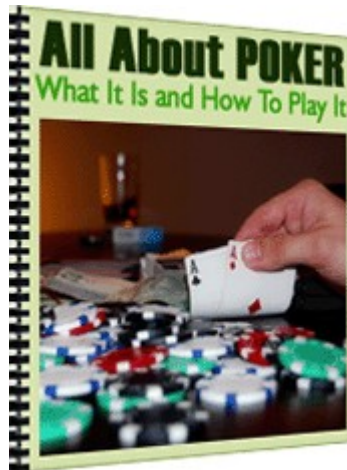


All About Poker: What It Is and How To Play It



All About POKER: What It Is and How To Play It

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All About Poker: What It Is and How To Play It

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Poker Basics

Poker is a card game, the most popular of a class of games called vying games, in which players with fully or partially concealed cards make wagers into a central pot, after which the pot is awarded to the remaining player or players with the best combination of cards.

In order to play poker, one must learn the basic rules and procedures of the game, the values of the various combinations of cards (see hand), and the rules about betting limits (see betting). Some knowledge of the equipment used to play (see Poker equipment) is useful.

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There are also many variants of poker, loosely categorized as draw poker, stud poker, community card poker, and miscellaneous poker games. The most commonly played games of the first three categories are five-card draw, seven-card stud, and Texas hold 'em, respectively; each being a common starting point for learning games of the type. Dealer's choice is a way to play poker where the dealer chooses what type of poker to play.

History of Poker

The history of poker is a matter of some debate. The name of the game likely descended from the French poque, which descended from the German pochen ('to knock'), but it is not clear whether the games named by those terms were the real origins of poker. It closely resembles the Persian game of as nas, and may have been taught to French settlers in New Orleans by Persian sailors.

It is commonly regarded as sharing ancestry with the Renaissance game of primero and the French brelan. The English game brag (earlier bragg) clearly descended from brelan and incorporated bluffing (though the concept was known in other games by that time). It is quite possible that all of these earlier games influenced the development of poker as it exists now.

English actor Joseph Crowell described the game as played in New Orleans in 1829: played with a deck of 20 cards, four players bet on which player's hand of cards was the most valuable. Jonathan H. Green's book *An Exposure of the Arts and Miseries of Gambling* (G. B. Zieber, Philadelphia, 1843) described the spread of the game from there to the rest of the country by Mississippi riverboats, on which gambling was a common pastime.

Soon after this spread, the full 52-card English deck was used, and the flush was introduced. During the American Civil War, many additions were made, including draw poker, stud poker (the five-card variant), and the straight. Further American developments followed, such as the wild card (around 1875), lowball and split-pot poker (around 1900), and community card poker games (around 1925). Spread of the game to other countries, particularly in Asia, is often attributed to the U.S. military.

The game and jargon of poker have become important parts of American culture and English culture. Such phrases as ace in the hole, beats me, blue chip, call the bluff, cash in, pass the buck, poker face, stack up, up the ante, when the chips are down, wild card, and others are used in everyday conversation even by those unaware of their origins at the poker table.

Modern tournament play became popular in American casinos after the World Series of Poker began in 1970. It was also during that decade that the first serious strategy books appeared, notably *The Theory of Poker* by David Sklansky, *Super System* by Doyle Brunson, and *The Book of Tells* by Mike Caro (ISBN 0897461002). Broadcast of poker tournaments for cable and

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satellite TV distribution, such as with the World Poker Tour, has added additional popularity to the game, as has the introduction of online poker.

Poker Game Play

The game of poker is played in hundreds of variations, but the following overview of game play applies to most of them.

Depending on the game rules, one or more players may be required to place an initial amount of money into the pot before the cards are dealt. These are called forced bets and come in three forms: antes, blinds, and bring-ins.

