

10 NO-LIMIT
HOLD'EM

BLUFFS

TO MASTER

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BE THE SHARK

10 No-Limit Hold'em Bluffs to Master

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Introduction

Welcome! I am excited to share with you 10 no-limit hold'em bluffs that you must master. This ebook is not meant to be a complete guide on bluffing. It is instead designed to ensure you add these 10 bluffs to your strategy so you become substantially more difficult to play against, which will result in you getting paid off far more often with your strong hands. For a full, in-depth guide on how to crush no-limit hold'em check out my Tournament and Cash Game Masterclasses in PokerCoaching.com.

The vast majority of poker players, especially those who frequent the small stakes cash games and tournaments, think the optimal winning strategy is rigid, tight, and aggressive. While winning most of the pots that belong to you plus a few more when your opponents play poorly is a nice way to keep variance low and to have an edge, your edge will consistently be small. If you are playing against players who are not world-class (you will rarely encounter a world-class player unless you play the highest stakes), you will win significantly more money by playing in a manner that exploits their suboptimal tendencies. This means getting maximum value from your premium hands, as many amateurs already know how to do, but also by stealing pots that do not belong to you.

I do not want you to get the idea that playing in a generally tight, aggressive style is bad. The problem is that this straightforward strategy does not maximally exploit other tight, aggressive players. At this point in time, almost every poker player has studied one of the now-outdated books that advocate playing mostly premium hands. These players are excellent at being patient and getting paid off when they are fortunate enough to make the nuts versus weak players. These sporadic large wins are enough to beat the worst players in the small stakes games.

As you move up, you will face fewer and fewer poor players, to the point that when you get to the medium and high stakes, there will rarely be an obviously terrible player at your table. Most middle and high stakes players strive to ensure they do not make the blunders that the worst players make. This tendency to avoid appearing dumb opens the door for you to steal pots when

these tight, aggressive players have nothing, and occasionally when they have a strong hand but become convinced that you have the nuts.

In general, you will find that each specific player has a point in the hand where they act in an honest manner. Some players play honestly as soon as they put a chip in the pot. They raise their strong hands, limp their medium hands, and fold their junk. Others raise preflop with all hands they deem respectable but then only continuation bet the flop when they have what they believe to be a strong holding. Many players in today's game continuation bet the flop with a wide range but then play the turn in an honest manner, only betting when they are confident they have the best hand, opting to check with their trash and marginal hands. More maniacal players are willing to play in an aggressive manner all the way to the river. You must diligently analyze your opponents' tendencies so you know exactly when and where to apply pressure.

Raise with a Wider Range Preflop

The simplest way you can become more aggressive and make yourself more difficult to play against is by raising before the flop with a range that is wider than only premium hands. This will make you significantly more difficult to read, which in turn will induce your opponents to make errors. In general, you win at poker because your opponents play poorly. If your opponents have a difficult time putting you on a range of hands, they will play worse against you compared to someone who plays in a straightforward manner. I am not suggesting that you start bluffing at every opportunity, but rather that you expand your strategy by opening with a slightly wider range of decently strong hands.

Raising from Early Position

Many amateur players raise with only premium hands from early position when the action folds to them, perhaps with this range of only the best hands:

AA	AKs	AQs	AJs	ATs	A9s	A8s	A7s	A6s	A5s	A4s	A3s	A2s
AKo	KK	KQs	KJs	KTs	K9s	K8s	K7s	K6s	K5s	K4s	K3s	K2s
AQo	KQo	QQ	QJs	QTs	Q9s	Q8s	Q7s	Q6s	Q5s	Q4s	Q3s	Q2s
AJo	KJo	QJo	JJ	JTs	J9s	J8s	J7s	J6s	J5s	J4s	J3s	J2s
ATo	KTo	QTo	JTo	TT	T9s	T8s	T7s	T6s	T5s	T4s	T3s	T2s
A9o	K9o	Q9o	J9o	T9o	99	98s	97s	96s	95s	94s	93s	92s
A8o	K8o	Q8o	J8o	T8o	98o	88	87s	86s	85s	84s	83s	82s
A7o	K7o	Q7o	J7o	T7o	97o	87o	77	76s	75s	74s	73s	72s
A6o	K6o	Q6o	J6o	T6o	96o	86o	76o	66	65s	64s	63s	62s
A5o	K5o	Q5o	J5o	T5o	95o	85o	75o	65o	55	54s	53s	52s
A4o	K4o	Q4o	J4o	T4o	94o	84o	74o	64o	54o	44	43s	42s
A3o	K3o	Q3o	J3o	T3o	93o	83o	73o	63o	53o	43o	33	32s
A2o	K2o	Q2o	J2o	T2o	92o	82o	72o	62o	52o	42o	32o	22

Action

Hands

Raise

6.6%

88 / 88

100.0%

Fold

93.4%

1238 / 1326

Instead of raising with only the best hands, add in many weaker, but still decent hands in order to confuse your opponents and give you better board coverage, meaning more flops can conceivably connect well with your range. Notice that the tight early position raising range above has a difficult time making the nuts on flops containing all middle or low cards. You want at least some potential to flop the effective nuts or a hand that is worth playing aggressively after the flop, such as a straight or flush draw, that your opponent will not expect. You do not want to make it easy for your opponent to turn all of your potential holdings into bluff catchers simply by raising the flop.

So, instead of raising a tight range, raise with a range that is closer to the GTO (game theory optimal) range like this from early position when the action folds to you:

AA	AKs	AQs	AJs	ATs	A9s	A8s	A7s	A6s	A5s	A4s	A3s	A2s
AKo	KK	KQs	KJs	KTs	K9s	K8s	K7s	K6s	K5s	K4s	K3s	K2s
AQo	KQo	QQ	QJs	QTs	Q9s	Q8s	Q7s	Q6s	Q5s	Q4s	Q3s	Q2s
AJo	KJo	QJo	JJ	JTs	J9s	J8s	J7s	J6s	J5s	J4s	J3s	J2s
ATo	KTo	QTo	JTo	TT	T9s	T8s	T7s	T6s	T5s	T4s	T3s	T2s
A9o	K9o	Q9o	J9o	T9o	99	98s	97s	96s	95s	94s	93s	92s
A8o	K8o	Q8o	J8o	T8o	98o	88	87s	86s	85s	84s	83s	82s
A7o	K7o	Q7o	J7o	T7o	97o	87o	77	76s	75s	74s	73s	72s
A6o	K6o	Q6o	J6o	T6o	96o	86o	76o	66	65s	64s	63s	62s
A5o	K5o	Q5o	J5o	T5o	95o	85o	75o	65o	55	54s	53s	52s
A4o	K4o	Q4o	J4o	T4o	94o	84o	74o	64o	54o	44	43s	42s
A3o	K3o	Q3o	J3o	T3o	93o	83o	73o	63o	53o	43o	33	32s
A2o	K2o	Q2o	J2o	T2o	92o	82o	72o	62o	52o	42o	32o	22

Action

Hands

Raise

17.5%

232 / 232

100.0%

Fold

82.5%

1094 / 1326

This range contains many more suited hands, including lots of A-xs, K-xs, suited connectors, and almost all pocket pairs. Adding these hands to your range gives you the potential to have the nuts on all flops. If you only raise with the best high-card hands, it is impossible to have (and represent) the nuts when the flop comes with all middle or low cards.

