle (typ) button/blinds (tight)” which means that in loose games you can play this in any position, in typical games from middle to blind position and in tight games you can play this on the button or from the blinds.

Early position is the under the gun seat (UTG) and one past that seat, middle position is the next three seats, late position is the next two seats until the cutoff and then the last seat before the blinds is called the button.

This is a No Limit Hold'em starting hand chart.

Starting hand	Occurs	Hands Won %	Hands Split %	Notes/position play in different games
AA	0.45%	31.00	0.49	All positions any game - raise and re-raise.
KK	0.45%	26.02	0.61	All positions any game - raise and re-raise.
QQ	0.45%	22.03	0.76	All positions any game - raise and re-raise.
AKs	0.30%	20.19	1.88	All positions any game - raise and re-raise.
JJ	0.45%	19.09	0.92	All positions any game - raise and re-raise.
AQs	0.30%	18.66	2.17	All positions any game raise in late position.
KQS	0.30%	18.08	2.09	Early (loose) Middle-late position /blinds (typical/tight) raise from button
AJs	0.30%	17.47	2.46	Early (loose) Middle-late position /blinds (typical/tight) raise from button.
KJs	0.30%	17.05	2.36	Early (loose) Middle-late /blinds (typical/tight)
TT	0.45%	16.83	1.12	All positions any game raise depending on situation and table type.
AK	0.91%	16.67	1.97	All positions (75% early tight) raise from late position.
ATs	0.30%	16.63	2.74	Early (loose) Middle (75% typical) late/blinds Late (tight 50%)
QJs	0.30%	16.58	2.39	Early (loose) Middle (50% typical) late/blinds Late (tight 50%)
KTs	0.30%	16.14	2.62	Early (loose) Middle (50% typical) late/blinds Late (tight 50%)
QTs	0.30%	15.84	2.64	Early (loose) Middle (50%

				typical) late/blinds Tight (late 25%)
JTs	0.30%	15.78	2.75	Early (loose) Middle (50% typical) late/blinds Late (25%)
99	0.45%	15.29	0.85	All positions
AQ	0.91%	14.87	2.25	All positions (loose) Early (75% tight)
A9s	0.30%	14.60	2.68	All positions (loose) Early (25% tight 50% typical)
KQ	0.91%	14.43	2.18	All positions (loose) Middle(50% typical) Middle to blinds (25% tight)
88	0.45%	14.16	0.85	All positions (loose) Early (25%) Middle to late (50% tight)
K9s	0.30%	14.15	2.47	Mid (50% loose) Late position and blinds (50% typical)
T9s	0.30%	14.07	2.66	late/blinds (loose to typical)
A8s	0.30%	13.89	2.86	Early (loose 25%) late/blinds (typical)
Q9s	0.30%	13.82	2.44	Mid (50% loose) Late position and blinds (typical)
J9s	0.30%	13.80	2.49	Mid (25% loose) late/blinds (typical)
AJ	0.91%	13.45	2.55	Early (loose) Middle (typical) button/blinds (tight)
A5s	0.30%	13.43	3.27	Early (loose 25%) button/blinds (typical)
77	0.45%	13.36	0.86	All positions Early (25% tight)
A7s	0.30%	13.35	3.01	Early (loose 25%) late/blinds (typical)
KJ	0.91%	13.18	2.48	Early (loose 20%) button/blinds (tight/typical)
A4s	0.30%	13.17	3.06	Early (loose 10%) button/blinds (typical)
A3s	0.30%	13.07	2.86	Early (loose 10%) button/blinds (typical)
A6s	0.30%	12.97	3.11	Early (loose 10%) button/blinds

				(typical)
QJ	0.91%	12.89	2.49	Early (loose 25%) button/blinds (tight/typical)
66	0.45%	12.77	0.85	All pos. (loose) Middle to blinds (25% tight/typical)
K8s	0.30%	12.77	2.60	Button/blinds (loose 25%)
T8s	0.30%	12.73	2.69	Button (10% loose)
A2s	0.30%	12.69	2.63	Early (loose 25%) button/blinds (25% typical)
98s	0.30%	12.63	2.36	Early (loose 10%) button/blinds (15% typical)
J8s	0.30%	12.47	2.53	button/blinds (10% loose to typical)
AT	0.91%	12.43	2.84	Early (loose 25%) button/blinds (20% tight/typical)
Q8s	0.30%	12.42	2.52	button/blinds (10% loose)
K7s	0.30%	12.23	2.73	button/blinds (10% loose)
KT	0.91%	12.23	2.75	Early (loose 25%) button/blinds (25% tight/typical)
55	0.45%	12.15	0.86	All positions (loose) late/blinds 50% tight/typical
JT	0.91%	12.13	2.83	Early (loose 10%) button/blinds (20% typical)
87s	0.30%	12.02	2.33	Early (loose 10%) button/blinds (15% typical)
QT	0.91%	11.99	2.75	Early (loose 10%) button/blinds (15% typical)
44	0.45%	11.94	0.67	Loose 25% late typical
22	0.45%	11.93	0.31	Loose 25% late typical
33	0.45%	11.86	0.48	Loose 25% late typical

I did not create the chart to be memorized. You can find plenty of starting hand charts on the market and feel free to memorize. Every starting hand is different according to the table conditions. This chart is for research purposes, to compare the starting hand chart with the win percentages for

each of the hands and look at the suggestions for when to play the starting hand. Compare these suggestions to different games you play and the different table conditions. Use it as a framework to build your probability style. You must always vary your play so that abiding by a starting hand chart is worthless in the end.

Any artist is aware of the thought that you must know the rules first before you can break them for a reason.

Odds and Outs

As a poker player, you must know how to read the board after the flop and count the number of outs you have to make your hand. The number of outs you have gives you an idea of how much money to invest into your hand. If there is only one card that will make your hand after the flop then you have a 4.3% chance of hitting that card or a 1/47 shot. So for this to be a wise investment there should be \$470 dollars in the pot for you to lay out a \$10 dollar bet. You consider pot odds when calling a bet in limit poker and you try to figure out what your opponent may be drawing to so you can attempt to ruin their pot odds with a bet. This does not take into consideration pot equity which may make it correct for your opponent to continue with the hand.

A quick way of figuring odds is the following:

After the flop, the quickest way to determine the probability is to count the number of outs and multiply by four. For example, say your pocket cards are 6 7s and the flop comes down 5s 4s Kc:

Your chances of hitting a Straight Flush is $2 \text{ outs} * 4 = 8\%$

Your chances of hitting a Flush is $13 \text{ outs} * 4 = 52\%$

After the Turn, you multiply the number of outs by 2 then add 2

So if the Turn is a 9d, making the board 5s 4s Kc 9d

Your chances of hitting a Flush is $13 \text{ outs} * 2 + 2 = 28\%$

The answer is an approximation but it is always accurate to within

Plus/minus 1%.

The following chart shows the pot odds up to 15 outs with one card to come or both the Turn and River combined. Notice, with 14 and 15 outs you have a slightly better than 50% chance of hitting your hand when seeing both the Turn and the River. With 15 outs on the Turn, you have a 32% and on the River a 33.3% or better than 2 to 1 odds on each street.

Understanding these odds allows you to call bets or bet to ruin other player's pot odds depending on what type of a hand you put them on.

If you have more than 15 outs and you have a hard time deciding to call a bet or even toss in a raise then maybe poker is not your game. I have 20 outs and miss the Turn and River; I do not feel bad at the end of the hand. I think, what a game, this poker stuff, that I had almost half the deck to hit my hand and it did not happen.

In limit poker or a passive big bet (no limit/pot limit) game for your drawing hand to get something paid off you might want to consider the number of callers that are in the pot.

If you have four outs - do not raise.

If you have eight outs - you want three to four callers

If you have nine outs - you want two to three callers

If you have 15 outs - just raise.

The considerations above deal with bet odds in limit poker and are the number of opponents in the pot when you decide to bet. Therefore, if you

have a Flush Draw on the board and you know at least two people are going to call a bet; you will be getting the correct odds. Therefore, if it is checked to you and you want to juice the pot and at least two people will call a bet then bet.

How to use pot odds and the difference between Big Bet Poker and Limit Poker

If someone has an open-ended Straight draw, eight cards complete their hand.

On the Turn and on the River a player would be facing two different situations. The Open Ended Straight draw has a 31.5% of hitting their hand when you consider both streets. In Limit Poker you should consider calling and even raising to build a larger pot (depending on whether completing the Straight will be the best hand) In Big Bet Poker you can be priced out of the hand by a pot sized bet. The Open Ended Straight draw is getting 2 to 1 odds and this makes it wrong to call according to probability.

Here is another example, the pot has \$20 and you bet \$20 your opponent needs to call \$20 to win \$40 on the Turn. They are not getting the correct pot odds to call on Fourth Street with the Open Ended Straight draw (eight outs, over 4 to 1 against or 17%) or even both streets (31.5% chance of hitting when seeing two cards). In no limit, you can make your opponent pay heavily when they try to draw out on you. When you consider pot odds, you should only consider the current streets pot odds not the combined streets pot odds. Because, in Big Bet if you are on a draw, your opponent may

Outs	Turn odds	River odds	Turn & River	Against Both Cards	Notes	break even pot odds*
1	1/47 – 2.1%	1/46 – 2.1%	4.3%	22.3/1		45 to 1
2	1/23.8 – 4.2%	1/23.2 – 4.3%	8.4%	10.9/1		22 to 1
3	1/15.6 – 6.4%	1/15.3 – 6.5%	12.5%	7/1		14.3 to 1
4	1/11.75 – 8.5%	1/11.5 – 8.6%	16.5%	5.5/1	Draw to better 2-Pair to Full House when board Pairs both hole cards or Gut-Shot Straight draw	10.5 to 1
5	1/9.4 – 10.6%	1/9.2 – 10.8%	20.3%	3.9/1		8.2 to 1
6	1/7.8 – 12.8%	1/7.6 – 13.1%	24.1%	3.1/1	Trips/set making Full House on Turn – One Pair vs. 2-Pair needing to pair board or larger kicker on Turn or 2 over cards making Pair	6.7 to 1
7	1/6.7 – 15%	1/6.5 – 15.3%	27.8%	2.6/1		5.6 to 1
8	1/5.8 – 17%	1/5.7 – 17.5%	31.6%	2.2/1	Open ended Straight draw	4.75 to 1
9	1.5/1 – 19%	1/5.1 – 19.6%	35%	1.9/1	Flush Draw or trips/set making Full House on River	4.1 to 1
10	1/4.76 – 21%	1/4.61 – 21.7%	38.4%	1.6/1	2 over cards and Gut-Shot	3.6 to 1
11	1/4.2 – 23.8%	1/4.1 – 24.3%	41.7%	1.4/1		3.2 to 1
12	1/3.9 – 25.6%	1/3.8 – 26.3%	45%	1/2/1		2.8 to 1
13	1/3.6 – 27.7%	1/3.5 – 28.5%	48.1%	1.1/1		2.5 to 1
14	1/3.3 – 30.3%	1/3.2 – 31.25%	51.2%	1.0/1		2.2 to 1
15	1/3.1 – 32%	1/3.0 – 33.3%	54.1%	0.8/1	Straight and Flush Draw	2.1 to 1

*According to Miller in Small Stakes Hold'em

figure this out after the Flop and make it even more expensive for you to draw the River card.

Knowing how many outs you have is important in deciding what size bet to call and how much to bet. When you are reading other poker books, you must consider the difference between Fixed Limit Hold'em and No Limit or Pot Limit, which needs a different thinking process because you can manipulate the betting. When you consider your pot odds, you should only

look at the probability of the current betting round, especially in no limit. With fixed limit, you can consider the probability of both streets because you can estimate and control the future betting rounds. In no limit, you cannot accurately predict future betting amounts so you must only consider the pot odds for the next card to come.

Here is an excellent chart to understand what odds your bet will give your opponent. You really should have these ratios memorized so you do not have to worry about figuring them out in the heat of battle with an online timer ticking down.

Bet	Odds you give
2x the pot	3 to 2
The pot	2 to 1
$\frac{3}{4}$ of the pot	7 to 3
$\frac{2}{3}$ of the pot	5 to 2
Half the pot	3 to 1
$\frac{1}{3}$ of the pot	4 to 1
$\frac{1}{4}$ of the pot	5 to 1

This is an important consideration for anyone playing big bet poker. If there is a two Flush on the board and you want to protect your hand then a bet of at least one-third to three fourths of the pot is called for to deter someone from calling with the correct odds to chase the Flush.

If someone has over cards to the flop and you have a medium Pair, then betting one fourth to one-half of the pot is considered good play when looking at pot odds.

Here are some interesting numbers when playing pre-flop. This should help you determine whether to enter the pot or not with your cards. For example, if you have K Q suited on the button and no one enters the pot in a \$5/\$10 blind game then you have pot odds of 66%. Your K Q suited has more of a chance to win the hand against two random hands than the 66% pot odds you are getting (in the chart from starting hand values you have 47% chance to win against two people that entered the pot).

This is including the blinds:

If no opponent has entered the pot odds to call are 1.5 to 1 or 66%.

If one opponent has called the BB, the pot odds to call are 2.50 to 1 or 40%

If two opponents have called the BB, the pot odds to call are 3.50 to 1 or
28.57%

If three opponents have called the BB, the pot odds to call are 4.50 to 1 or
22%

If four opponents have called the BB, the pot odds are 5.50 to 1 or 18.18%

At this point, pre-flop I would consider how much pot equity my hand has and if it is more than the pot odds are giving me. K Q suited pre-flop with two players limping is worth at least a call according to pot odds.

I hope this helps you to determine when you have the better hand pre-flop against the rest of your opponents.

Reading the Flop and Turn

Reading the flop is the time to decide to go for the money or wait for the Poker Gods to give you a different opportunity.

Things to consider on the flop:

Number of opponents – The more opponents in on the hand the more likely the flop hit a hand if it did not hit yours. It is not recommended to semi-bluff at a pot with more than three opponents unless they have shown a lot of weakness.

The strength of your hand – Do you have a made hand, a strong drawing hand, a mediocre hand that might be helped on the Turn or a hand that has no hope of becoming the best hand?

Type of opponent hands – What type of a hand would that flop help. What opponent in what position would play that type of hand?

If you have a set then two and three suited hands are dangerous to you. You may have to draw to a Full House by having the board pair but pairing the board is a 33% chance I will take if the betting is appropriate to pot odds or the implied odds are present. When you have a set, you want to see a flop that does not give any obvious straight or flush draws. I like to see flops with at least one big card so an opponent will chase 2-Pair or defend their TPTK.

Another big card on the Turn or River may have given someone the second best hand such as 2-Pair or a straight draw on the Turn.

If you have 2-Pair with both your cards matching a card on the board then the best thing for you is when someone with TPTK tries to beat out your hand. If there is a straight or flush draw then your options are much more limited. One important thing to consider is if your top card is larger than any other card on the board. If it is, then an opponent's 2-Pair cannot beat your 2-Pair.

If you have Top Pair with a strong kicker you need to look at the texture of the flop very carefully. In low stakes game most players will play any two cards. In a larger stakes game your TPTK is a stronger hand because there are fewer poor starting hands seeing the Flop. A Flop of Ace, three, five may have an opponent drawing to a bicycle straight or already have 2-Pair.

You must consider what your kicker actually is. For example, a nine kicker is not very strong. There are four more ranks that can beat you if you hold A 9 and you pair your Ace. If another card above your card falls on the Turn or River this may give someone 2-Pair. If you hold the top pair with your kicker, then a card that falls on the Turn or River will eliminate your top pair.

If you have a draw, you have to decide if it is worth chasing. You should consider if the hand has an excellent chance of being the nuts or close to the nuts if it completes.

Let us look at when it may be advisable to chase a hand. You have Ad 5d on the button with five players seeing the flop. The flop comes 2d 3d 8c. What should you be seeing with this flop?

You have a nut Flush Draw and a Gut-Shot straight draw. Any diamond (nine left in the deck) and any four (there are four left in the deck and one of them makes a Straight Flush) will make your hand a strong showdown winner. Thirteen outs (do not count the 4 of Diamonds a second time) is almost even money against you hitting the card needed to make a competitive hand. You have a 27.7% chance that one of your cards will fall on the Turn and 28.5% chance it will hit on the River or a 48.1% dog on both streets. You are a 1.1/1 underdog for it not to happen on both streets. That is almost even money and the expected value of the hand if you do hit will exceed the 1.9% you are sacrificing. In other words, if you do complete your hand you have an excellent chance of extracting more bets on the River. For example, if you miss your draw you will fold at the showdown but if you do complete your hand you will probably get a call from your opponents. So in limit poker if the Turn had 10.5 bets in the pot and the River completed your hand you can get at least one more bet. If there were two opponents then you would win a pot of 13 bets. If you missed then you would fold losing only three bets. If you win four times and lose four times then you will be gaining eight bets.

Many times with that drawing hand you will be playing against someone who thinks betting over cards to the flop is a smart play, someone that may have a wired pair, a set, or the blinds may have gotten one or 2-Pair.

However, most of these possibilities are slim. As Bob Ciaffone says, it is hard to get a good hand; they just do not grow on trees.

That is one of the tricks of playing after the flop; if your hand has more than one way to improve to the best hand then it was a good flop and you should become an aggressive poker player. If you have TPTK, or second Pair and there is no heavy betting, and you are in position (last or the cutoff), then you have the choice:

- A. checking/calling (which means that you don't reveal your hand strength),
- B. betting out for information,
- C. raising which over represents the strength of your hand (over betting the pot in big bet poker).

In limit poker checking and calling is a strategy you should use if your hand is second best but can become best. You keep the pot small and have the chance to complete your hand cheaply. This way you do not invest that much into the hand. Say you have Top Pair with top kicker (TPTK) and a Gut-Shot straight draw. You think your opponent has flopped a set or 2-Pair. The pot odds may be correct to call but you do not want to be raising in this situation building a big pot. The larger pot will be more incentive for your opponent to stay in and draw out on your hand.

Over betting the pot in No Limit Hold'em is a strategy meant to cut down on the number of opponents you are facing and represent a stronger hand than you may have. This is a risky maneuver and should only be attempted at a tight table with no calling stations in the hand.

Here is another example that will take into consideration your hand against what your opponents may hold that can beat you.

You hold the 9d Td and the flop comes Ad 8h Js.

You have eight outs to get the win.

This is a little more risky than the previous example because you will need to catch one of eight cards to make your Straight or a runner/runner of diamonds for a weak Flush. So now, pot odds really come into play. You only have one way to win this hand (excluding the backdoor Flush Draw which you might want to consider a half of an out); by hitting your open ended Straight draw and one of the hits could easily make your hand second best.

Depending on how many people saw the flop, the more likely someone hit his or her Ace an even 2-Pair. If there is a bet then you have the option to just call or re-raise, depending on how many people are in the pot and the pot odds. You have a three to one shot that it will hit on either the Turn or the River. (The Flush Draw is more risky because you do not hold the nut Flush). Therefore, you do not want to put too much money into the pot with this hand but do not give up.

The trick from this point on is:

A. know what you have and need to make your hand

B. What other possible hands are out there to beat you.

Chances someone has an Ace before the flop:

Number of players	No one has an Ace Including you	You have an Ace And no one else	You have no Ace Chances someone does
2	71.87%	88.24%	84.49%
3	60.28%	77.45%	70.86%
4	50.14%	67.57%	58.95%
5	41.34%	58.57%	48.60%
6	33.76%	50.41%	39.68%
7	27.27%	43.04%	32.05%
8	21.76%	36.43%	25.58%
9	17.13%	30.53%	20.14%
10	13.28%	25.31%	15.61%

In regards to our previous example, you will most likely be playing against someone holding an Ace, already hit 2-Pair or a different Straight draw that may beat you. This is why the Flop is a more dangerous. Many hands that are more possible can beat you. Count how many hands could be out there that can beat your Straight draw if you hit or do not hit. Being able to read the board and put it in relation to what your opponent could be holding is the ability to play winning poker.

Think about it: in middle to late position, someone could easily be holding K T or K Q in any type of game (loose to tight) giving your opponent a Gut-Shot Straight draw. He would be an underdog to hit the hand, but one side of your Straight draw does complete his hand. This is the type of hand people call in an un-raised pot with all the time.

An Ace and a blank card (especially a J = Ajax) is also a common starting hand (Ace small suited is more likely) people enter an un-raised pot with all the time.

Someone could have a medium to small Pocket Pair that caught the flop (8's in this example).

Finally, someone could be holding a different diamond draw (this happens less often than two people are holding suited cards of the same suite but it can be expensive if it happens and you are on the short end).

You have to get a feel for what your opponents may hold and then guesstimate this according to the betting that is happening on the flop. Put your opponent on a range of hands according to what position they are starting in and how they have been betting. In this hand, many different starting hands can beat you now and at the showdown even if you hit your Straight.

Deciding on the flop if your hand can become the best at the showdown or folding up camp for another run is where you win or lose money. Of course, not everyone is holding each one of these hands:

KT suited or unsuited

KQ suited or unsuited

88 wired

AJ unsuited

Ax unsuited

Do you want to invest a lot of your money into this pot if it will get beat? Of course not: you want to save your money for when you hold the best cards and someone raises the pot with the second best cards. I am not suggesting that you fold every time, then you would only be playing the nuts and that would not be the most profitable way of playing. You just need to be aware over the next two rounds what cards help you and what cards may help your opponent more.

Therefore, in our example, a 7 on the Turn or River would be the best card for you to complete your Straight. You would hold the nut Straight at that point. A Queen is a bad card because it may complete somebody else's Straight above yours. Once again, you can usually determine this by the betting of the other players. If the Queen slid onto the board, you would also be more careful with your betting, yet when the 7 fell onto the board, you want to get the most money into the pot at that time.

Practice reading the flop with these starting hands. Read what the possible best opponent hands might be and how your hand stacks up against them.

Another example: You see the flop for one bet with five people seeing the flop

Hero 55 – Villain KK

Flop = 2, 6, 5

You have a set and want to win the pot right there, because your hand is vulnerable to the Straight draw possibility. Pocket Kings calls your big raise.

Turn = 2 you have the second best Full House and the possibility that someone has a Wired Pair of 6's 2's or 2-Pair are very slim. I bet out two times the pot trying to dislodge my opponent's interest by making it too expensive to draw any more cards. He re-raises with the rest of his money and I call. Our cards are flipped and I see that he has K K with two outs and I am far ahead. Two outs on the River is a 22/1 dog to hit the card. So 22 out of 23 times, he is going to lose with his play. Obviously, this was a bad play on my opponent's part when you consider the odds he was getting.

Turn = K

Well I lost the hand. He hit a real miracle card and it does happen. But, I played that hand the way it should be played, aggressive and expensive for my opponent to draw out on me, and I would play it the same way every time in the future. I lost a \$250 pot but the next 22 times someone has only two outs on the River I will win. I decided on the flop, with a big bet, that I was going to go down to the River with my hand and extract as much money from my opponents as possible.

My opponent lost all his money within the hour playing this type of loose play and busted out. If it was not going to be me to bust him, it was going to be someone else. I won all my money back and doubled my starting money by the end of the night, because I realized that my play was correct and I won a similar showdown for more money next time.

You hold As Qs in late position with five callers ahead of you.

Board shows Ah, 7s, Td

An A T is a common starting hand, especially if there were no pre-flop raises. This flop could have given someone a strong 2-Pair. Someone could have a Gut-Shot Straight draw if they were holding K Q, K 9, Q 9 or Q J and anyone holding an Ace will at least call on the River. Of course small to medium Wired Pairs always have to be considered if there was no pre-flop raises.

This hand came down to the River in a showdown between A Q (in position) and A J (out of position). The player with A J decided his kicker was good enough and became very aggressive, A Q decided he had the better kicker and called every raise but did not re-raise. A Q won a nice pot at the showdown with the better kicker.

A way to practice reading the flop is to list the top five hands in any given flop. For instance:

A flop of Kh, Kc, Jc - The best possible hands are Four of a Kind of Kings then two different Full Houses, trip Kings and finally 2-Pair (if someone hold a pair in their hand.

A flop of 7s, 8s, Td – The best possible hands are a Straight 7 to Ten, a set of tens and then a set of eights, then set of 7's and then 2-Pair Tens and 8's.

A flop of 2d, 4,d, 6,d – The best possible hands are a Straight Flush of diamonds 2 to 6, then a Straight Flush of diamonds (a bicycle) of Ace to 5
Flush of diamonds, a set of 6's

You can also do this for the Turn:

The previous flop of Ac, Tc, Jh, the Turn card is a 9h – the Straight of Ten to Ace is still the best but then we have an added Straight of 8 to Queen to think about and the Straight of 7 to 10.

The board cards are Kh, Td, 7s, Ts – the best hand is a Full House of Kings and Tens, then a Full House of 7's and 10's and then a Straight 7 to 10.

Here are some hand to look at and the win percentages on each street. I do not consider what the board cards are in this exercise. I am only considering what types of hands are out there. These are from actual hands I analyzed on Poker Tracker software. The main consideration in this analysis is to understand what the probability is of your hand winning pre-flop and down the streets depending on the types of hands your opponents may hold.

All of the following hands were enumerated using Poker Tracker hand replay software and they are taken from actual hands.

Starting Hand/Win %	Flop/Type of Hand	Win %
A9s- 55.29%	Top Pair	46.73%
KJs- 44.27%	Flush Draw 2nd Pair	53.27%

The A 9 suited vs. the K J suited is an interesting example. On the flop, the A 9s has Top Pair vs. a Flush Draw and second Pair. The Top Pair is losing here in the win percentage because the K Js has 14 outs to improve to the best hand or a 51.2% considering outs. The Top Pair definitely wants to protect his hand by betting twice the pot and giving his opponent 3 to 2 odds. K J suited would be making the wrong play by calling that bet on the surface but the expected value of the hand is very high. I would think that if the third Flush card appears on the Turn the A 9 would slow down or even muck the hand. However, if the Jack appeared giving K Js 2-Pair, he could extract a good amount of money from the hand holding Top Pair. This is because the 2-Pair is not as evident as the Flush Draw so A 9 suited would continue to protect the Top Pair if there was no third Flush card on the Turn and even the River. The 2-Pair becomes an excellent trapping hand in this example.

