PARAGON

POKER SUITE

User Manual and Beginner's Guide to Poker

How to play Poker

Poker is not strictly a card game – it is a game of people. If you understand people, you'll make a good Poker player. Poker is not so much a game of chance but primarily a game of skill. These are the traits that make Poker one of the most stimulating and incredible games ever invented.

Despite this, Poker is an easy game to play. The only drawback with Poker is the incredible number of variations played and the different rules employed. In fact, there are no firm widely accepted rules of Poker – the rules being set by the particular house where the game is being played.

FIVE CARD DRAW POKER

Five Card Draw is the basic Poker that just about everyone is familiar with due to its popularity around the family kitchen table. However, it's alarming to find that most Poker players do not know the correct order of Poker hands nor how to proceed with betting rounds correctly.

The game begins by each player placing a small amount in the pot (the "ante") and being dealt five cards face down by the designated dealer. Note the dealer changes in clockwise order for each new deal. Once all the cards are dealt, the person to the left of the dealer begins the first round of betting.

This person has three options: he can either check, open the betting or fold his hand. Let's start with the first option. By checking, the player is signalling that he does not wish to commit himself to either making a bet or folding his hand. Alternatively, the player may wish to open the betting by placing a specified amount in the pot. By doing this, the other players either have to match the bet should they wish to stay in the game or they can fold their hands and lose their right to the win the pot. Finally, the player may fold his hand – that is, to place his cards face down in the table center and no longer be an active player for the pot.

Once the first player has made his decision, the action then passes to the next active player to his left. The options are different for these subsequent players because they can either check, match the previous bet amount, raise by placing more than the previous bet amount in the pot or they can fold. Note that subsequent players can only check if all the previous players checked during that betting round. Once any player bets or folds, nobody else can check during that round. If everyone checks then play proceeds to the next stage (or a new hand is dealt depending on the house rules).

The betting round continues until every active player (that is the players who have not folded their hands) have equalized their bets by placing the same amount in the pot. An example of a typical betting round can be shown in tabular form (player 'A' first to act) like this:

Player:	A	B	C	D	E	F
Action:	Check	Check	Fold	Bet $2	Bet $2	Raise $4
	Fold	Bet $4		Fold	Re-raise $6	Bet $4
		Bet $4				

Notice how the first two players checked. No other player could check once player 'C' had folded so player 'D' could only open the betting or fold. Player 'D' decided to open the betting with $2. Player 'E' decided to stay in the game and matched this bet. Player 'F' raised a further $2 by betting $4 – that is, he matched the previous player's bets and raised the amount that all the other active players need to match to stay in the game. By now, all the players have acted but the bets have not been equalized. Therefore, play continues around again starting with player 'A' who originally checked. Player 'A' decides to fold and player 'B' stays in the game by matching the previous amount of $4. The action passes to 'D' because 'C' folded. Player 'D' decides to fold too. Player 'E' decides to re-raise a further $2 bringing the amount to equalize to $6. Player 'F' need only bet $2 to stay in the game and match the equalization amount. Player 'B' equalizes by placing a bet of $2 also.

If player 'B' had raised again, both players 'E' and 'F' would have had to match that raise by betting yet another $2 each.

Now that all the bets have been equalized on the first round, the players can exchange some cards from their hands to try and improve their chances of winning the pot. This is called the "draw", hence the name Draw Poker.

The draw begins with the first active player to the left of the dealer. Each player can exchange up to 3 cards (sometimes 5 cards depending on the house rules). For example, a player may have the hand:

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K♥ K♠ 7♣ 3♥ 2♦

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In this case, the player holds a pair of kings and will most likely want to discard the other three cards to try and obtain one or more kings to improve his hand.

Once all the active players have exchanged their cards, play continues with the second and final betting round. This round of betting begins just like the first round but starts with the first active player to the left of the dealer. Note that in most cases the betting limits double on this second round. In other words, with our previous example, the players were betting in increments of $2. So, in the final round they will bet in increments of $4. This is called a $2/$4 limit.

