

APPENDIX C

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Frequently Asked Questions about Poker

This is the Poker section of the [rec.gambling Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#) list.

Changes or additions to this section of the FAQ should be submitted to: maurer@magellan.stanford.edu.

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Q:P1 How is Texas Hold'em played?

A:P1 [Michael Maurer]

Texas Hold'em is a "community card" game, meaning that some cards are dealt face-up in the middle of the table and shared by all the players. Each player has two down cards that are theirs alone, and combines them with the five community cards to make the best possible five-card hand.

Play begins by dealing two cards face down to each player; these are known as "hole cards" or "pocket cards". This is followed by a round of betting. Most hold'em games get the betting started with one or two "blind bets" to the left of the dealer. These are forced bets which must be made before seeing one's cards. Play proceeds clockwise from the blinds, with each player free to fold, call the blind bet, or raise. Usually the blinds are "live", meaning that they may raise themselves when the action gets back around to them.

Now three cards are dealt face up in the middle of the table; this is called the "flop". A round of betting ensues, with action starting on the first blind, immediately to the dealers left. Another card is dealt face up (the "turn"), followed by another round of betting, again beginning to the dealer's left. Then the final card (the "river") is dealt followed by the final round of betting. In a structured-limit game, the bets on the turn and river are usually double the size of those before and on the flop.

The game is usually played for high only, and each player makes the best five-card combination to compete for the pot. Players usually use both their hole cards to make their best hand, but this is not required. A player may even choose to "play the board" and use no hole cards at all. Identical five-card hands split the pot; the sixth and seventh cards are not used to break ties.

Q:P2 How is Omaha Hold'em played?

A:P2 [Michael Maurer]

The rules of Omaha are very similar to those of Texas Hold'em. There are only two differences:

Each player receives four hole cards, instead of two.

One must use *exactly* three community cards and two hole cards to make one's hand.

The second difference is confusing for most beginners. These examples show how

it works.

Board Hole Cards Best High Hand

=====

As Kc Qc 8d 2d Ac 2c Jd Th Jd Th makes ace-hi straight.

As Kc Qc Jh Td Ac 2c Jd 8h Ac Jd makes ace-hi straight.

As Kc Qc Jh Td 3c 2c Jd 8h Jd 8h makes pair of jacks. No straight
is possible using two hole cards.

As Ks 8h 9d 2s Qs 4h 4d 4s Qs 4s makes AKQ42 "nut" flush.

As Ks 8s 9s 2s Qs 4h 4d Qd Qs Qd makes pair of queens. No flush is
possible using two hole cards.

As Ts 8s 8h 4d Td Tc Ad 9c Td Tc makes TTT88 full house.

As Ts 8s 8h 4d Td 8c Ad 9c Ad 8c makes 888AA full house.

As Ac 8s 8h 4d Ah 2h 3h 5h Ah 5h makes trip aces AAA85. No full
house is possible using two hole cards.

As Ac 8s 8h 4d Ah 2h 3h 4h Ah 4h makes full house AAA44.

Omaha is often played high/low, meaning that the highest and lowest hands split the pot. The low hand usually must "qualify" by being at least an 8-low (the largest card must be 8 or lower). One can use a different two cards to compete for the high and low portions of the pot, and the game is played "cards speak" rather than "declare". Aces are either low or high, and straights and flushes don't count for low. Since everybody must use two hole cards to make a hand, the board must have three cards 8 or lower for a low to even be possible. Players often tie for low, and the low half of the pot is divided equally among them. Some more examples:

Board Hole Cards Best Low Hand

=====

As Kc Qc 8d 2d 8c Jc Jd Th Jd Th makes the low hand JT82A, which
does not qualify as 8-or-better.

3d 5h 8d Tc Ts Ac 2c Jd Th Ac 2c makes the "nut low" 8532A.

3d 5h 8d Tc Ts Ac 3c 4d Th Ac 4d makes 8543A.

3d 5h 8d Ad Ts Ac 3c 5d 8h Any two make T853A, not qualifying.

Ac 2c 3d 4h 5s Ad 2d Th Td Ad 2d makes "nut low" 5432A.

Ac 2c 3d 4h 5s 4d 5d Th Td 4d 5d makes "nut low" 5432A.

5h 7h 8d Ac 2c Ad 2d Th Td Ad 2d makes 8752A, but the nut low is
5432A with a 3 and 4. On the flop we
had the best possible low, but the turn

As in all split-pot games, the real goal of playing any hand is to win both halves of the pot, or "scoop". Thus, hands that have a chance to win both ways are far superior to those that can only win one way.

Q:P3 What should I expect the first time I play poker in a casino or card room?
What etiquette should I follow?

A:P3 [Michael Maurer]

Many people are intimidated on their first visit to a public cardroom. Knowing what to expect and some simple rules of etiquette will help the first-time visitor relax and have a good time.

Any cardroom with more than a few tables will have a sign-up desk or board for the various games being played. Usually someone will be standing here to take your name if a seat is not immediately available. This person can explain what games are offered, the betting limits, special house rules and so on. This is the moment of your first decision: which game and for what stakes?

Choosing a game is fairly easy; you already know which game is most familiar to you. You may be surprised to find that your favorite home games are not spread in public cardrooms. Most will offer one or more of Texas Hold'em, Seven-Card Stud, and Omaha Hold'em (usually hi/lo split, 8-or-better for low). Sometimes you will find California Lowball (5-card draw for low), Seven-Card Stud hi/lo, or Hold'em variations like Pineapple. You will rarely find High Draw (5-card draw for hi), and will never find home game pot-builders like Anaconda, Follow-the-Queen, 7-27 or Guts. Except for the joker in draw poker, cardrooms never use wild cards.

If they don't have a game you want, don't play.

Choosing a betting limit is a bit harder. It is best to start playing at a limit so small that the money is not important to you. After all, with all the excitement of your first time playing poker there is no need to be worried about losing the nest egg to a table full of sharks. Betting limits are typically expressed as \$1-\$5 or \$3-\$6, and may be "spread-limit" or "structured-limit". A spread-limit means one can bet or raise any amount between the two numbers (although a raise must be at least as much as a previous bet or raise). For example, in \$1-\$5 spread-limit, if one person bets \$2 the next person is free to call the \$2 or raise \$2, \$3, \$4, or \$5, but cannot raise just \$1. On the next round, everything is reset and the first bettor may bet anything from \$1 to \$5. In structured-limit like \$3-\$6 (usually recognizable by a factor of two between betting limits), all betting and raising on early rounds is in units of \$3, and on later rounds is in units of \$6. One only has a choice of "whether" to bet or raise; the amount is fixed by the limit. One usually doesn't have a choice between spread and structured betting at a given limit. Keep in mind that it is quite easy to win or lose 20 "big bets" (the large number in the limit) in an hour of play. Also, since your mind will be occupied with the mechanics of the game while the regular players consider strategy, you are more likely to lose than win. In other words: choose

a low limit.

If the game you want is full, your name will go on a list and the person running the list will call you when a seat opens up. Depending on the cardroom, you may have trouble hearing your name called and they may be quick to pass you over, so be alert. Once a seat is available, the list person will vaguely direct you toward it, or toward a floorman who will show you where to sit.

Now is the time for you to take out your money and for the other players to look you over. A good choice for this "buy-in" is ten to twenty big bets, but you must buy-in for at least the posted table minimum, usually about five big bets. Most public poker games are played "table-stakes", which means that you can't reach into your pocket for more money during the play of a hand. It also means that you can't be forced out of a pot because of insufficient funds. If you run out of money during a hand you are still in the pot (the dealer will say you are "all-in"), but further betting is "on the side" for an additional pot you cannot win. Between hands, you are free to buy as many chips as you want, but are not allowed to take any chips off the table unless you are leaving. This final rule gives opponents a chance to win back what they have lost to you. If you are so unfortunate as to bust out, you may buy back in for at least the table minimum or leave.

Once you have told the dealer how much money you are playing, the dealer may sell you chips right away or call over a chip runner to do so. You may want to tell the dealer that you are a first-time player. This is a signal to the dealer to give a little explanation when it is your turn to act, and to the other players to extend you a bit of courtesy when you slow down the game. Everyone will figure it out in a few minutes anyway, so don't be bashful. You may even ask to sit out a few hands just to see how it all works.

There are three ways that pots are seeded with money at the beginning of the hand. The most familiar to the home player is the "ante", where each player tosses a small amount into the pot for the right to be dealt a hand. The second way, often used in conjunction with an ante, is the "forced bring-in". For example, in seven-card stud, after everyone antes and is dealt the first three cards, the player with the lowest upcard may be forced to bet to get things started. The third way, often used in games without upcards like Hold'em or Omaha, is a "forced blind bet". This is similar to the bring-in, but is always made by the person immediately after the player with the "button". The "button" is a plastic disk that moves around the table and indicates which player is acting as dealer for the hand (of course, the house dealer does the actual dealing of cards, but does not play). A second or even third blind may follow the first, usually of increasing size. Whichever seed method is used, note that this initial pot, small as it is, is the only reason to play at all.

If the game has blinds, the dealer may now ask you if you want to "post". This means, "do you want to pay extra to see a hand now, in bad position, and then pay the blinds, or are you willing to sit and watch for a few minutes?" Answer "no, I'll wait" and watch the game until the dealer tells you it's time to begin, usually after the blinds pass you.

Finally, it is your turn to get cards and play. Your first impression will

probably be how fast the game seems to move. If you are playing stud, several upcards may be "mucked" (folded into the discards) before you even see them; if you are playing hold'em, it may be your turn to act before you have looked at your cards. After a few hands you should settle into the rhythm and be able to keep up. If you ever get confused, just ask the dealer what is going on.

When playing, consider the following elements of poker etiquette:

Acting in Turn

Although you may see others fold or call out of turn, don't do it yourself. It is considered rude because it gives an unfair advantage to the players before you who have yet to act. This is especially important at the showdown when only three players are left. If players after you are acting out of turn while you decide what to do, say "Time!" to make it clear that you have not yet acted.

Handling Cards

You may find it awkward at first to peek at your own cards without exposing them to others. Note that the other players have no formal obligation to alert you to your clumsiness, although some will. Watch how the other players manage it and emulate them. Leave your cards in sight at all times; holding them in your lap or passing them to your kibitzing friend is grounds for killing your hand. Finally, if you intentionally show your cards to another player during the hand, both your hands may be declared dead. Your neighbor might want to see *you* declared dead :) if this happens!