Many players do not realize that even though they have the second pair, the combined effect of their hand gives them more pot equity and they can try to force out the TPTK hand with a re-raise in No Limit Hold'em.

One final note on this hand, the A 9, even though it is losing on the flop still ultimately has the winning hand if the drawing hand does not improve.

Starting Hand/Win %	Flop/Type of Hand	Win %
AKs- 72.73%	Top Pair/kicker	86.93%
AQos-22.97%	Top Pair/2nd kick	11.74%

Here is an example of one hand dominating another because the players are sharing the high card and the kicker determines the winner. The flop had an

Ace in it to make both players Top Pair but the A Ks is a huge favorite and can only lose if a Queen falls on the Turn or River. It would be hard to throw away the second best hand here because it is so powerful pre-flop. You need to consider the type of opponent you are facing. If it is a solid player then the A Qos should realize that their opponent would not be defending a weak kicker.

Starting Hand/Win %	Flop/Type of Hand	Win %	Turn/Type of Hand	Win %
AA- 73.62%	Top Pair	4.76%	set of Aces	97.50%
A6os- 5.92%	Ace high	0		
KK- 19.65%	set of K's	93.29%	set of K's	2.50%

This hand is evident in regards to how lucky the Pocket Pair of Aces was on the Turn. Hitting one of your two outs is over a 12 to 1 dog. If there are no Straight or Flush possibilities on the board how could someone muck a set of Kings. I would think that all the money would be in the pot Pre-flop in No Limit Hold'em when these two large Pocket Pairs square off against each other. In this example all the money did get into the pot Pre-flop.

Starting Hand/Win %
JJ- 77.88%
86s- 21.80%

Starting Hand/Win %	Flop/Hand Type	Win %	Turn/Hand Type	Win %
KK- 78.77%	Top Pair K's	86.60%	Kings	2.38%
88- 20.86%	2nd Pair 8's	13.40%	Set of 8's	97.62%

The pocket King's vs. the pocket 8's is a good example of an opponent getting lucky. Pocket Kings will win that showdown four out of five times

pre-flop and five out of six times on the Turn. I will take those odds anytime and bet as much as my opponent wants to put into the pot.

Starting Hand/Win %	Flop/Hand Type	Win %	Turn/Hand Type
K9os- 55.28%	Top Pair K's	13.29%	Same
98s- 20.30%	trip 8's/top kick	50%	Same
83os- 17.05%	trip 8's/low kick	37.7%	Same

This would be an interesting hand and very profitable. When two players hold the same card that pairs on the board it is near impossible to read the hand. In the above example, the 8 3os was the big blind and with a small ragged flop you can put him on that type of hand; having an eight. It is difficult to believe that all four cards of a rank is in play in the same hand and even harder to lay down your trips. If this was a loose/aggressive table, the Top Pair of Kings might even go along for the ride.

Starting Hand/Win%	Flop/Hand Type	Win %	Turn/Hand Type	Win %
55- 34.90%	Pair 5's	34.15%	2-Pair 5/J's	50%
ATs- 41.55%	Ace high	29.15%	A high	32.50%
Q2s- 24.24%	Flush Draw	36.71%	Flush Draw	17.50%

A Flush Draw, three handed in the above example is powerful on the flop but it weakens considerable on the Turn. The Flush Draw again has slight lead against a made hand, a pair of fives in the example. This would indicate calling on the flop if you were in a limit game and even raising trying to push out the smaller Pocket Pair.

Starting Hand/Win	Flop/Hand Type	Win %
AA- 80.58%	Pair of A	7.97%
JJ- 19.83%	Set of J's	92.03%

Here is an example of how strong a set is even against a larger Pocket Pair.

Starting Hand/Win	Flop/Hand Type	Win %
ATos- 58.93%	Top Pair	97.01%
KJos- 41.45%	King high	2.99%

Unless you have a good draw, if an over card to your highest card hits the board you are a big dog to win the hand.

Starting Hand/Win	Flop/Hand Type	Win %	Turn/Hand Type	Win %
76os- 20.39%	Gut-Shot	18.05%	Open ended	19.05%
QTs- 42.38%	Top Pair Q's	67.55%	Top Pair	80.95%
K7s- 40.66%	King high	Fold		

Top Pair against a Gut-Shot draw. Gut-Shots are difficult draws and rarely do you get the proper pot odds to draw to one in no limit or pot limit. In limit poker, it may be correct to call if you figure to be the best hand when one of your four outs completes the draw. If you have a one or two gapped starting hand, then hit your Gutshot, the hand can payoff very well because it is such a difficult hand for your opponent to put you on.

Starting Hand/Win	Flop/Hand Type	Win %	Turn/Hand Type	Win %
AKs- 63.68%	Top Pair/gut	73.42%	TPTK/Gut Shot Draw	69.05%
Q7s- 36.81%	open ended	27.57%	Open Ended Straight draw/Flush Draw	30.95%

This hand shows how powerful a drawing hand can be. On the Turn, the drawing hand has almost one third of the pot in equity. The TPTK needs to bet the pot to three quarters of the pot for the drawing hand to be making a bad call. A bet of half the pot gives the drawing hand proper pot odds to call.

Starting Hand/Win	Flop/Hand Type	Win %	Turn/Hand Type	Win %
QJs- 33.38%	Over Cards	29.51%	Gut-Shot and Flush Draw and Over Cards	37.50%
TT- 35.02%	Top Pair T's	61.34%	Top Pair	57.50%
99- 17.62%	Fold			
88- 14.75%	2nd Pair 8's	9.15%	2nd pair 8's	5%

The Q J suited has an excellent chance of winning the hand with 18 outs. Any of the three Queens or Jacks, nine of the suite and three more outs for the Gutshot draw (one of the cards we included with the Flush outs). I would be raising this hand if I actually knew what my opponent's cards were. Since it was a small Flop, I could guess that my cards were over cards on the Flop.

The Pocket Pair of 9's bet out to see if the 9's were good because there were no over cards. The 10's re-raised a small amount and did not push any of the hands out of the pot. This was a loose table but not very aggressive. Mostly

calling stations that would not fold so most betting was not very large and allowed players to draw out.

Starting Hand/Win	Flop/Hand Type	Win %	Turn/Hand Type	Win %
AKos- 73.21%	high card	70.76%	high card	85.71%
KJos- 25.60%	Gut-Shot	29.24%	Gut-Shot	14.29%

It is best to probe bet half the pot with the A Kos hand on this flop. Someone with a Gutshot should not be calling a nice sized bet on the Turn. This would be a semi-bluff and should not be done against a calling station but against someone who can lay a hand down.

Starting Hand/Win	Flop/Hand Type	Win %	Turn/Hand Type	Win %
AKos- 50.59%	TPTK	77.30%	Trip Ace's	92.86%
QJos- 32.81%	2nd Pair	9.75%		0%
KTos- 15.71%	Gut-Shot	11.96%	Gut-Shot	7.14%

What would you do if you were in early position with TPTK?

Starting Hand/Win %	Flop/Hand Type	Win %
66 – 58.78%	Pair	58.78%
KJos – 41.21%	Gut-Shot and over cards	41.21%

With two over cards on the flop, you have a good chance of winning the hand.

Starting hand/Win %	Flop/Hand Type	Win %
A7os – 57.88%	high card	64.%
KJos – 42.12%	Gut-Shot	36%

One thing to look at in the above examples is that a Gut-Shot Straight draw has a difficult time winning against other hands. You have to be very lucky to hit one of your four outs on the Turn or River. But, if you do hit your Straight it will be the best hand 33% of the time. The odds for hitting a Gutshot, or four outs are 16.5% with both streets combined. In the long run, it does not pay off enough times if you only win 33% of the time at showdown. If there is a Flush Draw on the board that someone is drawing to one of your cards is counterfeited because it completes your opponents Flush. You may actually be drawing to three outs.

So look at this long term view of probability; if you call three bets 21 times (63 bets) and you hit one (one win) time out of every seven (six losses). You paid out 63 bets but your hand really only won one time out of three or 33% of the time. When it did win we can say with implied odds you won back the money you lost the two out of three times an opponent showed down a better hand. At best, you will win nine bets but pay out 63 bets, losing 54 bets.

One consideration though is how much a Gut-Shot might pay off or the implied odds. If you hold 7 4 and the board has 5 6 8 A and someone else had 2-Pair or a set; it is very hard for your opponent to put you on that hand.

They will not suspect that you have a Straight with such an awkward unorganized board. This type of hand has better implied odds than say A 5 suited with a three Flush on the board. Most players will suspect you have the Flush and check/fold. If you can draw to this type of a Gut-Shot with good pot odds in no limit then you may be paid off very well at the showdown.

In the above example, the K Jos has six over cards that can still win the hand and giving it more Pot Equity. A Probe Bet by the A 7os hand will not be as effective. Knowing your opponent and table profile can be the difference between winning this pot, losing a lot of money or mucking the hand. What would you do?

Starting Hand/Win %	Flop/Hand Type	Win %	Turn/Hand Type	Win %
AQs - 44.19%	Top Pair	38.43%	Top Pair	61.9%
K9os - 25.58%	2nd Pair	11.74%	2nd Pair	7.14%
87s - 30.22%	Flush Draw/3rd pair	49.83%	Flush Draw/3rd Pair	30.95%

Top Pair vs. the Flush Draw has the Top Pair slightly ahead by 7%. If a blank hits on the Turn, the Top Pair becomes a more dominant favorite. I see many players bet out for information and determine how to proceed after the flop. If a blank on the Turn, that does not seem to improve the typical draws (Flush or Straight), then become more aggressive because the Top Pair improves the chances of winning.

Starting Hand/Win %	Flop/Hand Type	Win %	Turn/Hand Type	Win %
AQs - 44.19%	Ace high	34.77%	Ace high	54.76%
K9os - 25.58%	King high	7.75%	King high	4.76%
87s - 30.22%	Flush Draw/Gut-Shot	57.47%	Flush Draw/Gut-Shot	40.47%

The two Flush and Gut-Shot are a considerable favorite against the over card draws on the flop. Once again, if a blank hits on the Turn the Ace high becomes a 12% favorite. This is an excellent example of why you should bet/raise on the Flop or the Turn. The drawing hand is so favored that

someone with just over cards may fold their hand. If that does not work a bet on the Turn could dislodge the opponents hand from the pot. Clearly the suited connector has the best chance of improving on the flop and is not that far behind on the Turn. By making a probe bet or throwing in a raise, you will probably get the K 9 off suite to fold.

Knowing where you stand in a hand based on win percentage is a priority skill.

Starting Hand/Win %	Flop/Hand Type	Win %
AKs - 33.6%	Top Pair	37.20%
JTs - 27.5%	2 nd Pair back door straight draw	24.38%
44 - 21%	3rd Pair	12.4%
78os - 18%	open ended straight draw	26%

Therefore, the Top Pair has a slight advantage when four players stay to see the Turn and should act lightly depending on position. By betting enough to knock out at least one player, say the Pocket Pair of fours the Top Pair gains almost the majority of the win percentage from the fours. The A K suited becomes favored by 48%. If the J T suited drops out then the A K becomes a more decided favorite to a 55.5% win percentage. If the only hand that sticks around is the open-ended Straight draw then the Top Pair becomes an overwhelming favorite with a 67.4% win percentage. Lets suppose a blank hits on the Turn, then the A K suited, being the Top Pair jumps up to 62.5% while the open ended Straight draw lowers to a mere 17.5%.

If the set does show up on the Turn for the Pocket Pair of 4's they become the projected leader with 72.5% chance of taking the money. The only hand that can really catch up to the set is the open-ended straight draw but it has a

17.5% chance to complete. The A K is drawing dead against the set of fours and the other hand.

Many different situations occur in Hold'em. The sheer number of opponents that can play on any one hand makes it difficult to create a complete flow chart.

I want to show you a hand where someone slow played a flopped 2-Pair until the River. This is a \$2/\$4 no limit game.

Everyone limped in, the small blind folded and the big blind checked to see the flop.

The flop was As 7h 3c

The big blind checked as well as player four and six. Player seven decided to slow play his 2-Pair. Perhaps he was thinking that someone else was slow playing a set and would check the flop. I think player seven saw that there was no Straight or Flush Draws and it would be safe to give a free card. The button checked.

The Turn card was the 9h

The free card player seven gave to four other opponents in an attempt to win more money backfired. Player six hit a set and decides to slow play by checking. This is risky because the 9 of hearts puts a two Flush on the board with four opponents. With this many opponents still in the hand there is a

good chance someone is drawing to a Flush. The correct play was to bet something to define any hand and see where it stood. Nevertheless, the larger error is when player seven checks the Turn. 2-Pair of Ace's and Three's is not very strong. On the Turn, anyone holding an Ace can have the board Pair negating player seven's bottom Pair of three's or Pair their own card creating a better Ace-x 2Pair. One of the best reasons to bet something is that anyone with a small to medium Pocket Pair would have to fold because they are getting terrible odds to keep drawing. Amazingly, everyone checks the Turn card.

The River was a Kc

The big blind checks as well as player four. Player six bets \$6 or two thirds of the pot to induce at least one player and maybe a few players to call. Player seven decides to strike with the 2-Pair and over bets the pot with an all-in bet of \$322. Player eight, the big blind and player four all fold.

Player six knows there are only two hands that beat his set, pocket Aces or Kings. The chances that player seven has one of those two hands is very remote since there were no pre-flop raises. Pocket Kings would be more probable because the flop included an Ace so anyone slow playing pocket Kings Pre-flop might not bet into four opponents when an Ace shows up on the flop. Player six decides to call the \$322 bet because the chances that someone would slow play pocket Kings before the flop against four opponents is too remote. Player six wins \$346.

Here is an example of entering a hand with good cards. Seven people see the flop. Six players limp and the big blind checks. It is a \$2/\$4 no limit game so the pot is \$30. Your hero starts the hand in second position with KJs. I do not have the best hand but this has been a loose but passive game. Therefore, I knew limping in early position with this hand was safe from being re-raised. The flop shows Jh 6d 3c. I have Top Pair with a good kicker. The only hands I really fear are Pocket Pairs and AJ. Since I am third to act with four players after me I decide to check my hand with the intention of calling any reasonable bet. The player right after me bets \$12 into the \$30 pot. Everyone folds and I call the bet. This loose aggressive player has won a few hands with questionable starting hands and lucky draws. I decided he had either a weak 2-Pair or Top Pair with a weak kicker. There were no obvious Straight draws or Flush Draws. In previous hands, I had seen this player raise pre-flop with small Pocket Pairs.

Pot is \$54 and a four of diamonds falls on the Turn

I want to see what type of a hand my opponent has. The four of diamonds gives someone a Gut-Shot Straight draw or a diamond Flush Draw. Since there was no two Flush on the Flop, I doubted he was drawing to a Flush, but the two Flush can mean trouble if someone included a backdoor Flush Draw in their outs (you could include the backdoor draw as one and a half outs). My opponent is short stacked so I bet \$40 and make him decide to go all in or fold. He calls \$38 and the River is a six of spades.

My opponent shows his Top Pair of Jacks with a seven kicker and an inside Straight draw (on the River). I win \$92. My opponent (as far as he knew)

had 10 outs to improve his hand so his call on the Turn was the wrong play according to probability and how many outs he had (a 21.7% chance, two Jacks, four 5's or four 7's). Since he was short stacked he had no chance to profit from the implied odds of improving his draw making his play even worse. Later in this book, we will discuss the implications of being short stacked in a no limit game. When you are short stacked you must protect your bankroll and cannot afford to chase a draw.

My opponent may have thought his Top Pair was good on the flop but the Turn bet should have made him think differently. He should have asked himself, what hands could my opponent have that beats me? Since there are six limpers in the hand, small Pocket Pairs are a huge possibility, because anyone playing them would be getting excellent odds with a huge +EV. My opponent should have also considered the real possibility of me having AJ, or KJ. These are common limping hands from under the gun or early to middle position in a loose passive or even a slightly aggressive table. I believe he made the mistake of trying to bluff/semi-bluff into too many opponents on the flop holding Top Pair.

You can categorize your hands into two headings: a made hand or a drawing hand.

A made hand that is the nuts is very easy to recognize. When you flop a Full House there is no reason to be aggressive. There are probably no hands that will improve to a better hand. Slow play and wait for someone to catch up with a hand that will call a bet on the Turn and/or River. An example is

when you hold A T and the flop shows A T T. The only hands that can beat you is someone holding pocket Aces, Kings, Queens, or Jacks. If no one raised pre-flop then there is little chance someone holds those hole cards. Furthermore, they would have to hit one of two outs to actually beat your hand, which is not impossible, but the chances of that happening outweigh the amount of money will win by slow playing the flop. The only other possibility that can beat you is a runner/runner of Kings, Queen or Jacks or someone holding a small Pocket Pair that improves to quads.

A made hand that also has redraws to improve. Say you have Q T and the board shows Q T 9. You have 2-Pair and can improve to a Full House. On the other hand, a more common redraw is hitting smaller card with a big kicker such as A 9 and the Top Pair is a 9. You have a redraw to 2-Pair, two more nines or Aces.

A made hand that cannot improve is more difficult. I remember having 4 5 and the board was A 2 3 K. If a Queen, Jack or Ten hits the River; someone could hit a larger Straight. This is an extreme example but shows you that your hand cannot improve to a better hand while a J T, Q T, Q K can all improve to the best hand.

A made hand that is mediocre and cannot improve to the best hand is something you do not want to bet your whole stack holding. Say you hold 7 8 and the flop shows 9 T J. You have the stupid end of a Straight and it cannot improve. Not only can someone holding a K Q play with you but also someone with just a King may get the right odds to chase. Anyone holding 2-Pair can improve to beat you as well as a Flush Draw.

Draws are more powerful in limit Hold'em. In No Limit Hold'em it is harder to get the correct odds to chase a draw but not unheard of. In small stakes No

Limit Hold'em, it is more common for players to chase because the overhead is low. If you have an open ended Straight and a Flush Draw such as J T suited and the board shows 8 9 3 with two of your suite you have a very powerful draw that will pay off at almost even odds over two streets.

You need to consider if your draw will be the nuts, a strong made hand if it hits, a hand that has more than 50% chance to win or a weak hand. This is how you should decide whether to chase the hand compared to the pot odds or not.

Most poker books show examples in terms of fixed limit betting because it is a known variable. In big bet poker, you cannot say when it is correct to call or fold due to the unpredictable nature of the betting limits. In terms of fixed limit betting regarding the implied odds this hand is a long-term winner. Say you hit it once and miss it once. If you miss it on the River then you fold saving a bet, you put in three bets. If you hit it then you have a good possibility of being paid off on the River so you will win at least four bets. If you miss four times and hit four times your totals will look like this. Miss – lose 12 bets, Hit – win 16 bets. This is another reason some players suggest putting in a raise in this situation, with 15 outs on the flop and Turn.

A drawing hand that can improve but not to the nuts is still a good bet in the end. You are taking a chance that your opponent does not have the nuts and you cannot always wait for the nuts or fear that your opponent has the

perfect hand to beat you. Just because someone is in the hand does not mean they have the nuts or are even drawing to the nut regardless of how the betting is going. I have won hands that had a three Flush showing while I had a set and tried to improve to a Full House. In the end, my opponent had Top Pair/Top Kicker (TPTK) rather than the Flush and I raked in a nice pot. If you have a drawing hand that will improve to a strong made hand then it is worth going for it while you get the correct pot odds.

An example is when you hold Q T and the board shows K 7 8 9 rainbow. You have a good hand and it can improve if a Jack or 6 hit the River. You have a Straight, but not the nut Straight if a 6 falls on the River, and a nut Straight if a Jack shows up. I would not fold this hand if I was facing one or two bets in a limit Hold'em game or if it was a quarter or even a third of a pot bet (the implied odds of hitting make this a probable call) in no limit.

Strong drawing hands are Flushes, open-ended Straight draws, and sets trying to improve to a Full House.

Mediocre drawing hands would be having Top Pair with your kicker being a Jack. Say you hold J 9 and the flop comes 5 6 9 with a Turn card of 7. You have Top Pair and a Gut-Shot Straight draw. You have eight outs to improve but not all eight outs are the same. If a Jack comes on the River, your 2-Pair of J 9 can be beat by someone holding 8 T to complete the Straight. If an 8 comes on the River, you complete a Straight but you are only using one of your hole cards. Someone who has J T has the nut Straight.

One side note, when you use both of your hole cards to make your final hand it is much stronger than when you only use one of your cards as the above example shows. Someone that uses both of their cards to make a Flush will beat someone needing a four Flush board to use their one Ace. This is even truer when you have a Straight. If your opponent has connectors, they may have a Straight that is one rank higher than your Straight.

Finally, a weak draw is when you have a small Pocket Pair and you miss on the flop. If there are no Straight possibilities (another way a small Pocket Pair can win) then you only have two outs. Even in limit Hold'em, this is not a long-term profitable play.

These are some essential thoughts about sets/pairs on the board for every poker player to be aware of:

If the board pairs and a caller becomes a bettor what does that mean? Anytime the board Pairs, there is the possibility of not only trips but also a Full House. If I have a small Pair in the pocket and I hit my set on the flop but the board also pairs I have a very powerful hand and will slow play the hand to allow the Straight and Flush Draws to catch up for a second best hand. I do not think enough beginner players appreciate what it means when the board pairs. Therefore, if someone who had previously checked and called suddenly starts to bet or play back at you beware. There will be a pair on the flop 12% of the time.

Conversely, whenever you do are lucky enough to flop a set you need to take into consideration what the other two board cards do for other players. You

need to look for the Straight draws or even a possible Full House. A flop of 4 5 5 is more likely to make someone a Full House than 8 3 3. If an Ace hits on the Turn or River, you could also be facing a Full House from someone playing Ace/little.

It is unusual for someone to check 2-Pair on both the Turn and River as we have seen in previous examples this is a bad play. You give up too many free cards that can beat you. 2-Pair is a good hand but in a large field, it is vulnerable. The 2-Pair wants to eliminate any small Pocket Pairs that can improve to a set or a better 2-Pair. In addition, the 2-Pair wants to make it difficult for an opponent to call a Gut-Shot draw or even a Flush Draw.

Bad Beats and How They Affect You

Let us switch gears from all the technical math stuff and move to some psychology. If you have ever taken a bad beat then you know it is hard to see your game or the table the same way. The Poker Gods were unkind, ran all over your 75% favorite, and you have to see it as just another hand.

Some things that come up in your mind are:

1. Taking it personally. You will get back at that person; you will get all your money back, and all of his. This is a terrible way to play poker. It will ultimately hurt your chances of making any money. You will stop looking at how your opponents are playing or the flow of the table. For example, you will stop noticing when your opponents change gears from loose to tight or passive to aggressive. You may even miss when players leave the table and new players enter the game. This is important because a few different players can change the whole table dynamic very quickly.

2. Thinking, perhaps I am not a very good poker player. I have coached players who fall into this syndrome and I have thought this way for a short period. You have to realize that the cards will not always go your way. There are ups and down when you play poker and if you are a good player your bankroll will increase in increments, not all at once. Your bankroll will go down because of bad beats, short bad streaks or even long durations of

having the second best hand. This does not mean you are a bad poker player; it is just poker. Try to remember this; remember when you were doing well and always had the best hand at the showdown. Use this time to study the game and increase your skill instead of beating yourself up. Feeling bad about your game is really just a waste of time if it takes away from the time you could be spending learning more about being a good player.

3. Changing your game style to a tight/weak game for fear of another bad beat. This is another way to feel bad about yourself because you will always be losing. You can break out of a slump if you take some swings at the pot when you have an advantage.

4. Changing your game style to a loose/aggressive to make up for the lost money or have the "any two cards can win" mentality. This is called "steaming" and is a sure fire way to lose the rest of your bankroll. The cards have no memory and they do not owe you a few big wins to make up for your losses. Good players will notice that you are steaming and happily step up to the plate with better hands pre-flop. You become a target when you steam.

5. Slowing the process of rebuilding your bankroll. When you are far ahead after the flop, you over-bet the pot shutting everyone else out so you do not get full value for your good hands. This happens when you are afraid someone will draw out on you and do not let the pot build to a decent amount. Essentially, you want the victory but are not being patient enough for the fruit to grow on the vine.

For the beginner player, having one or more bad beats inflicted upon you in any few sessions can lead to any of the above feelings. You must remember that bad beats are a part of the game and the probabilities always even out. If you have a solid game, and the bad beat was not because of making bad decisions, then you have to stick with your game. The cards will turn around; you cannot make them change. When the cards do change into your favor then your confidence will return with a few good wins. You actually want opponents to call and try to make the long shots because they are not playing at a profitable level of probability. The better the player the worse the bad beats because the better players are in the pot with the best hands.

However, sometimes you take three or four bad beats, which really cuts, into your bankroll, and the cards do not cooperate. You get a run of cards below the median of Q7 for what seems like forever. When you do get two good starting cards, the flop is always the opposite of what you need, a different suite, or always giving you Gut-Shot draws. When you compound this on top of bad beats, the session becomes frustrating. Patience is the only strategy to ride through the storm; knowledge that you will not get your money back until the storm passes. Therefore, here are some pointers besides patience that can help your bad run from the poker gods.

Take this time to study up on poker. Read a new book, get a different perspective, look for and find the leaks in your game.

Stop playing for the day and do something else. The poker tables will be there tomorrow.

I often see beginner and some experienced players have an inadequate bankroll. You may not be on tilt or really hitting a bad run of cards, you just do not have the correct funds to handle the swings in No Limit now. This in Turn will create the same process of having a bad run of cards. Your table funds can take huge swings of 25% to 50% in one or two hands. If you are worried about losing more of that buy in then you will be playing less than optimally.

Get up and walk away from the table. Do something else for a little while. Change tables when you come back so you are with new players who do not know your bad beat story. They will not target you or realize you have changed you game. This may also help you get back into your own game by saying this table has no memory. You will not be with the same player you may have built up some vendetta against for inflicting the bad beat. You will start with a fresh buy in so you will be less inclined to want to make up your funds, the reminder of what was left of your bad beat buy in is not there, so is your renewed buying power.

