



Proven Texas Holdem Strategies

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Strategy - 1: Playing a Lot of Hands in No Limit Texas Holdem

One mistake that many players, especially new players, make is playing too many hands. Playing weaker hands than your opponents can get you into a lot of trouble in poker. That's especially true if you're playing weaker hands consistently, rather than just once in a while.

Limit Poker:

In limit poker, the problem with playing too many hands is obvious. Let's say that you play 10 hands and only win one of them. Well, since the amount you can win in limit is fixed, you aren't going to make your money back on 10 hands from winning just that one hand. That means that your chip stack is going to quickly shrink, even with the occasional win. So, chasing hands is not an option, if you want to win.

No Limit Poker:

In no limit poker, the disadvantage of playing too many hands may not seem as obvious, but there definitely is one. The trouble is that it's not as noticeable right off because, in a no limit cash game, the blinds aren't that big usually compared to what you stand to win. There are two ways you could get into trouble playing too many hands, though.

Limp And Call:

The first problem you could have is that you could be a limper and caller. In other words, you might make the minimum bet to see most or all hands, but then feel obligated to call someone who raises you. Pre-flop, that's a very bad idea, especially if you have a marginal hand. You're likely to just get sucked into every hand and lose most of them.

Compound Mistakes:

The second problem is that you might be unwilling to back down from a mistake. If you thought you had a decent hand and got involved in a pot and then realize that you may not have the best hand, you should get out of the hand. Unfortunately, many people don't. They feel compelled to see the hand through.

An Example Of Trouble With Too Many Hands:

One way that playing too many hands in poker can get you into trouble is if you actually hit what you want. For example, let's say that you get dealt an 8c and 6c. All you have to do is place a minimum bet to see the flop, so you do.

Now, let's assume that the flop is Ac, 7s, 5d. A player in early position bets and you're in middle position. Now, you might think that, if that player had an ace, they would have raised pre-flop. So, the assumption is that you can now safely call and you do. Now, pretend that the turn is a 2c.

Now you have a draw for a club flush and a draw to a straight. However, the river comes and it's a 10 of diamonds. You've missed your straight and your flush now, but you don't want to fold, even though you only have a middle pair. There goes the hand and a lot of chips with it. So, that's why it's so important to learn to minimize loss and maximize profit by being choosy about the hands that you play.

Tip – 2: Playing Sets

If you want to win at Texas Holdem, especially in a no limit game, you need to learn one thing. That's how to make decisions about things before they happen. Know the right moves by heart and you can always act in a clear, quick way. One such situation that you can prepare for is how to play a set.

Playing Sets

A set is a specific sort of three-of-a-kind. It happens when you have a pocket pair, such as two 6's, and there's a third of that card, in this case a 6, on the community board. Sets are very powerful hands in poker because they can't be duplicated. In our example, nobody else can be holding two sixes because three of the four in the deck are accounted for. That means that nobody can tie your set. If someone has a card in their hand and two matching numbers on the board, it's not as safe. That's because someone else could have the fourth card of that number and catch the same trips.

Full House Protection

The other great thing about flopping a set is that you don't have to worry about someone with over cards catching better trips. That's because, even if they catch two runners to make trips, those two community cards that match will make you a full house. Since you have the added protection of a full house in that situation, it makes your set even more likely to be a winning hand.

Playing For a Set

When you're looking to make a set, you have to keep a couple things in mind. One is that sets aren't infallible. They can be beat by both flushes and straights, for example. They can also be beat by a higher set, but the odds of that are pretty slim. So, you shouldn't worry too much about higher sets.

The thing is that you shouldn't chase a set. The odds of you catching a set on the flop are 8 to 1 and, if you miss it there, you may be chasing it to the turn or the river. If you don't catch it, you could be in trouble. After all, keep in mind that you're looking for one of only two other cards in the deck. There are only four of each number and you're holding two of them.

So, the secret is to not play for a set at all. For example, if you have pocket twos, you probably don't want to play, unless you're in the blind and it's a free check to see a flop. You should only play pocket pairs that you feel have enough strength to potentially win the hand on their own, like kings or aces. That way, if you don't hit the set, you still have a shot at winning the pot.

