



HOW TO PLAY POKER

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//Introduction

So, you want to learn how to play **Poker**?

Poker gets a bit of a bad rap from Hollywood. It is typically portrayed through the eyes of the down-and-out and the desperate, with knee-bashing mob bosses around each wrong turn. The game is played in dark rooms with shady lighting and lots of smoke lingering in the air, and the good guy always comes out a little bruised, but okay.

Maybe that was the case in the old days, but today's reality is somewhat different. The game still calls for concentration, a little skill and a little luck, but the places it is played... aren't so similar to Hollywood. Sure, there are still the "Boys Nights" where makeshift tables are pulled together in living rooms and back alley joints, but for the most part, Poker is played in well lit casinos, or through a trusted online casino in the comfort of a cozy home.

But Hollywood is not where this game hails from. Its history is, in fact, highly contested.

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//Whats in it for you?

The first version of the history of Poker is that it's the result of multiple sources. A derivative of the Persian game As Nas, the French game poque, the Irish Poca and the German pochen.

There are traces of the English game brag, which descends from the game brelan.

Then there is the version of Poker's history that says that the game, as we know it, is not sufficiently visible in any older games. As per this view, modern day Poker developed in America in the 18th century as it spread across Mississippi towards the West during the gold rush.

Throughout the 20th century, Poker became a much more publically acceptable pasttime. This was aided by the World Series of Poker which began in the early 1970s; as well as a surge of literature in the late 1970s and the vast number of features on TV shows in the 1980s thus the game of Poker was entrenched into American culture.

In 1998, the face of Poker was altered indefinitely when Planet Poker, the first online casino was launched. The launch of Paradise Poker followed in 1999. A new age of Poker playing was born, bringing with it the shift in how Poker is perceived by both spectators and players alike. Since the launch of video poker began to give people an insider's view of the game, there has been a growing feeling that anyone can play this game. And they're right!

// The Right Steps

The Words

- To **check** is to not place a bet.
- To **call** is to match a bet. Calling is useful if you are not quite sure of your hand but want to see what the next round holds before folding.
- To **raise** is to up the betting amount.
- Upon deciding that a hand is not satisfactory, a player may **fold** and not play further.
- The **flop** is the collection of cards that have already been played. These are usually housed in a box to the right of the dealer before they are shuffled back into the deck.
- The **blind** is applicable to the two players on the left hand side of the dealer. The blind requires the two players to make a bet even though they do not yet know the value of their cards.
- To **bluff** is to display confidence in cards that do not have any remarkable value.
- **Going all in** refers to using all your chips in a single or final bet. This is done either when a player has a powerful hand or when a player wishes to take their bluff as far as possible.
- There are four types of **limits** in Poker. No limit, pot limit, spread limit and fixed limit. No limit games allow players to raise their bets to any amount. In a pot limit game, players cannot raise more than the total sum of the pot. A spread limit indicates the specific range of bets that can be made by players, and fixed limit games give players only one choice – to bet or not to bet.



TIPS:

PLAYERS OFTEN WEAR HATS OR GLASSES TO HIDE THEIR EXPRESSIONS SO OTHER PLAYERS CAN'T TELL WHEN THEY'RE BLUFFING.

// The Basics of the Game

Poker is played in a clockwise direction around the table and cards are dealt in the same direction. The first verbal declaration a player makes is binding which means that, for example, once a player announces that they will "raise" they cannot merely "call". Yes, it's a gentleman's game and you will be held to your word.

Passing the buck refers to the right to deal a hand. The dealer button rotates around the table so each player gets a chance. This only happens in casual settings as casinos have official dealers.

Before the cards are dealt, a blind is usually placed by two players. There are two kinds of blinds – the big blind and the small blind.

The small blind is paid by the player to the left of the dealer to ensure action in each hand. It is usually half the big blind.

The big blind is played by the player two places to the left of the dealer. It is usually twice the amount of the small blind.

The ante is a set amount paid into a pot by players before the hand is dealt and the game begins. It encourages players to keep playing when they feel like they could fold. However, antes are not typically used when a blind is used.