Play some smaller stake tables, play some low buy-in tournaments, get your confidence back with less risk involved. Poker is 50% how you feel. The rest is being able to use your cards and poker knowledge with the stable vision of a competitor.

I call being afraid of more bad beats Post Traumatic Poker Disorder or PTPD. I have had it. I have done all of the things mentioned above. There was a time when I would actually flinch if I had a made hand and two or three people were trying to draw out on me. I would over or under bet the

pot too much expecting everyone to draw out on me all of the time. My game was not optimal and it took me much longer to build my bank back up and start making a steady profit again. Eventually, I remembered how I played winning poker and everything was in balance again.

Since I read about poker during my slump, I was an even better poker player than before the slump, with more versatility than before. I had more insight into the game than ever before.

Bad beats are part of the game of poker, it is gambling and you never know what can happen. Continue to play on the correct side of probability and everything will even out in your favor. Do not let it bother you in the long run.

One thought to say to yourself if you are a good poker player is that if all you lost was profit from previous games then essentially you lost someone else's money. Those people who call your good hands without the proper odds are where you got the money from in the first place, and it will return the same way.

Another thought to keep in mind is that if that person called you with long shot odds then he/she is probably a bad player. Just grin and realize that they will give you many opportunities to win your money back in the long run.

Winners and Losers

I have the software Poker Tracker. It keeps records on my play and all of my opponents play when I load the hand histories you can get from most poker websites. The reason I mention this is that three out of every five players are long-term money losers. So 20% of the players are long-term winners, 20% are marginal winners, 40% are marginal losers and 20% are major money losers. There are more losing online poker players than winning poker players. There is enough money out there for a player to earn a nice income. Money always flows from bad players to good players over the long run. There are some things that you can do to assure that you will eventually be in the winning 20% (if you are not now) eventually.

1. Always study poker theory and thought. Reading one or even three books is just not good enough. There are many different styles of poker. Finding your own style means incorporating different strategies to fit the changing situations. I would honestly say you should read a new poker book right after you have finished one or reread the book you just finished. Consider it studying for a college degree and your major is poker. Someone who gets a degree reads at least three dozen books in their field of interest.
2. Get a poker coach or a mentor that you can discuss certain situations. Someone with experience will have insight that you have not even considered. Getting these nuggets of wisdom from a coach instead of through the hard knocks of experience can save you hundreds if not thousands of dollars. I have a Masters Degree in Clinical Psychology. I read at least 50 books on the subject of Psychology before entering a graduate

program. I was not able to perform effective therapy with a client until I was under the instruction of a supervisor. The supervisor cut through all the peripheral noise of information and led me in the right direction for my skill: what to look for, how to capitalize on it and how to deepen the situation. If someone could do that for you in regards to playing poker, then the investment will pay off a thousand fold.

3. Know yourself. This applies to all parts of your life and to playing poker. Know your game, what your strengths and weaknesses are. This way you can avoid the situations that lose you money and allow you to maximize the situation where you win money. I know one player who only plays big Pocket Pairs and he plays them well. Sometimes he will flop something with a free look while in the big blind but his profit comes with big Wired Pairs. He knows how to play them and he is a long-term winner. By understanding your game, you can start to fill the leaks and slowly improve your play one strategy at a time.

4. By knowing yourself you also know when you have played well and when you have played poorly. This is important so you do not go on tilt or become overly aggressive because you feel invincible. I remember that one of my losing streaks was not all because the cards were falling against me. My intentions had changed; I wanted to win more money and started to force my game: this Turned into a bad streak for a few weeks. I stopped playing poker for a week and re-evaluated my game, not the technical part but what was going on inside my own head. I realized that I was not happy with what the poker Gods were offering me each session, that I wanted more but that

that desire had me making the wrong decisions. When I returned to playing poker, I played my old solid game and returned to a consistent winning style.

5. Know the players you are playing against. Constantly take notes during the game for future reference. I find that you should know if a player is tight or loose, aggressive or passive. Those are basic. You should put different things into each of those categories, such as “Raises x amount pre-flop with “type of cards and position”. Alternatively, “Opponent does not raise with A Qos in early position.” Alternatively, “Always checks the flop when he gets a set with no two Flush on the board.” These simple observations WILL be the difference between a winning session and a losing session over time. After taking these notes on hundreds of people, it will also be easier for you to notice never before seen players and categorize them faster.

6. Always respect position. I think this is a very misunderstood concept, especially with small stakes players. Whenever you are about to raise or call a raise, determine how many people are behind you and what type of player has position on you. Even if you flop a favorable hand, if your position is poor your hand will be handicapped so much you will not be paid off as well.

If you hold a good hand in early position, you will not know if you are betting into the nuts so you cannot bet the proper amount. Top Pair with top kicker is good but someone may have flopped a set or 2-Pair. You cannot bet with confidence that your hand is best or has the ability to be best from early position. If someone plays back at you, you could be falling into a trap because a third player may have been slow playing the monster and would

re-raise the re-raise you just called. The more people involved in the hand after you the less of a chance your hand will pay off. These small leaks are another factor in being a long time winner or loser.

7. Pick a table that seems beatable. I play at the same online poker site every day. I know the “regulars” which means I also recognize when there are new players at a table. Just because a person is a regular does not make them good, so I also know which players among the regulars are the sharks. I choose the table with no more than five regulars and no more than three sharks. If I join a table then that would make four sharks cutting up maybe two to three fish. It is beatable, but playing at a table that has only one or two other sharks and only one or two regulars are infinitely easier. Then the school of weaker players is easier to isolate and outplay. Table selection is one of the most important skills you can have before plying your actual playing skills.

Look around at all the table and get an idea of the player’s skill level, what the chip sizes are and what category the table falls under. Is it loose, tight, aggressive, or passive? You may play well under different table conditions so you want to pick one that highlights your strengths. I like a table that has two to three loose aggressive players or a table that is full of passive players.

The passive players let you draw out by giving free cards too often and better hands easily trap the aggressive players.

It has been suggested that a player should eventually know how to beat any type of table, including pre-flop aggressive, passive, loose, and tight, etc.

But, know what type of a table you are in the mood for or what types of

tables you are best at. Is it the table with a high flop percentage but then a large showdown pot? This might mean that the flop betting and on is very heavy so you would have to be good at analyzing a flop. It could also mean that there are loose players that take their hands too far after the flop.

8. Remember that swings in your bankroll are part of the game. You will not win every night and you will not win every week. Do not get disappointed by losing streaks. I have experienced long winning streaks only to have them end for weeks at a time. Every hand I played was second best regardless of the strength. I could have a Full House and someone would have drawn to a Straight Flush. I would have a Flush and someone would have Quads. It seems like someone is doing TO you. It makes you forget the times YOU were the one that was unbeatable, showing down every hand with an even better hand. Ride it out, play tighter and wait for the swing to be in your corner more often.

The trick to swings is to play a solid game all of the time. Win more on your up swings than you lose on your downswings. Protect your bankroll on those downswings and push your bankroll when you are on an upswing.

I hope some of these thoughts about poker will help you make better decisions before you join a table and while you are at the table. If you are like me, the real value of playing poker is in the amount of money you make and the feeling of leaving a session with a larger bankroll. At least that is what keeps me studying and working harder to become a better player.

Bluffing and Betting

Bluffing is an art form in high stakes games. You just do not decide you are going to bluff a hand on the River or the Turn. The better players can read bluffs like this. The higher you go into the poker hierarchy the harder it is bluff. That is the accepted wisdom. Bluffing is a skill that is difficult to master.

Bluffing is something you plan on doing at the beginning of a hand, so you adjust your play from the go. Bluffing on the final card or the Turn and final card is not the way to go. Good players will realize something is wrong with the betting patterns and most will take advantage of this. Proper bluffing technique is an attitude you apply as you start the hand. In your mind, you say, “If I miss this flop, I will attempt to steal the pot”.

Now this may sound easy, but it is not as easy as it sounds. Most players do not have the ability to realize when this type of bluffing can be utilized. Obviously, just because you say you will bluff the pot, does not mean you will always succeed. Realizing or learning when the opportunity is right will help you succeed at bluffing.

People do not realize how important bluffing is at the higher stakes. The number one prerequisite to become a great bluffer is to become a great value bettor. This can also sound easy but is not. Great bluffers and great value bettors are also great readers of hands.

Value betting is what makes great bluffers. Having people, call with sub par hands means the person is dictating the betting. Eventually people get tired of calling with second Pair or bottom Pair, or even Ace high. This is why the best players are also the best bluffers and the best hand readers. This is why betting is preferred to calling. This also shows why position plays such a great part in the play.

Bluffing is not as important an issue in smaller limit games, because there are too many people in the pot and there is almost a zero chance a bluff will succeed. Smaller stakes games are more of a made hand showdown game. In games like this, you tend to adapt a style that eliminates bluffing. You adopt a style of betting on the come, with proper value. Seldom does an opportunity in low limit present itself for a pot to be bluffed, but the opportunities do arise and those sensing or knowing this can take full advantage. Players do not mind losing \$25 or even \$50 to take a shot at a large pot because these are not significant dollar amounts.

Simple examples of obvious bluffing can be found in many of the pot limit and no limit tournaments online. When flops such as 3h Jh Qs hit the board with several players in the pot and a person from an opening position leads out for a small percentage of the pot, this is a possible if not probable indication of a weak hand. Many times in these online tournaments, you will notice four or five way action. There may be five people in the pot for \$20, making the pot \$100. All of a sudden, the person in front leads out with a \$20 bet. What kind of bet is this? You should get into the habit of asking yourself, "What kind of a hand would you have to hold to make a bet like

this?" Does it make sense in regards to the types of cards on the board and the type of player making the bet?

We have gone down in the rank a little ways, actually a long ways to show you an illustration of a bluff. When a player bets \$20 like this, most of the players will call, unless one makes a play at the pot. Assuming most players just call you can also assume most players are also weak. Obviously, the possibility is present that some player is slow playing, but the possibility is also that this player is giving away a cheap card. No, you do not have to have position in this hand as you can steal from the front or the back. You just call and see what the next card brings. A card that would not seem to help anything could be a very advantageous card. Have you ever seen a player come out betting 20 again, getting several callers again? This is a great opportunity to make a move on the pot, whether you are in the front, where you check and now raised, or the back where you now raise. You do not even have to raise that much, a pot size bet should do the trick. Even if you are called, it is odds-on the person is on the come, thus you will know the safe cards that will allow you to follow through on your bluff. Just follow through and do not chicken out.

Watch how many times players make bets like this in these online tournaments. Truthfully speaking, these bets do not exist. They are just pointless for if you are sitting with anything why give any indication? Moreover, if you have anything and wish to protect it, you would obviously bet the pot. Now betting the pot in a position like this really does not give much away. It is easy to be on the come here, and just as easy to have a set. The hard thing or shall we say the stupid thing is to be stone bluffing the pot

from the front position. This situation will seldom if ever occur, so you might as well forget the possibility.

However, many people having a pair, without much experience playing this game attempt a maneuver to slow down the action and get a cheap card. This maneuver is doomed to fail if anyone in the game can play at all. This is one of the most obvious bluffs in these smaller limit tournaments and games.

The higher skilled bluffing will occur in a different manner. A player may sense weakness from a limper or several limpers and raise a pot size bet, knowing he is attempting to steal the pot if he misses the flop. Now bluffing is not for everyone. Many players can attempt a bluff but the real bluffers will follow through. Many times players will attempt bluffs and other players will sense this is a bluff, thus raising a bluffer and taking away his thunder. A better card reader will realize this attempt has been made and will have the nerve or the confidence in his ability to realize this. He will follow through and proceed to re-raise or go all in, with nothing but his gut feeling telling him he is making the correct play.

Have any of you given much thought when a sizable bet is made pre-flop and you hold A A? Is it correct to go all in at this time? If you are guaranteed a call, this is always acceptable. If you will not get a call then why raise? Allow the K K to have the lead and bluff the money off, thinking he is betting the best hand. Players are always far more eager to bet their chips off than to call.

The main mistake made by players who bluff in pot limit and no limit games is the amount they bet. Use this as a normal guideline for bluffing. If the blinds are \$25-\$50 and you opened for \$150 and received a call. If you miss and intend to bluff, follow through with a bet about equal to the pot. Also, use this as a guide for betting when you do flop a big hand. The main train of thought for betting and bluffing is thinking like the player who is facing you. If he bets, think of what you would do with what type of hand, and adjust to the play. Consider how other players see you in this pot. Think of what your image is in the other players mind.

If a pot has been checked around to you on both the Flop and Turn, throw out a pot sized bet to claim the money. It is hard for opponents to call that bet with a mediocre hand, they will think that you slow played a great hand on the Flop or completed a draw on the Turn. Do not wait until the River if you checked the Flop.

Big Bet Poker (no limit/pot limit)

Big bet poker differs from limit poker for one simple reason; whenever you enter the pot, your whole chip stack is at risk. The larger stacks are always looking to put a smaller stack to the test with an all-in bet. Many professional players say big bet poker is not about your cards as much as the money in front of each player and the type of opponent.

Say you have \$100 seat one

Opponent 1 has \$20 seat two (overmatched)

Opponent 2 has \$50 seat three (loose)

Opponent 3 has \$250 seat four (tight/aggressive)

Opponent 4 has \$75 seat five (loose)

Opponent 5 has \$125 seat six (typical/tight)

Blinds are \$2/\$4

Hands will be different for each player depending on the money they have.

For example;

Seat four is UTG. If he raises three times the big blind (\$12), or one twentieth of his stack, then opponent two is essentially making a decision to go all-in if he calls the bet of three fifths of his stack or 60%. It is no use just calling his \$12, the correct play is to go all-in with a re-raise or fold. If the flop hits player two in any way then he will be going all in with any type of bet. If it misses him player two is already pot committed. If the flop hits opponent four he will bet the extra \$8 to put opponent two to the test. One play and opponent two could be broke. Even if he doubles up, opponent four is still able to dominate player two in any future hand.

Therefore, every player who has a smaller stack has to beware of the larger stack at his or her table. Now I do not have to worry as much about opponent five, four, two, or one because they are less than or equal to my stack. I do

worry about opponent three but am somewhat leery about opponent five and four because they could put a huge dent into my money with one hand.

Here is another example where chip stacks have an affect on the play.

Opponent two has limped in UTG and opponent five calls and I see the flop from the big blind. Now the flop hits my hand with a Flush Draw and Top Pair. I check and opponent two bets \$12 and opponent five calls. If I were against opponent two heads up I would put him all-in trying to test him. He is also an overly aggressive bettor with second -Pair and his bet does not mean a flopped set or even 2-Pair. This person is capable of betting with over cards or second best Flush Draws. However, since opponent five is also involved I have a harder time making that bet because he can re-raise me and put me all-in. I also know he would be calling with a stronger hand, slow playing a Straight or even a set to induce me into the pot. This is another typical situation where stack size and player type is very evident.

This is why good players always try to have the maximum allowable amount of chips in front of them at all times. If you have taken a bad beat, reload after the blinds pass you and you are on the button. Staying at one table and building a good-sized stack over a session is advisable. As the session passes, you will see players come and go, but you will always be able to dominate them if you have built your chip stack.

I always wonder about the players who come to any table with five or ten percent of the buy-in. They are looking for one big score to double up but they are always at a disadvantage. Someone with \$50 can take two double

up hits from a \$10 stack and still have money in front of him. The \$10 stack can only handle one all-in hit, so they have to play perfect poker two to three times before the normal buy-in stack can fear them. A player who has already doubled up from the original buy-in can put that small stack to the test numerous times. Push the smaller stack from a hand by making them fold or risk their whole stack. When you are small stacked there is no decision making mistakes allowed, no bad luck Turns available. That is big bet poker.

You will see players raising the pot or going over the top at the larger stakes of big bet poker. You never really know if that player does or does not have what is represented on the board. All you really know is if you have the best hand or something close to it. The big stacks will make an opponent with a smaller stack have to decide whether to put in a larger percentage of their stack to continue with the hand. This sometimes occurs regardless of the hand the larger stack is holding. This is the meta-game of poker along with optimal bluffing strategy. We will look at the meta-game of poker later in the book.

Therefore, you have to be aware of stack sizes in big bet poker.

In a \$25/\$50 player with \$1,000 bets, \$200 - \$500 - \$50 on three consecutive hands pre-flop. These three distinct situations need to be considered differently. If you each hold \$1,000, you must realize that the \$200 bet is dangerous. A re-raise to define your hand (if you think it is good enough) should be attempted with the thought of folding if they play back at you. Make sure you understand the type of player that is re-raising your re-raise. I

was in a hand when there was a small raise from early position, the player to my right called the raise and I had Pocket Kings so I reraised to find out where I was and because I had position. The first player folded but the player to my immediate right reraised. He had not played a hand for an hour.

My thinking process needed to consider what type of a player this was. Since he was a tight player, he had to have something very good to reraise. Ask yourself, would this player reraise with anything less than pocket Aces?

The \$500 bet is actually saying “on the flop you must be willing to go all-in because you are wagering half of your stack pre-flop” so decide if you want to re-raise all-in before the flop or fold. The \$50 bet is showing weakness and should be dealt with according to how strong your hand is.

This is not all there is to talk about regarding big bet poker but it is a good primer. The main theory is to know who will fold to a big bet and who will not. Most large stakes big bet games do not see the River card very often. They are usually won or lost during the betting rounds because the stacks are so deep and the money much higher. One player attempts to pick up the pot on the flop and everyone either folds or another player decides he has a better hand. He will either just call or re-raise. The next betting round, the Turn, usually decides who has the best hand when someone throws in a pot-sized bet and dares the other player to declare they are going all in or fold.

Playing in Loose Games

Playing in those loose small stakes games can be profitable but require poker understanding on many levels. I am talking about those tables that have a pre-flop raise almost every hand and a re-raise ever few hands. Most of the time your opponents are playing poor starting cards, Q 3os or J 6 suited, in hopes of hitting a good flop for a favorable hand. Sometimes these cards even back into a favorable draw like 2-Pair or trips and will give someone with Top Pair/kicker a feeling of frustration.

Some guidelines to think about in loose game are:

Do not play poor cards from early position. I know I have said this before but it is worth repeating. You are not going to want to call an opponent's raise pre-flop because:

You will be sandwiched between the raiser and other opponents that may be slow playing. You will be out of position the whole hand and position is **EVERYTHING.**

Even if you think you might get the correct pot odds to play a 7 8 suited connector and don't mind losing one bet if someone with a real hand raises after you called the blind. This is ultimately unprofitable and even makes it appealing to call the raise when you are out of position. Most good players adopt the thought that you should not build a draw from early position.

Then again, occasionally I break this rule once or twice in a session just to vary my play. But, the correct play when you are going with two mediocre or drawing cards out of position is to raise so you will be facing less opponents but getting more money into the pot. You are also trying to trick your opponents into thinking you have better cards than you do have. If you do get a favorable flop, your opponents cannot put you on those two cards because they think you bet with good cards.

3. If you do happen to flop a favorable draw, which usually happens with suited connectors, or flop 2-Pair, you will always be out of position in the future betting rounds. This is a huge problem, and you could be facing someone who has a much better hand in a big field. In a big field (also called a family pot), it is always correct to limp by calling the blind with any Pocket Pair. This is just one problem.

4. Limping with this type of suited connector in early position if you flop a good draw forces you to play defensive, check and call poker. If you bet on the flop and are played back at, it can cost you a big chunk of money to keep drawing to what would or could be the nut hand. You do not want to call more than five to ten percent of your buy in for a draw (unless you are a looser player then set your own percentages). Those loose aggressive games always have someone re-raising.

Another important thing you can do when you sit down at the table is to observe the starting hands and player skill in the first 20 or 40 hands before mixing it up. You really want to notice the tight/solid/loose/gambling type

player at the table. This simple observation will save you money in the end.

How?

You should not call a pre-flop raise if they are from a solid player but may not be as troubled by one from a loose or weak player. If the board has paired and a solid player had flopped a set with Pocket Pairs they are smart enough to induce a bluff and take down a huge pot, waiting for someone to draw the Flush or Straight. A weaker player will not be as sophisticated. On the opposite side, someone in later position that raises always has the option of folding in future rounds. It is like being the home team in baseball. They always have the last half of the ninth inning to pull out the win without having the visiting team get a chance to respond.

When a solid player tosses in a raise, you want to play Pair poker, or at least have suited over cards to make a call. Re-raising is another option to thin out the field depending on your position in the hand. If the table is very loose, the raises do not mean much and the over cards you hold will diminish in strength when most of the players call the re-raise.

Play your gambling and speculative hands only from the button position or one from the button (the cutoff). What does having position on someone actually mean? It means that you can choose to take control over a pot at anytime, control what the pot odds will be and ultimately have more information about the other players hand more than anyone else has. If a game is loose, with many limpers this may be your only true advantage to keeping your bankroll in front of you. Having the last say on every betting round is having immense power.

Probability always evens out and those players limping with poor cards will ultimately lose in the end against patient and solid players. If the flop does not give you an advantage, throw your hand away, even if you find yourself throwing good starting cards away many times. When your good hands hit, against loose players, you can usually induce calls by acting weak. The loose player thinks that you are weak like them and that their Q 3 2-Pair is good against your K Q 2-Pair, or your flopped set.

Weak and loose players usually think about picking up as many small pots as they can. A solid player in big bet poker is looking to double up and will back up that play with the money (that is, being tight aggressive). One or two good hands can double up a solid player's buy-in while a loose player is risking their money more often and eventually leaks it all away one hand at a time.

I hope this helps you in the end by showing you that those loose fish will hit some of their hands but your ultimate goal is to take all their money in one or two hands with solid cards. Knowing when to lay down a hand is an important thought in playing solid, tight/aggressive poker. However, having the starting cards to do this with in the correct position and knowing the type of player your opponents are really makes the difference for long-term profit.

Reading Your Opponent

Watching your opponents game and getting an accurate read on their game is as crucial if not more important than knowing all of the probabilities. The ability to read and then exploit your opponents weak tendencies is the difference between being a winning player and a below average player.

Some important considerations, but not all of them, to watch for are:

1. How many hands do they play and how many times do they come in for a raise? If your opponent is always limping into the pot in any

position then you should mark this player as weak. The next step is to see if they are a calling station or able to lay down a hand to a big bet.

One note on how many hand they play. This is not always accurate but can be relied upon because in an initial read, the player may have been getting good cards or a player may have been getting bad cards for a long run. Looking at how they bet after the flop and with what types of cards will give you an indication if they play too many weak hands.

2. If they always limp into the pot then they are weak and should be abused for this issue? Re-raising and stealing from them is usually easy and many times, they will be calling with nothing. Once again, find out what their starting hand requirements are and if they respect positional advantage.
3. As the hand progresses, do they increase their bets with the best hand or do they let the opponent stay in the hand with small bets? This is another indication of whether the player is weak and can be bluffed out of a hand. A solid player will increase they bets as the hand progresses or will re-raise to find out where they stand.
4. Will your opponent call to the river with a drawing hand? This is called, calling off their stack and is another indication of a weak player/calling station. You must identify these players to protect yourself and to extract money at the correct time.

5. How often do they slow play or check-raise a hand? You can set up plays if you know this player has a tendency to check-raise or avoid disaster if they over bet the pot on the River after showing weakness.

I often take into consideration what type of a hand will be necessary at the showdown for different opponents at my table. I will be apt to stay in the hand with top kicker and Top Pair against one type of player but require 2-Pair or a set with redraws against another player.

How aggressive or weak are they? Does your opponent raise with a 2 Flush Draw, slow play a set, protect their hand with TPTK or over bet the pot when they have a weak kicker but top pair? Will they lay down their cards to aggression or do they re-raise when challenged?

Notice what size bet or raise will force a player to fold. This is important and may allow you to make some good steals in future hands. Some people are afraid of aggression while others will always accept the challenge with terrible cards. You can bluff the fearful and play the best cards against the bold.

These are all very important considerations and insights into exploiting your opponent's tendencies. Being a successful poker player requires you to make a read on your opponent's game style and then exploit it in the meta-game.

Would you need a strong hand or could you make a stone cold bluff on the Flop or Turn. The next most important thought to keep track of at the table is

their betting patterns and if they fold to a large bet what size was that bet.

This may be important when you are heads up and decided to bluff.

Oh, do not forget to mark down if they are a profitable player or if they leave the table losing money more times than not. You may see a player many times but not notice that over the long run, they loose money more often than they win. You can discover these players' weaknesses and exploit the reason why they leak money all over the poker table.

Here are four categories of poker players you will encounter at the tables.

You cannot pigeonhole a player into a specific tendency all of the time. Players come to the table in different moods or with different concentration levels. They could be distracted and want to play to pass the time or they could be wholly focused on the game.

These considerations are hard to put into exact numbers because poker is so situation specific. Some things you should consider when making the decision to put a player into a category are the same as when you categorize a table. Ask yourself, does this player raise whenever they enter the pot? Do they play many hands? Are they loose and aggressive pre-flop but tight and passive after the flop?

Tight player- they only play good cards. There are two types of players to look for here: The person that can throw away a hand if it looks to be beat and the person that falls in love with a hand. They cannot throw the hand into the muck when it is obviously beaten and they call bets down to the River.

Loose players – these players see many flops. When you play against these players, you can never tell what type of hand they may have. Since they will enter the pot with any two cards, it is hard to tell after the flop. You want to try to raise these types of players pre-flop if your hand warrants or re-raise them if your hand hits.

Passive players – these players do not bet or raise. Some different categories of these players are calling station. These players do not re-raise, they just check and call down to the River.

Aggressive players – they juice the pot all of the time. It is hard to get a read on them at any time in the hand because they will bet anytime, whether they have a hand or not.

These are common designations for players loose/tight – passive/aggressive.

I would like to break them down into subcategories and show different characteristics about them. From this, I would like to give a few tips about how to play against these opponents.

Loose Aggressive player (LAG) – There are two types of LAG players that you must differentiate.

1. A bad LAG will not notice your tight table image because they are playing from their ego. These players are easily trapped with good hands. If you re-raise over the top they will usually call all the way to the River. If you slow play your hand they will try to push you off the pot by betting and

raising large amounts of money. Just keep calling until the River then if you are first to act bet or re-raise if you have position on them.