Raising from Middle Position

Here is a strong range to raise when folded to from middle position (specifically the lojack, which first to act if the table is 6-handed):

AA	AKs	AQs	AJs	ATs	A9s	A8s	A7s	A6s	A5s	A4s	A3s	A2s
AKo	KK	KQs	KJs	KTs	K9s	K8s	K7s	K6s	K5s	K4s	K3s	K2s
AQo	KQo	QQ	QJs	QTs	Q9s	Q8s	Q7s	Q6s	Q5s	Q4s	Q3s	Q2s
AJo	KJo	QJo	JJ	JTs	J9s	J8s	J7s	J6s	J5s	J4s	J3s	J2s
ATo	KTo	QTo	JTo	TT	T9s	T8s	T7s	T6s	T5s	T4s	T3s	T2s
A9o	K9o	Q9o	J9o	T9o	99	98s	97s	96s	95s	94s	93s	92s
A8o	K8o	Q8o	J8o	T8o	98o	88	87s	86s	85s	84s	83s	82s
A7o	K7o	Q7o	J7o	T7o	97o	87o	77	76s	75s	74s	73s	72s
A6o	K6o	Q6o	J6o	T6o	96o	86o	76o	66	65s	64s	63s	62s
A5o	K5o	Q5o	J5o	T5o	95o	85o	75o	65o	55	54s	53s	52s
A4o	K4o	Q4o	J4o	T4o	94o	84o	74o	64o	54o	44	43s	42s
A3o	K3o	Q3o	J3o	T3o	93o	83o	73o	63o	53o	43o	33	32s
A2o	K2o	Q2o	J2o	T2o	92o	82o	72o	62o	52o	42o	32o	22

Action

Hands

Raise

24.3%

322 / 322

100.0%

Fold

75.7%

1004 / 1326

This even looser range does not contain junky high cards and middle cards such as A-7o, K-9o, and J-7s. These hands should almost always be folded from middle position. If you pay attention, you will observe many otherwise tight players raising these hands from most positions because they think all decently big cards or decent suited cards must be excellent. It is important that you play the correct distribution of hands when you are working to loosen up your raising requirements.

Raising from the Cutoff

Here is a loose, but strong cutoff (the seat to the right of the button) raising range:

AA	AKs	AQs	AJs	ATs	A9s	A8s	A7s	A6s	A5s	A4s	A3s	A2s
AKo	KK	KQs	KJs	KTs	K9s	K8s	K7s	K6s	K5s	K4s	K3s	K2s
AQo	KQo	QQ	QJs	QTs	Q9s	Q8s	Q7s	Q6s	Q5s	Q4s	Q3s	Q2s
AJo	KJo	QJo	JJ	JTs	J9s	J8s	J7s	J6s	J5s	J4s	J3s	J2s
ATo	KTo	QTo	JTo	TT	T9s	T8s	T7s	T6s	T5s	T4s	T3s	T2s
A9o	K9o	Q9o	J9o	T9o	99	98s	97s	96s	95s	94s	93s	92s
A8o	K8o	Q8o	J8o	T8o	98o	88	87s	86s	85s	84s	83s	82s
A7o	K7o	Q7o	J7o	T7o	97o	87o	77	76s	75s	74s	73s	72s
A6o	K6o	Q6o	J6o	T6o	96o	86o	76o	66	65s	64s	63s	62s
A5o	K5o	Q5o	J5o	T5o	95o	85o	75o	65o	55	54s	53s	52s
A4o	K4o	Q4o	J4o	T4o	94o	84o	74o	64o	54o	44	43s	42s
A3o	K3o	Q3o	J3o	T3o	93o	83o	73o	63o	53o	43o	33	32s
A2o	K2o	Q2o	J2o	T2o	92o	82o	72o	62o	52o	42o	32o	22

Action

Hands

Raise

38.5%

510 / 510

100.0%

Fold

61.5%

816 / 1326

As you get closer to the button, you can start raising with many worse hands. This is because there are fewer people yet to act who can either wake up with a premium hand or get out of line and exploit you. For example, when you raise from the hijack seat (the seat to the right of the cutoff), the cutoff, button, small blind, and big blind can re-raise (also referred to as “3-bet”), putting you in a difficult situation with your marginal hands. From the lojack, you also have to worry about the hijack too. As your position gets better, you can raise with a wider range.

Raising from the Button

Here is a strong range to raise from the button when you are folded to:

AA	AKs	AQs	AJs	ATs	A9s	A8s	A7s	A6s	A5s	A4s	A3s	A2s
AKo	KK	KQs	KJs	KTs	K9s	K8s	K7s	K6s	K5s	K4s	K3s	K2s
AQo	KQo	QQ	QJs	QTs	Q9s	Q8s	Q7s	Q6s	Q5s	Q4s	Q3s	Q2s
AJo	KJo	QJo	JJ	JTs	J9s	J8s	J7s	J6s	J5s	J4s	J3s	J2s
ATo	KTo	QTo	JTo	TT	T9s	T8s	T7s	T6s	T5s	T4s	T3s	T2s
A9o	K9o	Q9o	J9o	T9o	99	98s	97s	96s	95s	94s	93s	92s
A8o	K8o	Q8o	J8o	T8o	98o	88	87s	86s	85s	84s	83s	82s
A7o	K7o	Q7o	J7o	T7o	97o	87o	77	76s	75s	74s	73s	72s
A6o	K6o	Q6o	J6o	T6o	96o	86o	76o	66	65s	64s	63s	62s
A5o	K5o	Q5o	J5o	T5o	95o	85o	75o	65o	55	54s	53s	52s
A4o	K4o	Q4o	J4o	T4o	94o	84o	74o	64o	54o	44	43s	42s
A3o	K3o	Q3o	J3o	T3o	93o	83o	73o	63o	53o	43o	33	32s
A2o	K2o	Q2o	J2o	T2o	92o	82o	72o	62o	52o	42o	32o	22

Action

Hands

Raise

58.4%

774 / 774

100.0%

Fold

41.6%

552 / 1326

This may seem like an incredibly wide opening range, but it is justified because you will frequently win the pot immediately when both blinds fold. When one of the blinds calls your preflop raise, you will often win the pot with a continuation bet when the caller fails to improve on the flop, regardless of whether or not you improved your hand.

Attack Limpers

If you play the small and medium stakes games, you will undoubtedly see countless players limp (just call the big blind) with a wide range of hands from all positions. Their goal is to see a cheap flop and try to improve their junky preflop holding into a premium postflop hand. They think that if a hand is not premium, it is undeserving of a raise. Since these players usually have junk, a powerful strategy to maximally exploit them is to raise with a decently wide range, looking to win the pot preflop when the limpers fold or with a postflop continuation bet when only one or two players call.