Protecting Cards

In a game with "pocket cards" like Hold'em or Omaha, it is your responsibility to "protect your own cards". This confusing phrase really means "put a chip on your cards". If your cards are just sitting out in the open, you are subject to two possible disasters. First, the dealer may scoop them up in a blink because to leave ones cards unprotected is a signal that you are folding. Second, another player's cards may happen to touch yours as they fold, disqualifying your hand and your interest in the pot. Along the same lines, when you turn your cards face up at the showdown, be careful not to lose control of your cards. If one of them falls off the table or lands face-down among the discards your hand will be dead, even if that card is not used to make your hand.

Accidentally Checking

In some fast-paced games, a moment of inaction when it is your turn to act may be interpreted as a check. Usually, a verbal declaration or rapping one's hand on the table is required, but many players are impatient and will assume your pause is a check. If you need more than a second to decide what to do, call "Time!" to stop the action. While you decide, don't tap your fingers nervously; that is a clear check signal and will be considered binding.

String Bets

A "string bet" is a bet that initially looks like a call, but then turns out to

be a raise. Once your hand has put some chips out, you may not go back to your stack to get more chips and increase the size of your bet, unless you verbally declared the size of your bet at the beginning. If you always declare "call" or "raise" as you bet, you will be immune to this problem. Note that a verbal declaration in turn is binding, so a verbal string bet is possible and also prohibited. That means you cannot say "I call your \$5, and raise you another \$5!" Once you have said you call, that's it. The rest of the sentence is irrelevant. You can't raise.

Splashing the Pot

In some home games, it is customary to throw chips directly into the pot. In a public cardroom, this is cause for dirty looks, a reprimand from the dealer, and possibly stopping the game to count down the pot. When you bet, place your chips directly in front of you. The dealer will make sure that you have the right number and sweep them into the pot.

One Chip Rule

In some cardrooms, the chip denominations and game stakes are incommensurate. For example, a \$3-\$6 game might use \$1 and \$5 chips, instead of the more sensible \$3 chip. The one-chip rule says that using large-denomination chip is just a call, even though the chip may be big enough to cover a raise. If you don't have exact change, it is best to verbally state your action when throwing that large chip into the pot. For example, suppose you are playing in a \$1-\$5 spread-limit game, the bet is \$2 to you, and you have only \$5 chips. Silently tossing a \$5 chip out means you call the \$2 bet. If you want to raise to \$4 or \$5, you must say so *before* your chip hits the felt. Whatever your action, the dealer will make any required change at the end of the betting round. Don't make change for yourself out of the pot.

Raising Forever

In a game like Hold'em, it is possible to know that you hold "the nuts" and cannot be beaten. If this happens when all the cards are out and you get in a raising war with someone, don't stop! Raise until one of you runs out of chips. If there is the possibility of a tie, the rest of the table may clamor for you to call, since you "obviously" both have the same hand. Ignore the rabble. You'll be surprised how many of your opponents turn out to be bona fide idiots.

The Showdown

Hands end in one of three ways: one person bets and everyone else folds, one person bets on the final round and at least one person calls, or everybody checks on the final round. If everybody folds to a bet, the bettor need not show the winning cards and will usually toss them to the dealer face down. If somebody calls on the end, the person who bet or raised most recently is *supposed* to immediately show, or "open", their cards. They may delay doing so in a rude attempt to induce another player to show their hand in impatience, and then muck their own hand if it is not a winner. Don't do this yourself. Show your hand immediately if you get called. If you have called a bet, wait for the bettor to show, then show your own hand if it's better. If the final

round is checked down, in most cardrooms everyone is supposed to open their hands immediately. Sometimes everyone will wait for someone else to show first, resulting in a time-wasting deadlock. Break the chain and show your cards.

Most cardrooms give every player at the table the right to see all cards that called to a showdown, even if they are mucked as losers. (This helps prevent cheating by team-play.) If you are extremely curious about a certain hand, ask the dealer to show it to you. It is considered impolite to constantly ask to see losing cards. It is even more impolite if you hold the winning cards, and in most cardrooms you will forfeit the pot if the "losing" cards turn out to be better than yours.

As a beginner, you may want to show your hand all the time, since you may have overlooked a winning hand. What you gain from one such pot will far outweigh any loss due to revealing how you played a particular losing hand. "Cards speak" at the showdown, meaning that you need not declare the value of your hand. The dealer will look at your cards and decide if you have a winner.

As a final word of caution, it is best to hold on to your winning cards until the dealer pushes you the pot. If the dealer takes your cards and incorrectly "mucks" them, many cardrooms rule that you have no further right to the pot, even if everyone saw your winning cards. A dishonest player might try to steal the pot from you with a despicable trick. When you bet and all others fold, he may conceal his hand in the hopes that you will toss your cards into the muck, whereupon he will call and win the pot.

Raking in the Pot

As you win your first pot, the excitement within you will drive you beyond the realm of rational behavior, and you will immediately lunge to scoop up the precious chips with both arms. Despite the fact that no other player had done this while you watched, despite the fact that you read here not to do it, you WILL do it. Since every dealer has a witty admonition prepared for this moment, maybe it's all for the best. But next time, let the dealer push it to you, ok?

Touching Cards or Chips

Don't. Only touch your own cards and chips. Other players' chips and cards, discards, board cards, the pot and everything else are off-limits. Only the dealer touches the cards and pot.

Tipping

Dealers make their living from tips. It is customary for the winner of each pot to tip the dealer 50 cents to a dollar, depending on locale and the stakes. Sometimes you will see players tip several dollars for a big pot or an extremely unlikely suckout. Sometimes you will see players stiff the dealer if the pot was tiny or split between two players. This is a personal issue, but imitating the other players is a good start.

Correcting Mistakes

Occasionally the dealer or a player may make a mistake, such as miscalling the winning hand at the showdown. If you are the victim of such a mistake, call it out immediately and do not let the game proceed. If your opponent is the victim, let your conscience be your guide; many see no ethical dilemma in remaining silent. If you are not involved in the pot, you must judge the texture of the game to determine whether to speak up. In general, the higher the stakes, the more likely you should keep your mouth shut.

Taking a Break

You are free to get up to stretch your legs, visit the restroom and so on. Ask the dealer how long you may be away from your seat; 20 or 30 minutes is typical. It is customary to leave your chips sitting on the table; part of the dealer's job is to keep them safe. If you miss your blind(s) while away, you may have to make them up when you return, or you may be asked to sit out a few more hands until they reach you again. If several players are gone from a table, they may all be called back to keep the game going; those who don't return in time forfeit their seats.

Color Change

If you are in the happy situation of having too many chips, you may request a "color change" (except in Atlantic City). You can fill up a rack or two with your excess chips and will receive a few large denomination chips in return. These large chips are still in play, but at least you aren't inconvenienced by a mountain of chips in front of you. Remember the one chip rule when betting with them.

Leaving

Leave whenever you feel like it. You never have an obligation to stay at the table, even if you've won a fortune. You should definitely leave if you are tired, losing more than you expect, or have other reasons to believe you are not playing your best game. Depending on the cardroom, you can redeem your chips for cash with a chip-runner or floorman or at the cashier's cage.

Last but not least is the matter of the house take. Somebody has to maintain the tastefully opulent furnishings and pay the electric bill. The house will choose one of three ways to charge you to play. A simple "time charge" is common in higher limit games and at some small games: seats are rented by the half hour, at rates ranging from \$4 to \$10 or so, depending on the stakes. This method charges all players equally. Other cardrooms will "rake" a percentage of the final pot, up to some maximum, before awarding it to the winning player. The usual rake is either 5% or 10%, capped at \$3 or \$4. If the pot is raked, the dealer will remove chips from the pot as it grows, setting them aside until the hand is over and they are dropped into a slot in the table. This method favors the tight player who enters few pots but wins a large fraction of them. A simpler method is to "drop" a fixed amount at the start of each hand; one player, usually the one with the button, pays the entire amount of the drop. Depending on house rules, this "button charge" of \$2-\$4 may or may not play as a bet. If the chips do play as a bet, this method also favors the tighter players, but not nearly as much as the rake does. Regardless of the mechanism,

a cardroom will try to drop about \$80-\$120 per hour at a \$3-\$6 table. The exact amount is most dependent on the local cost of doing business: Nevada is low, California and Atlantic City are high. Since there are 7-10 players at the table, expect to pay somewhere from \$7 to \$14 per hour just to sit down. Add \$2-\$4 per hour for dealer tips and you see why most low-limit players are long-run losers.

More information on cardroom play and etiquette can be found in George Percy's "Seven-Card Stud: The Waiting Game" and Lee Jones' "Winning Low-Limit Hold'em". Beginning players may also want to watch for special cardroom promotions to draw new players; many offer free lessons followed by a very low-stakes game with other novices. Since everyone is a beginner, much of the tension is relieved.

Q:P4 What are some good books about poker?

A:P4 [Michael Maurer, December 1994]

All poker players should have this book on their shelf:

David Sklansky, "The Theory of Poker" (formerly titled "Winning Poker"), Two Plus Two Publishing, 1992, \$29.95. ISBN 1-880685-00-0

Beginners will benefit from this pamphlet which concentrates on Texas Hold'em and Seven Card Stud:

Mason Malmuth and Lynne Loomis, "Fundamentals of Poker", Two Plus Two Publishing, 1992, \$3.95. ISBN 1-880685-11-6.

This classic in the field is an advanced but slightly out-of-date work covering a wide range of games, including an excellent section on no-limit Hold'em:

Doyle Brunson et al., "Super/System: A Course in Poker Power", B & G Publishing, 1978/1989, \$50. ISBN 0-931444-01-4.

The most recommended book for medium-limit Hold'em is

David Sklansky and Mason Malmuth, "Hold'em Poker for Advanced Players", Two Plus Two Publishing, 1988/1993, \$29.95. ISBN 1-880685-01-9.

This recent work by a fellow rec.gambler has received several favorable reviews from low-limit Hold-em players:

Lee Jones, "Winning Low-Limit Hold'em", ConJelCo, 1994, \$19.95. ISBN 1-886070-04-0.

