CASH GAME KILLER
A high stakes veteran teaches you how to make more money playing poker than you do at your full time job
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Chapter 1
Introduction

Letter from the Author

Congratulations! You've just downloaded the best poker e-book on the internet. I'm sure you've heard that before so I'll just let the rest of this book speak for itself. The difference between this e-book and all the rest will be obvious once you begin reading.

Making a lot of money at poker is possible for anyone who makes the effort to become a better poker player. The big winners in poker aren't these guys you see in movies who can "read your soul" or play by "feel." They are human just like the rest of us.

What makes them great is how methodical they are. They meticulously study strategy, they take notes on their opponents and they constantly replay hands in their heads or on PokerTracker in an effort to see where mistakes could have been avoided. They set clear goals and always strive to improve their knowledge.

Online poker has proven itself to be here for the long haul. The US government has tried to prevent its citizens from playing poker, but the demand and the outrage is too great. People want to choose for themselves how they spend their money and no ridiculous law will be able to change that.

At this very moment, people are making hundreds of thousands of dollars playing online poker. It may be hard to believe at first, but you'll soon see that it's very realistic to make over $100,000 a year playing medium-stakes poker. That's right, you don't even have to be a high stakes genius to make $100,000 at poker; you just have to be a decent medium stakes grinder.

If you look online, you'll see that I'm not exaggerating this at all. If anything, I'm under-representing the possibilities of poker. Take Full Tilt Poker for instance. They have high stakes no limit tables with buy-ins going all the way up to $100,000. Seven figure months are not uncommon for the players who win at those stakes.

About the Author

My name is SmackinYaUp and I started playing poker in December of 2004. I started out a losing player and saw poker as nothing more than an entertaining diversion. Back then, I had no idea how much life-changing money I would soon be earning through poker.

I played small stakes games throughout 2005. I read up on poker strategy and improved my game, but I didn't set any goals. Because I didn't set any goals, I never really advanced beyond 200NL.
In early 2006, I set a long term goal to play as high as I possibly could and made it a short term goal to work my way up to 400NL. By the time June came around, I was playing 8 tables of 1000NL and making a killing. That month I made over $40,000 playing poker. I haven't looked back since.

Here's a PokerTracker screenshot from one of my poker databases:

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29 Levels 200,630 19.32 23.86 88.63 83.59 26.36 36.88 $56,254.41

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Chapter 2
Rules of Texas Holdem

The rules of Texas Holdem are fairly simple once you get the hang of 'em. The easiest way to learn is to have someone show you, in person, at a poker game. Since that isn't always possible, read on for an explanation of the rules.

A hand can be broken down into four parts:

1. Preflop
2. Flop
3. Turn
4. River

1. Preflop

Every hand of Holdem revolves around the dealer's button. The dealer's button is a flat disc that is used to represent the dealer of each hand. The dealer's button moves one seat to the left at the beginning of each hand.

The player to the immediate left of the dealer is the small blind and the player to the left of the small blind is the big blind. The players in the blinds must ante up a small amount of money to get each hand started. The small blind usually antes up half of a small bet and the big blind antes up a full minimum bet. At a 100NL table the blinds are .50/1.00. The small blind pays .50 and the big blind pays $1.00.
Two hole cards are then dealt to each player, one at a time, starting with the player to the immediate left of the dealer.

After the hole cards have been dealt, the first betting round may begin. The player to the left of the big blind starts the betting. He may fold his hand, pay 1 big blind to see a flop or he can place a preflop raise.

After that player has made his move, the action moves around the table to the left. Each player then has the same options as the first player. If at any time a player raises preflop, all of the other players at the table must either fold their hands, match that amount or re-raise.

After all the bets have been matched, the hand moves on to the flop.

2. The Flop

Next the dealer burns the top card of the deck by putting it face down in the muck. This is done to prevent cheating and to make sure nobody accidentally sees the top card of the deck.

Next the dealer deals three cards face up in the middle of the table. These three cards make up the flop and are community cards, meaning they can be used by all the players at the table to make their hands.

After the flop has been dealt, another round of betting begins. This time the betting begins with the player to left of the dealer. This player may either check or bet. After he makes his move, the action moves to the left around the table. If any player bets, all of the other players may either call that bet, raise it or fold.

After all the bets have been matched, the hand moves on to the turn.

3. The Turn

The dealer burns the top card of the deck again and then deals one card face up on the table. This is another community card and all of the players may use it to help complete their poker hands. After the turn is dealt, there is another round of betting just as there was on the flop.

After all the bets have been matched, the hand moves on to the river.

4. The River

The dealer burns one more card and then deals the last community card face up on the table. After the river is dealt, there is one last round of betting just as there was on the flop and turn.
After all the bets have been matched, the players still remaining in the hand have a showdown. The player with best 5 card poker hand, using any combination of the community cards and hole cards, wins the pot.

After the showdown, the dealer's button moves one seat to the left and a new hand begins the same way this one did.

Chapter 3
Getting Started

Choosing a Poker Site

If you're going to trust your entire bankroll to a poker site, you at least want to pick a reputable site. The sites listed in this section are the biggest poker sites on the net and have stood the test of time. These sites have served millions of poker players and have always been trustworthy.

Sites that accept players from the US:

PokerStars - PokerStars is the biggest poker site in the world. Their customer service is great and the site has a ton of players. You won't have a problem finding a table at PokerStars.

Full Tilt Poker - Full Tilt is one of the next biggest poker sites and it too has been around forever. Full Tilt has the biggest variety of cash games on the internet. They spread small stakes games, high stakes games, deep cash games where players can buy in for double the standard amount and more. I am also a major fan of Full Tilt's customer service - it's some of the best customer service in the industry.

Cake Poker - Cake is relatively new compared to the other sites but it's proven itself to be a legitimate poker site over the last few years. The cash games here aren't as numerous as the above sites but they are incredibly soft. Cake has some of the best software so be sure to check it out if you haven't played at Cake yet.

Aced Poker - Aced Poker is another smaller site but the games are extra soft. The high stakes games are pretty empty most of the time but it's a great place to build a bankroll if you play at low or medium stakes.

Carbon Poker - Carbon is the smallest site listed on this page. The cash games get a little sparse above the 400NL level, but the competition is super weak.
Sites that do not accept players from the US:

**Titan Poker** - Titan Poker opened its doors in 2005 and has quickly become one of the largest poker sites on the internet. If you don't live in the US, Titan Poker is a great place to build your bankroll.

**Doyle's Room** - At the time this book was written, Doyle's room did not accept players from the US but there were rumors that Doyle's room would soon return to the US market. Either way, check this poker site out. It's endorsed by one of the greatest poker players of all time, Doyle Brunson.

**PartyPoker** - I'll always have a special place in my heart for PartyPoker, the site where I first learned poker and where I would eventually have some of my highest-earning months ever. PartyPoker is one of the best poker sites out there so check it out some time if you haven't already.

One thing you should consider when picking a poker site is deciding on whether you want a site with lots of traffic or weak competition. There are pros and cons to both types of sites.

Sites with lots of traffic attract the best players, the multi-tabling aggressive types who make a living playing poker. They can't afford to play at a site that doesn't have hundreds of cash games going at all hours of the day. The larger site may have just as many fish as a smaller site, but it will take more work and table selection to find the fish.

The good poker players tend to shy away from the poker sites with less traffic so there is usually a higher percentage of fish at those sites. It will take less work to find the fish at a smaller site but there won't be as many tables for you to hop around on if a couple of your tables get tough.

In my opinion these factors balance each other out. You're either going to have a lot of tables to search through for the best game or you're going to have fewer tables with more fish sitting at them.

All these sites offer first time deposit bonuses, ranging from very small to very large. These bonuses change every once in a while but you can check my website for the latest bonus information.

Since the fish factor balances out at all sites and they all offer bonuses, the most important thing you do is pick a reputable site. If you go with any of the sites listed on this page or at my website, you should be good to go.

**Bankroll**

The proper care of the bankroll is one of those basic topics that give players of all skill levels trouble. It's not a matter of knowledge; it's a matter of discipline. The bankroll is
the simplest poker concept but it is also one of the most neglected poker concepts. Many people have destroyed their poker careers by playing on short bankrolls.

The facts of bankroll management are simple - you should never play a no limit game for which you have fewer than 20 buyins. No player, no matter how skilled, is immune to the regular ups and downs of variance. If you always keep 20 buyins in your bankroll, you can just about guarantee yourself that you won't go broke.

For medium to higher stakes games, such as those from 400NL to 1000NL, I recommend a larger bankroll of at least 30 buyins. The competition at those levels is stronger so your edge is smaller and your variance higher.

For games at 2KNL and above, I recommend a bankroll of at least 50 buyins. That might sound a bit excessive, but those are some tough games and you will be glad you waited to have a massive bankroll before taking them on.

<table>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.00/20.00</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The purpose of a healthy bankroll isn't only to keep you safe from going broke; it's also to allow you to play with a healthy mindset. If you play with the fact that you have a short bankroll in the back of your mind, your game will suffer. When you play on a short bankroll, you subconsciously try to minimize variance by decreasing your aggression.

The only way to fight that problem is to practice avoidance. Any time your bankroll dips below the 20, 30 or 40 buyin mark that you've set, you must move down and play at a level for which you are properly bankrolled.

It's hard to make yourself move down because it usually comes after a tough week and you feel like you need to stay at the higher stakes to rebuild faster. There's no easy answer to this except that you must have the self discipline to step down when your bankroll dips below a safe level. It doesn't matter who might see you at lower stakes or how quickly you need to rebuild - you have to move down when your bankroll takes a hit.
A big bankroll is a poker player's best friend so it must never be neglected. Whatever you do, do not ever play outside your bankroll. Playing on an inadequate bankroll is the biggest downfall of poker players in the world. It doesn't matter how great a poker player is, short term variance can cause downswings that wreak havoc on a short bankroll. If you ever hit a downswing and lose a good chunk of your bankroll, don't be afraid to move down to rebuild.

The biggest mistake you can make as a poker player is to refuse to drop down when your bankroll dips below your 20, 30 or 40 buyin mark. Playing on a short bankroll will affect your mindset and in turn cause you to play even worse. It's a compounding effect and it has broken many poker players.

If you want to take the occasional shot at higher stakes, that’s fine as long as you can control it. If you can afford to set some money aside and consider it gone, then go for it. If the shot goes bad, don't get greedy and try to keep playing at those higher stakes. Just drop back to your regular game and try again later.

**Do not ever play outside your bankroll.**

**Building a Bankroll with Bonuses**

The fastest way to build a bankroll is to take advantage of the bonuses that every poker site offers. You can grind a bankroll from scratch at a single poker site if you wish, but when there are sites offering $1,000 sign-up bonuses, it only makes sense to use them all to get off to a fast start.

The best thing about using bonuses to build your bankroll is that you can start without having to deposit much of your own money. If you're like most people, you probably don't have a ton of money to deposit right away. But that's a good thing because when you work your way up from the bottom, it gives you a better chance to develop your skills as a poker player.

Every time you move up in stakes, the competition gets a tiny bit tougher. By starting at the bottom and working your way up, you can assure yourself that you're qualified to play the next level up because you were skilled enough to build your bankroll high enough to play there.

Every site has bonus offers.

When you use bonuses to build your bankroll, it's important that you start out with the smallest bonuses and work your way up. Most poker site bonuses are reserved for new customers only. Once you use the bonus once, it's gone forever. You should always max out your bonuses because it's a waste if you deposit and only get $100 when you could have gotten $600.
Some sites require bonus codes for you to get your deposit bonuses. If I tell you to use a bonus code, just click on the link and sign up for the site like usual. Then you can type the code in when you make your first deposit at the site. The cashier screen at the poker site will have a blank box that says "bonus code" and you can just type it in there.

Here's the order I suggest you work:

1. **PokerStars** - **100% up to $50**. This bonus is automatically given to new players so just click the link at the beginning of this paragraph to get started. It's a small bonus but PokerStars is probably the best site on the internet.

   Start out here and get your $50 bonus and then play here until your bankroll reaches $600. The bonuses get much bigger from here on out so you need $600 before continuing.

2. **Full Tilt Poker** - **100% up to $600**. This bonus is automatic too; just click the link to get started. Make sure you wait until you have $600 in your bankroll before using this bonus because you only get to use this bonus once. After you clear the bonus and get your $600 match, you will have at least $1,200 in your bankroll.

3. **Aced Poker** - **100% up to $1,000**. This is one of the few bonuses that you can use more than once. The 100% bonus can be used two times and then it's gone forever. We're going to use it once right now to bump your $1,200 bankroll up to $2,200. If you win a little money while clearing this bonus, you should have about $2,500 after this bonus is completed. Use the bonus code ACED100 to get this bonus.

4. **Carbon Poker** - **100% up to $600**. Use the bonus code FIRST600 when making your first deposit to get this bonus. After you clear this one, you'll have about $3,100 in your bankroll. This is going faster than you thought isn't it? We still have more to go too!

5. **Cake Poker** - **100% up to $500**. Use the bonus code 500CASH when you make your first deposit to get this bonus. If you've been playing well and won a little money while clearing the last couple of bonuses, your bankroll should be about $4,000 now. If it's not quite up there yet, don't feel bad - downswings happen to the best of us. Just be glad that your bonuses have saved you a lot of pain.