After this final betting round, all the players left in the game (those who have not folded) move to the "showdown". This is where each active player places their hands face up on the table and the best Poker hand wins the pot. In the case of an exact tie, the pot is split. Should all but one player fold their hands, the remaining player wins the pot without having to show his hand.

TEXAS HOLD 'EM POKER
This is a fairly new variation of Poker which appears to have literally taken the Poker world by storm. Until Texas Hold 'Em was invented, Stud Poker was by far the most popular Poker variation. Amazingly, their are many Poker players who have still not heard of or do not know how to play Texas Hold 'Em, depsite it being the game of choice for the World Series of Poker held each year in Las Vegas.

Texas Hold 'Em is easily the most exciting of Poker games. This is because each player is only dealt two cards face down. Then a further five cards are dealt face up on the table which are called

community cards because each player then has to make the best possible Poker hand using any combination of his two hole (face down) cards and the five community cards. To make matters more exciting, there are four betting rounds in total – the betting limit doubling on the third round.

In Texas Hold 'Em, it is important for a player to be able to recognize the highest possible hand any player can have. For example, if you have community cards of the following:

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J♣ Q♠ 9♣ J♥ 4♣

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The best possible hand anyone can have is an Ace Flush (clubs). Therefore, if your hole cards are:

<div align="center">

3♣ A♣

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You know you have the best possible hand and cannot possibly lose. Not only should you never fold your hand under betting pressure, you should milk it for all it's worth – a bit like holding a Royal Flush in Draw Poker.

The mechanics of Hold 'Em are straight forward but instead of each player placing a small "ante", Hold 'Em usually requires two "blind" bets from the two players to the left of the dealer. That is, a small blind (the first player) and a big blind (the second player). The small blind is usually a fraction of the betting limit. The big blind is usually equal to the betting limit. Therefore, with a betting limit of $2/$4, the small blind may be $1 and the big blind will be $2.

Once the blinds have been placed, each player receives two face down cards beginning with the player to the left of the dealer. Then we begin the first betting round with the player to the left of the big blind. The action proceeds clockwise until all bets have been equalized just like in Draw Poker. One notable difference though is the fact that the small blind and big blind players only need to make up the difference between the equalizing amount and the blind amount.

After the first betting round, three cards are dealt face up on the table. These 3 cards are called the "flop". Then the second betting round occurs. Following this round, one more card is deal face up. This card is called the "turn" card. Then the third betting round occurs – usually with a double betting limit. Then a fifth and final card is dealt face up called the "river" card followed by the final betting round and then the "showdown". The player who can make the best possible five card Poker hand wins the pot.

It is notable that in Hold 'Em games, there are often ties between players. In this case, each joint winner shares the pot.

SEVEN CARD STUD

Until the advent of Texas Hold 'Em, Seven Card Stud was the most popular Poker game played in card rooms and casinos. In fact, Stud is remains a very popularform of Poker played throughout the world.

Here's the mechanics of Stud Poker: No ante or blind bets are usually made. Therefore each player has the opportunity of seeing at least part of his hand before losing any money. Play begins by dealing two hole cards face down and one face up card to each player proceeding with the first player to the left of the dealer. This is followed by the first betting round. Then, each active player receives another face up card followed by the second betting round. This is followed by another

face up card each and the third betting round. Another face up card is dealt to each player giving a total of two hole cards and four face up cards followed by the fourth betting round where the betting limits are usually doubled. Finally, a third hole (face down) card is dealt to each player which is followed by the fifth and final betting round. Then the "showdown". The player who can make the best five card Poker hand from his seven cards wins the pot.

