

POKER TRAINING HANDBOOK

Introduction

The purpose of this book is to give the beginning poker player a good understanding of the basic concepts in playing No Limit Hold 'Em.

Full Ring (10 player) cash games are totally different to the six-max (6 player) cash games, and Multi Table Tournament strategy is different to Single Table Strategy.

In addition to the type of game, the structure of the game will also affect how you play, the blinds, the buy-in, the prize structure, and other things all have a bearing on what cards to play and how to play them.

There is no 'one size fits all' approach to the games, what works at one level will see you lose at another, the skill is determining what type of opponents are playing in your specific game and adjusting your game to give you at least the best chance to win in the situation you are involved in.

We will endeavor to teach you the basics and topics to help you on your poker journey. We will mainly be focusing on the small stakes multi table tournament structure, however elements of this can be used to good effect when playing the other variations but be aware that using some of this information in a structure that it does not apply to (i.e. 6 max ring games) will cost you money if you do not make the correct adjustments.

We hope that by reading the information given in this manual you will learn to recognise the situation you are in and by using your knowledge, adjust to make sure you are a winning player in whatever particular game you happen to be involved in.

I would like to make one thing perfectly clear, and that is the simple fact that you will recognise several of your own traits in this manual, please do not take these examples personally, they are not aimed at you directly. In fact you are about to become a poker warrior, feared by the monkeys as you take all those lovely chips that they will want to give you time and time again. Because you will have evolved.

POKER TRAINING HANDBOOK

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Part 1: The Fundamentals

The Idea is to Win

Q. Why do you play poker ?

A. You should be playing poker to win. There should be no other reason, if there is then you should give the game a miss and do something else until your mentality is that of a winning player.

Q. Why do other people play poker ?

There are many reasons why someone is prepared to travel a distance to sit down at a poker game, it could be that they want to socialise, they may want to blow off a bit of steam by gambling, they may like the thrill of the competition, they need money and/or think it is an easy way to achieve it, there are many reasons but if you know why a particular player is at the table then you can take advantage of this knowledge.

The aim of this manual is to give you the confidence and insight to improve your poker game to a level where you do not feel out of your depth sitting down at a table full of strangers and wondering if you are going to be beaten.

There will be elements of this manual that you may already know and if that is the case then feel free to skip those parts you are confident on, however even experienced players may find some useful parts in the elementary sections and may even realise that they are wrong in their approach to certain aspects.

Some players may just need to re-focus their game on certain parts of the basics, and a read of these sections might help to reinforce their skills to a better, more improved standard.

Part 1: The Fundamentals

The Rules of the Game

There are no 'standard' rules set in place for No Limit Hold 'Em, however there is a basic structure of play and any disputes that arise during the game should be resolved by the tournament directors ruling which is binding.

Ensure you are aware of any tournament specific rules prior to sitting down at the tables, this is especially true more in 'home games' rather than organized events.

The dealer button rotates one place to the left each hand and the small blind and big blind forced bets will also move accordingly.

The player to the left of the big blind is first to act pre flop and the small blind is first to act post flop.

In No Limit you may bet all the chips in front of you when it is your turn, no matter what the pot size is.

A bet in No Limit has to be the size of the big blind, unless that player does not have enough money and is forced to move all-in.

A re-raise in No Limit must be a minimum of double the previous raise, unless the player does not have enough money and is forced to move all-in.

At showdown if a player is called then the original bettor must show his hole cards to the caller, if more than one person is involved in the showdown then the disclosure follows the normal rotation of the table. Even if the losing player wishes to muck his hand any player at the table can request to see the losing hand. (More on this rule in the next section)

You may have heard the term "*Show one, show all*" This refers to the action of a player showing another person at the table his hole cards after the hand is over, if this is done then the player is obligated to show the rest of the table his hole cards. It does not refer to the action of some players only showing one hole card, if that is all they wish to show the table without having a showdown then that is their prerogative.


Whilst on the subject, never, ever show your opponents your cards unless you have to at showdown, more information is gained by astute opponents about your play (and how to play against you) by seeing your cards than at any other point in the game.


Simple rule. Never show cards no matter how much you want to, or are coerced into showing.