6. For the next bonus, you have a couple of options. You can hit **TowerPoker** for a $Best bonus or skip it and go back to **Aced Poker** for your second $1,000 bonus. The reason I mention skipping the Bodog bonus is because I'm not a huge fan of Bodog Poker. They won't steal your money or anything like that but their customer service is pretty rotten. I take pride in being up front with all my
readers so I just wanted to give you that heads-up about Bodog. It's not a terrible site, but I personally don't like it.

If you choose to get the Bodog Poker bonus first, all you have to do is click on the link and sign up. When you move on to the Aced Poker bonus, just click on the link and use the ACED100 bonus code again.

After you clear this bonus (or bonuses) you'll have at least $5,000 in your bankroll. That's enough money to play $1/$2 no limit where you can make some serious money. Congratulations so far!

The next several bonuses are only open to non-US residents. I'm sorry my fellow US citizens; we're not allowed to play at these sites. Eventually the legal situation will improve in the US; I just don't know when.

7. **Party Poker - 100% up to $500.** No bonus code necessary here. Just click the link and sign up. After you clear this bonus, you'll have about $5,500 in your bankroll and maybe even more.

8. **Titan Poker - 100% up to $500.** This bonus works just like the PartyPoker bonus. You don't need to worry about any bonus codes here. Just click the link, sign up and deposit. This bonus will put you over the $6,000 mark. Nice work so far!

9. **Doyle's Room - 110% up to $550.** This bonus is automatic too. Just click the link, sign up and deposit $500 to get the maximum bonus. After this, your bankroll will have over $6,500 in it.

These bonuses total nearly $6,000 in free money. Poker bonuses are there for a reason so use them! You only get to use each bonus once so make sure you wait until you have enough money to get the maximum bonus every time.

Now that I've shown you how to make money with bonuses, let's show you how to make money with poker strategy. Bonuses are nice and all, but a solid poker strategy will make you much more money in the long run.

**Chapter 4**

**Preflop Strategy**

Preflop is where every hand begins so it's important you get it right. The cards you play and the way you play those cards preflop affects the way the rest of the hand goes down. If you make mistakes before the flop, the rest of the hand will reflect those mistakes. If you play a strong preflop game, the rest of the hand becomes easier to play.
Starting Hands

Choosing the correct starting hands is where a solid strategy begins. The biggest mistake new players make is playing too many starting hands. You must be very tight in picking your starting hands. A good poker player folds at least 75% of his starting hands.

There is a preflop starting hand chart at the end of this book that goes into great detail about which hands you should play preflop. The point of this chapter isn't to list every single hand; it's to explain the purpose behind playing a tight preflop game and how it helps you win money.

It may not sound exciting having to play a game of poker where you fold all the time, but that's how you win at poker. If you want to play poker for fun and play every starting hand you get, that's totally fine but you're not going to win any meaningful money that way. I find it much more exciting to win lots of money than to play every starting hand.

You want to limit yourself to playing only the strongest starting hands because those are the ones that win the most pots. Hands like AA, AK and AQ don't win every pot but they do win more pots than other starting hands. If you consistently put money in with strong hands while your opponents put money in with weak hands, you will gain in the long run.

If you're playing poker at a 6-handed table, the random dealing of cards dictates that each player should win, on average, 1 pot out of 6. Now hands like AA and AK won't win every pot but they will win about 4 or 5 pots out of 6. Of course you can't pick which hands you are dealt but you can pick which hands you put money in with. If you stick to the hands that win more than their fair share of pots, you will profit over the long run.

It's a simple concept but it takes discipline to apply it at the poker tables. It's easy to get bored during a dry stretch of cards and start playing non-premium hands but you have to avoid that temptation. Everyone hits dry runs of cards; the difference between the winners and losers is how they deal with those dry runs.

Position

Position is one of the most important concepts in poker. Being out of position is a huge disadvantage because it means you have to act first - before you get to see what your opponents do. What's even worse is your opponents get to see your actions before they must make theirs.

Being out of position is a difficult place to be in, so you want to have the strongest cards possible before playing a hand from out of position. That's why you should play extra tight from early position. In early position you should stick to the following hands:

- 22-AA
- AK, AQ
- AJs, KQs
Now with these hands, if you're the first person in the pot, you should come in with a raise. If several people have already limped in to the pot, you can limp in behind them with 22-99, AJs and KQs but you should put in a raise with TT-AA, AK and AQ.

With hands like AA-TT, AK and AQ, your best bet is to build a big pot preflop by raising. AA and KK are the absolute best hands so you should try to get these as close to all-in as you can without making your opponents fold. What you don't want to do is play those hands passively and let a bunch of people see the flop for free. You need to make your opponents pay to suck out on you. By doing so, you are trapping more money in the pot with a hand that will win more than its fair share of pots.

If nobody has entered the pot yet, middle position should be played the same as early position. There are still several people to act behind you so you are at the same positional disadvantage. If a couple people have already limped in, you can limp in behind them with some of the more speculative hands like small pocket pairs or suited connectors.

In late position you can really open up your game. You'll be the one with good position so you can take advantage of it. In late position you can raise with all kinds of hands if nobody has entered the pot yet. If people have entered the pot, you can play more hands too since you won't have to worry about the pot being raised after you limp in.

If it's been folded around to you in late position, you can raise with the same hands as in early position plus the following hands:

- Suited connectors from 67s to KJs
- Suited aces from A7s +

By raising these hands in late position, you're putting the blinds in a tough spot. They know there's a chance you're raising with garbage but they'll have to play the entire hand from out of position. If they fold, you win the blinds. If they call, they have to play the entire hand with poor position. It's a very strong place for you to be in if the blinds don't have premium hands.

### Raising Preflop

The last part of a good preflop game is playing with aggression. The purpose of placing preflop raises is to get money in the pot when you have strong hands. Your raise will also help limit the field, which will make it easier for you to take the pots down after the flop - either by betting or by having the best hand.

A good rule of thumb for the sizing of your preflop raises is the "4BB + 1BB per limper" rule. This mean your preflop raises should be the size of 4 big blinds plus 1 big blind per person who has already limped in to the pot. If you're playing $0.50/$1.00 no limit and one person has limped in already, your preflop raise should be $5.00 (4 big blinds plus 1 for the limper).
If you always raise using this rule, it will be impossible to tell what you have based on your bet sizes. Since you use this rule for all of your hands, your opponents will never know if you have a really strong hand or you are raising with junk. It's an easy way to keep your game unpredictable.

Very rarely is it a good idea to limp in with hands preflop. If a hand isn't strong enough to raise, it isn't strong enough to be played. The only time hands should be limped in is if it's a medium-strength hand but enough people have limped in to the pot in front of you that you're getting the odds to play it.

If several people have limped in and you have a strong hand, go ahead and raise it up. By raising here, one of two things will happen. You'll either thin the field so that it's easier for you to win the pot after the flop or everyone will call and you'll build a bigger pot with your strong hand.

If everyone calls your raise, the odds are you won't win the showdown. That's OK though because you'll still win more than that 1 in 6 pots that I was talking about earlier. Let's use a hypothetical example to explain this point:

Say you are dealt KK preflop, you raise it up and 4 people call your raise. Let's just say that whatever combination of cards your opponents call with, it ends up that your KK will win the showdown 40% of the time and the other four people will each win 15% of the time.

In this example, you have the highest chance out of anyone to win the pot, but there's still a 60% chance that you'll lose the hand. This sounds bad until you think about how much money you're putting in the pot. Everyone has put in the exact same amount of money into the pot up to this point. They all called your preflop raise so right now all bets are even. With five people in the pot that means each of you has supplied 20% of the money.

Now you'll see that you're getting a great deal on your money here. You've only supplied 20% of the money in the pot but you have a 40% chance to win the hand. Your opponents each supplied 20% of the money in the pot but they only have a 15% chance to win the pot.

If you got into this situation over and over again, you would make tons of money over the long run. Even though your odds of winning are only 40%, the large payoffs more than make up for the times you lose the pot.

If you raise it up preflop and only one person calls the pot won't be as big but that's OK too because you'll win the pot a much higher percentage of the time against a single opponent.
Chapter 5
Postflop Strategy

The TAG Style

Even though every poker player has his or her own style, there are some general categories we can use to describe them. The major categories are the fish, rock, lag and tag. I'll talk about the others later, but for now let's talk about the TAG style.

The word TAG stands for tight-aggressive and it is the style you should strive to have. Being tight-aggressive means you are tight in picking which hands you play but you are aggressive with the hands you do play.

The tag doesn't play weak starting hands and he certainly doesn't play hands after the flop with that passive, check and call style that the fish use. The tag plays with aggression. If a tag's hand isn't strong enough to bet or raise with, he'll fold it before it costs him any money.

The tag style is so powerful because it leaves no room for weak hands and it uses aggression to get money in the pot with strong hands. The tag style also makes your decisions after the flop easier than they would be with any other style.

If you check and call with a medium-strength hand all the way down like a fish, you're going to have no idea what your opponent has. He could be bluffing, betting with a monster or anything else in between.

If instead you bet your hands aggressively, you put all the pressure on your opponents. They don't have a clue of what you're betting with but they do know you just might have a huge hand. It is because of this uncertainty that they're going to have to play their hands in a more straightforward manner.

By putting that pressure on your opponents, they are going to have a hard time playing weak hands against you. It also makes it more expensive for them to bluff when you are the aggressor. If you check and call, all your opponents have to do to bluff is make a bet. But if you're betting and they want to bluff, they have to risk more money on a big raise.

Tags also know how to make the occasional bluff but they don't overdo it like the maniacs do. Tags are aware of their table image and they can judge the best times to make the occasional, well-timed bluff.

As a tag, your decisions become easier because you are playing strong hands that are likely to hit the flop hard. You are putting pressure on your opponents by betting and raising, not checking and calling. If you miss the flop, you can simply throw your hand away and wait for a better spot to put your money in.
The basic idea of the tag style is to play only strong starting hands before the flop and only continue after the flop with strong hands. If you don't hit a strong hand on the flop, you are quick to fold it.

**Playing the Flop**

A big part of the tag strategy we talked about in the last section is knowing when to fold your hands and when to stay in with them. It is the ultimate key to winning at poker. If you want to make a lot of money at poker, you're going to need to be very picky when choosing which hands you stay in with and which hands you fold.

It's tempting to take hands too far on the flop - especially if you've been folding a lot of your hands before the flop. When you finally do pick up a hand strong enough to play it can be frustrating to just fold it when the flop misses you.

The types of hands you're looking for on the flop are the ones that really stick out and make you go "oh great!" not the hands that make you think "well, I have a little bit of something and my opponent might be bluffing..."

Hands like top pair top kicker (TPTK from now on), two-pairs, sets, straights and flushes are what you want to see. Hands like top pair weak kicker and second pair are just asking for trouble.

The problem with weak hands like top pair weak kicker is that you are unlikely to get action from worse hands. For the most part the only hands that will call you down are hands that have you beat. People with hands worse than top pair weak kicker will usually fold them to any decent-sized bet.

You want to stay in the hand when you're the aggressor and you're sure your hand is the best one. It takes a little experience to get this feeling but it comes quickly enough. If someone else is doing all the betting and you're just calling down, hoping your hand is good, it's probably a good time to get out of the hand.

A big part of knowing when your hand is good is knowing your opponents. If you're playing a hand like AA and some fish is calling your bets all the way down, you're probably good. If you're betting with AA and the rock of Gibraltar suddenly puts in a huge checkraise on the turn, however, you will want to realize your AA is only a pair and he probably has you beat.

Playing those big pair hands is similar to playing hands like TPTK. If you raise AQ preflop and the flop comes 2Q7, you probably have the best hand but it's far from invincible. A pair is only a pair so although you should bet this hand for value, you will want to proceed with caution. You will want to play this hand like it's the best hand until someone proves you otherwise.
That brings me to another major part of the tag style: aggression. When you hit strong hands on the flop, the best way to play them is to bet them. By betting your strong hands on the flop, you are accomplishing two separate objectives: you are getting money in the middle with a strong hand and you are protecting your hand from draws.

Almost every hand is susceptible to draws so you want to bet your hands from the beginning. If you have a hand like TPTK, it's vulnerable to all sorts of draws - people can be drawing to two-pair, flushes, straights and all kinds of junk. You can't stop people from drawing against you but can make it expensive to draw against you.

By betting your strong hands on the flop you are cutting your opponents' pot odds which makes it unprofitable for them to chase their draws against you. Since you can't realistically guess which draws your opponents are on and calculate the odds of those hitting while sitting at the table, a good rule of thumb for betting your strong hands is to bet somewhere between 3/4ths the size of the pot to the full size of the pot.

If you are making proper bets with strong hands, you actually want your opponents to draw because you profit when your opponents chase draws against the odds. I'll get more into pot odds later but for now suffice it to say that if you bet big and your opponents still chase, they won't hit their draws often enough to make a profit off you. Sometimes it might seem like everyone is hitting their draws against you but in the long term drawing against the odds is as unprofitable as playing slot machines in a casino.