The ideal limpers to attack are those who limp with a wide range and will then either fold to your preflop raise or call preflop and play meekly postflop. You will find that the vast majority of weak small stakes players act in this manner, making these games incredibly profitable. In general, if your opponent plays in this manner and makes it to the turn, it is safe to assume they have a strong hand, meaning you should usually give up when you are total bluffing.

That said, it is important not to blindly attack the limpers because some players limp with all of their hands, including their strongest ones. Others only limp with their best hands, hoping an aggressive player mindlessly attacks them.

There are two main times you should not attack the limpers. First, if the limper is someone who rarely limps or plays a very tight strategy, you should not attempt to aggressively bluff them. It is too likely they have a strong hand that will not fold. A good rule to follow is that you should not attempt to bluff overly tight players. Second, if the limper only limps occasionally and limps from early position (even if they limp a lot from later positions), you should shy away from attacking them, again because it is too likely they have a decently strong hand and are hoping to trap you.

When determining how much to raise over the limpers, you should typically make it slightly less than a pot size raise when you are in position and slightly more than a pot size raise from out of position. In order to determine how much a pot sized raise is in any situation, use the equation:

Pot size raise = $3(\text{last bet}) + \text{any additional money in the pot}$

For example, if three people limp at \$1/\$2 and you want to make a pot sized raise on the button, you would raise to 3 times the last bet (the \$2 limp) plus the additional money in the pot (the first two limpers plus \$3 from the blinds).

Pot size raise = $(3 \times 2) + 2 + 2 + 3 = \13

Since you typically want to make it a bit less when you are in position, you should make it \$12. If you were out of position, you should make it \$14.

Suppose early in a tournament with 8,000 effective stacks with 100/200 blinds with a 200 big blind ante, the lojack limps and you are in the small blind with 9c-9d. Many players automatically raise in this situation, and that is often ideal against most weak limpers, but if the limper is known to be especially tricky, calling 100 more and seeing the flop for cheap could be ideal. If you wanted to raise, you should make it roughly 1,00.

When you limp behind a tricky limper with a decently strong preflop hand, be sure you accurately assess your hand's strength after the flop. Do not feel that you deserve to win the pot every time simply because you started with a strong preflop hand. If you have 9-9 on J-7-5 and your opponent wants to put a lot of chips in the pot, you are almost certainly crushed and should fold.

When you expect the limpers to be almost entirely weak, you should look to raise them with a wide range, especially with hands containing two high cards that really want to win the pot preflop or play against one player postflop.

Suppose at \$1/\$2 no-limit with \$200 stacks, four players who you think are weak and straightforward limp and you have A-9o, K-10o, or J-10o on the button. If you think they will frequently fold to a preflop raise, make it \$15 and steal the pot a large chunk of the time. If only one player calls, feel free to continuation bet \$10 when checked to on pretty much any flop and collect the pot whenever they have nothing. If multiple players call, play much more straightforwardly postflop because when multiple players see the flop, someone is likely to have a decently strong hand. With hands that have large implied odds (meaning they have a lot of potential to make premium postflop hands that win almost every time) such as 3-3, A-5s, and 8-7s, you should usually limp behind and try to flop well, assuming the rake in your cash game is not too high.

3-Betting Preflop with a Wider Range

Similar to raising with a wider preflop range when your opponents fold to you, you should look to widen your 3-betting range when someone raises in front of you. Most amateur players call open raises with the vast majority of their hands, opting to 3-bet with only the absolute best hands. For example, when facing a middle position raiser, the tightest, most straightforward players only 3-bet with A-A, K-K, Q-Q, and A-K. Slightly looser players may 3-bet with other strong hands like 10-10, A-J, A-10s, and K-Q.

A range that contains only the best hands is referred to as a linear range. Notice that a range of 10-10+, A-10s+, A-J+, and K-Q contains no bluffs. When someone who 3-bets with a range this tight gets 4-bet, much of this linear range is in marginal or terrible shape because their opponent likely knows their range is strong and will only apply aggression with hands that fare well against it.

It is important to realize that you are not actually playing your specific hand against your opponent, but instead, you are playing your range. With most of this linear range, if you face a 4-bet from an observant opponent, you will be forced to fold or put in a significant amount of money with a likely dominated hand, both of which are not attractive options.

3-betting with a linear range is usually only a good strategy against someone who open raises with a wide range and then calls 3-bets with numerous hands that are dominated by a strong linear range. As you move up in the stakes, these players stop populating the tables because those who play in that manner quickly go broke.

Instead of 3-betting with your best hands and calling with your marginal hands, you should 3-bet with what is referred to as a polarized range. A polarized range contains your best hands that can reasonably continue against a 4-bet as well as some hands that are a bit too weak to call a preflop raise.

For example, from the button with 40bb stacks against an active middle position raiser, here is a strong strategy:

AA	AKs	AQs	AJs	ATs	A9s	A8s	A7s	A6s	A5s	A4s	A3s	A2s
AKo	KK	KQs	KJs	KTs	K9s	K8s	K7s	K6s	K5s	K4s	K3s	K2s
AQo	KQo	QQ	QJs	QTs	Q9s	Q8s	Q7s	Q6s	Q5s	Q4s	Q3s	Q2s
AJo	KJo	QJo	JJ	JTs	J9s	J8s	J7s	J6s	J5s	J4s	J3s	J2s
ATo	KTo	QTo	JTo	TT	T9s	T8s	T7s	T6s	T5s	T4s	T3s	T2s
A9o	K9o	Q9o	J9o	T9o	99	98s	97s	96s	95s	94s	93s	92s
A8o	K8o	Q8o	J8o	T8o	98o	88	87s	86s	85s	84s	83s	82s
A7o	K7o	Q7o	J7o	T7o	97o	87o	77	76s	75s	74s	73s	72s
A6o	K6o	Q6o	J6o	T6o	96o	86o	76o	66	65s	64s	63s	62s
A5o	K5o	Q5o	J5o	T5o	95o	85o	75o	65o	55	54s	53s	52s
A4o	K4o	Q4o	J4o	T4o	94o	84o	74o	64o	54o	44	43s	42s
A3o	K3o	Q3o	J3o	T3o	93o	83o	73o	63o	53o	43o	33	32s
A2o	K2o	Q2o	J2o	T2o	92o	82o	72o	62o	52o	42o	32o	22

Action

Hands

3-bet

8.6%

114 / 310

36.8%

Call

14.8%

196 / 310

63.2%

Fold

76.6%

1016 / 1326

Notice the 3-betting range (the hands in red) still contains the absolute best hands, but instead of containing numerous other decently strong hands, it contains various hands that are not quite strong enough or barely strong enough to call a preflop raise. You will find that you are much better off 3-betting with A-10o and marginal suited hands compared to calling with them against most players who will tend to 4-bet (re-re-raise) or fold. Your calling range (the hands in blue) consists of hands that flop well. Calling with these hands gives you the best chance to see the flop and realize your equity.