The results of 900 million computer-simulated Hold'em hands are summarized in this unique work. It is useful for evaluating starting hands in two situations: when most players will play all the way to the river, or when one or more players is all-in before the flop.

Justin Case, "Percentage Hold'em: The Book of Numbers", Whitestone

Books, 1993, \$35.

Beginning Seven Card Stud players must read this small spiral-bound gem:

George Percy, "7 Card Stud: The Waiting Game", GBC Press, 1979, \$9. ISBN 0-89650-903-6.

More experienced stud players may benefit from

David Sklansky, Mason Malmuth and Ray Zee, "Seven Card Stud for Advanced Players", Two Plus Two Publishing, 1992, \$29.95. ISBN 1-880685-02-7.

Finally, in a different vein is the following book about reading your opponents and preventing them from reading you:

Mike Caro, "The Body Language of Poker" (formerly titled "Mike Caro's Book of Tells"), Carol Publishing Group, 1984/1994, \$18.95. ISBN 0-89746-100-2.

Many of these books are available to rec.gamblers with an Internet discount from ConJelCo.

Q:P5 What computer poker programs are best for my PC or Mac?

A:P5 [Darse Billings]

Still waiting for Darse's comments.....

If you want to write some of your own poker software, a fast poker hand evaluator is available by FTP as `poker.tar.gz` from `ftp.csua.berkeley.edu` in directory `pub/rec.gambling/poker`. It is in C but uses some Gnu C extensions.

Q:P6 What is IRC poker and how can I play?

A:P6 [Michael Maurer, June 1994]

IRC poker is a real-time network poker game that allows people from around the world to play poker with each other via the Internet. The stakes are "etherbucks", which is to say imaginary. Each player's imaginary bankroll is recorded from session to session, and rankings of both bankroll and earning rate inspire competitiveness. An automatic program serves as the dealer and controls the action. World Wide Web users can find out more about the dealer program by looking at <http://www.cs.cmu.edu:8001/afs/cs/user/mummert/public/www/ircbot.html>.

The game uses the Internet Relay Chat, or IRC, to arrange communications amongst the players and with the dealer. IRC is normally a sort of global cocktail party, with several thousand people from around the globe engaged in small pockets of conversation on various "channels". Within each channel, anything one person types appears on the screens of all the other people tuned in to the channel (although one person can also "whisper" privately to another). The poker channels are unusual in that an automaton is always present

to supervise a poker game. However, the chat aspect of the channel is preserved, so that the poker games can become quite social.

In order to play IRC poker, you must have an IRC client and access to the Internet. The client is a program running on your local machine that connects you to the IRC network. If you are on a Unix machine, try typing 'irc' to see if a client is already installed. If not, or if you are on a Macintosh, PC or VMS system, you will have to obtain a client by FTP. One archive site for IRC clients is cs.bu.edu (128.197.2.2) in the directory irc/clients. The Unix client is named ircII. This archive also contains a primer on using IRC and answers to some frequently asked questions.

Once you have a client up and running, you need to connect to the special, isolated IRC poker server. In order to speed up the games, the poker server is not a part of the standard IRC network. The different clients have various ways to specify the IRC server you want to use; on Unix you can say

```
irc nickname hephaestus.nectar.cs.cmu.edu  
or  irc nickname 128.2.250.45
```

where 'nickname' is the name by which you will be known to other IRC users. After a moment, this command should connect you to the IRC poker server and print a welcome message. (From this point on the instructions are Unix-specific, but many of the commands will work on the other clients as well).

At this point you can find out what channels are open by typing

```
/list
```

which prints the topic of each channel, or you can see a more detailed view with

```
/names
```

which lists all of the people on each channel. As of May 1994, typical channels included #holdem, #omaha, and #nolimit. To join a particular channel (for instance, #holdem), type

```
/join #holdem
```

The action of the poker game and the ongoing conversations should now appear on your screen. The play of the game is governed by sending special messages to the dealer automaton; for example, the message

```
p fold
```

indicates that you wish to fold. All poker commands are prefixed with the letter 'p'. The command

```
p commands
```

gives a list of all possible commands. The most important are

p join password % join the game (with your secret password)
p quit % quit the game
p fold % fold when the action gets to you
p check % check (do not bet or fold)
p call % call a bet
p raise % raise the bet

On the non-structured channels like #nolimit, some of these commands may take an argument, such as

p raise 50

When you join the channel you will notice the conspicuous absence of these 'p' commands despite the ongoing play. This is because most players send their messages privately to the dealer only, using a command like

/msg hbot p raise

where 'hbot' is the nickname of the dealer. (This is especially useful to hide your password when you join.) Because poker players are inherently lazy, most use a special set of IRC macros that saves them the effort of typing all those characters each time they have to act. These poker macros are available from <ftp.csua.berkeley.edu> in the file /pub/rec.gambling/poker/ircrc.poker. The file contains instructions for using it on a Unix machine.

In addition, a curses-based front end has been written for the Holdem games. This uses simple terminal graphics to draw pictures of your cards and those of the other players, helping you to visualize the action. When other players fold their cards are mucked, and the board and pot are shown in the middle. This front end can be used in conjunction with the IRC macros mentioned above. The program is available in source code form for Unix machines from jcs.w.com in the directory pub/holdem.

Finally, some IRC poker statistics are available by looking at the URL

<http://www-star.stanford.edu/~maurer/f.g>.

Q:P7 What skills are important for Texas Hold'em?

A:P7 [Michael Hall]

(Hold 'em) Poker Skills in Order of Importance

Disclaimer: I'm a poker novice, not an expert.

0. Table selection
1. Hand selection
2. Reading opponents' hands
3. Opponent assessment
4. Heads up play, bluffing, and semi-bluffing
5. Seat selection
6. Check-raising
7. Getting tells

8. Pot odds calculations

The exact order of importance of skills varies by game type. For example, you cannot read your opponent when your opponent does not know what he has. The list above is geared towards mid-level games where some sanity prevails but the game is not at an expert level either.

0. Table Selection.

By far the most important skill is table selection, so it ranks better than #1, it's #0. It doesn't matter how well you play if you are always picking the games with no fish where even an expert can't beat the rake. Most of your income will come from a few very bad players. If you play fairly well, you won't lose much to the better players, nor win much from the slightly inferior players; it's the fish that count.

1. Hand selection

Now that you've found your table with a live one or two, be patient. More than just having the discipline to play good hands and the stomach for surviving the variance, you should realize that most of our income in Hold'em comes from AA and KK, with notable mention to the other pocket pairs and AK. Your object is to not lose too much while waiting for these premium hands, and particularly not to lose too much to these hands when other players get them. At \$10-\$20 and below, go ahead and make it 3 bets if you can before the flop with your AA or KK; you'll be surprised at how little respect you get with people calling you all the way to the river even though your betting is screaming "I HAVE POCKET ACES!!!" And respect preflop raises done by other players, dumping a lot of hands you would normally play such as AT and KJ or even AJ and KQ, as you don't want to make top pair versus an overpair. On the flop, don't bet into someone who has made it three bets unless you can beat the shit out of AA and KK and *want* to be raised back and then just call and go for a check-raise on the turn.

2. Reading opponents' hands

Now, think about the range of hands and their probabilities that your opponents could have. Initially, when the players receive their first two cards, every possible two card hand is equally probable (unless you start grouping them like 87 offsuit, pocket aces, etc., but you get the idea.) Every action a player takes gives you information that you can use to adjust these probabilities. It's a Bayesian inference problem. Unfortunately, actually applying Bayes' rule exactly is beyond any puny human brain's capability. So, you make a major approximation and essentially just keep around a set of possible hands, which you then prune down as action take place.

Suppose a player just calls preflop in early position and the flop comes Q 7 2 offsuit and he suddenly goes berserk by reraising, you have to think about what hands are likely. The hands that make sense to reraise like that are AQ, KQ, Q7, 72, Q2, 77, and 22. QQ would probably be slow-played here instead. Now join that set with the possible hands before the flop. We can just look at these hands and see which are reasonable to just call preflop in early position. AQ

and KQ are often raised in early position, but at least sometimes they just call, so they are still consistent. Q7, 72, and Q2 are not reasonable calls from early position. 77 and 22 are reasonable calls, though tight players would probably dump the 22. So that leaves AQ, KQ, 77, and 22 as his possible hands, which has narrowed down the field quite a bit. Be aware also of how other players may interpret your betting.

3. Opponent assessment

As play goes along, give yourself a running commentary of the events, "she open-raises, he folds, he cold-calls...". You must make a lot of mental notes based on this, and you must do this even when you're not in a hand, because in addition to being useful during a hand, it's useful for later hands. You want to see the frequency with which a player sees the flop, the frequency with which a player defends his blinds from raises, and the hands a player open-raises with, raises with, reraises with, cold-calls with, and just calls with. This in conjunction with narrowing down the hands above will often give you a good idea of what's going on even when there is no showdown. Your goal is to stereotype each player, as well as to note particular idiosyncrasies of the individuals for use not only now but in future sessions.

4. Heads up play, semi-bluffing, and bluffing

Especially when heads-up, you should be constantly applying pressure to the other player to make him fold. You may reraise when you think you're either beaten badly or your opponent is bluffing. It's a bit like chess or wargames, with attacks, feints, counterattacks, and graceful retreats. This is part of the "feel" of poker that's hard to put into words, but hopefully you get the idea. Bluffing and semi-bluffing is important to keep yourself unpredictable, and with since you're keeping track of the ranges of plausible hands, it's quite likely you'll often know where your opponent stands. Cold bluffing is usually restricted to the river, where you might bet into one or two opponents (who might fold) if you have no chance of winning the pot if there is a showdown. Semi-bluffing is betting with a hand that is not likely best but has some big outs. Your opponent may fold immediately, and if not, you may hit your out and your opponent may seriously misread you. There is an important balance here; you must have sufficiently tight hand selection criteria such that when you do bet your opponent is positively terrified that you may have a big hand like an overpair. Semi-bluffing is very powerful, because you've been so careful in choosing your starting hands that even if you aren't there yet you are likely to get there.

