

Poker



**Tips, Tricks
And Strategies**



POKER

TIPS, TRICKS AND STRATEGIES



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Forward

I wouldn't call it an obsession exactly, this fascination I have with poker, more like a love of the game. I don't have a burning desire in my veins to go out and play all the poker I can, I know when to give in and cut my losses, and I know how to keep the cash from tumbling out of my pockets and in to the pot.



That said, I have to say that I also positively thrum with excitement when I'm in the middle of a great game, and I'm always loath to give it up for any reason; I also stick to my guns and try to bluff my way out of trouble, and I definitely know when to raise and when to call.

Poker, it must be said, is my one burning love and it's something that started long before I was old enough to gamble, legally!

In fact, I can't remember a time when I wasn't fascinated by poker, but if I try hard enough I should be able to come up with an answer to when exactly I tumbled into this fascination with poker.

I think it was when I was about four years old and knee high to a grasshopper. It all began if remember correctly when my Grandma passed away and Granddad came to live with us. He was this big blustering old man who always had a kind word and smile for me, and a soft spot for poker.

I can tell you that it was a revelation living with that man, even my dad seemed to change overnight into someone more lighthearted and carefree.

It started almost immediately, first with the old movies Granddad used to watch (most featuring Humphrey Bogart, he did love those movies), and most of which had some theme of poker running through them if at all possible.

Then it progressed to gathering a few cronies together to play a hearty game of poker, which naturally enough progressed to it being weekly poker night.



This was held mainly at our place, since everyone liked to get in on the act, and there was no babysitter to leave me with – they were also at the poker game!

And although I was supposed to be sound asleep by the time poker time rolled around, naturally enough with the inquisitiveness of a four year old, I was up and about, sneaking stealthily down the stairs to watch the fun.

And naturally enough, Granddad would always see me and beckon me over; I was to have pride of place on his knee – as long as I didn't ask questions like "what are all those colored cards Granddad?" or something to that effect.

So I grew up with poker, old movies, and joyous rambunctious poker nights when the cares of the world would slip away from everyone's shoulders and they would devote themselves to enjoying the night.

It is not then I assume, a great stretch of the imagination to figure out that I learned to play when I was knee high to a grasshopper.

To this day, my parents especially my dad, still plays poker, rounding up any likely suspects who might be willing to join in on their weekly game. Naturally I make it a point to go whenever I can. In our house, it's tradition you see.

Besides, these days we only play for matchsticks. After all, it wouldn't seem right me walking away with those old coots' pensions in my pocket, now would it?

Disclaimer

Before we proceed any further, I would just like to say that I do not in any way or manner advocate poker, or any form of gambling for children of any age.

My own experiences were my own, and for the most part, I did not "gamble" so much as I spent those very early years learning how to play poker properly. In no way or manner was this meant to say that I advise minors to gamble.

If you are a minor reading this book, please be advised that gambling is illegal for minors in many countries. Gambling is also addictive and can be detrimental to your quality of life. Poker is also a form of gambling and therefore is not suitable for minors to play.



Introduction

Just in case this is a first for you, and just in case you picked up this book thinking that you would be able to learn how to play poker, and just jump right in to the deep end, I have to tell you here and now, that I am not trying to teach you how to play poker.

This book is for those of you who know some little bit of poker and who want to enhance their games. On that subject though, I would just like to say a few words.

There is no special formula which you can use to play poker and win (or stop yourself from losing for that matter). Poker is a game that needs skill from the player; a little bit of luck, but most of all, the

ability to make a judgment call based on the facts that you will have at hand during the game.



And the only sure fire way that you can pick these up is through playing poker over and over again, by getting in some experience on the ins and outs of poker.

Then what are you doing reading this book, right? Well, you won't get formulaic answers from me on how to win your poker games, but what I will give you is good sound

advice on what you should and should not do when playing poker.

These tips, tricks and in some cases strategies can be utilized and applied to your own unique situation so that you will overall come away with a good idea of how the game is played, properly. And this holds true even if you have are not a rank beginner and have a few extra hours of poker under your belt.

However, for the almost complete beginner I have to say that I have also included a very short introduction on how to play poker, the different varieties of poker, the different betting structures, as well as a few of the possible "good" hands you can get. This is mainly as an aid for you and is not intended as teaching guide.



Poker

Poker is by and large a game that is part luck, and part skill. If you don't have one or the other, you can bet your bottom dollar that things will not go your way.

