

POKER

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO POKER
LEARN STRATEGIES TO DOMINATE POKER
AND TEXAS HOLD'EM



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Poker:

The Complete

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Introduction:

I want to thank you for choosing this book, “Poker: The Complete Guide to Gambling Online and Offline: Poker and Texas Hold’em – Become a Professional Poker Player and Win Money Now!”

This book is all about America’s national card game and how to become a professional at playing poker. If you already have played poker and consider yourself to be good, trust me, by the time you finish this book you will be feeling much more confident about winning.

Without taking any more of your time, let us begin!

Chapter 1: The Game

At a glance poker looks like a very simple game and it actually is, that is if you just want to play the game by the rules, learning the game should not take you more than a day, but learning to win that is a different story all together, As per me it take 2 key ingredients to be successful poker player. Planning and Discipline.

In the olden days planning and learning was quite an expensive affair, as to play with people you had to physically join a game and shell out a lot of money while you were learning the finer points of the game, however in today's age there are

multiple books and websites that give you good tips and also you can play online with play money and hone your skills before you decide to take the plunge and shell out your hard earned money.

However, you could have all the planning and practice in the world but if you don't apply what you have learnt while in a live game you are headed for big trouble and this is where discipline comes in. Players lacking self discipline will find it very hard to be consistent winners, regardless of the fact that they have got a firm grasp on the strategy. If a player lacks the discipline to throw away poor starting hands hoping that his

strategies will pull him through, then all the knowledge and strategies will not be able to help him be a consistent winner. We will look more into this as we progress.

What is poker?

Simply put the objective of a poker game is to win the pot, which consists of all the bets made by the players on the table. A player betting on a hand in a hope that he has the best hand or at least give the other players on the table the impression that he has the best hand and thereby convince the opponents to fold their cards does this.

Poker is a card game played with any standard 52 card deck. It is a very simple game to learn but could take you a lifetime to master, as mentioned above there are a few ways one can win the pot.

1. Everyone folds and the last man left

rakes in the winnings.

2. All cards have been dealt and the final 2 or more players left showdown and the player with the best card wins.
3. 2 or more players have similar card and the pot is split.

Now let's get down to actually what cards can win you a hand in poker. Hand rankings are basically a function of probability, the more rare the hand, higher is the probability of you winning. Given below are the types of hands that can win you a game.

PN: to make it easier I will be using only the initials of the card from here on so if you see an "A" it's an Ace "K"

would be King and numbers would denote the actual value of the card along with the suit.

Royal Flush:

This is basically an unbeatable hand in poker and there are only four possibilities of getting a royal flush. That is by getting AKQJ10 of any one of the four suits i.e. Hearts spades clubs or diamonds.

Straight flush:

A straight flush is similar to a royal flush but it can be a combination of any 5 consecutive cards belonging to the same suit. E.g. 56789 of hearts or 910JQK of hearts etc

Four of a kind:

The name says it all if of the 5 playing cards you have four cards of one rank plus one unrelated card you have 4 of a kind e.g. QQQQ5 or 8888A which would mean you have either a hand with four queens or four 8's the higher the rank the better the card, which would mean 4 queens would beat the four 8's

Full House:

You have a full house when out of the five cards you have you get 3 cards of one rank

and a pair and the full house is determined by the 3 card grouping and not the pair so if

you gave 888kk it would be eights full of kings and this could be beaten by a kkk22,

which would be kings full of two's.

Flush:

You have a flush when you have any five cards of the same suit, they do not have to be in sequence, because if they were, you would then have a straight flush. If more than one player gets a flush, the winner is decided by rank. This means the person holding the highest card wins.

Straight:

Five cards in a sequence not all belonging to the same suit, means you have a straight. If more than one player has a straight the winner is determined by the person by the person holding the higher card in the sequence, e.g. J10987 would beat a 98765

Three of a kind:

As the name suggest if you have three cards of the same rank along with two other unrelated cards you have three of a kind. E.g. 777KQ would mean you have a set of seven's

Two pair:

Again as the name suggest, when you have two cards of one rank (one pair) plus one more pair of a different rank along with the fifth unrelated card you have a two pair the higher rank determines which is the superior pair. If 2 players end up having two pairs the one with the highest rank pair wins, however if both have the same high card pair, then the rank of the second pair will decide who wins. In the event both pairs are identical, then the rank of the high card will determine who wins.

One Pair:

Simply put any player holding one pair and three unrelated cards has a one pair, person with higher pair wins, in case of same pair value of unrelated cards will help determine the winner.

No pair / High card:

When all your five cards do not meet any of the above criteria then the basic rank order is what will determine the winning hand. Person holding the highest card wins, if two or more have the same high card the next highest card will be taken in to consideration and so on.

Chapter 2: Betting

Betting is what makes the game of poker so interesting, if there was no betting then it would be just a game of chance and any person with high cards would win. The key to minimizing your loss when you have a poor hand or extracting the max there is too from your opponents when you have a good hand is what poker is all about.

Every betting interval requires a player to either check, call or raise. After the first player the player on the left then gets the opportunity to follow the same procedure as his predecessor. Who ever make the first bet opens the bet and once

the bet is made, other players have an option to either call raise or fold.

When any player folds he loses whatever chips he has already bet on that game. After final betting is completed there is a showdown and the winner is selected.

There are different types of betting in a poker game.

Fixed Limit:

As the name suggest a player may not bet more that the predetermined, maximum number of chips

Spread limit:

Similar to fixed limit a player may not bet more than the maximum number of determined chip, bets may be made in any amount within those limits subject to the raise being at least equal to the bet that preceded it.

Pot Limit:

In this case the amount that can be bet or raised is limited to the amount of the chips already in the pot. A player who raises can count the raise as a part of the pot and raise up to the entire amount of the pot.

No Limit:

A player can bet or raise any amount of chips subject to the availability of chips with the player at that point of time. No fresh chips can be added while a game is in progress.

Betting Rules and etiquette:

Now that you have a fair idea of what betting is you need to understand the rules, terms and etiquette as well.

Ante:

Ante is the token sum, which every player puts in before the cards are dealt

Blind Bet:

There are two types of blind bets, small blind and big blind both are forced bets and this takes care of games with no Ante. The requirement to post these blinds rotates around the table so every player on the table ends up paying their fair share. The small blind is fifty percent of the big blind

Check:

As long as no one has placed a bet a player has an option to check, a check is literally a bet of zero. However once a player has placed a bet the next player cannot check, he can either call or raise only. If after checking the next players' bets the player who had checked still retains the right to call or raise.

Call:

If a player has placed a bet the next player has to either call raise or fold. Call is basically matching the amount bet by the prior player.

Raise:

If the player before you has placed a bet

and if you not only call it but increase the amount you have raised the pot.

Checkraise:

This is normally done when a player has an extremely good hand and wants to squeeze out a bet or two from the other players, by checking if any of the other players bet, he then has an opportunity to not just call but raise the bet thereby trapping the player who had bet and get him to commit to the raise or just throw away the bet money.

Fold:

If the cards in hand do not give you the confidence that you are going to win the pot, the best possible solution at that

point is to fold.

All in:

In case the player before you has bet and you do not have sufficient chips to cover the bet, you have the option to put in all your chips and call ALL -IN. So basically you will then contest only that portion of the pot that your money covers. The remaining players can still continue betting with a separate pot that is created.

Chapter 3: Things To Avoid While Betting:

String raise:

It may look dramatic but it is not something that is accepted on a poker table. If you intend to raise a bet, you need to call raise, you cannot say, I call your bet and while stretching the sentence say and raise you another xxx amount. This is considered as unfair tactics and in most casinos if you try this approach you would be called for string betting and only the call amount would be accepted. If you intend to raise you need to say it upfront.

Splashing:

Avoid splashing your chips on the table where there is a possibility of them getting mixed with the main bet. Try and place the chips you intend to play in a neat pile and push it gently forward and let the dealer pull them in.

Handling your cards:

If you have folded your cards do not attempt to take them back once you have discarded them to the main pile; even if it is at the end of the game.

Act in turn:

Do not bet call raise or fold unless it is your turn. As any action you take out of turn may actually give an undue advantage to one or more players.

Avoid discussing hands in play:

Discussing a hand with others even if you may have folded may provide information to existing player and may give an undue advantage to some so avoid discussing the hand while it is still in play.

Chapter 4: Texas Hold'em:

In Hold'em the game begins with each player being dealt two cards face down. The two players to the left of the dealer are the players who need to post the compulsory small blind and big blind. The rest have an option to check or bet.