5. Seat selection

Generally, you want the loose aggressive players to your right and the tight passive players to your left. This is so that you can see a raise coming before calling the first bet. However, if the game is tight enough that it is being folded around to the blinds often, then you want some very tight passive players in the two seats to your right, so that your blinds will not be stolen. This is a very important skill, and just because you've found a good table, doesn't mean that every seat at that table would be a winning seat on average for you.

6. Check-raising

Because the nature of fixed limit Hold 'em makes calling one bet often correct for very weak hands, it's difficult to protect your hand. A major weapon you have to protect your hand is check-raising. However, you must be conscious of where you think the bettor will be. Typically, if you had a made but vulnerable hand you would check in early position if you thought there would be a bet in late position; you then raise and the players in between face two bets plus a risk of a reraise by the late position player, making it difficult for them to call. If you have an invulnerable hand that you want to make everyone pay you through the nose for, then you would check in early position if you thought there would be an early position bet, and then you would raise after everyone trailed in calling behind. The down side of check-raising is that you risk giving a free card if no one bets.

7. Getting tells

Be aware of tells. If a player has his hands on his chips and is leaning forward, all ready to raise if you bet, usually this is an act intended to get you to just check, as the player in fact does not want to raise you or maybe even call a bet. Two other incredibly valuable tells are the "what the heck, I raise" tell (get *out*, he has a monster!) and the "let me check to see if I have one of that suit with three on the board" tell (so you know he doesn't have a flush already.) Remember that if they think they're being watched, players typically act the opposite of what they have.

8. Pot odds calculations

Be aware of pot odds. You can count the number of "outs" you have to estimate if calling is a positive expected value play. You may be surprised that I rank this so low. Although it is a subjective opinion, particularly when heads up it's much more important outplay your opponent rather than outdraw him. In loose games, outdrawing becomes much more important, but then the pots are so big that you usually have odds for any half way reasonable draw anyway.

Q:P8 What is a good preflop strategy for Texas Hold'em?

A:P8 [Michael Hall]

SKLANSKY & MALMUTH HAND RANKINGS

AKQJT98765432

IIIIIIIIII

A-11223355555555

K-2126467777777

Q-3413457 S

J-45513468 u

T-66652457 i

9-888773458 t

8- 8874568 e

7- 85578 d

6- 8657

- 5- 8668
- 4- 8778
- 3- 78
- 2- 7
- unsuited

e.g., KQ suited is group 2,
KQ unsuited is group 4

SKLANSKY & MALMUTH PREFLOP ADVICE

The advice presented here for starting hands is a summary of part of Sklansky and Malmuth's book "Hold 'em for Advanced Players". I strongly advise you to buy the book, as these notes are no substitute, and it is an excellent book.

Key:

Numbers refer to the groups above.

1..8 means groups 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8, and similarly for other ranges.

+ and - mean add or subtract that group for the listed circumstance.

tight means the circumstance is it's a tight game.

loose means the circumstance is it's a loose game.

OPEN-RAISE means raise if no one else has yet called/raised the big blind.

RAISE means raise a call or big blind.

RERAISE means raise a raise.

OPEN-CALL means be the first call after the big blind (one bet)

CALL means call big blind (one bet.)

CALL2 means call one raise (two bets.)

CALL3 means call reraise cold (three bets.)

2/3 and other fractions mean do the play that fraction of the time.

AKs and other hands followed by "s" are suited.

Ax and other hands followed by "x" means kicker "x" is small

EARLY POSITION (1st, 2nd, 3rd to left of big blind)

OPEN-RAISE AA, KK, QQ, AQ, 2/3 (1/1 vs weak) AKs, AQs, AJs, KQs
1/3 hands like T9s,

JJ in tight but call JJ in typical or loose

RAISE AA, KK, QQ, AQ, 2/3 (1/1 vs weak) AKs, AQs, AJs, KQs

RERAISE AKs and maybe AQs (if you called initially)

and if a lot of players in then hands like JTs

OPEN-CALL 1..4 (loose +5, tight -4)

beware hands like 87s, 77 playable only vs

loose&passive (many callers not much raising)

CALL same as OPEN-CALL

CALL2 1..2 (loose +3 beware AQ, tight -2's AJs KQs)

CALL3 1? (loose +2?)

not JJ (but CALL2 JJ if 2 raises after your

call, be prepared to fold if fail to flop set)

MIDDLE POSITION (4th, 5th, and 6th to left of big blind)

OPEN-RAISE 1..3, 1..6 if >=25% chance of stealing blinds
RAISE 1..3 usually, but 3 depends # callers wanted
and strength of opponents (raise if weaker)
RERAISE AA, KK, QQ, AKs, AK, occasionally T9s, 88, etc
OPEN-CALL 1..5 (+6 loose)
don't just open-call with hands like AKs
CALL 1..5 (+6 loose), consider how weak callers are
CALL2 still need very good hand 1..2, maybe some 3's
CALL3 not JJ (but CALL2 JJ if 2 raises after your
call, be prepared to fold if fail to flop set)

LATE POSITION (button, 1st sometimes 2nd right of button)

OPEN-RAISE any playable hand
if on button 1..8 and also Ax & Kx vs very
tight or weak opponents

Ax & Kx if on button vs very tight or weak
RAISE 1..3, sometimes 4, if many callers don't raise
with high unsuited but can with 1..5 suited
connectors, can with any playable hand that
wants few opponents with 1-2 nonearly callers
e.g., A7s, KJ, QJ, and even as weak as QT,
if on button sometimes can with small pair
or small suited connectors

RERAISE 1, if raiser opened late position as weak as 4
but limit to 1..3 unless AJ KQ or weak player

OPEN-CALL usually open-raise or fold instead
CALL 1..6 usually, +7 if on button & some callers,
+8 and e.g. Q5s if on button & many callers

CALL2 still need very good hand, maybe 1..3,
but if many callers then T9s, 88, ...

CALL3 1? but not JJ (but CALL2 JJ if 2 raises after
your call, be prepared to fold if fail to
flop set)

SMALL BLIND

OPEN-RAISE because big blind has position, usually don't
raise with most hands e.g. A6, unless big
blind would fold >= 30% of the time

RAISE same as big blind RAISE, but even tighter

RERAISE AA, KK, not automatically AK or QQ,
1..6 if played should reraise vs stealer but
only when heads up

CALL(1/2) still be fairly selective but somewhat loose,
e.g., 85, any two suited, but not e.g. J2,
if only 1/3 bet to call, play every hand,

unless big blind player is frequent raiser.

CALL2(3/2) same as early or middle CALL2, unless heads up
against stealer in which case see RERAISE,
or many callers in which case you can perhaps

play hands like 33 or 86s.

CALL3(5/2) 1? but not JJ

BIG BLIND

OPEN-RAISE N/A

RAISE only extremely good hands

AK with 1-2 late callers

hands like JTs, T9s, 55 if many callers

RERAISE AA, KK, not automatically AK or QQ,

1..6 if played should reraise vs stealer

CALL(0) check usually

CALL2(1) essentially same as LATE CALL2 unless up

against stealer, in which case 1..8 if weak

but 1..6 if strong or caller in between.

tighten if caller on left & raiser on right

but can do flush & straight draws like A6s 87,

loosen if raiser on left, can maybe play

hands like 33 or 86s if many callers,

beware KJ.

CALL3(2) 1? but not JJ

LATE POSITION BLIND (posted one to right of dealer)

OPEN-RAISE usually *any* hand, but not if opponents will

almost always defend blinds with any hand

RAISE if already many callers, rarely raise with

a hand that you would not raise with if you

did not post

OPEN-CALL instead OPEN-RAISE

CALL(0) may wish to check even good hand as deception

CALL2(1) can call with slightly worse than in big

blind, against stealer heads up ok to call

with any ace and most kings

CALL3(2) like normal late position CALL2 or CALL3?

Q:P9 Why are poker hands ranked the way they are?

A:P9 [Michael Maurer, Darse Billings]

The standard poker hands are ranked based on the probability of their being dealt pat in 5 cards from a full 52-card deck. The following table lists the hands in order of increasing frequency, and shows how many ways each hand can be dealt in 3, 5, and 7 cards.

Hand	3 cards	5 cards	7 cards
====	=====	=====	=====
Straight Flush	48	40	41,584
Four of a Kind	0	624	224,848
Full House	0	3,744	3,473,184
Flush	1,096	5,108	4,047,644

Straight	720	10,200	6,180,020
Three of a Kind	52	54,912	6,461,620
Two Pair	0	123,552	31,433,400
One Pair	3,744	1,098,240	58,627,800
High Card	16,440	1,302,540	23,294,460
=====			
TOTALS	22,100	2,598,960	133,784,560

Notes:

1. The standard rankings are incorrect for 3-card hands, since it is easier to get a flush than a straight, and easier to get a straight than three of a kind. See question P11.
2. For 7-card hands, the numbers reflect the best possible 5-card hand out of the 7 cards. For instance, a hand that contains both a straight and three of a kind is counted as a straight.
3. For 7-card hands, only five cards need be in sequence to make a straight, or of the same suit to make a flush. In a 3-card hand a sequence of three is considered a straight, and three of the same suit a flush. These rules reflect standard poker practice.
4. In a 7-card hand, it is easier for one's "best" 5 cards to have one or two pair than no pair. (Good bar bet opportunity!) However, if we changed the ranking to value no pairs above two pairs, all of the one pair hands and most of the two pair hands would be able to qualify for "no pair" by choosing a different set of five cards.
5. Within each type of hand (e.g., among all flushes) the hands are ranked according to an arbitrary scheme, unrelated to probability. See question P10.

Q:P10 Why are ace-hi flushes ranked highest, when it's much harder to get a seven-hi flush? And similarly for two pairs?
A:P10 [Michael Maurer]

Only the classes themselves (flush, straight, etc) are ranked by the probability of getting them in five cards. Within each class we use an arbitrary system to rank hands of the same type. For example, our arbitrary system ranks four aces higher than four deuces, even though the hands occur with the same frequency. Similarly, flushes are ranked by the highest card, with the next highest card breaking ties, and so on down to the fifth card. This has the curious effect of creating many more ace-hi flushes than any other kind, because any flush that contains an ace is "ace-hi", regardless of the other cards. Thus, although 490 of the 1277 flushes in each suit contain a seven, only four of them are seven-hi flushes: 76542, 76532, 76432, and 75432. The median flush turns out to be KJT42.