Like most card games, the dealer shuffles the deck of cards. The deck is then cut, and the appropriate number of cards are dealt face-down to the players. In a home game, the right to deal the cards typically rotates among the players clockwise, whose position is often marked by a button (any small item used as a marker, also called a buck). In a casino a "house" dealer handles the cards for each hand, but a button is still rotated among the players to determine the order of dealing and betting in some games.

After the initial deal, the first of what may be several betting rounds begins. Between rounds, the players' hands develop in some way, often by being dealt additional cards or replacing cards previously dealt. During a round of betting, there will always be a current bet amount, which is the total amount of money bet in this round by the player who bet last in this round.

To keep better track of this, it is conventional for players to not place their bets directly into the pot (called splashing the pot), but rather place them in front of themselves toward the pot, until the betting round is over. When the round is over, the bets are then gathered into the pot.

After the first betting round is complete because every player called an equal amount, there may be more rounds in which more cards are dealt in various ways, followed by further rounds of betting (into the same central pot). At any time during the first or subsequent betting rounds, if one player makes a bet and all other players fold, the deal ends immediately, the single remaining player is awarded the pot, no cards are shown, no more rounds are dealt, and the next deal begins. This is what makes it possible to bluff.

At the end of the last betting round, if more than one player remains, there is a showdown in which the players reveal their previously hidden cards and evaluate their hands. The player with the best hand according to the poker variant being played wins the pot. Some deals may not reach the showdown phase if all players drop out except one.

There are many types of poker games. While poker was originally played with each player receiving five cards and only one betting round, it has expanded to include hundreds of variants. Currently, the most popular one is Texas Hold'em, but other variants are very popular.

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Here are some common rule variations:

1. High and low hand split the pot. Generally there is a qualifier for the low hand. For example, the low hand must have 5 cards with ranks of 8 or less (Ace is counted as low).
2. Players can pass cards to each other. An example of this would be Anaconda.
3. 'Kill Game'. When a fixed limit game is played and a player wins two pots in a row, the stakes are doubled.
4. Wild cards are added. This can range from simply making deuces wild to the wild 7-stud variant of baseball.
5. Players can buy another card from the deck. If a player does not like their card, they can purchase another one by adding money to the pot.
6. A stripped deck is use. Poker was first played with only 20 cards. In the spirit of poker history, players will sometimes only play with a stripped deck. A popular poker game in Spain is played with cards 8-A. It is played similar to hold'em, except that one card is dealt at a time and you must use both of your hole cards.

The Growing Worldwide Phenomenon Called Texas Hold 'Em

Thank Texas Hold Em for this huge poker craze that has swept over the country. This unique kind of poker is in large part responsible for the rise in popularity of poker in general in the last few years. Perhaps it's because the game is so different than your run of the mill five card draws and seven card studs. Maybe it's because the game is new and fascinating. Or maybe it's simply because people love to gamble!

Whatever the reason, this poker game has a grip on American culture. It's featured in weekly television shows, special star-studded celebrity battle offs that seem to happen once a month, and now even in one-hour dramas. Casinos from Atlantic City to Sin City offer special rooms just for it, where hundreds of players compete on dozens of tables until all they have left are the cigarettes in their hard pack (and sometimes not even them).

The basis of Texas Hold Em is the same as any poker game. You want to get the best hand at your table, and if you don't have this hand, then you want to bluff to make other people think you do. In Texas, unlike standard draw pokers, each player gets two cards of their own. Five other cards are dealt in the middle of the table. Any player can "use" those cards, as well as his two private cards, to create the best hand.

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Typically, the game is played with eight or nine players, though fewer is possible. However, you want to play with as many as possible. This means more money in the pot, and less competition as the worse players drop out before the real hands begin.

The game begins with the dealer giving each player their two cards face down. Bets are placed. People drop out. Then three community cards are flipped face up in the middle of the table, called the flop. More bets are placed, followed by another community card being flipped and more bets. Finally, the most exciting moment in Texas Hold Em occurs. The final community card is turned up.

