Poker from Scratch

How to Master the Game Even If You've Never Held a Deck of Cards



Poker Klub Kiril

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CHAPTER 1

What Is Poker, Anyway?

Poker: the game that conquered the world

Let me guess: you've been thinking about learning poker for a while now, but you've never quite worked up the nerve to ask anyone how it actually works. And I know, it all looks a bit complicated, maybe even intimidating: too many strange words, murky rules and people who seem to know way more than you do.

Believe me, I completely understand.

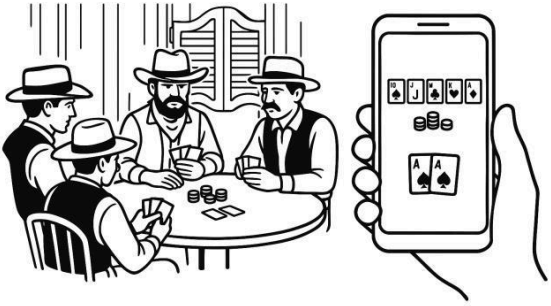
That's exactly why I decided to write this book for you, so we can start together **from the very beginning**, from absolute zero. By the time you finish reading, you won't just understand the basics of poker, you'll know how to start playing right away — and have a great time doing it!

From the Wild West to the mobile app

Poker really is a fascinating game. If you've ever watched a Western, you know the famous scene: the sheriff and the outlaw sitting across the table, dead silence, tension you could cut with a knife, cards being turned over, bluffing stares, chips clinking... Well, that's old-school poker — mysterious and thrilling.

But let's come back to reality for a second. These days you don't have to be a cowboy, or even go to a casino, to play poker. All you need is a phone or a computer, and a few clicks later you can be in the middle of a game with people from all over the world.

So how did that happen? How did poker go from the saloon table to a worldwide online sensation?



The online poker revolution

In the early 2000s, the face of poker changed dramatically. Thanks to the internet, people could suddenly play anytime, anywhere, without leaving their living room. Then it all exploded, thanks to the famous 2003 story of a man named **Chris Moneymaker** (yes, that's his real last name, believe it or not!).

He was a perfectly ordinary accountant who won his seat at the World Series of Poker through an online tournament that cost just a few dollars to enter. Against all odds, Chris went on to win the title, and $2,500,000 along with it. Imagine that — a millionaire overnight! From that moment on, poker became a global obsession, and online play exploded, drawing in millions of new players around the world.

It's thanks to that "online revolution" that you, too, can now learn, practice and play poker with zero pressure, entirely at your own pace and on your own budget.

Why poker?

Okay, you're probably wondering: **"Why should I play poker, of all games?"**

Simple: poker isn't a game of chance like most other card games. In poker you have **complete control over your decisions**, and your skill, psychology, strategy and ability to read other players directly shape the outcome. The better you play, the better your chances — and the more fun and interesting poker becomes.

Don't worry, I'll show you, step by step, how to build these skills yourself. All it takes is a little practice, patience and goodwill — and since you're holding this book, I know you've got all three.

What's ahead in this book?

In the pages ahead, we'll go through everything you need, in detail:

- You'll learn the basic rules of poker and the terms every player needs to know.
- I'll walk you through every hand combination, with plenty of examples.
- I'll show you how to think like a player, not a beginner.
- You'll see how to bet properly, what bluffing is and how to tell when someone else is bluffing.

- You'll pick up handy tricks for playing better — and having more fun — online.

And yes, of course we'll spend plenty of time on online poker, because that's where you can start practicing what you learn right away. The beauty of playing online is that there are **tables for every budget**, from games with stakes of just a few cents and freeroll tournaments that cost nothing to enter, all the way up to serious tournaments and cash games at every level.

And if you're the social type, there are online poker clubs like our very own **Poker Klub Kiril**, where you can meet great people, take part in fantastic competitions and have a genuinely good time.

To wrap up this section:

- Poker isn't as complicated as it looks.
- You're not the only beginner — everyone starts from zero.
- Poker can be wildly fun and a real workout for your brain at the same time.
- You can play right now, anywhere, whenever you like.

Now that we've broken the ice, it's time to move on to the next section, where we'll explore **what makes poker so much fun** and why, once you learn it, you'll have a hard time putting it down.

What makes poker so much fun?

Let's be honest right off the bat: there are countless games in the world, so why is it poker that's won the hearts of millions?

You've probably noticed that everyone who plays poker talks about it with a special kind of passion. Some love it for the thrill, some for the company, some for the challenge. It might surprise you, but poker has one very particular quality that most other games don't:

Poker isn't just about luck.

Yep, you read that right. At first glance poker might look like nothing more than flipping cards and waiting for luck to strike, but the reality is completely different. This game is actually a fascinating mix of strategy, psychology, math and intuition. Don't let that scare you off, though — that's what makes poker endlessly interesting rather than complicated.

Poker: a game of knowledge, psychology and skill

In poker, your decisions **directly affect the outcome**. It's not like roulette, where everything depends on a little ball, or an ordinary card game, where you need a "good hand" to win. In poker you can win even when you don't have the best cards, and that's what makes the game one of a kind!

In fact, poker is often called **"a game of people"** rather than a game of cards, because above all you're playing against your opponents — real people with their own emotions, mistakes, weaknesses and playing styles.



Why is it so much fun?

Here are a few key reasons:

- **Every hand is a new story** — No two poker games are ever the same. Every time you sit down at a table (live or online), you're in for a new adventure.
- **Bluffing: the thrill of faking it** — There's nothing sweeter than sizing up an opponent correctly and pulling off a bluff. The feeling of making someone fold a better hand is priceless! Of course, sometimes you'll be on the receiving end of someone else's bluff — but that's part of the game's charm.
- **A battle of wits** — Poker is a mind game. You'll constantly be trying to figure out what your opponents are thinking, what they're planning and how sure of themselves they are. All that "mind reading" gives the game its special magic.

- **A game for every budget** — Online poker lets you play for small stakes, and in freeroll tournaments, even completely free. You don't have to risk big money to have a good time. And if you're a more serious player, there are always tournaments and games with big prizes.

Poker myths: let's bust them right now!

Before we go any further, you should know that poker comes with a few popular myths, and it's time to clear them up. Here are the three most common:

Myth #1: "Poker is pure luck."

Reality: In poker, the better player always wins in the long run. You can get lucky in the short term, but knowledge and skill always come out on top over time.

Myth #2: "Online poker isn't fair. The software is rigged."

Reality: Online poker is regulated and monitored, especially on reputable platforms and in trusted clubs (like our own Poker Klub Kiril). The software goes through regular checks to guarantee completely fair play.

Myth #3: "You can't read opponents online."

Reality: Quite the opposite! Online poker lets you keep track of how your opponents play and take note of their habits and style. We'll talk about this in more detail later, but trust me: you can learn a lot about your opponents through a screen!

Can you really make money playing poker?

Now you're probably thinking, "Okay, but can you actually make money at poker?" The answer: yes, you can, but it isn't easy. Poker is a game of skill, experience and constant learning. If you take it seriously, put in the work to master the fundamentals, stick to sound money management and stay disciplined, then it's absolutely possible to make money — even serious money.

Of course, as a beginner your goal should be simple: **have a good time and learn the basics.** And as you improve, who knows? Maybe you'll be the next Chris Moneymaker!

One last fun fact

Let's end this section with a fun fact: did you know that some people play online poker at ten or even twenty tables at the same time? Yes, you read that right — imagine playing twenty different games at once! This is called multi-tabling. It's one of the things that make online play unique, and it would be completely unthinkable in a live game.

You'll start with one or two tables, of course, but it goes to show just how interesting, dynamic and exciting poker can be, time after time.

Texas Hold'em: the "Cadillac" of poker games

Now let's take a small step forward, toward the most popular variant of poker, the one you surely know from movies, televised tournaments or maybe your friends' home games. Yes, we're talking about the famous **Texas Hold'em**.

But why is Texas Hold'em so popular? And what's so special about it that people call it the "Cadillac" of poker games?

First of all, Texas Hold'em is popular for a simple reason: **it's incredibly easy to learn**. All you need to get started are the basic rules, and they're short and straightforward. What makes the game so interesting, though, is that while it's easy to learn, it's **very hard to master**.

It's that combination of easy entry and real depth that let Texas Hold'em conquer the world and become the most popular form of poker, especially online, where millions of players around the globe take a seat every day.

So what does Texas Hold'em actually look like?

Here's a quick overview of how the game works. Don't worry, this is just an introduction; later on we'll go through every stage of the game in detail.

Every player at the table gets **two cards face down**. Those cards are yours and yours alone; nobody else can see them. These two cards give you your first idea of how good (or bad!) a spot you're in.

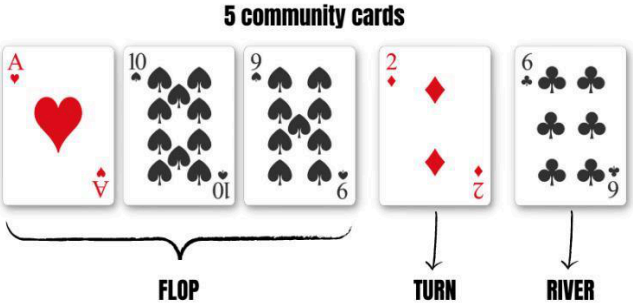
Then a total of **five community cards** are dealt face up on the table, and every player can use them. The goal is simple: combine your two cards with the community cards on the table to make the best possible five-card hand.

The community cards: Flop, Turn, River

The five community cards come out in three stages, which you'll hear called:

- **Flop** — the first three community cards.
- **Turn** — the fourth community card.
- **River** — the fifth and final community card.

Each of these stages brings a new round of betting, and this is where the real action starts: raising the stakes, bluffing, "reading" your opponents, the suspense as you wait for the last card...



That's why Hold'em is considered the perfect blend of strategy, psychology and excitement.

Why the "Cadillac" of poker games?

Hold'em got this charming nickname from legendary poker player Doyle Brunson, two-time world poker champion, who wrote in his famous book **"Super System"** that Hold'em is the "Cadillac of poker games," because it offers the ideal balance of challenge, sophistication and enjoyment.

In other words, if you want a game that makes you use your brain, your skills and your strategy while giving you a real adrenaline rush, Hold'em is hands down the best choice.

Texas Hold'em's popularity online

No wonder Hold'em is the first choice of online players everywhere. Almost every poker platform, app and club offers it, which makes Texas Hold'em the ideal starting point for getting into online poker.

Online play is faster, more dynamic and available 24 hours a day. Whether you want to play on your coffee break, in the evening once your to-do list is done, or on the weekend with friends, online Texas Hold'em is always ready for you.

Endless variety

Another reason Hold'em is so engaging is that every hand plays out differently. The card combinations are practically endless, so you'll never feel like you're playing the same scenario twice. That means the game always stays interesting, fresh and exciting.

On top of that, there's always room to sharpen your skills and strategy. The longer you play, the more you'll realize how much more there is to learn and improve.

A little fun fact

You might be interested to know that Texas Hold'em became so popular worldwide largely thanks to TV coverage of the biggest poker tournaments, especially the **World Series of Poker (WSOP)**. When the cameras first started showing the players' hidden cards, audiences around the world could follow the game live and actually understand what was going on in the players' heads — and the game's popularity went through the roof.

Today you can find countless online tournaments just like the ones you've seen on TV. So now you don't just get to watch: you can feel the thrill of Texas Hold'em yourself, right from your armchair or your phone, wherever you happen to be.