The round is completed once every player has bet an amount equal to the current wager, raised the wager or folded.

// Game Play



Claim your Winnings



Claim your Winnings



Play responsibly

The Hands

Depending on the type of Poker being played, players use the cards available to create the best possible hands as per this chart. The only exception to this ranking is the Lowball Poker variation which rewards poor poker hands.

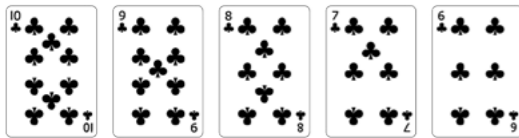
Royal Flush



Straight



Straight Flush



3-of-a-Kind



4-of-a-Kind



Two Pair



Full House



One Pair



Flush



High Card



The different types of Poker

Straight Poker is played with a standard deck of cards (52 cards) - the aim being creating winning card combinations. Players are allowed to raise and re-raise at various points of the game.

Straight Poker is the oldest known variation of Poker, with links to Primero, the game played by aristocrats during the American Revolution.

Whether the origins of Primero are Spanish or Italian is not known.



In **Stud** Poker players are dealt a mix of face-up and face-down cards. Once the cards are dealt, betting commences. This version of the game was originally played with three cards, but has since developed into a seven card game.

Players need to make the best possible five-card combination out of their seven cards. The extra two cards make it more likely that a player will come out on top.

In **Draw** Poker, a five-card draw is most common. Players are dealt complete hands before betting commences. Players can then announce how many of the cards in their hand they would like replaced. The number of cards that can be replaced is usually three cards but is determined by the House Rules. This is known as "drawing". This is followed by an "after the draw" betting round which starts with the player to the left of the dealer. If, after this betting round, more than one player remains, the player with the best hand wins.

Casinos try to weed out cheating by not allowing the bottom hand of the deck to be used.

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Draw Poker Variations

The **Gardena Jackpots** variation is played in accordance with the standard rules of Poker, but includes a Joker as a wildcard.

In the **Kansas City Lowball** version of draw Poker is also referred to as “deuce-to-seven low” and allots better hand values to, you guessed it, 2s to 7s. This means that any hand combination using an 8, 9, 10, Jack, Queen, King or Ace has no value.

California Lowball is a variation of draw Poker that, similar to Kansas City Lowball, gives “ace-to-five low” however, this variation also has a Joker in the pack.

California High/Low split is played with one joker, as well as high and low hands. This version of the game uses “ace-to-five low” values and high hand and low hand split the pot. In this game an 8-high or better hand is needed to win low. If none of the hands qualify low, the high poker hand wins.

Badugi, a game thought to have Korean origins, was first played in America after the Vietnam War. In Badugi, four hands are used and all cards are of different ranks and suits. Players can replace up to four cards in an effort to get the best badugi hand – a hand consisting of all four suits. Any duplicate cards are removed during the hand ranking stage. Baduci is a sub-variant of Badugi which uses a “deuce-to-seven triple draw low”.

Q-Ball is the brainchild of the professional poker player and author, Michael Wiesenberg. The game is played with three blinds, one joker and “ace-to-five low” values assigned to cards.



In **High/Low declare** the game is played like a regular five-card draw, but includes a declaration phase whereby each player hides two chips from their own stack underneath the table. Players then raise a fist containing two, one or no chips. No chips means the player wants to win the low half of the pot. One chip means the player wants to win the high half of the pot. Two chips mean the player plans to scoop or take the pot. Once all the players have raised a fist, all players open their fists to reveal their chips, and intentions. If a player has two chips and the best hand, they scoop the pot. If not, half the pot goes to the player who declared high and has the highest hand. The other half goes to the player who declared low and has the lowest hand.

Double-/Triple-Draw Poker is a variation within a variation. Any game of Draw Poker can be played with two or three draw phases. Triple draw lowball, using either ace-to-five or deuce-to-seven are quite popular.

In the **spit in the ocean** variation, each player is dealt four cards. A fifth card acts as a community value card in the middle of the table and is used for each player. After the initial round of betting, players can draw and replace cards from the shoe.