How to Play A Set

How to play a set depends on the situation at hand. For example, instinct might be to bet at the pot, since nobody will suspect that you made a set. However, if there's an ace on the board and people don't have an ace, that may get them to fold off the hand, which isn't what you want. You want the pot to grow, since you're likely to win the hand. So, you might need to slow play the hand a bit and see how others react to it. It takes practice and a good ability to read your opponents for set hands to be really profitable.

Tip – 3: Playing Suited Connectors

One of the standard styles of playing poker is called the tight, aggressive style. The style consists of being very choosy about the hands that you play, but then playing those hands aggressively. Although it can work, one of the problems with it is that it is a playing style. If you play the same way all the time, in other words, you will become predictable. That's why learning to play hands like suited connectors can help you.

The Advanced Transition

Tight, aggressive play is usually a strategy used by intermediate players. Learning to play suited connectors and other hands that loosen your play style is one step towards the transition to advanced play. Suited connectors are known as a speculative hand.

Speculative Hands

Speculative hands consist of cards that you hope to make useful over time. For example, if you had a Q and a J you could attempt to hit a straight. That would be a speculative hand.

The thing about suited connectors is that they are some of the most popular speculative hands. That's because there are even more ways to potentially win with them. Since they're connected, you have straight potential. Since they're suited, though, you also have flush potential. Also, you can make two pair or trips with them and, in such cases, people are unlikely to know that you caught a hand.

Easy Play

The nice thing about suited connectors is that they are fairly easy hands to figure out. All you have to know is when it's profitable to draw. That means that you need to know basic poker odds.

Of course, how profitable it is to try to draw to a hand also depends on your position. For example, if you're in early position, you don't get to see how others act first. So, that can be tricky. If you act last, though, you get a chance to see what everyone does and can better figure out how you should play based on that.

When to Play Suited Connectors

The important thing about when to play suited connectors is to make sure that it's profitable for you. There's about 4:1 odds of drawing to either a straight or flush. That means that you need to have some action on the hand to make it worth playing. You should have at least two guaranteed opponents in the hand or the pot won't be potentially large enough to be worth the risk. Also, understand that those odds are throughout the entire hand. Your odds of flopping either a straight or flush draw are 8:1 each or 6:1 that one or the other will happen.

Post-Flop Strategy

The easy way to play suited connectors after the flop is to just fold or call based on the draw odds. However, you might decide to make a semi-bluff, based on the situation. If you aren't sure that your hand could win in the end and you feel that other players are weak, for instance, a semi-bluff might be just the thing to get them to fold.

Tip – 4: Possible Leaks

Texas Holdem poker is a game that is very easy for a lot of people to pick up. In fact, thousands of people are learning and playing it all the time, especially on the Internet. However, as easy as it is to learn and play, it's not so easy to become great at. In fact, even the greatest players are constantly learning how to plug leaks in their game.

What Leaks Are

Leaks are any holes in a player's game that cause that player to “leak chips” at the table. In other words, they are consistent mistakes that a player makes that cause that player to lose hands and, therefore, lose chips.

Avoiding those leaks is crucial to your game but, in order to avoid them, you first need to know what they are. Every player has their own leaks, but here are a few of the most common ones.

Playing Too Much

Playing too much is a big leak in Holdem. In a limit game, that means playing almost every hand and only winning a hand now and then. The fixed bets limit how much you can win, so even wins won't help you in that situation. Your chip stack will shrink just like slowly letting the air out of a tire or a balloon.

No limit games are a bit different, since it can be cheap to see flops, but mistakes can get worse and worse as you get more committed to a hand. So, that still leads to big problems. For example, if you play suited cards in hopes of catching a straight or flush, you might find yourself spending a lot of chips for a great potential payout. If you don't catch your straight or flush, though, you may find yourself on the losing end of a huge pot.

The Tilt

One reason that players play too many hands is inexperience. Another is boredom. After all, when you fold hand after hand, you might just want to play anything. The big reason that a lot of people play too much is tilt, though.

Tilting is the term used to describe losing your cool at the poker tables. There are a lot of reasons people tilt. They might have too much to drink. They might be distracted by a problem at home. They might be over tired. The big reasons, though, are that they are verbally harassed by the other players or that they take a bad beat.

If you take a bad beat at the tables it means that you had what would have been a great hand. If someone sucked out a better hand with marginal cards. If that person had no business playing those cards, let alone winning a hand with them, it can be very frustrating.