So get ready: with a little practice, you'll soon be enjoying what many people consider the greatest poker variant of all time.

Online poker: is it for me?

We've already talked about online poker and why it's so popular around the world. But I'm sure a question is already forming in your mind: "Okay, but how do I know if online poker is really for me?"

Let's try to answer that together, honestly and without overcomplicating things.

Online poker has some big advantages that attract all kinds of people, from those who want a little fun after a long day to those who treat it as a serious sport and a way to earn some extra money. Either way, to really enjoy this kind of game, it helps to have a few specific traits and interests.

Traits of a good online poker player

First of all, understand that a good online player doesn't need to be a math genius or a master psychologist. All it takes is a little patience, goodwill and a desire to learn the basics.

Still, here are a few traits that can really help you get your online poker journey off to a good start:

- **Patience** — In online poker the cards are dealt much faster than live, so you'll often be tempted to play hand after hand, even when your cards aren't great. A good online player knows how to wait for the right moment instead of charging in and taking unnecessary risks.
- **Self-control** — Since you're playing alone, without direct contact with the other players, good self-control is essential. You need to know when it's time to stop, rest or simply take a break if things start going badly. Controlling your emotions is one of the most important skills any successful online player can have.

- **Willingness to learn** — Online poker is perfect for players who want to keep improving. The more you play, the more you learn about strategy, players, stats and all those little things that separate beginners from serious players.
- **Discipline** — Discipline is what separates good players from great ones. You need to be disciplined about tracking your results, analyzing your play, and sticking to a strategy and a budget. Without discipline, long-term success in online poker is hard to come by.

If you recognize yourself in at least a few of these traits, or feel like you could develop them easily, you're already well on your way to becoming a great online poker player.

A quick self-test: is online poker for you?

If you're still not sure, let's do a fun little test together to help you figure out whether online poker is something you'll enjoy. Answer these questions honestly (just to yourself):

- Do you like games where you control your own decisions and directly affect the outcome?
- Do you like being able to play anytime, from anywhere (your bed, your armchair, a café...)?
- Do you like analyzing things, tracking your progress and watching yourself get better over time?
- Do you enjoy a challenge, and do you get a kick out of knowing you're up against real people, not a computer?
- Do you want a game that doesn't take a big budget to have fun?

If you answered "YES" to most of these, online poker is almost certainly perfect for you!

What if I'm a beginner? Can I start playing online right away?

Of course! In fact, online poker is the ideal place for beginners. There are freeroll tournaments that cost nothing to enter, plus games with tiny stakes (just a few cents). That means you can practice, make mistakes and improve at your own pace, with no pressure and no real risk.

At Poker Klub Kiril, for example, beginners always have a special place. Not only can you play with people just like you, you can also find help, advice or simply good company to share your poker experiences with.

So never think you're not good enough or too inexperienced to join an online game. Believe me, everyone was once exactly where you are now: sitting in front of the screen, wondering whether it's the right moment to click "Join" at their very first poker table.

One more important thing about online poker...

There's one great thing that draws a lot of players to online poker in particular: anonymity and freedom. If you're a bit shy, or you simply prefer playing on your own without face-to-face interaction, online poker is the perfect solution.

You can play relaxed, without worrying that anyone will see your nerves or your mistakes. And over time, as you grow more confident, you might just want to test your skills live too — whenever you feel completely comfortable.

In short, online poker is a great way to unwind, have fun, practice your poker skills and discover a whole new hobby. And who knows? Maybe online poker will be your first step toward bigger poker challenges.

First steps in online poker: what do you need?

Now that you know online poker is for you and you want to take that first step, you're probably wondering: "Okay, what do I need to get started?"

I've got good news: getting started is really simple, and you probably already have everything you need! Let's go through it in detail so you're not left with any doubts.

What exactly do I need to start playing online poker?

Unlike live poker, where you have to go to a casino or poker club, online play doesn't require any special equipment beyond the following:

- **An internet connection:** Obviously, the first and most important thing is an internet connection. It doesn't have to be super-fast, but a stable connection is a good idea so the game runs smoothly without interruptions. That's especially important if you want to play tournaments or several tables at once.
- **A phone, tablet or computer:** These days you can play online poker on any device: a smartphone, tablet, laptop or desktop computer. Most modern poker apps run perfectly on both Android and iOS devices, as well as on Windows and Mac computers.
- **A poker app or software:** To play poker online, you'll need a reliable poker app or platform. It's important to pick a safe place to play, with a proven reputation, stable software and good customer support. Our own Poker Klub Kiril, for example, is just that kind of place, where you can play without a worry in the world.
- **A user account:** Once you've found an app or platform, you need to create your account. The process is very simple: a few clicks, some basic details and you're ready to play. It usually takes just a few minutes.

Online poker for beginners: start small

For your first steps in poker, the best thing is low-stakes games — say, a few cents or a few euros per game. That way you can try your hand at real poker without much financial pressure, while gaining valuable experience for more serious games later on.

Your first online poker game: what's it like?

When you sit down at an online table for the first time, you'll see the process is very simple. You pick a table with stakes that suit you, click "Join" or "Sit," and within seconds you're in the action!

On the screen you'll see the table, your opponents and the buttons you use to make decisions (Check, Bet, Raise, Fold...). The app will show you exactly when it's your turn and what you need to do. No worries: it's all very simple and intuitive, even if you've never played before.

Don't worry if you make a few mistakes at first. That's the whole point of playing small stakes: so you can relax, learn safely and quickly get into the rhythm of the game.

And don't forget the most important thing: every player was a beginner once. Even the world's best poker players had to sit down at their first table, just like you're doing now. So relax, jump into your first game and enjoy every minute of it!

Online poker clubs: where we hang out and compete

We've covered a lot of ground so far: how to start, how to play, what you need... But one of the best things about online poker is still ahead of us: **online poker clubs**.

If you think online poker is just playing anonymously against random people on the internet, I've got great news for you: online clubs are something completely different, and a lot more fun.

Imagine this: a place where you can play poker every day with people you know, where the atmosphere isn't cold and anonymous like on the classic poker sites, but friendly, fun and full of good vibes and camaraderie. That's the whole idea behind online poker clubs like our **Poker Klub Kiril**: a place where poker isn't just a game, but a way to hang out and have fun.

Why play in an online poker club?

You're probably wondering: "What can a club give me that I can't get on a regular poker platform?"

First and foremost, a club is a community. That means you're always playing against real people who are there for the same reason you are: to enjoy the game and have a good time. Whenever you sit down at a table, you know a friendly atmosphere is waiting for you, where you're free to ask questions, chat and relax.

But community isn't the only perk. Here's what else our Poker Klub Kiril has to offer:

- **Tables for every budget:** We've got games to suit any wallet. If you're just starting out, you can play at our tables with blinds of just **€0.10/€0.20** (10 and 20 cents). That's perfect for practicing and enjoying the game with no pressure. When you feel ready for more, you can easily move up, all the way to tables with **€0.50/€1** blinds, where more serious play and bigger thrills await.
- **Daily freeroll tournaments:** Every day you get the chance to play in two completely free tournaments (freerolls), where the prizes are tickets to our real-money tournaments with valuable cash prizes. That

means every single day you have a shot at serious winnings without spending a cent.

A special welcome for new players: a €100 bonus

Now we come to what might be the best part: as a new player at Poker Klub Kiril, you immediately get a special chance to earn something extra.

Here's how it works: as soon as you play your first **500 hands** at our smallest table (€0.10/€0.20 blinds), you automatically get a **€25** bonus. After that, for every **250 hands** you play at the higher level (€0.50/€1 blinds), you get another **€25**, up to a total of **€100 in bonuses**!

It's a great way to make fast progress, because you're not just learning the game, you're earning extra at the same time while you enjoy your favorite new pastime.

The poker league: see the world playing poker!

Another great thing about our club, something that really sets it apart, is the monthly **poker league**. This isn't just any league; it's a real challenge for players of all levels, where you compete against other club members over 20 days.

On top of the valuable prizes you can win in every league tournament, there's a special grand prize for the winner: **a trip for two to an exotic destination**! Yes, you read that right: every month, our league's top player gets to jet off with someone special to soak up the sun, the beaches and some well-earned rest.

How do I join Poker Klub Kiril?

If you're wondering how to join, the process is quick and easy. All you have to do is get in touch through our **Instagram page** — Poker_Klub_Kiril. Send us a message saying you'd like to join, and we'll get back to you fast, explain the details and help you jump straight into the action.

No need to worry about complicated procedures or waiting around. In just a few minutes, you can be part of our community, sitting at a table and enjoying the game.

Poker has always been much more than a game. It's a way of life, of getting together and having fun. That's why we created Poker Klub Kiril: so you'd have a place where you're always welcome, where you can play without pressure, and where there's always someone to help you, give you advice or simply enjoy a good game with you.

CHAPTER 2

Poker Dictionary for Beginners

"Wait, what did you just say?"

If you've ever sat next to a poker player, or watched a tournament on TV, you've probably heard some completely baffling words and phrases. It sounds like these people speak a language of their own. "I raised preflop," "he donk-bet the river," "I got there with a runner-runner flush," and so on... Say what?

Don't worry, you're not the only one who's ever been totally lost. Believe me, everyone who sits down at a poker table or walks into an online poker room for the first time gets the very same shock. The usual beginner reaction is a confused look, an awkward silence and, very often:

"Sorry, could you say that again in plain English?"

Poker definitely has its own language, full of slang, abbreviations and expressions that are simply easier to say than to explain in a couple of sentences. And that's why I decided to put together this friendly little poker dictionary for you: so you understand what's being said at the table, and even more importantly, so you feel comfortable and confident while you play.

Why do you even need to know poker lingo?

Picture this:

You're sitting at an online table, you've been dealt great cards and you're already imagining yourself winning. Suddenly your opponent types in the chat: "nh man, sick river!"

Puzzled, you reply:

"Thanks...? Wait, the river's sick? Should we call a doctor?"

Of course, you don't need to know every term by heart right away, but understanding the basic ones will do two things for you:

1. **You'll follow the game more easily** — you'll know exactly what's happening at the table.
2. **You'll learn and improve faster** — because you'll understand the advice you get and the strategy you read about.

Poker isn't just about the cards. It's also about how you communicate, how you follow the game and how you fit into the community of players.

Poker slang: easier than you think

Here are a few funny examples of classic poker misunderstandings:

- One newcomer at our club thought calling someone a **"Fish"** meant they liked seafood, not that they were a weak player.
- Another thought a **"Shark"** was just an animal from a Discovery Channel documentary, not a great player who can "eat" your chips.
- And someone was absolutely sure the **"River"** was an actual river where people played poker on a boat.

Of course, you'll pick all of this up very quickly, and in a few weeks you'll be the one casually saying:

"I raised preflop, rivered the nuts and took two fish for their whole stacks."

In the next sections we'll take it nice and slow and go through all the key terms every poker player needs to know, together, step by step. I promise you three things: **it'll be clear, it'll be easy, and you'll definitely laugh at least a few times.**

If you're ready for poker lingo to stop being a mystery, let's dive in!

"Meet your opponents: the player types at the table"

If you thought all poker players were the same, think again. At the poker table you'll meet some of the most diverse, most entertaining and sometimes downright strangest characters you've ever come across. The good news is that most players fit neatly into a few fun categories that every poker player knows — and soon you will too.