A small circular disc that keeps moving after every game marks the position of the dealer. This ensures that all players are evenly getting the forced bet.

Once the betting has been completed that is all others have checked or if someone has bet and the rest have called the bet and all have placed equal amount of chips in the pot or folded. The next set of

cards are dealt, These three cards are generally called the flop and are placed face up and can be used as common cards in addition to the two cards held by every player. Once the three cards are dealt the next round of betting begins. Again when all players have either checked or matched any player bet the fourth card is placed face up on the table, this is the turn card. Post this one more round of betting progresses and the fifth and final card or the river is placed on the table.

So now every player still contesting for the pot has 2 cards in his hand which only he knows about and five face up common cards which all can see and the

person with the best five card combination will win the pot, that is after a final round of betting takes place.

So technically that is all there is to Texas hold-em, however things are never as simple as they seem and this holds true for Texas hold-em as well.

Hold'em in depth:

No matter, if people may tell you that any two cards can win it all depends on the flop turn and river, while it may hold a little bit of truth the statement would apply to only those who are playing believing in luck as a factor and not including skill in their playing technique.

The first two cards are the most important cards and if you maintain a certain discipline and play only with certain cards on the long run you will have a more successful win rate than you would playing with any two cards. Yes there may be cases where in after you fold you may end up with the winning hand but then, you did not lose, as you

did not bet. However playing with poor first two cards and losing is when your bankroll starts diminishing.

Prior to a flop, in Texas hold-em there are 169 different combinations that you could get as your first two cards, this number is assuming you take cards like AK of hearts equal to AK of clubs. The significance of these cards may change drastically after the flop, for e.g. if the flop has three hearts the person holding the AK of hearts gets a flush where as the other still holds only high cards, but prior to the flop they would hold the same value.

Also to further simplify, these

combinations can be further segregated in to only 5 categories.

1. Pairs
2. Connecting cards
3. Gapped cards
4. Suited connecting cards
5. Suited gapped cards

So keeping the above 5 basic combination in mind when ever you are playing, you now need to understand which of these are playable and which not. Trust me all are playable depending on your position on the table.

Table position:

Your position at the table at the time you have been dealt the card also plays a significant role in what cards you want to play with, the positions are fairly simple, early, mid and late. Simply put are you the first to act when cards are dealt? If yes, you are in the early position else mid or late. Depending on your position we will run through a few combinations that should help you decide if the hand is playable or not.

Early position:

In this position you need to have strong hands, these are the type which we do not come across very often but when we do, generally we end up being a favourite to win the pot right from the start.

Early position Pairs:

Pair which is a 7 pair or above

Early position Suited cards:

If in the early position you get suited cards the possible combinations you want to start with are A with a KQJ or 10, K with a Q J or 10 and J with a 10 or 9 or 10/9 combo.

Unsuited cards:

A with KQJ or 10 or K with either a Q or J

Middle position:

When you are either the 4th to seventh player to act, you are in mid position and you can add a few more combination that you can play, subject to no one raising the pot.

Mid Pairs:

5 and 6

Mid suited cards:

A with 9 8 7 or 6. K with 9. Q with 9 or 8. J with 8 10 with 8 and 9 with 8

Mid unsuited cards:

K with 10. Q with J or 10. J with 10.

Late position:

In this position you have the advantage of playing either last or second last. So you can have the option of playing with the remaining combination of cards as well. However these should be played only if the pot has not been raised. You need to maintain discipline in such scenarios. Also if the flop is not making your cards strong you need to release the cards immediately and not hold on to the hope that a turn or river cards will turn your fortunes.

Discipline is a must, for e.g. you might have a suited K and 2 and in the flop you get a king, though you are on a strong pair think of the possibility of any other

player having a king, that player would most certainly beat your two and you could end up losing so with late position cards it is imperative that you either get a very strong flop or no one else has betted and then you can go for a free turn card.

Actual betting

Let's assume you are now following the above guidelines and someone raises you after you have called, you are now committed to match that raise and see the flop before you take any decision, however if there are multiple raises after your call you might want to contemplate folding unless you have a very strong hand.

Remember one thing while being safe you need to understand that Hold-em is an aggressive game and when the opportunity arises you need not play safe but actually go ahead and raise as well, what this does is thins down the number of people competing for the pot. So if

you have a strong hand before the flop, raising is something you should definitely consider. Pre flop you can always raise with cards like a high pair or suited un-gapped cards. Also if you are in the late position and no one has called so far, you can raise with any pair or high card and you might end up stealing the blinds as well.

Playing post the flop:

If the flop does not fit your hand, don't think about getting lucky on the turn or river. Just quietly fold if someone has bet.

In a catch 22 situations where in you are unsure whether to continue or fold, keep in mind the following

1. Has it improved your hand?
2. It has not made it a strong hand but offers to pay you huge if you hit a card on the turn or river.
3. You held a big pair before the flop.

So while you may not like the flop most of the times, on some occasions you might get the best flop possible, where in you may flop a straight flush four of a

kind, a full house etc, where in your worry now won't be whether you are going to win or no, but how much you can extract from the rest of your opponents.

Your first order of business would be to look at the flop closely to search for possibilities of someone coming up with a hand that is second best.

Then depending on how your flop has helped you choose the following betting options.

Straight flush:

Go all in it is very unlikely you will lose.

Four of a kind:

After the flop if you have 4 of a kind chance are you have the winning hand, this can be beat only is someone comes up with a straight flush or a royal flush or if another pair hits the table after the river and your opponent has that pair in hand and it turns out to be a higher pair, though this is possible, chances of this happening are very slim

Full House:

Before you get all excited and put in all your money, be sure to scan the board to ensure yours is the best possible full house and if yes then definitely raise.

Nut Flush:

When you have a flush with an ace high and there is no pair on board, this eliminates the possibility of your opponent getting a full house or four of a kind. This means you now have the best possible hand, go on betting.

Nut Straight:

If you have a highest possible straight and you see there is no possibility of a flush or full house you have got the best hand. Bet all you have.

Other flops:

Depending on the situation stay with the hand if it yields something like three of a kind or two pair or even top pair but be vary of your opponent getting any other higher combination.

Playing the turn:

Mostly you may not even see the turn card but if you are then you should be already holding a hand good enough to win, or at least a promising draw that will give you huge results. Or if you feel you have a decent hand after the turn card but not necessarily a winning hand you can bluff and try to grab the pot.

Playing the river:

If you are still in the game you either have the best hand or are hoping that that the last card will give you an unbeatable hand. After the river card if you have good cards but not something that is an outright winner you might want to contemplate calling in case it is a heads up or if the pot is big. You do not want to come all this way to fold out on a winning pot.

Tips to remember when playing Hold-em

If you are in the early position, play few hands, you may end up throwing away a lot of hands but you will definitely end up saving money.

If you are in the late position, even a slightly respectable hand should be raised and that may help you steal the blinds if nothing else

If the flop does not improve your hand you must consider folding irrespective of how you were placed prior to the flop.

Many a time you may play an AK as strongly as a AA but what you

need to remember that it is not as strong a hand by itself as an AA is which does not depend on the flop.

Now that you have the basic idea of how to play next step is to get in on an actual game, you can always play with play money to get a feel of the game online but that normally does not actually help you learn the fine tricks as mostly you see people raising when not required or going all in as the money is not real.

So before you take the actual plunge and you need to build up your confidence you can participate in home games with fixed pot limit, or even play on line where you can play in games as low as 1 cent 2 cents, though small in value it still

is actual live money being used and will give you the real feel for the game.

Once you are comfortable playing you can either continue online and move on to a table with higher stakes or just go to a casino and get yourself placed on a table.

Both the above options are quite simple really, for online gambling, you need to find a good reputed site so you do not get duped of your money, once you have selected the site the first time login might take some time, as you need to register and set up your account. However once done all you need to do is login, check if you have sufficient balance to play, if not add the required amount and begin

playing. While playing online you even have the option of having someone next to you to discuss the hand and help you while you are new, while this is strictly a NO-NO at a casino, you could use this one advantage if gambling on line. Also you do not need to practice a poker face as no can see your reaction to the cards that you have been dealt.

If you intend to start off in a casino, all you need to do is look for a table which meets your budget and ask the floor person in charge to add you to that table, if the tables are all full all you would need to do is ask the floor person to put your name in queue and the moment a seat is vacant you would be notified.

Once on the table you can directly purchase your chips from the dealer and you are on your way.

Chapter 5: Bluffing

Previously we've talked about the possibilities that you always have something to flop. But what if you have absolutely nothing to flop? Don't worry, as you're not done with the hand yet. There's a nifty little trick called the venerable bluff that can turn you from zero to hero.