When 3-betting, look to make it roughly the size of the pot, which is again 3(last bet) + any additional money in the pot. If at 100/200, someone raises to 600 and you want to 3-bet, make it roughly 1,800 from in position and 2,400 from out of position.

If your opponent calls your preflop 3-bet and then checks to you on the flop, a reasonable play to continuation bet using a small size or roughly 30% pot on most flops that do not connect especially well with your opponent's range. While there are certainly times to check and bet small, most players will fold often enough to make a small bet profitable with all or most of your range.

If you 3-bet a decent amount of the time, your opponents will eventually start fighting back. In general, if your opponents are letting you push them around, you should fold to their first few 4-bets unless you have a premium hand because most of the time, they will be playing straightforwardly with premium hands. Do not fall into the habit of mindlessly piling your stack into the pot every time you get 4-bet. Remember, you are exploiting the fact that your opponents will raise a little too wide preflop, fold a little too often preflop, and then check/fold a little too often on the flop. Since you expect them to only 4-bet with the best hands, when they actually do 4-bet, proceed with caution.

Go All-in when Short Stacked

When you have a short stack, perhaps 10bbs or fewer, when the action folds to you, you should usually either go all-in or fold. This is the opposite of what many amateur players do. They instead raise to 2bbs with the intention of folding if they get 3-bet or they limp, hoping to flop well. This is a huge mistake because they frequently blind down to only a few big blinds before becoming extremely short.

Easy-to-use push/fold charts are available for free in the PokerCoaching.com app and on the website. In general, you should push with a wide range from late position and a tight range from early position.

Many players are surprised to see how wide they can go all-in when everyone folds to them from late position. If you are not pushing with 10-8s from the cutoff with a 10bb stack, you are playing too tightly. Others are shocked to see how tightly you must play from early position.

Being suited adds a huge amount of value to your hand. For example, when it comes to going all-in when folded to, J-9o and 7-6s have roughly equal values. Most amateur players think any hand with an Ace or King, like A-4o and K-9o, is much stronger than they actually are. For example, A-4o from first to act at an 8-handed table should be folded when you have 5bbs. It is far too likely that someone yet to act has you dominated and will not fold to your small all-in.

I highly suggest you download the PokerCoaching.com app and start using the push/fold quiz immediately. That will quickly teach you how to play well with a short stack so you never make a mistake.

Be aware that just because going all-in is profitable does not mean it is the most profitable option, especially as your stack gets deeper. You can actually determine optimal all-in ranges for any stack size. For example, you can go all-in with K-K from the button when everyone folds to you for 100bbs and show a profit, but making a normal sized raise will show much more profit. With stacks larger than 10bbs, develop a strategy where you go all-in with some hands and min-raise some hands.

For example, here is the GTO strategy from the button when you have 12bbs and everyone folds to you:

AA	AKs	AQs	AJs	ATs	A9s	A8s	A7s	A6s	A5s	A4s	A3s	A2s
AKo	KK	KQs	KJs	KTs	K9s	K8s	K7s	K6s	K5s	K4s	K3s	K2s
AQo	KQo	QQ	QJs	QTs	Q9s	Q8s	Q7s	Q6s	Q5s	Q4s	Q3s	Q2s
AJo	KJo	QJo	JJ	JTs	J9s	J8s	J7s	J6s	J5s	J4s	J3s	J2s
ATo	KTo	QTo	JTo	TT	T9s	T8s	T7s	T6s	T5s	T4s	T3s	T2s
A9o	K9o	Q9o	J9o	T9o	99	98s	97s	96s	95s	94s	93s	92s
A8o	K8o	Q8o	J8o	T8o	98o	88	87s	86s	85s	84s	83s	82s
A7o	K7o	Q7o	J7o	T7o	97o	87o	77	76s	75s	74s	73s	72s
A6o	K6o	Q6o	J6o	T6o	96o	86o	76o	66	65s	64s	63s	62s
A5o	K5o	Q5o	J5o	T5o	95o	85o	75o	65o	55	54s	53s	52s
A4o	K4o	Q4o	J4o	T4o	94o	84o	74o	64o	54o	44	43s	42s
A3o	K3o	Q3o	J3o	T3o	93o	83o	73o	63o	53o	43o	33	32s
A2o	K2o	Q2o	J2o	T2o	92o	82o	72o	62o	52o	42o	32o	22

Action

Hands

All-in

27.6%

366 / 502

72.9%

Min-raise

10.3%

136 / 502

27.1%

Fold

62.1%

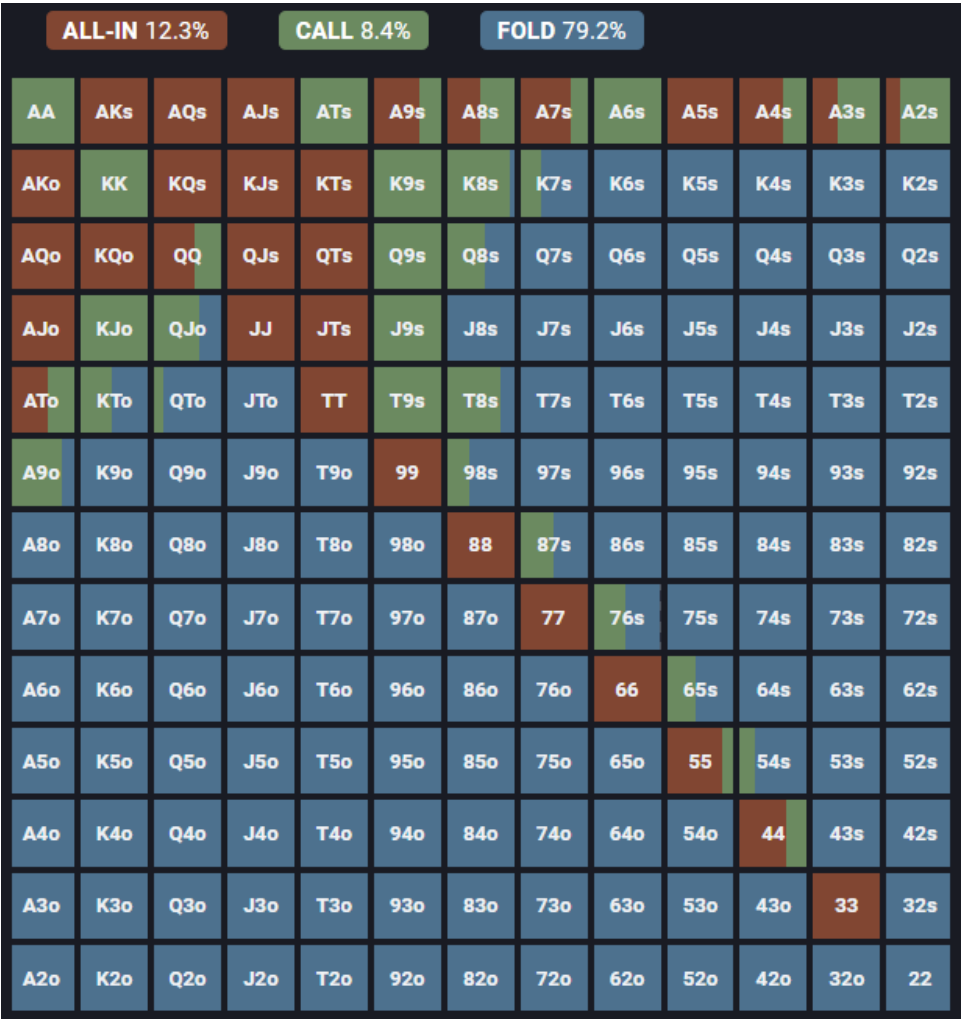
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As your stack increases a bit over 10bbs, you will usually find that the best hands plus a few hands that are not quite good enough to go all-in min-raise to 2bbs and the strong, but non-premium hands open push all-in. In this situation, when you min-raise and someone yet to act goes all-in, call off with the best hands (9-9+, A-6s+, K-10s) and fold the other hands. These charts are also available for PokerCoaching members in the app.