2. The smart LAG can lay down his cards when someone plays back or continues to call their raise (sandbagging). They are much more difficult to beat because if they are not driving the betting they will get out or suspect a trap. Inducing bluffs and allowing this player to bet is one of your best options. Because this player is adept at playing a loose aggressive style, they will usually be suspicious if you call both a flop and Turn bet, suspecting a trap.

Some things that can happen against a LAG:

If you challenge the LAG, you may be pushed into someone else's nut hand. On the other hand, you are caught when the LAG actually has a good hand. The LAG is working on the premise of bluffing theory, raising the stakes of the table to make other players uncomfortable and trickery. Everyone at the table is gunning for this player and wants to bust them. The LAG does not mind putting money into the pot or the large bankroll swings if they know how to lay down a hand before the betting gets too intense.

By increasing the betting at the table with raises, the LAG increases the amount of money that would have been wagered on one not only hand but also subsequent hands. Other players are willing to risk more in the end and call bets with a draw. This is exactly what the LAG wants. For example, the LAG is at a \$1/\$2 table and raises most of the time. By increasing the volume in the pot with his mediocre hands, he will win one out of three

times (estimate). However, other players will start to loosen their requirements. The LAG will take advantage of this by increasing the betting two to four times the previous level of raises. The inexperienced player will not understand how the increase in betting affects the structure of the game. They will think that the LAG is just trying to buy the pot again. However, this is when the LAG makes up for the previous two losses. By increasing the betting more than twice the previous betting levels, the LAG makes up for the losses and gains back much more.

Say the LAG has an average starting hand but gets a good flop. You cannot read this player so you do not know that he has hit 2-Pair or a small set with a ragged flop. The other five hands that the LAG has played in the same manner, betting/raising, applying pressure have the same betting patterns. He figures that if he loses two hands but wins five hands and one of them was a monster pot while the two losses were minor losses because he folded when someone re-raised his mediocre hand then the LAG has profited in the long run.

The other thought is that you will be pushed into another opponent's nut hand that was gunning for that LAG leaving you putting more money into the pot because you were gunning for the LAG. Here is what can happen. You know the LAG is playing mediocre hands. You flop Top Pair and Top Kicker. That should be enough to beat the LAG three out of five times. Yet, someone else that was waiting for an even better hand, by upgrading his or her requirements before entering the betting, has a set on the flop. If you are in early position and bet, the LAG re-raises and the button calls. You have a

difficult decision to make. What does the opponent on the button have that they would call a re-raise with and allow you to keep drawing?

Alternatively, an early position player hits the set, bets, the LAG re-raises and you are sitting there in between two players not knowing if your hand is good. You call, the original bettor re-raises again and the LAG folds leaving you in the pot.

If you are playing against a LAG there are some things you can do to combat this person. If you are going to enter the pot, make sure your cards are worth calling a re-raise at the least. If you do not want to risk a lot of bankroll variance then you need to upgrade your starting hand requirements. If you are not as worried about large variance in your bankroll then continually challenge the LAG with good to strong hands.

Making sure the LAG is on your right and not your left is the consensus of poker players. This way you can determine to call or fold after the LAG has made a move. If you call before this person then you will always be deciding whether to call a re-raise or fold pre-flop.

Some good LAG's will call/bet down to the River once but learn their lesson and not do it a second time after they understand your tactics against them. They may even upgrade their own showdown requirements when they are heads up against you. They will not challenge you as often unless they have a good hand, so you now need to be more careful with your hand selection against that player.

Essentially, the LAG bets, raises and semi-bluffs as a tactic to confuse the other players as to the real strength of their hand. When you do get a good hand you want to let them drive the betting until the Turn or River where you can play back at them. Another adjustment to make is not to be driven off your mediocre hands as often. Many times the LAG is playing second pair as strongly as TPTK.

A tricky LAG will continually be adjusting their game so do not get comfortable playing any one style against them.

Loose passive opponents (LPP) are the best opponents to have at your table. They never raise and always call your bets or give free cards. If they do bet then they probably have the nuts or the near nuts. They will not bet a draw but they will not fold one either. Therefore, the frustrating thing about LPP's is that they will draw out on you more often because you cannot push them out of the pot regardless of the odds you are laying. Since they are loose, they will play any two cards and you may never see it coming. This is the type of player that calls a big pre-flop raise from someone holding pocket Aces with 7 2 suited. If it does hit to beat you, they think they made a great play as they rake the money into their bankroll. This player relies on luck and most likely you will have your money back and all of theirs if you play a solid game.

However, the good news is you will be able to draw out on them more often and they will always call your bet on the River. The advantage you have against LPP's is that you will bet and they will call versus them betting and you folding. So when you do make your hand you it should pay off 3 times

the amount you put into the pot when your opponent drew out on you. You do this because you know how to bet a hand to get more money into the pot and get a call on the River. Take these two scenarios:

The LPP has position on you. You raises pre-flop and the LPP called. The flop hit your hand but it gave the LPP a draw. You make him pay to draw out on you. He hits one out of three times *(this approximates heads up situations considering the percentage of Flush and Straight draws hitting). Now, the LPP has a draw and you have position on him. You hit your hand well, say a set and the LPP checks every street, but you bet, so he calls (he is a passive calling station). Alternatively, either your hand improved or you find out he could not have improved. You will win two out of three times (* see above) with this method. In big bet poker, this is even more costly for the LPP because you can vary the bet sizes to hide the real strength of your hand. On the River, you either make it look like you are bluffing with a huge bet or a teaser bet that is intended to make him call. However, you will be able to draw out on them more often and they will always call your bet on the River. The LPP always pays off in the end. They rarely bluff and you always know where they stand with the hand.

Tight passive or tight weak as some people call them, plays good starting hands but has difficulty following through and lays the cards down if there is any substantial betting. They think the opponent always has a better hand or the hand being represented. They always see the worst scenario against their good hands. If the TPP has a small set they figure the opponent betting must

have a larger set, if they have a pair of Queens then the opponent must have a pair of Aces.

They will occasionally win some pots but nothing too large. They are happy with small wins. You can easily bluff them out of a pot with a big bet on the Turn or even the River. You can usually tell if the flop hit this player because they only play solid cards, usually over cards and Pocket Pairs with the occasional suited connectors. If there are no over cards on the flop, you can be more certain that his hand did not improve. The frustrating thing about this player is they are so passive that they may not even raise the hand with a solid Pocket Pair like Aces pre-flop because they are too scared to risk the money.

The best news about playing a TPP or a table full of TPP is that you will be able to draw out on them more often and they will always call your value bet on the River. Therefore, they are inadvertently trying to trap you if no over cards to the Pocket Pair shows up on the board.

The reason the TPP does not profit much is that they never gamble or risk money even when they have the best of it. They rarely take down the big pot because they never invest the money into it. This is the player that raise's one more bet with pocket Kings (in big bet poker a larger raise is recommended and allowed) and when the flop hits thinks his Kings are already beat if there is a lot of betting. Of course, since they were tight passive they have one part of the game down, playing solid starting hands. They will need to learn the larger poker concept that you are looking to win the most money not the most pots. Most pots are won and lost on the Turn

and River, especially in small stakes games. Sometimes the big pots take a large investment when you are ahead in the hand but other players bet their draws.

Having a passive player at your table is so profitable in the long run; you want to find a table with at least one of them. They are a gold mine who will call one bet after another until their whole stack is gone. Identify these players as quickly as possible so that when you are heads up versus them you can extract as much money as possible. Some things to help you recognize a calling station are:

1. You will notice them calling bets down to the River and then fold on the River or call the River bet and then their hand is thrown into the muck. Of course, you will not see them raise or re-raise any of the bets.
2. Another indication I have detected online is that when the passive player does bet or raise in no limit Hold'em they only bet the minimum. For example, in a \$1 /\$2 game, they will only bet out \$2 or if they are raising pre-flop they will only raise one bet.

Tight Aggressive Players (TAG) are the stone cold killers of the poker table. They usually play with the best hand pre-flop or will notice when the pot is giving the correct odds for suited connectors or even speculative hands. They are willing to bet the most money when they have the best hand and have an innate ability to lay down a good hand to a better hand before putting too much money into the pot. This is a complete poker player with

the skills of reading other players, reading cards, along with an understanding of probability. With this knowledge, they know how to bet or lay odds so the opponent is making a mistake more often than they are. If you are going to play in a hand after the flop with a LAG then you must be willing to put your money behind your cards. If you are going after a draw on the Turn and River be prepared to spend a lot of money to see those cards when the LAG has the best hand.

You must notice who is a TAG at the table when you scope it out or sit down. Some indications that will help you tell are:

They do not enter many pots; a good percentage to see the flop is between 15 and 25 percent depending on the types of cards you are getting in the session. Now just because a player is not seeing many flops does not automatically rank them as a TAG. They could be getting truly terrible cards that even a semi-loose player would not even play but it is a starting indicator.

When the TAG does enter a pot pre-flop they usually enter the pot with a raise. This is because they know when they have the good cards, cards that give them a 60+ percent win ratio and will put some money behind the cards. They know that being strong pre-flop is the first building block for a good hand and they want to isolate a few opponents with the hand.

Since the TAG has rated and identified most of the player's skill types at the table, they want to exploit it by isolating certain opponents. For instance, they know the player who raised UTG is an aggressive player that will toss a

pre-flop raise out with any two cards. You can identify this player by how many times he out plays his opponents after the flop. Ask yourself if he made the correct read more times than not on the streets after the flop and extracted the most money possible. If your answer is yes then you have met a TAG.

A **Loose Aggressive** player will overestimate their hand, raising frequently, and their aggressive nature will drive the pot value higher, increasing potential winnings.

A **Loose Passive** player will overestimate their hand, but due to their passive nature will rarely raise, preferring to call and allow other players to increase the pot. These are the weak players in the house, and you need to exploit them as often as possible. Their money is your money because they may be aggressive on the flop but are easily outplayed during the hand.

A **Tight Aggressive** player will play to close constraints, participating in only a few hands which they have a high probability of winning. The hands they do play, they will raise frequently to increase the size of the pot.

A **Tight Passive** player will participate in few hands, only considering playing those that they have a high probability of winning. The passive nature implies that they allow other players to drive the pot, never doing it themselves.

Of course, after reading this book I hope that you will be a TAG instead of a losing poker player.

Playing Your Best Poker

Self-awareness is an important skill to have in poker. This chapter deals with playing when you are tired and ultimately needing the ability to check in on yourself to see if you are bored, frustrated, steaming, scared, or having fun.

You want to figure out your optimal state of being for playing your best poker. When you are able to concentrate, be in the flow of the game and make the correct decisions. If you are preoccupied or distracted, you will not see the minute indicators and tells of your opponent's style. You will be missing vital information when the time comes to go heads up with certain players. Your natural instincts will not be working, the part of you that sees things that your conscious awareness misses, like when a person takes a little more time before they check. Your unconscious may have already categorized that as being a trapping move.

One of the more costly mistakes a poker player can make is playing a session for too long. When a player starts to get tired, they begin to lose interest, are unable to concentrate as much and start to force their play. One bad bet here, one overcall there and your bankroll could be halved in no limit.

Lou Krieger says that the most important thing a poker player can do is to play their best game whenever they are playing poker. You must know yourself well enough to know what it feels like when you start playing tired poker. I do not think it is a matter of setting a time limit on the session but

being aware of how you are playing as compared to when you started the session.

I know when I start a poker session I go in there with great concentration, with the ability to analyze my opponents and make terrific plays. I am patient with which starting cards to use, aware of position and will not hesitate to raise to put someone else on the hot seat for a correct decision. As the night progresses and I accumulate wins or suffer unfortunate beats, my actions change, I become a different poker player. Sometimes I become too passive to protect the money I have made or to lick my wounds. Sometimes I become too reckless trying to get back money I have lost or become overconfident believing I cannot lose. I may become impatient for another big or small win just to see my bank move in a direction. I usually find that these changes can be corrected when I notice them. That is the issue, when you get too tired after playing x (insert your own number) hours in a session, you stop looking at your game. You lose the ability to adjust your game and play optimal poker.

You should regularly be looking at the type of table you are sitting at, especially in an online poker room where players can change on a regular basis. Every new player that sits down at a table can possibly change the character of the table. If you are not playing your best poker because you are tired and not alert then you could easily lose a few NLHE hands and destroy any profits that were made in the past hours when you were alert/playing your best poker. At that point, you better be looking at how you are playing and why it has gone in the trash. But, if you are tired then you probably will not be thinking correctly to adjust to the table's character.

Another issue that a player will encounter when they are tired is after they lose a few big bets. Then they think, well I will adjust, become tighter or whatever is needed. But, you do not possess the same concentration that was present at the beginning of the night and because of this, the adjustments that you make to your game may not be enough. You will not be alert enough to run through all the correct decision making processes when that big hand does come down to the showdown. The other players that may have just arrived in the past hour are fresh and usually can outplay you at that point. Not because they are better poker players than you, but for the simple reason of being fresh. They can probably run through more scenarios about the hand and will outplay you.

Do you really want to play poker with that level of handicap?

One scenario would be when you become too passive. The fire in the belly is just not there, you are just looking at cards waiting for one more big hand, and you get pushed around. Then when you get tired of being pushed around and decide to make a stand you do it at the wrong time and lose big. You didn't notice that the person you were raising was the tight aggressive player that has not played a hand for the past 30 minutes since he sat down and he made it three bets pre-flop.

Stay alert to how you are feeling. Notice your level of concentration and if you are playing that patient, tight aggressive poker still. Some warning signals may be:

Not being able to follow the play of the hands as quickly, your mind drifts off, and you stop looking at the other players starting hands after the showdowns.

You start playing looser starting hands for no reason other than boredom.

You stop noticing when players have left the table and new ones have sat down which change the character of the table.

You just forced a K 2off suite from the blind, holding Top Pair against someone who raised from UTG and he keeps calling you raises. Oops, should have laid that one down.

The Meta Game of Poker

I consider the meta-game as the game within the game. To start let me give you a framework to build around. There are four levels of play that you can consider when playing poker. As you go higher in stakes the skill level of your opponents should go up which means the level of thinking goes up. The four elements are or questions players consider during a hand are:

What cards do I hold?

What cards does my opponent hold?

What does my opponent think I have?

What does my opponent think I think he has?

As I mentioned, the larger the stakes the higher up on the strategic scale most players think. If you are playing against a group of low stake novices you are not going to try and out think them because they are more worried about what their cards make, how many outs they have and what to bet. They rarely consider what cards you may have and definitely never think on level three. Play any hand that you have Straight forward when playing against beginners. They are calling stations that bet/call down to the River just to see what the outcome of the hand will be. They are like a child that is learning to walk and they just want to practice putting one foot in front of the other. They do not think about how fast they are walking or even where they are walking.

If you are playing against better poker players then you have to start thinking at a higher level.

When you are last in the betting you have the advantage of letting the action come to you. In terms of starting hands, this has always meant you can try hands that are more speculative. In terms of playing after the flop, you are the last decision maker at the table. If the flop is checked to you, then you have the option of getting a free card, juicing the pot, or raising to bluff/semi-bluff. One of the best parts of being last to act is that you always get the option to call or fold after all the cards are out. This is like being the home team in baseball but the advantage is that you can save a bet or have last say in the betting.

For example – heads up, player one bets into the flop and you call, player one checks the Turn, you have the option of checking for a free card or betting to win the hand right there. By checking, you save a bet on the River if you do not improve and your opponent makes a large bet thus saving you a bet. Your opponents mistake, if he had a hand or not was giving away the initiative to you.

Being first to act gives the player first rite to bluff. If this is heads up it can be a powerful tool. It becomes less powerful if the opponent with position calls, or re-raises you. By calling, you are guessing what his hand may be, by re-raising the player with position is trying to take away the initiative. First rite to bluff should not be given away heads up. In multi-way pots, being in early position is the worst place to be. You do not want to bluff

more than two opponents. If you do flop a hand or improve, check raising is the correct strategy if you are at an aggressive table with many loose players.

If player A, out of position, in No Limit bets one bet on the Flop, player B can look at this as being weak or player A is trying to trap them. By using your chips as a weapon for information, player B can reraise, smooth call, or fold. If player A has no hand, they are betting that player B also did get no help on the flop. The reason player B can think this is a sign of weakness is because if player A had a average hand, say Top Pair, they would want to protect it with a larger bet. Hence, player A's bet is playing at the level of thinking: what does my opponent think I have. If player B reraises he is playing at the level of, what does my opponent think I think he has.

You and your opponents define certain hands through betting patterns. By noticing what actions different players take in different situations, on different streets, with different hands you can take advantage of the different levels of thinking. Poker players consider this the "line" of thinking. Here is an example of the deep level of thinking with pocket 10's in a limit Hold'em game.

When you have 10's and the flop misses you but throws out over cards heads up against a "Rock" what do you do?

Pot is 6.5 bets pre-flop

The "rock" term is referring to his being very selective with his starting hands. Once he plays a hand, he can be very aggressive, passive, or

somewhere in-between. In addition, a player is not the same all the time. He may play differently based on: his life situation, his mood, and his perception of you. He might be a player good enough to keep a history of his play and mix up his game. He may not be that rocky, just that lately he has had a run of poor cards. It is a big assumption that the "rock" has only A A, K K, Q Q, J J, or A K.

A Q, A J suited/off-suit, and medium Pocket Pair's are possibilities.

Action was three bets pre-flop the opponent has position on you, so I do not think many players are going to fold to a flop bet. If you check the flop, the A K could bet or check behind you. A good player would only bet to your check or raise with the intent of taking the pot on the Turn.

Lines of play:

- A. You bet, he calls, 8.5 bets. Not giving free card.
- B. You bet, he raises, and you call, 10.5 bets. Defining your hand.
- C. You check, he checks, 6.5 bets. Giving a free card.
- D. You check, he bets, you call, 8.5 bets. Playing defense.

I do not think any of these define his hand. Only if you had his game down well would you know what his responses are likely to be. Since I have an over Pair to the flop, I would bet the flop.

That would have me now at A. 4 bets, or B. 6 bets into this hand.

I would not check the flop and give him the options of seeing the Turn free to hit one of his high cards, or betting either with a hand or to set up a steal on the Turn. I do not want to give him such good options to fake me out. A check-raise is not a good play because he is not folding for only one small bet with the current size of the pot, and if he re-raises you don't know if he's bluffing or he's cleaning you out with the over Pair. Three betting the flop is not going to do anything either except have you losing more to his over Pair.

The problem is that your options are limited since you are out of position. It is not as if you can raise on the flop, bet the Turn, and then get a free showdown.

Lines of plays

The Turn, BLANK:

- E. Flop A. Turn; you bet, he folds giving up his no Pair. Wins 6.5 bets.
- F. Flop A. Turn; you bet, he calls. 8.5 bets.
- G. Flop A. Turn; you bet, he raises, you call. 10.5 bets.
- H. Flop B. Turn; you check, he checks. 10.5 bets.
- I. Flop B. Turn; you check, he bets, you call. 12.5 bets.
- J. Flop B. Turn; you bet, he calls. 12.5 bets.
- K. Flop B. Turn; bet, he raises, you call. 14.5 bets.
- L. Flop B. Turn; you bet, he folds. Wins 10.5 bets.

I do not think a check-raise is a good play here either. If he only has high cards, he would probably check behind you and get a free chance to beat you

on the River. If he has that over Pair, then he is going to re-raise you. He may even be a tricky rock that tries the play of re-raising you with no Pair if you have shown lay downs to raises before.

He folds to your Turn bet (E.) only if he has nothing. Since only one bet on the flop, he could still not be tied onto this hand. His fold of L. is unlikely, and must have been an attempt to get a free card on the Turn with nothing. I think now you have more information about his hand.

(F.) Is most likely he has nothing and is paying one big bet hoping the River will save him (and win a nice pot). I do not think many players would smooth-call your Turn bet with an over Pair or a set hoping to raise you on the River.

(G.) You are probably beat. Calling his raise and check calling the River costs you two more big bets of a pot of now six big bets. If you hit a River 10, you could get a few more bets. Calling makes you somewhat bluff proof. It can help you out later when other players think you will call so they will be reluctant to try to bluff you. Folding to his Turn raise probably saves you two big bets (you lose 3 big bets on the hand), but sets up your image as one that will lay down to a raise after you've raised pre-flop and bet out the flop and Turn. I think this makes you a target.

(H.) He has nothing. Unless he hits on the River, you have him. With a River blank bet out, else with an over card to your tens I will check-call. If he had nothing he could just check behind on the River, or bluff at it. If he has you beat, you lose just one more bet on the River with a check-call. If he has the over Pair or set and checked the Turn (unlikely) then he missed a bet to "keep

you in the hand on the River", and gets only one more bet out of you with your bet on the River blank(and he raises).

(I.) Is the safe play to call him down? If he raised the flop with his over pair, bet the Turn, bet the River; your call-down loses you two more big bets (assuming you do not hit a set). This is also a way to catch the bluffer with big cards and keeps pushing with a nothing hand because you have just called him and he is hoping one of his bets makes you fold. I do not like folding on the Turn here - again you save your two big bets, but leave yourself vulnerable. Obviously, if you call the Turn, you are calling the River.

(J.) OK, what does he have? He three bet pre-flop, raised your flop bet, but only called your Turn bet. Is he a calling station that tried to take it on the flop of rags hoping you have only high cards? Did he try for a free Turn card? Again, I do not think most players would smooth call with the over Pair (or set) here to get more out of you on the River - so it is unlikely they have you beat. A lot of players three bet pre-flop with any pp to get the lead on the flop, so he could have a medium pp that is not an over Pair to the board (this is also how he might have a set, but it is unlikely and you can't be thinking every raise you face means a set).

(K.) This line looks like you are beat very good. I could see folding here. Again, folding makes me more of a target in future hands. Therefore, calling the bet here and the River bet costs you two big bets to protect a pot that is gotten quiet large (now has almost eight big bets and will be almost 12 big bets in the end).

Turn, OVERCARD:

- M. Flop A. Check, check.
- N. Flop A. Check, he bets, you fold.
- O. Flop A. Check, he bets, you call.
- P. Flop A. Bet, he folds.
- Q. Flop A. Bet, he calls.
- R. Flop A. Bet, he raises, you fold.
- S. Flop A. Bet, he raises, you call.
- T. Flop B. Check, check.
- U. Flop B. Check, he bets, you fold.
- V. Flop B. Check, he bets, you call.
- W. Flop B. Bet, he folds.
- X. Flop B. Bet, he calls.
- Y. Flop B. Bet, he raises, you fold.
- Z. Flop B. Bet, he raises, you call.

We are putting him on either over cards or an over Pair. So when an over card comes either he had us beat already, has us beat now, or that big card missed him.

I think it is more likely that an Ace or King hit him, and a Queen or Jack missed him (with his over-cards). So, maybe play more cautiously with the Ace or King on the Turn. If you want to call him down, check-call the Turn and River (line O. or line U.)? If you now think it is not worth the risk, check-fold (line N. or line V.).

I think the Rock just calling the flop makes that over card on the Turn more dangerous. The check-fold is probably the safe play, A Q suited is really the bluffing hand with a King on the Turn but worse things have happened.

A less-likely line of play (but not impossible, I have seen opponents play this way, write it down because they will do it again) would be for a medium pp that could pull the three bet move pre-flop and now semi-bluff at it on the Turn. Betting out both for when he just called the flop or raised the flop is a dangerous play. For the times your aggression could win an extra bet, I think many more times it loses you a bet. The only thing that is gained is that if you bet out and are then raised, you can be more secure in the thought that you might be beat. However, this only saves you one big bet from the check-call on the Turn and River play.

The one big bet you do not get when you are ahead for the check-check Turn (line M. or T.), I think, is not worth the more likely big bet you lose when you are beat. With the check-check on the Turn, you can still bet out the River, and do it with more confidence in you winning. Again, I don't think many players are going to check behind you on the Turn to keep you betting and calling on the River when they've got you beat with an over Pair or that now Top Pair. I think an under Pair to the Turn high card is still going to bet to your Turn check.

He is folding (line P. or W.) with only nothing but high cards (that the Turn missed). Therefore, yes a Turn bet could have him fold his high cards and not get the chance to hit the River and beat you. I just think it is more likely

that he now has you beat, and if not take that risk of him hitting the River when he could have folded the Turn. It goes to how likely or can he even fold high cards on the Turn once he's already invested quite a bit in this hand(i.e. can he lay down a hand, or is he like most players and will try to pull it out by hitting the River).

In summary, I think you have to play this hand to the end without over cards to your 10's on the board. You just should not get out of line with raises and re-re-raises. Notice that in all the scenarios I listed none has me raising. You could characterize my play here as weak by not raising and doing a lot of check calling. However, this player is not usually in a hand with junk, right? When playing a rock caution is appropriate. Remember, "Rock" does not mean "tight" where he will be very predictable and fold easily to bets and raises you make, nor will he have to have you beat if he bets or raises. With a different kind of player, and maybe having position I would be more inclined to get more aggressive.

You do not think of all these lines of play in the moment. You do not have that much time at an online poker room. You have to go on instinct and skill.

What do I mean by that?

Instinct and skill is the culmination of all your experience, studying and lessons put into action. When you sit down at a table you characterize the type of table, then you start to observe and categorize different player types. When you are in a hand, you consider the player types and the different lines of play that may have the different results. You consider a few plays and then choose one of them in 15-25 seconds. The skill is all of your studying

and ability to identify as many elements of the situation as possible. Instinct is being able to pick the one that will best work.

There is another part of the game within the game. The first hand is dealt and after each subsequent hand, you are creating a table image. Your play is being watched and you are watching other players trying to categorize their skill and intuition. If you have been winning pots without showing your hand then some opponents will challenge you to see what type of a hand you are actually betting. I suggest tightening up for a few rotations if you have been winning without showing a hand. Some players do bully the table and will continue to use this type of play until someone stands up to them. Someone will anoint himself or herself the table sheriff eventually so if you have been stealing pots then tighten up. If you have a strong hand push it because if you do show a good hand in that instance then all of your other hands will be validated as quality holdings. Then other player will fear you more often when you do play a hand.