Part 1: The Fundamentals


Hand Rankings


You know the rules, you sit down, if you are going to win you need to know what is the best hand to hold is.

Royal Flush: 5 suited cards in rank from Ace to Ten. eg 


Straight Flush: 5 consecutive suited cards eg 


Quads: 4 cards of the same rank eg 


Full House: three cards of one rank and two cards of another eg 

Flush: 5 cards all the same suit eg 

Straight: 5 consecutive cards of any suit eg 

Trips: 3 cards of the same rank eg 

Two Pair: 2 times one pair hands eg 

One Pair: two cards the same rank eg 

High card: no 5 card combination of the above

Part 1: The Fundamentals

Reading the Board

The most important thing in Poker is knowing the winning hand, even so there are way too many players who do not know what hand wins, we have all heard the arguments over 'split pots' (where the board is better than the players hands, or players share a common high hand) and these discussions are between players who have several years playing experience. Then there is the classic 'lost in headlights' look of a player who was about to scoop the pot when it is suddenly handed to an opponent and the player then has to be told by the rest of the table why their hand was second best.

You must know what wins, if you rely on others and mistakes are made it could cost you your tournament life by throwing away the winning hand.

Do not rely on the dealer or your opponents to tell you if you have won, make sure you know.

There was a famous incident at a televised game where everyone thought a player had been eliminated (including the dealer), as the player was walking past the spectators one of them pointed out that he had split the pot with the other player in the hand and was actually still in the tournament.

This bit bears repeating

The most important thing in Poker is knowing the winning hand.

How can you win the pot if you don't know which hand wins the pot ?

It is good practice in your spare time to grab a deck of cards and deal 3 cards face up.

Work out the best hole card combination you want in your hand

Now deal a turn card, and again what hole cards would you like

Finally deal a river, again what are the best hole cards.

Did you notice from one card to the next how the best hole card to have changed ?

Poker is a dynamic game and it is rare that the nut (best) hand pre flop is still the best holding when the river is shown.

Part 1: The Fundamentals

Here is a short quiz, **try to answer as quickly as possible**, imagine you are at the final table of a major tournament and the action and TV cameras are on you.

Board

You want as your hole cards

1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					
8.					
9.					
10.					



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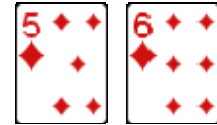
Part 1: The Fundamentals

Answers

Board

1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					
8.					
9.					

You want as your hole cards



ANY ACE / ANY QUEEN



THREE / FIVE



KING / ANYTHING



NINE / TEN

IF YOUR ANSWERS DO NOT MATCH THE ANSWERS ON THIS PAGE YOU NEED TO PRACTICE YOUR BOARD READING SKILLS. DO NOT DISMISS THIS, MAKE SURE YOU PRACTICE UNTIL YOU ARE HAPPY THAT YOU CAN READ THE BOARD CORRECTLY.

Part 1: The Fundamentals

Board Texture and the Playing Zone

The flop is the defining moment in Hold 'Em, simultaneously 3 community cards are shown and 60% of the board is exposed to all players, you will know if the flop helped your hand, but now you have to deduce if the flop helped your opponents hand, this is called analyzing the texture of the flop.

Most weak players when playing poker will play any ace or any two picture cards when calling a raise pre flop. When the flop lands with two high cards this is known as 'in the playing zone' and there is a big chance that your opponent matched at least one of his cards or has the possibility of a draw to a good hand.

When the flop comes with only one high card and a couple of low cards, (or three low cards) we can say it missed the playing zone and therefore most of our opponents possible range of hands that he is playing so the betting will probably be smaller and slower.

If you caught a small piece of the flop be wary if it is in the playing zone, and the more opponents there are in the hand the bigger the chance that someone hit the flop harder than you.

You must also be careful if the texture of the flop isn't in the playing zone but could still give an opponent the current 'nuts' (the best hand) and leave you drawing dead,

For example you hold



And the flop comes



You should be aware that there are a lot of made hands or potential draws that will decimate your kings in this situation. Betting structures will be dealt with later but for now just know that you need to recognise dangerous flops and the signs your opponent may have you beat.