Poker 101

A guide on playing poker

HowToPlayPokerInfo
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Poker Hands & Probabilities

The poker hand ranking system is universal to all types of poker games. Be it 7 Card Stud, Texas Hold’em or Pot Limit Omaha a flush will always beat a straight and a full house will always beat a flush.

So make sure you pay attention because the ‘poker hands order’ will be useful to you no matter what type of poker you play!

A poker hands calculator (for poker hands odds) can be found at PokerStrategy.com which may also be of use.

The strongest to weakest hands of them poker hand hierarchy are listed below with the poker hands probability listed in brackets. After reading there will be no debating with friends ‘who has the best poker hand’!

**Poker hand ranking system:**

1. **Royal Flush** (649,739:1)
   Ace, King, Queen, Jack, Ten all of the same suit – the strongest poker hand.

   ![Royal Flush](image)

2. **Straight flush** (72,192:1)
   Five sequential cards all of the same suit. The second strongest poker hand.

   ![Straight flush](image)

3. **Four of a kind** (4,164:1)
   Four cards of the same value. Also known as ‘quads’.

   ![Four of a kind](image)

4. **Full House** (693:1)
   Three cards of the same value plus two cards of the same value. Usually a winner!

   ![Full House](image)
5. **Flush** (508:1)
   Five cards all of the same suit.
   
   ![Flush example](image)

6. **Straight** (254:1)
   Five cards in sequential order. Also referred to as a run.
   
   ![Straight example](image)

7. **Three of a kind** (46:1)
   Three cards of the same value.
   
   ![Three of a kind example](image)

8. **Two pair** (20:1)
   Two sets of two cards with the same value. A common hand which can sometimes win at showdown!
   
   ![Two pair example](image)

9. **One pair** (1.37:1)
   Two cards of the same value.
   
   ![One pair example](image)

10. **High card**
    The player with the highest card wins. Unlikely to be a winner so play with care.
    
    ![High card example](image)

**Kickers**

A kicker is much like a decider when both players have similar hand types.

For example, if player A has A♠Q♣ and Player B has A♣J♠ and the board is A♥K♦5♠ 7♠ 2♦ both players will have top pair with an ace but player A will win because the Q♣ is a better kicker than the J♠.
The best five cards in this scenario are AAQ75 whereas the losing hand has AAJ75. A kicker is a very important concept when trying to understand the poker hand ranking system.

**Split pots**

Split pots occur when both players get to showdown and have the same hand rank. The pot is divided up equally between each of the players.

To take an example, if player A has K♠J♥ and player B has K♣Q♠ on a A♥K♦5♠5♣2♠ board both players will have two pair and ace kicker as their best hand (A, K, K, 5, 5). Therefore the pot will be split between the two players.

Alternatively, if the neither player can improve the hand on the board it will also be a split pot. If the board is A♥K♦5♠5♣K♠ and player A has Q♠J♣ and player B has 4♣4♠ then both players will be playing the board and thus it will be a split pot.

Hence, you cannot have three pair in poker and the best two pair will play.

**Beyond hand rankings**

The rules of poker and poker hand rankings are just the beginning for you on your poker journey. One of the core skills in poker is being able to determine whether your hand is strong or weak on a relative scale as opposed to an absolute scale.

For example, three of a kind is extremely strong on a board with no flush or straight possibilities but very weak on a board with 4 to a flush or 4 to a straight (e.g. T♥9♥8♥7♥ – any heart or J or 6 beats three of a kind).

One key point to note is that in poker all suits are of the same value. An Ace high flush of hearts is the same value as an Ace high flush of spades.

The first step to this is remembering if a flush beats a straight, or whether a straight flush beats quads; the next stage is figuring out your hand’s relative strength based on how your opponent is playing, his tendencies and most importantly the board texture as noted.

Additionally, we should take into account the following factors:

- How many players are in the pot
- The amount of chips in the pot
- The size of the bets made

If you can understand the poker hand rankings and relative hand strength you will be ahead of the game; get ready to beat all your friends and opponents at your home games and casinos! Want to accelerate your poker learning? Check out our poker training sites post for the quickest ways to improve your poker game.

If you are new to poker and are unsure of what hands you need to play, check out our starting hand charts over at our poker cheat sheet webpage.
Texas Hold’em Rules

In Texas hold’em each player is dealt two cards called their ‘hole’ cards. Hole cards can only be seen and used by one person. The dealer button (denoted by a circular disc) is allocated before hands are dealt to allow for the positioning of the forced bets: small blind and big blind, and also to determine who will act first and last in the hand.

There are a total of four betting rounds: preflop, the flop, the turn and the river. The betting rounds will be detailed further on.

If you have a dedicated dealer (such as at a casino), the button will still move around the table so everybody will eventually have to pay the blinds. The button doesn’t show who is dealing in a casino; the button shows who is seated the best position at the table and where the blinds are located.

If you just sat down (out of turn) you will have to pay the blinds in order get dealt a hand; otherwise, you can wait until the blinds come around to your seat. You should wait for the blinds as paying twice is unprofitable.

The size of the blinds depends on the limit; for example, a 1/2 No Limit Hold’em game would have a big blind of $2 and a small blind of 1$. The small blind and big blind are located to the left of the button. This is shown in the case of a 6 handed game below:

The blinds are an important part of the rules of poker. These forced bets which give players an incentive to play; in other words ‘spice up’ the game.