Notable differences in Stud Poker are how the action is started on each betting round. Unlike Draw Poker where it is always the first active player to the left of the dealer, in Stud the first round is begun with the player who has the highest face up card showing. Therefore, a player with an ace begins the betting round. If there is a tie, it is the tied player who is closest to the left of the dealer to begin. On the following rounds, it is the person with the highest Poker hand who begins the betting round.

Poker Hand Values

From highest to lowest, these are the possible Poker hands by rank. These values should be used to determine the ranks of hands during any game of Poker.

ROYAL FLUSH – *Example:* **10♥ J♥ Q♥ K♥ A♥**
This is the highest possible hand. Any 10, Jack, Queen, King and Ace of the same suit.

STRAIGHT FLUSH – *Example:* **4♣ 5♣ 6♣ 7♣ 8♣**
Same as a Royal Flush but not Ace high. Note that in any kind of "straight" hand, the Ace can also count as a one.

FOUR OF A KIND – *Example:* **7♦ 7♥ 7♠ 7♣ Q♥**
This is the highest possible hand. Any 10, Jack, Queen, King and Ace of the same suit.

FULL HOUSE – *Example:* **5♥ 5♦ 5♠ J♣ J♦**
Any three of a kind plus any pair. When two or more players hold a Full House, the highest three of a kind wins the pot.

FLUSH – *Example:* **2♠ Q♠ K♠ 7♠ 4♠**
All five cards of the same suit. If two or more players hold a flush, the one with the highest card wins. If equal high cards then second highest and so on.

STRAIGHT – *Example:* **7♠ 8♥ 9♥ 10♠ J♣**
All five cards in consecutive order. Ace can also count low as in A 2 3 4 5. If two or more players have a straight, one with highest card wins, otherwise an exact tie.

THREE OF A KIND – *Example:* **6♠ 2♠ K♠ K♣ K♥**
Any three cards of same value.

TWO PAIRS – *Example:* **3♠ 3♦ A♠ A♣ Q♥**
Any two pairs. If two players hold exact same two pairs then highest remaining cards wins pot. If both hands exactly equal then it's a tie.

ONE PAIR – *Example:* **9♠ 4♦ K♦ K♣ 3♦**
Any two cards of the same value. Use value of remaining three cards to determine winner of a tie.

HIGH CARD – *Example:* **K♠ 2♥ 8♦ A♥ 7♥**
Not even a pair but the highest card determines winner in a tie. If equal high cards then the second highest card and so on.

Paragon House Rules

Every place where Poker is played should have a set of house rules to resolve disputes and so on. These are the Paragon house rules used with Paragon Poker Suite:

SET RULES FOR EVERY VARIATION
These are options which cannot be changed by the player. There can be no more than three raises per betting round unless there are only two active players remaining.

FIVE CARD DRAW
You can introduce the Joker as a "wild card" to stimulate higher hands. The Joker can count as any value and any suit the holder wishes to make a valid Poker hand. However, there is no such hand as Five of a Kind – a Royal Flush still beats everything else!
You may wish to play qualifiers such as "Jackpots" or "Acepots". That is, a player cannot open the betting unless he holds at least a pair of Jacks or at least a pair of Aces respectively.
The betting limits may be changed at any time between deals. These range from $2/$4 to $10/$20.

TEXAS HOLD 'EM & SEVEN CARD STUD
The betting limits may be changed at any time between deals. These range from $2/$4 to $10/$20.

The Poker Calculator

The Poker Calculator is a very valuable feature for any seasoned Poker player. Basically, you can choose any combination of a possible starting hand and simulate a number of deals against up to five other players. The Poker calculator will show you the chances of improving that starting hand plus your chances of winning the deal with that starting hand.

For example, you may wish to simulate a game of Draw Poker where you have a pair of Queens to begin with. Choose the number of players and the number of deals to simulate (up to one million) and the calculator will tell you the exact odds against hand improvement and winning against that many players.

Additionally, you can record the results of your calculations into a text file for your records. Note that calculations take longer for games with wild cards or more than five cards due to the large number of hand value variations involved.