Go All-In Over a Raise when Short Stacked

When you get down to roughly 25bbs or fewer, when someone raises before you, you should consider going all-in with many of your playable hands, especially if you expect the raiser to raise a little too loose and call your all-in a little too tightly. The reason for this is that stealing the pot before the flop is quite valuable when you have a small stack and your opponent will fold too often. Of course, if you expect your opponent to only raise with premium hands, you should only go all-in with hands that do well against their premium calling range.

Suppose the cutoff raises to 2bbs and you are on the button with 20bbs. Here is the GTO strategy:



Many of your hands that are usually ahead but do not fare especially well postflop prefer to go all-in. This will often be the case with small and medium pairs, some A-x, and some high cards, depending on how wide the initial raiser’s range is. A common mistake lots of players make is to call with many hands that

prefer to go all-in, such as 4-4 and K-10s. This results in them frequently blinding out while waiting to connect well with the flop.

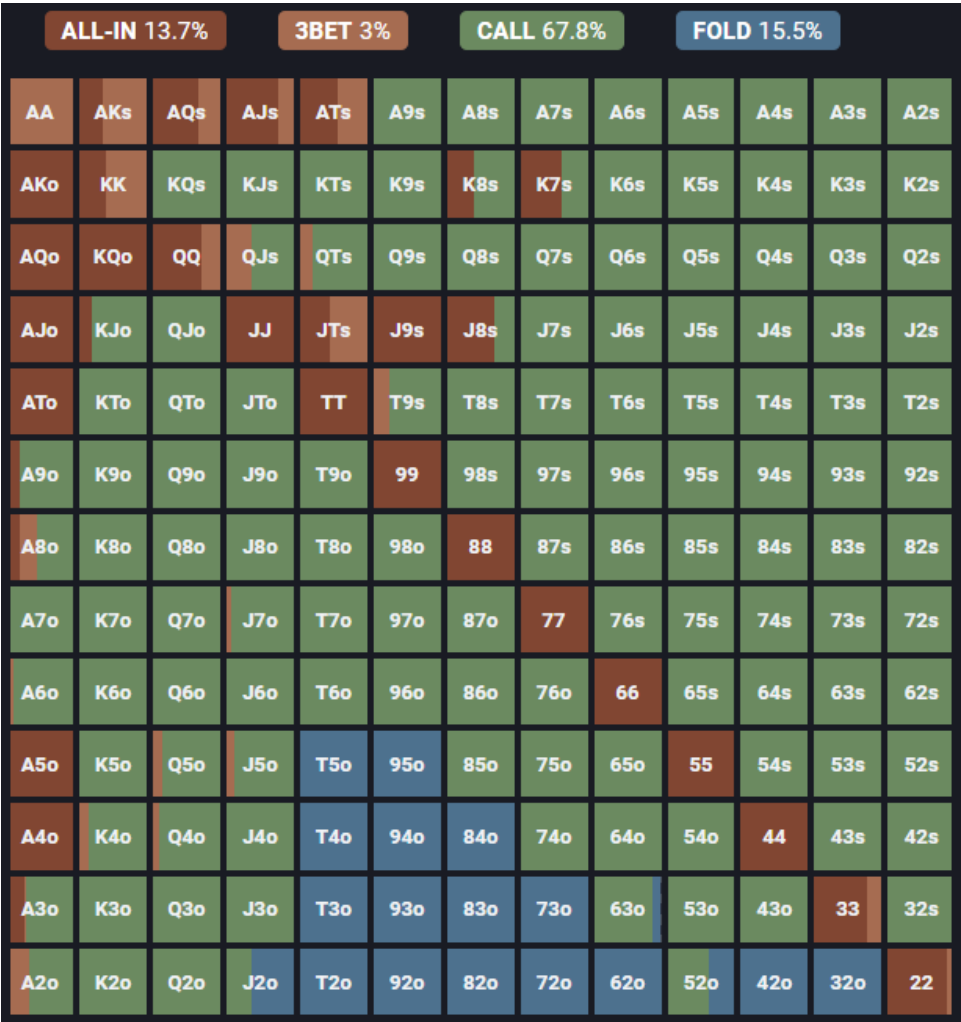
If you think the cutoff is raising too wide, you should actually go all-in with an even wider range including many (or perhaps all) of the weak hands that should usually call. If someone will raise too wide and fold too often to an all-in, do not be afraid to go all-in!

Suppose instead the cutoff raises to 2bbs, the button folds, and you have 20bbs in the small blind. Here is the GTO strategy:

ALL-IN 18%		3BET 0%		CALL 6.9%		FOLD 75.1%							
AA	AKs	AQs	AJs	ATs	A9s	A8s	A7s	A6s	A5s	A4s	A3s	A2s	
AKo	KK	KQs	KJs	KTs	K9s	K8s	K7s	K6s	K5s	K4s	K3s	K2s	
AQo	KQo	QQ	QJs	QTs	Q9s	Q8s	Q7s	Q6s	Q5s	Q4s	Q3s	Q2s	
AJo	KJo	QJo	JJ	JTs	J9s	J8s	J7s	J6s	J5s	J4s	J3s	J2s	
ATo	KTo	QTo	JTo	TT	T9s	T8s	T7s	T6s	T5s	T4s	T3s	T2s	
A9o	K9o	Q9o	J9o	T9o	99	98s	97s	96s	95s	94s	93s	92s	
A8o	K8o	Q8o	J8o	T8o	98o	88	87s	86s	85s	84s	83s	82s	
A7o	K7o	Q7o	J7o	T7o	97o	87o	77	76s	75s	74s	73s	72s	
A6o	K6o	Q6o	J6o	T6o	96o	86o	76o	66	65s	64s	63s	62s	
A5o	K5o	Q5o	J5o	T5o	95o	85o	75o	65o	55	54s	53s	52s	
A4o	K4o	Q4o	J4o	T4o	94o	84o	74o	64o	54o	44	43s	42s	
A3o	K3o	Q3o	J3o	T3o	93o	83o	73o	63o	53o	43o	33	32s	
A2o	K2o	Q2o	J2o	T2o	92o	82o	72o	62o	52o	42o	32o	22	

Again, you should go all-in with lots of your playable range including lots of pairs, A-x, and high cards.