Over Valued Hands

Another popular Texas Holdem leak is over valuing hands. If you have a great hand, like pocket aces, it can be tough to fold them. However, if people are constantly betting into you, there's a good chance that they've made a hand, especially if there's flush or straight potential on the board.

Tip – 5: Pot Limit Strategy

If you love the thrill of Texas Holdem poker, you aren't the only one. Players around the world play it every day, especially on the Internet. However, a lot of those players are missing out on a bigger challenge.

You see, they stick mainly to no limit Texas Holdem. After all, that's all that most of them know of. No limit Texas Holdem is played constantly on TV and online. So, it's the version of Holdem that is most popular. In fact, many people don't even know that other versions exist. So, they miss out on those other versions, like pot limit Texas Holdem.

Pot Limit Rules

Playing pot limit Texas Holdem is essentially the same as playing no limit Texas Holdem. The rules are similar and the hand rankings are the same. The only big difference is the betting. In pot limit Texas Holdem, players can only bet up to the size of the current pot. In no limit Texas Holdem, on the other hand, players can go all in and bet all of their chips at any time.

Strategy Changes

It might seem like there's not much difference between pot limit and no limit Texas Holdem games. In rules, that's more or less true. However, in strategy, it's another story. Pot limit Holdem takes a completely different strategy because the chips are put in the pots in completely different amounts at completely different times.

All you have to do is look at a few hands of each. You'll soon see that a lot of no limit players try to push players off the pot early on with large bets. Pot limit players can't do that because they can only bet a certain amount. So, you'll see that pot limit players tend to see a lot more hands through to the turn or the river than no limit players do.

Pre-Flop

You see, pre-flop a pot limit game plays a lot like a regular limit game. That's because the amount that any one person can bet starts out fairly low. That causes people to want to see cheap flops. So, it's difficult to scare pot limit players off of a hand early on. That means that, if you plan to play pot limit, you need to be prepared to play more hands than you might in a no limit game and see a lot of those hands through to the turn or river.

Post-Flop

When you're playing pot limit games post-flop, you need to have nerves of steel. You have to calculate the odds, of course. You also have to read your opponents, though. By the end of a pot limit hand, you may have to go all in or fold, just like in no limit Texas Holdem. Sometimes, though, you may need to massage the pot a bit with smaller bets to try to entice your opponents to call. It all depends on the circumstances of the game.

So, although no limit and pot limit games are similar in many ways, as you can see, they require completely different strategies and skill sets. So, give pot limit a try, but be prepared to learn the strategy involved.

Tip – 6: Shifting Gears in No Limit Texas Holdem

Shifting gears may sound more about cars than about poker, but it really applies to both. Shifting car gears allows you to go faster or slower, as a situation requires. Well, the same is true of shifting gears in a no limit Texas Holdem game.

Fast Gear

Fast gear in poker refers to aggressive, sometimes even reckless, play. A player that is moving fast is bluffing a lot, making big bets and, in general, bullying a lot of the table into folding, or so they'd like to do. Now and then, though, that strategy backfires on them and they wind up losing their money.

Slow Gear

Slow gear means that you're playing a much tighter game. You're guarding your chips carefully and only investing them with cards that you consider to be the best of the best. That sort of conservative play can serve you well, but it can also cause you to miss out on a lot of opportunities. Plus, you may not catch good cards often enough to build a chip stack.

Changing Gears

What you need to understand is that there is no right or wrong gear in poker. That is, there is no right or wrong gear until you stay in one too long. If you're always conservative or always aggressive, other players will pick up on that and exploit it to your detriment and their advantage.

That's why changing gears in poker is so important. You have to try to avoid becoming predictable at the tables. That way, you won't get all of your chips sucked away by someone who reads your actions.

Adaptation

Of course, there's also one other good reason for shifting gears in poker. That reason is adaptation. For example, you might mainly play conservative, but you might have a read on another player that tells you that you could bully that player into giving up some chips. In situations like that, it's even more important to understand the advantages of switching poker gears.

Practice

Varying your play is an excellent skill. In fact, the ability to change gears in poker is almost required, if you expect to succeed in higher levels of game play. It's not something that happens over night, though. Like anything else in poker, or in life in general, learning to shift gears in poker takes a long time and a lot of practice to master.