Win the Pot on Poker Accessories

You'll need poker accessories, trust me. Poker is like any other hobby or sport. Once you get hooked, you'll find yourself needing more and more different supplies. First, you need your own supply of fancy casino-grade cards, since the cheapos at the gas station won't do anymore. Then you'll need your own cache of chips. Next, you'll need better quality chips, containers to carry the chips, tables to use the chips on, and so on and so on. Trust me. Before you get hooked, find a good Web site to buy all of these supplies at.

Once you do, consider the wealth of options that are before you. For cards alone, there are the cheap kind that you can find at any supermarket or gas station convenience store. These cards work well enough for the first few poker games. After only a short time, though, you'll notice that these cheapos don't wear so well.

High-quality cards, like the kinds that casinos use, are designed to last. Plus, they are coated so they tend not to stick together, or aren't slippery to the touch. These are both positives that may be worth the investment if you're looking to take up poker playing full time.

When most people think poker accessories, they think chips. Chips are perhaps the most fun supply to shop for. Their sheer variety, vibrant colors, and cool designs make it so you can highly personalize your chip selection. Your main concern when buying chips should be the type, or consistency, of the chip.

Top quality chips, and the most expensive, are made with 100 percent clay. Next down the line are clay composites, followed by plastic injected molded chips of cheaper and cheaper consistency until you arrive at the flimsy blue, red, and white chips you played with when you were five.

You'll want to buy a chip case once you buy your chips. There is also a wide variety of chip storage units and cases out on the market. There are the standard clear plastic kind, which are used by many casinos despite their simplicity. For a touch of class, you can choose an aluminum

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briefcase-type carrying case if you go mobile with your chips often. Or for storing in your home, consider a wood finished case.

Whatever you choose, be sure to price check all your poker accessories.

Why the World Series of Poker Will Wow You on ESPN

The World Series of Poker is like the Jerry Rice of poker. It's been around for so long that people tend to forget how great the WSOP was when it first started, or how great it still is. Unlike the hundreds of poker Web sites that have sprouted out of the woodwork in the last couple years, and the handfuls of TV shows, the WSOP was around when poker was serious card playing. It wasn't a fad or a fashion. Men smoked cigars over it and sipped whisky while eyeing their opponents.

It was a game for men like Nicolas Dandolos, aka Nick the Greek, and Benny Binion. These two were champion gamblers back in the 1940s. It was small wonder then when Nick the Greek approached Binion to set up a match with the supposed champion of all poker players, Johnny Moss.

Binion agreed to the plan. Binion set up the match between Dandolos and Moss, but made sure to attract as much attention to the event by holding it in public. It was to be a marathon. All parties agreed to it after five months of discussions and compromises. The World Series of Poker was born in 1949. The players only took breaks for sleep. Moss came out on top and purportedly took home a \$2 million purse. That was a casino's worth of money in 1949.

It wouldn't be for another 21 years later that Binion decided to try the WSOP again. It was 1970, and this time he officially called it the WSOP. And again, Johnny Moss took care of business and walked away with the pot.

But now Binion knew he had something. He continued the World Series of Poker each year from then on. By 1982, there were 52 top poker players signed up for the WSOP. Now in 2003, at the height of the poker craze, when everyone believes he or she is a poker whiz, there were 839 people entered into the competition. The following year, there was an amazing 2,576. With the WSOP moving to the much larger Rio Hotel Casino for 2005, the number of entries may be overwhelming.

The Whole Truth About the World Poker Tour

The World Poker Tour may be best known for its close up, table level views that show the viewer what each player is hiding in his hole cards. It adds an excitement to viewing poker

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that's as close to actually playing with thousand dollar hands as possible. But possibly the true excitement is knowing that you can turn off the television at any moment and enjoy your own poker thrill. Whether you're anteing with one thousand dollars, or one, you can get juiced up over a few hands of poker yourself.