Once you learn to recognize your opponents at the table, the game gets a lot more interesting. These terms are part of the poker language, and you'll hear them from other players very soon (probably at your own expense).

Let's meet them together, and to keep things from getting boring, let's take the fun route.

Fish ("Shark Food")

If someone calls you a "fish" for the first time, don't assume they've figured out you're a Pisces.

In poker, a fish is a beginner or a weak player who makes lots of mistakes. A fish often puts way too much money in with bad cards and doesn't think much about strategy.

Of course, don't worry if someone calls you a fish at first. Almost everyone was a fish once, even the biggest pros. Still, your goal is to get out of the fishbowl as fast as you can and stop being the fish!

Shark ("The Predator")

The exact opposite of a fish is a poker "shark." If you see someone at the table who keeps winning, plays smart and takes other people's chips without breaking a sweat, congratulations: you've just met a shark.

Sharks know what they're doing, and they usually like to sit at tables full of fish (makes sense, right?). It's really important for beginners to spot the sharks, because let's be honest, nobody wants to be their breakfast.

Nit ("The Tightwad")

A nit is a player who plays very rarely and very cautiously — so rarely that if they ever do decide to play a hand, everyone else at the table falls off their chair in shock. A nit is easy to read: if a player like that suddenly starts betting aggressively, you can be sure they're holding something really good.

If you want to have a little fun, try bluffing a nit. But if they catch you, don't expect to last much longer at that table, because they'll happily take every chip you've got.

Maniac ("The Action Junkie")

This type of player is the exact opposite of a nit: a maniac loves action and raises at every opportunity. This player isn't afraid to shove all their chips into the middle even with the worst hand imaginable.

Maniacs often create hilarious situations. Once you meet a true poker maniac, you won't know whether to run for cover or sit back and enjoy the show. Enjoying it is the better choice — just keep your guard up!

Donkey ("The Loose Cannon")

If someone calls you a "donkey" (or "donk" for short), don't get mad, but keep in mind it's definitely not a compliment. A donkey is a player who keeps making illogical moves, doesn't really understand strategy and often causes chaos at the table without even meaning to.

Nobody likes being called a donkey, but the irony is that even a donkey can beat a great player by pure accident, which gets some hilarious reactions from everyone else (especially the sharks).

Funny moments at the table

Here are a few examples of what you can expect when you run into these player types online:

- The **Fish** is thrilled to have hit a pair on the flop, while everyone else can already see that the opponent obviously has a flush.
- The **Nit** folds perfect cards because their opponent seemed a little "suspicious."
- The **Maniac** goes all-in with a 2 and a 7 because they're bored and want to stir up some action.

- The **Donkey** wins a hand by accident because they didn't know the rules, infuriating the serious players at the table.



Yes, all of this happens a lot, and you'll probably see plenty of moments like these when you play poker — but that's what makes the game so much fun.

Now that you know the basic types of opponents, the next time you sit down at a table (or open the app), you'll spot them quickly and know how to adjust your game — whether that means laughing along, playing carefully or maybe even taking their chips.

"It's all about position (and no, we don't mean yoga)"

If you think the word "position" belongs in a yoga class rather than at a poker table, I totally get it. But in poker, it's one of the most important things there is. It might sound like an exaggeration, but go ahead and ask any experienced player, and you'll get the same answer:

Position is everything!

But what does "position" actually mean in poker, and why does it matter so much?

The short version, no beating around the bush

In poker, position is the order in which the players at the table make their decisions. Put more simply: **whether you act first, last or somewhere in between when it's your turn**.

It may seem like a small thing, but it makes a huge difference. The later you act (that is, the closer you are to the button that marks the dealer), the more information you have. Why? Because you've already seen how the opponents before you reacted, how confident they were, how many chips they put in and so on.

The basic poker positions, minus the yoga and meditation

Let's go over the key positions you need to know, nice and simple:

- **Dealer or Button**

The best possible position in poker. The player "on the button" acts last, after everyone else has made their move. If you want to impress your friends, just say, "I was on the button and raised him on the river," and you'll instantly sound like a seasoned pro, even if you're not quite sure what you just said.

- **Blinds (the small and the big blind)**

The blinds are the two players immediately to the left of the button. They have to put in small forced bets at the start of every hand, before they even see their cards. It might seem a little unfair, but think of the blinds as the price of your seat at the poker table — a kind of little "poker subscription."

- **Early position**

The players who act first, right after the blinds. It's not the most comfortable seat at the table, because you have to decide what to do first, with no information about how the players behind you will react. In these positions, be extra careful and play only strong cards.

- **Middle position**

As the name suggests, you're somewhere in the middle. You have a bit more information than the players in early position, but you still can't be sure how the players behind you will react. Even so, you can afford a little more freedom than the players who act first.

- **Late position**

These are the best seats at the table (close to the button). You have a ton of information, because you've seen how everyone else reacted. In late position you can play much more loosely, even with weaker cards, because you can better judge what's going to happen next.

Why position matters so much: a practical example

Let's say you have decent cards — for example, Ace-ten suited. If you're first to act (early position), you won't know what the opponents behind you are going to do. Maybe someone has much better cards. So you have to play more cautiously.

But if you're on the button (the dealer), you already know whether the players ahead of you played aggressively or carefully folded. You can judge much more accurately how strong their cards are and how safe it is to raise, or maybe even bluff.

That's why players often say:

"Give me bad cards in good position over good cards in bad position!"

Funny moments involving position

- You'll often hear new players who don't get why everyone keeps talking about "position" and think it's about the chair they're sitting in ("Is that the chair by the fridge? Should I grab a better position?").
- Others are completely thrown when someone asks, "What position are you in?" and answer, "Uh, sitting? I'm not really flexible enough for other positions..."

Of course, this is all part of the charm and fun of learning poker. Very soon you'll understand all these terms, and position will become a perfectly natural part of your poker vocabulary.

It may sound complicated now, but in a few weeks you'll be the player who knows exactly what they're doing, and everyone else at the table will be thinking:

"Look at this guy, he really knows what good position is!"

And of course, they won't be thinking about yoga.

"Bet, Raise, Fold... say what?"

One of the things that most often confuses new players is how to put money (or chips) into the pot properly. If anyone has ever told you, "Raise him preflop, but don't call his re-raise, just fold," you may have stared back at them as if they were speaking Greek.

Don't worry, you're not alone. Poker has a special term for every betting action, and I'm going to explain them all now, simply and with a few laughs along the way.

Fold ("I'm out of here!")

If you think your cards aren't good enough and you want to drop out of the hand, you "fold." The easiest way to remember this word is to imagine saying, "I'm done, I'm off to grab a coffee!" or "I wouldn't wish these cards on my worst enemy."

Folding is actually one of the most important things in poker. Why? Because sometimes it's smarter to throw away bad cards than to stubbornly hang on, hoping for a miracle. Trust me, miracles in poker aren't all that common — except when your opponent gets one.

Check ("I'll pass for now")

When nobody before you has put in any money, you can "check," which means you want to stay in the hand without betting anything. Think of a check as the moment the waiter asks, "Can I get you anything else?" and you say, "No thanks, I'm good for now."

Of course, you can only check if nobody before you has bet. Once someone bets, checking is no longer an option and you have to choose something else.

Bet ("Let's spice things up")

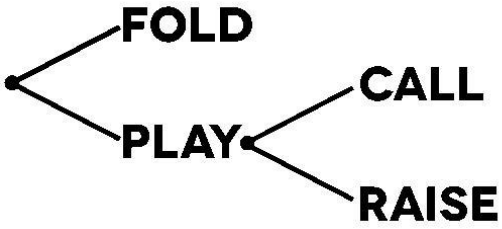
When you're the first to put money in, that's called a "bet." Put simply, if you want to make a move, put chips on the table and challenge your opponents, you "bet."

The easiest way to remember it: if you feel you have good cards (or you want the others to think you do), you bet. That's how you let everyone know you're ready to fight for the pot.

Call ("Challenge accepted!")

If someone before you bets and you want to stay in the hand, you "call." Picture a call as someone saying to you, "Let's see what you've got!" and you answering, "Oh, you're on!"

In poker, calling is how you stay in the hand without raising the stakes. You simply match what the previous player put in — no more, no less.



Raise ("Let me teach you a lesson")

When someone has already bet and you want to increase the bet, you "raise." A raise is how you tell your opponents: "You think your cards are good? Well, wait till you see mine!"

Raises are most often used when you have great cards or when you want to bluff your opponents out of the pot. A raise is often a great move, but it can be dangerous if you're not sure what you're doing, because sometimes your opponent has cards you didn't even dream were possible.

All-in ("All or nothing")

This might be the most exciting term in poker. When you put all your remaining chips into the pot, you're going "all-in." In other words, you're staking everything on the turn of a card — literally.

All-in is a move often made by brave players, but also by those who love a bit of drama at the poker table. If you're after some excitement or an adrenaline rush, all-in is your best friend. Of course, sometimes it ends in a fantastic win, and sometimes you'll end up wondering, "Why on earth did I do that?"

Funny betting moments at the table

- One new player at our club thought "fold" meant he had to fold his cards in half and leave them neatly on the table (very tidy of him, but completely unnecessary).
- Another said "call" and thought he had to phone somebody, so he started patting his pockets for his phone while everyone stared at him in confusion.
- And maybe the funniest moment of all: someone said "raise" and then asked, "Wait, what did I just do? Did I just bet money or did I quit?"

It's all part of being a beginner, and pretty soon you'll be laughing at yourself when you realize how simple all of this actually is.

The next time you sit down at a table (online or live), you'll know what to do — and even more importantly, you'll know what the other players are doing when they start throwing around words like fold, call, raise or bet.

Poker isn't Greek to you anymore. From now on, we're speaking the same language!

"Flop, Turn, River: are we playing poker or going rafting?"

By now you've realized that poker players have a pretty strange way of naming things. If having to learn words like fish, donkey and shark wasn't weird enough, just wait till you hear what they call the cards on the table: the flop, the turn and the river.

If you're picturing yourself sitting in a rowboat flipping cards, you're not alone. But let's quickly clear up what these terms mean, so the next time you hear them you don't start pulling on your swimsuit and grabbing your fishing rod.

Flop ("The first three surprises")

The "flop" is the first three community cards the dealer turns over in the middle of the table. All the players can use these three cards, and the flop is where the real action begins.

If you want an easy way to remember the flop, think of a time you thought you had great cards — say, Ace-King — and then the dealer suddenly flipped over three community cards: two deuces and a three. Congratulations, you've just seen the flop of your nightmares!

Jokes aside, the flop is the most important stage of the hand, because that's when you finally see what your chances of winning are, and what your opponents' chances are too. It's the moment you start thinking seriously about what comes next: whether to bluff or run for the hills.

Turn ("Card four: now it's getting serious!")

If you didn't drop out after the flop, here comes the "turn." That's the fourth community card on the table, and it's often the moment when it becomes crystal clear whether you have a good shot or not.

You know those moments when you think, "Anything but a heart, please," and then the dealer turns over a heart? Yep, that usually happens right on the turn.

Why is the turn so important? Because by now you have an almost complete picture: either your hand has a good chance, or you're getting ready to run (yes, fold).

River ("Card five: prayers and miracles")

And at last we come to the fifth community card, the famous "river." Think of it as the season finale of your favorite show: it'll either end perfectly or leave you deeply disappointed. The river is where you'll often see the biggest turnarounds, the craziest bluffs and the funniest moments.