Continuation Bets

A continuation bet is a bet you place on the flop after having raised preflop. It doesn't matter if you've hit the flop or completely whiffed it, it's a continuation bet. It is called a continuation bet because it is a continuation of the aggression you showed preflop by raising.

Here's an example of a continuation bet: You raise $4 preflop with AK and get one caller. The board comes J34, totally missing you. Your opponent checks to you and you bet $8. That $8 bet is your continuation bet.

A good size for continuation bets is somewhere around 3/4ths the size of the pot to the full size of the pot. If you're playing in a $10 pot, a good continuation bet would be around $7 to $10. If your continuation bets always follow the "3/4 to full pot sized" rule, your opponents won't be able to guess the strength of your hand based on the size of your bet.

Continuation bets are useful because they can often win the pot for you on the flop without you ever having to go to a showdown. In the example above, you started out with a great hand but it didn't really pan out for you on the flop. Instead of giving up and potentially losing to something like a pair of 4's, you've thrown out a continuation bet that will most likely win the pot for you.
Another good time to use continuation bets is with made hands. This works especially well if your opponents have seen you make continuation bets somewhat frequently. Sometimes the best play to make after raising preflop and hitting something nice on the flop is a normal continuation bet. First of all, it gets money in the pot early which means the bets on the turn and river will be bigger. Second, your opponents are likely to think you're just placing another continuation bet with some kind of weak hand.

Continuation bets put your opponents in a difficult spot because they have no idea what you have. You've raised preflop and you've carried that momentum over to the flop with a continuation bet. Even though your opponent might suspect his pocket 9s are good, it's going to be difficult for him to play that hand on a TQ2 board if you're throwing a big continuation bet his direction.

Even though continuation bets are strong plays, there are times when you will want to consider not placing them. One of the worst times to place a continuation bet is when there are multiple opponents in the pot with you. The more opponents there are in a hand, the more likely it is that one of them hit something and won't fold to your bet.

You will also want to take into consideration the board texture. Some board textures are better than others for continuation bets. If you have one opponent and the board looks something like 3d7sKh, you have a better chance at winning the pot than if the board was something like ThJhQh.

A board like ThJhQh is especially bad for continuation betting because it hits so many potential hands. If you think about the types of hands people like to play, it could have easily given someone a flush, a straight, a two pair or a strong draw. Boards with aces are also dangerous for continuation bets because weak players love to play any hand with an ace in it. If you're up against tight opponents, aces become good cards because your opponents will think you raised with an ace.

Other times you'll land a decent draw on the flop and have to decide if you want to semi-bluff with it or check to get a free card. The semi-bluff works well because it gives you two chances to win the pot: your opponents might fold or you might hit your draw. The only problem with this is you risk getting raised out of the pot. If your opponent checks to you and you check behind, you get to see the turn card for free. But if your opponent checks and you place a bet, you open yourself up to the risk of a big checkraise.

Checkraises in general pose a significant threat to continuation bets because your opponents know that people usually bet after raising preflop whether or not the flop helped. If your opponents notice that you place continuation bets very frequently, they will start checkraising you more often.

When deciding whether or not to place a continuation bet, you want to base your decision on the likelihood of your opponents folding. Here are a few questions you can ask yourself when trying to decide if a continuation bet is a good idea:
Is there more than one opponent in the hand against you?
Are you up against calling stations or opponents who checkraise often?
Does the board texture look like it could have hit hands that your opponents are likely to play?
Have you taken down several pots with continuation bets recently?

If you answer yes to one or more of these questions, you may just want to play it safe and check instead of bet.

Chapter 6
Draws

Playing Your Draws

The key word to keep in mind to play your draws successfully is moderation. Draws are not made hands and they miss more often than they hit. Don't overdo it when it comes to playing your draws.

One of the biggest mistakes fish make besides playing too many hands is putting too much emphasis on their draws. When you chase draws against the odds, you are losing money. It may not look like you're losing money when you get lucky and hit a couple of draws in a row but the reality is that the odds are stacked against you. Any money you spend chasing a draw against the odds is money thrown right down the drain.

When deciding whether or not to play a draw, there are several things you want to consider:

- Your pot odds
- Other cards that could help you win the pot
- The likelihood that your draw will win the pot
- The visibility of your draw
- Your position
- The potential size of the pot

As you can see, playing draws properly requires a little more consideration than one would think. All of these factors contribute to how favorable of a drawing environment you are playing in. Let's take a quick look at each one of these factors:

- **Your pot odds**

The most important factor by a long shot is your pot odds. If you are getting the proper pot odds to chase a nut draw, none of the other factors matter. When you are getting the proper pot odds on a draw, it means you will make enough money the few times you complete your draw that it will more than make up for the rest of the times you miss your draw. I'll explain this in greater detail in the section titled "Pot Odds."
Other cards that could help you win the pot

Other cards that can help you win the pot are called "additional outs." Your chance of winning the hand increases with every additional out you have.

For example, say you have a spade flush draw with the AsKs in your hand. The board is showing 2sQs8d and you suspect your opponent has a hand like AQ or KQ for top pair. In this example you have a flush draw that has 9 outs. Additionally, you can catch any A or K to possibly make the best hand. There are 3 aces and 3 kings out there somewhere for a total of 6 additional outs and a grand total of 15 outs for the hand.

But wait, are you sure those additional Aces and Kings are outs that can win the hand for you? If your opponent has AQ for top pair, any ace is going to give you top pair but it will give him two pair. If your opponent does indeed have AQ, those Ace outs you counted were actually counterfeit outs and are very dangerous to you.

The same thing goes for your King outs if your opponent has KQ in his hand. A king on that board would give you TPTK which would look like a great hand but it would in reality be losing to your opponent's two pair.

On top of all that, you can't really be sure that your opponent only has top pair. You might suspect it but you won't know it until the showdown. If your opponent already has two pair, your additional outs won't help you.

If your opponent already has a set, you're in even more trouble than before. In this example, not only would your ace and king outs be worthless but any spade that pairs the board would give your opponent a full house while giving you a flush - a potentially very expensive situation.

All of this isn't to say you don't want additional outs, it just means you should be cautious when taking them into consideration. The fact is additional outs only increase your chances of winning the hand. The only problems come when we put too much faith in them.

The likelihood that your draw will win the pot

Drawing to a second best hand is an enormously expensive mistake so make sure the draws you're chasing are to the nuts. The last thing you want to do is spend money chasing a draw that wouldn't even have won the pot.

If the board has three cards of the same suit showing, you wouldn't want to chase a straight draw because someone could already have a flush. You also wouldn't want to chase a flush on a paired board because someone could already have a full house.

You should only chase draws when you're getting the right odds to do so and you're sure that the draw will win the pot for you.
- **The visibility of your draw**

The visibility of your draw refers to how obvious it is. Draws that are somewhat hidden are more likely to be paid off than obvious draws. Flush draws tend to be the most obvious because everyone can see how many cards of each suit are on board.

Hands like double gutshot straight draws are a little harder to detect. A double gutshot straight is basically like having two inside straight draws at the same time. An example of a double gutshot straight would be holding 68 on a T74 board. Here any 5 or 9 would complete your straight.

- **Your position**

It's much easier to play draws from late position than it is from early position. If you want a free card all you have to do is check behind if your opponents check first - which they will do often because they are out of position.

If you want a free card and are in early position, you just have to check and hope your opponents check behind you. If you check and they bet, you're usually going to have to throw away your draw. Sometimes you can bet from early position as a semi-bluff but that puts more money at risk and when done from early position you won't know if you're betting into a made hand or not.

- **The potential size of the pot**

Your draws increase in value as the potential size of the pot increases. Estimating the potential size of the pot requires a little judgment so take extra care in being realistic. Taking the potential size of the pot into consideration is called estimating your *implied pot odds* and there is an entire section devoted to this topic coming up.

**Pot Odds**

The topic of pot odds isn't as complicated as it sounds so give this section a chance. It's an important thing to know because by using pot odds you can quickly determine whether or not it's profitable to chase a draw.

All pot odds are used for is to compare the size of a bet to the size of the pot. For example, say you're playing a no limit game and the pot is $9. If your opponent bets $1, the pot is now $10 and it costs you $1 to stay in. The pot odds in this situation would be expressed as 10:1.

If the pot is $20 and your opponent bets $10, your pot odds are 30:10 or more simply, 3:1. That's all there is to finding your pot odds.
Now that you know what your pot odds are, all you have to do is compare them to the odds of your draw completing.

Let's use another example to explain how we compare our pot odds to our drawing odds. Say you're playing in a $100 pot and you have a flush draw. Your opponent bets exactly $100 and you know that your pot odds are 200:100 or 2:1.

Now all you have to do is compare the odds of a flush draw to the pot odds you're getting. The odds of completing a flush draw are roughly 4:1. By comparing the 4:1 of your flush draw to the 2:1 of your pot odds, you see that your pot odds are worse than your drawing odds. If you're only getting 2:1 on a 4:1 draw, you can't call and expect to make a profit over the long run.

I'm going to use a long term example to show why you shouldn't call when the pot odds are against you. If you got into this exact same situation 100 times and called that $100 bet 100 times, you'd spend a total of $10,000 chasing. Out of those 100 times chasing, you would complete the flush draw and win the $200 pot 20 times for a total of $4,000 in wins. That works out to a loss of $6,000 over the course of those 100 situations.

If you didn't notice earlier, I just told you the odds of that flush draw earlier without telling you how I came up with that. Well, there are two ways to calculate the odds of your draws completing. One of them is very difficult; one of them is very simple and can be done at the table.

The difficult way to do this is to count your outs and use a long, complicated equation to find your odds. If you want to do it this way, you're going to have to look elsewhere because I don't even know what that equation looks like.

The easy way to calculate your drawing odds at the table is to just memorize the odds of a few of the more common draws and then memorize more over time. Here are the odds of some of the more common draws:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Draw</th>
<th>Odds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flush Draw</td>
<td>4:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Ended Straight</td>
<td>5:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set to Full House</td>
<td>6:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gutshot Straight Draw</td>
<td>11:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Pair to a Full House</td>
<td>11:1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Before we end this section, let's take a quick quiz to make sure you have this concept down. You can find the answers on the next page.

You have an open ended straight draw in a $200 pot and your opponent bets $100.

1. What are your pot odds?
2. What are your drawing odds?
3. Should you chase this draw?
1. After the opponent's bet, the pot is $300 and you have to call $100 to stay in. The pot odds are 300:100 which reduces down to 3:1.

2. A quick look at the odds chart above will tell you that the odds of an open ended straight draw completing are 5:1.

3. Since 3:1 pot odds are worse than 5:1 drawing odds, you should not chase this draw.

**Implied Pot Odds**

"Implied pot odds" builds upon the pot odds concept by taking future betting rounds into consideration when determining the profitability of a call. Implied odds are an estimate of how much money you think you can win if you complete your draw.

Say you're on a flush draw and your opponent has bet but you aren't quite getting the pot odds you need to chase it profitably. Let's also say that you somehow know that your opponent will bet a million dollars on the river no matter what card comes. It would be crazy not to call on the flop because you're getting massive implied odds on the call.

For a more realistic example let's pretend that you have a flush draw in a $100 pot. If your opponent bets $50, you'd be getting 3:1 on a 4:1 draw which isn't good enough to call. But let's say you estimate that if you complete your draw, you can get your opponent to call a $100 bet on the river.

This is where your implied odds come into play. To calculate your implied odds, all you do is add your estimated future bet to the size of the pot. After your opponent's $50 bet, the current pot size is $150. If you add that $100 river bet that you're planning on making, the final size of the pot you stand to win is $250.

Your implied odds in this example are 250:50 or more simply 5:1. Since your implied odds are greater than 4:1 you can now profitably chase this draw.

The one major weakness of the implied odds concept is that it's based on an estimate. Poker players, being the positive bunch that we are, tend to get a little overoptimistic when estimating our implied odds.

What you absolutely do not want to do is use exaggerated implied odds as justification for making bad calls. Before you make a call based on your implied odds, make sure you have a strong reason to believe your opponent will call a big bet on the river if you hit your draw.

People make bets with all types hands so don't assume they'll call your bets every time you hit your draw. You really need to have a good reason to believe your opponent has a strong hand and will call your bet.
Reverse Implied Odds

Reverse implied odds is a term used to describe the situation in poker where completing your draw is the worst possible outcome. Completing a draw can be a terrible thing if you're drawing to a second best hand.

Let's say you have Ah Kh and are drawing to a flush on a board of 4h4sQh. If your opponent has pocket queens for the flopped full house, the worst thing that can happen is you hit a third heart. By drawing to second best hands not only are you wasting money chasing for no reason but when you do hit you're going to lose even more money.

The lesson in this section is to never chase draws that aren't to the nuts. Don't chase draws to straights if there could already be a flush out there and don't draw to anything if the board is paired. You lose in every possible way when you chase draws that aren't to the nuts.

The problem with chasing non-nut draws even extends to the few times you get lucky enough to hit your draw and your opponent doesn't already have you beat. If you catch a flush on a paired board, do you think your opponent is going to put much money in the pot with something that will pay you off? Not a chance. Your opponent will be too worried about the full house and flush possibilities out there to put any money in with something like top pair.