This is also applicable when you did have good cards but did not show your hand in the end. The other player don't know that you had been playing solid cards so any attempt to steal a pot or the blinds will be met with some resistance. All these players know is that you have been stealing pots and must be stopped.

Take these three hands in no limit Hold'em that are actually just the same hand because they set up each other for a larger and larger payout in the end.

The first hand I had Top Pair with a weak kicker Ks 2s and was first to act in a five person hand. I bet the flop to define my hand and see where I stood. Two out of the three players called. The Turn was a blank but gave the board two Flush Draws. I checked and it was checked around. The River card was a card that completed a Flush, I semi-bluffed with my Top Pair since no one had shown any strength and perhaps my opponents would assume I had the Flush. The player on the button, an aggressive player bet out the pot when it was checked to him, I folded.

A few hands later, I had Q J suited on the button and I called the big blind with five players seeing the flop. The flop paired my Jack and had two small cards four and five. The table checked to me so I bet half the pot. Two players called the bet. The next card was a King, an over-card to my Top Pair. The two players checked the Turn to me, so I decide to bet the pot bluffing K J and the other two players fold.

I realize that this is a loose table pre-flop but rather tight after the flop. Everyone folds to any big bet. I also realize that my table image may be considered loose and aggressive. I have only been at the table for less than one rotation of the blinds but have been in two pots where I have bet out four times. It could be perceived as a semi-bluff from early position and the other two could be considered steal attempts. I have not had to show down a hand.

This has set up the third hand where I limped in from the small blind against four other players. I flop my set, there is a two Flush on the board and I decide to check. Not an unusual line from early position. If someone makes

a play on the pot and there are a few callers, I can decide to let it go to the Turn or try to end it right there.

The aggressive opponent from the first hand bet out half the pot to me. I smooth call the bet after waiting about 10 seconds and there is one other caller. The Turn lays out a second Flush Draw but and a possible over card 2-Pair. I decide to bet out because of the two Flush Draws and lay out a pot-sized bet. The first player folds but the aggressive opponent re-raises. I call.

The River card put a third Flush card down, but not the flop two Flush but the Turn two Flush. This is an important consideration. I bet out the size of the pot and my opponent re-raises the size of the pot. I have to think if this bet lines up with what he has been calling with. Since the Flush from the flop did not hit I do not think he has the Flush, I think he has at least 2-Pair or Top Pair with top kicker. He could have another set, but set vs. set and the way that he played it does not lead me to believe this is possible. I decide to call and take down the pot to a full out bluff.

My play in the first hand led my opponent to believe that I would lay down my hand, as I did with the Top Pair/top kicker, to a big bet. My play on the second hand led him to believe that I was buying the pot with loose calls and aggressiveness. Therefore, he tested the theory and lost most of his stack.

When other players say you need to vary your play this is one of the considerations. Your line of betting, I bet out the flop but check the Turn and then bet the River in the first hand. I bet out the flop and the Turn on the second hand. On the third hand, I checked the flop but bet out the Turn and

River. How is an opponent going to get a read on what my hand is? When you do have to show down a hand, your better opponents will remember what the betting patterns occurred for the type of hand you showed. This is what you need to vary in your play.

There is much more to write about the game inside the game. The best way to learn the meta-game is to play more poker and then analyze the hands by replaying your hand histories. Poker database programs such as Poker Tracker or Poker Office are essential programs if you want to advance your play fast.

Another way you can advance your poker skills and help them become more intuitive is to read as much poker strategy as possible. One of the best places on the web for poker strategy discussions these days is the 2+2 forum. For poker news, you want to visit Recreation Gambling Poker. There are many poker books on the market but I will list the most important books at the end of this e-book. I suggest you include these into your library.

Practice reading what level of thinking your opponent is using. Think in terms of lines of play. Finally, what your table image is and how you can best exploit that image.

Finally, memorizing all the probabilities and numbers will only take your game so far. Many of the best players know how to play their opponent. They understand that categorizing an opponent is a big part of the game. They know when to lay back and not try to bluff a calling station. But, they know when to go over the top against a constant bluffer. These are the

decisions that cannot be taught in a book but have to be learned by experience and discussion with other poker players.

Online Tournament Strategy

Tournaments are a fun and interesting way to play poker. For beginners, someone who has played less than 1000 to 5000 hands, I suggest playing smaller buy in tournaments. \$1-10 buy-ins are small tournaments. This way you can observe how to play poker for a small amount of money for a long period of time.

In the beginning of the tournament, there are many loose players who don't care if they lose the cheap buy in. Players who are playing K 7 off suite, Q 8

off suite under the gun or any Ace little out of position. These are sometimes high stake ring players who want to blow off steam, inexperienced players or just people who want to gamble. Unless you have the best hand or the experience to read these players stay away from them.

First Stage

There are two points of view for the first stage of play:

1. Play very tight, only with the top five to ten starting hands and do not chase unless you are getting the correct pot odds.

Or

2. Play loose/aggressive trying to build your chip stack by outplaying weak players after the flop or hitting advantageous flops.

Online tournament have many inexperienced players and you can easily trap them in the beginning of a tournament.

If you are an inexperienced player, I would suggest using strategy number one in the early stages of a tournament. Play only the top five to ten starting along with medium Pocket Pairs. If the flop does not help your hand, then throw it into the muck and start again. Do not chase a drawing hand if it is going to cost you most of your chips. You are trying to double up your chips while risking as few chips as possible on mediocre hands. If you have lost your chips in small increments then when those Aces do hit your pocket you will not have a substantial amount of chips to double up.

Another good reason to play tight is that the blinds are so small. When you bet in poker, you are making a claim for the blinds. If the blinds only amount to 15 chips then you are competing for pennies compared to what is needed to win the tournament. Later in the tournament, as the blind levels increase, one hand will be worth more than three of the early hands. If you have to showdown three hands and risk chips that equal half of your stack versus the thought of winning the same amount with one very good hand, then you should choose the second choice. You have less of an opportunity to make mistakes or be trapped by a monster hand.

Strategy two calls for playing a few more starting hands than strategy one does. You are able to read flops better and categorize player types. If you do hit a good flop, you have the experience to extract as much value from your hand as possible. This takes experience to notice when the pot is giving you the correct odds to fish then be able to read the flop and finally read other players. If you have identified a few loose players and are able to isolate them with a Pocket Pair then by all means, take their chips. Some good online tournament players are aggressive, with the theory that pushing small edges is correct strategy. They try to double up early in the tournament. If they cannot double up a few times in the first hour then they would rather be involved in a good ring game so they risk their tournament life more often.

I have placed in the money and onto many final tables with both strategies. Sometimes the cards do not give you a chance and you sit, mucking one bad starting hand after another until the golden Ace's show up in your hand at a loose and aggressive board. You know someone will raise and re-raise so

you limp UTG or you are in middle position and two people ahead of you have limped so you put in a raise that gets a few fish biting. You catch two opponents risking their chips and you suddenly tripled up. The times when the cards are bad and they do not give me the chance to make mistakes and I stay tight up until the late stages when you can steal blinds. I have had some success making the final table after three hours of mediocre cards, stealing pots and one or two big Pocket Pairs. Of course, the big Pocket Pairs appeared in my hand at the most advantageous moments that allowed me to double up and survive for another few rotations.

Playing in a tournament does have a large luck factor because at any given moment you can run into a better hand than your great hand and bust out.

You have to risk your chips sometimes because the blinds are always pushing the tournament forward, ever increasing and challenging your abilities. In a ring game if you lose the initial buy in you just reload. The blinds are static so they are not a factor, and you can stay as tight as you want. However, in a tournament you have to be aware of how many rotations you have left in your chip stack before it is time to risk it all on one hand.

All through the first stage, you should be watching the tendencies of your opponents. Learn something about the players you think will make it to the later stages. What are their opening hands in certain positions? Do they fold to a large re-raise and how much? What type of hands do they bet with? Make notes; keep a book of notes on the players you have assessed.

There are some other things to think about! If you have lost a majority of your chips in the beginning of the tournament, do not fret and start to get looser. Do not take the view that any two cards can win. This is the time you really tighten up and play only the best hands. Practice reading players and wait, just wait for those two golden cards, the big Pocket Pair. Many players have gone on to win tournaments after being down to just T \$100 chips, including myself. If you double up two or three times then you will have enough chips to make it to the second stage.

Another reason to tighten up when you are short stacked is because when you do enter a pot all the larger chip stacks will want to take you out. They will most likely raise the pot and make you play all of your chips on that one hand. This is actually good and bad news for you. If you have been waiting for the best hand then you will feel secure in the fact that you have made your stand with the biggest gun. It is true, the more guns pointing at you the harder it will be to take the pot down. But, the good news is, the more people in the pot trying to take you down the faster you will be able to build your chip stack up. If three people try to take you down, your T\$100 chips will become T\$400 chips when you win. If only one person tried to take you down then you would only win T\$100 more chips. So, make your stand with the best hand. Even when you win the T\$400 chips the larger stacks will still want to take you down so this process could repeat two or three times. That is how you get back into the chip count. So never despair in no limit tournaments, you can double up two or three times and be right back in the running.

Middle Stage

The middle stage of the tournament is where people start to shift gears.

There is a clear chip leader and usually half of the entrants have been eliminated. The blinds are starting to get larger and hopefully your chip count is large enough where you do not have to worry about the blinds eating you away. The money places are still far away but you have gotten past the loose players and are heading into the stretch run.

If you are short stacked then you must make a move now. Short stacked is when you can only stand three to four rotations of the blinds (have 10 big blinds in your stack) before busting out. You need to start looking for a place to go all in and steal some pots. If you do not get a hand in the top 20 starting hands or can isolate someone in a race between a Pocket Pair and over card draw then it has been suggested to keep waiting. It is up to you, make a stand with a mediocre hand like A 4 suited before the blinds are going to knock you out or just wait until the last possible hand. Deciding if a better starting hand will come is the choice.

The most important aspect to recognize about the middle and late middle period is when to shift gears and steal pots.

Usually right before the bubble and before a change in the purse earnings level, everyone tightens up. After these levels have been achieved, then players loosen up again and do not shy away from aggression. So being able to shift gears when you detect these changes is important. When everyone

starts to tighten up then you need to steal a few pots, by over betting or going all in.

If you are going to bully someone with an all-in or semi-bluff, pick on someone who has slightly less chips than you do. Your bet should force your opponent to call all-in and risk their tournament life on the outcome of that hand. This is called fold equity. You were watching and noting your opponent's tolerance to different size raises. This is when you take advantage of that information. Picking on the smaller stacks has the downside of being re-raised all-in because they have no choice. If they call the bet then they are essentially all-in on the flop or Turn with any significant betting action.

For example, you have Q5os with T\$7000 and the Big Blind has T\$2300 with antes at T\$400/T\$800. If you raise T\$1600, that becomes a re-raise opportunity for the Big Blind who is looking for a heads up situation to double up with. For the Big Blind it is an easy re-raise but for a steal attempt, it puts you into a position to lose more chips.

If you have an excellent starting hand, you want the larger stacks to call you so you can double up. This is a good reason to raise the pot with any big Pocket Pairs. You push out the marginal stacks and the only opponents that will call are the large stacks that can double you up.

With marginal hands or steal attempts be careful not to go against a very large stack that would rather just see you go away and does not mind risking ten percent of his chips. If you have any of the best five starting hands then

you should consider going all-in pre-flop or on the flop against smaller stacks. You want to double up as often as possible. If you know that an all-in pre-flop bet will just chase everyone out of the pot then you have to bet something that one or two players will call. This makes it more risky that someone will hit a big hand but the blinds move too fast to worry about that, you need to accumulate chips

You should loosen up at the middle-late stages in regards to your starting hand qualifications. This is when the good tournament players distinguish themselves from the good ring players. As the blinds increase, you need to take more chances. A good ring player does not realize this and is still playing a static blind game. The ring player usually has a small to medium stack at the bubble because they have not adjusted their play for the increasing blinds. They have tightened up because the blinds have increased to a larger percentage of their chip stack. At the beginning of the tournament the blinds were miniscule and risking chips was not as hard but in the middle to late middle stages a shift in perception needs happen. Usually this type of player busts out before the bubble or places in the money far away from the big prizes. You must continue to accumulate chips.

When you want to steal a pot, you must look for weakness in a hand and have an idea who will slow play and who is weak. Steal attempts are best done before the flop in late position or after the flop when the betting has been checked to you. Some players advocate betting a hand after the flop because you are not risking more bets before knowing if the blinds actually have a hand. You should have an arsenal of steal attempts in you mind for different situations. I remember being in a tournament and watching my

opponents go all-in from UTG. This is a strong steal attempt because many players will put you on a very good hand from that position and will not risk being wrong. But, this steal attempt, pre-flop, is risky because someone may have a very good hand in front of you.

Another point to think about is what the total chips in play are. You should estimate what size stack you need to get to the final table. With ten players at a final table then you should think of building your chip stack to ten percent of the total tournament chips in play. This makes your goal seem much easier to obtain in the middle of the tournament. You will see huge chip stacks with the lead at this stage of the tournament, opponents with ten or even thirty times yours. Do not play to catch up to them. I assure you, if you are not the chip leader you have not lost the tournament. Later in the tournament when the blinds start getting large there are more opportunities to double with huge pots. In no limit and even limit tournaments the chips leaders change places multiple times, jockeying up and down the leader board. Sometimes a player will bust out and you have moved up a place without risking anything. Do not get over anxious and force your play (play poor cards without the value or start fishing for draws). If you have an average chip stack or 5-10% below the average chip stack, you are in good shape to improve. You do have work ahead of you but do not get desperate.

If you have one of the largest stacks at a table then protect your stack while flexing your muscles more often. You can try to knock the smaller stacks around and take them out if you have a good hand. Spending 5 to 10% of your chip stack into a speculative hand or a strong draw against a small stack that is probably playing weak cards because they cannot survive another

rotation is a way to continue building your stack. If you tighten up too much in the this stage then everyone will catch up to your chip count as the middle stacks take out other people or the small stacks catch cards. The larger your chip-stack the more you can bully someone to steal the pot with a bluff or a semi-bluff.

It is a balancing act. I have seen large chip stacks try to push and intimidate too much and be knocked down or out of the tournament. Other players with medium stacks will try to trap you more often or you will start making mistakes because you feel like you have a few chips to burn speculating. Do not get carried away. Once again, protect your chips, tournament are about survival. If there is a good possibility you are beat, do not waste the chips just to find out. In the late stages of the tournament, you will be able to last through more rotations of the blinds and be able to scoop up the more desperate players.

Look for the flow of the game. Is your table so tight that no one will call a pot unless they hold aces? Is there someone stealing blinds because everyone is playing too tight? You have to consider all of these events. As always, try to learn more about your opponents. At this point, you should decide whether you want to win or just make it into the money places. This will determine how loose your starting hand requirements should be.

In every tournament there are opportunities due to your position (button or in the cutoff position), your chip advantage and your ability to not put all of your chips at risk. Look for these opportunities with less than optimal hands.

For example, I was in a tournament during the middle stages with around

T\$9,000 chips. The blinds were T\$100/\$200 so it was still early in the structure. There were four or five players with around the same amount of chips as me at the table. I am on the button. The UTG player bets two times the big blind (T\$400) the next player re-raises the big blind (T\$600) and one-person calls putting T\$1600 in the pot. I have 4 5 suited. Normal reasoning would say fold due to two raises and a cold call but look at these numbers. I am risking less than ten percent of my chip stack for three times my bet and I have position on all of them. No one dominates another player's stack so if the flop is bad for me I am not risking my whole tournament bankroll. There is the real possibility that the UTG raiser will go all-in instead of just calling the re-raise and I will lose the T\$600 but it is still in the early middle stage. Well I called, a loose call but these are the times for opportunity to strike and strike it did. A flop of three 5's, quads for me hit the table. The UTG player goes all-in, the next player calls his all-in and the next player calls that all-in. What is going on here? They each had Pocket Pairs of J's, A's and 7's. They all had Full Boats but I had Quads. I collected over T\$30,000 in chips right there.

This was the extreme event, but these things happen in every tournament. If you can flop a monster, with a speculative hand in good position no one can put you on that hand and you will win a large amount of chips. You called because of position, pot odds and by following the five/ten rule, do not risk more than five to ten percent of your chip stack on a draw. If you are going to push someone around use the same rule. Essentially, you must think survival, do not risk your chips needlessly. Sometimes fold if you are not driving the betting unless you are sure the other person is betting out of place for their cards (bluffing or over-betting).

I am a conservative player and if you want to play looser then increase the percentage, you will risk in any given hand. You may feel more comfortable with twenty to thirty percent of your chip stack.

There is no doubt that this is the point when you will have to catch some luck from the Poker Gods. There are two things to remember if you want to win a tournament.

1. Make the least amount of mistakes. Fold if you think you are beat. Do not call raises unless you have a good hand or are getting the correct odds.
2. Get lucky when luck is needed. This you cannot control but you can put yourself into a position for luck to happen to you.

There are many trees to cut down in a tournament. Do not needlessly challenge someone.

Final Stage

Therefore, you are in the money round or at a final table. Things get hot and heavy here. People will go all in at any time. Since everyone is going to make some money, the play gets looser. Premium cards are what you need and want when you enter a pot. You must loosen up but you must also ask yourself, would I call an all in raise with these cards? If the answer is no then throw them away. A majority of the hands will have all-in bets pre-flop

or on fourth street. This is why you should not panic in the middle part of the tournament if you are not the chip leader or even in the top 20. If you have the average amount of chips then a double up or a triple up from a pivotal hand will happen. After the first bubble pops, the all-in bets get more frequent until the next bubble level.

Usually at this time, the blinds are very large and many of the players will not be able to last one or two rotations. This is another reason people will go all in at any time. If someone commits all of their chips, look and see if they are in first position right before the blinds hit them. Look at their chip stack.

If it is small, then this is probably an inferior hand.

For the rest of the tournament the battle between a made hand and an over-card drawing hand really appears. The starting hand showdowns of AK vs. QQ or AA vs. JJ are typical showdowns in the late stages of a tournament. If you have a strong starting hand, you should raise with authority. You should try to steal the blinds as often as possible in favorable position. Since the bets are such a large percentage of a players chip stack, one hand can bust someone out of the tournament or cripple them severely. The other players will not contest your raise unless they have a very good starting hand to match to large raise. Two big cards are gold and Pocket Pairs are power at the final table in shorthanded play.

There will be a fair amount of pre-flop raising, heed the pre-flop betting; if there is a raise and a re-raise then your hand needs to be very good for you to join the dance. The person who bet out all-in may not have a good hand but usually someone who calls a big raise has something. You do not want to

get in the way of two people who are intent on putting their chips at risk. If there is a chance that one person will get knocked out fold unless you hold one of the top five hands and feel like you can knock both of them out. For every battle that knocks an opponent out is one more money spot up the pay ladder. Right before the final table things will tighten up until the smallest chip count has to risk or be taken out by the blinds. Chip management and blind stealing are essential here. You cannot continue to leak chips waiting for the small stacks to bust out or you will become the small stack.

I have been at the final table many times hovering between seventh and tenth place. I would win one key hand to keep me alive but not the level of chips the leaders have. I play conservative at this point looking to double up. Any one of those large stacks wants to take you out and get more chips for the final three-player showdown and the big money. However, an amazing thing can happen if you can hang around long enough. Players start to knock each other out in huge showdowns. All of a sudden, I am in sixth place, then I catch a key hand and I move up in the leader board. Then another person is knocked out and then I catch another big hand. Survival, accumulate, never say die. Usually the final table will quickly be short handed and then you should loosen up your starting hand requirements. For every person less than a full table the more powerful the over cards become. Wired Pairs become gold. This is when the battle between a made hand and an over card drawing hand really appears.

I suggest reading up on shorthanded play and playing in some sit and go tables. These are excellent mini-tournaments to practice your later round play. In the beginning of a sit and go, it is about chip management and

analyzing your opponents. When the first few players are knocked out then you can start to play strategy that is more shorthanded.

You will not make the final table every time or even hit in the money. 1 out of 10 times hitting the money is a good percentage. You are always looking to make the final table but the opportunities (cards) might not always be there. At some point, you may have to make a decision to just survive and not bust out before the bubble, make the money. You will play tight and wait for the smaller stacks to bust out. Get some money for the next tournament buy in and a fresh start to hit the final table or even win it all.

Some Thoughts about Online Tournaments

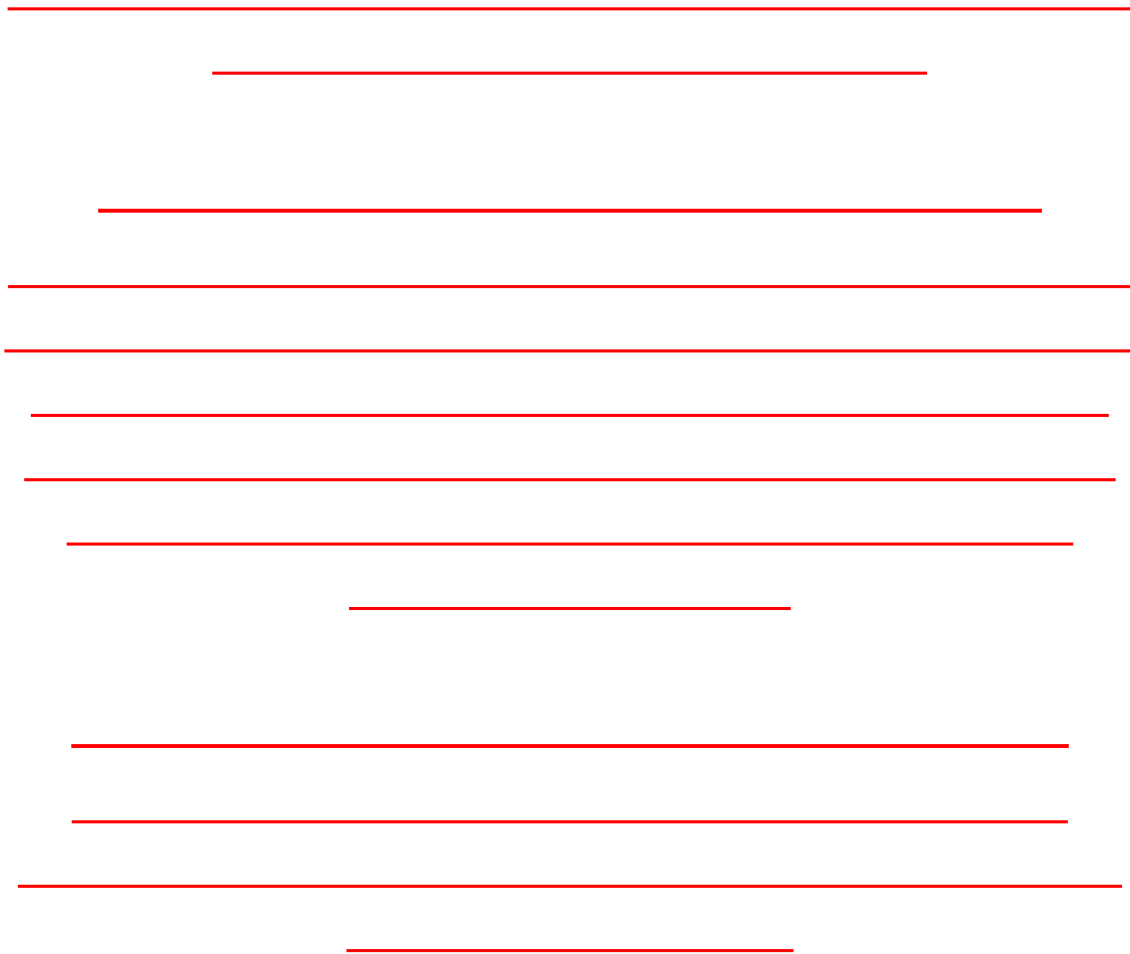
Many tournament poker books discuss strategies that are best used for brick and mortar tournaments. Brick and Mortar tournaments have a much slower structure than online tournaments. Most online tournaments are essentially three hours and the larger ones, with six hundred or more players, may be five hours or more. These structures would be considered satellite tournaments in a Brick and Mortar location. The common thoughts on satellite tournaments are to be more aggressive due to the structure. Some sites have the blinds increase anywhere from eight minutes to fifteen minutes. After the first four to eight levels an ante may start to eat away at your chips creating more stealing and more of a need to play looser but more opportunities because of the increased pot size and the odds you would be getting for speculative/drawing hands. The structures create the atmosphere. Be aware of the structures and the timing of every tournament.

Some advice is to play in a small priced buy in tourney and play very tight, try to make it as far as possible just to get a feel for that particular online sites structure. Another thought is to just be an observer for the whole tournament and take notes as to when the more experienced players change gears or when the whole tournament changes gears. How many players are usually remaining during different blind/ante levels, what are the average chip stacks, leading chip stacks and what level does the bubble usually fall upon. I always tell new players to understand the pace of the tournament.

What I mean by pace is when you need to shift gears, what amount of chips are needed at different stages of the tournament to have a chance at the final table. I have seen players obtain the chip lead in the late stages of a tournament. Then, their chip count is knocked down to less than the buy in chip amount. Then jump back up into the top five players again. In a no limit tournament, you are never out of achieving final table status. The cards and your skill level will do that for you.

You must feel the flow of the game like the water flows over the ground.

You will understand the table dynamics and player types and you will instinctively know what to do with your cards. It sounds so obscure but this is the point of poker that you cannot teach. You can only teach that you need to stay within yourself and not let the outcome of the cards bother you. The cards will happen, as long as you got your money into the pot when you had the best advantage, when you thought out why you were risking your money and formulated a plan, it means you are playing your best poker.



Shorthanded Play

Playing shorthanded is a skill but also one of the times when you have to go on feel or instinct more often. You need to decide on your play from aggressive to trapping for different opponents. Many times when you play shorthanded, heads up or against two players, it is about knowing how to play your opponent correctly then how to take advantage of hitting the flop or having a good hand pre-flop.