Why does the river stir up so many emotions? Because it's the card of no return: no more new cards, no second chances. This is it — either you've won the pot or you've just lost your chips.

Funny moments on the flop, turn and river

- You've surely seen people start cursing on the flop because their cards are bad, and then hit the perfect card on the river and suddenly change their tune to "Oh, I knew I'd get that card all along!"
- And there are those who wait for the perfect card on the river, and when it doesn't come, they look around as if the dealer were personally to blame for their bad cards. Yes, we've all been that player

at least once.

Why all the river talk?

A lot of beginners wonder why the cards have names like flop, turn and river. The truth is, nobody's 100% sure where these terms come from. One theory says the "river" got its name in the days of the Wild West, when players often played poker on riverboats, and the last card could literally decide whether you'd walk off the boat a happy winner or end up in the river. Of course, nobody ends up in the water these days (we hope).

In the end, what matters most is that you now understand what players are talking about when they mention the flop, turn or river. The next time you sit down at a poker table and hear these words, you won't be looking around in a panic for a river or a swimsuit; you'll know exactly what's going on.

That said, with all these terms flying around, it's probably still wise to keep a spare swimsuit handy — just in case!

"Stack, Pot, Bankroll: where did my money go?"

Now we're moving on to a very important part of poker, one that directly affects your results and your whole experience at the table: the money and chips you play with. These terms might not be as much fun as some of the earlier ones, but they're definitely something you need to understand if you want to enjoy poker the right way.

Stack: your money on the table

When you sit down at a poker table, online or live, the chips in front of you are called your **stack**. This term matters because it directly determines your options during the game. Put simply, the bigger your stack, the more options and freedom you have in your decisions. If your stack is smaller, you need to be more careful, because every move you make counts.

In poker there are three basic kinds of stack:

- **Deep stack** — when you have lots of chips (e.g., more than 100 times the big blind). This gives you much more room to play, bluff and maneuver.
- **Average stack** — about the average number of chips compared to the other players at the table. Here you can play moderately aggressively, with a bit of caution.
- **Short stack** — a small number of chips (usually less than 30 times the big blind). If you're short-stacked, every move you make has to be carefully thought out, because there's not much room for mistakes.

The advice for beginners is to always play more cautiously with a small stack, while a big stack gives you more room to experiment.

Pot: the money everybody wants

When you hear the word **pot**, it means the total amount of money or chips being played for in a given hand. Every decision you make at the poker table boils down to one simple question: do the cards you're holding justify the risk you have to take to win the pot?



One of the most important things to understand about the pot is the rule that you should never risk a lot of chips (or money) to win a small pot. By the same token, if the pot is big, it may be worth taking a bit more risk, because the reward justifies it.

Remember this simple rule:

- Small pot, small risk.
- Big pot, bigger risk may be justified.

Bankroll: how much money do you have to play with?

If there's one thing that separates good players from beginners, it's how they manage their **bankroll**. Your bankroll is the total amount of money you've set aside for poker, and it's your personal poker economy.

You may have already heard the classic stories of players who made money fast and lost it even faster. That's why bankroll management is one of the most important poker skills. The goal is to always play at a level that fits your bankroll, so you're never forced to stop playing because of bad luck or a short-term losing streak.

Here are a few simple bankroll management guidelines for beginners:

- Never put all your money into one game or tournament (unless you're playing just for fun and know the risk).

- Play games where you have enough money for at least 20–30 buy-ins. For example, if you play tables with a €1 buy-in, you should have at least €20–30 in your poker bankroll.
- Be patient. A bankroll grows slowly but steadily — as long as you play with discipline.

How do you keep your money from "disappearing" off the table?

Every beginner, at some point, asks the same question: "Where did all my money go?" Most of the time the answer is simple: you didn't manage your stack or your bankroll carefully enough.

That's why it's important to understand that poker isn't a short-term game. You might have a great day and win a big sum, but the very next day things can look completely different. That's why it's so important in poker to think long-term and play in a way that makes your money last as long as possible — ideally forever.

Poker is a game where disciplined players always win in the long run. If you learn to manage your stack, your pots and your bankroll well, you'll see that poker can be a fun, exciting and maybe even profitable hobby or job.

Remember, the money you have for poker isn't just money: it's your tool, your weapon and your ticket to enjoying the game. Protect it, manage it wisely, and you'll enjoy poker for a long time, without stress or unnecessary losses.

"Showdown, Nuts and other things you need to know"

In poker there's a moment of truth: the moment when the cards have to be turned over, when bluffs no longer matter and your hand has to do the talking for you. That's the "showdown," a part of the game that can be incredibly tense, dramatic and often decisive.

In this section we'll go through a few terms that come up a lot in the final stage of a hand, when it's decided who takes the pot home.

Showdown: the moment of truth

"Showdown" is the term for the end of a hand, when the players still in it show their cards. That's when everyone can see whether you were playing it straight, actually had good cards or were bluffing to the very end.

Only the players who haven't folded by that point take part in the showdown. The player with the best hand wins all the money in the pot. And it's worth pointing out: in poker, there's no prize for second place. Either you take the pot or you lose the money you put in.

Nuts: the best possible hand

You'll often hear the word "nuts" at the table. It simply means the best hand anyone could possibly make at that point. When someone says "I have the nuts," it means they're holding cards nobody else can beat in that hand.

Why do the nuts matter so much? Because when you have the nuts, you can play as aggressively as you like, knowing nobody else has a better hand. Your goal in that spot is to get your opponents to put as many chips as possible into the pot, so you win the biggest possible prize.

Kicker: the extra card that makes the difference

When two players have identical hands (for example, both have a pair of Aces), the winner is decided by the next-highest card they hold in their hand. That card is called the "kicker."

The kicker often decides hands, especially when it's a high card (e.g., an Ace or a King). That's why experienced players always pay attention not just to their main cards but also to their kickers, because those can be the difference between winning and losing.

Bad beat: when luck lets you down

You'll often hear the term "bad beat" in poker. It describes a situation where a player with a much better hand loses to an opponent who got lucky at the last moment. It can be frustrating, but it's an important part of the game.

It's important to understand that sooner or later you're going to suffer a bad beat. That doesn't mean you're playing badly. Quite the opposite: it means you played perfectly, but luck decided otherwise. Experienced players learn to bounce back from bad beats quickly and keep playing their best game, regardless of the result.

Cooler: when you have great cards, but your opponent has better ones

Another situation you're bound to run into in poker is the "cooler." This term describes a situation where you're dealt great cards (so good you think you can't lose), but your opponent ends up having even better ones.

A cooler is something you can't avoid. It's part of the game, and it happens to absolutely every player, from beginners to pros. What matters is that you don't let it affect your game. A cooler isn't a mistake; it's simply part of the game, and you have to accept it.

How do you deal with the emotional side of these situations?

Now we come to a really important part: how should you handle a showdown, a bad beat or a cooler emotionally?

Poker isn't just a game of strategy and math; it's a game of emotions and discipline. The most important skill you can develop is staying calm and steady, no matter how any single hand turns out. If you suffer a bad result or an injustice, remember that in poker only the long-term result counts.

It always helps to remember that poker is a numbers game: sometimes you'll get lucky, sometimes you won't. But if you keep making good decisions, in the long run you'll get better results than most of your opponents.

The showdown is the moment of truth, and it'll often feel amazing to turn over the winning cards. But when things don't go the way you planned, stay calm, accept the outcome, learn something from it and move on.

It's part of the game, and it's these very situations that make poker such a deep and fascinating sport — a sport where you'll learn not only about cards and strategy, but also about yourself and how you react when the going gets tough.

"Online slang: LOL, GG, NH... wait, is this poker or a group chat?"

If you've ever played any game online, you know the internet has its own special language. Poker is no exception: online poker tables often look like a place where people talk in strange abbreviations, emojis and expressions you might not understand at first glance.

So in this section, we'll walk through the most important abbreviations you'll come across every day when you play poker online. This time we'll keep it short, simple and very practical.

LOL ("Laughing Out Loud")

You probably know this one already: LOL is the universal internet way of laughing or saying something's a joke. In poker you'll often use it (or see others use it) when someone does something funny or unusual, or when the hand takes an unexpected twist.

Example:

- Player 1: "All-in with 2-7? Seriously?! LOL"
- Player 2: "Just checking you're all awake!"

LOL is always friendly, and it helps keep a good atmosphere at the table.

GG ("Good Game")

GG is most often used at the end of a hand or tournament to show respect to your opponent or congratulate them on playing well. Even if you lose, it's polite and friendly to type "GG" and show that you respect your opponent's game.

Example:

- Player 1 (winning): "GG buddy, great hand!"
- Player 2 (losing): "GG, I'll get you next time!"

NH ("Nice Hand")

When your opponent gets great cards or plays a hand particularly well, "NH" is how you give them credit. It's a quick, friendly way to show respect for a good move.

Example:

- Player 1 wins the hand: shows a full house
- Player 2: "NH, didn't see that coming!"

WP ("Well Played")

Like NH, WP is used to give credit when someone plays a hand brilliantly, shows good planning or pulls off a great bluff. WP always sounds nice and adds to a positive atmosphere at the table.



Example:

- Player 1 bluffs and wins the pot.
- Player 2: "WP, I didn't have the guts to call you!"

BRB ("Be Right Back")

If you need to step away from the table for a moment during the game, just type BRB and the other players will know you'll be gone for a short while.

Example:

- Player 1: "BRB, coffee break!"
- Other players: "No problem, hurry back!"

TY ("Thank You")

This one is very simple but important. When someone types GG, NH or WP to you, it's polite to reply with TY, a quick thanks to your opponent for the compliment.

Example:

- Player 1: "NH, you played that hand great!"
- Player 2: "TY buddy, I got a little lucky!"

Tilt: when you lose control of your emotions

"Tilt" isn't really an abbreviation, but it's a word you'll see a lot in online poker chats. It means a player has lost their cool after a bad hand or a bad beat and started making poor, impulsive decisions.

If someone types "I'm tilting," it means they're playing nervously or irrationally. It's a really useful term to know, because tilt is something you want to keep out of your own game.

Example:

- Player 1: "Horrible luck, I'm on tilt now..."

- Player 2: "Take a break, get some rest, come back when you're ready."

Why does understanding online slang matter?

Beyond the cards themselves, online poker is a social game. Communicating at the table (or in the chat) can add a lot to your whole experience. If you understand these terms, you'll fit in more easily and feel like part of the community, and you'll often make new acquaintances or even friends.

Online slang makes poker lively, friendly and fun. It's a way to connect with other players and make a good impression — which, in poker (as in life), is always welcome.

Now that you know these terms, the next time someone types GG or NH you won't be left scratching your head. You'll confidently reply "TY," or maybe even type "WP" to your opponent, showing just how well you understand the special language of online poker.

CHAPTER 3

The Rules of Texas Hold'em

The basic goal: what are you actually trying to do?

Before we get into the specific rules and details, it's important that you fully understand **the basic goal of Texas Hold'em**. This will make it much easier to follow everything else we'll cover in detail in the next sections.

In the simplest terms, the goal in Texas Hold'em is to make the best possible five-card poker hand using the seven cards available to you during the hand.

In every Texas Hold'em hand you get **two cards of your own** that only you can see (they're called **"hole cards" or "pocket cards"**), while **five community cards** are laid out on the table for every player to see and use to build their own hand.