The first thing to do before proceeding towards carrying out a bluff is setting your goals straight. Inspect your hand and then measure your bluff against your goals. If there's a dry board and you flop huge, your goal at that time should be to maximize your earnings. On the other

hand, when you're flopping a huge draw, your goal must be to manipulate the game in such a way that you can garner an easy win. And if you don't know whether you're above or behind, then your goal should be to minimize losses.

But when you look down, inspect your hand and find out that you can win with a head on showdown, its time you start shaping the events to your goal. And remember, you shouldn't simply aim to win with the worst hand; instead your goal should be to bluff your way to a point that maximizes your chances of success.

The first way to increase your chances of success is to invest a significantly

lower amount of money and bring out the greatest gains. When implementing this, our goal is simple, i.e. to play the top pair so that we have greater chances of a better hand laying down. You should also be able to draw a line between a complete bluff and a semi-bluff, with the latter one being used to minimize your losses in case your bluff gets caught.

The two kinds of bluff that are absolutely pure are either those where you are absolutely sure that all the other hands are better than your or those where you are partially unsure about your hand's standing.

Without further ado, let's start with the different possibilities of bluffs:

The Continuation-Bet Bluff

Imagine that you raised before the flop and the big blind is called. The flop results in an A-10-5 and the opponent checks. If this is the case, you'll be executing one of the most common bluffs there is known as a continuation bet. This is exactly why you put yourself in the lead in the first place so that when the opponent misses the flop, you can win.

To execute the bluff you'll need to bet (50 – 75 percent of the pot) when the opponent checks to the raiser and you hold a KQ. Keep in mind that you'll be betting whether you hold a draw, a monster, a top pair, etc. The other player

will be quite aware of this tactic if he's paying attention, but think again, what will such a move tell him about your hand? The answer is nothing. This will give cover to your bluff and all the bets you've made with excellent hands will now raise the chances of you winning. In a nutshell, when the game's checked to you and you're in the leading position, simply keep on betting.

The Second-Barrel Bluff

In some cases, your opponent might check to you & your continuation bet; when you get called, your first instinct might be to say "Ohhh". Now, before you say this, remember one thing. Your opponent might not have a great hand

when he calls you on the flop, he might be having a draw or an under pair or a small player so control your instincts! Furthermore, your opponent might be bluffing with you so if your opponent checks once again then don't just shutdown. Keep in mind that when you're betting around half of the pot, you'll only need the other player to fold almost 33 percent of the time so that you break even.

The Float on Dry Boards

Assume that the big blind has the lead and bets you or the other player was the raiser and now you've ended up with a continuation bet into you while holding a KQ on A-10-5 board. What do you do?

Most people who think that bluffing can get them out of this usually think about raising and then taking the pot straight away. However, this isn't the way to go.

Suppose that before going to the flop, you have yourself 1000 pot. Next, the other player leads 500 so if you raise, you'll have to go as high as 2000 to make sure nobody suspects. And before you know it you've invested 2,000 on the flop just to see your opponent's reaction. There might be a possibility that he's truly weak & folds; if that happens you will his bet. But you invested 2000 and you only got the chance to see him play one time.

Think of the board as A-10-5 while the

other player holds QT or some other medium level hand. If he's astute then be sure that he won't go away because your raise is so weak. On the other hand, if your hand was strong, you can call behind and let him bet on the turn. If your opponent is strong, he'll raise you right away so that he keeps the ball in your court. What do you do in that case?

Consider that the other player bets 500 and you call. Till now, you've only invested 500 and without taking the risk you've made your opponent think again. His only choice is to play the rest of the hand against someone who has given a willingness to call. Your normal plan of action is to find out your position in the

game would be to raise on the flop, right? Well, think again. If you modify your strategy and let your opponent play by the traditional rules, you might be able to change the tides. Basically, when you flat-call, you put your opponent on the back foot because the call seems to be so slick.

It doesn't feel like a bluff, but it actually is. Next comes the turn card that can be whatever considering that weren't calling just so you could hit your hand. The other player would check which means that you can bet almost half of the pot or what a real hand would do. So till now, you've invested almost 1500 in the pot and if the opponent folds here, you

will be winning his 500 flop bets for 300 less. This is called getting the greatest out of a small price. There's more. You get to see your opponent twice that gives you more information. Do you see the point here? Bluffing like this is much better than simply barfing around all of your chips into the pot, isn't it?

There is also the possibility of you getting check raised on the turn that means you might have to fold. But that shouldn't matter as you won't be giving up a pot that could've been yours at the showdown. Always keep this in your mind that the reason you can't just bet a single pair is that if you get checked & raised then you might end up folding

your hand, which is a grave mistake. When bluffing, you can't afford such a mistake. Your half-pot bet only needs to workout 33 percent of the time if you're to break even.

At times however, your opponent might not check you. Assume that he leads you and if you realize that he holds a strong hand then you'll need to give up on your bluff. You would lose, but your losses would be minimal compared to a raise on the flop. You'll be out of the hand for a cost of mere 500 instead of losing 1800 to 2000 on the out.

Even better is the fact that you don't have to fold if you want to re-raise and you definitely don't need to surrender

when the other player is thinking of firing into your float. The bluff-raise tells the story of a strong hand one that could've trap called on the flop. If you sense considerable amount of weakness when the other player bets, you have extremely high chances of executing a bluff. Grab the opportunity while you can as it won't come very often or you can even save it for situations where you're semi-bluffing.

Let's consider you have a hand like QJ on a K-10-2 board while your opponent leads you on the flop. You call and now the turn becomes a deuce or into a card that doesn't give either of you any significant advantage over the other.

Next, your opponent leads again but over here you read his weakness and you use the information gathered from the bluff-raise to win. If you used the information rightly, you win, otherwise you lose. But here's the real win-win situation; even if you lose you would still have your outs so sometimes you'll be able to go ahead and raise even if you face the second barrel.

You should only carry out this technique against someone who possesses a weaker hand and is going to bet with it, i.e. an aggressive player who always takes a second barrel. The technique is highly effective if the other player thinks of you as an A-B-C player. But, against

non-creative players who only bet with a monster, you should avoid bringing in such a technique.

What you should learn from this very technique is that breaking down bluffs into parts can be extremely useful. You can get more information with less risk and you'll also be able to minimize the risks. Furthermore, when you call behind the flop, you don't have to go through reopening the betting to an aggressive player who wants to come over the top at all costs.

Bluffing Out of Position

Logically thinking, it's much harder to carry out bluffs out of position rather than in position. Just think for a second

why floating in position is so much cleverer. Without spending a lot of money you can see two streets of information before you even run your bluff. But you only get this advantage since you're the last one to act. Putting yourself out of the position will mean that the edge goes away. This doesn't mean that you shouldn't execute the bluff at all. You simply have to gain some perspective. Read the upcoming bluffs to understand what this means.

The Continuation Bet

If you lead into the flop then you should definitely carry out this technique no matter what the position is. After all, this is the main point of raising a pre-flop is

to get the edge one needs to run his/her hand. As you must know by now that if a continuation bet is executed rightly, you will have 1/3rd chances of winning the pot. Even if you carry out a 75 percent bet, e.g. 750 out of a 1000 chip pot, you'll still have a success rate of 42 percent. Always keep in your mind that your opponent might miss out the flop almost 67 percent of the time. So to sum it all up, the continuation bet isn't even purely a bluff, its simply good use of your brain!

The Second-Barrel Bluff

Sometimes Continuation Bets do get caught and if this happens to you, what should you do next? So when a player

calls you on your bet you shouldn't just give up, instead you should think for a second. The player might be floating to bluff or might even be holding an under pair, waiting for you to blink.

So given that he might be bluffing, it won't hurt you to take another shot at the pot. You should bet a small amount that is good enough to trigger a fold 33 percent of the time. The technique is greatly valuable especially if the other player floats a lot. In addition, if the pot is textured, then your opponent might be calling a bluff so a second barrel will tell you whether the texture would hit or not. If it misses out and you know that your opponent holds a draw then fire a

second barrel so that he can be priced off the draw. If the texture completes and he shows dissatisfaction when the turn card shows up then you can also bet. No matter what the circumstances are, the bet doesn't always have to go after profit, information should also be a priority.

The Float on Dry Boards

Even though floats are known to be most effective when the other player has acted first, this doesn't put a permanent sanction on floats. If you're playing against a player who has a habit of freezing up whenever you check or a player who goes to the offensive using only a single barrel, then you can use the

floating technique even if he/she hasn't acted first.