A similar situation occurs for two pair hands. There are twelve times as many ways to make two pair with aces being the high pair ("aces up") as there are to do it with threes as the high pair ("threes up"). While the aces can go with

another other rank of pair, the threes must go with twos, or we would reverse the order and call them, for instance, "eights up". Note that it is fruitless to alter the relative rankings to try to account for this imbalance, since as soon as we do the cards will be reinterpreted to make the best hand under the new system. For example, if we decide to make "threes up" the best possible two pair hand, now all the hands like "eights and threes" will be interpreted as "threes and eights", and the population of "threes up" hands will soar twelve-fold. The median two pair hand turns out to be a tie between JJ552 and JJ44A.

 Q:P11 What is the correct ranking for 3-card poker hands?
 A:P11 [Darse Billings, Michael Maurer]

The standard ranking of poker hands is based on their frequency of occurrence in a 5-card hand. In 3-card hands the relative frequency of hands is different, so different in fact that three of a kind beats a straight, and a straight beats a flush.

This table shows the number of possible 3-card hands of each type, dealt from a standard 52-card deck.

Hand type	number	cumulative	frequency	cum freq
Straight Flush (AKQs - 32As)	48	48	0.0022	0.0022
Trips (AAA - 222)	52	100	0.0024	0.0045
Straight (AKQ - 32A, no sf)	720	820	0.0326	0.0371
Flush (XYZs, no sf)	1096	1916	0.0496	0.0867
Pair (AAX - 22x) (288 each)	3744	5660	0.1694	0.2561
Ace high (AXY, no str or fl)	3840	9500	0.1738	0.4299
King high	3240	12740	0.1466	0.5765
Queen high	2640	15380	0.1195	0.6959
Jack high or lower	6720	22100	0.3041	1.0000

For example, a pair of aces loses to a random hand about 9% of the time. Guts players may want to use this as a guideline for determining the relative strength of their hand. With 6 opponents, that pair of aces wins about $0.91^6 = 57\%$ of the time.

 Q:P12 What is a poker tournament? How does one work? What is a chip race? What is a satellite?
 A:P12 [Michael Maurer]

A poker tournament is an event in which poker players compete for all or part of a prize pool. Each player pays an entry fee and initial buy-in for a set number of tournament chips. The chips are non-negotiable, having no cash value except at the end of the tournament. The contestants play until all but one or a few are busted; the top finishers divide up the prize pool according to the tournament rules. The game's stakes increase with time to hasten the tournament's end.

Within this framework is considerable room for variation. Many tournaments permit "rebuis", which allow a busted player to reenter the tournament by posting additional money to the prize pool. The number of rebuis may be unlimited, limited to one or a few, or limited to an initial period of the tournament. Some tournaments allow an "add-on", which is a final rebuy at the end of the rebuy period. The betting structure may be limit only, pot-limit, no-limit, or a mixture, usually limit in the early rounds and no-limit later. Whatever the betting structure, the blinds or betting limits increase continually, perhaps doubling every twenty minutes in a small tournament, or more slowly in a large one.

A confusing aspect of the increasing stakes is the way in which some tournaments get rid of the small denomination chips. At some point in the tournament, the dealer may "race off" all the red \$5 chips. Each player puts all their red chips in front of them, and the dealer converts them to as many green \$25 chips as possible. Whatever red chips remain are raced off: each player receives one card for each chip, and the player receiving the highest card (ace, king, etc) wins everybody's reds and converts them to greens. Bridge suits break ties for the high card (spades, hearts, diamonds, clubs).

The tournament may continue until only one player remains; this is called a "freezeout". The winner may take all the money, or the top finishers may divide it up according to a set schedule. In most tournaments, tables are consolidated and seats redrawn when a certain number of players are eliminated, resulting in a "final table" of contestants. Sometimes, each table plays until only one player remains, and then combines the survivors at a final table; this is called a "shootout". Since the betting stakes are often large at the final table, luck plays a major role and many players prefer cutting a deal to playing the tournament to its conclusion.

A "satellite" is a tournament in which the prize is an entry to another tournament. Large tournaments like the \$10,000 No-limit Hold'em event in the World Series of Poker generate a lot of satellites. Typically, the satellite buy-in is around 1/10 the tournament buy-in, so the top 10% of satellite finishers win a tournament buy-in. Sometimes a satellite will even have mini-satellites, in which the prize is an entry to the main satellite. A mini-satellite for the \$10,000 event might have a \$100 buy-in and award a \$1,000 buyin to a satellite that is awarding a \$10,000 buy-in to the main event.

Many small (under \$100 buy-in) daily or weekly tournaments are listed in the back pages of Card Player magazine. Be sure to call the casino to see if they are having the tournament that day, since the magazine is sometimes out of date.

Q:P13 How does tournament strategy differ from that of regular games?
A:P13

Several books have been written on this subject, but none has received wide praise from rec.gamblers.

Q:P14 What the hell is Rumple Mintz?

A:P14 [Michael Maurer]

Rumple Mintz is the official rec.gambling spelling of a brand of 100 proof peppermint schnapps called Rumple Minze, imported from the Scharlachberg Distillery in Germany. Best served shaken over ice for five seconds, then strained into a short glass. It is the official drink of rec.gambler poker players everywhere, and is known to increase poker skill dramatically. Legend has it that one rec.gambler won \$4000 in a 50-100 Hold'em game while under its spell, lived to tell the tale in a trip report, and assured its eternal fame.

Q:P15 What is a burn card and why is it dealt?

A:P15 [Michael Maurer]

A burn card is a card dealt face down at the beginning of a round, before any other cards are dealt. This card is not used in the play of the hand. The main reason for this custom is to guard against marked cards. If the cards are marked, a player who can read the backs will know what the top card on the deck is. In a flop-game like Hold'em or Omaha, knowledge of the next board card is extremely profitable. Knowledge of which card it will *not* be is slightly useful, but much less so.

Q:P16 What happens if there aren't enough cards in the deck to deal the final card in 7-card stud?

A:P16 [Michael Maurer]

The burn cards will be shuffled into the remaining deck. If there are still not enough cards, a single community card will be dealt face-up and used by all the players.

Q:P17 What is the difference between a shill and a proposition player? What skills are needed to be one?

A:P17 [John Murphy]

A shill is paid by the house at an hourly rate, and plays with house money. A prop is paid by the house and plays with his own money. Many states require cardrooms to identify house players if asked, but may not require them to do so otherwise. Shills and props are directed to games by the house. This means that they may be constantly shifted to tougher games, as non-house players boot them out of seats in juicy games. The most important skill for a prop is to be able to excel in all games, since they may be called to play any game that the house offers, against players who specialize in that game. Also, be they must be prepared to sit and wait if all games are full.

Q:P18 What are the Las Vegas poker room phone numbers?

A:P18 [Dave Marshall, June 1994]

Here's a list of all the poker rooms in Las Vegas (Santa Fe, Boomtown, and

Henderson poker rooms not included) with addresses and the *direct* phone number of the poker room. In one or two cases, the poker room doesn't have a direct line, so the main casino line is used instead. See bottom for the two 800 numbers I know of.

Aladdin Hotel & Casino	3667 S Las Vegas Blvd	736-0329
Binion's Horseshoe Hotel & Casino	128 Fremont Street	366-7397
Circus Circus Hotel-Casino	2880 S Las Vegas Blvd	734-0410
Continental Hotel & Casino	4100 Paradise Road	737-5555
El Cortez Hotel	600 Fremont Street	385-5200
Excalibur Hotel-Casino	3850 S Las Vegas Blvd	597-7625
Fleming Hilton	3555 S Las Vegas Blvd	733-3485
Fremont Hotel	200 Fremont Street	385-3232
Gold Coast Hotel & Casino	4000 W Flamingo Road	367-7111
Hacienda Hotel & Casino	3950 S Las Vegas Blvd	739-8911
Harrah's Las Vegas	3475 S Las Vegas Blvd	369-5234
Imperial Palace Hotel & Casino	3535 S Las Vegas Blvd	731-3311
Jackie Gaughan's Plaza Hotel & Casino	1 S Main Street	386-2249
Las Vegas Hilton	3000 Paradise Road	732-5995
Luxor Hotel And Casino	3900 S Las Vegas Blvd	262-4210
MGM Grand Hotel	3799 S Las Vegas Blvd	891-7434
The Mirage Hotel And Casino	3400 S Las Vegas Blvd	791-7290
Palace Station Hotel & Casino	2411 W Sahara Avenue	367-2453
Rio Suite Hotel & Casino	3700 W Flamingo Road	252-7777
Riviera Hotel & Casino	2901 S Las Vegas Blvd	794-9255
Sahara Hotel	2535 S Las Vegas Blvd	737-2317
Sam's Town Hotel & Gambling Hall	5111 Boulder Highway	454-8092
Sands Hotel & Casino	3355 S Las Vegas Blvd	733-5000
Hotel San Remo	115 East Tropicana	739-9000
Sheraton Desert Inn	3145 S Las Vegas Blvd	733-4343
Showboat Hotel & Casino	2800 Fremont Street	385-9151
Silver City Casino	3001 S Las Vegas Blvd	732-4152
Stardust Hotel & Casino	3000 S Las Vegas Blvd	732-6513
Treasure Island at The Mirage	3300 S Las Vegas Blvd	894-7291
Tropicana Resort And Casino	3801 S Las Vegas Blvd	739-2312

800 Poker Room Numbers:
Binion's : 1-800-93-POKER
MGM Grand: 1-800-94-POKER

Q:P19 What do all these poker terms mean?

A:P19 [John Hallyburton, Steve Jacobs, Darse Billings, Ken Kubey]

In addition to the following list of poker terms, Lee Jones' glossary from

"Winning Low-Limit Holdem" is online at

<http://www.conjelco.com/pokglossary.html>, and Dan Kimberg's glossary is online at <http://www.cs.cmu.edu:8001/aifs/andrew.cmu.edu/usr/dk3a/www/pokerdict....>.

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This glossary is supposed to be readable and sensible. If it is not or (worse yet) contains an error, please send additions and corrections to John Hallyburton, hallyb@vmsdev.enet.dec.com, for future updating.