It's important to know that you can make your best five-card hand in any of these ways:

- Using **both** of your cards and **three** cards from the board,
- Using **one** of your cards and **four** cards from the board,
- Or even using none of your cards at all, just the five cards on the board (although this happens less often).

What a complete hand looks like: a quick example

To illustrate, let's look at a practical example of a hand:

Imagine the following situation:

- You're dealt **A♠ (the Ace of spades)** and **K♠ (the King of spades)**. These are your private cards.
- Then the following cards come out on the table (these are community cards that all the players can use):
  - **Flop (first three cards)**: 10♠ J♠ 3♦
  - **Turn (fourth card)**: 2♣
  - **River (fifth card)**: Q♠

If you look at all the cards, you can make the best possible five-card hand using **A♠ and K♠ from your hand** and **10♠, J♠, Q♠ from the board**.

The hand you have now is:

- **A♠ K♠ Q♠ J♠ 10♠** — the best possible hand you can make, known as a **Royal Flush** (the highest hand in poker).

In this situation you'll win all the money or chips in the middle (the pot), because nobody can make a better hand.

What is the pot and how do you win it?

In poker, the money (chips) that all the players put in during a hand is called the **"pot."** Your main goal in every hand is to win that pot — that is, to have a better hand than everyone else at the table (or to make your opponents give up before the cards are shown, but more on that later).

You win the pot in one of two ways:

1. The hand goes all the way to the end (**showdown**) and you have a better poker hand than all your opponents.
2. You get all your opponents to give up (**fold**) before the cards are shown. Then you win the pot automatically, without even showing your cards.

What's next?

Now that you fully understand the basic goal, you're ready to learn exactly what a complete Texas Hold'em hand looks like, from start to finish. In the next section, we'll explain in detail what happens during a hand, what stages there are, and what you can expect when you sit down at a poker table (or in an online poker room) for the first time.

Learning poker is a process, and you've just taken a very important step. Understanding the basic goal of the game will help you learn each new part faster, more easily and with much more confidence.

How a hand unfolds: what exactly happens at the table?

In the previous section you learned the main goal of Texas Hold'em: to make the best possible five-card hand. Now we'll go through the complete flow of a Texas Hold'em hand step by step and in detail, so you know exactly what to expect when you start playing.

A Texas Hold'em hand is made up of several distinct stages. These are the ones to remember:

1. **Preflop** — the first betting round (before any community cards are turned over)

2. **Flop** — the second betting round (after the first three community cards are turned over)
3. **Turn** — the third betting round (after the fourth community card is turned over)
4. **River** — the fourth and final betting round (after the fifth community card is turned over)
5. **Showdown** — the cards are shown and the winner is decided

Each stage has its own rules and quirks, and we'll go through them in more detail now.

1. Preflop: the start of the hand

Every hand of Texas Hold'em begins with each player getting two cards that only they can see. These cards are called **hole cards** or **pocket cards**.

Once everyone has looked at their cards, the first betting round begins: the **preflop round**. Starting with the first player to the left of the big blind, the players have three options:

- **Fold** — throw away your cards and drop out of the hand.
- **Call** — match the current bet (the size of the big blind or of an earlier raise).
- **Raise** — increase the bet (put in more than the amount bet so far).

Once all the players who haven't folded have put in the same amount, the hand moves on to the next stage.

2. Flop: the first three community cards

The dealer now turns the first three community cards face up on the table; this is known as the **flop**. After these three cards are turned over, the second betting round begins.

This round starts with the first player still in the hand to the left of the dealer (the button).

During this stage the players have these options:

- **Check** — stay in the hand without putting in any more chips (if nobody before them has bet).
- **Bet** — put chips into the pot.
- **Call** — match the amount already bet.
- **Raise** — increase the bet.
- **Fold** — drop out of the hand.

Once all the bets are equal, the hand moves on to the next stage.

3. Turn: the fourth community card

When the flop round is over, the dealer turns over the fourth community card, known as the **turn**. Then comes another betting round, exactly like the one on the flop.

Once again the players can check, bet, call, raise or fold. When the bets are equal again, it's on to the last card.

4. River: the fifth community card

Now we come to the last community card, known as the **river**. After it's turned over, there's one final betting round. The action works just like in the previous two stages (flop and turn):

- Check (if nobody has bet yet)
- Bet (the first player to put money in)
- Call (matching the bet)
- Raise (increasing the bet)
- Fold (giving up)

Once this betting round is over, the hand moves on to its final part: the **showdown**.

5. Showdown: showing the cards and declaring the winner

If more than one player is still in the hand after the final betting round, it's time for the **showdown**. All the remaining players now have to show their cards. The best (five-card) poker hand wins the pot.

An important showdown rule:

- The first to show is the player who made the last bet (or raise) on the river. The other players then show their cards in turn, clockwise. If nobody bet on the river (everyone checked), the first to show is the player closest to the dealer's left (the small blind or the next player still in the hand).

The player with the best poker hand wins the whole pot. If two or more players have the same best hand, the pot is split equally between them (a "split pot").

The deal and the blinds: how every hand begins

Every hand of Texas Hold'em starts with the deal and the posting of the blinds (the forced bets). Understanding these details is key to making sense of the game right from the start.

Who deals: the Dealer (Button)

At the poker table there's one special position called the **"Dealer"** or the **"Button."** The button that marks the dealer moves clockwise, shifting one seat after every hand.

If you play poker live, there's usually a professional dealer who physically deals the cards, but the button still moves around to mark the order of action. If you play online, the cards are dealt automatically, but the button still rotates and shows which player is currently the "dealer."

The button's position is very important, because it determines who posts the blinds and the order in which players make their decisions during the hand.

What are the blinds? The small and the big blind

In Texas Hold'em, before every hand begins, two players have to put chips into the pot, before they even see their cards. These forced bets are called the blinds.

- **Small Blind**: the player sitting first to the left of the button.
- **Big Blind**: the player sitting immediately to the left of the small blind.

The big blind is usually twice the size of the small blind. For example, if you're playing at a table with €0.10/€0.20 blinds, the small blind is €0.10 and the big blind is €0.20.



Why do the blinds exist?

The blinds are forced bets that get the action going at the table. Without them, players could simply wait forever for perfect cards, which would make for a dull, passive game. The blinds force players to get involved and create a starting pot to play for in every hand.

How does the deal work?

Once the blinds are posted, each player gets two cards face down (hole cards). The players look at their cards, and then the first betting round (preflop) begins, starting with the player sitting immediately to the left of the big blind.

In online poker the deal happens automatically and quickly. In a live game, the dealer first shuffles the cards, then deals each player one card at a time, clockwise, and then a second card, so that every player ends up with two.

Why the blind positions matter

The blinds are special positions that call for careful strategy, especially since the players in the blinds are forced to put money in before seeing their cards. That puts them in a unique spot, because they often have to

defend their bet and stay in the hand even with weaker cards.

The big blind has a special position in the first betting round (preflop), because it's the last to act. That lets the big blind see what everyone else has done first, which can lead to a better decision.

The small blind is in a trickier spot, because in every round after the preflop it has to act before the other players, which means it has less information about what everyone else is doing. That's why it's important to choose your hands carefully when you're in the small blind.

The blind and button positions shape a lot of things in poker: how you'll play your cards, how aggressively you'll bet and how carefully you need to read the situation at the table. As you gain experience, you'll realize more and more how important these positions are and how to use them to your advantage.

Betting rounds: how to make the right decisions at the table

Every betting round in Texas Hold'em is a unique chance to take control of the hand and show your opponents what your intentions are. Here we'll focus solely on **how to make decisions while betting**, with concrete tips and examples to help you understand when the time is right for certain moves.

We won't repeat the basics of how a hand unfolds (we covered that in the "How a hand unfolds" section); we'll jump straight into **specific situations and decisions**.

Preflop betting: practical tips

The preflop stage is when you have the least information (you can only see your own two cards), which is why you need to be more careful with your decisions. Here are some straightforward recommendations:

- **When should you call preflop?**

Call mainly when you have solid cards like **medium pairs** (e.g., 8-8, 9-9) or **two high cards** (e.g., K-Q, A-J). You can also call with weaker cards if you're in late position and several players have already entered the pot, because that increases your potential reward.

- **When should you raise preflop?**

Raise if you have very strong cards (A-A, K-K, Q-Q, A-K) or if you want to thin out the field before the flop. A raise is also a good idea if you want to show strength and take the initiative, especially in late position.

- **When should you fold preflop?**

Always fold weak hands (like 2-7, 3-8 and so on), especially if someone before you has raised. Don't be afraid to fold; in poker, it's often the best decision.

Flop betting: practical tips

Once you've seen the first three community cards (the flop), the decision gets clearer. Here it's important to assess how well your cards fit the flop.

- **When should you check on the flop?**

Checking is the best decision when you're not sure how strong your hand is but you don't want to give up yet. Example: you have two high cards, but you didn't make a pair on the flop.

- **When should you bet on the flop?**

Betting is a good choice when you want to protect a good hand (e.g., you've made a pair, two pair or a flush/straight draw) or when you want to push out players with weaker hands. Always think about how many opponents you're up against, because more opponents may call for a more aggressive approach.

- **When should you raise on the flop?**

Raise when you have really good cards (a set, two pair or strong draws) and want to build the pot. It's also a good move when you think your opponent is bluffing and you want to make them fold.

Turn betting: practical tips

By the turn, you're getting a much clearer picture of the hand. This is where you need to be careful and very aware of the situation you're in.

- **When should you be careful and check?**

When you're not sure you have a better hand than your opponent, or the situation has gotten worse after the fourth card. Checking is often the best way to protect yourself from a big loss when you're unsure.

- **When should you bet on the turn?**

A turn bet is great if you have a good hand you want to protect from your opponent's possible draw, or if you want to knock your opponent out of the hand before the last card (the river).

- **When should you raise on the turn?**

If you think you have the best hand or you can plainly see your opponent is bluffing, raising the turn can significantly increase your chances of a big profit in the hand.

River betting: practical tips

The river is the last card: your last chance for action and final decisions. At this point you have the most information, but also the most pressure.

- **When should you check the river?**

If you're not sure how strong your cards are, or you believe your opponent has a stronger hand, checking is the smartest decision. Better to save your chips than to take unnecessary risks.

- **When should you bet the river?**

Bet when you're fairly sure you have the best hand, or when you're trying to convince your opponent to fold a stronger hand (a bluff). The river is a common time to bluff, but always be careful: a good opponent will spot a bluff.

- **When should you raise the river?**

Only raise the river if you're sure you have the winning hand. It can be a powerful way to maximize your winnings when you have the nuts (the best possible hand).

General betting tips

- **Always watch your opponents:** The best way to make a good decision is to pay attention to how your opponents play in different situations.
- **Don't bluff too often:** Bluffing is useful, but you need to be selective. Don't let bluffing become the main strategy of your game.
- **Don't be afraid to fold:** Folding is often the best move, especially when you're not sure about the situation. A good player knows when to let a hand go and save their chips for a better opportunity.

If you approach every bet carefully and thoughtfully, you'll have a big edge over players who bet impulsively or without a plan. Poker is a game where your decisions shape the outcome, and every well-thought-out decision improves your chances of success in the long run.

Poker hand rankings: which hand beats which?

To play Texas Hold'em properly, you need to know the strength of poker hands precisely. Poker hands have a fixed ranking, from weakest to strongest, and that ranking decides the winner of every hand.