Without the blinds, there would be no penalty for waiting and only playing strong hands. The only hand worth playing would be two aces!
Antes are another form of forced bets which are often used to increase the action in some game types such as tournaments and deep stacked cash games.

Pre-flop – The First Betting Round of Hold’em
The first round of betting takes places starting at the position to the left of the big blind (early position or EP). Each player has the following options:

- **Raise:** you can raise the current bet to increase the stakes of the game. If someone has raised before you, you can still raise again – this is called a reraise. The minimum size you can raise is typically chosen to be twice that of the last bet or raise.
- **Call:** When you do not want to raise the stakes but want to continue with your hand you can match the current bet.
- **Fold:** If you feel your hand is not worth playing any further you can fold your hand and not commit any more bets.
- **Check:** If there is no bet placed you can check in order to see the next card. This isn’t applicable to preflop. The blinds are the first bet preflop which must be matched with a call or raised, if a player wishes to continue.

Players must act in sequence until all bets are settled. The button must always act last in the first sequence. This first round of betting called ‘pre-flop’ occurs before the flop is dealt.

The Flop – The Second Betting Round
The second round of betting takes places after the three community (shared) cards called the flop are dealt. The action will be to the first player to the left of the dealer. This is opposed to the action starting to the left of the big blind during the preflop betting round.

The first player to act has the option to check bet or fold; although you should not fold when you can check for free. The betting rounds after the flop is dealt is collectively known as ‘post-flop’.
The Turn – The Third Betting Round
The third round of betting occurs after the second community card has been dealt. This card is called the turn. Again, the action starts with the active player to the left of the dealer.

![Flop Turn](image)

The River and Showdown – The Fourth Betting Round
The fourth and final round of betting occurs when the dealer turns over the river card. The hand ends with the showdown of hands or if there is only one live hand remaining (the other player(s) have folded).

At showdown, the player with the best five card combination from their hole cards and the community cards wins the final pot. Split pots occur when both players have the same best five cards.

![Flop Turn River](image)

After each hand, the button moves to the left of the dealer. This means everyone will have to play the blinds at some point.

Texas hold’em rules are quite simple; however the strategies involved in winning are ever evolving.

**The rules of Texas Hold’em are just the beginning so head to [poker 101](https://example.com/poker101) if you want to learn more!**

If you want poker cheat sheet beside to you to help you remember the rules and strategies of Texas Holdem, head [here](https://example.com/cheat-sheet) to pick up your one-page cheat sheet.

Other notes:

- The dealer will often take one card off the top of the deck before turning over the flop, turn and river for a total of three cards. The three removed cards are called the burn cards. The purpose of these cards is to make it difficult for cheaters.
• A player can not buy in for any more chips once he is in the hand. So if they start the hand with $100 they cannot add another $20 to their stack midway through the hand; they have to top up in between hands.
Texas Holdem Strategy: The Basics of Preflop, Postflop and Betting

Before we get into the nuts and bolts of Texas Holdem strategy, I thought I would share a quote that is quite appropriate for most readers:

**Poker is a lot like sex. Everyone thinks they are the best, but most don’t have a clue what they are doing. — Dutch Boyd**

[Titanpoker.com](https://www.titanpoker.com)

It is very true, but hopefully by and reading our Texas Holdem Strategy section you will at least have a clue how to do well at one of them!

One of the great benefits of poker is that it is quite easy to learn the basics. The rules are quite simple and allow easy access for beginners. However, on the other hand, it is a tough game to master; there’s always something to improve upon or learn.

The basic strategy below should provide you with the groundwork for developing a dominant poker game. We link to some more advanced material throughout for anyone that is further ahead of the trend.

**Preflop Texas Holdem Strategy**

Your preflop poker strategy forms the foundation of your game. Your first decisions will be made preflop during a hand, so it is important to get these decisions right. Thankfully this is one of the easier areas of the game to understand.

So to help you understand let’s take a quick example (click the picture to see the full replay):
We have JT's (J = Jack, T = Ten and the ‘s’ after JT means both cards are of the same suit. An ‘o’ after the JT would refer to off-suit) in the first position under the gun (UTG) on a six-handed table with $1/$0.5 BB and SB.

We have to decide what to do: we can raise, call (otherwise known as a limp) or fold. There are a huge number of factors which we need to take into account, and unfortunately, I won’t be able to cover them all. But I will try to cover the most fundamental factors in the coming paragraphs.

Firstly, it is very common to see new players play too many hands. They believe that they can outplay their opponents post flop and turn a profit even with the weakest hands. This belief isn’t the case and often is the main reasons a new player loses money when starting out.

**Only Play A Small Percentage Of The Hands You are Dealt**

Thus the first preflop poker strategy tip is to **play only a small percentage of the hands you are dealt** – the type of hands to play will be discussed further on in the text. Players who play a small selection of the hand they are dealt are referred to as **tight**. Conversely, players who play lots of hands are known as **loose**.

The vast majority of winning poker players are relatively tight, and for the most part losing players are loose. Therefore, the first important strategy tip:

**Preflop poker strategy Tip 1: Only play a small percentage of the hands you are dealt.**
Luckily, JTs is in the top 12% of hands and therefore is a hand we would want to continue with in this case. We can determine ‘how strong’ a hand is using a program called Equilab.

So our options are now to raise or to call because our hand is too strong to fold.