Reverse implied odds also come into play when the one card you need to complete your draw is the same card your opponent needs to complete a better draw. For example, if you're holding 89 on a 3TJ board a queen will complete your straight but if your opponent has AK, that same queen would give him a better straight. The same thing goes for flush draws. If you're chasing a low flush at the same time an opponent is chasing a higher flush, you're going to be in big trouble if you hit the card you want.

It's easy to avoid the reverse implied odds situation if you only chase draws to the nuts. As you get started in poker, I highly recommend you stick to that strategy. Eventually you'll be able to use your hand reading skills to chase weaker draws when you know your opponent has a big pair or whatever.

But for now, the lesson remains the same: never chase draws that aren't to the nuts.
Chapter 7
Playing Made Hands

This is the chapter where all the fun is at. You've patiently folded hand after hand until, finally, you are dealt something strong. Some people say that playing made hands is easy, they say things like "anyone can play the nuts; the hard part comes in folding your weak hands." Well, I disagree for a couple of reasons.

First, just because you have a strong hand it doesn't mean you have an invincible hand. Made hands are susceptible to all kinds of draws and other, better made hands. The second thing that makes big hands difficult to play is finding the right balance between protecting your hand with bets and sucking other people into the pot by slowplaying.

Slowplaying vs. Fast Playing

Right off the bat I'm going to tell you that you should lean towards betting your hands rather than slowplaying them. If you're not sure how to play a strong hand, your best bet is to bet with it from the beginning. If you want to win a big pot you have to start getting the money in early.

By betting early you accomplish two important objectives: you protect your hand from draws and you start building the pot against weaker hands. By waiting to bet you run the risk of letting opponents with draws see free cards. You also miss out on value from weaker hands and people chasing draws.

If you start betting on the flop, you can get money from people with draws. If you wait until the river to bet, people with missed draws obviously aren't going to call. That's money that would've been yours had you starting betting early. The only draws that are going to call bets on the river are the ones that were completed.

You should also lean towards fast playing if there are several people in the pot with you. The more people that are in a hand, the more likely it is one of them hit something that they feel is worth calling a bet with. It is also more likely that someone has a draw and you need to protect your hand.

Slowplaying is best reserved for powerhouse hands that are unlikely to be outdrawn. If you land a full house on the flop, it's unlikely anyone will draw out on you. It's also unlikely anyone else has much of a hand because you've connected with pretty much every card on the board. Often the best bet here is to slowplay for a street or two in the hopes of letting someone else make a strong second best hand.

Other times a bet on the flop is the best if you have a monster but your hand is disguised. If you raised preflop from early position with 22 and the board comes 277, your opponents are likely going to think that since you raised preflop in early position, you have a couple of high cards that completely whiffed this board. If you're up against the
right opponent, a bet will encourage them to try to take the hand from you or call your "bluff."

Whenever you're trying to choose between slowplaying and fast playing, keep the following guidelines in mind:

Learn towards slowplaying:

- Very strong hand
- Few opponents
- Tight opponents

Lean towards fast playing:

- Not as strong of a hand
- More opponents
- Loose opponents
- Disguised hand

**Big Pairs and Two-Pairs**

I've grouped big pairs and two-pairs together because they are so similar in strength and in how they should be played. These are the weakest hands in the "made hands" category but they are still much stronger than the average hand you'll be up against. Big pairs include hands like top pair top kicker, top pair second kicker and big pocket pairs like AA and KK. The two keys to playing big pairs and two-pairs correctly are aggression and caution.

You want to play these hands with aggression to get value from weaker hands and to protect them from draws. Your opponents will call with all kinds of garbage so don't pass up on free money by failing to bet. Big pairs and two pairs are nowhere near strong enough to slowplay so don't fall into that temptation.

Caution is needed with these hands because they can be beaten by so many hands. Big pairs and two-pairs are usually strong enough to win the pot but not always. If you ever get a reason to believe you're up against a stronger hand you should be quick to fold yours. It's easy to get attached to your big pocket pair or two-pair but you've got to be able to fold it when it's beaten.

This doesn't mean you need to play your hand like a scared little boy though. You should bet this hand hard on the flop, turn and river unless your opponents give you a reason to believe they have you beaten. Until they do, bet that hand for value.

If you suspect your opponent is chasing a draw, you can bet your hand on the flop and turn, but then check it on the river if the draw misses. That way you give your opponent a chance to bluff with his missed draw.
Sets

Over the course of your poker playing career, you will come to learn that the set is your best friend. No other hand will make you more money than the set. Sets are sneaky hands because they only require one card on the board to match up with the pair in your hand. There's no way for your opponents to tell you have a set - they aren't like flushes or straights that are easily detected based on the cards on board.

The other great thing about sets is they can easily turn into full houses. And you know that when you get a full house, the pot is almost always going to be yours. What's even better is when the card that pairs the board and gives you a full house is the same exact card that completes your opponent's flush draw (reverse implied odds, anyone?).

Sets are good hands to start betting with right off the bat because you want to protect them from draws and start building a big pot. Even though the set is a strong hand, it's still susceptible to straight and flush draws. The other benefit to betting sets early in the hand is it bloats the pot early on so you can make bigger bets on the turn and river.

Very rarely is it a good idea to fold a set but sometimes it will be necessary. You should only fold a set if the board turns ugly and you have a strong reason to believe your opponent has a flush or straight. It's not fun to fold sets but if you have a strong read that your opponent has you beat you really have no choice.

Keep in mind that the odds of improving a set on the flop to a full house by the river are about 3:1. The odds of improving a set to a full house with one card to come are about 6:1. If you are sure that your opponent has you beat but if he is giving you the odds to improve to a full house you can draw to it.

Straights

Straights are the next step up in the made hands totem pole but they are still susceptible to a variety of draws, including bigger straights. Sometimes you're going to have to slowplay these hands because your opponents won't have much - you've hit the board pretty hard when you land a straight.

For the most part though, my advice is that you play your straights fast. When you have a straight there are a lot of cards that can kill your action. For example, if you have ThJh on a 7s8s9d board you've got the top straight. But if any spade, 7, 8, 9, T or J comes you won't have the nuts any more. Once you lose the nuts, you don't get them back. Straights aren't like sets - they can't improve to anything better.

Even if none of those cards helps your opponents it's going to hurt you because your opponents will be scared of the board. If a 6 or T comes on a 789 board, there's going to be 4 to the straight showing and anyone without a straight is going to shut down immediately.
Because of these reasons I recommend you play your straights fast. Get the money in the pot while you have the lead. If you can get it all in on the flop with a straight you're in great shape.

**Flushes**

One more step up is the flush. Flushes are way stronger than straights because there are way fewer cards that can kill your action. If you have the nut flush the only hands you'll ever have to worry about are full houses (and those are relatively rare anyways).

Feel free to slowplay the nut flush if you catch one right on the flop. If your opponents don't have a hand yet, you can give them a chance to catch up a little so they put money in the pot.

If you have any indication at all that your opponent has a strong hand, go ahead and bet your flush on the flop. The last thing you want is for another flush card to come and kill all your action. Another benefit to playing flopped flushes fast is that sometimes your opponents won't believe you. They will reason that if you really had a flush you'd be slowplaying it instead of betting.

The smaller your flush is, the more you'll want to lean towards fast-playing it. If you have something like 4d5d on a Kd8d9s board, there's a good chance someone has something and your bets will be called. Don't dally around in getting money in the pot with small flushes. If another flush card comes your hand becomes basically worthless.

Every once in a while you're going to run into a bigger flush with your small flushes. That scenario is pretty rare so don't worry about it too much. If you never fold a flush on a non-paired board, you'll be just fine. Sometimes your big hands just run into other big hands; there's not much you can do about it.

The only times you should consider folding a small flush is when you're up against smart, tight players and they're giving you too much action. Even then I wouldn't fold mine very often. But if you have a strong indicator your opponent is sitting on a bigger flush then go ahead and muck it. Don't start seeing monsters under the bed and making this a habit though. If you start folding your small flushes every time someone gives you a little action you're going to lose out on all kinds of money.

**Full Houses and Better**

I've lumped the rest of the powerhouse hands together because full houses, quads, straight flushes and royal flushes are all the same strength relatively speaking. Once you get one of these hands, you're going to win the pot. It doesn't matter if it's a full house or a royal flush. Quads and straight flushes are so rare that it really doesn't matter how you play them.
Hell, most of the time I'd rather have a full house than a straight flush because with a straight flush you've got the deck locked down so tight that nobody will have anything with which to pay you off. While we're at it I'll just tell you right now that you should probably slowplay quads or a straight flush for at least one street. In that situation you'll want to at least give your opponents a chance to catch something.

But anyways, the hand you're going to see most often out of this group is the full house. If you have the top full house you can either play it slow or play it fast depending on your read of the opponent. You're going to win the pot either way.

With the underfull, you're probably going to win the pot still, but it's slightly more susceptible to bigger full houses. For example: say you have 22 on an AA2 board. You have the underfull and you'll probably win but you might as well come out betting. People love playing aces so if you come out betting there's a pretty decent chance someone will call you. If they have an ace, you can start building the pot and protecting your hand. You don't want someone with an AJ to have a free shot at catching a jack on the turn. If they don't have an ace, well, they probably wouldn't have called much anyways so you didn't lose anything by betting early.

**Chapter 8**
Crushing Your Opponents

The longer you play poker, the more you'll come to see that most of your opponents can be classified under several general categories. Of course you can't fit everyone into a perfect little category but you can get close enough to call it good while you work on getting to know each opponent better.

If you use PokerTracker or Holdem Manager, you can get a pretty good idea of which category each opponent fits into after only a few rounds at the table. Once you have an idea of what type of opponent you're up against, there are some general tactics you can use to make money off them. Poker is like the game paper-rock-scissors because every strategy has a weakness. The faster you can switch your strategy to counter your opponent's strategy, the more money you'll make in poker.

**Loose-Passives (a.k.a. Fish)**

Loose-passive opponents are the fish of the poker world. When I first started out in poker I just thought the fish were people who "sucked at poker" or were "idiots." I had no idea there were actually specific characteristics that made "the fish" the fish.

The fish are classified as loose-passive opponents. They are loose in their starting hand requirements and they are passive with their hands after the flop. Basically this means that they play too many hands before the flop and then they do a lot of checking and calling after the flop.
The fish have many bad habits that are good for people like you who play poker to win money. Here are a few characteristics of the common fish:

- They play 40% or more of their starting hands
- They come in with a preflop raise less than 10% of the time
- They like to play any two suited cards
- They like to play any hand with an ace in it
- They chase draws against the odds
- They chase random backdoor draws
- They call bets on the flop with nothing in the hopes of hitting a pair
- They make lots of checks and calls
- They make very few bets or raises

The best ways to clean the fish out are pretty simple:

- Play a straightforward game
- Don't berate the fish

**Play a Straightforward Game**
The best way to take advantage of the fish is to play a straightforward game of poker. Fish are utterly unbluffable so don't even try bluffing them with anything but the occasional continuation bet. You'll also want to lower your continuation bet frequency against fish because they like to call so much.

**Don't Berate the Fish**
The fish will always be your best friends because they are the ones that keep the games juicy. If it wasn't for the fish, there wouldn't be a whole lot of money circulating through the poker economy. The fish will irritate the hell out of you sometimes and you'll want to reach through the monitor and slap them. No matter how mad they make you, never forget that the fish are your friends.

I see people berating the fish all the time and it drives me nuts. If a fish makes you mad, get over it quietly! Cursing at the fish only hurts your bottom line because it discourages poor play. The fish will either try to play better poker or quit the game for good. Yelling at the fish is just shooting yourself in the foot.

*Cliffs Notes*: Don't bluff the fish, value bet them. No matter what happens, don't berate the fish!

**LAGs (a.k.a. Maniacs)**

LAG stands for loose-aggressive. Maniacs are loose in their starting hand requirements and they play their hands very aggressively. These are the guys you see betting and raising so much that it messes up the whole table. Maniacs can sometimes be difficult to play against but they can be exploited.
Lags that go on hot runs can really screw the table up and intimidate the players. Those are the times they are the hardest to play against. Just remember that there's always a way to exploit each type of player. If maniacs are playing so many hands, they have to be playing weak ones too, right? That is correct. And if they are putting lots of money in the middle with weak hands, there has to be some way to take advantage of that, right? Correct again.

Here are the 5 things you can do to crush the lags:

- Use the power of position
- Slowplay the lags
- Value bet the lags
- Play tight
- Open up your 3-betting range

**Use the Power of Position**
The first thing you can do to gain the advantage is to get yourself seated to the left of the lag. This will make your life infinitely easier. By sitting to the left of the lags, you will have position on them and will always get to see their actions before you make yours. The power of position is especially useful against maniacs.

**Slowplay the LAGs**
One of the best strategies against lags is to slowplay them. If they are the types of lags that can't spot a slowplay, you'll make tons of money by just waiting for strong hands and then slowplaying them. If you have position on the lag, it's even better because it looks like you're just calling with a marginal hand. Sometimes this will even get action from other players at the table.