The difference between being shorthanded and at a full table is the range of hands possible. At a full table, you are playing against nine other random hands. The possibility that someone has a better starting hand than you is nine to one. Three handed the odds drop to two to one. A good to great starting hand is worth more in shorthanded play because there is less of a chance an opponent has a better one.

If your opponent raises more than 1x the Big Blind into you pre-flop, folding weak to marginal hands is recommended. Let them take the hand, you have not invested any money into the pot other than the blinds. Watch to see if they always raise in a certain position, then you can discount the raise in future hands. For instance, some players will always raise when they are on the button shorthanded. If you have an excellent starting hand then you want to either raise/re-raise or trap on the flop (depending on the type of opponent). I like to mix it up and limp with some big hands after creating an image of always betting the flop regardless of my hand. If I win the hand by surprising my opponent then he will be really confused as to what type of cards I am limping with or raising with.

The same goes when you have a good hand, you can raise or decide to trap on the flop and subsequent streets. You want to keep your opponent off balance and always guessing what you really hold. You do this by applying pressure on the flop and being able to let a hand go if your opponent fights back. You must determine if they fight back as a bluff more often than when they have a decent hand. Against weak opponents, you always want to apply pressure by being aggressive. Against aggressive opponents, you want to

play a trapping strategy more often. The better your opponent the more ability they will have to adjust to your play. You must then always be aware of any adjustments they make so you can also adjust your strategy.

The best place to practice poker is in Sit n Go heads up tournaments. This is a good time to also practice chip management, reading your opponent and employing different strategies. If they are down and they raise, fold, why give them any more chips. You want to be dictating when to raise and when to call. If you are able to steal a majority of the hands then you know you have your opponent guessing as to what your actual starting hand requirements are. If you have a good starting hand then you want to always be raising so they will have to fold more often. This is also an excellent opportunity to trap with some strong hands.

Say you have your opponent in a two player Sit n Go 2 to 1 in chips. You have T\$2000 and they have T\$1000. You have them on the ropes. The larger the blinds the more you can apply pressure with raises and make them sacrifice the blinds. This leak will make some players start to panic and perhaps go all in with a marginal hand. Raising Pre-flop or limping in and trying to take it away on the Flop works well against weak players. If they raise into you, this is when you fold. Don't invest chips into a pot when you have someone down. Make sure you are driving the pot.

In contrast, your opponent should be playing the same way and you should respect their big raises pre-flop or on subsequent streets. In the Taoist tradition, flow with the hands, like water down a River moving around

rocks, sometimes banging into the rocks and other times avoiding the rocks altogether.

Understanding your odds against any random hand pre-flop will help you decide when to throw in a raise with a marginal hand or limp with a great hand. I usually think in terms of “how much pot equity does my hand have” against one or two different random hands. I pulled these numbers from Poker Stove.

Against two different random hands, I ran more than 14 billion hands and against one opponent I ran over two billion hands.

Starting Hand	You	1 opponents equity	You	2 opponents equity
AA	85.21%	14.79%	70.12%	16.43% - 13.45%
KK	82.40%	17.60%	67.47%	17.01% - 15.53%
QQ	79.93%	20.07%	65.46%	17.61% - 16.93%
JJ	77.47%	22.53%	63.50%	19.65% - 16.85%
TT	75.01%	24.99%	61.40%	21.80% - 16.80%
99	72.06%	27.94%	58.87%	24.45% - 16.68%
88	69.16%	30.84%	56.08%	27.12% - 16.80%
77	66.24%	33.76%	53.05%	30.01% - 16.94%
66	63.29%	36.71%	50.23%	32.92% - 16.85%
55	60.33%	39.67%	44.55%	35.08% - 20.37%
44	57.02%	42.98%	40.12%	37.30% - 22.58%
33	53.69%	46.31%	34.45%	37.90% - 27.65%
22	50.33%	49.67%	29.79%	38.20% - 32.01%
AKs	67.05%	32.95%	49.79%	27.91% - 22.30%
AKos	65.32%	34.68%	46.36%	26.66% - 26.98%
AQs	66.21%	33.79%	49.20%	28.42% - 22.38%
AQos	64.43%	35.57%	45.85%	27.41% - 26.74%
AJs	65.39%	34.61%	48.69%	22.47% - 28.84%
AJos	63.56%	36.44%	45.44%	27.07% - 27.49%

ATs	64.60%	35.40%	47.98%	29.04% - 22.98%
ATos	62.72%	37.28%	44.67%	28.10% - 27.23%
KQs	63.40%	36.60%	48.91%	28.71% - 22.38%
KQos	61.46%	38.54%	45.49%	27.81% - 26.70%
KJs	62.57%	37.43%	48.34%	29.29% - 22.37%
KJos	60.57%	39.43%	44.87%	27.99% - 27.14%
KTs	61.79%	38.21%	47.70%	29.91% - 22.39%
KTos	59.74%	40.26%	44.37%	26.65% - 29.08%
K9s	59.99%	40.01%	45.71%	22.86% - 31.43%
K9os	57.81%	42.19%	42.31%	30.47% - 27.21%
QJs	60.26%	39.74%	47.78%	29.99% - 22.23%
QJos	58.13%	41.87%	44.48%	28.98% - 26.54%
QTs	59.47%	40.53%	47.21%	30.62% - 22.17%
QTos	57.29%	42.71%	43.83%	29.50% - 26.67%
Q9s	57.66%	42.34%	45.02%	31.96% - 23.02%
Q9os	55.36%	44.64%	41.73%	32.14% - 26.13%
JTs	57.53%	42.47%	47.09%	30.86% - 22.05%
JTos	55.25%	44.75%	43.67%	30.01% - 26.31%
54s	41.45%	58.55%		
65s	43.13%	56.87%		
76s	45.37%	54.63%		
87s	47.94%	52.64%		
98s	50.80%	49.20%		
T9s	54.02%	45.98%		

If you are going to make a play for the pot, you want two big cards or a Pocket Pair so I ran the numbers with that in mind and compare it to what an opponent might play. On the flop, you can decide whether to continue with pressure if you hit a pair or slow play if you hit a good hand.

Two big cards are gold, Pocket Pairs are power and one big card is worth a call at least when you are playing short handed while. I suggest practicing

with heads up Sit n Go's. They are the best way to learn how to play different opponent types.

Pot Odds vs. Hand Equity

In these examples, I wanted to eliminate the flush possibilities so none of the suites overlap, each hand has their own flush draw. For instance, Ace Jack suited of spades against 8 of diamonds and 8 of hearts. I am going to run through as many lines of play against two over cards versus different boards. The percentages are pot equity of the particular hand enumerated from Poker Stove compared to pot odds. Take this into consideration when looking at these numbers; Your pot equity is how often you win if the cards are run out with no more betting, as being all-in. Assuming there is money left, your pot equity is not so meaningful. Your outs as compared to the pot odds count the most, with the implied odds appearing as well.

Hole	Win %	Flop Jh 5s 3h	Turn 5c
Ac Jc vs.	68.44%	Top Pair of Jacks s – 88.59%	Top Pair Jacks – Needs another Jack on River - 3 outs 4.5%
Ad 5d	31.56%	2 nd pair of 5's and a backdoor straight draw – 11.41%	Three 5's - Had a 4.2% chance of hitting a 5 on Turn

This shows how dangerous a pair on the board can be. It is definitely a lucky card to hit on the Turn but making the adjustment by recognizing the danger is part of a good players skill set.

Hole	Win %	Flop Ah 5s 3h
Ac Jc vs.	68.44%	Top Pair of Aces – 19.04%
Ad 5d	31.56%	2-Pair Ace's and 5's – 80.96%

This is an interesting hand because on the flop the A J has fewer outs when the third board card is lower than the second pair of the A 5. If the board card were larger than the 5, the A J would have three more outs.

Hole	Win %	Flop Ah 5s 9h	Turn 8h
Ac Jc vs.	68.44%	Top Pair of Ace's – 6 outs, three Jacks and three 9's or 12.8% – 27.525% Pot equity	28.41% adds another 3 outs to the A J hand – 9 outs 19.6%
Ad 5d	31.56%	2-Pair Ace's and 5's – 72.475%	71.59%

Here is the hand played out with an over card on the board to the 5. It adds three outs to the A J hand. On the Turn, when another over card to the 5 shows up then the A J has another three outs, three Jacks, three 9's and three 8's.

Here is a line of play to think about:

A 5 is first to act (player 1) and A J has position (player 2) – A 5 bets out on the flop with his 2-Pair to find out if it is good. Pot odds say that a bet of one third the pot (giving 4 to 1 odds to call) or one quarter of the pot (giving 5 to 1 odds to call) would make the A J (6 outs, 12.8% or 6.8 to 1) wrong in calling while risking the least amount of money if someone has flopped a set. However, the A J has more pot equity over the next two streets (27.52% or 2.6 to 1) than the pot odds indicate (you calculate the pot odds according to the next card). On the Flop the A 5 may not bet as much as is needed to drive the A J out of the pot. Therefore, the smart player can fire back a re-

raise on the Flop or wait until the Turn when another over card to the small 2-Pair hits giving him more bluffing equity and more outs.

You have to decide if a re-raise will get you the pot right there on the Turn by encouraging your opponent to lay his cards down. Is the opponent passive, weak, a calling station or will they be aggressive? This is the decision you want to make before re-raising and building a large pot on a draw. How will the opponent react to the re-raise?

Therefore, what can Player 2 put Player 1 on regarding a hand. He could have a set but most players will not bet a flopped set because the hand is too strong. I usually see players call on the Flop, especially with a board that has no Straight or Flush possibilities. Therefore, Top Pair is more likely in this situation and the 2-Pair is even more evident on the Turn if Player 1 fires a pot sized bet.

When Player 2 re-raises on the flop it is a blocking move saying, "I might have 2-Pair or a set so be careful." This way Player 1 has to think hard about throwing a pot sized bet out on the Turn and River. The re-raise can allow you to see both streets more cheaply instead of being priced out of the pot and having to fold.

Hole	Win %	Flop Ah 5s 9h	Turn As
Ac Jc vs.	68.44%	Top Pair of Ace's – 6 outs, three Jacks and three 9's or 12.8% – 27.525%	12.5% 6 outs
Ad 5d	31.56%	2-Pair Ace's and 5's – 72.475%	87.5% Full House

Now if another Ace falls on the River you are way behind. You are not getting the extra three outs for a better 2-Pair and your folding equity has diminished to your opponents Full house. Your pot equity has dropped so your pot odds need to be 8 to 1 to make a call.

Hole	Win %	Flop Ks Qs 5s
Ac Jc vs.	68.44%	Gut Shot Straight and 2 Over Cards 29.44% Pot Equity 19% pot odds
Ad 5d	31.56%	TP with a weak kicker 70.56%

Once again, your pot equity is too high to fold the hand. With two over cards and a nut straight draw. If you can put your opponent on a small pair you should call or re-raise, (I am not considering the three flush on the board because I created that example for the sole purpose of not having it figure into the equation).

Hole	Win %	Flop As 2h 3h	Turn 8s
Ac Jc vs.	68.44%	69.50% Top Pair with top kicker	84.09%
Ad 5d	31.56%	30.50% Top Pair with weak kicker Gut Shot Straight 6 outs 12.8%	15.91%

Here the A 5 has better pot equity than pot odds like the previous example but on the Turn he will not gain any outs and the pot equity will go down if he does not improve. If the A J has position on the A 5 then drawing to the better hand becomes a losing strategy. If a 3 does show up on the Turn or River then the A J can get away from his hand and the A 5 does not profit

from Implied Odds. Drawing to 6 outs is not as appealing to me so I would not re-raise unless I thought my opponent might fold. You will get better opportunities in the future.

Hole	Win %	Flop Jd 3d 2s	Turn 9s
Ac Jc vs.	68.44%	53.89% Pot Equity TPTK - 5 outs to improve and a backdoor straight draw 10.6% on Turn	72.73%
Ad 5d	31.56%	46.11% Pot Equity Gut Shot and Flush Draw - 12 outs or 25.6% on Turn	27.27%

What would you do with the A 5 hand? With 49 unknown cards and one quarter of the cards improving your hand to a nut hand or very good hand you have to play to maximize the amount of money in the pot. This is one of the instances where you should take a shot at the pot on the Flop with a big bet hoping for your opponent to fold. Your hand has an excellent chance of improving and winning at the showdown. So you want to be aggressive on the Turn in Limit and in No Limit let the pot get larger if someone bets, The hands you fear are, someone who has made their set and wants the board to pair or a starting hand of 4 5. Nevertheless, you should not curb your “correct” play for a possibility.

If the Turn does not give you what you want you should play defensive but still stay in the pot. You have excellent Pot Equity and implied odds for the river. A pot sized bet may not be good to call but a bet of half the pot should work.

Other important considerations to continue on the Turn is your position, how many other players are still in the pot and how much money is in front of each player.

Here are more examples that you can run the numbers for hand equity and pot odds. I am sure that the amateur poker player does not think on this level, does not know when there are small edges like this to exploit. They say, “I have a pair with a bad kicker I should fold”. They do not consider what percentage of the pot is still theirs.

Run the different comparisons with these types of hands:

- A. Two suited cards – you want to see if you hold at least one of the suite in your hand and how high the card it.
- B. Two connecting cards – does this give you an open-ended straight draw?
- C. A pair on the board (high or low) – If this does not pair your cards, you have to estimate if it paired someone else’s card. The higher the card the more likely it has hit an opponent.
- D. All high cards – This is the type of Flop that gives someone 2-Pair or a Straight draw.
- E. Three suited – It is hard to tell if someone has the flush on the flop. Most players will slow play the Flush and wait for the Turn or River. In Limit players usually wait until the Turn when the betting rounds double and in No Limit a large bet on the River challenges players to call a bluff or fold the

slow play. The only reason an opponent would be betting out is if they have a weak flush and fear a fourth card of the suite or defending against the board pairing when they suspect someone has a set.

F. Three connecting cards – This is another situation where an opponent may already have a made hand. You must consider if the board has a two suite and the type of betting. A player would be more apt to protect their hand if there is a two flush on the board or the board has paired.

G. Rainbow all rags – this hand probably helped no one and a semi-bluff is a strong option especially if you have a medium to high Pocket Pair.

H. One high card with no straight or flush draws – The more players in the hand the more likely this hit at least one opponent and other opponents will just fold to any bet.

Starting Hands	Pot Equity %
AJs vs. AQs	29.18% - 70.82%
AJs vs. 88	47.5% - 52.5%
AJs vs. KK	32.48% - 67.52%
AJs vs. JJ	34.51% - 65.49%
Starting Hands	Pot Equity %
KQs vs. JTs	62.53% - 37.47%
KQs vs. 54s	60.91% - 39.09%
KQs vs. 88	48.89% - 51.11%
KQs vs. ATs	41.65% - 58.35%
KQs vs. KK	13.87% - 86.13%
KQs vs. QQ	35.34% - 64.66%

Building a Bankroll Online

The term bankroll may be one of the most important words in a poker player's vocabulary. You must have one to play poker just as you need a boat to travel on water (unless you swim very well).

Most sites offer a first time deposit bonus. In addition, this is the key to building a bankroll. By depositing money at a site, you get the deposit bonus, an investment that pays off better than any bank interest rate. Play a good game of poker and you can leave the site, money in hand to deposit into another site, and then get that initial bonus.

That is the key though, you need to play tight poker, play only the best hands and don't go chasing hands that can flush your bank (two card runner straights, or the two outer wired pair on the river with a pot bet in front of you). It is like playing a tournament, play the hands that will win you the money without risking too much of your money, and after a certain amount of hands (each site has different requirements) you can cash out the bonus free and clear.

One of the best ways to get the required amount of hands to keep your deposit bonus is to play limit poker. This will eliminate the decision to match opponents all in bet. You may know that person is bluffing, but you are trying to build a bankroll. Sure, winning a huge pot would build your bankroll, but think about this.

Most professional poker players suggest having at least 300 times the amount of the big blind as your bankroll. I suggest at least 200 to 400 times the big blind. Because, if you have a bad string of hands (which is inevitable in poker), you will have a large swing in your cash flow toward the negative side. When this happens, you do not want to change your poker style (unless that is the reason you are losing). Let me repeat that.

If you are playing your best poker, the odds are always in your favor, and your opponent catches that lucky river card or a runner-runner to make the nut straight then just chalk the problem up to the poker Gods evening things out. You do not have to change your game, but you need the bankroll to get past the string of bad beats. If your bankroll is getting small, then you may start playing differently, like you have to make up that money (looser) or to tight to protect your small amount of money. These are the worst things that can happen, changing your poker style to meet a bankroll problem.

Build the bank at five to six different sites, slowly, and build it into \$500 to \$1,000. Then you can start playing some real poker. With an adequate bankroll, you can start playing the \$2/\$4, \$5/\$10 or \$10/\$20 no limit tables.

There is nothing more frustrating than to have the total nut hand with someone betting into you with all his or her money as a total bluff and you can only double up \$50 because you do not have an adequate bankroll.

\$1/\$2 no limit game you should have at least \$200 and even better \$800-\$1200 bankroll. \$2/\$4 no limit game you should have at least \$400 and probably \$1200-\$1600 bankroll. \$5/\$10 no limit game will really put swings into you roll. You should only play these games after getting some

experience because of the amount of tough players. However, sometimes there are players who just want to bully you around, and you can slow play the nuts for a big win. Your bankroll should look rather large for this game, with the bare minimum of \$2000 and ideally \$6000.

So say you start at Royal Vegas Poker and get the free \$10 along with the deposit bonus. You can build that to \$200. Therefore, you leave with \$400 dollars because you won a few nice pots playing the limit table over the past month clearing the bonus. That is not bad for a \$100 dollar investment. Meet the requirements, pull your money and then make another deposit into, Absolute Poker where they will match 35%. \$400 times 35% equals another \$140 added to the bankroll. After another two or three poker rooms, you will have an adequate bankroll to play the no limit tables. Of course, this is also assuming you do not win something at the tables. Players who do this are called "bankroll whores" and many players do it. If you keep accounts on all of the sites listed below you will be clearing reload bonus offers every month and earning extra money on top of your excellent poker play.

Here is information about seven of the top ten Online Poker Rooms according to player traffic, tournaments, bonus offers and the most important factor, safety of your money. These are the most established poker rooms on the net.

You should have an account with each one of these poker rooms to take advantage of the frequent reload offers and special tournaments. In any given month, one or more of these rooms will have reload bonus offers.

The best poker rooms on the web and why

Party Poker Network is the number one online poker site in terms of player traffic and money wagered. The network has many skin sites that share ring game traffic but not tournaments. The two main skin sites are Party Poker and Empire Poker.

One of the oldest and most respected poker site is Paradise Poker. They have excellent player statistics, player notes and tournament promotions. They also offer blackjack.

Prima Poker, Poker Room, Ultimate Bet, Paradise Poker and Pacific Poker all have around the same amount of player traffic and rank three through eight in this category. Depending on the time of day 1500 to 8000 players are wagering at a table in ring game traffic or tournament play. Each room has their advantages and personalities.

Prima is great for the Step Sit n Go Tournaments. Ultimate Bet and Prima have guaranteed tournament payouts between \$1,500 to \$22,000 all day.

Poker Room and Pacific Poker have a great daily tournament with a large guaranteed tournament payout of over \$30,000. All have cheap satellites.

I mention these poker rooms because they are the most established. They are safe and secure. They provide the most benefits for the players in terms of promotions and redeposit bonus offers. They have the most WPT, WSOP and European Poker Tour satellites.

I am signed up at every one of the poker rooms I rate and take advantage of the reload bonus offers. I also play in the satellites (\$5-\$10) to qualify for the larger \$25,000 to \$250,000 tournaments. So I am always jumping from site to site. Finally, the best reason to have multiple accounts is to scout out the easiest tables. 50% of being a winning poker player is to find the easiest tables and the weakest players. It really is that simple.

Ultimate Bet

40% First Time Deposit Bonus up to \$200

Ultimate Bet has frequent reload bonus offers of 25% to 50%

World Poker Tour Satellites - Guaranteed Tournament Payouts



Software

Ultimate Bet has an advanced look and feel.

They are an exciting and innovative leader in the online poker software development area. Has note taking feature for every opponent and comprehensive player statistics (shown on bottom). One click hand history that is compatible with the Poker Tracker software and other tracking programs. You can play on more than one table at a time with a feature that allows you to see the tables in two different types of views, in a detailed view or a condensed table (shown below). Your account page has all the information a person would need, including an accounting of where all your money has come from (money won/lost, deposit's), Ultimate Points, time at tables, Tournament Entry Chips won (TEC's are won in freerolls and are entries into \$100 tournaments. You can collect the entry chips and buy into a larger tournament, ex. \$500). The UB lobby is comprehensive and the home page has information and news about the poker world.

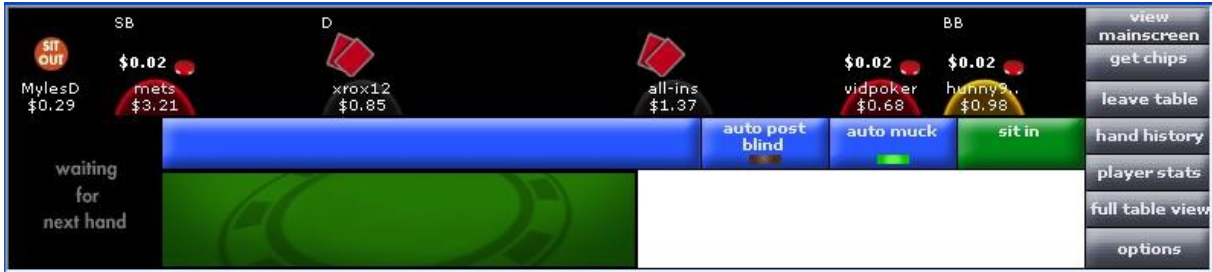
Hands Dealt 1		Hands won 1 (100%)		
Flops seen 1 (100%)		Time played 0:01		
	Pre Flop	Flop	Turn	River
Hands Played	1	1	1	1
Checked	-	-	-	-
Check raised	-	-	-	-
Called	-	-	-	-
Bet	n/a	100%	-	-
Raised	100%	-	-	-
Reraised	-	-	-	-
Folded	-	-	-	-
Won	-	-	-	100%

about your stats reset stats

Game Choice

The Hold'em ring tables always have traffic, 24 hours a day, with a wide variety of stakes, play money, \$.01/.02 to high stakes. There are hourly tournaments, from \$1.00 to \$500 dollar and extensive freerolls (8-10 a day). In any 24-hour period there will be from 500 to 7000 tournament players at Ultimate Bet. If you like tournaments then this is the place for you. Ultimate Bet has anted up and created a large pool of guaranteed tournaments every day. Every day there are guaranteed tournament payouts of \$2000 to \$60,000. Go to the website to see the daily schedule of tournaments. They are also always sponsoring at least one but usually more WPT satellite events. Hold'em, Omaha Hi and Hi-Lo, 7-Card-Stud Hi and Hi-Lo, Crazy Pineapple and Lowball.

Mini Table View for multi tabling, actual size.



Bonus Requirement

To cash out bonus money you need points for raked hands called Ultimate Points. For example, get 1000 points for raked hands (where you just get dealt cards) at \$0.25/\$0.50 tables and up, within any time limit to cash out \$100. Each pot with rake under one dollar gives 0.5 points and a pot with rake over one-dollar gives 1.0 points. Use the Ultimate Points for merchandise or as Tournament fees.



UB is a great site and has so many offers you should have an account set up just for the WPT qualifiers and freerolls.

Prima Network

40% deposit bonus up to \$200

Royal Vegas Poker \$10 free for signing up

Many tournament promotions and cash frequent player rewards every month.

Prima Network is one of the most popular poker rooms on the web.

Royal Vegas Poker is the flagship site of the network and is recommended by Lou Krieger

7 Sultans Poker (shown below) is another popular Prima skin.



Software

The software has gone through minor changes over the past year and runs smoother than before. They have updated the navigation features and other features. Prima has all the

major software features an online poker player could want. Hand histories you can download for tracking software, player notes, ability to play multiple tables at one time, and player statistics. The Random Number Generator was tested by Price-Waterhouse-Cooper. They performed a statistical analysis of over 1 million dealt hands and certified the RNG as being authentic.



Game Choice

Hold'em, limit and no limit are both available in a variety of stakes. There are always full tables 24/7. **They are the only site with 7-stud pot limit and no limit stakes (big bet) as well as the more standard limit games.** Once again, you can always find a full table game. Prima has two very large guaranteed prize pool tournaments; a Sunday \$100,000 guaranteed. There are satellites running for this tournament all week long for \$5. There are daily guaranteed tournament of \$1,500 to \$22,000. In addition, four \$1,000 freerolls run every day and one \$200 freeroll for the night owls.

They run WPT and European satellite tournaments for the land-based brick and mortar major tournaments with inexpensive satellites. Check out the website for current promotions. Sit n go's and MTT's running all day. Prima also carries five card stud tables, Omaha and Omaha hi/lo in all betting forms: limit and big bet.

Party Poker and Empire Poker

20% bonus on first time deposit up to \$100
Frequent reload offers and free offers



Overview

Empire poker is part of the Party Poker Network and is preferred by many online players because of better customer service and tournament structure. Party Poker has larger tournaments but with the larger turnout the competition gets more difficult.

The ring game traffic is shared in the Party Poker network, so you could be playing against someone at Party Poker if you are signed up at Empire Poker. If you sign up at Empire Poker you get all the advantages of playing in the loose-shared ring game traffic and play at tournaments with easier opponents. On any given day, there is \$3,000,000.00 wagered and 30,000 or more players gaming.

The tournament structure at Empire is great, 1000 starting chips with 15 to 20 minute rounds and no antes. I like the longer rounds before blind increases because you are not as rushed to increase chips and therefore needlessly gamble. It is less of a crapshoot and more of a skill game. The Party Poker network does not share tournament traffic so everyone playing is signed up at Empire Poker.

They have multitable Sit n Go's up to 30 players. An evening guaranteed tournament from \$10,000 to \$20,000. Finally, there is an end of month \$200,000 guaranteed tournament at Empire Poker. All of these tournaments have daily satellite qualifiers.