This result leads onto a second reason new players are unsuccessful – frequent limping.

**Limping** is defined as calling the big blind instead of raising or folding. For example, you are first to act after you have been dealt two aces (AA) or like our example with JTs and instead of raising, you just call – this is called a limp.

**Limping: Flawed Reasoning**

Often, new players limp to see a cheap flop with speculative hands or to trap with strong hands such as AA or KK. Good winning players very rarely limp and there are many reasons why:

1. **You give the other players a chance to beat you with their weak holdings.** For example, if you limp with AA and your opponent in the big blind checks behind he will have a chance to outdraw you to three of a kind or two-pair. Do not give people a free chance to improve and beat your strong hands.

2. **Raising with good hands builds the pot.** A big hand deserves a big pot! Typically the only way you will win an opponent’s whole stack (all of their chips) is by raising preflop; winning their entire stack is what you want when you have AA or KK, right?

3. **It allows you to better understand what your opponent may have.** If we limp in and our opponent is in the big blind, he could have every possible hand; however, when we raise our opponent will fold some of the worse hands and the type of hands he can have become more defined. Experienced players use this to their advantage.

4. **Playing speculative hands (hands which could potentially, but infrequently win a big pot) such as 64s (s = suited, o = offsuit) and T2s just is not profitable in the majority of cases, whether you raise or limp, and no matter how good you are at poker.**

**Preflop poker strategy Tip 2: Never limp preflop**
Example: JTs Under the gun
Since limping (i.e. just calling) is not an option our only option is to raise. That poses the question of how much? In this case, we will raise to 3x the BB, so $3 and one player calls our bet as shown. We will cover the reason we use 3x later in the article.

Three times the BB is a standard raise size which we will go into later in this article under Texas Holdem betting strategy. But first, a little more on aggression to drive home the point:

You should only raise or fold your hands when first entering the pot. However calling with some hands after someone else has raised is fine. There are some situations where open limping is a good idea but they are so few and far between that never limping is a good starting preflop poker strategy – especially for a beginner.
This leads to another generalization of how people play poker:

Aggressive vs. Passive
In poker, an aggressive opponent is a player who bets and raises frequently. A passive opponent is a player who calls and checks often and very rarely bets or raises.
Aggression is one of the keys to success in poker for one simple reason: When you bet or raise, you have two ways to win the pot – either your opponent folds or you get to showdown with the best hand.
Unfortunately, when a player is passive there is only one way to win the pot – by having the best hand. This difference is hugely important and is the reason all big winners are aggressive poker players; while most losing poker players are quite passive.
Preflop poker strategy Tip 3: Take the initiative and be aggressive. Bet and raise your strong hands frequently and don’t rely on other to do the betting for you!

The four play styles
In total there are four player styles:

1. **Tight-Aggressive** (TAg) – This player type which makes up the majority of the winning player pool. They wait for strong hands and bet and raise them hard, punishing other players who play weaker styles.

2. **Loose-Aggressive** (LAG) – successful loose aggressive players are few and far between. They play lots of hands and play them very aggressively. It is a tough style to play but also a tough style to combat!

3. **Tight-Passive** – this player type does not play very many hands and when they do the play them by calling and checking frequently. These players lose their money slowly but surely.

4. **Loose-Passive** – these player types just don’t like to fold. Loose passive players play lots of hands – sometimes over 50% of the hands they are dealt. They are the complete opposite of tight-aggressive. This player type is the biggest loser and where the big winners make their money.

So what hands should you play? That is a difficult question to answer since it depends on many factors – what position you are in, how many opponents are on the table, how likely your opponents are to
raise, the equity of your hand, how many BB you have and how many hands you have been raising recently.

**Starting Hand Types**

However, there are some basic starting hands that you should almost always be playing:

**Premium Hands**

There are very few premium hands in poker but when we do get these hands we should be trying to build a pot as big as possible and as quickly as possible. These hands are:

AA, KK, QQ, JJ, and AK – the top pocket pairs and Ace-King. AK is considered to be a powerful hand because:
- It dominates all other strong non-paired hands (e.g. AQ and KQ),
- Against a pair it has approximately 50% pot equity (will win the pot 50% of the time)
- It blocks AA and KK which are the only two hands which have a significant equity advantage.

These hand should always be raised and often re-raised to begin building the pot.

**Strong Hands**

Strong hands are hands you should also always be raised when first entering the pot. These hands should be called when someone has already raised before you. These hands include:

AQ, AJ, AT, KQ and 99-TT. Large suited and connected hands such as QJs, JTs, are also considered strong hands. Suited hands derive their strength from being able to make flushes. However, do not overestimate the value of suited hands.

Don’t play a hand just because it is suited. The value of a hand is derived from the combination of the ranks of the two hole cards. Example: AQ is much stronger than Q5, AQ is still much stronger than Q5 suited.

**Preflop poker strategy tip 4:** Do not overestimate the value of ‘suitedness.’ Evaluate the strength of the hand from the rank of the two hole cards.
Medium Strength Hands
You need to be careful of this hand type. These hands can make you a big winner if correctly played, but when incorrectly played can cost you lots of chips. These hands include:

KJ, KT, QJ, JT and 22-88. Medium suited connectors such as 87s are also considered to be medium strength hands.

You will play different hands from various starting positions. Details on this require a separate section – for more on the differences in the positions read position is king which will provide a beginners starting hand chart.