Instead suppose the cutoff raises and you are folded to in the big blind. Here is the GTO strategy:



Now you should go all-in with fewer hands because you are closing the action in a heads-up pot and you are getting excellent odds to call. Still though, lots of pairs and A-x opt to go all-in.

As the initial raiser comes from an earlier position, meaning they should have a stronger range, you should go all-in far less often because it is more likely you will run into a premium hand.

Here is the GTO strategy from the button against a 2bb raise from first position at an 8-handed table:

ALL-IN 5.7%		3BET 0.4%		CALL 11.5%		FOLD 82.4%							
AA	AKs	AQs	AJs	ATs	A9s	A8s	A7s	A6s	A5s	A4s	A3s	A2s	
AKo	KK	KQs	KJs	KTs	K9s	K8s	K7s	K6s	K5s	K4s	K3s	K2s	
AQo	KQo	QQ	QJs	QTs	Q9s	Q8s	Q7s	Q6s	Q5s	Q4s	Q3s	Q2s	
AJo	KJo	QJo	JJ	JTs	J9s	J8s	J7s	J6s	J5s	J4s	J3s	J2s	
ATo	KTo	QTo	JTo	TT	T9s	T8s	T7s	T6s	T5s	T4s	T3s	T2s	
A9o	K9o	Q9o	J9o	T9o	99	98s	97s	96s	95s	94s	93s	92s	
A8o	K8o	Q8o	J8o	T8o	98o	88	87s	86s	85s	84s	83s	82s	
A7o	K7o	Q7o	J7o	T7o	97o	87o	77	76s	75s	74s	73s	72s	
A6o	K6o	Q6o	J6o	T6o	96o	86o	76o	66	65s	64s	63s	62s	
A5o	K5o	Q5o	J5o	T5o	95o	85o	75o	65o	55	54s	53s	52s	
A4o	K4o	Q4o	J4o	T4o	94o	84o	74o	64o	54o	44	43s	42s	
A3o	K3o	Q3o	J3o	T3o	93o	83o	73o	63o	53o	43o	33	32s	
A2o	K2o	Q2o	J2o	T2o	92o	82o	72o	62o	52o	42o	32o	22	

While you still have an all-in range, you are forced to play substantially tighter.

As your position gets worse, you are forced to go all-in with an even tighter range due to having many players yet to act who will randomly wake up with a premium hand.

Here is the GTO strategy from second position at an 8-handed table against a 2bb raise from first position at an 8-handed table:

ALL-IN 3.2%		3BET 2.3%		CALL 4%		FOLD 90.5%						
AA	AKs	AQs	AJs	ATs	A9s	A8s	A7s	A6s	A5s	A4s	A3s	A2s
AKo	KK	KQs	KJs	KTs	K9s	K8s	K7s	K6s	K5s	K4s	K3s	K2s
AQo	KQo	QQ	QJs	QTs	Q9s	Q8s	Q7s	Q6s	Q5s	Q4s	Q3s	Q2s
AJo	KJo	QJo	JJ	JTs	J9s	J8s	J7s	J6s	J5s	J4s	J3s	J2s
ATo	KTo	QTo	JTo	TT	T9s	T8s	T7s	T6s	T5s	T4s	T3s	T2s
A9o	K9o	Q9o	J9o	T9o	99	98s	97s	96s	95s	94s	93s	92s
A8o	K8o	Q8o	J8o	T8o	98o	88	87s	86s	85s	84s	83s	82s
A7o	K7o	Q7o	J7o	T7o	97o	87o	77	76s	75s	74s	73s	72s
A6o	K6o	Q6o	J6o	T6o	96o	86o	76o	66	65s	64s	63s	62s
A5o	K5o	Q5o	J5o	T5o	95o	85o	75o	65o	55	54s	53s	52s
A4o	K4o	Q4o	J4o	T4o	94o	84o	74o	64o	54o	44	43s	42s
A3o	K3o	Q3o	J3o	T3o	93o	83o	73o	63o	53o	43o	33	32s
A2o	K2o	Q2o	J2o	T2o	92o	82o	72o	62o	52o	42o	32o	22

Now, you get to play only the best hands and your all-in bets are reserved only for premium hands.

Min-Raise then Continuation Bet, even when Short

While many players incorrectly assume that once you get short stacked that your only options are to go all-in or fold, you should frequently min-raise preflop with the intention of continuation betting for 1bb or so on most flops. This play is best reserved for when you have 15bbs or more, but you can min-raise preflop with the intention folding to an all-in with a stack as short as 10bbs, especially when you have strong reads on the players yet to act.

One of the best spots to min-raise with the intention of folding is when you are in early position with a strong, but not amazing hand, such as A-10o or Q-Jo. You can min-raise to 2bbs out of a 15bb stack and confidently fold if someone goes all-in because you are highly likely to be dominated.

Suppose with a 12bb effective stack you raise from second position at an 8-handed table with the GTO strategy:

ALL-IN 9.7%			RAISE1 8%			FOLD 82.2%						
AA	AKs	AQs	AJs	ATs	A9s	A8s	A7s	A6s	A5s	A4s	A3s	A2s
AKo	KK	KQs	KJs	KTs	K9s	K8s	K7s	K6s	K5s	K4s	K3s	K2s
AQo	KQo	QQ	QJs	QTs	Q9s	Q8s	Q7s	Q6s	Q5s	Q4s	Q3s	Q2s
AJo	KJo	QJo	JJ	JTs	J9s	J8s	J7s	J6s	J5s	J4s	J3s	J2s
ATo	KTo	QTo	JTo	TT	T9s	T8s	T7s	T6s	T5s	T4s	T3s	T2s
A9o	K9o	Q9o	J9o	T9o	99	98s	97s	96s	95s	94s	93s	92s
A8o	K8o	Q8o	J8o	T8o	98o	88	87s	86s	85s	84s	83s	82s
A7o	K7o	Q7o	J7o	T7o	97o	87o	77	76s	75s	74s	73s	72s
A6o	K6o	Q6o	J6o	T6o	96o	86o	76o	66	65s	64s	63s	62s
A5o	K5o	Q5o	J5o	T5o	95o	85o	75o	65o	55	54s	53s	52s
A4o	K4o	Q4o	J4o	T4o	94o	84o	74o	64o	54o	44	43s	42s
A3o	K3o	Q3o	J3o	T3o	93o	83o	73o	63o	53o	43o	33	32s
A2o	K2o	Q2o	J2o	T2o	92o	82o	72o	62o	52o	42o	32o	22

With hands like A-9o, K-Jo, and Q-Jo, your plan is to fold if someone yet to act goes all-in.