1-4-8, 2-4, 3-6, 6-12, 10-20, etc. adj. The betting structure for a game. See **FIXED LIMIT**, **SPREAD LIMIT**.

ACCORDING TO HOYLE adv. By the rules of the game. See also: **HOYLE**.

ACTION n. Money that is being bet. "No action" means a hand or game has few bettors and fewer raisers. "Gimme some action" is ostensibly a plea for calls and raises.

ACTIVE PLAYER n. A player who is still in the pot.

ALL {BLUE, GREEN, PURPLE, etc.} n. Colorful terms to describe a flush.

ALL-IN adj. To have all of one's chips in the pot. A player who is all-in cannot be forced out of the pot by more betting, but is only eligible to win that portion of the pot he has contributed to. Generally, a **SIDE POT** is created each time a player is all-in.

AMERICAN AIRLINES n. In Hold'em, a pair of Aces in the hole. Better known (at least in rec.gambling) as **POCKET ROCKETS**.

ANTE n. A small bet all players are required to make before a hand is dealt. Not all games have an ante. Related terms: **BLIND**, **FORCED BET**.

ASSAULT RIFLE n. In Omaha, hole cards that are A-K-4-7 of any suit(s).

BACK DOOR adj. Applies to a hand that was made in the last card or two, specifically not a hand the player was originally planning on having. Most often applied to straights and flushes.

BAD BEAT n. A very good hand, often a full house or higher, that is beat by an even better hand. Some establishments offer a prize for a bad beat, though the terms and conditions vary substantially.

BAD GAME n. Any game in which you figure to be the loser, because the other players are better than you.

BANKROLL n. Current total gambling funds available. To be distinguished from the current money you happen to have on the table. See also: **STACK**, **STAKE**.

BARN n. A **FULL HOUSE**, three of a kind and a pair.

BEE No. 92 (TM) n. Trade name for the "diamond back" cards frequently used in casino games. Compare: **RIDER BACK**.

BET v.t. To put money into the pot, pursuant to the rules of the game, thus maintaining a chance of winning the pot.

BET FOR VALUE v.t. Betting a hand that, in the long run, is expected to win more than it loses. Antonym: **BLUFF**.

BICYCLE n. The best possible low hand: A-2-3-4-5. More common term: **WHEEL**.

BIG BLIND n. A blind bet, usually a raise of an earlier blind which would be called the **SMALL BLIND**. In limit poker, the **BIG BLIND** is usually the size of the minimum bet on the first round of betting.

BIG BOBTAIL n. An open-ended 4-card straight flush.

BIG SLICK. n. In Texas Hold'em, hole cards of A-K, suited or not.

BLACK n. When referring to chips, black usually stands for \$100 casino chips. "This guy sits down with a stack of blacks and raises the first bet." Not ALL casinos use black for \$100 but that is the common usage.

BLANK n. Used in describing stud and Hold'em games. Refers to a dealt card that does not offer any value; stating the actual rank and suit would detract from a description of the hand. "The last card was a blank."

BLIND n. A mandatory bet made by certain player(s) usually sitting left of the **BUTTON** before each new hand is dealt. Used in place of antes or in conjunction with antes. See also: **ANTE**; **BIG BLIND**, **FORCED BET**, **LATE BLIND**, **LIVE BLIND**, **SMALL BLIND**, **STRADDLE**.

BLUFF n. To make a bet or raise with a poor hand, in hope that the remaining active player(s) will fold.

BOARD n. The exposed cards in Hold'em and stud. Also **BOARD CARDS**.

BOAT n. A **FULL HOUSE**, three of a kind and a pair.

BOBTAIL STRAIGHT n. See **OPEN-ENDED STRAIGHT**.

BRODERICK CRAWFORD n. In Hold'em, hole cards of 10-4. From the 1950s TV series "Highway Patrol", starring Broderick Crawford.

BUCK n. See **BUTTON**. (Unrelated to one Michael Buck, this is said to be the origin of the term "buck" to represent one dollar).

BUG n. A limited wild card, represented by the Joker. May be used as an Ace, or as any card to complete a straight or flush (or straight flush). See also: **WILD CARD**. Only used at certain tables in certain card rooms, most frequently in draw lowball.

BULLET[S] n. Ace[s].

BUMP v.t. Slang for **RAISE**.

BUNNY n. An eight. So named because one can easily draw "rabbit ears" above the numeral 8, "paws" in the middle and "feet" at the bottom. (Do this only at home, and not on cards that will be used for play.)

BURN v.t. To discard the top card of the deck prior to dealing, usually done for every dealing round except the first. The theory being that if somehow the cards are marked (illegally) no one will know what card will next be dealt, only what card will be burned. This makes marked cards less of an advantage, hence tends to reduce cheating.

BUTTON n. A distinctive token held by the player sitting in the theoretical dealer's position, when a house dealer is used. The button rotates around the table so that every player has an opportunity to be the last to act. Also, "THE BUTTON" can refer to the player who currently has the button. ("I was the button and called the blind".) Synonyms: BUCK, PUCK.

BUTTON CHARGE n. A periodic fee paid by whoever is the button, perhaps every 20 minutes or 30 minutes. Constitutes part or all of the HOUSE CUT.

BUY-IN n. The minimum amount of money necessary to join a game. Also, the amount of money one actually used to join the game. See also: REBUY.

BUY IN v.i. To purchase chips at the start of a game. Thus in a game with a \$100 buy-in one might buy in for \$147.

CALL v.t. To put in to the pot the minimum amount of money necessary to continue playing. See also: SEE. (CALL is used mostly in the present tense with the bet as the object, SEE with future tense and the original bettor as the object).

CALL COLD v.t. See COLD CALL.

CALLER n. One who calls. Sometimes used collectively, as in "3 callers".

CAP v.t. To cap the betting is to make the last permitted raise in a round.

CARDS SPEAK n. winner(s) of the hand are determined by turning their cards face up, the best hand(s) wins (no declaration).

CASE adj. Specifies a card that gives a player an unbeatable hand. Suppose you start a Hold'em hand with a pair of 6s and flop a third 6 for a set. When a fourth 6 later comes on the river it would be called the "case 6", assuming no higher hand than your four 6s was possible.

CHASE v.t. To continue in a hand, often at poor odds, in the hopes of catching a much better hand. "He called, chasing the flush."

CHECK n. A chip. Dealers and other casino employees often use the term "check" where most nonprofessional gamers would say "chip". See CHIP.

CHECK v.i. To bet zero, when it is legal to do so. Frequently a sign of only a fair hand, but may be a bluff.

CHECK RAISE v. To check initially, then raise a bet made later on in the same betting round. Frequently a sign of strength, but may be a bluff.

CHIP n. A round gaming token used in place of cash for convenience in handling

and counting. The standard form of currency in most casinos. See also: CHECK n.

COME adj. A hand that is not yet made ("come hand") such as four cards to a flush. See also ON THE COME.

COMMUNITY CARDS n. Cards that are available for every player to use in making a hand. Usually dealt face up somewhere in the middle of the table.

COMPUTER HAND n. A hand considered to be fair by computer analysis, but which is poor in practice. For example, Texas Hold'em hole cards that are a Queen and a Seven of different suits.

COLD CALL n. Calling both a bet and raise at the same time, as opposed to calling a bet then later calling a raise made after the call.

COURT CARD n. A jack, queen or king.

COWBOY n. A king.

CUT v. To break the deck into 2 stacks of at least 5 cards each. Usually performed by the player to the dealer's right to insure that the the deck is not stacked.

CRYING CALL n. A call made with little chance of ultimately winning, but marginally better than an immediate fold.

DEAD DRAW n. See DRAWING DEAD.

DEAD MAN'S HAND n. Generically: two pair, aces and eights. Specifically: the black aces, black eights and nine of diamonds. The hand Wild Bill Hickock was holding when he was shot to death.

DEAD MONEY n. Money contributed to the pot by players who have folded.

DEALER'S CHOICE n. In home games, a rule that permits the dealer to name which poker game to be played that hand. Often limited to selecting from a list provided.

DECLARE v.t. In high/low games, declaring one's hand as high or low or both ways (usually done with chips in hand). Usually played in home games; casinos tend to play CARDS SPEAK.

DEUCE n. A two.

DOOR [CARD] n. A player's first upcard in stud games.

DOYLE BRUNSON n. In Hold'em, 10-2 in the hole. So named because Doyle Brunson won two straight WSOPs (q.v.) in 1975 and 1976 with 10-2 on the last hand. (Suited (spades) in 1975, unsuited in 1976).

DRAW n. [1] A class of poker games characterized by players being dealt 5 cards face-down and later having the opportunity to replace some of the original 5. "Draw poker" and "Five-card draw" are examples of usage.

DRAW n. [2] In stud and Hold'em games, the set of cards that will be dealt later can be collectively called "the draw".

DRAW v.t. To discard some number of cards and have dealt an equal number of replacements.

DRAWING DEAD v.i. A draw in which it is impossible to obtain a winning hand for any of a variety of reasons: an opponent's hand is better than whatever you are drawing to, the card(s) that make your hand are out of play, or (in Hold'em) give an opponent a stronger hand even if it makes yours. Frequently used in the past tense, since one rarely knows it at the time.

DRAW OUT v.i. To catch a card that improves your situation from a losing hand to a winning hand, especially when you beat someone holding a hand that usually figures to win.

EARLY POSITION n. Being one of the first players to act in a betting round. See also: **MIDDLE POSITION**, **LATE POSITION**.

EDGE n. An advantage over an opponent, either specific or subjective.

EVEN-MONEY adj. A bet that pays off exactly the amount wagered. E.g., "Double or nothing" is an even-money bet.

EXPECTATION n. The long-run [dis]advantage of a given situation, specifically without reference to any particular outcome. I.e., what you figure to win [lose] on average after a large number of repetitions of the same situation.

FACE CARD n. A jack, queen or king (a card with a face on it, not joker).

FAVORITE n. Before all the cards are dealt, a hand that figures to be the winner. Ant: **UNDERDOG**.

FIFTH STREET n. In stud poker, the fifth card to be dealt to each player. Sometimes used to refer to the last card dealt in Hold'em, although the more common term for this is **RIVER** (q.v.).

FILL v.t. To draw a card that makes a five-card hand (straight, flush, full house, straight flush).