Skinny Minnie/ Shotgun/ Roll out require five cards to be dealt to players, and a round of betting thereafter. This betting round begins the “rollout” where each player sorts their cards into their chosen order and places them face down. Once each player has revealed top card, a new round of betting starts. This continues until all the cards have been revealed. Players are not allowed to reorder their cards after the initial round of reveals.

In the **Anaconda** variation, each player is dealt seven cards. Players examine their hands and move three cards from the hand to the table on their left before the first round of betting starts. Each player then picks up the cards that have been discarded by their neighbor (on the right) and adds them to their hand. Players have to discard cards before seeing what they are about to receive.

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Game Tip 1:

Players have a greater chance of winning a round of Poker when they go all-in with their bets because playing aggressively is a great way to bluff and it will encourage other players to fold.

Game Tip 2:

Pay close attention to the cards on the table so that you don't miss important opportunities to play a flush or a straight. Always focus on the game at hand and don't be easily distracted by wavering thoughts and the other players at the table.

The Community Poker Variations

Community Poker is also known as Flop Poker. Community refers to the communal hand that is dealt in the centre of the table and used by all of the players to build their card hands.

Texas Hold'em is the most popular version of community poker. In Texas Hold'em, two cards are dealt to each player (face-down). Two players are designated as the big and small blinds. The hand starts with a pre-flop round of bets which moves clockwise from the player to the left of the big blind and continues until each player has folded, bet all their chips or matched the amount put in by any players left. A fourth community card is then revealed, after which another round of betting begins. The last community card is drawn, the last round of betting occurs and then... the final showdown, during which players form the best possible hand using their two cards and the five community cards.

Omaha Hold'em is the same as Texas Hold'em, except for a few tweaks. In Omaha Hold'em, each player is dealt four cards of which two must be used with three of the five community cards.

Crazy Pineapple rules state that players be dealt three cards, the third of which is must be discarded after the flop betting round. In the 'normal' pineapple variation, players can discard any of their three cards.

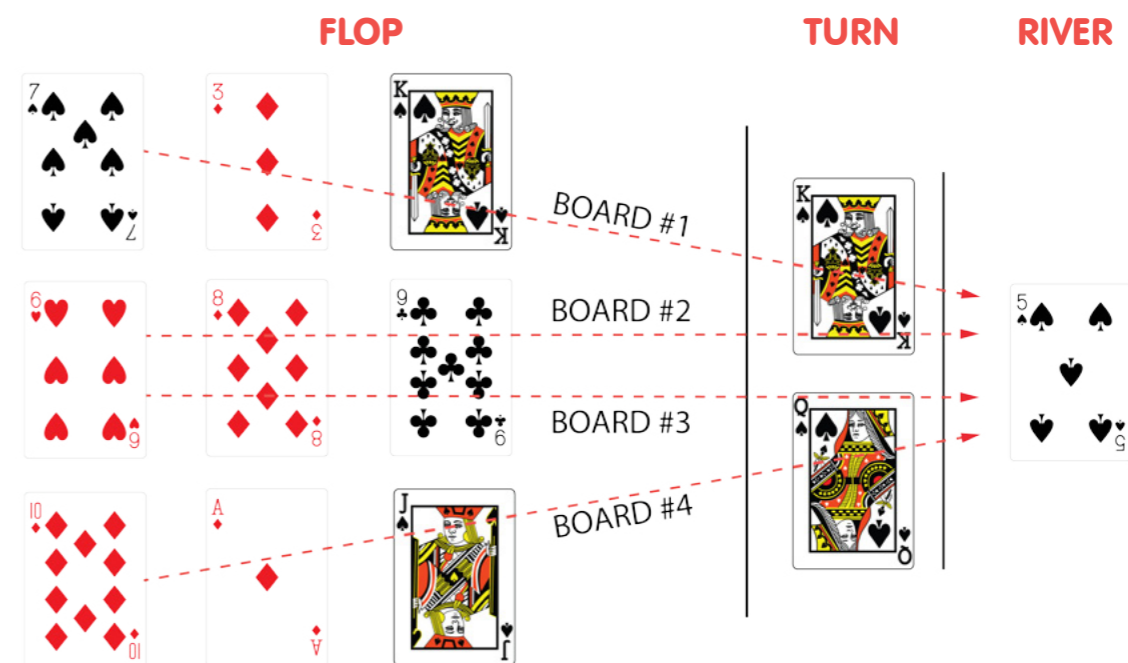
In **Manila** Poker, cards below seven are removed from the deck. Each player is dealt two cards, and a single card is placed in the centre of the table, face up. The first betting round follows swiftly afterwards. This continues until a fifth community card has been placed in the centre of the table, after which a final showdown ensues. The difference here is that players make their best hand using their two cards and three of the five community cards. Because the smaller cards are removed from the pack in the Manila variation, a flush would beat a full house.