Remember that you can have a basic play style that you're comfortable about. You don't have to switch gears on every hand. After all, that in and of itself would be a predictable pattern that the other players can use against you. Learning to shift gears in poker is just about being able to switch gears when the situation requires it.

Tip – 7: Railbirding - Learn By Watching

Playing poker online has a lot of great advantages. One is that you can always find a game any time, day or night. Another is that you don't have to waste time or gas money driving to the casinos. Nor do you have to worry about tipping casino staff. However, those aren't the only advantages. Railbirding, for instance, is another big advantage of online poker.

What Railbirding Is

To put it simply, railbirding is watching a game of poker being played. In a live setting, the rail is the separator that keeps the audience away from the poker table. The trouble with railbirding in a casino is that you only have one perspective. Often, you're far back from the table and can only see the backs of the players.

Railbirding Online

Railbirding Online is very different from doing so in a casino. That's because, when you railbird online, you just need to click on a table in the gaming lobby and you will automatically see a game table pop up. Then, you can clearly follow all of what is going on at that table. The perspective allows you to see everything clearly.

The Advantage

The advantage of railbirding online is clear. Online railbirds have the ability to learn from what is going on at a certain table. Just because you can't see each player's hole cards doesn't mean you can't learn. You can see how they bet and how they react to what is going on. If you see cards at the showdown, you can gain even more information about how each player played their hand.

The nice thing about railbirding a game is that you have no specific interest in the outcome. So, nothing will color your judgment. You may want to make physical or mental note of situations where you find yourself railbirding and thinking "I should play like that." After all, it's hard to resist temptation when you're in a game. So, you have to really strive to remember what you learned from only watching.

Who To Railbird

If you like to play a certain type of game, such as no limit Texas Holdem, you should railbird an online game of that type. For example, it does no good to watch an Omaha game being played if you want to learn Holdem strategy.

Once you choose a game to railbird, be sure to make general notes on what goes on at the table. Also, it makes sense to railbird games on websites that you intend to play on later. That way, you can also make notes about how specific players on that site play the game. If you notice a loose player or a tight player, mark it down. Then, you can take advantage of that when you face them at the tables.

Another option is that you can railroad known professionals. Many professional poker players do play on popular poker websites, after all. Watching the professionals play, you're bound to pick up on some great tips. In fact, with patience and by sticking to your game plan, you may just find yourself competing with the pros.

Tip – 8: Your Contuning Training

Training is important in almost anything you do. Whether you're learning to ski, weightlifting or swimming, it takes practice and a certain method to work your way up the ranks. Playing poker is no different, except for one very important thing. That thing is the stakes.

Stakes and Time

You see, when you play Texas Holdem, you can play free games. However, strategy basically doesn't exist in free games. That's because there are no stakes. Nothing is at risk, so people don't care if they make crazy moves with junk cards. That's not the way to learn anything other than the most rudimentary rules of the game.

Pay To Learn

That's where poker games, like Texas Holdem, differ from other types of training in life. You have to pay to truly learn poker. You aren't going to learn how to play at \$20/40 stakes, for example, unless you actually play at \$20/40 stakes. That means that there's potential for both wins and losses.

Micro Limits

Of course, if you play online, there are micro limit tables. So, you can minimize what you spend to learn. However, that only teaches how to play at lower stakes. You see, as poker gets more expensive, it tends to turn into more of a head game and less of a numbers game. So, micro limit gaming can only take you so far.

Thinking Post-Flop

If you want a good exercise, play a \$2/4 game with friends and incorporate \$2 antes along with the blinds. What will happen is that you'll have to think about hands based on what they could be worth after the flop, not based on what they are worth before the flop. If you play short handed (with only 4 or 5 people at the table) that will teach you to play your hands aggressively.

Aggression:

Aggression is something that you absolutely must learn, if you want to succeed at higher stakes poker. If you don't believe me, just watch a game on TV or railbird an online game at high stakes. You'll see that the person with the best hand is not always the person that wins. Why is that?

Well, the answer is simple. Players who play high stakes poker no the value of playing the people, not just the cards. Different people have different play styles. In fact, a single person, if they want to be successful, needs to be able to change their play style at the drop of a hat.