FILL UP v.t. To fill a full house.

FIRE v.i. To make the first bet in a betting round. Used to emphasize that the player bet when a check was possible, showing strength.

FISH n. A player who loses money. An old saying is "If you can't spot the fish at the table, *you* are the fish."

FIXED LIMIT adj. A betting structure where the amount of each bet is a specific fixed quantity. Usually specified as A-B, where A is the amount to bet in the first few betting rounds and B (larger than A) is the amount bet in the later rounds. Related terms: **FLAT LIMIT**, **NO LIMIT**, **POT LIMIT**, **SPREAD LIMIT**.

FLAT CALL v.t. To call a bet. Emphasizes that the caller did not raise.

FLAT LIMIT adj. A variant of fixed limit where all bets are the same amount.

FLOORMAN n. The casino representative in charge of the card room or a section of a card room. Arbitrates disputes when unusual events happen.

FLOP n. In Hold'em, the first three community cards, dealt simultaneously.

FLOP v.t. To deal a flop, or to make a hand on a flop. "I flopped trips".

FLUSH n. A poker hand consisting of five cards all one suit.

FOLD v.t. To decline to call a bet, thus dropping out of a hand.

FORCED BET n. In some stud games a player may be required to make a bet to start the action on the first card. This is similar conceptually to blinds and antes, but in this case is dependent on the cards shown rather than player position. Usually the weakest hand is forced to bet.

FOSSIL n. (derogatory) An elderly poker player.

FOUR FLUSH n. Four cards to a flush.

FOUR OF A KIND n. A hand containing all four cards of the same rank.

FOURTH STREET n. In stud poker, the fourth card dealt to each player. Sometimes used to refer to the fourth community card dealt in Hold'em, although the more common term for this is **TURN** (q.v.).

FREE CARD n. A card dealt after all players checked in a betting round.

FREEROLL n. A poker tournament that does not charge a buy-in fee; players must earn buy-in credits through previous play at the same establishment.

FREEROLL v.t. Having a lock on part of a pot (sure to win a greater fraction of the pot than one is betting) and playing to win more or all of it.

FREEZE-OUT n. A table-stakes game that continues until a small number of players (possibly only one) has all the money. The major event in The World Series of Poker is a freeze-out game.

FULL BOAT n. See **FULL HOUSE**.

FULL HOUSE n. A hand consisting of 3-of-a-kind and a (different) pair.

FULL OF n. Describes a full house. "Fives full of queens" is 5-5-5-Q-Q.

GIVING AWAY v.t. Revealing one's hand by obvious play. See also **TELL**, **READ**.

GOOD GAME n. A game with players worse than you so that you can expect to win a lot of money.

GUT-SHOT adj. A draw to an inside straight.

HEAD UP adj. Playing a single opponent.

HEADS UP adj. Playing a single opponent.

HIGH-LOW SPLIT adj. Forms of poker in which the pot is split between the best hand and best lowball hand.

HIT n. To make a hand or catch a card or cards that improves one's hand. "I hit a gut-shot draw on the river."

HOLD'EM n. [1] Generic name for a class of poker games where the players receive a certain number (2 to 4) of hole cards and 5 community cards. Usually there are betting rounds after dealing the hole cards, then after dealing 3 upcards (FLOP), after dealing a 4th upcard (TURN) and finally after dealing a 5th upcard (RIVER).

HOLD'EM n. [2] When used in the specific sense (e.g., "We're playing Hold'em") the term usually refers to the game of Texas Hold'em (q.v.). See also OMAHA.

HOLE n. See HOLE CARDS.

HOLE CARDS n. In stud and Hold'em, the face-down cards dealt to each player.

HOOK n. A Jack. So named because the "J" resembles a hook.

HOT BABE (TM) n. An attractive, well-dressed female in or near a casino. The term is a trademark of rec.gambling. An example of proper usage is: "I had just raked in the pot when this Hot Babe (TM) comes up to the table and asks 'Are you Frank Irwin?'"

HOUSE CUT n. Generic term for how the house profits from hosting the game. See BUTTON CHARGE, TABLE CHARGE and RAKE.

HOUSE RULE n. Rules and interpretations (e.g., use of wild cards, or rules on having to show beaten hands) that are specific to an establishment or even tables within the establishment.

HOYLE n. Edmund Hoyle (1769-?) was the authoritative source for rules of card games. Hoyle is to card rules as Webster is to word definitions.

IMPLIED ODDS n. A refinement to POT ODDS which includes money not yet in the pot. Considers the potential extra bets and winnings made when a player forms a very good hand.

IN adj. Still eligible to win the pot. "I'm in" is often spoken as one adds chips to the pot, calling.

INSIDE STRAIGHT n. Four cards to a straight, where only one rank will complete the hand. E.g., 4-5-6-8 is an inside straight since only a 7 will fill (i.e., complete) the hand. Often called a GUT-SHOT. Compare: BOBTAIL STRAIGHT, OPEN-ENDED STRAIGHT.

JACKS OR BETTER n. Draw poker in which a pair of jacks is the minimum hand

JOKER n. A 53rd card in the deck, distinct from the others, used as a wild card or as a BUG.

KICKER n. In hands containing pairs and trips, the highest card not matched. In draw games, sometimes a card kept for deception purposes.

KU KLUX KLAN n. 3 Kings.

LADY n. A Queen.

LATE BLIND n. In addition to "regular" blinds, some games allow a player (particularly a new one) to post a blind bet in return for the right to enter the game immediately and act last on the first betting round. The amount of the blind is determined by house rules, usually somewhere between the last blind and double the last blind. It is frequently a LIVE BLIND.

LATE POSITION n. For a particular betting round, a player who does not have to act until most of the other players have acted.

LAY ODDS v.t. To give favorable odds to an opponent.

LEAD v. To bet first, even when one had the option to check. See also FIRE.

LEAK v. To show one's hole cards (often unknowingly).

LID n. The top card of the deck.

LIMIT POKER n. A poker game wherein the amount to be bet is fixed, or at most variable within a prescribed minimum and maximum. Ant.: NO-LIMIT POKER.

LINER n. A face card. (Because you can see a line when the card is face down and the lower right corner is lifted).

LIVE [CARD] n. In stud, a card probably not held by other players.

LIVE BLIND n. The last and largest blind bet may or may not be LIVE. If LIVE, the blind bettor has the option of "raising" his own blind in the event the bet is called around to him. This is normal, and is sometimes referred to as "blinds are live".

LIVE ONE n. The best kind of opponent, a poor player with a lot of money to lose and in a hurry to lose it.

LOCK n. A hand that cannot be beat under any circumstances. Also: NUTS.

LOOSE n. Playing more hands than the norm. Antonym: TIGHT.

LOWBALL n. Generic term for poker where the lowest hand wins.

MARKED CARDS n. Cards that have been (illegally) altered so that their value can be read from the back.

- MIDDLE POSITION n. Betting positions approximately halfway around the table from the first player to act.
- MILES OF BAD ROAD n. Three of a kind. Prefixed with a number, 3*, to indicate 3 s. Thus "24 miles of bad road" is 3 eights, etc. (This obviously doesn't work for face cards.)
- MISDEAL n. A hand dealt incorrectly that must be re-dealt.
- MITES AND LICE n. A hand consisting of two pair, threes over twos.
- MUCK n. A collection of face-down cards near the dealer composed of discards, i.e., folded hands, burns and discards for drawing purposes.
- MUCK v.t. To throw one's cards into the muck, thus folding.
- NICKEL n. Five dollars, usually represented by a red casino check.
- NO-LIMIT POKER n. A game where there is no maximum bet; a player can wager any amount (perhaps above some minimum) up to whatever money is on the table in front of him.
- NO-PEEK[EE] n. A class of poker games where players do not get to see their cards before betting. Rarely played in public games.
- NUT adj. The best possible hand of a given class. The "nut flush" is the highest possible flush, but might still lose to, e.g., a full house. Usually used in Hold'em games.
- NUTS n. The best possible hand at the time. Not a LOCK unless all cards have been dealt. Usually used in Hold'em games.
- OFFSUIT adj. Not of the same suit. "I held A-Q offsuit" or "The flop was 10-6-2 offsuit". When speaking of 5 or more cards, not 'all' of the same suit, i.e., no flush, as in "button had A-K-10-8-7 offsuit."
- OMAHA n. A variant of Hold'em where each player receives 4 hole cards and must use exactly two of them (together with 3 of 5 board cards) to make a hand. Often played high-low split with an 8 qualifier for low.
- ONE-EYED adj. The jack of hearts, jack of spades or king of diamonds. So named because the characters are drawn in profile, thus showing only one eye.
- ON THE COME adj. A situation where the player does not have a complete hand but hopes to make one if the right cards come up.
- OPEN v.t. Make the first bet in a hand, especially in draw poker.
- OPEN-ENDED STRAIGHT n. Four cards to a straight which can be completed by drawing a card at either end. E.g., 6-7-8-9 is an open-ended straight. Also: BOBTAIL STRAIGHT. Compare: INSIDE STRAIGHT.
- OPENER n. The player who opens the betting, especially in draw poker. A hand

may have no openers, in which case it is PASSED OUT, i.e., new hands are dealt.

OPENERS n. Cards in a hand that qualify a player to open the betting.

OPEN-HANDED n. A category of games characterized by a part of each player's hand being exposed.

OPEN PAIR n. An exposed pair.

OUT n. A card that will improve your hand, often substantially. A hand with many OUTS is preferable to a hand with only 1 or 2.

OUT adj. Folded, ineligible to bet or win this hand. "I'm out" is often a synonym for "I fold".

OVER conj. A term used in describing two pair or a full house. "Kings over tens" means two pair, kings and tens. "Jacks over", also "Jacks up" describes a hand that is two pair: Jacks with an unspecified lower pair. Also used to describe a full house, distinguishing the three of a kind from the pair. The hand J-J-J-A-A could be described as "Full house, Jacks over Aces".

OVERCALL v.t. To call a bet after one or more players already called.

PAIR n. Two cards of the same rank.

PASS v.i. Opposite of bet. To check, if checked to. To fold, if bet to.

PASSED OUT. adj. A hand in which nobody opens. What happens next is a function of the game being played.