Suppose that you're calling a raise out of position against the aforementioned players while holding K-Q of hearts and the flop comes as A of spades, 10 of diamonds and 2 of clubs. Next, you check while the opponent bets. It must be logically evident that he'll never call you just so he can hit a jack; this gives you an edge and if you call here you'll be bluffing with a bonus. The bonus will be that you might be able to get the jack by pure coincidence. So if you're against a player who executes continuation bets most of the time, you'll have an option to call a float.

What if the float takes 3 sheets rather than 2?

When you float in position and the other player checks the turn, you have an option to bet and pick the pot up from right there. When you float the flop out of position, you can check the turn and if your opponent checks back, it is very much likely that he was simply placing continuation bets with nothing at all! Next, after the check, you can bet the river, as you'll have 1/3rd chances to win. Therefore when you're out of position it's better to bluff on the river rather than on the turn.

The type of float is extremely effective against an opponent who raises late in

the game when the board is dry. A button raiser on the other hand can possess a whole variety of cards. But you, being the player who calls out the position have a greater chance of having a good ace so you hit the flop right in front of him. He'll go for it and bet in position but only once so you'll only have one shot to identify your opponent's motives. Therefore, if you're playing against a button raiser then its best to after him with a flop.

Now let's assume that you check-call a flop, then check the turn and the player still takes a second bet instead of shutting down. If this is the case, you can go for a head on check-raise there. Also,

know that you'll be playing with pretty strong hands. If the player is weak then by all means carry out a check-raise bluff. The bluff works almost 50 percent of the time so if the other player seems to be folding half of the time, execute it.

Now let's say that you check-call with a 9 & 8 of hearts on a flop of Jack of hearts, Ten of spades and Two of hearts. If this happens then check as soon as the 4 of spades hit and if the other player checks back, play a straight float without looking at the river. However, if your opponent bets the turn then carry out a check-raise semi-bluff. Know that even though you may get called you would still have a 30 percent chance of winning

after the bluff is caught. You see, this is more of an insurance plan in case everything does not go according to plan.

Bluff Check-Raising the Flop

Floating can make up for a great story, however in spots check raising on the flop can work out as a highly effective technique. If the player has a habit of checking the turn to pick out bluffs, carrying out floating can be dangerous. The player might not be nice enough to bet the turn and instead wait for you to execute a river bluff. Against these kinds of players, its best to execute a check-raise bluff.

Against a smart opponent, this technique

will be quite weak however, in most cases the button is weaker. The player cannot contend even if he catches you on the very check-raise bluff you're carrying out. Therefore, the odds of running into a genuine hand are quite small and so are the chances of a bad hand carrying out a bluff against you.

The logic behind this kind of bluff is quite simple. The button may be raising with any of the two cards that he has which means that having an ace isn't a huge possibility. It is more likely for the big blind to hold compared to a button because after all you did carry out a pre-flop raise. The opponent is most likely to carry out a continuation bet to win the

pot if you miss out and therefore to prevent this from happening, you pretend that you did not miss. The opponent seeing this will fold and will become weaker as you told him a clever story; next he might let his hand go altogether instead of carrying out a risky three bet bluff. If in any case he does get three bets, don't worry because it's not like you'll have to fold the best hand you have.

When it comes to playing against a first-position player, you should never think of making such a play. Such a player is much more likely to possess a hand that can actually decimate you. Against such a player, you should execute the opposite

of a flop that won't hit the strong hand the player raises from the start. Finally, you can carry out a check-raise bluff like 7-6-4 and turn the game in your favor.

Multi-way Bluffing Techniques

It's best to save most of your energy for a heads-up situation, as there aren't several multi-way bluffing opportunities. Missing the board or at least hitting the board in such a manner that the opponent lays down are two things that are essential for executing a bluff. Your chances of executing a bluff decrease as the number of players layering into the pot increase. In addition, as the number of players in the pot increase, the numbers of draws rise as well and as a

result the chances of getting hit by someone increase too. The following are a bunch of Multi-Way techniques that will help you in similar circumstances.

The C-Bet Multi-way

There are a few opportunities through which a person can bluff in multi-way pots. The most common of these is betting when everyone checks to you, because they think that you're the pre-flop leader. Once you bet, you can easily take $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ pot shot and win the game right there. In addition the pricing you set also determines your chances of winning and in this scenario you only need to pick up 33% of the time so that you break even. But to successfully

execute the C-bet you should also know your opponent's instincts and know his nature.

For example if the other player is stubborn then c-betting in a multi-way manner way too often will almost always work, more than 2/3rds of the time. In addition, you must remember at all times that dry boards are way better than wet boards for c-betting. Boards that have draws may elicit your opponent to call you. Obviously, when it's checked to you, you can make the in position bets, even if you aren't the leader.

When trying to pick up pots, being the last one to act isn't the only criteria that

must be checked. For example, you can also take these stabs even if you're second last to act. The players leading you may have demonstrated their weakness that should give you enough space to move in, worrying only about the player behind you. Seize these bluffs as long as you are sure that you'll be able to stack the pot almost 33 percent of the time.

But there are also somethings that you should avoid. For instance, you shouldn't execute c-bets on a habitual basis into multi-way pots when you're playing against a crowded field and you're in an early position. You're under no obligation to try, as your chances of

winning under these circumstances would be thin. Against players who are willing to execute a raised pre-flop there is a huge probability that someone has already hit the board. This is one of those times where it's smart to give the lead away.

Also remember that sometimes when you're possessing big hands on coordinated boards, you should willfully check away the lead so that you get a check-raise in. In those cases, you check away the lead in multi-way pots right from an early position. On the other hand, sometimes you may have something else planned for later, so giving your lead right away might not be

a good idea. Mixing it up makes the checks harder for the other player to understand which is always what a bluff is executed for.

Squeezing Unsited Boards

Another multi-way bluff that you can execute is a little squeeze on the flop. For instance, player 1 bets while player 2 calls. At this moment, you can bluff-raise by leveraging 2's presence to drive out 1 and the weakness of 2's call to drive him out as well. However, this excellent bluff can't be called on suited boards because if there is a suit on the board that you don't have but the better does then you won't be able to squeeze them.

For example on a board like J-8-2, if the first player leads on what a continuous-bet without muscle while the second player calls, then you can take your chances and squeeze the pot. As you'll obviously have lower chances of bluffing against 2 players rather than 1, it's nice to have a contingency plan in place like making a hand.

On the J-8-2 board, you should consider squeezing whenever you have QT or KQ. Remember, it won't be the end of the world if someone calls, as you still might be able to make the best hand. The player will most probably check on the turn that will give you another shot at firing again, given that the other player is

weak. Otherwise, if you think he's strong then it's best to take a free card or hit gin.

Another moment when squeezing would be a great opportunity on the same board is with a hand like 10-10 or 9-9. The odds are that the lead better may be on a bad jack and in that case you would want him folded, right? When the pot is multi-way your raise will have greater strength and moreover, in multi-way situations there is a lower chance of people playing their big hands slow.

Even when you're not sure about your hand, you can make a similar play out of position. For example, an early-position player raises and picks up a caller

besides you who holds TT in the big blind. A 2-6-7 rainbow flop can be a tough spot to play and you might even have the best hand but two opponents can make the game much more complex. You might be up against an over pair and even if you're not, you don't want to be the guy who sees the turn card, that too against two opponents.

If you lead, it's very unlikely that the hand ends right there and the chances are that you'll trigger a raise which is not something you would want especially with a hand like TT. So as a solution, if both players continue, you can check to squeeze and keep on semi-bluff floating if you keep ending up heads-up.

Considering that you check, the raiser bets and the 2nd player calls. If you sense that the 2nd player is calling weak, then you won't get a better opportunity to execute a check-raise squeeze. Player 1, the raiser may be having anything whereas 2 would be weak. When you check-raise, you'll be able to raise & call on the bet or go right for a float, your choice. But either way you should treat you TT as a bluff.

This kind of multi-way squeeze can be executed even if you don't have a hand. At the same J-8-2 board with something like A-Q, you can check which would make the pre-flop raiser to bet while another player would call. If you

successfully read the bettor and the caller then you can even make the top pair to fold, as your play would look so clever.

Waiting

Bluffing is all about striking at the right time. Waiting is an essential part of executing a successful bluff and can act as an extremely resourceful weapon in your arsenal.

Bluffing isn't something that occurs by accident and having said that it shouldn't be considered as something you do on the spot. Instead, you should have your focus on it from the start of the game and you should be forming a strategy for

implementing a bluff when the timing's right. Also, there is no limit on the number of bluffs you execute; bluff as much as you want considering the situation in the game but keep all the circumstances in mind and don't just keep on bluffing at every move.