Summary Of Preflop Texas Holdem Strategy
In summary, preflop you should:

1. You should play a small percentage of the hands you are dealt.
2. Never limp.
3. Take the initiative and be aggressive. Raise and Reraise your strong hands frequently and don’t rely on other to do the raising for you!
4. Do not overestimate the value of ‘suitedness.’ Evaluate the strength of the hand from the rank of the two hole cards.

If all you take from this section is these four points you will still have significantly improved your chances of winning.

Postflop Texas Holdem Strategy
Once you understand right preflop Texas Holdem strategy, the postflop poker strategy becomes significantly easier. When you play weak hands from poor positions poker is quite difficult; nobody likes to play Q7 from out of position (Out of position means you act first, so your opponent will have more information than you)!

However, if you play only a narrow range of hands from good starting positions, as is recommended, poker will become a much simpler prospect.

Postflop, there are many factors which we must take into account before we make a decision. The number of variables makes each decision quite complicated for a beginner. However, there are a few guidelines and concepts which can be understood which will help you in the decision-making process.
Postflop Poker Strategy – The Basics

One of the most important considerations is if we are in position (IP) or out of position (OOP). We will cover this in more detail in Position is king.

Secondly, we should be considering what our opponent may be holding. Does our opponent have only strong hands if he is a tight player? Does he play lots of hands meaning his ‘range’ of hands will be quite weak? See more on how to hand read.

A whole book could be written on hand reading, so I won’t go further into it. But it is important as a new player to begin thinking about what your opponent may have. Do not only consider the hand you are holding.

Postflop poker strategy Tip 1: Always consider what your opponent could be holding.

Next, we should consider the board texture. For example, is the board likely to have improved your hand or your competitors? Is the board likely to change very much on the turn or river? These considerations will be detailed further on in this guide.

Another consideration is how many players made it to the flop. If the flop is heads up (only you and your opponent) the strength of each hand is much better than if five or even six people made it to the flop.

The more players that see the flop, turn, and river the less likely you are to win at showdown with a weak holding such as one pair. For more information on the differences between multiway and heads up pots, head over to pokernews.com.

Postflop poker strategy Tip 2: The more players there are in the hand, the less likely you are to win and the weaker your holding.

Finally, we need to consider how many chips are in the pot, how much we have left behind in our stack and how many chips our opponent has.

After these considerations, we can make a decision on how we are going proceed in the hand.
So first let’s have a look at board texture:

**Postflop Poker Strategy: Notation**

Before we discuss postflop poker strategy and board composition in detail we need to make sure the notation is clear to everyone.

In some cases, pictures will be used to show board textures, but often just text will be employed. When describing the board with text (i.e. letters and numbers), each card rank is represented by either its number or the first letter of its name. To take an example, the board:

```
5♥ K♣ 5♦
```

This texture is described by 5♥ K♣ 5♦ and is often shortened to 5hKc5d. It is sometimes shortened further to 5K5r. Here the ‘r’ means rainbow (the flop is all different suits). When the flop has a flush **draw** (i.e. not a rainbow board) the board could be represented by 5K5s. Here the ‘s’ represents suited.

There are many types of boards, but in general, they can be broken down into two types: **dry board** textures and **wet board** textures.

**Dry Board Texture**

Dry board textures are ones which the players in the hand are less likely to have connected with the community cards. Also, dry also means a board which the strength of your holding is unlikely to change over the course of the hand.

Examples of dry board textures are:

```
5♥ K♣ 5♦ 2♠ 7♥ 4♠
```

Why are these boards considered dry? Well on the K55 board there are not many hands that will change the strength of your opponent’s or your holdings. If for example, you held KQ, then the only way your opponent can now beat you is if he has:
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strength of your opponent’s or your holdings. If for example, you held KQ,
then the only way your opponent can now beat you is if he has:

If for example, you held KQ, then the only way your opponent can now
beat you is if he has:

- An Ax (e.g. Ace-Queen or Ace-Seven) hand and hits an ace on the turn
  or river.
- A pocket pair such as 77 which hits his set on the turn or river
  (unlikely).
- A hand such as QJ which hits a runner runner straight (two cards in a
  row – for example, the turn is a Ten, and the river is an Ace resulting a
  straight Ten to Ace) or runner runner full house (two Queens or two
  Jacks).

The most important factor is that neither of these two board has many
straight-draw or flush-draw possibilities. The lack of draws means that if
you have a hand like A5 on the K55 board or 44 on the 742 board you are
very unlikely to be beaten by your opponent if he is behind on the flop.

Additionally, dry flops are inherently difficult to hit and hence makes
continuation betting as the pre-flop raiser (you raised first, and someone
called your raise) especially useful on dry boards. Continuations bets will
be detailed further on in this section.

**Wet board texture**

On the other hand, wet board textures are boards where the board is very
likely to change over future streets.

Looking at the QT9s board, there are many cards which will modify the
strength of many hands. If we have AQ or TT on this board we have a
strong hand; but on many turn cards such as a K, J, 8 or any heart, the
strength of these hands will significantly degrade. Also, there are many
hand types that your opponent may have hit this board with:

- Any 8 or K is an inside straight draw (4 cards will complete the
  straight).
- Any J is an open-ended straight draw (8 cards will make a straight)
- The majority of opponents plays Queens, Tens, and Nines. Therefore, your opponent is likely to continue with a large proportion of his hands on this board.