PAT adj. Holding or being dealt a pat hand. "I'm pat" would mean "I don't want to draw any cards.

PAT HAND n. In draw poker, a hand that does not need any more cards. Specifically, a straight, flush, full house or straight flush. One might bluff and represent a pat hand but actually hold something else.

PAY OFF v.t. Calling a bet with little expectation of winning, unless the opponent is bluffing.

PAY STATION n. A player who rarely folds, thus who frequently calls better hands and loses. Almost as much fun as a LIVE ONE (q.v.).

POCKET [CARDS] n. Hole cards in stud and Hold'em.

POCKET ROCKETS n. In Hold'em, a pair of aces for hole cards.

POCKET PAIR n. Generic Hold'em term for 2 hole cards of the same rank.

POSITION n. One's location in the betting sequence, relative to the players still in the hand. First position is first to act.

POSSIBLE [STRAIGHT/FLUSH] adj. up cards that quite possibly could lead to a

straight and/or a flush.

POT n. The total amount of money bet so far in a hand.

POT LIMIT n. A game where the maximum bet is determined by the size of the pot at the time. Note that a player wanting to raise first calls the bet, then totals the pot to determine the maximum amount he can raise.

POT ODDS n. The amount of money in the pot divided by the amount of money you must bet in order to call. Often used to determine if a pot offers enough reward to play on the come.

PRESTO! e. In Hold'em, what one says when revealing pocket 5's. This term, specific to rec.gambling, is still evolving and subject to redefinition. The term comes from a more well-established background in Blackjack where one says "Presto!" when turning over a blackjack.

PUCK n. A token denoting the dealer position. See BUTTON.

QUALIFIER n. A minimum standard that a hand must meet in order to win. Usually applied to the lowball side of a high-low split pot.

QUARTER n. Twenty-five dollars, often symbolized by a green casino chip.

QUARTER v. To divide half a pot between two tying hands. In split pot games, a player who "ties" another player for their half of the pot is said to be "quartered". One might say "I didn't bet my A-2 because I figured I'd get quartered".

RAGS n. Board cards that are small, not suited and not in sequence. When "rags flop", it is unlikely that anyone has a good hand.

RAIL n. A barrier dividing the card playing area from a public area.

RAILBIRD n. A spectator behind the rail.

RAISE v.t. To wager more than the minimum required to call, forcing other players to put in more money as well.

RAISER n. One who raises.

RAKE n. Money taken from each pot and given to the house in return for hosting the game. Usually a percentage of the pot (5%-10%) up to some maximum amount.

READ v.t. To determine whether an opponent has a good, medium or bad hand by observing his personal behavior. An inexact science.

REBUY v.i. To purchase additional chips after an initial buy-in, usually after losing most or all of the previous buy-in.

REPRESENT v.t. Implying, by one's betting style, that one has a particular hand.

RERAISE v.t. To raise after an opponent has raised.

RIDER BACK (TM) n. A brand of playing cards that feature a bicycle rider on the back of the cards. Often used in home games. Compare: BEE No. 92.

RIVER n. The last card dealt in a hand of stud or Hold'em.

ROLLED UP adj. In seven-card stud, being dealt three of a kind in the first three cards.

ROYAL FLUSH n. An ace-high straight flush, the best possible hand in regular poker.

SANDBAG v.i. Playing a strong hand as if it were only a fair one. See also SLOWPLAY.

SCOOP v.t. To take all of a pot that is normally split, either by winning both halves outright or winning one half when no players qualify for the other half.

SEAT CHARGE n. A periodic fee for playing poker, paid by all players at a table. Most often seen in California card rooms. Also TABLE CHARGE.

SEE v.t. To call, as in: "I'll see you" or "I'll see that bet".

SEMI-BLUFF n. To bluff with a come hand that figures to win if it hits.

SET n. In Hold'em, three of a kind where two of the cards are hole cards.

SEVENTH STREET n. The seventh card dealt in 7-card stud.

SHARK n. A good/crafty player often posing as a fish early in the game.

SHORT-STACKED adv. Playing with a only a small amount of money, thus limiting one's risk and reward.

SHOWDOWN n. The point at the end of the hand where all active players reveal their cards and the pot is awarded to the winner(s).

SIDE POT n. When an active player runs out of money during the course of a hand, the remaining players participate in a second or SIDE POT for the rest of the hand. Additional side pots are possible if several players run out of money at different points in a hand.

SIXTH STREET n. The sixth card dealt in 7-card stud.

SLOWPLAY v.t. To play a strong hand weakly, by checking instead of betting or by calling instead of raising. Usually done to win extra bets by keeping more players around for future rounds of betting. See also SANDBAG.

SMALL BLIND n. In games with two blinds the first blind is the SMALL BLIND because it is usually one-half (or less) the second or large blind.

SPLIT [OPENERS] v.t. In draw poker, to discard one or more openers, usually to

draw to a straight or flush. Normally requires the opener to declare the act and retain the discards so that the act of opening can later be validated.

SPLIT [POT] n. A pot that is split between two or more hands.

SPLIT [THE POT] v. To split the pot between two or more players. Related term: **QUARTER**.

SPREAD v.t. To offer a particular game, as in "Shorty's casino spreads razz on weekends and holidays".

SPREAD LIMIT n. A variation on fixed limit wherein the minimum and maximum bets are different. A 1-4-8 game allows bets from 1 to 4 in the early rounds and 1-8 in the last round. A 1-4-8-16 game allows bets from 1 to 4 in the early rounds, 1 to 8 in the next-to-last round, and 1 to 16 in the last round.

STACK n. The amount of money (the stack of chips) a player has on the table. See also: **STAKE**.

STACKED [DECK] n. A deck that has been arranged to give one player a huge advantage. Also: **RIGGED**.

STAKE n. The amount of a player's **BUY-IN**, or the amount of money they are willing to play with in a given session. Compare: **BANKROLL**.

STAND OFF v.i. To call a raise. "Opener raises. I stand off".

STEAL v.t. To win the pot by bluffing.

STEAM v.i. Playing wildly, calling and raising a lot, because one is upset.

STRADDLE n. In some games with blinds the player left of the last blind may make a "straddle" wager, essentially a raise of the blind, before any cards are dealt. The player making the straddle then has the privilege of acting last on the first betting round. Straddles, like blinds, are real bets that the rest of the table will have to call or raise. See also: **BLIND**.

STRAIGHT n. A hand consisting of 5 cards in sequence but not in suit.

STRAIGHT FLUSH n. A hand consisting of 5 cards in sequence and the same suit.

STRING BET n. An unethical and often illegal means of raising whereby a player puts a call-size stack of chips into the pot and, after observing the reactions of the players, then goes back to his stack and puts out more, thus raising.

STUCK adj. Down a nontrivial amount of money, as in "he's stuck \$800".

STUD n. Any of several poker games in which some of each players' cards are exposed.

SUICIDE KING n. King of Hearts. So named because in the drawing the king appears to be stabbing himself in the head.

SUITED n. Two or more cards all the same suit. Ant: OFF-SUIT.

TABLE CHARGE n. A fee paid for playing. See SEAT CHARGE.

TABLE STAKES n. A standard rule whereby during a hand players can only bet the money they have on the table. If the bet to a player is more than the player's stack, that player may call with all his chips and be eligible to win only that portion of the pot he contributed to equally. A side pot is created, for which only the remaining players may compete.

TAP v.i. In no-limit games, to wager all of one's money in one bet.

TAPPED [OUT] adj. Out of money. Can refer to a player running out of money in the course of a hand, thus still active for the main pot; or can refer to a player who has lost his bankroll and can no longer play.

TELL n. Any personal mannerisms that reveal the quality of one's hand. E.g., constantly looking at one's hole cards is often a tell of a poor hand. (Some players, knowing this, will at times check their hole cards when they have a great hand and don't need to look.)

TEXAS HOLD'EM n. A Hold'em game where players receive two hole cards and may use zero or more of them, together with 5 board cards, to make their hands. See HOLD'EM.

THREE OF A KIND. n. Three cards all the same rank.

THIRD STREET n. In stud, the third card dealt to each player.

THREE FLUSH n. Three cards of the same suit.

TIGHT adv. A style of play that entails playing fewer hands than average. Antonym: LOOSE.

TIGHT n. A FULL HOUSE.

TO GO v.i. The current betting level, as in "\$20 to go" meaning every player must contribute \$20 (total) or drop. A \$10 raise would then make the pot "\$30 to go".

TOKE v.t. Gambling term for "tip", as in "Toke the cocktail waitress".

TREY n. A three.

TRIP adj. Three of a specific kind, as in "Trip sixes".

TRIPS n. Three of a kind. In Hold'em the term SET is used when two of the three cards are hole cards.

TURN n. The fourth community card in Hold'em.

TWO FLUSH n. Two suited cards.

UNDERDOG n. Before all the cards are dealt, a hand that does not figure to be the winner. Ant: FAVORITE.

UNDER THE GUN n. The position that has to act first in a round of betting.

UP adj. Designates the higher card of a hand consisting of two pair. Thus, "Queens up" refers to two pair, of which the higher pair is queens and the lower pair is unspecified. See also **OVER**.

WALK n. A pot won by the last blind when no one opens.

WHEEL n. A-2-3-4-5. Usually discussed in the context of lowball where it is the best possible hand. Can also refer to a 5-high straight in high games. Also: **BICYCLE**.

WHITE BLACKBIRD n. A hand so astonishingly rare as to be unworthy of the opponents' consideration, e.g., being dealt a pat royal flush in 5-card draw.

WILD CARD n. A joker or standard card that, by player agreement and/or dealer's choice, can be used to represent any card desired. See also **BUG**.

WIRED [PAIR] n. A pair in the hole. In 5-card stud, a door card that pairs the hole card.

WORLD SERIES OF POKER n. The top poker game in the world, sponsored by Binion's Horseshoe Club in Las Vegas. A series of no-limit elimination hold'em matches with buy-ins in the \$10,000 range.

WORLD SERIES OF POKER n. A series of several different poker games with relatively large buy-ins, culminating in a \$10,000 buy-in no-limit Hold'em tournament, the winner of which is crowned the World Poker Champion. Sponsored by Binion's Horseshoe Club in Las Vegas.

WSOP n. Acronym for **WORLD SERIES OF POKER**.

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