**Value Bet the LAGs**
Value bets also work well against lags because they like to make hero calls. When people get annoyed by a lag's antics, they tend to try big bluffs. The lags know this and they like to make big calls. This leaves an opening for you to come in and value bet a wider range of hands than you normally would. Lags love to make big calls on the river so give them many opportunities to do so.

**Play Tight**
Don't forget that lags get strong hands sometimes too. If you start overplaying your hands or making loose calls just because you're up against a maniac you're going to lose money. Lags get just as many strong hands as everyone else so don't turn into a calling station against them. Lags make the most money when people start making big calls with junky hands.

One of the hardest things to do when playing against lags is to tighten up enough to avoid getting stuck in marginal situations but not to tighten up so much that you become predictable. This is the main reason I suggest you get a seat to the left of the lag. If you can play tight against him but normal, or even a little looser, against the rest of the table,
it will look like you're playing a normal game (in the lag's eyes). By having position you'll know when you can get in and play pots with less than stellar hands.

**Open up Your Three-Betting Range**

Since lags raise so many hands preflop, it only makes sense that you open up your 3-betting (or re-raising) range. This tactic takes a lot of finesse to use it correctly so don't try it if you're not 100% comfortable with playing in 3-bet pots. This strategy also works best when you have position on the lag.

If you don't usually 3-bet hands like AQ or TT preflop, the best time to start doing it is against the lags. Hands like AQ and TT are major favorites over the preflop raising ranges of lags. You want to get more money in the pot with hands like these when you're against lags. You're almost always ahead with hands like these.

Don't forget that last section, though. Lags sometimes get strong hands too. If you 3-bet a lag and he 4-bets you in return you're going to have to do some serious thinking. Some lags are just psychotic and 4-bet with anything. These guys are easy to deal with - you just call.

Other lags are smarter than that and actually have some standards for hands they'll get it all in with preflop. You're just going to have to estimate their hand ranges and decide if your hand is strong enough to call. Taking notes and looking back at the recent history of the game will help you in making that decision.

*Cliffs Notes: Slowplay and value bet the lags. Tighten up and wait for strong starting hands but don't tighten up so much that it becomes obvious. 3-bet them with a wider range of hands.*

**Rocks**

Rocks are players who play a tight-passive game. They are very tight with their starting hands and very passive with the hands they do play. It's hard to win much money from rocks because they are so tight but they are very predictable players. Most rocks won't make a bet or raise after the flop unless they have very strong hands.

Rocks are the best players to sit to the right of. If you're going to let one person have position on you at the table, make it be a rock. If you remember the last section, I said to sit to the left of lags because they are so unpredictable. Well rocks are the most predictable players so they're the best ones to have on your left.

You won't have to worry about them abusing you with position because they play so tight and straightforward. Of course even rocks make the occasional bluff but it's a lot easier to deal with that than some tricky, unpredictable player always messing with your pots. You won't have to worry about them making as many preflop raises either so your range of playable hands is wider than it would be with a lag on your left.
The other advantage you get from having rocks on your left is that you can steal their blinds with ease. Every chance you get, steal their blinds. Sometimes they’ll defend their blinds but for the most part you’ll find the most success stealing from rocks.

TAGS

Tags are the worst players to have at your table. The name stands for tight-aggressive which means they are tight in selecting their starting hands but aggressive with the hands they do play. Tags usually have a pretty decent handle on poker strategy and they don't give up the money easily.

If you ever find yourself at a table that has more than a couple of tags, the best strategy is to just find yourself a new table. If this isn't an option, there are a few things you can do to take tags off their game:

**Float Them**

Many tags are unimaginative so floats are a great play to pull on basic, straightforward tags. The float is a play that you use when you have position on a tag. The basic concept is when a tag raises, you call with any two cards. Then, when they place a continuation bet on the flop, you call that bet with the intention of stealing the pot on the turn.

This works because ABC poker types of tags will throw out c-bets close to 100% of the time whether they hit the flop or not. If they get called, they usually check and fold the turn, giving you an easy pot to steal. This works the best if there is any kind of draw on the flop and it completes on the turn. Say there's a couple of spades on the flop and the turn brings a third spade, you've got a perfect opportunity to steal the pot.

Floats are also effective because they are so cheap to attempt. If you get any action, you can easily let the pot go and get out cheap. If your opponent bets again on the turn or he checkraises you when you bet, you should just fold and get out while it's still cheap. Your opponents, on the other hand, will have to invest a lot more money to see if they are good. A turn bet can get expensive and a turn checkraise is even more expensive. When floating, you have all the advantages (position, small bets) and your opponent has all the disadvantages (out of position, and has to place bigger bets).

You can read more about the float in Chapter 9.

**Pressure Them**

You'll find a lot of straightforward, multi-tabling tags at any poker site. These guys have trained themselves to concentrate on playing 8 or more tables at a time so they usually aren’t overly tricky. These are the perfect types of players to put pressure on. They don't like trying to get reads on you when they've got 7 other tables going on at the same time.

Use your position and put pressure on the tags. They hate it! Use well timed bluffs, float them, raise your draws and do anything you can to annoy them. Most multi-tabling tags
need very strong hands to stay in if someone plays back at them. They just don't have the
time or inclination to worry about one guy at one of their tables messing with them.

**Chapter 9**
Advanced Strategy

**Board Textures and Hand Reading**

Originally, "board textures" and "hand reading" were two separate sections but I've
decided to combine them. Reading the board and reading hands are so closely
intertwined that it does no good to try to learn these skills separately. Reading the board
is useless if you can't put people on hands and putting people on hands is useless if you
can't read the board.

The term "board texture" refers to how favorable the board looks for your hand and your
opponents' likely hands. Being able to read and understand the board texture is a critical
skill for every poker player. Fortunately, it's not a tough skill to master and eventually it
will come natural to you.

For example, let's say you have a pair of tens, make a preflop raise and get called by 4
people. If the flop comes something like AKQ, you could say the board texture looks
terrible for your tens. There are three big cards out there and 4 people called your preflop
raise so it's likely someone already has your tens beat. This is an obvious example but
this is how you read the board.

Now we'll throw a little hand reading in the mix. Let's say a really tight player raises
preflop from early position. This guy rarely raises preflop and it's even rarer for him to
raise from early position so you figure he has to have something like AK, JJ, QQ, KK or
AA. Just by doing this much you've already done a little hand reading.

Continuing the example, let's say the flop brings three low cards - something like 2d3s8c.
This is a good board texture for your opponent because he likely has a high pair in his
hand and is soundly beating anything on the board. This would be a bad time for you to
try to pull a bluff because you can't really represent anything other than a flopped set.
Very rarely can you get an opponent to fold a big pair on an unconnected, unsuited board.

It's this combination of putting your opponents on hands and reading the board texture
that will give you a major advantage at the no limit tables. Just being able to roughly
guess your opponents' ranges of raising hands is a great start if you can apply that
knowledge to what's showing on the board.

Once you master the art of estimating your opponents' preflop hand ranges, you can
narrow down the list of likely hands by observing how your opponents play *after* the flop.
Every time there is a showdown, take a look at each opponent's cards and see what type
of hand he was playing. Keep an eye out for draws, weak hands, medium-strength hands
and monsters. Notice how each opponent plays his hands from in position and out of position.

Does your opponent play his draws fast, with lots of bets and raises? Does he play his medium-strength hands with much gusto or does he play them as if he's unsure of how to proceed? Does he always slowplay his monsters or does he play them fast? If you constantly ask yourself these types of questions (and record the answers) you'll get to know your opponents much faster than you could by just trying to wing it and go by "feel."

Table Image

Table image is all about perception. It is how you perceive your opponents and how your opponents perceive you. If you win six pots in a row without a showdown, your opponents will perceive you to be an aggressive, bluff-happy player. It doesn't matter if you've bluffed every single time or just happened to be on a hot rush of cards. All that matters is that your opponents have seen you take down six pots in a row.

It pays to be aware of your table image at all times. Let's say that after winning those six pots in a row you look down and find that you've been dealt yet another strong hand - a full house. Most of the time you would want to slowplay a full house for a street or two to give everyone else a chance to catch up or make a second-best hand. This time, however, you'd probably want to start betting and raising right off the bet.

You've taken the last six pots down so if you bet yet again, your opponents are likely to think you're just out stealing another pot. By playing to your table image, you won't have to rely on one of your opponents getting a second-best hand because there is also a good chance that one of them will get frustrated enough with you that they'll try to take a stand against you.

This is pretty basic stuff so far but the table image concept gets poker players into trouble all the time because of the following fact:

Table image comes into play for loose and aggressive players WAY more than it does for tight, solid players.

People notice loose players and tend to forget about tight players. Tight poker players get in trouble with this because they overestimate the effects of their table image. They'll try to pull off a big bluff because they haven't won a pot in two hours and think they can get away with it. These bluffs fail because fish don't notice tight players. On top of that, fish love trying to catch big bluffs.
There are two ways to use table image to your advantage:

1. Conscious manipulation
2. Use of your natural table image

Conscious manipulation means making certain plays in a conscious effort to manipulate your table image. If you want people to call more when you have strong hands, you would want to steal more pots when in late position and show your cards after successful bluffs.

Some poker players take it to the extreme and show their cards every single time they steal a pot, no matter how small. This is a surprisingly effective tactic because it irritates the other players at the table to no end. They'll think that you're some kind of cheap hot-shot wannabe. When you constantly show your bluffs, the other players will want to teach you a lesson in humility. Use this to your advantage! Not only will your strong hands get more calls, but you'll also get to laugh at all the crazy comments you'll see in the chat box.

The use of your natural table image is something you should be doing all the time. Like I said before, always be aware of your table image. If you've been getting crappy cards for the last hour, your late position steals will be more effective. Just don't go overboard with the stealing because people don't notice tight players like they notice loose players.

If you've had a lucky streak and hit a few strong hands recently, you will need to lower your bluff frequency and increase the speed at which you play your strong hands. There's not a better feeling in the world showing a big bluff and then getting a hand like AA on the very next hand. Use that table image!

Before we move on to the next section, I have a few last words of wisdom to pass on to you:

The looser your table image, the more you should value bet your marginal made hands.

What this means is that if you have a loose or reckless table image, you can get away with betting weaker made hands than you could if you had a tight table image. Why is this so? Because if your opponents see you as loose, they will open up the range of hands with which they call you. Sometimes you can bet hands like 2\text{nd} pair, medium kicker and get calls from even weaker hands.

Now if you have a tight image, you can't get away with betting such marginal hands. Your opponents see you as tight so they won't make nearly as many loose calls. Bets in this case have negative expected value because your opponents will fold everything that you can beat and will only call with hands that are beating yours.
Semi-Bluffing Secrets

The semi-bluff is one of the most powerful moves in poker. It gives you two ways to win the hand: you might make everyone else fold or you might complete your draw and win the showdown.

Most of your opponents are already well aware of semi-bluffs are so even though it's a powerful move, you still want to use it with discretion. If you go around throwing semi-bluffs that have no chance of inducing folds, you're just making it more expensive to hit your draws.

Remember that no matter how hard you bet your draws, they're still going to complete less than half the time. Therefore, the best result for a semi-bluff is a fold because a fold is a guaranteed win. If your opponents don't fold, you're going to have to hit your draw to win the pot. This is basic stuff but it's easy to forget because semi-bluffing is so much fun!

The most common, and therefore most obvious, semi-bluff is the flush draw semi-bluff. Flush draws are powerful but they are also easily seen by your opponents. To keep your opponents guessing, mix up the way in which you play your flush draws. Semi-bluff with them sometimes, call with them sometimes (with the intention of either hitting your draw or stealing the pot on the turn) and sometimes you can just fold if you're not getting the right odds.

If you play your made hands aggressively like you should, it will make it even more confusing for your opponents. They'll have a hard time telling if you're betting to protect a made hand or if you're semi-bluffing a flush draw. The more you can keep your opponents off-balance, the more money you'll make.

Bluffing with straight draws is a little less obvious but many of your opponents will be able to spot these too. Mix up your straight draw semi-bluffs the same way you mix up your flush draw semi-bluffs.

One of the best hands to semi-bluff with is the double-gutshot straight draw. These hands are very well disguised and will often pay off big when you hit them. An example of a double-gutshot straight draw looks like this:

Hole Cards: Board:
Q-J 8-T-A

In this example, any nine and any king would complete your straight draw. Double gutshot straight draws have the same chance to hit as regular straight draws but they are much more disguised.
If you get caught red-handed trying to pull a semi-bluff not all is lost, however. The one upside to losing a pot with a bluff is that your opponents are going to remember the time(s) they caught you bluffing the next time you make a big bet. If you happen to have a strong hand at that point, you'll have a good chance of getting a call or two.

In fact, you should make it a habit to play your semi-bluffs and made hands the same way. If you got caught semi-bluffing recently, play your next made hand in the exact same manner that you played your bluff.

Make the vast majority of your semi-bluffs from late position. When acting in late position you get to see your opponents' actions first and can then act accordingly. Your opponents are more likely to play their hands straight-forward from early position than in late position. If an opponent check-raises you, give up on the semi-bluff unless you're getting sufficient pot odds to make the call.