The chance of executing bluffs, "no matter what" are quite rare if not zero. The logic behind the wrongfulness of this approach is twofold. First of all, you won't ever know how your hand's going to develop and if you end up getting locked into a strategy then beware, it's a trap. Secondly, consider the difficulty one faces to make a hand while playing hold'em; now take this

consideration and think for yourself the number of opportunities you'll have to bluff without the need to go hunting for extras.

It also wouldn't be a great idea to call in position before the flop with absolutely nothing just so you could execute a bluff after the flop. You do have position, no doubt about that but if you don't have good cards then executing a bluff is simply stupid. In a nutshell, all bluffs work better when there's a contingency plan to support them if they get called.

However, when playing against a weak player you can call in position even before the flop from the bottom. That would give you exactly what you want

but then again that's against a weak player. Be patient as you'll get a lot of opportunities to execute such moves so don't go along looking for adventures that raise your variance, especially in a real game! Also, if you go around calling holding hands that are simply useless just so you could execute a bluff later on, you have a problem. You simply have no idea that a game can be won without a hand. Even worse is the problem that you can't set your goals right. If you're playing in such a manner then you aren't minimizing your risks, instead you just want to look like a stud, which isn't something a good poker player, does.

In the end however, the bluff is an

amazing weapon which you should always have locked & loaded! Betting bluffs gives cover to your hands just as betting big hands give cover to your bluffs. In position against lesser number of players, your chances of getting called are quite low so a bluff is excellent in such games. Also, you should use your brain to read the other opponent and if you feel like you're confusing your opponent then you shouldn't let the momentum go and keep on bluffing.

There are some players who only bet when they hit. If you're up against such a player then you shouldn't bluff at all. You should fold when they bet, as there are simply too many other ways to bring

in their money. Aim your bluffs at players who are very much active, too vulnerable to c-bets or too prone to weak leads. You should always be bluffing against weak leads. When players weak-lead right into you, call them right away. These players are either carrying a monster or an extremely weak hand. Therefore, when you're raising pre-flop and the other player(s) lead into you, simply know that they're begging you to take the pot away. All you need to do now is call them, then either bet or raise and then take the pot away.

Chapter 6: Reading Your Opponent

Poker is a great game that involves nerves, strategy and complete mental concentration. Most people think that having a great strategy is all that is required to win a poker game but the truth is one cannot win if he/she doesn't make mental inferences about his/her opponent, even if he/she is playing against them for the first time. Psychology will greatly help you reduce your chances of losing while drastically tipping the scales in your favor. This

chapter is dedicated to reading your opponent and using your power of observation to judge your opponent, tailoring every move according to his/her body language.

There are two types of players who are sitting on a poker table. One, who are unaware that the other person might be reading their “tell signs” and the other ones who are completely aware of the other player noticing them; these are usually “actors” who deliberately provide false signs to the other player as an attempt to shuffle them.

So first of all, you need to know whether your opponent is an actor or not. If he/she is an actor then you should

determine what he's doing and why he's doing it. Players usually act because poker puts them in uncharted territory where every action can have different consequences that can be extremely difficult to judge. Most newbies in this art usually go about acting the opposite of what they want that can sometimes be too predictable, giving their money away for free. When they're strong, they act like they're weak and when they're weak they act strong.

No need to worry about this too much, all of this is given in the 10 signs given below which would greatly help you get a win in a game of poker.

Shaking Hands:

Our hands don't normally shake. They are heavily wired with our brain and any inappropriate reaction has a pretty good explanation behind it. With respect to poker, there's a theory that says if a player starts trembling while making a wager then that's a signal that he/she is not quite sure about the bet he's placing and is therefore bluffing.

You would think that this theory would become outdated but the truth is not everyone is such a good actor that he can genuinely replicate a shaking hand and show nervousness on tap. What most likely would be happening is that the other player might have an extremely strong hand. The hand would be close to

unbeatable and what you're witnessing from him would be a release of tension as a way to beat the suspense.

Some players on the other hand are always nervousness, even if they have great hands. The technique that is being discussed here is not show of nervousness at all times; instead its "sudden shaking", i.e. a player who was steady before but suddenly starts to lose control. If you notice such behavior try to keep your eye on the opponent and he most certainly won't be bluffing if he tries to control the shaking.

The sudden shaking isn't a bluff because usually players tend to portray themselves as bold when bluffing. They

usually get them unusually cool and hardly move. That's where the term "poker face" has come from. A poker face isn't a shaky one but is one that shows no emotion, as players know that one wrong movement can trigger the calling reflex.

What is the calling reflex?

The calling reflex is an inbuilt instinct mostly in players who would kill for a showdown and have an inclement towards calling rather than folding. These players are always looking to call the bet which means a bluff can easily be called so the player does everything he can to make sure he doesn't trigger such a calling reflex from an opponent.

Expect bluffers to be stone cold and unanimated. Also remember that sudden trembling can't be controlled no matter how good of an actor you are as your body's releasing sudden energy involuntarily.

Jittering:

Jittering is also not an act. Instead, some people are naturally impatient. Some players start drumming their fingers against the table as a show of this impatience, mostly without even knowing. Now, the player bets while he continues to drum and as you reach towards your chips, he stops!

What does this tell you? It means that the bettor is either weak or is bluffing. A

player who possesses a big hand will feel relaxed when the other player calls. Whenever, there's a close decision about folding or calling, players often use this technique to show their impatience or nervousness. However, with the passage of time most players develop control over it. But nonetheless, if you notice the other player reacting in some way and then stopping all of a sudden, know that you need to call, otherwise fold.

Shrugs & Sad Voices:

These kinds of voices are basically acts. For instance, whenever a player sighs or releases an indistinct-able sound and after that says, "I bet", you'll be needing a big hand if you want to call. The

player who shrugs actually displays sadness.

But why does he do that? If a player has a weak hand then will he go all out public and display this failure? The answer is no. He acts this way so that you start thinking he's weak. Get my point? The player would be acting and would actually be holding a strong hand. Therefore remember, any shrugs are indications of strong hands.

Changes in Breathing Patterns:

This unconscious yet extremely clever tells is one of the most widely used in poker, not to mention one of the strongest. If you're positioned near your opponent, you'll most likely be able to

accurately figure out this tell. But don't worry, as with the passage of time you'll be able to filter out his breathing right across the table.

The key over here is that players who possess strong hands become excited quite easily and start breathing faster. On the other those who bluff are usually disguising themselves and in the process of becoming rock-hard, stop breathing entirely, fearing that any movement would trigger a calling reflex.

Misdirected Bets:

A misdirected bet is undoubtedly an act. If the action is carried out in a three-way manner then know that your opponent is nervous about the player that appears to

be the most powerful. If you have the strongest hand, then you are the main target.

But what if the opponent starts staring down and directing his attention towards someone who isn't actually a threat? If the player starts aiming his bets towards that player then you have just witnessed a misdirected bet. And you on the other hand have every right to go, "What about me"!

The misdirected bet usually means that the player is trying to convince you that you aren't his biggest problem and he's more worried about the player than you. The player is well aware that you're the strongest but still does this to confuse

you. You must realize this veiled threat and shouldn't let yourself get intimidated into folding. If you were thinking of calling or raising then it's best to raise.

Extra Emphasis:

Adding emphasis on a betting motion is definitely an act, and one that is extremely difficult to spot. You'll need a lot of experience to tell this one. By emphasized bets I do not mean exaggerated bets. In this case, the better might want to lure you in so that he can entice your call. Placing extra emphasis on the bet is much more subtle but effective.

Here's how you can spot it. Keep watching the tail end of a bet. If the

motion is smooth but is closed by an extra flare, e.g. flick of the fingers, and then this means that the player is placing extra emphasis, i.e. he is weak. The player might either be bluffing or nervous about his hand's strength. The opponent would be flaring because he would be continuously thinking whether the bet he's placing is strong enough or not. Why would he do that? The answer is only if his hand wasn't powerful in the first place.

Therefore, when an opponent places extra emphasis on a bet then it's best to call more frequently.

Looking away:

Looking away from the poker table is

also in fact a clever act. A player who looks away from the action is in fact an extremely dangerous player compared to one who looks directly at you. When a player looks away, beware. There could only be two things. One, the player isn't quite interested, so why bet, or second, he might be acting so that you get confused. Either way, hold your nerves. Unless you possess an extremely strong hand, the best thing to do is check & fold right after he bets. However, if you bet a medium-strong hand, then you'll most probably get raised. Also, never ever bluff into a player whose been looking directly at you for quite some time.