Some people will try to tell you differently, try to tell you that poker is not based on chance or luck, that skill is the only factor involved. This is simply not true. There is a strong element of luck, or chance, involved when you play poker.

Poker is not a game that is for everyone. It requires a level of skill that goes beyond most of the other card games, and it also requires some commitment on your part to learn to play it.

Once you do however, and you become familiar with the various ins and outs of poker as well as a variety of other small details, you will find that poker is a fun game to play.

It also need not be a solitary game. True, when you play poker there are generally other players as well, but this doesn't mean that it's a sociable game. If you are playing against people you have never before met in your life, you will find that often conversation is simply not there at all, or stilted.

Although by its very nature, the game of poker is solitary, you will find that playing poker in your home or with friends, can make it into a fun and frolicking game.

So by all means learn how to play poker, learn how to take chances when the cards are looking good, and learn how to bluff your way out when the cards are looking bad.

Then go and find some friends who can play poker with you and set up a friendly poker game of your own. After that, you can casually beat them at their game, by going through and reading strategy and tip guides like this one.

There really is nothing quite as satisfying as raking in a pot of chips, even if it isn't for real money, and watching your friends' faces look on in disbelief. Unless of course they had the same idea and are raking in the chips the same as you!



A brief introduction to Poker

If you've never played poker before, you have no idea what you're missing. It is by far one of the greatest card games ever played, not mention one of the most well known.



(I give you to such movies as *Rounders*, with Matt

Damon starring, and which introduced a whole new generation to the wonders of poker; as well as the more easygoing *Maverick*, with Mel Gibson, Jodie Foster and James Garner.)

Poker is a cornerstone of our lives that we can't just throw out and forget. It is something that has come down through the ages as being not only a gambling card game, but also an intelligent game which requires much skill, as well as a game that is part of our culture and history.

Poker if you did not know it before, is very much part of our lives, even if you do not play it, and there is no getting away from that.

Before we go any further though along the route to enhancing our poker skills, it should be noted here, that this book deals primarily with the Texas Hold'em variety of poker game.

This is the most popular game of poker being played now (if you weren't aware of it, this was the poker game played in the latest James Bond flick – *Casino Royale*), and it also seems to be the easiest.

Note here that I said seems to be the easiest. I didn't claim that it was the easiest variety of poker, nor would I say that it is the most difficult. These distinctions vary from person to person, and from game to game.

It depends on the game being played, the skill level of the players, and even the size of the pot waiting to be won. And don't be surprised if the pot is not all that is at stake for some poker players.



However, there is more to Texas Hold'em than meets the eye. So don't be surprised if you learn all there is to learn about the game, only to find out in the very next minute that there are yet many levels of it left for you to learn.

For some, the distinction to be crowned the best poker player in their town/ city/ country, is a far greater pot than the actual prize money can be – although that does help to sweeten it up a little!

The best advice that I can give you though, whatever type of poker you're looking at playing, is that there is no substitute for getting in some real playing time.

Book learning can only take you so far, and online poker also has its limits, besides I find that not to be as enjoyable as sitting across from someone trying to figure out what their "tell" is, and whether or not they're trying to bluff me.

So by all means, read this book, read other books, play poker on line, play with your buddies in your basement.

But until and unless you venture out and find a game or two of poker in the real world, you won't know what you're missing, or even whether you just prefer your weekly friendly games of poker over the real world deal.

But first

Before we go right ahead and jump into the game of poker, we need to take a little detour and to get the correct sequence of the cards.

This might seem simple enough on the face of things, but if you have played any card game before this, you know that there is always one ambiguous card: the Ace.

(It doesn't matter whether it is the Ace of Clubs, or the Ace of Diamonds, or even whether it is the Ace of Spades, or the Ace of Hearts, since all suits are equal. See the section following entitled, "...and third".)

Depending on the card game you are playing and the people with whom you are playing, you will know that the value of the Ace can



change from being the highest ranking card, to the lowest ranking card.

This means that it can be the card which comes after the King in the deck, or it can be the card which comes before the Two.

This is no laughing matter and there has been many a heated debate over the years as to whether the Ace is the highest or the lowest card. You might even remember some of these debates yourself, especially from when you were young!

That said, for the purposes of poker, it is accepted that the, Ace is the highest ranking card, coming in after the King, except in those poker games where the hands are reversed and the highest cards become the lowest, and vice versa, but then, that's a entirely new ball game altogether, and not one that I have particularly covered in this book.

