

Texas Hold 'EM Rules

The Shuffle, The Deal and The Blinds

The dealer shuffles a standard 52-card deck. A "dealer button" moves clockwise from player to player to mark which player is the dealer as the game goes along unless there is only one person dealing and not playing.

The two players to the left of the dealer (the button holder) put a predetermined amount of money into the pot before any cards are dealt. This is called "posting the blinds". Most often, the "first blind", the player to the left of the dealer, puts up half the minimum bet and the "second blind puts up the full minimum amount.

Each player is dealt two cards, face down. These are known as the "hole cards".

Betting Begins

A round betting takes place, beginning with the player to the left of the two who posted the blinds. Players can call, raise, or fold when it's their turn to bet.

The Flop

After the first betting round, the dealer discards the top card of the deck. This is called "burning the card" and is done to ensure that no one accidentally saw the top card, and to help prevent cheating.

The dealer then flips the next three cards face up on the table. These are called the "flop". These are the first three of the eventual 5 community cards.

Note: *Eventually, a total of five (5) community cards will be placed face up on the table. Players can use any combination of the community cards and their own two hole cards to form the best possible five-card Poker hand.*

After the flop, another round of betting takes place, beginning with the player to the left of the dealer (the button). During this and all future rounds of betting, players can check (no chips are put on the table), call (put in the same number of chips as the last player), raise, or fold when it's their turn to bet.

Fourth Street

The dealer burns another card and plays one more face up onto the table. This, the fourth community card, is called the "turn" or "Fourth Street".

The player to the left of the dealer (the button) begins the third round of betting.

Fifth Street

The dealer burns another card and plays one more face up onto the table. This, the fifth community card, is called the "river" or "Fifth Street".

Final Betting and the Winner

Players can now use any combination of seven cards, the five community cards and the two hole cards known only to them, to form the best possible five-card Poker hand.

The fourth and final round of betting starts with the player to the left of the dealer (the button).

After the final betting round, all players who remain in the game reveal their hands. The player who made the initial bet or the player who made the last raise shows their hand first.

The player with the best hand wins.

That said, there is a point where the investment you've already made virtually dictates that you hang in there. It's useful to measure this in terms of percentage of your chips. For example, if you've already committed 40% of your chips to the pot, another 5% isn't that much. This is the gray area, so once again the best advice is to be cautious.

The Best Hand

Standard five-card Poker hands are ranked here in order of strength, from the strongest Poker hand to the weakest.

Royal Flush

This is the best possible hand in standard five-card Poker. Ace, King, Queen, Jack and 10, all of the same suit.

Straight Flush

Any five-card sequence in the same suit (e.g.: 8, 9, 10, Jack and Queen of clubs; or 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 of diamonds).

Four of a Kind

All four cards of the same value (e.g.: 8, 8, 8, 8; or Queen, Queen, Queen, Queen).

Full House

Three of a kind combined with a pair (e.g.: 10, 10, 10 with 6, 6; or King, King, King with 5, 5).

Flush

Any five cards of the same suit, but not in sequence (e.g.: 4, 5, 7, 10 and King of spades).

Straight

Five cards in sequence, but not in the same suit (e.g.: 7 of clubs, 8 of clubs, 9 of diamonds, 10 of spades and Jack of diamonds).

Three of a Kind

Three cards of the same value (e.g.: 3, 3, 3; or Jack, Jack, Jack).

Two Pair

Two separate pairs (e.g.: 2, 2, Queen, Queen).

Pair

Two cards of the same value (e.g.: 7, 7).

High Card

If a Poker hand contains none of the above combinations, it's valued by the highest card in it.

Strategy Tips

To be a truly great Texas Hold 'Em Poker player, you need to be able to read your opponents, ascertaining when they are bluffing and when they really have a solid hand.

Two Things to Always Remember

1. The two cards you hold are the only cards that set you apart from the other players and give you the chance to win
2. All of the face-up cards are community cards, shared by you and every other player. It's vital that you focus on what those cards could mean to someone else at least as much as you focus on what they mean to you. In particular, keep your eyes open for your opponents' straight and flush possibilities

Evaluating Your Cards

Usually the first decision you make in a hand of Texas Hold 'Em Poker happens with your only knowledge being what your two cards are.

When you look at your cards, be careful not to reveal anything with your reaction. Taking a sharp breath, no matter how quietly you do it, can tell a wily opponent all he/she needs to know to have an advantage over you.

How do you know if your cards are good?

It depends in part on how many players are in the game, but a general rule is that you should seriously consider folding before the flop if you have two non-pair cards, both less than 10. A more conservative player might fold if just one of the cards is less than 10.

If the big blind (a forced bet designed to ensure that every hand has a pot) is low enough, it may be worthwhile to pay in so that you can see the flop even if you don't have particularly strong cards in your hand.

A lot of Texas Hold 'Em strategy is based on the cards in your hand. You must be willing to suffer through a series of poor hands without getting impatient. The good hands will come, eventually, and you'll be in better position to take advantage of them if you don't waste your chips (money) trying to get something out of nothing.

The Flop

After seeing the flop, don't be afraid to cut your losses. A common mistake made by novices is to decide, "I'm already in the hand, so I might as well play it out". **WRONG!**

With seven players at a table, two pair or better will eventually be a winning hand. If you don't have the high pair after the flop, and you're not in good position for a straight or flush, you should probably get out of the hand.

However, remember that as the number of players goes down, so does the potential of a strong hand, so if you're at a table with just two other players, it could pay off to be more aggressive.

If you're the first to bet after the flop, don't be afraid to check. This can work to your advantage in two ways. First, if your hand is on the weak side, you might be able to see one more card without having to put more into the pot. Second, if your hand is strong, you could convince an opponent or two that it's weaker than it really is.

Fourth Street and Fifth Street

The fourth and fifth community cards give you two more chances to get out of the pot before you lose even more chips (money) or increase your winnings.

At this point, it's likely there will be only one or two other players still in the pot with you. The best advice here is to be cautious. After fourth street, don't stay in the pot hoping for a straight or flush, unless you can do so on a check (that's without putting more chips into the pot). Although there will be times when you would have drawn the straight or flush, they will be outweighed by the times you don't.

The bottom line is "Don't allow yourself to get sucked in too far with a weak hand."