We can directly translate all these points to the 432s board; except for the last as this board has cards of lower ranks. On the 432s board, however, every Ace has an inside straight draw. Aces will be played quite frequently by most opponents.

Every other board type will be somewhere in between the dry K55r and the wet QT9s. Understanding how wet or dry a board is and adjusting your strategy correctly is the key skill at play in this scenario. For more information on board textures, see this excellent article.

**Continuation betting**

A continuation bet, as its name suggests, is when you follow up on your previous aggressive action with another bet. For example, you raise pre-flop and then continue to bet on the flop. Continuation bets are extremely useful postflop poker strategy for two reasons:

1. It is tough to connect with most board types; therefore player who bets first will often win the pot
2. The player who last raised pre-flop will typically have the strongest hands; thus will get the benefit of the doubt when he bets again.

The rate at which you continuation bet should, be on a very basic level, determined by the wetness of the board.

The dryer the board, the less likely your opponent hit and therefore the more often we will want to bet to win the pot.

But we should also be more prone to bet when we have a chance to win the pot when called. In other words, we have **pot equity** in the form of a draw or overcards.

**Postflop poker strategy Tip 3: The dryer a board texture, the more likely we are to win the pot by continuation betting (cbet).**

**Post-flopExample 1: A Good Spot To CBet**

So let’s take a few examples of good examples of continuation bets. Continuation from our previous example of JT's from UTG (click the picture to see the full replay):
We opened to 3bb from UTG and got one call from the Button. On the flop of 9h7s3s, we have an inside straight draw and two overcards. This board is ranked medium for wetness and how the opponent connects; our opponent can have a few straight and flush draws as well as top pairs.

JTs is a good hand in this situation as we can make robust pairs on the turn and river and also can make the nut straight. Thus this is a good spot for a cbet as a bluff. We expect him to fold hands which are better than ours. However, if he does continue, we have a good chance of making a stronger hand with a J, T or 8.

We should keep bluffing to a minimum when playing small stakes and especially at play money poker. But in this case, it is almost a perfect situation for a bluff.

**Example 2: Another good spot to CBet**

Another situation for a good cbet is below:
We raised with 22 from the Button and got two callers from the SB and BB. Both check to us on the flop. This situation is a clear spot to value bet (value betting and bluffing are discussed in the next section). The flop is relatively wet, and two players can draw out us with straights and flush draws. Therefore, we want to charge them to see them next card.

Also, we have a robust hand (the second or third strongest depending on whether our opponents will re-raise KK preflop). We can get lots of value and win a big pot by betting; thus this is an excellent spot for a value bet.

Cbetting for value is a fundamental aspect of our postflop poker strategy and is one of the primary sources of profit at small stakes. Ensure you understand and utilize continuation betting fully by reading this great article by the poker bank.

**Example 2: A bad spot to Cbet**

Below is a dangerous situation to continuation bet:
We raise a **limper** with 98s and get a call from the BB and the player who limped. The flop is terrible for us as we have a small amount of equity and this board is likely to have hit one of our opponents. Thus it is not a good spot to continuation bet (cbet), and we should check behind and fold to any future bets.

**Postflop poker strategy Tip 5: Do not cbet on board textures where your opponent is likely to call, and you have little chance of improving on later streets**

Continuation bets can also apply to the turn and the river. For example, we refer to betting the flop, turn and river as river continuation bet.

Continuation bets are how a significant proportion of your winnings will be generated at small stakes and free money poker. People often give up when they do not hit anything so take advantage of this fact.

**Stack sizes**

The number of chips you have bought in for or currently have on the poker table is known as ‘**stack depth.**’

If you are playing ‘**short stack**’ poker, it means you are not playing with very many chips on the table – for example, 40bb. We do not recommend shallow stack play. Shallow stack poker means we have fewer chips on the table and hence we can win fewer chips from the weak poker players at the table.
Conversely deep stacked play means you have a lot of chips at the table – e.g. 200bb deep.

The shallower your stack depth, the more likely you should be to go all in. In poker terms going all in is called ‘stacking off.’

Stack depth has a profound effect on your preflop and postflop poker strategy so ensure you are aware of your stack depth at all times.

For example, it would be appropriate to allow yourself to get all in with post flop with top pair good kicker such as KQ on K72 if you had a stack depth of 40bb; however, not if you had a stack depth of 100bb or greater.

Postflop poker strategy tip 5: The greater your stack depth, the stronger a holding you need to stack off. Always be aware of your stack depth before entering a pot.
Before playing a hand preflop, you should be checking the stack depth of you and your opponents. Checking stack depth ensures you understand how many chips are at play.

One mistake often made by new players is not considering effective stack size: if you have 100bb and your opponents has 40bb then the effective stack size is 40bb; this is because your opponent can win no more than 40bb from you. Hence your effective stack size can vary from hand to hand, and you must adjust you postflop poker strategy accordingly.
Texas Holdem Strategy: Betting and Raising

Betting is the fundamental aspect of poker which makes it an exciting game to play. The ability to wager money as a bluff inducing your opponent to fold is one of the biggest selling points of the game; it is the first thing people think of when discussing poker!

But it’s not all about bluffing as Hollywood has led you to believe. A lot of a winning Texas Holdem strategy just involves getting your bets in when you have a better hand than your opponent.