If only one player calls, you should continuation bet tiny (1bb or 2bbs) on all flops that do not connect well with the preflop caller’s range, which will be most

flops except for middle boards such as 8-7-5 and 6-5-3. Notice that your preflop min-raising range is well protected due to it containing 10-10 and better pairs, which can happily get in for your short stack on pretty much all boards.

Many players make the mistake of continuation betting far too large on most flops, perhaps for the size of the pot or even all-in. This is an error in pretty much all spots because when you completely miss the flop, such as with K-Jo on Q-4-2 or A-6s on 9-8-3, you want your bluffs to lose as little as possible in order to maintain your stack. With your best hands, you are not concerned with building the pot because the pot is already large in relation to your stack. So, bet tiny and then go from there.

After You Call a Bet, Bet when Checked To

It may sound overly simplistic, but after your opponent bets the flop and you call, if they check to you on the turn, you should be highly inclined to bet with many hands that cannot reasonably expect to win at the showdown. This is because when many players bet the flop and check the turn, the best hand in their checking range will often be top pair with a bad kicker, and sometimes their range will contain only middle pair and worse hands. If the best hand your opponent can have is top pair with a bad kicker, they will inevitably fold far too often to a turn bet. This is especially true if your opponent will continuation bet the flop with their entire range (as many players will do).

Suppose 40bbs deep the lojack raises and you call from the button. On Js-6h-5d, the lojack bets 60% pot and you call. The turn is the (Js-6h-5d)-10h. The lojack should continue betting with almost all top pair and better made hands in their range, so when the lojack checks, they will usually have a fairly weak range, roughly top pair with a bad kicker and worse made hands. Many players incorrectly keep betting with all their top pairs and better made hands, further weakening their checking range. If they never slowplay (as you should pretty much always do some portion of the time from out of position) with J-J, 10-10, 6-6, and A-J, it weakens their checking range substantially.

Assuming your opponent checks with a perfectly balanced range, you should bet roughly 50% of the time using a 60% pot bet with a generally polarized range including Q-J and better made hands as well as various bluffs with high equity draws like K-Q but also with some weak hands like A-7s and K-6s.

To make matters even worse for your opponent, if you bet 60% pot on the turn, they should continue with marginal hands like 9-9, 8-8, A-6s, and A-5s almost every time. Many players instead fold these hands, resulting in you stealing a lot of equity.

Suppose you bet the turn for 60% pot and the lojack calls. The river is the (Js-6h-5d-10h)-2c. If the lojack checks and you go all-in, they should call off with A-10, K-10, Q-10, A-6, and A-5, which many players will simply never do. On (Js-6h-5d-10h)-Kd, they should call an all-in with Q-J, J-9, A-6, and A-5, which again, many

players will not do. This pattern occurs over and over in most situations when players give up the betting lead on the turn or river.

If your opponent will over-fold on any betting round, you should add even more bluffs to your range, perhaps with any hand that cannot reasonably win at the showdown. Especially against straightforward players who rarely call down on the turn and river with marginal hands, you should bluff far more often than the GTO strategy.

Lead when the Board is Good for Your Range

A “lead” is when you bet into the aggressor from the previous betting round. This implies that you check/called a bet on the previous betting round and get to act before the previous aggressor on the current betting round.

From a GTO point of view, you should lead only when you are not too deep stacked on the turn or river when it substantially increases your equity and expected value because you will then have the range and/or nut advantage. You should not lead when the turn is neutral or bad for your range even if it is good for your specific hand. You also get to lead more often as stacks get shallower because getting all the money in behind with a hand like top pair or a weak flush is far less costly compared to when stacks are deeper. Most of the time when you lead on the turn, you should use a small bet size because you are pushing an equity advantage.

The most common spots to lead on the turn are when:

A middle or low 4-straight comes.

A middle or low 3-straight comes.

The middle or bottom card on the flop pairs.

An Ace-high 4-flush comes.

While there are a few other less common spots where leading is ideal, these are the four main situations that happen over and over. Playing these spots well will increase your win rate substantially while also making you much more difficult to play against.

One of the best times to lead on the turn is when the flop contains all middle or low cards and the turn brings a 4-straight, assuming you have lots of combinations of straights in your range and your opponent does not.

Suppose 40bbs deep the lojack raises, you call from the big blind, and the flop comes 6s-3s-2h. You check, the lojack bets 55% pot, and you call with a range of mostly pairs and draws.

On any 5 or 4 that is not a spade, you should lead for 25% pot with your entire range. On the 5s or 4s, you should lead for 25% pot with roughly 90% of your range. You get to lead a ton because you have a lot of straights and two pairs in your range while your opponent has almost none, giving you a substantial range advantage. It is worth noting that if you were against the button instead of the lojack, on the 5d turn, you should lead less often (85% of the time instead of 100%) because the button will have proportionally more combinations of straights in their range since they will raise preflop with more hands containing a 4 than the lojack does.

Suppose 40bbs deep the lojack raises, you call from the big blind, and the flop comes 9s-8h-7d. You check, the lojack bets 55% pot, and you call. On the 5c turn, you should lead for 25% pot with your entire range because you have many combinations of straights and the lojack has almost none. However, on the Jc or 10c turn, you should never lead because the lojack would then have many combinations of straights. Similarly, on the (Ks-Qs-9h)-10d turn, you should also never lead.

When you turn lots of combinations of straights, lead frequently (often 100% of the time when your opponent has close to no straights) using a small bet size. When your opponent turns lots of combinations of straights, check every time.

River Over-Betting

When you get to the river and your opponent's range is almost entirely marginal value hands/bluff catchers and your range is mostly premium hands and bluffs, you should consider bluffing for between 100% and 200% pot. This will often be the case after you bet the flop and turn and have a busted draw on a scary river. Since you would play your premium hands in this manner, you can reasonably play your bluffs in the same way, especially when you should have relatively few combinations of bluffs, or when your opponent will naturally expect you to have relatively few combinations of bluffs.

Suppose 20,000 deep at 100/200, the player second to act at an 8-handed table raises to 500 and only you call from the button with 6c-5c. The flop comes Jc-8s-4d. Your opponent bets 500, you raise to 1,600, and your opponent calls. From in position, both raising and calling with your weak draw are fine plays. The turn is the (Jc-8s-4d)-3d. Your opponent checks, you bet 3,500 into the 4,700 pot and your opponent calls. With no showdown value and an open ended straight draw, you should usually bet the turn. The river is the (Jc-8s-4d-3d)-8h and your opponent checks.

Notice that in this scenario that there aren't too many logical draws available on the flop. Given the deep stacks, you would certainly want to raise on the flop with your sets for value. By the river, it is somewhat clear that your opponent has at least a pair, and perhaps a hand as strong as an overpair, although they could have a busted straight or flush draw. If you make a "normal" bet of 5,000, your opponent will call pretty much every time, even if they fear you have a full house. The only way you can possibly elicit a fold is to make a gigantic bet. While it may seem incredibly risky, this is a reasonable spot to make an over-bet all-in for 14,400 into the 11,700 pot.