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DID YOU KNOW?

THE MOST POPULAR POKER VARIANT IS TEXAS HOLD 'EM. IT WAS FIRST PLAYED IN ROBSTOWN, TEXAS IN THE EARLY 1900'S. HOWEVER, TEXAS HOLD 'EM ONLY BECAME POPULAR WHEN IT REACHED LAS VEGAS IN 1967, WHERE DOYLE BRUNSON AND AMARILLO SLIM WERE AMONGST THE FIRST TO PLAY THE VARIANT. BY 1970 THE VERY FIRST WORLD SERIES OF POKER TOURNAMENT (WSOP) WAS HOSTED BY BENNY BINION AND TEXAS HOLD 'EM SOON BECAME THE GAME OF CHOICE FOR THE MAIN EVENT.

Chowaha Poker is similar to the other variations in that each player is dealt two cards, after which a round of betting begins. However, unlike Texas Hold'em where the dealer deals one flop or community card, Chowaha requires nine flop cards to be dealt in three rows of three before the next round of betting starts. The dealer then places one card –a turn card between the first and second rows of cards, and another between the second and third rows of cards. A betting round follows, and thereafter the dealer places a final community card, known as “the river”, immediately below the second row of flop cards.



East Village Poker rules allow the dealer to deal each player seven cards of which players may choose two cards to put aside, to be used at a later stage. Of the five cards left, players then donate one card to a communal collection which is shuffled by the dealer. These donated cards will make up the three card flop, the turn and the river cards. Players create their best hand using their two cards and three of the five community cards.

Tic Tac Toe has a board of nine cards arranged in a 3 card x 3 card square in the centre of the table. Players construct a five card hand using the two cards they have been dealt and any row of three on the board. Just like tic tac toe, the rows can run vertically, horizontally or diagonally.

In the **Lame-brain Pete** version of community Poker, players are dealt three cards. The subsequent round of betting is followed by one community card being drawn, followed by another round of betting. This carries on until there are four cards in the flop. During the final round of betting, players need to make up their best hand but, unlike the other variations, the lowest ranking community card acts as a wild card.

In **London Bridge** players are dealt four cards, of which they must throw out one. All aces, 2s and 4s act as wild cards and the best five-card hand wins.

In **Otis Elevator**, players are dealt four cards. The flop is then dealt face-down in an “H” shape. A round of betting is followed by two of the corner cards in the “H” being turned over. After another betting round, the values of the other two corner cards are revealed. This continues until on the centre, or Elevator, card is left.

And lastly, the **Six Pack** variation. Each player is dealt two cards. Six community cards are then dealt in a circular shape. After the first betting round, two of the community cards, opposite each other in the circle, are turned over. Another betting round is followed by two more community cards being turned over and this is repeated until all the community cards have been turned. Players then combine their two cards with and three consecutive community cards.

Video Poker Variations

As computer technology advanced towards the 1970s, so Video Poker became increasingly popular as an alternative to the traditional, table-based variations of the game.

Public demand drove casinos to investigate the financial viability of this modern alternative. The computerized systems intrigued players, and the lack of human counterparts took away the psychologically taxing analysis of opponents that regular poker often requires, which made Video Poker a popular platform on which to explore and learn the game.

The slot-reels/poker hybrid proved more popular than expected, dealing five randomly generated on-screen cards from which players pick which to play with, and which to discard. The player’s final hand is used by the computer to determine what the payout will be.