- Ace being the highest card however, is what we would do normally, but it is always best to ask before getting in on the game – there can be nothing more disheartening than to think you have a winning hand with an Ace, when in reality you don't.
- So although it is taken that Ace is the highest ranking card in this book as well as in most games, you should always ask to make sure – just in case.

...second

To make it easier for you to read any of the examples I give on various hands, I have given below some notation. So, we will take it that,

- A – represents Hearts
- C – represents Clubs
- D – represents Diamonds
- S – represents Spades

these being the four different suits in any normal playing-card deck.

All examples of hands given throughout the book will have the same notations. One such example using this notation is given below.



Incidentally, the hand is an example of a Pair, (it has a pair of Tens).

(For more on that and other hand rankings, go to the section entitled, "A winning hand").

Example: 5C – 9H – 10D – 6H – 10H

Translated, this says that you have,

5 of Clubs – 9 of Hearts – 10 of Diamonds – 6 of Hearts – 10 of Hearts

.....and third

Just as a point of reference, you need to know that there will be more than one way of playing poker. It is an international game with many adherents and many different methods of playing.

Although there are standard poker playing practices, you will find that not everyone likes to go with the standard method. Both my father and granddad for instance prefer to play having values to the four suits. In their case, Spades is the highest suit.

Others also have their own likes and dislikes, and depending on these you might find that the spades suit has the lowest value or a middling value, instead of the highest value that my father and granddad like to play with.

In poker standards then, you will find that the suits are all equal. None of these has a value assigned to them, (which is good in and of itself as it can become even more confusing to play with these allocations!).

The only value you will get will be from the cards themselves, with the Two, or the Deuce card being the lowest and the Ace card being the highest.

There is one exception though, and this is when you get a Straight, in the sequence of 2-3-4-5, with an Ace. In this case, the Ace comes *before* the Two.

For more on the various hands, go to the section called, "A winning hand". And for more on Straights, go to the subsection in that section called, "Straight". (That was *straightforward* wasn't it!)



So, in short,

- Ranks are the value or the denomination of each card, (normally going from Two through to Ace, with the Two the lowest and Ace the highest)
- There are four suits to a normal deck of playing cards, and they are, Spades, Clubs, Diamonds, Hearts
- Suits are all equal across the board and have no special value to them, (most of the time, but there are exceptions to this rule)
- Each card rank will be the face value of the card, with Jacks coming after Tens; Queens coming after Jacks; and Kings coming after Queens – so in sequence it would be something along the lines of Ten – Jack – Queen – King – Ace
- Aces are considered to be the Highest card coming after Kings, except in certain circumstances such as an Ace-low Straight, where the Ace would come before the two to make the Straight



The different varieties of poker

There are many different varieties of poker doing the rounds these days, and there is no way that I can make an honorable mention for all of them – that would just be absurd not to mention tedious, time consuming, and in the end, downright impossible!



Besides which, all of these different poker games that are being played across the world by different people are just variations on a few main types of poker.

If you know these or if you know one of these, then there is no reason that you shouldn't be able to play variations of these if need be.

However, that is going slightly off course to what I started out telling you about – the different varieties of poker. Mostly, the basics of poker across the board are the same, whether you play Seven card stud, Texas Hold'em, or Omaha, or even strip poker for that matter!

It is only when you go into the nitty-gritty of each individual game that the differences come out. You will need to learn these differences fast if you want to play any of the games, and learn how to play them well.

Below I have given a few of the main variations on poker.

- Texas Hold'em
- Omaha Hold'em
- Seven card stud
- Five card stud
- Five card draw
- High Low games



How to play Texas Hold'em

Like I said, this book deals primarily with the Texas Hold'em version of the game, so I thought before we went too far down the line, that I would give you what amounts to a concise explanation of how to play Texas Hold'em.



To begin with, you will need to know the basics, so here they are:

- A 52-card deck of playing cards is utilized in playing Texas Hold'em.
- Ace is considered the highest card, except in certain situations. Please refer to the section on “A winning hand” and all subsections of this, to find what I have said on the subject.
- Normally, there are between 2-10 players at one game.
- There is a Dealer “button” which is moved from one player to the other, in a clockwise motion after each hand is completed.
- The initial Dealer is normally chosen by dealing one card each to the players. The player with the High card will become the initial Dealer.
- The two immediate players to the left of the dealer are known as the Small Blind and the Big Blind, respectively.
- These two players will open the pot by posting a bet.
- The Small Blind will post a bet which is normally $\frac{1}{2}$ the amount of the lower betting limit.
- And the Big Blind will post a bet that is equal to the lower betting limit.



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