It is important to understand the math behind this play because it is not as risky as it may seem. You are risking 14,400 to win 11,700. This means your bluff needs to make your opponent fold $14,400 / (14,400 + 11,700) = 55\%$ of the time to break even. If you are confident in your read that your opponent will fold to an all-in with almost their entire range, this play may work as much as 100% of the time, allowing you to make an incredible profit.

It is worth mentioning that at any point in time, the dynamic of your regular game may be such that your opponents will call over-bets with a wide range because they presume they must be bluffs. This can happen when numerous other players have been over-betting on a regular basis with bluffs or when your opponents know you like to use over-bets primarily as a bluff. If that is the case, reverse this tactic and make over-bets primarily for value. Always be aware of the dynamics in your specific game because this play can vary wildly from incredibly profitable to incredibly unprofitable.

One betting line that works particularly well against amateur players is betting 33% pot on the flop, 25% pot on the turn, and then 125% pot or more on the river. This line is powerful because it keeps your opponent in with a wide range on the earlier streets and then forces them to fold almost their entire range on the river. This line works so well because many amateur players elect to raise on the earlier betting rounds with their strong hands, capping their flop calling range at top pair and perhaps even middle pair. This means they will have mostly marginal made hands when they get to the river, assuming they don't improve by the river, which won't happen too often.

Suppose you raise to 2bbs out of your 27bb stack from the lojack with Ah-5h and only the big blind calls. The flop comes Js-3h-2c. The big blind checks, you bet 2bbs, and the big blind calls. The turn is the (Js-3h-2c)-9d. The big blind checks, you bet 3bbs, and the big blind calls. Betting the turn with your weak straight draw plus an overcard is perfectly fine. The river is the (Js-3h-2c-9d)-Qs and the big blind checks.

This is a great spot to go all-in for your opponent's remaining 20bb stack, especially since the river brought an overcard that should connect well with your logical turn bluffing range. Notice that if you bet small, they may call with many of their made hands, which should be a large portion of their range. If you go all-in, you force them to call off for all their money with what is now most likely a bluff catcher. You will find that most opponents make snug folds when you make them put in all their chips, opting to take their chances with their short stack in a more comfortable situation.

Betting for “Obvious” Value

It is vitally important that you work hard to figure out each of your opponents’ river tendencies. Some players always bet their strong hands and check their weak hands, making their checks susceptible to bluffs. Other players frequently check their decent made hands when all the draws miss in order to give their opponent the opportunity to bluff. When you are the aggressor, some players will only call a turn bet when they intend to call a river bet. Against these players, bluffing the river is a horrible idea. As you observe your opponents at the table, work hard to figure out their tendencies then develop strategies to exploit them.

One of the most common leaks amateur players have is to call flop and turn bets with the intention of folding all hands worse than an overpair to a river bet. Their logic is that if their opponent is willing to bet all three streets, they simply must have top pair beat, meaning their river bet must “obviously” be for value. Many players in the middle stakes games exhibit this tendency. They make money in these games by getting full value from their premium hands while rarely paying off their opponents when they are against a premium hand. Your goal is to play your bluffs exactly as these players expect you to play the nuts.

Since most of these players tend to raise hands stronger than top pair on the flop and turn, when they only call flop and turn bets, you can be confident they have marginal made hands or draws. If you can make these players think you have a premium hand, three barrel bluffing is highly profitable because it will result in them folding almost their entire range.

Suppose 100bbs deep you raise to 3bbs with Qh-Jh from the lojack and only the button calls. The flop comes 10s-8h-4s. You continuation bet for 4bbs and your opponent calls. The turn is the (10s-8h-4s)-3c. You bet 12bbs into the 15.5bb pot and your opponent calls. The river is the (10s-8h-4s-3c)-5d.

Although the river is an innocuous card, notice that most of the flopped draws missed. Also notice that if your opponent has a made hand, the best they can have is top pair, top kicker. This should lead you to make a large bet of 30bbs or so into the 39.5bb pot. Over-betting doesn’t make a ton of sense with an

overpair in this situation unless you planned to have a wide value over-betting range due to having many potential bluffs, which could be fine if your opponent is a calling station. If you think your opponent will assume you must have a strong hand after you bet all three betting rounds, assuming you think your opponent's range is mostly bluff catchers, you should go for it and attempt the bluff.

Three barrel bluffs may feel quite risky, but the risk of getting called is actually quite low when you are keenly aware of your opponent's tendencies. You want to be sure you play your bluffs just as these players would expect the average player (or specifically you) to play the nuts. This usually means you have to make as significant a bet on the river just as they would expect you to make with your strong value hands. If you bet too small, perhaps 15bbs into the 39.5bb pot, they may decide to hero call, thinking you could be value betting a worse made hand than their bluff catcher.

Against strong players who think they can read betting patterns well, you should consider flipping the previous concept on its head by betting small on the river as a bluff. These players will correctly recognize that a large river bet polarizes your range, meaning you have either a premium hand or nothing. Since there will usually be many more combinations of potential bluffs in your range than premium hands (especially when lots of draws miss), these players will be somewhat prone to call large bets with a wide range of bluff catchers.

While most strong players view large bets as polarized, some view medium and small bets as if they are for value. This usually results in these players folding their marginal bluff catchers to small bets.

In the situation above with Qh-Jh on (10s-8h-4s-3c)-5d in a 39.5bb pot, if you make a large bet on this river, many strong players will assume you must have a polarized range containing straights, sets, two pairs, overpairs, and busted draws. Since every front door draw missed, your opponent will correctly assume your bluffing range could be quite wide. This will often lead to them calling a large bet with most of their bluff catchers. If instead of betting large and polarizing your range, you make a smaller bet perhaps 15bbs into the 39.5bb pot, your opponent may think you are betting a decent made hand for thin

value, such as with J-J or Q-10. If your opponent assumes you must be betting for value, they will fold most of their hands that cannot beat top pair, which will be most of their range. Also notice that when you bet this small, your bluff only needs to succeed about 28% of the time. Since your opponent will almost certainly fold all missed draws on the river, this bet will usually be profitable, even if they call with some of their marginal made hands.

Against players who think they know how you will play your value hands, it is important that you play your bluffs exactly as they think you would play your value hands. Always keep in mind the betting lines that each player has seen you make and reverse them in the future. If someone is convinced you only make big bets on the river for value, make big bets against that player as a bluff. As soon as your opponents think they have a solid read on you, reverse your tactics and crush them until they adapt.

Conclusion

Thanks for taking the time to read this ebook. To continue your journey to poker mastery, I strongly suggest you go through my Tournament or Cash Game Masterclasses in PokerCoaching.com, depending on the form of poker you want to play. After mastering the content in that 40-hour-long interactive course, you will understand no-limit hold'em and be prepared to have an edge in pretty much any small or medium stake game you enter. If you want many more tips similar to these in this ebook, be sure to check out my book *100 Essential Tips to Master No-Limit Hold'em*.

Thanks for reading and good luck in your games!



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