Depending on the type of Poker in play, players are dealt face-up or face-down cards which are ultimately used to formulate what they hope will be the winning hand. As cards are added, outcomes change considerably. Therefore, it is important to maintain a calm composure so other players don't play your emotions to their advantage. You want players who potentially have better cards than you to think your hand is even better so they fold, bettering your chances of winning. Sneaky, isn't it? But that's just Poker for you.

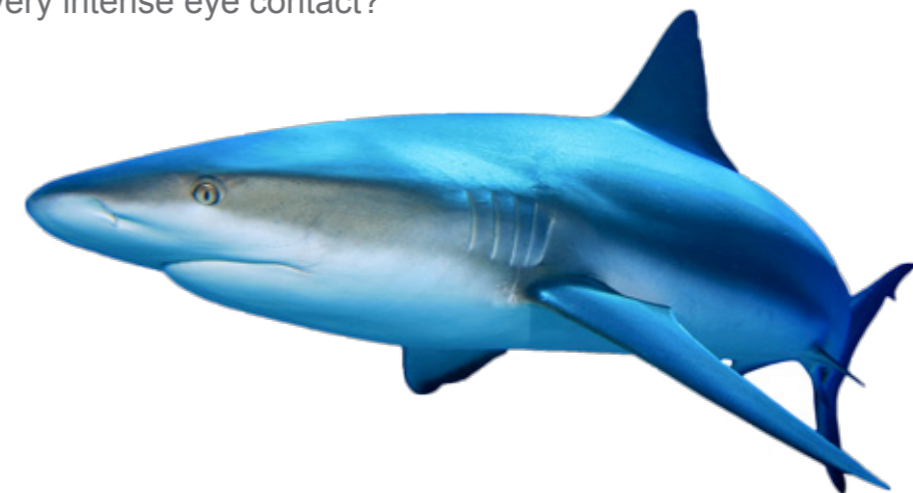
Luckily, with some practice, this can be controlled by developing some bluffing techniques. That is, deceiving other players into thinking you have a great hand.

It is important to note here that trying too hard to bluff, or being a novice bluffer can sometimes be picked up by players. Keep at it though!

Bluffing

Figuring out whether your opponents are bluffing is just as important as working on your own bluffing tactics. To do so, try keeping these questions in mind the next time you play: Is my opponent:

- Avoiding eye contact?
- Making very intense eye contact?



// Wrapping It Up

How does my opponent react when:

- Their hand wins. Is it genuine satisfaction or does it look like the smug satisfaction that comes from knowing you tricked the rest of the table?
- Folding after making a considerable investment. Are they genuinely annoyed?

Has my opponent:

- Suddenly raised a high amount? Is my opponent trying to force me out?

However, there are players that double bluff – that is, making you think they are bluffing a good hand when they do actually have a good hand. For this reason, it is important to look at each player to isolate specific reactions and character traits.

Here are some indicators that a player is trying to cover up a good hand:

- Acting uninterested in a hand
- Breathing fast
- Sighing and shrugging
- Continuously looking between chips and cards

And here are some indicators that a player is trying to cover up a bad hand:

- Visual intimidation i.e. staring opponents down
- Holding their breath

Sometimes, opponents will have a mediocre hand. Neither good nor bad. So they'll be deliberating whether it is worth them carrying on, or whether they should fold. This kind of deliberation can be indicated by the player

- Checking their hand after the flop
- Waiting longer than usual before placing a bet

And with that, you're ready to start playing. Visit a land based casino or, if you want to test out your skills, try out an online casino and most of them let you "practice play" which won't cost you a cent. Just keep these guidelines in mind and give yourself some time to get the hang of the game, mate.

On-line gambling allows you the time you need to make that move as it's a less pressurized environment than an actual casino, so for a beginner it's probably the perfect place to start. Hoping this guide has cleared up any misconceptions and answered all your questions... best of luck to ya.



DID YOU KNOW?

BLUFFING CAN BE BOTH PHYSICAL AND BASED ON BETS. KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR FACIAL TICKS, FIDGETY HANDS, FREQUENT AND HIGH RAISES.

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