If you make bluffs and semi-bluffs from late position on a regular basis, your opponents will catch on and check-raise you much more often - both with made hands and with their own bluffs. When this starts to happen, lower your bluffing frequency and increase your value betting frequency. Sometimes you can call a check-raise if you suspect it's a bluff and then steal the pot on the turn. This is an expensive gamble, though, and should only be used when you have a strong read on your opponent.

Semi-bluffing from out of position is extremely difficult. If you place a bet as a semi-bluff on the flop and get called by your opponent, the turn is extra difficult to play if you miss the draw. In a situation like this, you have no idea of the strength of your opponent's hand. It makes you have to choose whether to continue the bluff or give up without getting any information from your opponent first.

Having said that, there are still times to semi-bluff from out of position. The best time to do this is when placing continuation bets after having raised pre-flop. If you make a preflop raise, your opponents will expect you to make a bet on the flop. If you have opponents who like to float you on a regular basis, the occasional semi-bluff on the turn will make your opponents think twice before pulling the float move on you.

(The "float" is a strategy opponents use to steal whiffed continuation bets. When you raise preflop and make a bet on the flop, the opponents call your flop bet with the intention of stealing the pot from you on the turn. This is discussed in greater detail under the section titled "Using the Float and Defending Against the Float").

How to Read Hands - The 4 Step Formula

Hand reading is obviously a critical skill in poker since the entire basis of a winning strategy is to play as close as you can to the way you'd play if you could see your opponent's hand. The secret to hand reading lays in betting patterns.
Betting patterns refer to the sequence of actions opponents take during the course of a hand. There are only five different actions an opponent can take during a hand: fold, check, call, bet and raise. It's pretty simple when broken down like that but these five actions can be arranged in an almost infinite number of betting patterns.

Being able to identify and understand betting patterns is one of the most powerful skills you can have in no limit holdem. If you've never heard of this concept before, don't worry; you probably already use it to some extent without knowing it. Poker players who consciously study this area can gain a tremendous advantage over their opponents.

Let's use a simple example to demonstrate what I'm talking about.

Say you're playing a .50/$1.00 no limit game and are dealt a pair of aces. A decent tight-aggressive player in middle position limps in and it folds around to you in late position. You make a $5 preflop raise, the blinds fold and the guy in middle position calls your raise.

The flop brings something like 5QQ and looks pretty safe. He checks, you bet $9 and he calls.

The turn brings a 4, he checks again and you bet $19. Again, he calls.

The river brings a 9 and suddenly your opponent leads out with a $35 bet.

Damn! What do you do now?

Well, you make a read on his hand using the following four step formula:

1. Analyze each street of his play and try to imagine what kind of hole cards would make YOU play the same way as him

2. Put it all together and analyze his betting pattern as a whole

3. Make your prediction using a combination of this formula and any additional reads you've already picked up on your opponent

4. Assign percentages to the likelihood of his having certain hands

Let's work through this formula together to figure out what he has.

1. Preflop - Your opponent had something worth playing in early position, but it probably wasn't strong because he only limped in. If he was slow-playing a big pair like AA or KK, he probably would have let you know by pulling a limp-raise.
Flop - Your opponent checked and then called a bet on a 5QQ flop. At this point it looks like he's just being stubborn. He knows it's not very likely you have a queen because two are showing on the flop. He might have a medium pocket pair and doesn't think you hit anything. It's also possible that he has pocket fives for a flopped full house. There's a slightly smaller possibility that he has a queen, but that wouldn't make sense for a decent player in early position. Decent players usually come in for a raise with high cards like AQ and KQ. A tight-aggressive wouldn't normally limp in from early position with AQ or less and then cold call a raise from a player in late position. That would be a highly passive play.

Turn - The turn card doesn't change anything. It's highly unlikely that either one of you believes the 4 improved the other's hand. What does change is how worried you should be. Your opponent checks to you again and he calls yet again. Either he's being extra stubborn or he's slowplaying you with something. Pocket fives are starting to look pretty likely. There's still a chance he has a queen even though that wouldn't make any sense if he truly is tight-aggressive.

River - The board is 5QQ49 and now your opponent leads out with a huge bet. This bet represents massive strength because you have been betting into him all the way down. He has to know you have something strong but he's betting big despite that.

2. Put it all together - Your opponent has checked and called you all the way down and suddenly place a huge bet on the river. You've been representing strength by betting on every street but this hasn't fazed him at all. This is either a monster hand or an elaborate bluff. It would be a pretty ballsy bluff considering how much strength you've shown so far.

3. Make your prediction - He has to have at least a full house or 3 of a kind to be willing to bet into you on the river. My guess is he flopped the full house while holding 55. It's also possible that he got stubborn with 44 on the flop and then ran into a miracle turn. It doesn't really matter which one of those he has though because they both do the same thing.

He might have a queen but we decided that most tight-aggressive opponents wouldn't play a queen from early position and then call a pre-flop raise. That would be a pretty fishy play for a tight-aggressive player but surprises do happen.

4. Assign percentages - this is the most difficult part in the process. It's a skill that develops with experience. Try to get as close as you can to a total of 100%. If you end up well short of 100%, that means you are dealing with a wide range of unknown hands. This will happen sometimes so you just have to play as carefully as you can. As you develop your hand reading skills, you'll get closer and closer to 100% every time.
In the example above, I would place about a 70% chance on him having a full house, a 20% chance he has a queen in his hand and a 10% chance he's making a weird bluff. This is more of an art than a science so the numbers will never be exact. Feel free to adjust these numbers based on your reads and past experience with the opponent in question.

That's it for the four step process. It's not easy but it is simple. If you practice this every hand you play and every hand you observe, your skills will grow at a tremendous rate.

**Using the Float**

"Floating" is a poker tactic where you make a call on the flop with the sole intention of stealing the pot on the turn. It's usually done when you have position on someone who raised preflop and made a standard continuation bet on the flop.

Here's how a basic float looks:

1. Player A raises preflop with AK and Player B calls from late position with 67s.
2. The flop comes 25Q and Player A makes a standard continuation bet, hoping to take the pot down.
3. Player B calls this bet because he suspects Player A is just making a standard continuation bet with a couple of whiffed overcards (and he's correct in this instance because Player A didn't hit a thing).
4. The turn brings a brick and Player A checks because he doesn't have anything and he already got called once.
5. Player B makes a bet even though he has nothing and Player A folds because he can't call with just an ace high from out of position.

Floats are powerful moves because they use the advantage of position to keep your opponent in the dark as to what your intentions are. Your flat call on the flop tells him nothing except you're going to be sticking around one more street. Because he's acting out of position, your opponent doesn't know what your next move will be. Most of the time he'll have to give up on the pot if he doesn't hit anything on the turn.

The other advantage of floating is that it's a relatively cheap and safe way to steal a decent-sized pot from someone. You don't have to put in any big raises; all it takes a call on the flop and a small bet on the turn. If the float is unsuccessful, you're not out a whole lot of money.

The best players to float are straightforward, unimaginative TAGs. These are the players who know how to raise preflop and make continuation bets but they don't like to play too tricky after the flop. If you give them any trouble and they don't have a real hand, they'll usually hand you the pot. If you see a TAG playing many tables at once, he's usually too busy to defend against the float so you should try it against him often.
Some players have caught on to the float and they know how to deal with it. If you find a good player who bets the turn often or uses random checkraises on the turn, it's best to avoid him in the future. Fish are bad to float too because they call too often for your floats to be profitable.

**Defending Against the Float**

It's tough to defend against floats because they take advantage of your poor position. The best way to defend against the float is to mix up your play to such a degree that other players become afraid to float you.

One of the best ways to make it scary for other players is to add random turn checkraises to your arsenal. Mix it up so that sometimes you checkraise with air and other times you checkraise when you have a real hand. One of my favorite ways to get value from real hands is to bet the flop with it and then checkraise the turn. It reduces your predictability and makes it difficult to float you.

Another good counter to the float is to bet the turn more often. Again, you should sometimes bet the turn with real hands and sometimes bet the turn with bluffs. By betting the turn, you keep control of the hand and make it a lot more expensive to bluff you. When you bet the turn, your opponent has to make a big raise to bluff at you and that is often enough to keep them at bay.

Other times, you'll just have to let the floater take the pot. You can't beat every float, and not every "float" is a bluff. Sometimes your opponents will just be slowplaying big hands. In those cases, it can cost you a lot of money if you push too hard.

One last tactic that helps is to avoid the situation altogether and lower your c-bet frequency. You don't have to bet the flop every single time you raise preflop. Every once in a while, check the flop. Try this when you miss and try it occasionally with a real hand. This just adds to your opponents' confusion.

If you keep it mixed up between flop checks, turn checks, turn check-raises and turn bets with real hands and missed hands, your opponents will never know what you have. Their floats will become guesses and you'll fare much better in the long run.

**Managing Scare Cards**

There's nothing worse than having a strong hand, building a big pot and then getting counterfeited by a nasty scare card. Bad scare cards make your life extra difficult because if they don't give your opponent the hand you fear, they make your opponent scared to put more money in the pot. It's a lose-lose situation.

Scare cards can be anything from an ace landing on the flop when you hold KK to the third flush card hitting on the turn to the fourth straight card landing on the river. Any card that can easily give your opponent a better hand than you is a scare card. If that's
not a good enough definition, think of scare cards as any card that lands on the flop, turn or river that makes your stomach drop.

Whenever you see a scare card, don't let it freeze you up. Remember, there's still a chance to make the best of the situation. First of all, don't check every single time you run into a scare card. Checking is just an open invitation for your opponent to bet no matter what he has. You won't know if he needed that card or if he's just betting to steal the pot.

If you play on and bet, your opponent will have a harder time bluffing you because now he has to raise instead of bet. When it gets expensive, your opponents are less willing to bluff you. If he raises your bet, you can safely fold knowing he most likely has the hand you fear.

Sometimes you'll have to check of course, but just don't check every time you run into a scare card. A little hand reading (see Chapter 9) will take you a long way in determining the best course of action. Look at how your opponent has played the hand so far to see if it looks like he was playing a draw. Some of your opponents can be surprisingly obvious with their draws.

If you're up against an opponent who chases a lot or one who looks like he was on a draw, you can check to avoid putting any more money in the pot. It's no fun having to give up on the hand but that's a part of poker you have to deal with sometimes.

Another great way to deal with scare cards is to mix up your play in other situations as well. What I'm talking about is semi-bluffing. If you sometimes bet your draws the same way that you bet your made hands, it will be hard to tell which type of hand you actually have. So when the scare card does come, the opponents don't know for sure if it helps you or hurts you.

One more thing you can do to keep your play varied is to fire the occasional second-barrel turn bet into scare cards. Opponents who pay attention will now notice that sometimes you bet into scare cards with the goods, with complete junk and with other made hands. Sometimes you should even check when the scare card helps you. Other times you can check-raise when scare cards come. Keeping it mixed up is the key.

You definitely don't want to bluff all the time, but the right combination of straightforward play and tricky play will keep you extra difficult to read. This will cause your opponents to play more straightforward against you because they never know what your next move is going to be. This is all easier said than done but you'll get better at it with experience.

**Taking Notes on Your Opponents**

One of the greatest advantages of playing poker online is that it gives you the opportunity to take notes on your opponents. In the past, you had to try to remember everything you
could and that was about it. Now every poker site has some sort of note-taking feature, providing a tremendous advantage to dedicated poker players.

Note taking is an extremely important tactic, so don't ever get lazy and neglect this part of your game. Not only will the notes help you down the road when you run into the same players again, but they help you in the short-run by improving your observation skills. Notes also serve to keep you involved when you're passing time between hands. It's easy to zone out between hands, but you miss out on a lot of valuable information when you do so.

There's a lot you could write about the players at your table, but with note taking, you want to cut off all the fat and only take down the most useful information. Use an abbreviation system to make it shorter. If you don't have an abbreviation system, just type it out long-hand. You'll develop an abbreviation system over time without even thinking about it.

I've listed 10 things to look for when taking notes but don't let this list restrict you. If you find something else useful, feel free to write it down. You also don't want to go to the other extreme and spend every second at the table furiously writing down notes. It's possible to go overboard with it and lose track of what's going on at the table. Take thorough notes but don't take any more than what would be useful at a later date.

1. The date

Note the date at the beginning of each entry you add to a player's notes. This will tell you how relevant the notes are the next time you run into this player. Player styles can change over time.

2. Starting hands

Any time there is a showdown, check the starting hands for everyone involved. Make sure you pay attention during the hand too so you can see how each player played his hand.

If you see that someone plays a pretty tight preflop game like you, note it. If you see someone play a loose game, note it. Any time you see someone play a weird hand, note the hand, the position it was played from and the circumstances in which it was played. Something like "limped in with AK from early position and just called button's preflop raise with it" will tell you a lot.

You can also keep a little section in your notes that just lists all the hands he raises with preflop. Something like "PFR: AA, AK, 77, QJs" will give you a good idea of his preflop raising range.

3. Major confrontations
Write down the circumstances of any major confrontation your opponent had. If two people get it all-in, you should take notes on both players. What did they play and how did they play it on each street? You don't need to note who won or lost because it's the play that matters, not the result.

4. Note how they play big hands

Every time you see someone show down a strong hand, write down how they played it. Something like "limped 44 UTG preflop, hit set, check-called flop, check-raised turn, bet river" will help. If you take a note every time someone shows a big hand, you might catch on to some extremely useful patterns.