In this section we'll lay out all the hands from weakest to strongest in a simple overview, with examples to help you recognize and remember them easily.

1. High Card

If no player has a pair or any other hand, the winner is the player with the highest single card.

Example:

If you have A♠ K♦ 9♣ 7♠ 3♦ and your opponent has K♠ J♦ 9♥ 8♣ 5♠, you win the pot because your Ace is the highest card.

2. One Pair

One pair is two cards of the same rank, plus any three other cards.

Example:

- Hand: A♠ A♦ 9♣ 7♥ 3♦ (a pair of Aces).

If two players have the same pair, the winner is decided by the next-highest card (the kicker).

3. Two Pair

Two pairs of different ranks, plus one more card (the kicker).

Example:

- Hand: K♠ K♦ 7♣ 7♦ 4♥ (two pair, Kings and sevens).

If two players have the same two pair, the kicker (the fifth card) decides.

4. Three of a Kind (Trips)

Three cards of the same rank plus two unrelated cards.

Example:

- Hand: Q♠ Q♦ Q♥ 9♣ 2♦ (three Queens).

If both players have three of a kind, the higher three of a kind wins.

5. Straight

Five cards in sequence that aren't all the same suit.

Example:

- Hand: 9♣ 8♦ 7♥ 6♠ 5♦ (a straight, five through nine).

If two players have a straight, the one with the higher top card wins.

6. Flush

Five cards of the same suit that aren't in sequence.

Example:

- Hand: A♥ J♥ 9♥ 5♥ 2♥ (a heart flush).

If two players have a flush, the winner is decided by the highest card in the flush.

7. Full House (The Boat)

A full house is three cards of one rank plus two cards of another rank.

Example:

- Hand: 10♠ 10♦ 10♣ 4♠ 4♥ (a full house, tens full of fours).

If both players have a full house, the winner is the one whose three matching cards (the three-of-a-kind part of the full house) are higher.

8. Four of a Kind (Quads)

Four cards of the same rank plus one extra card.

Example:

- Hand: J♠ J♦ J♥ J♣ 5♦ (four of a kind: four Jacks).

If both players have four of a kind (rare), the higher four of a kind wins.

9. Straight Flush

Five cards in sequence, all of the same suit.

Example:

- Hand: 8♣ 7♣ 6♣ 5♣ 4♣ (a straight flush).

If two players have a straight flush, the one with the higher top card wins.

10. Royal Flush

The highest possible hand in poker: A, K, Q, J and 10, all of the same suit.

Example:

- Hand: A♠ K♠ Q♠ J♠ 10♠ (a royal flush).

This hand can't be beaten.

The most common hand-ranking mistakes

- **Ignoring the kicker:** Players often forget that when two hands are otherwise identical, the kicker decides the winner.
- **Mixing up flushes and straights:** A flush needs five cards of the same suit, a straight needs five cards in a row. Check your cards carefully before you make a big bet.
- **Misjudging the strength of a full house:** In a full house, the three-of-a-kind part determines the strength of the hand. Beginners often get confused about which part of the full house counts more.

How to remember the rankings easily

The best way to learn the hand rankings quickly is to practice and play regularly.

That said, here's a quick cheat sheet to make them easier to remember (from strongest to weakest):

- **Royal Flush** (A-K-Q-J-10 of the same suit)
- **Straight Flush** (five cards in a row, same suit)
- **Four of a Kind** (four cards of the same rank)
- **Full House** (3+2)

- **Flush** (five cards of the same suit)
- **Straight** (five cards in a row)
- **Three of a Kind** (three cards of the same rank)
- **Two Pair** (two different pairs)
- **One Pair** (two cards of the same rank)
- **High Card** (no hand, just your highest card)

Once you know the hand rankings cold, it's easier to make decisions and play with confidence. This section is key to your understanding of poker, so it's important to memorize these hands and always keep them in mind while you play.

Showdown: revealing the cards and deciding the winner

The **showdown** is the final stage of every Texas Hold'em hand, where it's decided who wins the pot. Once all the betting rounds are over (preflop, flop, turn, river), the players still in the hand show their cards and compare hands. In this section we'll walk you through how this part of the game works.

Who shows first?

There's a set rule for who shows their cards first at showdown:

- **If there was betting in the last round (the river):** The first to show is the player who made the last aggressive action (the last **raise** or **bet** on the river).

The other players then show their cards in turn, clockwise.

- **If nobody bet on the river (everyone checked):** The first to show is the player closest to the dealer's (button's) left.

Keep in mind that a player can also choose not to show their cards if they think their hand is weaker than one that's already been shown. In that case the player can simply throw their cards away face down (**"muck"**).

How is the winner decided?

Once all the players in the showdown have shown their cards, their best five-card hands (made from their two cards and the five community cards) are compared. The winner is the player with the strongest poker hand, as described in detail in the hand rankings section.

- **Example:** If player A has a pair of Kings and player B has two pair (nines and threes), player B wins (two pair beats one pair).

In poker there's no prize for second place: the pot goes only to the player with the strongest hand.

What if players have the same hand (split pot)?

Sometimes two or more players will have hands of exactly the same strength. In that case the money (the pot) is divided equally between them; this is called a **split pot**.

- **Example:** The board is A♦ K♣ Q♠ 8♦ 5♣

Player A has A♣ 9♠ (hand: a pair of Aces with K-Q-9 kickers).

Player B has A♥ 9♦ (identical hand: a pair of Aces with K-Q-9 kickers).

In this case the pot is split equally between players A and B, because their hands are exactly the same strength.

What is the kicker and why does it matter?

When players have the same hand (for example, the same pair or the same two pair), the winner is decided by the next-highest card they hold; this card is called the **kicker**.

- **Example:** The board is K♠ J♦ 7♣ 5♦ 2♠

Player A has K♣ 9♥ (hand: a pair of Kings, kickers J-9-7)

Player B has K♦ 8♥ (hand: a pair of Kings, kickers J-8-7)

In this situation player A wins, because they have the higher kicker (9 versus 8).

The kicker is often the deciding factor in poker, so always think it through carefully before you get into a big bet.

Do you always have to show your cards?

As we mentioned briefly, at showdown you have the right not to show your cards if you see your opponent has shown a better hand. In that case you can simply muck your cards and concede without showing them.

However, if you think you have a better hand than the one already shown, you have to show your cards so the winner can be decided.

Also, if you bet or raised in the last betting round and nobody called you (everyone folded), you automatically win the pot without showing your cards.

Key showdown tips

- **Never show first if you don't have to:** If you're not sure how strong your cards are, let your opponent show first whenever you can.

- **Don't rush to muck:** Always check your opponent's cards carefully before deciding to throw yours away, because players often misread their own hands.
- **Don't show your cards unnecessarily when your opponents fold:** You don't want to give players free information about your game if you don't have to.

The showdown is the stage of the game where you see who read the situation well, who played bravely and who made a mistake. A good player always studies showdown results carefully, because it's the best way to learn about your own playing style as well as your opponents'.

Special rules and situations you need to know

In Texas Hold'em there are some specific situations that won't come up every hand, but when they do, it's crucial to understand them so you know how to react. In this section we'll cover these special cases and the rules that go with them, with concrete examples to help you remember them easily.

What does "all-in" mean and when is it used?

"All-in" means a player puts all their remaining chips in at once. This happens when a player doesn't have enough chips to call another player's bet or raise, or when they deliberately decide to put all their chips on one hand.

When a player goes all-in, there are two possible scenarios:

- **If only one opponent is left in the hand:** The hand plays out as normal, for a single pot. The opponent puts in at most what the all-in player had, and the rest of their chips stay with them.

- **If two or more opponents with more chips are left in the hand:** A so-called **"side pot"** is created. The **main pot** is capped at the amount the all-in player could cover, while the other players with more chips can keep betting into a separate side pot.



Example:

Player A goes all-in with €50. Player B has €100 and decides to call. Player C has €200 and also decides to call.

- The main pot is now €150 in total (€50 from each player).
- If players B and C keep betting (say, another €50 each), that money goes into a separate side pot (an extra €100 in total) that only the two of them are competing for.

At showdown, player A is only competing for the main pot (€150), while players B and C are competing for both the main pot and the side pot.

How does a side pot work?

As we explained, a side pot is created when one player doesn't have enough chips to keep betting. This extra pot lets the other players keep betting and competing even though one player is already all-in.

The key things to know about side pots:

- The all-in player can only win the main pot.
- The other players (who aren't all-in) can win both the main pot and the side pot.

What happens if two players are knocked out at the same time in a tournament?

If two players are eliminated from a tournament at the same time (e.g., both are all-in and lose to a third player), the player who started that hand with more chips gets the better finishing position.

Example:

- Player A has 200 chips, player B has 150 chips and player C has 500 chips.
- Players A and B go all-in, player C calls and beats them both.
- Player A finishes higher in the tournament standings than player B, because A had more chips at the start of the hand.

The minimum raise rule

An important rule that often gets overlooked is the **minimum raise**:

- If someone before you has raised, the smallest raise you're allowed to make is the same amount the previous player raised by.

Example:

- If player A bets €10 and player B raises to €20, the next player (C) who wants to raise again has to make it at least €30 (an extra €10). A smaller raise isn't allowed.

"String bet": the all-at-once rule

In live poker there's a rule about what's called a "string bet": you have to put your chips in all at once, or clearly announce exactly how much you're betting. You're not allowed to put chips out in several separate motions without announcing it first.

If a player breaks this rule, the floor can disallow the raise and count only the first amount of chips the player put in the pot.

Example:

- If you want to bet €100, say out loud, "Raise, €100," or put all your chips in the pot at once.
- If you first put in €50 and then add another €50 without a clear announcement, your raise can be ruled invalid, and only the original €50 will count.

In online poker there are no problems like this, because the app takes care of all the bets, but in live poker you need to keep this rule in mind.

What if the dealer makes a mistake (misdeal)?

In live poker, the dealer may accidentally deal the cards wrong or expose a card too early. This is called a **misdeal**. In that case:

- If the misdeal is caught right away (before the betting starts), the hand is redealt.
- If the mistake is noticed after the betting has started, play continues and the floor manager decides how to correct the error, often in a way that protects the players who didn't cause it.

In online poker mistakes like this are practically impossible, because the dealing is automatic.

Why it pays to know these rules

These special situations and rules may look complicated, but they come up more often than you think. Good players know these rules inside out and are ready to react correctly in every one of these situations.

Knowing the special rules protects you from mistakes and misunderstandings and lets you play with confidence and efficiency. In poker, the details often make the key difference between a good player and a great one, so it's really important that you understand all these specific situations.

Cash games vs. tournaments: the differences

In Texas Hold'em there are two basic formats: **cash games** (also known as "ring games") and **tournaments**. Both formats have clear rules, but there are significant differences that directly affect your strategy and your overall approach to poker. Here we'll explain the key differences, with practical tips on choosing the format that best suits your style.

What are cash games?

Cash games are probably the format you'll run into first when you start playing poker. In cash games every chip has an exact cash value, and you can leave the table at any time and take your winnings with you.

- **Example:** If you sit down at a cash table with €20 and an hour later you have €50, you can get up right away, leave and take all the money you've won with you.

Cash games have **fixed blinds**, which means they don't go up during play but stay the same the whole time. For example, at **Poker Klub Kiril** you can play cash games starting from very small blinds like €0.10/€0.20

(10/20 cents), all the way up to more serious €0.50/€1 blinds, so every kind of player can find the level that suits them.