Above all else, remember that poker is a game that is never mastered. There's always something else to try or something else to learn. So, practice as much as you can, but remember that you stand to both lose and win. You can't win them all, but you shouldn't lose them all either, if you learn the proper techniques.

Tip – 9: The Basics of Cash Game Poker

These days, poker tournaments are all the rage. They were unheard of not that long ago, though. The poker games of choice used to be cash games, until the World Series of Poker and other tournaments like it came along in the late 20th century.

The thing that you need to know, though, is that cash games are far from dead. In fact, they're more and more popular with each passing day. If you want to make the most of your poker experience, you should try some cash games. They do require very different strategies from tournaments, though. So, here are some tips.

Blind Structures

Blind structures in cash games aren't as worrisome as in tournaments. That's because they never go up. They stay at a set amount throughout the course of the game. It's best to keep at least 100 times the big blind in chips. However, bankrolls and capped games may not allow for it. Also, because of the blind structure, many players are more conservative in cash games because they can wait for more ideal cards.

Cash Game Rebuys

Another thing that's different in cash games than in tournaments is that rebuys can occur any time and as often as a person wants in a cash game. That's not necessarily a good thing, though, since it's very easy to spend more than you can afford to lose, if you constantly rebuy. That's why it's important to recognize when you no longer have an edge over the competition at a particular table and get up and walk away.

Defining an Edge

An edge is anything that makes you better than the other players at the table. For example, you might find it easy to steal chips from less experienced players or players whose styles you know well. However, in a cash game players can come and go at any time. If the players change, the entire mood of the game changes with them. You may suddenly find that your skills aren't up to snuff against the new set of players. At that point, you've lost your edge.

Understanding Cash Game Pot Odds

Pot odds are, quite simply, the chances of winning versus how much you could potentially win. In a tournament, the pot odds are very different from in a cash game. Cash games typically require a much smaller edge. In other words, the odds only need to be slightly in your favor for you to invest some chips.

Many things will influence how you play against the pot odds. For example, do you have sufficient money to rebuy several times? If so, you can afford to take risks with the tiniest of edges. Alternatively, maybe you've noticed something about how your opponent has been playing that tells you that you have an edge, even if the mathematical odds don't. After all, as with any other poker game, you have to play the cards, the odds and the people, if you want to come out ahead in cash games.

Tip – 10: What Are Texas Holdem Tells

In Texas Holdem, or any other form of poker, we often hear about tells. What are they and what are they good for? Well, to put it simply, a tell is anything that your opponent says or does that tells you something about your opponent's hand.

Are Tells Real

The short answer is yes, tells are quite real. It's more complicated than that, though. You see, good poker players don't become good if they have easy to read tells. So, although you might encounter tells from time to time, they're much less common during higher stakes games.

The Problem of Repetition

The other problem is the problem of repetition. In other words, you would have to play against a person repeatedly, in order to recognize most tells. Well, there are so many poker players in the casinos or on Internet websites that you aren't likely to encounter the same players a lot. So, tells are much more helpful in small weekly home games with the same players each week, let's say, than in actual cash games and tournaments online or in casinos.

Two Types Of Tells

Nevertheless, since tells do exist, you should know a bit about them. First of all, there are two types of tells, blatant and subtle. Blatant tells are really not seen in poker, except by amateurs. They're tells that you can read a mile away, like someone taking a sip of their drink any time they bluff.

Subtle tells are more about how players communicate at the tables. For example, you might encounter a player that always slow plays their big hands, trying to trap others into betting at them. The opposite could also be true, of course. Someone might aggressively bet their hands to the end.

Habit

Habit is a big part of the subtle tells in poker. In other words, people who do something one way in a certain situation are likely to repeat that action in similar situations. So, if you identify the loose or tight players, you can take advantage of their force of habit.

Playing Cards Vs. Playing People

Many people will tell you that playing poker is a game of numbers. That's true. There's a lot of math involved, especially as far as knowing pot odds. However, math is not the only thing in poker.

Tells are part of a bigger concept. That concept is playing the people, not just playing the cards. You have to be able to get a good read on your opponent, especially since not everyone knows the mathematical statistics involved and, even if they do, they may not always play based on those statistics. After all, winning at poker is about being unpredictable.

So, the bottom line is that tells are out there, but blatant ones are only a tiny part of a huge picture. It's the subtle language of poker that you need to worry about.