5. Bluffs

Every time you see a bluff, write it down. Detail it all the way from preflop down to the river. Again, this can lead to some very useful patterns. Also note the bluff frequency. Some people bluff a lot, others not at all - you can adjust your play against both if you know how often they bluff.

6. Fish moves

Any time someone makes a fish move, note it. Do they chase draws against the odds? Do they chase weak draws like low 1 card flushes or the bottom end of straights? Jot it down. These fish moves will tell you exactly how fishy your opponent is. If you find someone who makes tons of fish moves, you don't need to note every single instance. Just a couple will give you the right idea. Remember to keep the date, though, because some fish improve over time.

7. Note how hard it is to make them fold

Some players are unbluffable but others will fold if you just look at them wrong. If you see an opponent who lies at either extreme, note it. If someone is unbluffable, you'll know to value bet him more. If someone always folds, you'll know to steal more pots from him.

8. Aggression

Note how aggressive the player is. Does he bluff a lot? Does he raise a lot? Does he play second pair as if it were the nuts? Does he bet every time it's checked to him? Note it. Also make notes if you find extremely passive players. Passive players can trap you if you think you have a decent hand and they just call you down all the way with a stronger hand.

In addition to general notes, add a little section that lists the exact hands you've seen your opponents bet and fail to bet. Something like "Bet: top pair, set, small flush. Didn't Bet: second pair, top pair no kicker."
9. Continuation Bets

Watch how your opponents play their hands after raising preflop. See if they make continuation bets on a regular basis or if they only bet when they hit something on the flop.

10. Three-Bets

When you raise preflop and someone else puts in a re-raise, it's called a 3-bet. Note the cards you see your opponents 3-bet with. There won't be showdowns that often but every time there is a showdown, record it.

Table Selection

This section sounds a little basic but it covers one of the most powerful concepts in poker. Good table selection is the single easiest way to improve your hourly wage at poker no matter how skilled you are. The key to success in poker is to outplay the opponents at your table, not to outplay everyone.

You can get pretty in-depth when picking your tables, but when you first log in to your poker site of choice, there are several basic things you should at when looking for good tables. Every poker site lists the stats of the tables somewhere in the lobby. Use this picture for reference:
If you've ever played a hand of online poker, this image should look familiar to you. It's a list of all the tables running at the moment and it lists five statistics that are of particular interest to us:

1. **Average Pot**

   This is a good indicator of how much money is moving around at the table. High average pot numbers mean you'll find bigger pots more often. Just remember that this number can sometimes be skewed by recent all-in confrontations between two players at the table.

2. **Players to the Flop**

   This number is expressed as a percentage and it is a running average that tells you how often people at the table are seeing the flop. Loose opponents (fish) are good to have at your table so look for tables with a high players-to-the-flop percentage.

   Make sure you take into account how many people are seated at the table, though. If there are only 2 people at the table, a big number in this column won't tell you a whole lot.

3. **Hands per Hour**

   Your hourly rate is directly affected by how many hands per hour you play, so look for tables that move along at a decent pace. If you're a winning player, more hands per hour equal more money per hour. This stat is also affected by the number of players at the table, so don't let it throw you off if there are only two people at the table.

4. **Stack Sizes**

   This stat is shown in different places at different poker sites but it's usually set up like it is in the picture above. If you highlight a table in the list, information on the players at the table will appear in the box to the right. Along with the names of the players, you can see how much money they have at the table.

   You want to find tables with big stacks because that means more money for you to win. If there are several big stacks at the table, it might mean there is good action there too.

5. **Player Notes**

   This statistic is also shown a little differently at every poker site but it's usually similar to the image above. You can see if you have notes on any of the players at the table without even opening the table. Just highlight it from the lobby and look for an
By joining tables where you have notes on the players, you give yourself an immediate information advantage. Having notes on even just one person at the table is a great benefit when you join a new table. Make use of this feature as often as you can.

Some poker sites even have search systems where you can search for players by their names. Whenever I play at sites with a search feature, I use it every single time I play poker. Every time I run across a fish, I write the name down and make sure to search for him or her the next time I log on. It's a little stalker-ish but it's an awesome way to make extra money.

As you can see, there are a lot of things you can do to find the best tables. Each tactic is small in the grand scheme of things but they all add up to make a big difference in your bottom line. If you make good table selection a habit, I guarantee you will make a lot more money than you do now. It's such a simple concept that people often underestimate its power. Make sure you don't make the same mistake.

**Exploiting Your Opponents' Mistakes**

Nobody plays a perfect poker game. No matter how well someone plays, there's bound to be a chink in their armor. It doesn't matter if it's the best poker player in the world, there's a way to exploit him. The human brain works in patterns and our poker play reflects that through the actions we take at the table.

We all try to randomize our play as much as possible but we usually end up making some plays more often than others, making it possible for us to be exploited by observant opponents. The higher up you go, the harder it is to find these exploitable opportunities but they do exist.

I'd like to discuss several common mistakes people make in poker and how you can exploit them:

1. **Folding Too Often**

Some opponents fold too often in general, others fold too often on certain streets. Make a conscious effort to find opponents who fold too often. Poker players who fold too often in general are commonly referred to as "rocks." You can exploit rocks by stealing their blinds, playing your draws aggressively and bluffing at them more often. If you increase your aggression against these players, you'll win more pots without having to show your hands.

Some poker players fold too often on a certain street - like the river. These opponents need very strong hands to continue or else they'll fold to aggression. Make it a point
to bluff more often against them. You usually don't even have to bet a whole lot to make them fold.

2. Calling Too Often

Some opponents get too suspicious and call too many bets with weak hands. You can exploit these opponents by increasing your value-bet standards. Against some opponents, you would just check hands like top pair no kicker but against these players you can bet these hands for value.

3. Betting Too Often

People who bet too often or bluff too much can be exploited by slowplaying. You can slowplay your monsters and even weaker hands like top pair top kicker because these people bet too much, too often. You can further exploit these opponents by stealing their bluffs. Be careful when doing this because even overaggressive opponents get real hands sometimes.

4. Continuation Bets

Most of your opponents can be exploited by messing with their continuation bets. If you're up against the type who makes a continuation bet every time he raises preflop, you can float him relentlessly. Opponents who are predictable with their continuation bets are prime candidates for the float play. You can read more about it in the section about "floats" in this chapter.

5. Scare Cards

Some opponents are scared to death of scare cards. Look for people who always check when a scare card hits and then make a bet every time they check. When you find the right opponent, it's funny how often they give up the pot when a scare card comes. Just be careful when identifying these opponents; just because someone checks one time a scare card falls doesn't mean they'll give up every time a scare card falls.

As you can see, it's pretty easy to exploit your opponents once you've identified their weaknesses. The hard part is actually finding those weaknesses. A mixture of close observation, player notes and experience will yield the best results. Learning how to exploit your opponents is not an overnight process. Make a conscious effort to learn your opponents' weaknesses every time you play and it will come naturally over time.
Patience

This book has covered a lot of information over the past 9 chapters so it's easy to get caught up in it all and go running to the tables ready to put it all to use right away. But remember, although the information in this book is useful, you can't *force* anything at the tables.

Poker is a game of patience because it takes time to develop your skills, get reads on your opponents and even to hit strong hands. A lot of your time at the poker table will be spent in observation mode. If you fold 75% of your poker hands, that means you will spend 75% of your time watching everyone else play poker.

During those downtimes it can be tempting to try to force something at the table or to let you mind wander. Don't let those temptations get to you. Spend your down time watching your opponents and taking notes. Instead of living for the few hands you play, make every second you spend at the table count for something.

A general lack of patience is one of the biggest reasons there aren't more winning poker players. Anyone can learn how to become a winning poker player; the information is all available out there. The problem is that it takes time to learn. It also takes patience. Not many people have the patience to fold 75% of their hands. It sounds boring.

Just remember that your excitement comes from the thrill of winning cold, hard cash. All the mental energy you expend learning about the game, analyzing your opponents and making decisions pays off when you leave the game with a huge stack.

Tilting

Tilt is another big bankroll killer. When you get frustrated and let your emotions affect your play, you are on tilt. Everybody has to deal with it at some point, so it's a good idea to have a plan for dealing with tilt before it happens.

The most common cause of tilt is being on the receiving end of a bad beat. You know the scenario - you play patiently for an hour, waiting to get a good hand. You finally make something like three of a kind on the flop but some fish chases his flush all the way down to the river and makes it.

Other causes of tilt can include simple things like waiting around for hours and never seeing a good hand, getting bluffed out of a huge pot or losing a hand to a player you just don't like. Whatever the reason is, when you let it affect your play, you are tilting.

The best plan for dealing with tilt is to recognize it for what it is and then take a break from the game. Some people cool off after just a few minutes while others will have to
take off the rest of the day. However long it takes you, just make sure you stop playing until you're refreshed and in good spirits.

Recognizing tilt isn't the big problem most people have. The problem is being able to tear yourself away from the game. When you get mad at the game, you want to stick around and teach it a lesson! It's like being in a bad mood but not admitting to anyone that you're in a bad mood. For some reason we get stubborn when we get mad. It's kind of funny when you look at it from the outside.

If you can overcome your feelings and step away from the tables for a while, you'll be glad you did. A break will help you clear your mind and help you refocus your game. If you come back to the table and realize you're just not ready, go ahead and take the rest of the day off. There's a big world out there and poker is just a small part of it.

**Setting Goals**

In poker and in life, setting goals is a good way to achieve success. When I first started playing poker online, I didn't have any goals. I just played poker every day and hoped I had money. After I set goals, everything changed for me. I now had a roadmap and played every hand with more focus and determination.

After you finish this book, take a little time to write down several poker-oriented goals. Make at least one short-term goal, one medium-term goal and one long term poker goal. The goals should be concrete and have specific timelines attached to them.

Even if you miss the timelines attached to your goals, the simple fact of having a specific destination in mind will take you far. In fact, I'd be willing to bet that you achieve every single goal on your list if you take the time to write them down on paper.

Your short term poker goals can range from anything like "play 1,000 hands this week" to "buy PokerTracker 3 by Friday." (I'll explain PokerTracker later in this chapter). Your medium and long term poker goals can include things like "don't play a single hand of poker while drunk this year" or "build a $50,000 bankroll within 18 months."

Be creative and have fun with your goals. Pick goals that excite you! Make your goals ambitious but realistic at the same time. It really doesn't matter what kind of goals you choose as long as they are positive ones. The human mind is a powerful thing and having goals sitting in the back of your mind will lead to good things.

**Continued Learning**

Even though I believe this book is one of the best resources in existence for no limit poker players, you shouldn't limit yourself to just one book. If you want to be a top poker player, you need to continue your poker education forever. There's not a single professional in the world who will tell you he's done learning about poker.
Some of the best resources for continued learning are online poker forums. Find a good poker forum and join in on the discussion. You'll find some very smart people at the bigger poker forums. Read their posts, make your own posts and get involved in the community.

A big part of continuing your learning is saving your hand histories and sharing them with other people. Any time you play a big hand, make a note to yourself to discuss that hand with someone later. After your poker session, post your hand at some poker forums and ask for advice. Some of the things people have to say about your hand histories will really surprise you.

When you talk to other people about poker, be humble. No matter how great you are, people will have input for your poker hands. Accept their criticisms graciously because they're telling you things that will make you more money in the long run. Be willing to share your point of view as well. Nothing makes for a better learning experience than a lively but civilized discussion.

Save this book and read it again later. Pick through your favorite chapters and re-read the parts that didn't make sense to you. Maybe you could even read the entire thing all over again at some point. This book will sound much different to you if you read it once as a new poker player and then again with some experience under your belt. I've read poker books as a complete newbie and then revisited them again later and been wowed by some of the things I missed the first time around.

**Essential Poker Tools**

There are a few poker tools that are so powerful that they are actually essential. At the very least, you need one tracking program like PokerTracker or Holdem Manager. Either one will do you just fine - just make sure you get one. The price looks expensive at first but these programs pay for themselves many times over. The money you earn at the poker tables because of these tools will more than make up for the up-front cost.

1. **PokerTracker**

   PokerTracker is an incredibly sophisticated piece of software that saves every single hand you play and stores it in a database. From that database, you can see the playing styles of every single opponent you've ever played against. You can see how often they raise preflop, what hands they've shown down and much more.

   The software also provides a heads-up display that you can use at the tables. Above every player's avatar, PokerTracker displays a customizable list of statistics on that person. You can also view your own stats, create earnings charts and use it to aid you in table selection. PokerTracker is a very powerful tool and every serious poker player has a copy of it.

   Visit the official website here: [http://www.pokertracker.com/](http://www.pokertracker.com/)
2. **Holdem Manager**

Holdem Manager is a direct competitor to PokerTracker. It's a great program as well and it also saves every hand you've ever played to a database. You can view old hand histories, get all the stats on your opponents and use a customizable heads-up display at the table.

PokerTracker has been around for a long time but a lot of poker players have made the switch to Holdem Manager. A major selling point for Holdem Manager is that low stakes players can get a copy of it for cheaper.