It is a toss up which site to choose. If you have a Party Poker account you are not suppose to have an Empire Poker account and visa a versa. So you have to choose which site you want to play at. Each has their own advantages, larger tournaments (and huge payouts) at Party Poker or smaller but easier tournaments at Empire Poker. If you don't really play tournaments then it does not matter which site you choose. Empire has the better customer service which clinched the decision for me.

Paradise Poker

25% bonus up to \$50

Paradise Poker established 1999



Top 10 Reasons to Play Poker at Paradise

You may be wondering "why should I be playing at this poker site?". We're here to help make that decision a little easier. And if we don't answer your questions or concerns below, please don't hesitate to drop us an [email](#), anytime.

1. Integrity

Paradise Poker is the undisputed and recognized leader in online poker. Our reputation for providing the best action, the best software, the highest levels of support and the safest site is second to none.

Paradise Poker has recently joined forces with Sportingbet plc, a publicly traded company on the London Stock Exchange ([Ticker Symbol: SBT.L](#)), to form the world's largest online betting company. With over two million customers worldwide we are proud to offer further transparency and accountability, as well as more safety and security for our customers.

We are excited to feature our sister site, [Sportsbook.com](#), America's sports betting destination and the largest single sportsbook and casino on the planet.

As well, Paradise Poker is pleased to provide our clients with the added comfort of an independent third party review of our shuffling. We engage the services of a Big Four accounting firm to review our card shuffling. Please read the [Independent Third Party Shuffling Review](#).

2. Action

What kind of action are you looking for? How about non-stop, 24 hour poker action against real people from around the world! Over 7000 players are logged in during peak times. Whatever your game, you're sure to find a table open.

3. **Security**

Paradise Poker considers [security](#) to be our number one priority. From the SSLv3/TLSv1 encryption algorithm to our sophisticated collusion detection methods to our random number generation and card shuffling techniques, we offer the highest levels of security available. Our security methods and procedures are reviewed and updated regularly to keep them the best in the world.

4. **Established**

As the premier online poker room in the world, you have the added security in knowing your funds will be safe, and available to you, whenever you want. Paradise has segregated reserve accounts that hold at minimum 100% of all player balances.

5. **Support**

Our highly knowledgeable [support](#) team is standing by to address any issue that may arise. They can be reached by [email](#) at all times, generally replying within minutes of receiving your query. Rest assured that we will endeavor to address any issue to your satisfaction.

6. **Game Choice**

The [selection of games](#) at Paradise Poker is unparalleled. We offer the standards, such as Texas Hold'em, Omaha and Seven Card Stud, plus the High-Low versions

of the latter two games. Paradise also gives you the best Tournament and short handed table action online. And if you're new to these games, give our free play money tables a try.

7. **Promotions**

Paradise offers its players plenty of great promotions, where we give away tons of money. Progressive bad beat jackpots, 10% deposit bonuses and landmark hand number jackpots are just an example of the promotions offered in Paradise.

Check our [promotions page](#) for constant updates.

8. **Connection Stability**

Our game servers run 24 hours a day, 365 days a year virtually disruption free. And in the rare case of a connection problem, we're back up and running in no time. We also make it easy for players to know the status of our server at all times, through our [Network Status Page](#).

9. **Graphics**

Our world class graphic artists have made the Paradise experience second to none on the internet. From the [beautiful lobby montage](#) to the elegant table setting, our players feel like they are actually sitting in our live, online, five star poker paradise.

10. Features

We offer many more [features](#) to make your game playing experience enjoyable. From easy-to-navigate Lobby systems and terrific animation to straight forward betting actions and the ability to play multiple games at the same time.

Absolute Poker

35% bonus on first time deposit up to \$210

Use Bonus Code AP35 for the 35% bonus

Monthly 35% reload bonus offers

Absolute Poker has all the regular online game choices, NL, PL and Limit versions of Texas Hold'em. They have Omaha, 7-Stud with hi/lo choices also. The ring games have some high stakes players but mostly this is a good site for small stakes \$.25 to \$10



The tournament action at Absolute is the best part of this site. They have plenty of action. WSOP and WPT satellite freerolls/MTT's run every day. Tournament Poker Leagues run

every day. Low to Mid sized buy in tournaments run every hour. This is a great site where you can build your poker skills.

For each raked hand (minimum rake of \$0.25) played you will receive 1 point, and you will receive 1 point for each \$1 of tournament buy in fee. At 100 points, Absolute will move \$10 from your Pending Bonus account to your cash account. You earn points for hands that are raked, that collect a minimum of 25 cents.

Pacific Poker

25% bonus on first time deposit up to \$100
Frequent reload bonus offers

Pacific Poker has grown tremendously during 2004 to become the favorite poker room for many Texas Hold'em players looking for very "juicy" high-action tables and frequent promotions. It is incredible how well good hands are paid off at Pacific Poker. This fact alone makes up for the poor software development.

Game Choices

One of the best parts of Pacific Poker are the no limit Hold'em sit n go's. I like the payout structures of the 20 player \$16, \$8, \$2 tournaments. Places 1-5 are paid. They have a tournament every 30 minutes to an hour. They have a great daily tournament. A \$20,000

guaranteed no limit Hold'em multi table tournament every day with \$3 and \$6 satellites.

A weekly \$75,000 tournament.

The no limit and limit Hold'em games are very loose, mostly family pots where other players go way to far with their dominated and dead hands. Flop percentages of 60 and 70 are always available, amazingly. That means your good hands are going to be paid off.

They have limit 7-Stud, Omaha and high/low.

Competition

Now the reason Pacific Poker is such a good site. Because the competition is soft and the loyalty bonus is the best in the industry. I am not the only person who has this opinion. They normally peak around 2500 to 3500 players in tournament and ring games at any 24-hour period. They are associated with a casino/sports book so there are more recreational players than professional sharks wanting to gamble some money.

Poker Room

20% first time deposit bonus up to \$100

Play 1000 raked hands to get \$100 in 40 days – Many reload bonus offers throughout the year. Poker Room is one of the oldest sites in the Online Poker game which translates into integrity and security.

Poker Room is the best choice for Mac and Linux computers. You have the option of playing on downloaded and installed software or using a Java interface that does not require downloaded software to play.



13 daily \$1000 free roll tournaments and two \$500 added money tournaments as well as a \$2500 added money "Lucky Dollar" every Saturday. One unique policy is that players scoring the most points any given day are eligible for cash prizes, ranging up to \$250.

Poker Room offers guaranteed tournaments every night at 10pm ET \$15,000 to \$60,000. They are also pioneering a more Casino style tournament where the blind levels increase every few hours instead of every 12 minutes. They always have some unique promotions going on so check out the site.

Poker Room offers great statistical analysis of your game and an open database of the hands played at the site. There traffic is very concentrated to the Hold'em and tournament section. A large proportion of the games are short-handed tables with 5 or 6 players.

Bonus Points are awarded for every raked hand in which a player participates. The points can be converted into cash (Player Points Payback) or used as buy-ins in free roll tournaments (Player Points Freeroll). Each 100 points is converted to \$1.

You cannot look at the top stakes games for soft competition, where PokerRoom is less of a "fish pond". Still, you can at times find \$5/\$10 no-limit Hold'em tables with a view flop percentage of 35-40%. Overall, many full ten-player Hold'em games have a view flop percentage in the 40-ies and 50-ies, and some in the 60-ies - so the games are quite soft and the trend is good.

True Poker

30% first time deposit up to \$100

Play 1000 raked hands to get \$100. Your bonus amount is paid out in increments of \$10 for every 100 raked hands. New players get four free sit and go entries.



Poker World

50% deposit bonus up to \$100 and reload offer

\$100 First Deposit x 5 = 500 raked hands required to be played before the First Deposit Bonus Bucks will be released.

Poker Dictionary

All-in – When a player puts all of their chips into the pot, that player is considered “all-in”. The player can only win the amount of money they put into the pot from each player who calls the bet. They cannot win any side bets.

Backdoor – When a player hits their hand with the last two cards. When there is only one of a player’s suite on the flop but the Turn and then the River card give that person a Flush.

Bad Beat – Having a dominating hand that is ahead and an opponent hits a miracle card to win the hand. This is compounded by the fact that your opponent should not have been in the hand because they were getting terrible odds to stay in the pot.

Bicycle Wheel – Also called a wheel is a Straight Ace through five.

Big Bet Poker – Is referring to the betting limits of No Limit and Pot Limit poker in any variation. The player chooses what amount to bet as opposed to limit where it is a fixed amount every round.

Big Slick – The starting hand of Ace and King is called big slick because it has so much promise pre-flop but can be a slippery slope downhill if the community cards do not help improve the cards.

Blank – A board card that looks like it did not help anyone, such as a deuce on the Turn when the board cards were Ten, seven and jack rainbow.

Bluffing Equity – A percentage that you assign to any player or situation in a hand that the other player will fold without a showdown. For example, the board shows As Js 4s. You have seen your opponent fold to a three flush before so the chances he will again if he does not hold a large spade or two spades. You assign the number depending on what your opponent thinks you have and the type of player they are.

Boat – Another name for a Full House.

Broadway – An Ace high Straight, also people consider face cards big Broadway cards.

Bullets – A Wired Pair of aces in the hole.

Button – The marker that represents where the dealer is which means that is the last person to act at the table after the flop.

Calling Station – A player who only calls bets and does not take advantage of their good hands by raising. They also will not fold very often so you should not bluff them but need to show down the best hand.

Case card – The fourth card of any rank that makes Four of a Kind.

Check-Raise – Usually, but not always, someone in early position will check with the intention of raising if someone else bets after them.

Cold Call – Is to call two or more bets at the same time. For example, if one player calls and another player raises you are forced to call two bets.

Continuation Bet – A bet made after the Flop by the Pre-flop aggressor as a continuation of the original raise. Used to win the pot right there or figure out how strong the hand is after the Flop.

Cowboys – The name for two wired kings in the hole.

Cutoff Position – One seat to the right of the button/dealer position.

Domination – When two players hold the same card rank and one player has a better kicker. For example, AK dominates AJ because they both share an Ace. The only way AJ can win is by hitting a Jack. The AK is always dominating the hand because if an Ace hits the board the AK is still winning. Therefore, the AJ has only two outs while the AK has five outs (excluding any Straight or Flush Draws).

Double Belly Buster – Is the name for an inside Straight with two ways to win. Say you have 74 in the hole and the board cards are 2 5 8. You need a 3 or a 6 to catch one of your two inside Straight draws.

Drawing Dead – You have no way to win the hand with further cards to be dealt.

Equity – Your mathematical share of the pot and your chances of winning it.

Say you have pocket Aces against two people, your pot equity is over 70 percent of the pot.

EV or Expectation – Is the amount of profit or loss you would expect to make if there were no variance in poker. If you are dealt AQs three times, you are expected to win a certain amount of times with that hand.

Therefore, a raise with AQs is playing the positive expectation of your cards.

In the end, your AQs will show a profit due to probability.

Family Pot – When everyone at the table has entered the pot.

Fill Up – To make a Full House from trips or a set.

Fixed Limit – The betting is predetermined for each round.

Flop - The first three cards dealt in Texas Hold'em.

Flush – A hand that has five cards of the same suite.

Free Card – When you get to see another card without needing to call a bet.

Freeze out Tournament – A tournament that does not allow a player to buy more chips after the tournament has started.

Gut-Shot – A draw to an inside Straight such as A, K J T and you need a Queen to make your Straight. You have four outs unless there is a two Flush on the board, which can limit your effective outs to three.

Hand Rankings -

Royal Flush	Ace, King, Queen, Jack Ten all of the same suite
Straight Flush	Any five consecutive cards of the same suite
Four of a Kind	four cards of the same rank, four Aces to four 2's, also called Quads
Full House	three cards of one rank and two cards of another rank, three Kings and two 4's is Kings full of 4's
Flush	any five cards of the same suite
Straight	any five consecutive cards
Three of a Kind	three cards of the same rank, three Aces to three 2's, also called Trips or a Set
Two Pair	two pairs of any rank, two Aces and Kings
One Pair	one pair of any rank, a pair of Aces to 2's
High Card	unimproved hands only have high cards

Implied Odds – Money you should make on future betting rounds if your cards improve to the best hand and you are sure a certain number of payers will stay to see the river.

Odds – A ratio of two probabilities, such as the probability of making the hand vs. not making the hand. If you have a 25 percent chance of hitting your hand then you have a three to one chance of not making it or against.

Open Ended Straight Draw – When you can hit either end of your draw essentially having eight outs if there are no Flush Draws out. Therefore, your hand is J T and the board cards are 9 Q 2 rainbow. You need a King or an 8 to complete your Straight.

Out – A card that will improve your hand. Poker players count how many cards are theoretically still in the deck (unseen) that will improve their hand.

If you have a Pocket Pair then you have two outs to improve to a set or quads.

Paint – Face cards, Jack, Queen, or King.

Passive – A style of play where someone is reluctant to bet or raise.

Pot Equity – The amount of money your hand should win. For instance, pocket Aces against one opponent with K J suited has 83.15% pot equity. Therefore, 83.15% percent of every dollar belongs to the Pocket Pair pre-flop.

Pot Odds – The ratio of money in the pot to the amount of a bet you have to call. This is compared to the number of outs you have and the ratio of hitting

your hand. The better your pot odds are the more likely you should be to call the opponent's bet.

Probe Bet – A small bet meant to gain information about the strength of your hand by noticing the reaction of other players to your bet. Made by a player who was not the pre-flop aggressor.

Protect – When you have the winning hand after the flop you want to protect that hand from drawing hands by betting an amount that makes it unprofitable to chase. In limit poker, it is much more difficult to protect a hand in a large pot.

Rainbow – When three cards of all different suits flop or when there are all four suits on the board out of the four cards being shown. Kd Qh 8c 9s is a rainbow board with no Flush Draws.

Rake - The money removed by the house from a pot to pay as payment for the table. Every poker room had different standards and prices. Usually there is a cap on how much a poker room will take from each hand and if there was no flop, there may not be a rake taken from the pot.

Redraw – A further way to better your hand. For example, you have AQ and the board is 8 9 T J, a King on the River will improve your hand to the nut Straight.

Ring Game – A cash game as opposed to a tournament.

River – The last card that is dealt in any hand.

Runner-Runner – When two cards on consecutive streets made the winning hand. For example, some one holds a backdoor straight draw and the next two cards complete the straight.

Sandbag – Concealing the strength of your hand for inducing bets or bluffs from your opponents.

Scare Card – A card that may complete your opponents draw or better your opponent's hand. When you have the Top Pair of Kings and an Ace slips off the deck this is a scare card.

Semi-Bluff – A bet from someone who does not have the best hand currently but has outs to improve to the best hand. This tactic is meant to cut down on the number of opponents or win the pot right there.

Set – A hand that has three of the same rank and more specifically, two of that rank are in the pocket.

Smooth call – To call a bet with a hand that actually warrants a raise.

Under the Gun (UTG) – The first player to act in a hand.

Wired Pair – A starting hand that has two of the same rank in the hole, ex. two aces is a Wired Pair of bullets, also called a Pocket Pair.

Recommended Book List

David Sklansky – The Theory of Poker

Designed for every variation of poker, this book teaches you the details of poker. It presents the logic and principles of bluffing, reading hands, slow playing, getting free cards, and so much more. It is the mathematical theory of poker; the answers to how professional poker players decide to make certain plays in certain situations according to probability.

David Sklansky – Hold'em for Advanced Players

This book will advance any poker players Limit Hold'em game. It is intended for a more experienced player who has played at least 20,000 to 50,000 hands. It is intended for medium to high stakes so many of the plays will be useless for small stakes. It will give you an understanding of basic poker principles and is a great long-term reference.

Ed Miller – David Sklansky – Small Stakes Hold'em

A great book for the small stakes Limit Hold'em player. It discusses starting hands but the details of the book teach how to think on the later streets.

There are many books on the market that address small stakes Limit

Hold'em but this one is one of the best. It will be a long-term reference for you.

Bob Ciaffone – How is your Pot Limit and No Limit

This book is the best book for anyone that plays big bet poker or wants to move from limit to bug bet poker. No Limit and Pot Limit is a type of betting structure. This book teaches you how to change your thinking and adjust your game to succeed in Hold'em, 7 Card Stud and Omaha.

Bob Ciaffone - Improve your Poker

This is another great book written by Bob Ciaffone “The Coach”. He is a writer of strategy and makes a living being a professional high stakes poker player. This book is a compilation of Ciaffone’s articles into loose subject matter. It discusses No Limit Hold'em, Limit Hold'em, 7 Card Stud and Omaha as well as a great section about satellite tournaments and a section recounting the World Series of Poker Tournament when he finished 3rd to Eric Seidel and Johnny Chan.

Dan Harrington – Harrington on Hold'em

This is the best strategic guide to playing in No Limit Texas Hold'em tournaments, multi- table or single table. It discusses the difference between brick and mortar tournaments and online tournaments. This is a great poker book with tons of hand examples, and the thinking of a successful poker player for each street during a hand. From pre-flop decisions all the way to the River, this book will increase your decision-making skills and intuition.

Gary Carson - Complete Book of Hold'em Poker

I highly suggest this book for Limit and No Limit players. There are interesting insights and theories regarding Texas Hold'em that will get you thinking differently about how to play the game. Very enjoyable read and will increase your skill level threefold.

Matthew Hilger – Internet Texas Hold'em

This is an excellent and extremely detailed book. A well-organized book categorizes how each type of hand can be played when compared to the board cards. The book breaks the hands down to the decision making process and the odds of all types of situations happening. If you are a Limit player this book is the edge you are looking for.

Larry Phillips – Zen and the Art of Poker

This book is highly recommended to understand the intuitive side of poker. It does not tell you how to play the mechanics of poker or the probability of the cards. It tells you how to play within yourself and the foundations of staying centered in the game. This book tells you the professional way of playing poker. It reminds you how to stay centered and how to take advantage of your opponents.

Psychology of Big Bet Poker

Flow like the water is the best advice I can give you as a poker player. Always come in for a raise if you have a hand that is worth a raise in your position (this is considering that only limpers are behind you or no one has entered the pot). Only limp when you have the numbers and are in late position. If you are in the habit of limping in, good players will look at this as being weak and take advantage of you. You will never know what the opponent has but he will be able to understand his hand in comparison to your hand by your reaction. By raising, your opponents will not be able to detect what your probe or continuation bets mean.

Probe bet and continuation bet often. A probe bet is when you were not the pre-flop aggressor but want to see if your hand is best. A continuation bet is just that, a bet that continues your pre-flop aggression. These tactics are meant to put pressure on your opponents and have them make the decision.

You flow like the water by understanding your opponents reply.

If they re-raise they are saying they have a hand and you must determine your pot odds, type of hand you hold and the type of opponent you are playing against. If their re-raise does not make sense then you have a decision to make. That is the flow like the water part, if your opponent is aggressive then you want to switch to a trapping game plan, if they are weak then you want to apply pressure.

If they only call they are probably weak or on a draw. Look at the board and see if it could have hit in some way. Since they did not re-raise you need to decide if you should continue to put them to the test with another bet. The next bet should be a larger bet that makes them fold. If you check the Turn then you are saying, “take the pot away from me with a big bet”. If they fold to your bet then you won the pot move on to the next hand. Poker is that simple!

Of course, there are bluffs in poker and then you have to determine the type of player you are betting against and compare it to your hand strength. If you have nothing and your opponent plays back at you then you are going to fold. If you win the pot right there with a probe or continuation bet then you have succeeded in confusing your opponent. It is much harder to make a hand than to have a hand so by betting you put your opponent to the test of having a hand or not.

Do not push your hands too far. The cards will tell you how to play the hand; your job is to interpret what the cards are saying and how to react to your opponent. If you do not have a starting hand then you fold and continue folding if you never get a hand to play with. Patience is the strongest part of a poker player’s game. If you have been paying attention to the game, you will know how to exploit your opponent’s tendencies and avoid losses. Do not let your ego tell you what to do, let your understanding of your opponent tell you what to do.

You are not going to win at every session. If you break even then many times you are actually ahead. If you still have the money then you still have

the ability to make a profit in the next session. Avoid the thoughts that you are expected to win, or you have to win or that you are suppose to win. Even the best poker players do not win every session. On the other side of the coin, realize that you are not a bad poker player if you lose sometimes.

Ultimately, if you do lose then you have to look at your game and thinking process. You have to be honest with yourself to realize what you may be doing wrong. Are you raising with poor holdings, making a continuation bet against too many players in the hand when you did not improve on the flop? Are you calling too many raises hoping to hit a good flop? I think this is the ultimate demise of many players; they never look at themselves to see what they can change or what has changed in their thinking.

Sometimes the pressure to make money is so great that you start pushing your hands too hard. You may not even realize that this shift in thinking on your part is the reason your game has changed. By contemplating your game and way of thinking, you may unearth a change in thinking that has nothing to do with your actual skill level in poker but how you are approaching the game. For example, you were a winning player, accumulated \$2,000 over three months. You decided to spend \$1,000 of that money on a small vacation. When you return and start playing poker again you may think to yourself; "I need to replenish the \$1,000 I used". You are not as patient and start pushing smaller and smaller edges while risking more and more money.

This would be a change from the patient accumulating style of poker.

Your goal is to reach a point in your play when everything comes natural. This takes practice and long hours of study. Eventually you will reach that

place where you see the board and understand how your opponents play poker. You will be able to read their hands easier, you will be able to predict their actions and you will be able to act in anticipation of those actions before you act. A musician practices the language of music and their instrument until it comes second nature to them. A Jazz musician does not think what notes they are going to play they understand the structure of the composition (game structure/type) and the notes that create a certain emotion (players at a table). They are in a quasi state of awareness and intuition blended together, interchangeable for the needed moment. I hope your poker game gets to that point.

Appendix I

This is a description of a World Class Poker Player from the Loki project. The Loki project is trying to build artificial intelligence and considers these attributes in creating the learning structure of the computer program.

Hand strength assesses the strength of a hand in relation to the other hands. The simplest hand strength computation is a function of the cards in the hand and the current community cards. A better hand strength computation takes into account the number of players still in the game, the position of the player at the table, and the history of betting for the current game. An even more accurate calculation considers the probabilities for each possible

opponent hand, based on the likelihood of each hand being played to the current point in the game.

Hand potential computes the probability that a hand will improve to win, or that a leading hand will lose, as additional community cards appear. For example, a hand that contains four cards in the same suit may have low hand strength, but has good potential to win with a flush as more community cards are dealt. Conversely, a hand with a high pair could decrease in strength and lose to a flush as many cards of a common suit appear on the board. At a minimum, hand potential is a function of the cards in the hand and the current community cards. However, a better calculation could use all of the additional factors described in the hand strength computation.

Betting strategy determines whether to fold, call/check, or bet/raise in any given situation. A minimum strategy is based on hand strength. Refinements consider hand potential, pot odds (your winning chances compared to the expected return from the pot), bluffing, and opponent modeling and trying to play unpredictably.

Bluffing allows you to make a profit from weak hands, and can be used to create a false impression about your play to improve the profitability of subsequent hands. Bluffing is essential for successful play. Game theory can be used to compute a theoretically optimal bluffing frequency in certain situations. A minimal bluffing system merely bluffs this percentage of hands indiscriminately. In practice, you should also consider other factors (such as hand potential) and be able to predict the probability that your opponent will fold in order to identify profitable bluffing opportunities.

Unpredictability makes it difficult for opponents to form an accurate model of your strategy. By varying your playing strategy over time, opponents may be induced to make mistakes based on an incorrect model.

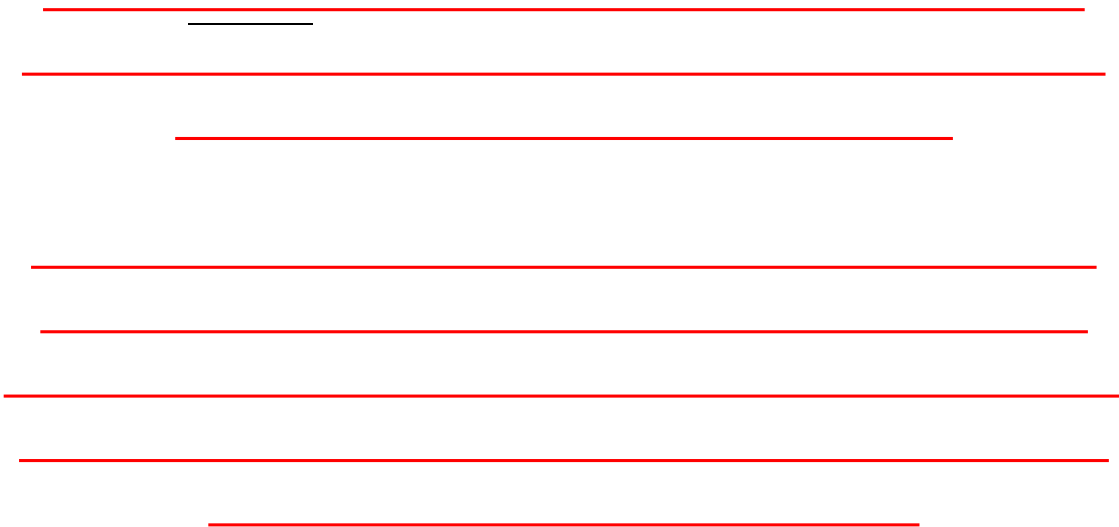
Opponent modeling allows you to determine a likely probability distribution for your opponent's hidden cards. Other forms of deception (such as calling with a strong hand) are not considered here for this simulation. A minimal opponent model might use a single model for all opponents in a given hand. Opponent modeling may be improved by modifying those probabilities based on the collected statistics and betting history of each opponent. Several other identifiable characteristics may not be necessary to play reasonably strong poker, but may eventually be required for world-class play. Opponent modeling is integral to successful poker play.

It is important to differentiate an *optimal* strategy from a *maximizing* strategy.