Staring at you:

Imagine that it's your turn but another player starts looking at you directly. If this is the case then he's most probably trying to intimidate you and prevent your bet. The opponent will keep on calling but will never raise. Such kind of behavior means that you can bet with any medium-high hand without fearing.

Therefore, instead of being intimidated, simply start making borderline bets whenever you have strong hands.

Reactions after Seeing their Cards:

Sometimes, whenever players look at their cards they think that they aren't being watched at that time so they show their true emotions. So if you can spare a second or few, instead of looking at your

own cards, look at the opponent's face as your cards aren't going anywhere!

If your opponent quickly looks towards their chips right after observing their cards then this means that they hold a strong hand and they'll be betting. This case is especially true if the player looks at their chips and then stares away as if he saw nothing! Look for the last part and you'll know the whole story because this last part is exactly what the other player thinks you'll notice. Always keep in your mind that a player who stares away usually possesses strong hands.

Reaching for chips

If a player reaches for his/her chips in anticipation that the other player is going

to bet then know at once that this is an act. Even though weak players or newbies sometimes reach for their chips before its turn, experienced players don't do this.

As a reaction, if you're thinking of placing a borderline bet then before you do so, look at your opponent and if he reaches for the chip then there's a pretty good chance that he's acting so that you don't make the bet. If that's the case then go ahead and make the bet without worrying.

Chapter 7: River Play in Position

Previously, we've been talking about multi-way plays. In this particular chapter, we'll be dismissing that and for two reasons. The first one is that all even hands starting out in a multi-way fashion will end up heads-up by the river. The second reason is simply that the technique is extremely dry. Think for yourself; if you're not heads-up then you're betting either because you want to bluff or for a particular value. For instance, if you're holding an iffy hand and you're well aware of it then the odds are that you won't be betting into a

multi-way field. Therefore, every situation that we'll be discussing in this chapter would be heads-up.

Whenever you find yourself in river situations, ask yourself 2 questions. The first one being, "Am I bluffing" and if the answer to this question is yes then you'll have to infer whether your bluff will work. However, if the answer is no then ask yourself the second question, i.e. "If I bet, is there any possibility that I could get paid off by a hand that's worse than mine".

You would generally expect people to ask these questions naturally but the truth is they don't which is why I explicitly mentioned them here. Generally, players

are so concerned with making value bets that they put all their attention on making a great value bet without even thinking for a second what such actions would bring. Basically, this means betting a hand that can be paid off through a worse hand. But what if there is no worse hand and you're the weakest link? In that case, you're not the one who's value betting; instead, this is called bluffing. And these bluffs often happen when you don't know your position in the game.

In the chapter about Bluffs, you saw that when you bet A-Q into A-K, you have to pay close attention to the risk associated with it beforehand. If you get raised then

you'd have to fold your best hand. So in the end, what you want is to extract every single piece of chips that you can but at the same time you don't want to trap yourself.

For instance, assume that you hold a K-Q on a J-T-x-x board, going into the river. Next, a queen comes off and out of nowhere you just hit top pair. The other player checks and it's up to you whether you want to bet or not. There had been betting previously on the flop as well as the turn that should make you confident enough to know that the other player holds at least something. However, before you value bet the top pair you must take a moment to think about the

strength of the hands you're playing against. You also have to analyze whether these hands will make a crying call with AT or AJ against the chances that they were simply dragging two pairs. This one sentence isn't an easy one to understand, so I'll be breaking everything down, step by step, so you could understand better.

First, know about your position, i.e. are you the first one to act or the last one? Second, what kind of cards does your opponent hold? I know that you can't know the answer to this question for sure, but it would sure help if you could analyze them in some manner. Remember, you've had 3 good enough

looks at him, i.e. on the flop, on the turn and pre-flop. If you add up all these looks, you'll get a pretty close estimate. Next, you should also evaluate your own strength. If you're weak, then it's certain that you'll be bluffing and not value betting; on the other hand, if you're strong then you're capable of betting the better hand.

Assume that you're holding a medium-strength hand while your opponent hold something near that. Obviously, you would want him to pay off with a weaker pair but you're aware at this point that he may be leading you. Before doing anything, ask yourself "How aggressive is he?" A passive player and

an aggressive player would behave different depending on his/her intensity. In the end, you should be thinking like this, “I have a medium-strength hand and I’m in position, facing another set of medium-strength cards held by a super-aggressive player”.

Finally, when you can start asking yourself this particular question, you can move on to the next part. I know that this question may sound boring and tiring to you but as you move ahead, you’ll understand that it holds a unique significance.

In Position against an Aggressive Bettor, both holding a Strong Hand

In the first case, you're in position against an aggressive player while holding a strong hand. He bets into you on the river while the board is Q-J-7-3-2 and you hold 77. What would the ideal response be in such a situation?

First of all, you need to judge your own position. After that you judge your opponent's. You're both strong but he is aggressive as well. Assuming that your hand is better, what should you do next?

If this is the case, then get ready to raise big! Remember, that he is an aggressive player so you don't need to tease the values out of him. Instead, it's time to aim big. Being an aggressive player, the opponent knows that you will call

bullshit on his bets therefore, he will be calling raises more frequently compared to non-aggressive players.

Moving on to the next case. In this case your hand is strong while you suspect your opponent to be weak when he leads into you. Once again, you'll have to start analyzing the situation. You not only have position in this case but you also have strength so you have the option of both closing as well as re-opening the action. In this case you don't need to bet too big. Even if he thinks that you're scared, his hand isn't strong enough to make the call. Nonetheless, you can still make an aggressive player call by making an extremely small raise. This is

called the value raise and is more likely to work in this case. And even if it fails, you wouldn't be at a loss, as your opponent would have already contributed on the river. In a nutshell, you'll be free-rolling your way to a better payoff.

If you look closely, you'll realize that in either case, whether the opponent is strong or weak, you're essentially using the same logic. You're ultimately guessing the biggest raise that your opponent will call. The stronger you think the other player is, the more you'll expect from him so against a stronger hand, and you'll raise a bigger amount. With that being said, try to look for

opponents who don't read big bets correctly, seeing them as weak. Against such opponents, you can keep on raising bigger on the river and he may want to make hero calls that would only land him in trouble.

In Position against an Aggressive Bettor, both holding a Medium-Strength Hand

In this case you hold a medium-strength hand while you suspect your opponent of having a hand somewhere near yours. For example you may have 77 and the board is J-T-7-3-2 along with 3 clubs. The hand is the same as the previous case but it is no longer as strong. You can now be beaten by two sets along

with straights & flush. You should call your hand medium-strength when you know it could be the best one but isn't anywhere near the nuts.

So the opponent leads into you. What should you do? You obviously can't fold because you might be holding the better hand. But at the same time, you can't raise as well because, well he might simply crush you. When playing against aggressive players, remember that they are very well capable of making re-raise bluffs so it's best to keep the action closed when holding a hand that might be capable of winning a show down but can't handle getting re-raised.

In this case, you simply call assuming

the following:

- You're playing against an aggressive opponent who doesn't need to beat you to bet,
- The price is right,

If he decides to shove all-in so that you're not even winning 2-to-1 then you'll have to be super-confident in your read to call. However, if he bets half to full pot which may give you 3-to-1 on your call, then you'll have significantly lower amount of money pressure on yourself. All you need to do is be correct more than a quarter of a time to show profit.

As you play you'll realize that it's all about avoiding risky decisions. Think

for yourself, wouldn't it be awesome if you could somehow teach your opponent not to put you through many of those decisions when playing on the river. Well, there is a way. You can start calling reasonable river bets from much aggressive opponents whenever you get the feeling that your cards might be the same strength as theirs.

Once again, if the opponent is betting two times the pot then you can analyze the move for a few seconds before folding your hand. By doing so, you've consciously trained your opponent to over bet, which in the long run will be fruitful. A number of aggressive players also prefer to take small bets at the river

and if they do so, you should call them immediately. Don't worry, as you don't have to be correct every time but doing so will surely slow them down.

Aggressive players frequently make their money by exploiting players who fold way too often. They usually bet amounts that let the pot lay them a price. In addition, they bet quite frequently which puts off most of their opponents. If you let such aggressive opponents know that you'll be calling whenever you match their range, you can successfully bring an alteration to their strategy or better yet a change to their betting size. Either way, you'll make their play less profitable.

In Position against an Aggressive Bettor, with a Weak Hand

In this case, you'll be holding a weak hand against an opponent who you suspect to be stronger than you. The opponent leads into you. What should you do? The answer is simple, you fold. You shouldn't think twice while doing so as you have a worse hand against an aggressive opponent.