Check out all the details here: [http://www.holdemmanager.net/](http://www.holdemmanager.net/)

3. **PokerStove**

This powerful piece of software is 100% free of charge so get a copy of it right away. PokerStove is an advanced poker odds calculator that can run the calculations better than any other piece of software on the market.

PokerStove isn't a piece of software that you use at the tables like Holdem Manager or PokerTracker. Instead, it's best used after your poker sessions when analyzing hands and seeing how different hands match up against each other.

The best thing about PokerStove is that it allows you to work with hand ranges rather than specific hands. For example, let's say you want to know what the odds are that your JJ will win against an opponent's range of likely hands.

You know that your opponent is willing to go all-in preflop with AA, KK, AK, QQ, JJ and TT. Well, all you have to do is plug in your hand and the opponent's range of hands and PokerStove will tell you what your chances of winning are based on the hands your opponent is likely to have.

Read more and download it here: [http://www.pokerstove.com/](http://www.pokerstove.com/)

**Glossary**

**3-bet**
A 3-bet is a re-raise of a preflop raise. If Player A raises to $10 preflop and Player B re-raises to $40, Player B has just made a 3-bet. 3-bets are also called three-bets and reraises.

**AA, AKo, TJs, etc**
These two-letter abbreviations represent player hole cards. The numbers 1-9 represent the corresponding card, T represents a ten, J represents at a jack, etc. The small "o" next to hole cards stands for "offsuit," meaning the two cards are of different suits. A small
"s" stands for "suited." If neither an "o" nor an "s" is present, then the suit of the cards doesn't matter in the example given.

**Action**
A player's turn to act. "Hurry up, the action's on you." Action can also describe a situation where there is a lot of betting and raising going on during a hand.

**BB**
Big blind

**Backdoor Draw**
A draw that requires two cards to be completed. A player holding two diamonds when there is only one diamond on the flop is said to be holding a backdoor flush draw.

**Big Blind**
The player located two seats to the left of the dealer. The term is also used to describe the ante that player has to place before the hand.

**Blinds**
The blinds are the antes that the two players to the left of the dealer have to place before each hand. The term is also used to describe the actual players sitting in the blind positions.

**Board**
The community cards in the middle of the table.

**Board Texture**
The overall feel of the board. How many draws are present, how connected the board is, how well the board connects with likely hands.

**Burn**
In between each betting round, the top card on the deck is discarded to prevent players from accidentally glimpsing the next card. This is called "burning" and the discarded cards are called "burn cards."

**Cash Game**
Normal poker game where actual cash is exchanged, players may join and leave as they please and the blinds remain at a steady level.

**Check**
To decline to bet or fold; passes the action on to the next player in the hand.

**Checkraise**
A tactic in poker where a player checks with the intention of raising any bets made by the players acting behind him.
Counterfeit Outs
Cards that complete one player's hand but also complete a stronger hand at the same time. An example of this would be a player getting the card he needs to complete his straight, but that card also completes another player's flush.

Dealer's Button
The round disc at a poker table that represents the dealer's position.

Double Gutshot
Having two inside straight draws in one hand. If a player holds 67 on a 349T board, then a 5 and an 8 both complete his straight.

EV
Expected Value

Expected Value
This term describes the amount one can expect to gain on average if making a certain play. Say you and a friend decide to flip a coin and bet on the outcome. For some reason he's willing to pay $100 every time he loses and you only have to pay $50 every time you lose. Every two flips, on average, you can expect to win $100 once and lose $50 once for a net gain of $50. Divide that $50 by the total number of possible outcomes (2 in this example) and you find that your EV per flip is $25.

Fast Playing
To play strong hands by betting and raising. The opposite of slowplaying.

Fish
Poker players who lose money at the table. Fish are usually the players who play too many hands, chase too many draws and call too many bets.

Flop
The first three community cards that are dealt face up on the table.

Fold
Refuse to call a bet and discard one's cards.

Full House
Five card poker hand consisting of a pair and three of a kind. Example: Holding AK on an AKK board.

Gutshot Straight
A straight draw that can only be completed by one rank of card. If a player holds TJ on a 678 board, only a 9 gives him a straight.

Holdem Manager
Powerful software package discussed near the end of Chapter 10.
**Hole Cards**
The cards dealt to each player at the beginning of the hand.

**Implied Pot Odds**
Similar to pot odds except implied pot odds take into account possible future betting. Discussed in Chapter 6.

**Inside Straight Draw**
Another name for Gutshot Straight.

**Kicker**
A single card used to determine the winner between two otherwise equal hands. Example: Player A has AK and Player B has AQ and the board shows A34J9. Player A has a pair of Aces with a King kicker and would win this pot.

**LAG**
Loose-aggressive player. Discussed in Chapter 8.

**Limp**
To call the minimum amount before the flop before there has been a raise. For example, a player with 55 may choose to limp in preflop instead of enter the pot with a raise.

**Limp Reraise**
Tactic where a player limps in preflop and then places a 3-bet if someone behind him raises. For example, a player in early position might limp in with AA in the hopes that someone else at the table will put in a raise. If someone raises, the player with AA can then place a 3-bet and trap more money in the pot.

**Made Hand**
A hand that has all the cards necessary to make a strong hand. Someone holding five cards of the same suit would be holding a made flush.

**Muck**
To fold one's cards without showing what they were. This term also describes the pile of discarded cards in front of the dealer.

**Nuts**
The highest possible hand given the cards on the board. On a board of 567AK, anyone holding 89 would have the nuts assuming there is no possible flush on board.

**OESD**
Abbreviation for Open Ended Straight Draw.

**Offsuit**
Two hole cards of different suits.
Open Ended Straight Draw
A straight draw that can be completed at both ends. A player holding 67 on a K45 board would have an open ended straight draw because any 3 or 8 would complete the straight.

Open Limp
To be the first person to enter the pot, but to do so without making a preflop raise. Usually seen as a weak play.

Orbit
Refers to playing one whole round of hands, with the dealer's button moving all the way around the table one time.

Overfull
Having the highest full house possible on the board. A player holding KK on a KJJ board would have the overfull while a player holding KJ would have the underfull.

Outs
Cards necessary to complete a draw.

Outside Straight Draw
Another name for Open Ended Straight Draw.

PokerTracker
Powerful software package discussed near the end of Chapter 10.

Postflop
Refers to any action that takes place after the flop has been dealt.

Pot Odds
The size of a bet compared to the size of the pot. Discussed in Chapter 6.

Preflop
Refers to any action that takes place before the flop is dealt.

Quads
Four of a kind.

Rake
The money a poker room or poker sites takes out of every pot in order to provide income to the poker room/site.

Re-raise
To raise another raise to an even higher amount.

Reverse Implied Odds
Describes the situation when a player is chasing a draw that will still lose the pot when completed. Discussed in Chapter 6.

**Ring Game**
Another word for cash game.

**River**
The fifth community card to be dealt face up in the middle of the table. Also describes the final round of betting.

**Rock**
Person who plays very few starting hands.

**Runner-runner**
Another word used to describe Backdoor Draws.

**Scare Card**
A community card that may have turned the best hand into the second best hand. If a player with a straight is in a pot against four other people, any diamond could be a scare card if there are already two diamonds on the board.

**Second Pair, Third Pair, etc**
Second pair describes pairing up one's hole card with the second-largest card on the board. Example: Holding TJ on a KJ2 board.

**Semi Bluff**
A bet made with an incomplete draw. Example: Betting $100 on the flop while holding TJ on a 289 board.

**Set**
Three of a kind made with two cards in a player's hand and one card on the board. Example: Holding 33 on an A3K board.

**Showdown**
The point at the end of the hand when all players still in the hand show their cards. The player with the best hand at this point wins the pot.

**Slowplay**
To check and call instead of bet when holding a big hand so as not to scare away one's opponents.

**Small Blind**
The player directly to the left of the dealer. Also describes the money anted by the small blind at the beginning of the hand.

**Soft**
Used to describe a table full of easy-to-beat opponents.

**Straight**  
Poker hand with five cards in sequence. Example: Holding TJ on a 789 board.

**Suited**  
When both hole cards are of the same suit. "I have AK suited."

**TAG**  
Tight-aggressive player. Discussed in Chapter 8.

**Three-bet**  
Another name for 3-bet.

**Top Pair**  
Pairing up one's hole card with the highest card on the board. Example: Holding AQ on a 23Q board.

**Top Pair Top Kicker**  
Having top pair with the best possible kicker. Example: Holding AK on a 67K board.

**TPTK**  
Abbreviation for Top Pair Top Kicker.

**Trips**  
Three of a kind made with one card in a player's hand and two on the board. Example: Holding AJ on a 2JJ board.

**Turn**  
The fourth community card to be dealt face up in the middle of the table. Also describes the betting round that takes place after the turn card has been dealt.

**Underfull**  
Holding the lower full house on the board. See **Overfull** for examples.

**Value Bet**  
A bet a player makes with a made hand, hoping his opponent will call it.

**Variance**  
Describes the natural swings in a player's bankroll as a result of chance and not skill.
## Chapter 12
### Extras

### Poker Odds Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Outs</th>
<th>After the Flop</th>
<th></th>
<th>After the Turn</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 Cards to Come</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 Card to Come</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Odds</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>Odds</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>22.4:1</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>44.5:1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>10.9:1</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>22.3:1</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>7:1</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>14.4:1</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.1:1</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>10.5:1</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.9:1</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>8.2:1</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.1:1</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>6.7:1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.6:1</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>5.6:1</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.2:1</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>4.7:1</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.9:1</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>4.1:1</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.6:1</td>
<td>38.4</td>
<td>3.6:1</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.4:1</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>3.2:1</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.2:1</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2.8:1</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>1:1:1</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>2.5:1</td>
<td>28.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>.95:1</td>
<td>51.2</td>
<td>2.3:1</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>.85:1</td>
<td>54.1</td>
<td>2.1:1</td>
<td>32.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>.75:1</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>1.9:1</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>.67:1</td>
<td>59.8</td>
<td>1.7:1</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>.6:1</td>
<td>62.4</td>
<td>1.6:1</td>
<td>39.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>.54:1</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>1.4:1</td>
<td>41.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>.48:1</td>
<td>67.5</td>
<td>1.3:1</td>
<td>43.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The poker odds chart on the previous page is broken up into sections to make it easier to use. On the far left column is the number of outs you need to complete your hand. So if you have a flush draw, which has 9 outs, you move down to the number 9 and you can see both the odds and percentage it has to hit.

You can see the odds for the draw when there are two cards to come and when there is only one card to come. During a poker hand, you should use the odds for when there is only one card to come because you can assume that your opponents won't give you any free cards.

The odds for two cards to come should only be used when faced with an all-in situation on the flop. In that situation, you would know for sure that you're going to see two cards after calling the bet.

If you flip back to the "Pot Odds" section in Chapter Six, you can review how to use pot odds to help you play your draws. The easiest way to calculate the odds of a hand completing is to just memorize the odds for the most common drawing hands. Here they are again:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hand</th>
<th>Odds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flush Draw</td>
<td>4:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Ended Straight Draw</td>
<td>5:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gutshot Straight Draw</td>
<td>11:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Pair to a Full House</td>
<td>11:1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For other draws with different numbers of outs, you can refer back to the odds chart to see how likely it is to complete.
Starting Hand Charts

In no limit holdem (and especially in shorthanded no limit holdem), you can't rely on starting hands charts to define your preflop game. There are simply too many variables involved - things like your opponents' playing styles, your table image, who has entered the pot already, how many pots you've won recently and more.

However, I do understand that starting hand charts do come in handy for new players looking for at least a basic idea of what to play and when. Even though it's not an end-all solution, I'm sure some of you newer players will find it useful. Because most of the people who use starting hand charts are new players, I took a conservative approach in making these charts.

First In:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Small Blind</th>
<th>Big Blind</th>
<th>Early Position</th>
<th>Middle Position</th>
<th>Late Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AA, KK, QQ</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JJ &amp; TT</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99 &amp; 88</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77 - 22</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AKs &amp; AKo</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AQs</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AJs &amp; ATs</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A9s to A2s</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AQo</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AJo &amp; ATo</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A9o &amp; A8o</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KQs</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KJs</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KT</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QJs &amp; QTs</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QJo &amp; QTo</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JTs, J9s, JTo</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T9s</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T9o</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98s, 87s, 76s</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56s &amp; 54s</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everything Else</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First in means it has been folded around to you. If you're in the big blind when this happens, you don't do anything because you win the blinds.
"After 2 or more limpers" means that two or more people have entered the pot without raising.
After a raise:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Small Blind</th>
<th>Big Blind</th>
<th>Early Position</th>
<th>Middle Position</th>
<th>Late Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AA, KK, QQ</td>
<td>RR</td>
<td>RR</td>
<td>RR</td>
<td>RR</td>
<td>RR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JJ &amp; TT</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99 &amp; 88</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77 - 22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AKs &amp; AKo</td>
<td>RR</td>
<td>RR</td>
<td>RR</td>
<td>RR</td>
<td>RR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AQs</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>RR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AJs &amp; ATs</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A9s to A2s</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AQo</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AJo &amp; ATo</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A9o &amp; A8o</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KQs</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KJs</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QJs &amp; QTs</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JTn, J9s, JTo</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>