Poker betting strategy: reasons to bet
There are three reasons why one would want to bet:

1. **For value** – to get worse hands to call meaning we will win a bigger pot. For example, you value bet AK on an Ace high board (such as A72) to get AQ, AJ, etc. and worse pairs to call.
2. **As a bluff** – to get better hands to fold so we can win the pot with a poor holding. For example, you may be QJ on the A72 board to get hands such as non-paired Kings (KQ, KJ) to fold.
3. **As a semi-bluff** – A semi-bluff is much like a natural bluff only that when we are called we will still have a good likelihood of winning the pot. With a semi-bluff, we have a lot of pot equity. An example of a semi-bluff would be betting or raising with a flush draw: a weak non-made hand which has the potential to make a robust hand. See more information on semi-bluffing.

Before betting, consideration should be made as to why a bet is being made. Can worse hands call our bet and provide us with value? Can we get better
hands to fold? If neither is the case, you typically shouldn’t be betting. This concept is integral to correctly implementing a solid poker betting strategy.

**Poker Betting Strategy Tip 1: Always consider when betting, will your bet either get your opponent to fold a better hand (bluffing) or call with a worse hand (value betting).**

This concept can difficult to grasp as a new player. But generally, you should be just betting with your strong hands; and if you are playing small stakes or especially free poker, keep bluffing to a minimum. People at low stakes or even play money poker do not fold; thus bluffing at these stakes is a complete waste of money.

**Poker betting strategy: Bet sizing**

Bet sizing is one of the most complicated parts of NLHE and is one of the most challenging aspects to grasp for a new player. For simplicity sake there a few rules to stick to which won’t lead you too far wrong:

1. **Preflop** raise to 3 times (3x) the BB with all hands you are opening. Do not varying your bet sizing depending on your hand strength. Changing your bet sizing based on your hand strength is a sure fire way to let your skilled opponents what you are holding.
2. The same applies when re-raising another player **preflop**, make your raise three times the initial raise. For example, a player in a 100NL game might open to $3. In that case, when you re-raise him with your strong holdings such as AA or KK, make it $9.
3. **Postflop** bet between 1/2 and full pot size bets. That means that if on the flop, the pot is $10 you should be betting between $5 and $10. Any smaller than that and your opponent can easily call with a lot of hands. Allowing your opponent to call with lots of hands means you miss value with strong hands; also, your opponent isn’t likely to fold when you are bluffing. This is a bad result either way!

For a more advanced guide on poker bet sizing see: [Pokerlistings.com](http://Pokerlistings.com)

A big mistake new players often make is using the same bet size as the pot grows on each street. For example: betting 5$ into a $10 pot on the flop and then betting $5 into a $20 pot on the turn. Your bet sizes should be relative
to the pot! As the pot grows so should the size of your bet. Think fractions, not dollar amounts!

**Poker Betting Strategy 2:** As a general rule always raise at least three times the previous bet or raise. When betting postflop bet between 1/2 to a full pot sized bet.

These bet sizing rules aren’t optimal; they are approximations. However, they should provide you with solid groundwork to get you off to a good start in your poker career.

Once you begin to understand the merits of betting and raising and develop a more comprehensive poker betting strategy you can start to see when it is appropriate to deviate from these rules.

See this video on value betting for more information.

**Further Reading**

That’s it for Texas Holdem Strategy. If you are really keen on learning poker quickly, we would suggest you check out our [poker training sites post](#) to accelerate your poker learning.

There is still a lot to learn so here are some further reading:

23+ Texas Holdem tips for beginners
Poker Position Explained: Find Out Why Position is King!

Position is one of the most important concepts in poker. Poker position can have two slightly different meanings:

1. Your position after the cards have been dealt (e.g. early, middle, late or the blinds)
2. Your position after the flop has been dealt (if you are first or last to act).

Poker Position Names:
These two ideas are interrelated; if you play your hand from EP is it very likely you will end up playing your hand out of position (OOP) postflop. If you play your hand from the Button, you will always act last.

This is considered in position (IP) play. Being IP is a very important advantage which provides you with more information than your opponent and the ability to control the pot size more effectively.

The Button is the best and most profitable seat on a poker table. The Small blind is the worst seat (as you will always act first and act with the least amount of information) and the Big blind is the least profitable seat.
The above image shows the poker tables positions for a 9 handed or full ring table. This will be discussed as it is the standard table which is found in casinos. 6-max tables are shown below:

**Position Breakdown: Early**

**Under the gun** (UTG): this is the first seat to act when the cards have been dealt. This is a difficult seat to play as there is a large number of players to act behind. When there are more players left to act it is more likely someone will have a strong hand. For this reason, players should only play a very small number of hands from UTG. This is especially true for full ring tables. UTG+1 should be played in a similar manner.

**Position Breakdown: Middle**

**Middle position** (MP): You should play conservatively from this seat (play a tight range). However, you can play slightly more hands from this seat when compared to UTG. MP+1 should also be played in a similar manner to MP.

**Hijack** (HJ): In this seat, you can play more hands. This seat should be significantly more profitable than the earlier positions. Each position from this point forward has individual names because they play quite differently.