Cash games are great for beginners for several reasons:

- You control how long you play.
- You can play with small amounts of money.
- You can top up your chips or get up from the table at any time.

What are poker tournaments and how do they work?

If you're like most players who've just started exploring poker, you're probably wondering what exactly a poker tournament is and why people enjoy them so much. The truth is, tournaments have a special kind of magic. They're different from regular cash games because here you know exactly how much you're risking, how much you can win and how long the game will last.

That clarity is what makes tournaments a great choice, especially if you're just setting out into the world of poker. Simply put: when you play a tournament, you pay what's called a **buy-in**. The buy-in is the amount of money that gets you a seat at the tournament table and kicks off your adventure. Unlike regular games, in a tournament every player starts with the same number of chips and the same chance of winning.

As the tournament goes on, players are gradually knocked out: once they run out of chips, their game is over. The goal of a tournament is simple: **stay in the game as long as possible and finish among the top players** who'll share the prize pool at the end. The longer you last, the better your chances of winning money, maybe even the top prize.

At **Poker Klub Kiril**, there are regular daily freeroll tournaments (completely free to enter) where you can win free tickets to real tournaments with real prizes. There's also a special monthly league, where the winner gets an exclusive trip for two to an exotic destination. This kind of tournament is ideal for anyone who loves extra excitement and clear goals while they play.

One of the main things you'll notice in tournaments is that the size of the *blinds* goes up as play goes on. The blinds are forced bets that drive the action and stop players from waiting too long for the perfect hand. Say a tournament starts with blinds of 10/20 chips: after a set time they go up to 20/40, then 40/80, and so on until only one winner is left. These rising blinds force players to change their strategy over the course of the tournament, which makes the game exciting and dynamic.

You'll also often come across terms like **rebuy** and **add-on**. A *rebuy* means that if you lose all your chips during a certain period of the tournament, you can buy back in and keep playing. An *add-on* is an extra you can buy once, usually after a certain amount of time, to increase your chip stack. Of course, these depend on the type of tournament and aren't part of every format.

The **prize pool** of every tournament is made up of all the buy-ins put together. For example, if the buy-in is €10 and there are 100 players, the prize pool will be €1,000. This pool is shared among a certain number of top finishers: the better you place, the bigger your share. Pretty straightforward, right?

Here's an example of a typical online tournament I often play:

- Buy-in: €10
- Starting chips: 5,000
- Blinds: start at 25/50 and go up every 10 minutes

- Number of players: 100
- Prizes: the top 15 players get a share of the prize pool, with the winner taking the biggest chunk.

At first I was a bit nervous, but once I understood how things worked, I felt right at home. I knew straight away how much I could win, exactly how much I was risking and what I had to do to succeed. Knowing all that up front is what made tournaments my favorite form of poker.

The main differences between cash games and tournaments

- **Chip value:**
  - In a cash game, chips have a direct cash value.
  - In a tournament, chips have no cash value; they just decide where you finish.
- **Blind structure:**
  - Cash games have fixed blinds that don't change.
  - In tournaments the blinds go up as play goes on, so your strategy has to be more flexible.
- **Length of play:**
  - In a cash game you can play as long as you like: come and go whenever you want.
  - Tournaments last until one player has won all the chips, or until a set number of players is left.
- **Strategy:**
  - In a cash game you can play in a more relaxed way, with less risk.
  - In tournaments you often have to play more aggressively and adjust your strategy as the blinds go up.

How do you choose the right format?

If you like a relaxed game with no time limit, where you control your budget, **cash games** are a great choice. They're also ideal if you want to practice new strategies or experiment with different playing styles.

If you thrive on competition and excitement and enjoy the strategy of adapting to rising blinds, **tournaments** may be a great choice for you. Freeroll tournaments and special leagues like the one at Poker Klub Kiril are especially fun, since you can win valuable prizes or even exotic trips.

Either way, it's good practice to try both formats. By combining cash games and tournaments you can develop a wide range of poker skills while enjoying the game to the fullest.

Poker Klub Kiril is designed to give you the best of both worlds: every day you can play cash games that fit your budget, and also compete in exciting tournaments with attractive prizes.

In the end, the format you choose depends on your preferences, personality and goals in poker. What matters is finding a format you really enjoy, because above all, poker should be fun and exciting.

A complete Texas Hold'em hand: a detailed walkthrough

In this section we'll go through one complete Texas Hold'em hand step by step, from the very beginning to the final reveal (the showdown). The example is realistic and practical, with the kinds of decisions that come up all the time at poker tables, live or online.

The setup (the deal and the blinds)

Four players are in the game: **Marko**, **Ivana**, **Stefan** and **Jelena**.

- Jelena has the button (dealer).
- Marko is the small blind (€0.10).
- Ivana is the big blind (€0.20).

The dealer has dealt everyone two cards:

- **Marko:** K♠ J♦
- **Ivana:** 8♣ 7♣
- **Stefan:** A♦ Q♦
- **Jelena:** 9♥ 9♠

Preflop: the first betting round

- **Stefan** is first to act (he's sitting to the left of the big blind). He has very good cards (A♦Q♦) and decides to raise to €0.60.
- **Jelena** has a pair of nines (9♥9♠), which is solid. She decides to call and puts in €0.60.
- **Marko** has K♠ J♦ : interesting cards, but in bad position. He still decides to call the €0.60, adding €0.50 (since he's already put in the €0.10 small blind).
- **Ivana** has 8♣7♣ and also decides to call, adding another €0.40 (she's already put in the €0.20 big blind).

The pot is now: €2.40

Flop: the first three community cards

The dealer turns over the flop: **9♦ J♣ 4♦**

- **Marko** has a pair of Jacks (J) with a King kicker (K).
- **Ivana** hasn't really hit anything, but she can make a straight if a ten comes.
- **Stefan** has two diamonds, which gives him a great flush draw (he needs one more diamond).
- **Jelena** has three nines (a set of nines), which is the strongest hand right now.

The next betting round starts with Marko:

- **Marko** decides to bet (€0.80) because he has a pair of Jacks.
- **Ivana** folds, because her hand is weak.
- **Stefan** has a great shot at a flush and decides to call the €0.80.
- **Jelena** has the best hand (a set of nines) and decides to raise to €2.50.
- **Marko** now has some thinking to do: he only has a pair, and he can see Jelena is playing very aggressively. He realizes he's probably behind and decides to fold.
- **Stefan**, however, sees a great chance for a flush. He decides to call the raise and puts in another €1.70.

The pot is now: €8.20

Turn: the fourth community card

The dealer turns over the fourth card (the turn): **6♦**

- This is a great card for Stefan: he's made a diamond flush (A♦Q♦ from his hand plus 9♦ 4♦ 6♦ on the board).
- Jelena still has three nines, a great hand, but now it's weaker than the flush.

Stefan is first to act:

- Stefan now has a flush and decides to bet aggressively, €4.00, looking to maximize his profit.
- Jelena believes she has a good hand, but now she's careful because a flush is possible. Still, she decides to call the €4.00, because she can still improve: any river card that pairs the board gives her a full house, and the last nine would even give her four of a kind (four nines).

The pot is now: €16.20

River: the fifth community card

The dealer turns over the fifth card (the river): **4♣**

- This is a fantastic card for Jelena: she now has a full house (three nines and two fours).
- Stefan has a flush, still a very strong hand, but now weaker than Jelena's full house.

Stefan is first to act:

- Stefan is still convinced he has the best hand. He decides to bet another €6.00 into the pot, completely confident in his flush.
- Jelena knows she has the winning hand (a full house). She now raises to €12.00, looking to get paid as much as possible.
- Now Stefan has to decide: a lot of money is already in, and he has a strong flush. Still, he senses something isn't right, because Jelena never bluffs in spots like this. After a short think, he decides to call the extra €6.00 anyway.

The total pot is now: €40.20

Showdown: the cards are revealed

- Stefan shows a flush (A♦ Q♦ 9♦ 6♦ 4♦): very strong, but not the strongest.
- Jelena shows a full house (9♥9♠9♦4♦4♣), which beats it here.

Jelena wins the whole €40.20 pot.

What this hand teaches us

This hand shows how important it is to carefully weigh your cards, your opponents' actions and the changes on the board. Stefan played well — a flush is a strong hand — but in poker things often change on the last card. Jelena got lucky with the river, but she also read the situation brilliantly and got the most out of her strong hand.

Every poker hand brings something new: a new lesson, new experience and new situations to analyze. That's why poker is a game that never stops being challenging and interesting.

CHAPTER 4

Basic Strategy and Tips for Beginners

Choosing which cards to play (starting hands)

One of the most important things you'll learn at the start of your poker career is choosing which cards to get involved with in the first place. In poker you can't control what cards you're dealt, but you can absolutely control **which cards you decide to play** and which ones you simply throw away.

This may well be the single most important skill for a beginner. Lots of new players go wrong by playing too many hands. That's why it's important to build discipline right from the start and learn to play selectively.

What good players actually do at the start of a hand

When I first started playing poker more seriously, honestly, I didn't give much thought to starting strategy. I'd sit down at the table, look at my cards and get into almost every hand. My thinking was: *"Maybe these are the cards that'll bring me something good."* Of course, the result was pretty predictable: lots of lost chips, little success and plenty of disappointment.

After a few experiences like that, I realized there had to be something experienced players were doing differently. I started paying attention and watching their moves, and soon I noticed something that completely changed the way I played:

Experienced players choose their starting cards much more carefully.

They didn't care about being in every hand; what mattered was being in the hands where they had a real chance of winning. I vividly remember watching an older player who, over a whole hour, got involved maybe four or five times. Every time he played, he was relaxed and confident, and he won most of those hands.

I wondered: why hadn't I been doing that all along? But it was a lesson I had to learn for myself.

What I realized later is that there's no big secret to choosing the right starting cards. In fact, it's very simple. Instead of playing almost everything you're dealt, start being a bit more selective. Good starting cards are the ones that give you the most options once the flop comes out.

Which cards are best for beginners?

There are a few categories of cards that are generally good to play, especially for new players:

1. Big pairs (AA, KK, QQ, JJ, 10-10)

- These hands are always strong, and you should play them aggressively before the flop (raise, or even go all-in if necessary). Big pairs are rare, but when you get one, it gives you a great chance of winning.

2. Suited high cards (AK, AQ, AJ, KQ)

- High cards of the same suit give you a chance to make a strong pair, a straight or a flush. With cards like these you can raise, especially from good position.

3. Medium pairs (99, 88, 77, 66)

- Good cards for careful play, especially if you can get in cheaply (call) and try to hit a set (a third matching card on the flop). If you don't hit that third card on the flop, be careful.

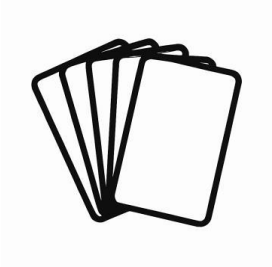
On the other hand, weak cards like 7♣2♦ or J♠3♥, however cute they may look, will usually cost you chips. Yes, we've all heard about players who win a big hand with weak cards, but trust me, it rarely happens. *And just because it happened once to you or a friend doesn't mean it'll happen again next time.*

Which cards do beginners often misplay?

Cards that look good but can be dangerous if you're inexperienced:

1. Small suited connectors (e.g., 5♣6♣ or 7♦8♦)

- They're tempting, but they take a lot of experience to play well. If you play them, be very careful and don't put in too much money until you can see you have a good chance at a straight or a flush.