The optimal player makes its decisions based on game-theoretic probabilities, without regard to specific context. The maximizing player takes into account the opponent's sub-optimal tendencies and adjusts its play to exploit these weaknesses. In poker, a player that detects and adjusts to opponent weaknesses will win more than a player who does not. For example, against a strong conservative player, it would be correct to fold the probable second-best hand. However, against a weaker player who bluffs too much, it would be an error to fold that same hand. In real poker, it is very

common for opponents to play sub-optimally. A player who fails to detect and exploit these weaknesses will not win as much as a better player who does. Thus, a maximizing program will out-perform an optimal program against sub-optimal players. Although a game-theoretic optimal solution for Hold'em would be interesting and provide a good baseline for comparing program (and human) performance, it would in no way "solve the game." To produce a world-class poker program, strong opponent modeling is essential.

I am sure this E-book will help you win more money in the long run and will pay for itself in just one session. If you want to buy the complete book or have any questions email the writer – webmaster@totalpokerpro.com.



Appendix II

Penn Poker Project Hand Probabilities

Simulated Using Open Source System Available at www.seas.upenn.edu/~poker/

Cards		Chance of winning against X opponents where X is...										Cards	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	9 Comp*		
P	A A	0.8595	0.7388	0.6317	0.5511	0.4723	0.4449	0.3924	0.3443	0.3243	0.3100	A A	P
S	A K	0.6762	0.4862	0.4009	0.3503	0.2990	0.2605	0.2393	0.2207	0.1974	0.2019	A K	S
	A K	0.6436	0.4694	0.3770	0.3135	0.2621	0.2328	0.2063	0.1735	0.1619	0.1667	A K	
P	K K	0.8160	0.6885	0.5776	0.4941	0.4194	0.3704	0.3292	0.2840	0.2556	0.2602	K K	P
S	A Q	0.6640	0.4553	0.3735	0.3245	0.2880	0.2546	0.2200	0.2049	0.1898	0.1866	A Q	S
	A Q	0.6283	0.4529	0.3406	0.2949	0.2443	0.2070	0.1844	0.1644	0.1420	0.1487	A Q	
S	K Q	0.6038	0.4655	0.3658	0.3271	0.2693	0.2421	0.2062	0.1930	0.1726	0.1808	K Q	S
	K Q	0.5975	0.4272	0.3388	0.2769	0.2355	0.2000	0.1663	0.1518	0.1298	0.1443	K Q	
P	Q Q	0.7968	0.6522	0.5299	0.4287	0.3597	0.3094	0.2772	0.2420	0.2207	0.2203	Q Q	P
S	A J	0.6216	0.4623	0.3577	0.3058	0.2616	0.2322	0.2062	0.1896	0.1623	0.1747	A J	S
	A J	0.6342	0.4357	0.3400	0.2730	0.2272	0.1926	0.1613	0.1473	0.1265	0.1345	A J	
	K J	0.5770	0.4049	0.3171	0.2534	0.2076	0.1790	0.1570	0.1393	0.1202	0.1318	K J	
S	K J	0.6111	0.4436	0.3420	0.2946	0.2456	0.2209	0.2030	0.1825	0.1582	0.1705	K J	S
	Q J	0.5550	0.4045	0.3066	0.2451	0.2087	0.1823	0.1573	0.1387	0.1212	0.1289	Q J	
S	Q J	0.5822	0.4317	0.3431	0.2750	0.2618	0.2065	0.1915	0.1688	0.1582	0.1658	Q J	S
P	J J	0.7646	0.5913	0.4946	0.4055	0.3149	0.2786	0.2372	0.2107	0.1754	0.1909	J J	P
	A 10	0.6002	0.4275	0.3144	0.2499	0.2157	0.1786	0.1574	0.1335	0.1142	0.1243	A 10	
S	A 10	0.6293	0.4375	0.3738	0.3028	0.2440	0.2126	0.1978	0.1762	0.1560	0.1663	A 10	S
	K 10	0.5701	0.3817	0.2970	0.2414	0.2029	0.1756	0.1469	0.1294	0.1165	0.1223	K 10	
S	K 10	0.5862	0.4340	0.3214	0.3049	0.2466	0.2037	0.1808	0.1606	0.1519	0.1614	K 10	S
S	Q 10	0.5848	0.4245	0.3391	0.2801	0.2351	0.1959	0.1849	0.1657	0.1396	0.1584	Q 10	S
	Q 10	0.5647	0.3683	0.2980	0.2296	0.1994	0.1709	0.1428	0.1268	0.1125	0.1199	Q 10	
	J 10	0.5470	0.3742	0.2885	0.2296	0.2023	0.1567	0.1387	0.1227	0.1110	0.1213	J 10	
S	J 10	0.5674	0.3815	0.3280	0.2704	0.2286	0.2006	0.1713	0.1584	0.1438	0.1578	J 10	S
P	10 10	0.7443	0.5515	0.4415	0.3541	0.2844	0.2384	0.2031	0.1859	0.1682	0.1683	10 10	P
S	A 9	0.6051	0.4259	0.3222	0.2587	0.2213	0.1929	0.1755	0.1511	0.1498	0.1460	A 9	S
	A 9	0.6043	0.4052	0.2941	0.2230	0.1910	0.1565	0.1264	0.1188	0.0989	0.1020	A 9	
S	K 9	0.5616	0.3939	0.3054	0.2591	0.2112	0.2005	0.1608	0.1447	0.1247	0.1415	K 9	S
	K 9	0.5608	0.3821	0.2740	0.2095	0.1693	0.1420	0.1222	0.1042	0.0934	0.0993	K 9	
	Q 9	0.5191	0.3546	0.2605	0.2076	0.1695	0.1418	0.1186	0.1004	0.0916	0.0981	Q 9	
S	Q 9	0.5531	0.3901	0.2926	0.2522	0.1990	0.1773	0.1516	0.1386	0.1340	0.1382	Q 9	S
S	J 9	0.5598	0.3817	0.2793	0.2376	0.1966	0.1791	0.1728	0.1376	0.1330	0.1380	J 9	S
	J 9	0.5114	0.3319	0.2662	0.2071	0.1669	0.1435	0.1183	0.1091	0.0932	0.0999	J 9	
	10 9	0.5026	0.3472	0.2560	0.2051	0.1683	0.1426	0.1177	0.1059	0.0916	0.1038	10 9	
S	10 9	0.5074	0.3530	0.2899	0.2506	0.2016	0.1708	0.1637	0.1459	0.1291	0.1407	10 9	S
P	9 9	0.7146	0.5215	0.4149	0.3246	0.2460	0.2227	0.1876	0.1613	0.1567	0.1529	9 9	P
	A 8	0.5768	0.3877	0.2719	0.2139	0.1704	0.1449	0.1265	0.1024	0.0881	0.0942	A 8	
S	A 8	0.5861	0.4020	0.3068	0.2390	0.2142	0.1922	0.1628	0.1369	0.1397	0.1389	A 8	S
	K 8	0.5513	0.3329	0.2501	0.2006	0.1466	0.1236	0.1074	0.0917	0.0796	0.0845	K 8	
S	K 8	0.5733	0.3793	0.2952	0.2405	0.2013	0.1723	0.1550	0.1348	0.1139	0.1277	K 8	S
	Q 8	0.5211	0.3287	0.2305	0.1895	0.1531	0.1190	0.1036	0.0846	0.0741	0.0828	Q 8	
S	Q 8	0.5487	0.3715	0.2800	0.2189	0.1857	0.1627	0.1357	0.1281	0.1106	0.1242	Q 8	S
	J 8	0.4995	0.3381	0.2420	0.1856	0.1481	0.1228	0.1079	0.0864	0.0777	0.0850	J 8	
S	J 8	0.5065	0.3751	0.2712	0.2283	0.1891	0.1539	0.1457	0.1206	0.1156	0.1247	J 8	S
	10 8	0.4675	0.3159	0.2195	0.1834	0.1506	0.1257	0.1091	0.0922	0.0842	0.0893	10 8	
S	10 8	0.4775	0.3425	0.2658	0.2207	0.1807	0.1657	0.1400	0.1227	0.1095	0.1273	10 8	S
	9 8	0.4675	0.2997	0.2308	0.1881	0.1532	0.1262	0.1070	0.0914	0.0867	0.0897	9 8	

S	9	8	0.4675	0.3421	0.2600	0.2216	0.1934	0.1607	0.1442	0.1231	0.1117	0.1263	9	8	S
P	8	8	0.6493	0.4945	0.3733	0.2927	0.2366	0.1877	0.1763	0.1525	0.1405	0.1416	8	8	P
S	A	7	0.5596	0.3975	0.3138	0.2469	0.2168	0.1902	0.1611	0.1362	0.1325	0.1335	A	7	S
	A	7	0.5704	0.3606	0.2645	0.2063	0.1628	0.1374	0.1169	0.0923	0.0828	0.0883	A	7	
S	K	7	0.5420	0.3706	0.2756	0.2290	0.1875	0.1699	0.1546	0.1306	0.1258	0.1223	K	7	S
	K	7	0.5423	0.3419	0.2383	0.1816	0.1510	0.1261	0.1057	0.0841	0.0755	0.0786	K	7	
S	Q	7	0.5070	0.3561	0.2717	0.2144	0.1676	0.1496	0.1205	0.1045	0.1045	0.1120	Q	7	S
	Q	7	0.4923	0.3112	0.2193	0.1653	0.1353	0.1105	0.0903	0.0760	0.0659	0.0697	Q	7	
S	J	7	0.4817	0.3244	0.2389	0.1950	0.1777	0.1378	0.1286	0.1211	0.1065	0.1112	J	7	S
	J	7	0.4642	0.2920	0.2239	0.1616	0.1286	0.1031	0.0822	0.0746	0.0670	0.0710	J	7	
	10	7	0.4444	0.2937	0.2099	0.1671	0.1350	0.1063	0.0912	0.0813	0.0718	0.0753	10	7	
S	10	7	0.4717	0.3347	0.2500	0.2130	0.1600	0.1487	0.1319	0.1164	0.1013	0.1147	10	7	S
	9	7	0.4446	0.2688	0.2129	0.1706	0.1330	0.1110	0.0972	0.0789	0.0756	0.0796	9	7	
S	9	7	0.4656	0.3271	0.2409	0.2114	0.1655	0.1469	0.1396	0.1213	0.1079	0.1174	9	7	S
	8	7	0.4236	0.2811	0.2139	0.1634	0.1316	0.1143	0.0991	0.0909	0.0740	0.0836	8	7	
S	8	7	0.4876	0.3082	0.2563	0.1994	0.1747	0.1658	0.1279	0.1168	0.1031	0.1202	8	7	S
P	7	7	0.6756	0.4824	0.3348	0.2623	0.2026	0.1855	0.1623	0.1396	0.1358	0.1336	7	7	P
S	A	6	0.5972	0.3721	0.2913	0.2497	0.2036	0.1733	0.1538	0.1314	0.1258	0.1297	A	6	S
	A	6	0.5683	0.3646	0.2508	0.1962	0.1561	0.1269	0.1172	0.0952	0.0822	0.0839	A	6	
S	K	6	0.5200	0.3801	0.2764	0.2208	0.1861	0.1481	0.1335	0.1289	0.1152	0.1184	K	6	S
	K	6	0.5265	0.3247	0.2370	0.1664	0.1442	0.1185	0.0969	0.0853	0.0695	0.0746	K	6	
	Q	6	0.4844	0.2950	0.2201	0.1538	0.1240	0.0997	0.0908	0.0735	0.0639	0.0658	Q	6	
S	Q	6	0.4994	0.3361	0.2466	0.1972	0.1637	0.1477	0.1184	0.1043	0.1019	0.1085	Q	6	S
S	J	6	0.5064	0.3182	0.2222	0.1904	0.1537	0.1408	0.1179	0.1069	0.0909	0.1010	J	6	S
	J	6	0.4508	0.2833	0.1863	0.1539	0.1223	0.0879	0.0751	0.0642	0.0541	0.0594	J	6	
	10	6	0.4487	0.2636	0.1876	0.1441	0.1098	0.0995	0.0776	0.0718	0.0562	0.0628	10	6	
S	10	6	0.4509	0.3243	0.2195	0.1846	0.1541	0.1268	0.1207	0.0969	0.0910	0.1031	10	6	S
	9	6	0.4217	0.2684	0.1893	0.1486	0.1164	0.0963	0.0818	0.0705	0.0628	0.0677	9	6	
S	9	6	0.4335	0.3127	0.2140	0.1798	0.1546	0.1334	0.1189	0.1073	0.1017	0.1065	9	6	S
S	8	6	0.4321	0.2896	0.2496	0.1803	0.1581	0.1463	0.1236	0.1149	0.1031	0.1116	8	6	S
	8	6	0.4027	0.2590	0.1878	0.1534	0.1166	0.1037	0.0906	0.0744	0.0721	0.0740	8	6	
S	7	6	0.4197	0.2915	0.2399	0.1886	0.1630	0.1421	0.1323	0.1157	0.1046	0.1147	7	6	S
	7	6	0.4001	0.2624	0.1992	0.1481	0.1223	0.1056	0.0919	0.0847	0.0767	0.0788	7	6	
P	6	6	0.6338	0.4229	0.3142	0.2405	0.1939	0.1715	0.1511	0.1301	0.1266	0.1277	6	6	P
	A	5	0.5587	0.3653	0.2529	0.2012	0.1618	0.1407	0.1164	0.1048	0.0898	0.0892	A	5	
S	A	5	0.6032	0.4097	0.2795	0.2493	0.2151	0.1811	0.1636	0.1457	0.1370	0.1343	A	5	S
S	K	5	0.5385	0.3713	0.2666	0.2164	0.1712	0.1417	0.1251	0.1136	0.1104	0.1157	K	5	S
	K	5	0.5118	0.3234	0.2235	0.1735	0.1343	0.1060	0.0894	0.0776	0.0668	0.0713	K	5	
S	Q	5	0.5305	0.3197	0.2715	0.1817	0.1644	0.1389	0.1212	0.1203	0.1004	0.1055	Q	5	S
	Q	5	0.4775	0.2912	0.2062	0.1544	0.1244	0.0983	0.0799	0.0707	0.0615	0.0626	Q	5	
S	J	5	0.4854	0.2920	0.2359	0.1783	0.1550	0.1306	0.1101	0.0941	0.0881	0.0986	J	5	S
	J	5	0.4594	0.2731	0.1927	0.1387	0.1123	0.0875	0.0719	0.0597	0.0570	0.0563	J	5	
S	10	5	0.4434	0.2826	0.2058	0.1606	0.1481	0.1312	0.1036	0.0938	0.0882	0.0923	10	5	S
	10	5	0.4112	0.2453	0.1785	0.1328	0.0960	0.0786	0.0688	0.0546	0.0500	0.0522	10	5	
S	9	5	0.4303	0.2827	0.1955	0.1775	0.1452	0.1196	0.1107	0.0803	0.0897	0.0956	9	5	S
	9	5	0.3844	0.2569	0.1713	0.1278	0.0978	0.0849	0.0681	0.0604	0.0513	0.0560	9	5	
S	8	5	0.3965	0.2865	0.2276	0.1730	0.1535	0.1224	0.1139	0.1088	0.0918	0.1012	8	5	S
	8	5	0.3911	0.2423	0.1774	0.1419	0.1063	0.0854	0.0742	0.0644	0.0564	0.0630	8	5	
S	7	5	0.4040	0.2747	0.2079	0.1789	0.1593	0.1402	0.1188	0.1058	0.0979	0.1069	7	5	S
	7	5	0.3680	0.2356	0.1829	0.1469	0.1101	0.0984	0.0832	0.0726	0.0654	0.0701	7	5	
S	6	5	0.4056	0.2902	0.2180	0.1754	0.1719	0.1398	0.1228	0.1078	0.1194	0.1113	6	5	S
	6	5	0.3720	0.2468	0.1743	0.1531	0.1217	0.1066	0.0860	0.0843	0.0749	0.0757	6	5	

P	5	5	0.6068	0.3984	0.2763	0.2226	0.1846	0.1589	0.1369	0.1232	0.1288	0.1215	5	5	P
	A	4	0.5572	0.3552	0.2431	0.1920	0.1675	0.1270	0.1137	0.0941	0.0832	0.0872	A	4	
S	A	4	0.5937	0.3891	0.3024	0.2343	0.2022	0.1647	0.1489	0.1371	0.1312	0.1317	A	4	S
	K	4	0.5071	0.3059	0.2175	0.1625	0.1232	0.1039	0.0890	0.0741	0.0657	0.0695	K	4	
S	K	4	0.5512	0.3340	0.2426	0.2006	0.1853	0.1528	0.1245	0.1140	0.1008	0.1140	K	4	S
S	Q	4	0.4948	0.3328	0.2360	0.1836	0.1632	0.1428	0.1312	0.1025	0.0925	0.1043	Q	4	S
	Q	4	0.4761	0.2773	0.1902	0.1421	0.1201	0.0903	0.0798	0.0666	0.0567	0.0613	Q	4	
S	J	4	0.4644	0.3128	0.2341	0.1681	0.1358	0.1286	0.1079	0.0873	0.0907	0.0973	J	4	S
	J	4	0.4375	0.2537	0.1853	0.1264	0.0981	0.0834	0.0769	0.0574	0.0503	0.0550	J	4	
	10	4	0.4125	0.2338	0.1656	0.1249	0.0946	0.0785	0.0684	0.0536	0.0454	0.0504	10	4	
S	10	4	0.4230	0.2785	0.2129	0.1689	0.1401	0.1228	0.1004	0.0895	0.0834	0.0911	10	4	S
S	9	4	0.4250	0.2683	0.1871	0.1499	0.1260	0.1099	0.0936	0.0854	0.0852	0.0870	9	4	S
	9	4	0.3815	0.2194	0.1523	0.1087	0.0840	0.0716	0.0613	0.0508	0.0450	0.0465	9	4	
S	8	4	0.4224	0.2471	0.2091	0.1648	0.1297	0.1110	0.1010	0.0940	0.0824	0.0914	8	4	S
	8	4	0.3743	0.2323	0.1479	0.1108	0.0899	0.0739	0.0623	0.0524	0.0454	0.0525	8	4	
	7	4	0.3565	0.2088	0.1639	0.1244	0.0965	0.0852	0.0667	0.0620	0.0529	0.0596	7	4	
S	7	4	0.3977	0.2869	0.1891	0.1649	0.1452	0.1161	0.1064	0.0938	0.0929	0.0974	7	4	S
	6	4	0.3371	0.2247	0.1617	0.1290	0.1083	0.0944	0.0801	0.0739	0.0657	0.0675	6	4	
S	6	4	0.3563	0.2556	0.1978	0.1662	0.1509	0.1319	0.1249	0.1000	0.0921	0.1044	6	4	S
	5	4	0.3448	0.2468	0.1792	0.1323	0.1057	0.1001	0.0866	0.0750	0.0694	0.0736	5	4	
S	5	4	0.3939	0.2730	0.2267	0.1796	0.1578	0.1442	0.1306	0.1060	0.1061	0.1090	5	4	S
P	4	4	0.5207	0.3436	0.2536	0.1940	0.1621	0.1331	0.1335	0.1269	0.1221	0.1194	4	4	P
	A	3	0.5219	0.3453	0.2385	0.1845	0.1496	0.1331	0.1120	0.0946	0.0829	0.0850	A	3	
S	A	3	0.5792	0.3931	0.2966	0.2288	0.1886	0.1794	0.1643	0.1375	0.1246	0.1307	A	3	S
S	K	3	0.5323	0.3615	0.2270	0.2061	0.1694	0.1473	0.1303	0.1154	0.1032	0.1126	K	3	S
	K	3	0.4998	0.2940	0.2024	0.1615	0.1279	0.1096	0.0886	0.0734	0.0635	0.0687	K	3	
	Q	3	0.4624	0.2794	0.1906	0.1394	0.1159	0.0937	0.0767	0.0646	0.0553	0.0605	Q	3	
S	Q	3	0.4909	0.3111	0.2385	0.1856	0.1545	0.1319	0.1246	0.1007	0.0902	0.1042	Q	3	S
	J	3	0.4279	0.2578	0.1812	0.1366	0.1002	0.0860	0.0702	0.0609	0.0524	0.0541	J	3	
S	J	3	0.4459	0.3031	0.2139	0.1722	0.1511	0.1220	0.1064	0.0987	0.0884	0.0957	J	3	S
S	10	3	0.4403	0.2779	0.2021	0.1600	0.1368	0.1202	0.1014	0.0985	0.0808	0.0906	10	3	S
	10	3	0.3966	0.2249	0.1593	0.1240	0.0990	0.0792	0.0627	0.0565	0.0458	0.0495	10	3	
	9	3	0.3638	0.2203	0.1444	0.1076	0.0928	0.0696	0.0602	0.0532	0.0417	0.0451	9	3	
S	9	3	0.4032	0.2511	0.2030	0.1602	0.1317	0.1114	0.1027	0.0922	0.0796	0.0853	9	3	S
S	8	3	0.3871	0.2417	0.1918	0.1421	0.1174	0.1127	0.0985	0.0865	0.0793	0.0823	8	3	S
	8	3	0.3294	0.2075	0.1424	0.1047	0.0831	0.0683	0.0512	0.0433	0.0444	0.0433	8	3	
S	7	3	0.3599	0.2513	0.1758	0.1537	0.1207	0.1073	0.0989	0.0854	0.0799	0.0875	7	3	S
	7	3	0.3311	0.1991	0.1400	0.1093	0.0923	0.0707	0.0583	0.0513	0.0435	0.0494	7	3	
	6	3	0.3301	0.2106	0.1592	0.1130	0.0870	0.0757	0.0668	0.0637	0.0559	0.0573	6	3	
S	6	3	0.3714	0.2484	0.1802	0.1601	0.1293	0.1250	0.0914	0.1064	0.0975	0.0949	6	3	S
S	5	3	0.3623	0.2681	0.2015	0.1713	0.1461	0.1154	0.1170	0.0966	0.0980	0.1018	5	3	S
	5	3	0.3195	0.2144	0.1655	0.1202	0.0992	0.0877	0.0779	0.0668	0.0641	0.0657	5	3	
S	4	3	0.3975	0.2524	0.1981	0.1595	0.1499	0.1245	0.1054	0.1003	0.0917	0.0981	4	3	S
	4	3	0.3277	0.2061	0.1555	0.1174	0.1001	0.0889	0.0729	0.0665	0.0570	0.0617	4	3	
P	3	3	0.5422	0.3238	0.2448	0.1929	0.1576	0.1408	0.1385	0.1252	0.1160	0.1186	3	3	P
	A	2	0.5296	0.3346	0.2292	0.1811	0.1569	0.1227	0.1055	0.0971	0.0787	0.0818	A	2	
S	A	2	0.5291	0.3654	0.2786	0.2341	0.1975	0.1655	0.1540	0.1337	0.1238	0.1269	A	2	S
S	K	2	0.4994	0.3285	0.2452	0.2010	0.1679	0.1557	0.1278	0.1210	0.1091	0.1127	K	2	S
	K	2	0.4833	0.3022	0.2055	0.1581	0.1209	0.0996	0.0834	0.0712	0.0611	0.0676	K	2	
	Q	2	0.4619	0.2554	0.1819	0.1319	0.1041	0.0892	0.0778	0.0652	0.0571	0.0595	Q	2	
S	Q	2	0.4972	0.3067	0.2102	0.1841	0.1466	0.1235	0.1209	0.1069	0.0988	0.1028	Q	2	S
S	J	2	0.4549	0.2739	0.2162	0.1592	0.1249	0.1280	0.1089	0.0938	0.0914	0.0950	J	2	S

J	2	0.4115	0.2441	0.1732	0.1146	0.1011	0.0790	0.0715	0.0560	0.0473	0.0533	J	2	
S	10	0.4199	0.2785	0.1961	0.1587	0.1276	0.1176	0.0967	0.0955	0.0843	0.0897	10	2	S
	10	0.3934	0.2208	0.1659	0.1163	0.0896	0.0753	0.0602	0.0564	0.0444	0.0488	10	2	
	9	0.3701	0.2163	0.1436	0.1017	0.0797	0.0688	0.0569	0.0483	0.0428	0.0447	9	2	
S	9	0.3850	0.2367	0.1978	0.1457	0.1188	0.1072	0.1011	0.0828	0.0798	0.0846	9	2	S
	8	0.3480	0.1990	0.1366	0.1030	0.0820	0.0691	0.0533	0.0490	0.0396	0.0420	8	2	
S	8	0.3437	0.2496	0.1671	0.1403	0.1351	0.1054	0.0912	0.0839	0.0758	0.0811	8	2	S
S	7	0.3644	0.2304	0.1675	0.1407	0.1191	0.0990	0.0989	0.0821	0.0792	0.0791	7	2	S
	7	0.3204	0.1874	0.1332	0.0965	0.0681	0.0656	0.0502	0.0458	0.0407	0.0404	7	2	
S	6	0.3471	0.2170	0.1778	0.1520	0.1372	0.1061	0.1039	0.0874	0.0826	0.0848	6	2	S
	6	0.3122	0.1958	0.1327	0.0986	0.0818	0.0655	0.0589	0.0475	0.0470	0.0472	6	2	
	5	0.3127	0.2003	0.1394	0.1079	0.0892	0.0722	0.0689	0.0641	0.0559	0.0556	5	2	
S	5	0.3429	0.2613	0.1876	0.1519	0.1230	0.1134	0.1006	0.1093	0.0984	0.0925	5	2	S
S	4	0.3064	0.2408	0.1656	0.1470	0.1243	0.1047	0.1135	0.0932	0.0815	0.0902	4	2	S
	4	0.2898	0.1823	0.1314	0.1036	0.0906	0.0780	0.0621	0.0577	0.0558	0.0540	4	2	
	3	0.2950	0.1895	0.1173	0.0998	0.0826	0.0673	0.0566	0.0558	0.0531	0.0502	3	2	
S	3	0.3189	0.2111	0.1886	0.1416	0.1223	0.1113	0.1036	0.0998	0.0834	0.0870	3	2	S
P	2	0.4749	0.3026	0.2235	0.1743	0.1524	0.1425	0.1312	0.1221	0.1156	0.1193	2	2	P

* 9 Comparison column is taken from <http://1-169pockethands.hitstrade.us/> as a reference

S= suited, P=pair