**Position Breakdown: Late**

**Cutoff** (CO): The cutoff is the second best seat in poker. If the Button doesn’t join the hand then you will always be last to act. We highlighted previously why acting last is extremely advantageous. You can play a wide range of hands from this position very profitably (25-30% of hands).
**Button (BTN):** The button is the most powerful seat in poker and you can play a wide range of hands from here. Oftentimes, you can play 50% or more of the starting hands from the button.

**Position Breakdown: Blinds**

**Small blind (SB):** The small blind is one of the two seats where you need to front up money before seeing your hand. This is a massive disadvantage and is the reason why this seat is almost always a losing seat for poker players.

**Big blind (BB):** The big blind is the second blind seat. Forcing the BB to front up chips means that almost every player (pro or beginner) will make a loss from this seat.

Each seat plays very differently from one another and as a result differentiating from each of the seats is one of the first steps to improving your game.
Common Poker Mistakes That You Shouldn’t Be Making (10+ Actionable Tips)

Our penultimate section of poker 101 for dummies shows you some common poker mistakes you are likely to come across in your poker career.

Check them out below to improve your game, get you off to a winning start at the tables and avoid some of the worst poker mistakes you can make.

If the terminology isn’t clear to you make sure you check out Poker 101 for the ‘dictionary’ of poker terms.

Common poker mistakes:

1. **Chasing draws without the odds to call.** When calling with a draw you must have the correct pot odds and equity to call. For example, if you are facing a full pot sized bet with 4 outs to a straight (called a gut shot), e.g. 87 or JT5 board, you are not getting the correct odds to call. A fold would usually be correct in this situation but oftentimes new players will call hoping to get lucky. Calling without the correct pot odds is a long term losing play. Check out more on pot odds here & this video on pot odds.

2. **Not folding to aggression** is another major leak with new poker players. Oftentimes, players won’t fold with their marginal hands hoping that villain is bluffing. Most low stakes poker players do not bluff often enough for you to be able to bluff catch with marginal hands. If you are facing a lot of aggression on it usually a sign that you are beaten and that you can happily fold. This is especially true at the low stakes where opponents are typically much less aggressive than they should be.

3. **Playing above your bankroll.** Sitting down at games within your limits is key to becoming successful at poker. Playing outside your bankroll will increase the chance you will go broke. Read up on correct bankroll
management strategy for more information on how to devise a good bankroll management strategy and put it into use.

4. Learn to control your emotions! Poker can be a stressful game which oftentimes can cause you to tilt even if you are one of the most composed of players. Tilt induces poor play by not allowing players to think clearly. Keep a level head and your emotions under check. One simple strategy is to step away from the table for 10 minutes and get some air when you feel you’re not in the right mindset. You will come back feeling fresh and ready to play. Check out The Poker Mental Game [Powerful Tips For Resolving Tilt] & this video on resolving tilt at the poker table:

5. Using the same bet size on every street: For example, betting 5$ into a $10 pot on the flop and betting $5 into a $20 pot on the turn. Your bet sizes should be relative to the pot; as the pot grows in size so should the absolute size of your bet. Not increasing your bet size as the pot grows means you will either miss value or your opponent won’t fold to your small bluff. This was covered in more detail in our Texas Holdem strategy section.

6. Not taking notes on your opponent: Poker is a war of information. The more information you have on your opponent the more likely you will be to win. Start paying attention to your opponents tendencies and make note of something you can use to beat him in the future. It might be his demeanour when bluffing, or how he acts confident when holding a strong hand. Even if you don’t take a notepad to live games, make sure you take a ‘mental note’ of anything useful. Check out this great guide for taking notes on opponents.

7. Fancy play syndrome: It is often thought that you have to outsmart or trick your opponent when playing a game of poker. New players often replicate this by playing the opposite of the way they should i.e. betting
all their weak hands and checking and calling their strong hands. Essentially, poker is a game of making good decision after good decision. Don’t over complicate the basics by getting too fancy!

8. **Don’t slowplay strong hands:** When an inexperienced player gets a strong hand (such as AA or KK preflop) they are tempted to slow play their hand to not fold out everyone from the pot. This is the wrong attitude; it often leads to winning a small pot or losing a big one when your aces get cracked. Hence, raise and reraise your strong hands, a big hand deserves a big pot!

9. **Overvaluing the strength of Ace rag:** Small aces such as A6 and A2 are known as Ace rag. Often, inexperienced players see an ace in the hole and think the hand is much stronger than it actually is. Weak aces are dominated quite often by other opponents stronger aces which means you will either lose a big pot or win a small one. There is a time and place to play weak aces. Make sure you know when by reading up on **position is king**. Check out this video on playing weak aces for more information:

10. **Chasing losses:** one big mistake made by new and experienced players alike is moving up in stakes to recoup losses. This is a huge mistake and can often lead to you losing your whole bankroll. If you find yourself tempted to move up in stakes to chase losses, quit your game and go find something else to do. You will be greatful the next morning, I promise
11. **Not having a plan:** when calling a bet or calling a raise you should have a plan for what you are going to do on the following streets. Are you going to call or raise? On which cards are you going to fold if your opponent bets? Similarly, when betting you should also know what to do when your opponent calls or raises. The more you can think about future streets, the more easily you will be able to exploit your opponent.

![Plan Image](image1.png)

12. **Playing for long stretches without a break:** Poker is a difficult game, and as a result, we tire quickly when playing. Make sure you take a break every hour for a few minutes to freshen up. Even going for a 5-minute conversation about non-poker related stuff will allow you to refocus. Your bottom line will thank you for it.