That's the beauty of poker and of the WPT. Poker is every man and woman's game. Anybody can learn to play it, and anyone can learn to master it with a little natural talent, an inkling of smarts, and a lot of practice. In fact, many people playing on the WPC started in their basements or parents' garage, first learning to take money from their friends and neighbors. They eventually worked their way into the casino circuit, or online these days, and then they found themselves under the bright lights of television.

The World Poker Tour is now part of the whole poker phenomenon that is sweeping the country. It airs every week on the Travel Channel on cable TV. It follows the ups and downs of 14 super high stakes poker tournaments, which are located around the world in some of the most famous gaming spots on the planet. The show even has special features like Ladies' Night and celebrity contests.

The game of choice for the WPT is no-limit Texas Hold 'Em. This may be far different than the Texas Hold 'Em that you play at home or watch at casinos. This style of game heats up the action, since the players can bet as much as they like during any part of a hand. The biggest payoffs, and collapses, happen when a player goes "all in," wagering his or her bet on one hand. Sounds exciting, right. The World Poker Tour is betting that you'll think so and tune in.

Computer Poker Players

The game of poker (or at least most of the variants) is considered to be computationally intractable. However, methods are being developed to at least approximate perfect strategy from the game theory perspective in the heads-up (two player) game, and increasingly good systems are being created for the multi-player or ring game. Perfect strategy has multiple meanings in this context.

From a game-theoretic optimal point of view, a perfect strategy is a minimax one that cannot expect to lose to any other player's strategy; however, optimal strategy can vary in the presence of sub-optimal players who have weaknesses that can be exploited. In this case, perfect strategy would be one that correctly or closely models those weaknesses and takes advantage of them to make a profit.

Some of these systems are based on Bayes theorem, Nash equilibrium, Monte Carlo simulation, and Neural networks. A large amount of the research is being done at the University of Alberta by the GAMES group led by Jonathan Schaeffer who developed Poki and PsOpt.

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Get Yourself Logged in to Online Poker

Online poker has launched poker to the big time. Sure, professional poker players would like to think that they have something to do with it. After all, you can see these pros make their moves and trounce their competition every week on cable entertainment and sports channels. Even famous celebrities have added their popularity to the game with their occasional match ups on television. But the truth of the matter can be seen in the numbers. Millions of people play poker on the Web every day.

That's outstanding. The ease of logging onto the Internet and surfing to one of the dozens of poker sites is just too appealing. For many, it's a hobby that's supplanted television, that's conquered e-mailing friends, and that's even kept them up late on a work night with the energy and passion that only wagering money can muster. Believe it or not, top online players can even make a living off the sport, earning hundreds of thousands a year merely by playing cards on the Web.

Of course, when anything gets this popular and fun, there are some out there to ruin your fun. Scam artists abound the online poker scene, looking to steal your money through underhanded means rather than earning it from you through fair play on the table. One key to avoiding these hucksters is to choose your Web site wisely where you plan to play.

First, look for sites that don't charge very much, or nothing at all, to play on their tables. This low or no cost should not be limited by any time duration. You should be able to play as long as you like as long as you ante in. Also look for sites that promise to keep your private and banking information private. This includes your e-mail address. You don't want your inbox stuffed with spam merely because you played online poker last night.

Poker Quotes

Poker is a microcosm of all we admire and disdain about capitalism and democracy. It can be rough-hewn or polished, warm or cold, charitable and caring or hard and impersonal. It is fickle and elusive, but ultimately it is fair, and right, and just. -- Lou Krieger

Whether he likes it or not, a man's character is stripped bare at the poker table; if the other players read him better than he does, he has only himself to blame. Unless he is both able and prepared to see himself as others do, flaws and all, he will be a loser in cards, as in life. -- Anthony Holden

If you can't spot the sucker within the first half hour at the table, then you are the sucker. -- Common poker saying, spoken by Matt Damon in Rounders

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There are few things that are so unpardonably neglected in our country as poker.. Why, I have known clergymen, good men, kindhearted, liberal, sincere, and all that, who did not know the meaning of a 'flush'. It is enough to make one ashamed of one's species. -Mark Twain

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