But what if the opponent holds a weak hand as well and still leads into you? You might be holding an extremely weak hand in which case folding might seem like the best option. But consider this, your opponent is still weak, right? So maybe instead of folding you can wind

up with the pot by calling with a hand that's only a little weaker than his or by raising him off his hand.

Such a case can arise if you're on the high flush draw while your opponent is on the low straight draw while you both are blank. Being an aggressive player, he would bet which in his thinking would be the only way to win the pot. You might be holding something like QJ that may lead you to the conclusion that your hand is better. But even if you put him on the right range of hands, he might be on a different draw, e.g. same flush as yours; this wouldn't be good at all for you.

If you're thinking about a hero call, only do so if you know that your opponent is

holding cards that even your weakest cards can bet. If your opponent holds a card stronger than you, then it's best to raise. You can't beat those hands so the hero call would be a total disaster. But if your opponent puts too much pressure on you with his river bets then making a hero call can drastically put away that pressure.

One way to figure out where your opponent might be sitting is by looking for blocking or defensive bets. You should take note of these bets and see if they link up with hands in the mid-vulnerable range. Blocking bets are carried out to save the bettor's chips in conditions where he knows that he'll get

called if he checks. If you notice your opponent making small defensive bets on the river every once in a while, this means he's vulnerable and you'll have a chance to strike when he bets against you.

You can't call because it isn't likely that he's bluffing. However, you can raise which would trigger a fold from the opponent.

Occasionally, under the right set of conditions, you may make the hero call. But if you think that you're against an opponent who thinks he has a better hand then just fold and move on. With the passage of time you'll realize that you can't just assume that your hand is better;

you have to make assessments and read your opponent. Only then can you arrive at any conclusion.

In Position, Passive Bettor, Strong Hand

Okay, this time you're in position on the river but now your opponent is a passive bettor.

Before we move on, what does a passive bettor mean? A passive bettor is a player who is straightforward, non-creative and most importantly consistent. If you make a little effort, then you'll be able to manipulate his moves quite easily and read them in advance.

For instance, imagine a situation where you as well as your opponent hold a

strong hand. The player decides to bet into you. At once, you know that he's got a strong hand because otherwise he wouldn't have bet. Thus, you can easily put him on the highest point of his range. An aggressive player might be value betting at this stage however a passive bettor doesn't do that. He would be thinking that he has won the game and by leading out he leaves no doubt in his confidence. Now, before you start throwing raises, you need to be damn sure that his confidence is fake. You'll most probably call and see whether he was right or not.

You're holding a king-high flush. You make your hand on the turn and when

your opponent bets into you, you call. He bets again on the river. You have 2nd nuts however if you look closely at your opponent, his character is such that calling will be the right thing to do. Maybe he holds the nuts or maybe he doesn't know how to judge people correctly. You can't really say anything unless & until there's a showdown. If you were up against an aggressive opponent then re-raising would've been the best thing to do. But in this case calling is the better thing to do. At a flushing board, your opponent is more likely to beat you when he makes the second bet but he's also much less likely to call your raises with cards that you've

beaten, i.e. low flushes.

A number of players make such raises when playing on the river and it isn't until they get called that they understand that they've been bluffing not raising.

Assume now that you're holding a slightly worse hand like jack-high flush. The other player bets into you. Players who raise in this condition think that they're raising for a value, trying to win chips from the other player. These players keep themselves confined to their in-house misconception until they realize they've been making mistakes all along. Actually, your raises were nothing but bluffs. Therefore, you must be well aware of your raise's value before it's

too late and you get called.

In Position against a Passive Opponent, Medium-Strength Hand.

Over here you're holding a medium-strength hand while you suspect your opponent of having a hand that is more or less the same in terms of strength. If you were playing against an aggressive opponent, calling would've been the right thing to do. However, against a passive player, you actually have to consider folding. A player's passivity tells you that he's betting with the top of his range whereas your hand is only capable of competing with the bottom of his range.

All arguments put aside, why should you

make yourself uncomfortable and contest here? You don't have to win every pot when playing against passive players because you'll get so many readymade chances. In addition, you don't need to call as this would dis-heart him from making pressure bets. So don't do something that will prove disadvantageous for you in the long term. But, if your hand is stronger than your opponent's then you should also give calling due consideration. The other player will most probably bet the top of his range but in this condition as your range matches with his favorably, you can beat him quite easily. You may also raise. By doing so, you may scare away

your opponent who would then fold most of his range with which he makes defensive bets. This will give you the added edge of not needing to show your hand, which in every scenario is a win.

In Position against a Passive Opponent, Weak Hand

When you're holding a weak hand, have the slightest idea about your opponent's card and if you think they're weak, then the best thing to do is fold.

What if both of you hold weak hands while your opponent holds the weaker one. He would most probably make a blocking bet and if he does so, you should raise. He would never re-raise on a bluff here so this would give you an

opportunity to take the pot away. Be wise as you won't get a lot of opportunities to take the pot away from passive opponents.

At this point maybe you're wondering what your passive opponent would do. Would he even bet here? Or would he simply check & fold? Well, this isn't always the case as sometimes passive guys tend to get desperate and in this desperation they replicate aggressive plays that have been made on them by other players in the past. To avoid such situations, keep your eyes open for players who have been bluffed and have seen someone's hand. These players often tend to get aggressive but as

they're passive in nature, they'll make small river bets. So in effect, they may want to capture the pots like true, aggressive players but in reality they never get to do that.

Against passive players, there isn't much discussion of hero calls. The reason behind this is simple. Firstly they never bet with anything significant so that you get pressurized. Secondly, they make the raise a lot valuable by folding a much wider range of hands compared to aggressive players. And lastly, you won't be getting the same kind of value out of your hero call compared to hero calls you make against an aggressive player. Against aggressive players, a

hero call actually has a confusing effect but against passive players the hero call discourages players from risking themselves in the future, which is not something you want.

In Position, Strong Hand, against an Aggressive Player who Checks You,

Before you move on, keep in your mind that a check doesn't always mean weak against aggressive players.

What should you do when you hold a strong hand and face an aggressive player with an equally strong hand who checks you?

The first thought that may enter your mind is, "Check behind", but instead you should be thinking about betting and

betting big. You know that both of you hold strong hands so you also know that he'll pay you off.

But think again. The opponent is aggressive which means he might be checking to execute a bluff. A small bet may expose him completely and tell you about his true motives. This bet will get you a sure call but a raise isn't that probable. A small bet is the right thing to do because as the size of your bet increases, the opponent might get other unwanted ideas like raising and flat calling.

Remember when betting, you're looking to make a bet which will surely make your opponent call it. Since he's strong,

it's very likely that he'll call any bet. If that's the case, then why not make the value-bet bigger and get a raise out of it? If you've read your opponent as the type of player who loves to check-raise on the river then its best to go for a smaller check-raise inducing bet. However, if you only get called then you lose your value. With a bigger bet, you might be able to get the raise but at the same time you'll surely get called.

Now, let's assume that you have the same strong hand as him but your opponent holds weaker cards. In this case, you should bet the biggest amount that will get a hero call out of him. The magnitude of the amount is up to you. In

order to calculate the best amount you think you should bet, take a look at his stack. Therefore, it's best to bet into the other player's comfort zone giving his stack size key importance.

In Position, Medium Strength Hand, against an Aggressive Opponent who Checks you

If an aggressive player holding a medium-strength hand checks to you then the best response from you would be to check behind. This is one of those situations in which the only hand that can call you, can actually beat you. If you get raised then you'll be in a tight spot where folding will seem like a golden choice.

Before betting the river, ask yourself if your hand is capable of winning at a showdown. In this particular case where you hold a medium-strength hand, the answer is yes. Therefore, if you decide to bet here then you won't be betting to bluff but you'll be betting for value. And think for yourself, against a player who holds a strong hand, how could you value from a bet? Hands worse than you won't give you any profit but might just raise you and bluff you right out of the pot.

Look at it this way; say that you have a hand like Q and J of Hearts while the board is set as 2-4-T-8-J of hearts, spades, clubs and diamonds. You flop a

flush draw and end up with a top-pair queen-kicker. This is a hand that can surely win at a showdown but would end up folding if someone were to raise. If you consider betting then there wouldn't be a lot of hands that would pay you. You would have to expect a hero call from someone holding AT, which would be highly unlikely. You see, the entire scenario makes no sense.

In conclusion, better hands won't fold but at the same time worse hands won't call. And even worse is the fact that these hands might raise which would be a total disaster. Therefore, the hand you're holding is the perfect one and you'll have to try your luck because in

the end the game is heavily dependent on chance!