13. **Not working on your mental game:** your mental game is almost as important as your technical game; however, the majority of inexperienced players completely neglect developing it. Controlling your emotions, recognising when you are tilting and playing in the zone are all part of your mental game. To find out more see the blog post on [mental game](#).
14. **Playing when you are not in the right mindset**: we all have lives outside poker and unfortunately, it can affect our poker game in some cases. Have a fight with your spouse? Your boss on your back? Not sleeping right? Now is not the time to play poker as you are vastly more likely to have a losing session; hence playing poker will only make matters worse.

15. **Not making the most of online offers**: a common poker mistake you can easily avoid! Poker rooms offer bonuses for new players which can be a real bankroll builder. Make sure you seek out all the top bonus offers and take full advantage of them. Sometimes, they can even double your bankroll if you find the right offer. Bonuses do require a certain amount of play to be released, however! Check out our [best online poker sites page](#) for more information.

Bonus: **Chasing draws with suited rags**: beginners often overestimate the strength of their draws (i.e. likelihood of completing the draw) and as a result, pay too much to see the turn and river. Rag hands such as 84s and 53s are classic examples. This is made worse by the fact the ranks of the cards are also poor, meaning if you miss your draw you have very little chance of taking down the pot. Fold them rag draws!! Thanks to [@VenicePaulie](#) for the shout out for this one

Follow up common poker mistakes with [Real money limits, stakes and types of poker games](#).

Return to [poker 101](#)?
Poker Etiquette – Don’t Look Like A Fool With These Mistakes

Before we discuss the what you should be doing on the table let make sure you know what you shouldn’t be doing – the unwritten rules of poker.

Poker Etiquette – Poker 101

1. Don’t talk to someone while they are playing a hand. When a player is in a hand they need to concentrate and they will not appreciate you trying to maintain a conversation with them. Pick up the conversation after the hand has ended.

2. Don’t allow anyone to see your cards until the showdown. Only one person to a hand while the hand is in play. This ensures that you are not unfairly receiving advice and negates the chance of your cards being exposed.

3. Don’t throw your chips into the pot when betting, calling or raising. Your need to let the dealer count the chips before the hand can continue.

4. Avoid making string bets – string bets are when you say I call your raise and raise you more. The first action out of your mouth is (call, raise or fold) is the action you will be forced to take in a casino.

5. Pay attention so that you don’t delay the game. The situation comes up in the casino quite often – players will no realize it is their turn to act and they slow up the game. Always keep your eye on the action and be ready to act when it is your turn.

6. Act in turn. The game of poker is structured so that everyone will act in specific order. Not following this order will put someone unfairly at a disadvantage (usually you).

7. Do not ask to see mucked hands. A player may throw his hand away after being called and the river as he knows he is almost always beaten. Don’t ask to see his hand, this would be very poor etiquette.

8. Slowrolling – slow rolling is the act of pretending you have a weaker hand than you do in order to trick your opponent into thinking he won after the hand has ended. This is frowned upon at the poker table. The only acting or tricks you should pull should be when the hand is in play. Not afterward.

9. Blaming the dealer – the dealer isn’t at fault for you being dealt poor hands. He is just shuffling the deck and doesn’t have a personal agenda vs you. So make sure you treat him with respect.
Real Money Limits, Stakes and Types of Poker Games

There are many different types of poker games. A short summary of the limit types are described below:

**Types of Poker Games:**

**Fixed limit or limit poker:** The bet size is limited to a pre-set amount which cannot be exceeded. The bets are usually small relative to the overall size of the pot.

**Pot limit:** In a pot limit game the maximum bet size is the overall size of the pot. A common pot limit game is *Pot Limit Omaha* or PLO for short.

**No limit poker** No limit poker, such as No limit hold’em means that any bet size can be used during any betting rounds. The famous all-in move can be employed at any stage to put maximum pressure on your opponent!

The stakes in poker can be defined in two different ways. Firstly, the small blind/big blind amount can be used to define a stake such as 1/2 No limit (or 1/2 NL for short). Otherwise, the value of a 100bb buy-in can be quoted e.g. 200NL. For deep tables (where the standard buy-in is 200bb+) the stake won’t be called 400NL, it will instead just be called 200NL deep.

There are many different types of poker game types such as cash games, tournaments, sit and go’s and each can be broken down into further subcategories.

**Types of Poker Game Structures:**

**Cash games** are the most basic poker format. A player buys in with a certain amount of money depending on the stakes, and with that cash they can bet/raise/call once they have been dealt cards. Players can sit out
whenever they want once they are not in the hand without a penalty. This is the best format for the poker player with the busy schedule as it is easy to get in a few hands during a short free period.

**Tournaments**, on the other hand, require a player to play until either they are out of chips or they have busted from the tournament. If a player sits out their blinds are still taken meaning they will still lose chips despite not being at the table. Tournaments can require a significant time investment so would not be recommended unless you have a completely free schedule. However, tournaments have the largest prizes and can attract massive player pools!

**Sit and go tournaments** are much like tournaments although they aren’t scheduled – they will start when enough players register. Much like tournaments they require a time commitment – a player cannot sit out without playing the blinds. However, they typically are much quicker from start to finish than a tournament. Sit and go tournaments are often good practice for final tables of larger multi-table tournaments.

That is for types of poker games.