ODDS

In Poker, the odds of drawing any card is 1 in 52, but those odds change as cards are dealt. And remember, even a hand with the highest odds of winning can lose, because a successful bluff can always win the pot.

ETIQUETTE

Ready to play? Although they don't increase your odds of winning, good manners make for a good game:

- Cards should be kept on the table surface in plain view.
- Place your bets on the table, try not to throw them.
- Always keep your chips in neat piles, and in full view of the Dealer.
- Be sure to wait your turn before playing.
- Make sure you have enough chips for the big blind before you play the next hand.

FOR MORE

FACTS, TOOLS & ADVICE ON TEXAS HOLD'EM

GO TO PLAYSMART.CA

WHICH POKER HANDS ARE BETTER THAN OTHERS?

READ TO FIND THAT OUT + MORE!

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PKR-03E

HOW TO PLAY *TEXAS HOLD'EM*

Play Smart
Knowledge you can bet on.

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TOOLS TO PLAY

TEXAS HOLD'EM

THE OBJECT OF THE GAME

Texas Hold'em Poker is a popular variation on Poker that's played all over the world. It's a game of chance that also requires skill and strategy to beat the other players at the table.

The object of the game is to win the pot. Players can do so by creating the best 5-card hand from the cards available, or they can "bluff" to make other players believe they have the best hand.

MAKING A HAND

Texas Hold'em Poker uses a single 52-card deck. The best 5-card hand is made using a combination of the five community cards and the two "hole" cards dealt to the player.

"HOLE" CARDS
Each player is dealt two "hole" cards at the beginning of the game. These cards belong to the individual players and are kept facedown.

COMMUNITY CARDS
Five community cards are dealt face up in the centre of the table, and belong to all the players. The "flop" which is the first three community cards dealt, the "turn" which is the fourth card, and the "river" which is the fifth card – each being dealt after a completed round of betting.

BEFORE YOU PLAY

1. MAKE A GAME PLAN: Set a play budget you can afford, and consider a win limit in case you win. It's better to make an early exit than lose your stack.

2. GET A SEAT: Before you play, you'll have to talk to a Poker room supervisor. They will guide you where to go to play. Poker rooms can get busy, so some will let you call ahead and put you on a waiting list.

3. PAY THE SESSION FEE: Once at a table, you'll need to pay a commission known as a "rake" or "session fee" to play.

THE HANDS

Knowing the various hands and their rankings is essential. Here are the hands in order of highest to lowest value:

1. ROYAL FLUSH
An Ace, King, Queen, Jack and 10 in the same suit. The highest straight flush and best hand.

2. STRAIGHT FLUSH
Five cards of the same suit in order.

3. FOUR OF A KIND
Four matching cards (same card in all four suits).

4. FULL HOUSE
Three of a kind plus one pair.

5. FLUSH
Any five cards of the same suit.

6. STRAIGHT
Five cards in order, with mixed suits.

7. THREE OF A KIND
Three matching cards.

8. TWO PAIR
Two sets of pairs in one hand.

9. ONE PAIR
Two matching cards.

10. HIGH CARD
Highest card out of five non-ordered, unmatched cards.

HOW TO PLAY

1. PLAYING A HAND

Texas Hold'em Poker has rounds of betting that happen throughout a hand. Players can choose to stay in for all rounds, or to throw away their hand (or "fold") if they don't think they're going to win.

2. THE DEALER

Each round has one player act as the "Dealer" which changes every hand, and is indicated by a puck placed in front of that player. Acting as a dealer doesn't mean you deal the cards (the *actual* dealer takes care of that), it just determines the starting point for dealing. The first of the "hole" cards are dealt starting with the player to the "Dealer's" immediate left, and moving clockwise from there.

3. PLACING BLIND BETS

In the first round, the pot is built by forced bets known as "blinds". The player to the left of the Dealer adds the "small blind", which is usually half the minimum table bet. Moving clockwise, the next player adds the "big blind", which is usually equal to the minimum table bet.

4. BETTING ON THE "HOLE" CARDS

Every player is dealt two "hole" cards. Then starting with the player to the left of the big blind, each player can choose to either fold, call, or raise.

When play circles back to the first two players who added the blinds, they can also fold, call, or raise. But, since they have already contributed to the pot, they only have to make up the difference (if any) between the current bet and what they initially contributed in order to play on. This is what's known as the first round of betting.

5. BETTING ON THE FLOP

After the first round, three community cards are dealt face up. This is called "the flop". Then another round of betting begins, starting with the player to the Dealer's left.

6. BETTING ON THE TURN

When the flop round is complete, a fourth community card is dealt face up. This card is called "the turn". The turn starts another round of betting, starting with the player to the Dealer's left.

7. BETTING ON THE RIVER

When the turn round is complete, a final community card is dealt face up. This card is called "the river". One final round of betting starts.

8. ENDING THE HAND

There are two ways a hand can end. The first takes place after the river round, where the remaining players turn over their "hole" cards for a "showdown". Here, the player with the best hand wins. The second way to win is to have every player fold until there is only one player remaining, which can happen at any time.

WAYS TO BET

Below are your options during each betting round. Remember, you have to follow through with whichever action you say – in casino poker games, your word is binding.

CALLING

Calling involves matching the big blind or any additional amount already bet, so you can continue on to the next part of the round.

WHAT TO SAY: CALL

FOLDING

Folding is the act of ending participation in a hand. You can fold during any round of a hand, but you must wait until your turn to do it. When you fold, push your cards away facedown towards the dealer.

WHAT TO SAY: FOLD

CHECKING

Checking allows you to remain in the game and pass to the next player without making an additional wager in the current round of betting. If all players check, the game moves on to the next round. If you check but a player after you bets, all players still in the round get the opportunity to call, raise, or fold.

WHAT TO SAY: CHECK or tap the table.

RAISING

If you have a good hand, you can raise to bet more than the asked amount – forcing other players to match the amount if they want to continue. Raising can also be used as a bluffing tactic, to give the impression a hand is better than it really is.

WHAT TO SAY: I RAISE $4

STRATEGIES

Poker is a game of chance, skill and strategy. The best strategy for improving your play is to know the game inside out. That said, no amount of knowledge can guarantee a win.

UNDERSTAND THE GAME

Serious players play to win and won't hesitate to take advantage of novice players. Before you play at a casino, make sure you know the game well. Consider practicing at home first.

KNOW THE HANDS

Understanding your own cards as well as being able to predict possible hands of other players can help you know when to stay in the game and when to fold.

KNOW WHEN TO WALK AWAY

Knowing when to fold or leave the game entirely is the best way to avoid losing more than you planned.

DON'T GET TOO AGGRESSIVE

If you're on a losing streak and getting frustrated, don't play more aggressively to "chase" your losses. It's often a recipe for losing even more.

GET TO KNOW THE PLAYERS

Keep your eyes on the other players at the table. Look for "tells", which are indicators of a player's betting intentions or hand value. Examples include leaning forward or back, fidgeting, playing with chips, or changes in tone of voice or facial expressions.

PLAYSMART TIP
Play conservatively and don't be afraid to fold. Calling or raising with only strong hands can help to extend your play time and budget.

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