Chapter 8: Money Management

Money Management is one of the things that you would've expected to die long ago but somehow they've lived on and today are an integral part of the gaming literature. Most people describe Money Management with a single phrase that says "Quite while you're ahead". This single phrase has been alive for quite some time now and still applies to every game. Converted into poker terms, this means that after you've won your predetermined amount its best to get up

and leave the game while you're still rich and not to mention happy. The phrase also says that you shouldn't play for so long that you start losing your winnings. Once you've reached a certain limit, simply get and leave. Come back tomorrow if you have to.

Many people ask themselves the following questions whenever they think of money management:

1. Does the entire concept make any sense?
2. Is it really okay to quit while you're leading?
3. Should you simply quit after you've started losing?

4. If you must quit when you're ahead and must quit when you start losing, should you only play when the conditions satisfy your stop-loss limit?

Every money management guru admits that a game of poker can go on forever, and it doesn't really make a difference whether you play four hours one day and four hours the next.

Should you go home once you get the lead?

If you follow the quit while you're ahead approach, advocates say that this will allow you to take the profits home without losing the money you've taken from them. Give it another through and you'll see that this only makes sense if

you get out of the game entirely, i.e. you never ever play the game again. If you quit only today's game, then there are chances that you lose your winnings the next! This way the profits never permanently sit in your pockets.

But if you quit today and lose tomorrow, is there any difference between doing this and simply keep on playing? The answer is simply, no. You would simply be pocketing your winnings for a couple of more hours instead of a day.

On the other hand if you're an occasional player then walking away as the winner would be the right thing to do because you'll know you'll be spending the cash.

There are a number of theories about money management but in the end only one of them is true, i.e. if the game is in your hand and you're the most favorite to win then keep on playing. Otherwise, if the game is good and you feel like an underdog, abandon your instincts and quit!

A game may even be going terrifically and you might not be in the most favorable position for a number of reasons. You may be exhausted, upset, ill or simply not in the mood. All of these factors contribute to your chances of winning. Follow this simple rule and you'll be thankful your entire life. If you're not at your best, fold and go

home. Remember, quitting it today won't make it disappear tomorrow however, playing the same day will just increase the likelihood of empty pockets for you.

One of the most key concepts that are essential to win any poker game is selecting the right game. Think for yourself; why should you take yourself out of a great game just because you lose a certain amount of money. If you've suffered from bad beats and everything seems to be going against your way then quitting is the right thing to do but only if you reassure yourself that you'll consciously do better next time.

Also, you should never quit just because you've hit the stop-loss limit. Imagine

that you're in a great game and you're ahead by a thousand dollars. Is quitting really the right thing to do? If you don't have any external commitments then why shouldn't you keep on playing?

Regardless of whether you choose to go home or keep on playing, the results are always hanging. The game goes on virtually forever and the time periods in which you play are just arbitrary.

Importance of Keeping Records

This may seem like a useless point to many but the truth is keeping records is the key to knowing your success rate. How would you know the magnitude of your success if you aren't keeping records? Without having accurate

records, you won't know your true potential.

Therefore, if you're serious about playing poker then treat it like a business. Many poker players simply don't maintain their records because they're afraid of the amount of money they've lost in games. The truth simply hurts. However, maintaining records is essential, especially if you can develop the habit right from the start and you plan to see the effectiveness of your strategies.

Fortunately, the records you'll be maintaining won't be as complex as real businesses and won't take much of your time.

You should be keeping the records that give you an overview of the following two quantities:

1. Win rate – this would tell you how much money you're winning/losing per hour.
2. Standard deviation – this is a statistical measure that shows short-term fluctuations in your winning. Basically it would tell you about your luck!

What to record?

You don't need to be aware of all the rules of statistics if you want to keep your records. You only need to keep track of three quantities and you'll be good to go. The next time you go to play

poker take a small pocket-sized notebook with you and record the following quantities on an hourly basis:

- Money won/lost,
- The name of the game,
- Total number of hours played,

When you get home or in the way, process the collected information and you'll have your cumulative statistics.

- Calculate the amount won for the entire month and subsequently the year.
- The total number of hours played for the month.

One of the greatest hurdles that you'll face while keeping records would be

keeping up with it. This is a psychological problem that can trigger after a great loss. It can simply be too hard for a person to record his own loss after a winning streak and so he forgets to do so. The next thing you know, you've missed out the records for the entire week. Try your best to avoid such behavior.

Figuring out your Win Rate:

There's an easy way to compute your win/loss rate. Simply divide the money you won/lost by the number of hours you put in!

This calculation will give you the average amount of money you lost for every hour played per session. In

statistical terms, this is called the mean. If you like playing different games then it's best to keep records on a game-to-game basis.

Knowing about your win rate on an hourly basis is extremely helpful but sometimes the mean can be misleading especially if your winnings have been fluctuating. For instance, in poker, two players might be winning at an average of \$15/hour. One of these players might hold greater aggression and might be winning large amounts of money on some days while losing on the rest. This means that he won't have any consistency that would make mean a wrong measure of the player's success

rate.

I won't go too deep into the mathematics side of things and would keep it simple as much as possible. Standard deviation is the best way to counter such situations where a player lacks consistency. Think of standard deviation as if it was an adjective used to describe the hourly win rate. But before you go on learning this nifty technique, ask yourself whether you truly need it. If your winnings do not swing wildly then simple average would be a good enough technique for you. Either way, learning this technique wouldn't do any harm. Every player has a certain risk threshold that he is always willing to take. If you monitor your

standard deviations and the average winning rate you calculated earlier, you can easily work your way up and reduce your fluctuations drastically. This will give you the consistency any poker player strives for.

How does it work?

Consider the following table:

A (mean = 36)		B (mean = 116)	
Value	Deviation	Value	Deviation
6	-30	111	-5
24	-12	114	-2
37	1	117	1
49	13	118	2
64	28	120	4

Which player do you think would have greater standard deviation? If you answered A, then you're right and here's why.

The values in the first column are further away from their mean compared to the values in column 2 and their dispersion from their mean. We can't just calculate an average of the deviations because they'll sum up to zero. To rectify this issue, we can square each of the deviations that would eliminate the minus signs.

Now when you take the mean of the squared deviations, this is known as **variance**. This variance is in fact the square of the standard deviation and

thus, you can calculate standard deviation simply by taking the square root of the calculated value.

Reducing Fluctuations

You can play with a much smaller roll if you start avoiding marginal situations that require you to inject extra money into the pot every time there's a close call. If you're a player who often wins you'll get the money back soon, within a few hours. But in the end, there's no right or wrong way to bet your money in a game of poker. Some people might be comfortable with playing at a high level or risk and have their full pockets pay the price. Others, who aren't that rich don't like taking such high risk.

So what does this mean for you? Should you live on the edge or stay within confined boundaries? As long as you can compensate your fluctuations with cash, this is pretty much your choice. However, keep the following three points in mind, and it'll become much easier for you to decide your position in a poker game.

- It is only you and you alone who can decide the amount of uncertainty you can handle.
- If you push for every advantage irrespective of magnitude, then you'll have greater fluctuations compared to giving away your mean win rate just so you could attain greater stability.

- If you want to increase your win rate then a larger capital is necessary when playing poker.

The Size of your Bankroll

This is one of the most asked questions about poker: how big should my bankroll be so that I can always win back the money I've lost? The "How big" part of the question is quite complex, fortunately there's a formula that can help you with this. However, there's another point that can help you a lot. Remember, that if you aren't a winning player, then no matter how big your bankroll is, you'll always keep on depleting it. In order to eliminate the odds of going completely broke, you'll

need a bankroll that can go on and beat your odds. Without such a bankroll, you'll always find yourself looking for fresh cash that would affect your personal life.

A great way to build up your bankroll in a reliable manner is to start off with 300 bets. But don't just stick to this rule altogether. Even if you are a great player who wins more often than loses and were up against a group of passive players who seldom raise, then playing on a smaller bankroll won't affect your odds of going broke.

Even when you're the hot favorite in a game, you should follow a few tips, which are as follows:

- If you are playing against clever players then you'll be needing more than 300 big bets if you want to keep yourself from going broke.

- But when you're playing against an average player, one who plays every day trying to win 1 to 1 1/2 big bets every hour, the 300 rule would go pretty well.

Conclusion

Well, here we are, towards the end of this book. I have covered everything that you need to know and understand about the game of Poker. You can now confidently say that you are ready to take on any opponent, real or virtual in the game of Poker.

So go on and place your bets.