2. An Ace with a small kicker (e.g., A♠4♦)

- It looks good (you've got an Ace!), but it can easily get you into trouble, because when you make a pair of Aces, you'll often be outkicked by an opponent holding an Ace with a better kicker (A-J, A-Q and so on).

3. Unconnected cards that look "pretty" (e.g., K♣9♦ or Q♥7♠)

- Beginners often get into hands with cards like these because the one high card draws them in. Realistically, cards like this rarely make a good hand and often lead to losses.

How do you decide which cards to play?

When choosing your starting cards, here are the questions to ask yourself:

- **What's my position at the table?**

The earlier you have to act (early position), the stronger your cards should be (AA, KK, QQ, AK, AQ).

The closer you are to the dealer button (late position), the more you can afford to play somewhat weaker cards, because you have more information about your opponents.

- **How many opponents have already come into the pot before me?**

If players have already come in before you, you can get involved with slightly weaker cards (medium pairs, small suited connectors), because the potential profit is bigger if you hit a good hand.

- **Has anyone raised before me?**

If someone before you raises, you should be more careful and mostly play only stronger cards. If the price is low (e.g., just the blinds with no raises), you can play a wider range of cards.

An example of choosing the right cards

Let's say you're in early position (first to act) and you're dealt **A♣J♦**. It looks like a solid hand, but you need to be careful because you're first to act. You can play this hand, but cautiously, perhaps with a small raise or a call. However, if someone after you raises big, the sensible thing is to fold, because you could easily be up against stronger cards like AK or AQ.

If you're in late position (the button or the cutoff), the same hand (A♣J♦) becomes much stronger. You can play it aggressively, because you've already seen what everyone before you has done.

Why is being selective so important?

In the end, here's the simple reason you should be selective with your starting cards:

- **If you play too many hands, you'll often end up with weak hands and lose money.**
- **If you play only good starting hands, you'll have a much better chance of winning pots.**

Experienced players also tend to play far fewer hands than beginners. Instead of playing almost every hand, they wait for the right situations, the ones where they have an edge. That doesn't mean you have to be boring or play cautiously all the time, just that you choose your opportunities carefully.

Once I started doing that, the results came very quickly. I lost less, I felt better, and the game became much more fun.

Perhaps most importantly, I soon spotted the most common mistakes other beginners make: they play too many hands, ignore position or take too many risks with weak cards. That's when I realized it actually isn't

hard to avoid these mistakes. You just need to be aware of what you're doing and have a bit more discipline.

The biggest of those mistakes is the first one: playing too many hands. So if you can build discipline from the very start, you'll be a step ahead of most of the players you meet at the table.

Remember: in poker, less is often a lot more.

To wrap up this section, I want to ask you something, and I'd like you to think about it before you read on:

What do you think was the first thing I changed in my game when I decided to become a better player?

Has something similar happened to you?

Think about it for a moment. It might be just what shows you where you can take your first big step toward becoming a much better poker player than you were yesterday.

Why position matters more than you think

The second thing I soon noticed, right after how carefully good players choose their starting cards, was how important your position at the table is. At first I didn't pay much attention to it. I thought, "What does it matter where I sit? Cards are cards." But position turned out to be far more important than I'd ever imagined. When you're one of the last to act, you can see what the players before you are doing, and that's a big advantage. You can play weaker cards, or back off if you notice someone before you raising.

Now that you understand the basic idea of position at the poker table, it's time to dig a little deeper: how exactly does position affect your decisions, your choice of cards and your whole strategy?

Position isn't just another little detail in poker. It's often the key advantage you'll have over your opponents, especially when you're just starting out on your poker journey. Here are some practical tips on using position to your advantage and adjusting your style depending on where you're sitting.

Early position: play carefully and selectively

If you're one of the first players to act (what's called **early position**), you need to be very careful. The reason is simple: you have no information yet about what the players behind you are planning.

Practical tips for early position:

- **Play very few hands**: the best choices in early position are premium cards only (AA, KK, QQ, JJ, AK). All other cards, even ones that look solid (like A-J or K-Q), are better thrown away unless you're ready for a potentially big risk.
- **Be careful with medium and small pairs (e.g., 6-6, 7-7)**: they can be very awkward to play from early position, because there's a good chance someone behind you will raise, which puts you in a tough spot.

Example of an early-position decision:

Imagine you're sitting right after the big blind (the seat known as UTG, "under the gun") and you're dealt something like K♦J♦. It looks solid, but your position is really bad. If you decide to play this hand, you have to be

ready for the possibility that one of the players behind you has stronger cards. In most situations, the better move is simply to fold this hand from this seat.

Middle position: more freedom, but stay careful

Middle position gives you a little more flexibility, because you have a bit more information. Several players have already made their decisions, so you can already get a feel for the situation at the table.

Practical tips for middle position:

- **Widen your range a little**: you can play cards like A-J, A-10, K-Q and Q-J, especially if nobody has raised before you.
- **With medium pairs (e.g., 8-8, 9-9)** you can play more freely, especially if nobody before you has made a big raise. The goal is to get in cheaply (limp or call) and try to hit a set on the flop.
- Be careful if someone before you has already raised; then it's better to play only strong cards like A-K, A-Q or big pairs.

Example of a middle-position decision:

If the player before you just calls (limps) and you have something like 9♠9♣, feel free to come in with a call or even a small raise. If the player before you raises aggressively, be careful with this hand: the best option is to call (if it's not too expensive), or fold if you think your opponent has a stronger hand.

Late position: the best place for aggressive play

Late position — the button, or the player just before the button (the cutoff) — is the best position at the poker table. Here you have the most information, because you know what all the players before you have done,

and you can best judge how strong their cards are.

Practical tips for late position:

- **Play a wider range of cards**: you can play even relatively weak cards if you see that nobody before you has shown strength. For example, cards like Q-10, J-9 or even 7-8 of the same suit (a classic suited connector) can be great for aggressive play in late position.
- **Be aggressive when you sense weakness**: if you notice nobody before you has raised, go ahead and do it yourself. You'll often win the pot right there before the flop, without a fight.
- **If there's been aggressive play before you, be more careful**: in late position you have the luxury of folding easily if the situation looks risky. If other players are showing strength, there's no need to take chances with weaker cards.

Example of a late-position decision:

If you're on the button and all the players before you have just called or folded, and you have Q♣10♣, that's the ideal spot to raise. Most of the time you'll either win the pot right away, or at least be in good position to control the action after the flop.

Why is position so powerful?

In short, poker is a game of incomplete information. Position gives you information others don't have, because you get to see how everyone before you reacted. The more information you have, the better you can judge the strength of your hand and the weakness of your opponents.

That's why pros often say:

"Players who know how to use position win more money than players who just get good cards."

And it's true: the best players are the ones who use position wisely and carefully choose the cards they play based on where they're sitting.

If you make this a habit right at the start of your poker career, position will be your main weapon against other players. This one simple strategy instantly puts you ahead of most of the players you'll meet at the table, live or online.

Bluffing: when, why and how?

Bluffing is one of the things beginners love most about poker. And while bluffing can be a very useful strategy, it's often overrated, especially early in your poker career. In this section you'll learn **when, why and how** to bluff properly, without unnecessary risk.

A bluff isn't just impulsively throwing money in with bad cards. A real bluff is a strategic move with a clear purpose: to win the pot by getting your opponents to fold their cards, which may even be better than yours.

Here's what that looks like in practice — a situation from my own experience:

I'm sitting at the poker table with a decent stack in front of me, but nothing special. I haven't been dealt anything playable in almost half an hour. The players around me are pretty relaxed, and most of them probably think I'm a complete non-factor in this game. The flop hits the table — 9♦ 4♠ 2♣ — nothing that could help me, because I'm holding just Q♥ J♠, a total miss.

The first player to act makes a small bet, the second player folds right away, and the third seems undecided. It's my turn, and I have absolutely nothing. Still, I look at the player who made the first bet and notice something interesting: *he's slowly fiddling with his chips, avoiding eye*

contact, and he doesn't seem all that sure of his decision. That's enough for me. Without much thought, I grab some of my chips and casually push them into the middle of the table, making a big raise.

He looks at me, confused. He thinks for a long time, and finally decides to throw his cards away. He takes a sip of his drink, visibly annoyed, while I calmly rake in his chips. That one small, subtle detail, the uncertainty in his behavior, has just won me a pot I had no real reason to win. That's the essence of bluffing.

Bluffing is much more than just acting or trying to look confident. It's not enough to raise and hope your opponents fold. A real bluff always has a reason, a clear explanation of why you're raising right now, at this exact moment.

When should you bluff?

You should only bluff in certain situations. Here are the three most common situations where a bluff makes sense:

- **When your opponents show weakness**

If you see your opponents checking or betting very little, you can assume they don't have strong cards. That's a great opportunity to bluff and take the pot.

One thing I've learned over time is that a bluff is almost never random. **The most successful bluffs happen when you correctly read weakness in an opponent**. If someone seems overly cautious or unsure, that's a sign it may be the right time to bluff. But if a player seems confident and strong, a bluff attempt can be very expensive.

- **When you have good position**

In late position (the button or the cutoff), you have much more information about your opponents. If everyone before you has shown weakness, this can be the perfect spot for a bluff, even if your cards aren't good.

- **When the board looks scary**

If the flop brings three coordinated cards (for example, three cards of the same suit, or connected cards like 8-9-10), it can scare your opponents. A bluff in this case can easily get them to fold, afraid that you've made a great hand.

When shouldn't you bluff?

Bluffing isn't always the right move. Avoid bluffing in these situations:

- **When you're up against too many opponents**

If lots of players are in the pot, it's very likely that at least one of them has a strong hand. Bluffs work much better against one or two opponents, not five or six.

- **Against players who never fold (calling stations)**

If you know a certain player calls a lot no matter what they're holding, bluffing them is usually a bad idea. Against players like that, wait for real cards and win their money without bluffing.

Many beginners make one big mistake: they bluff in the wrong situations. For example, I once watched a player who kept trying to bluff an opponent known for almost never folding. And every time he ended up losing chips and getting frustrated. That's when I realized how important it is to know your opponent well before you try moves like this.

- **If you've already been caught bluffing**

If your opponents have already noticed that you bluff a lot, next time they'll probably call your bet no matter what they hold. That's why it's important to be selective and sometimes skip the bluff.

How do you bluff properly?

A successful bluff isn't a matter of courage; it's a matter of strategy. Here are a few tips to make your bluffs more effective:

- **Bluff as if you really have good cards**

If you decide to bluff, make it convincing. Bet firmly and confidently, as if you really are holding the winning hand.

- **Bluff rationally and deliberately:** Never bluff on impulse or out of frustration. A good bluff should be carefully thought through, with a clear idea of why your opponents are going to fold.
- **Pay attention to your bet size**

When you bluff, your bet should be big enough to scare your opponent, but not so big that you're risking a lot of money for nothing. Generally, a bet of between half and three-quarters of the pot is ideal for a bluff.

An example of a successful bluff

Imagine you're sitting in late position with relatively weak cards, like **5♦6♦**. The flop comes **K♠ 10♠ 4♥**. The two opponents before you both check, showing weakness. Even though you don't have a strong hand, this is a great moment to bet and represent a King or a ten. If you do it with enough conviction, there's a good chance your opponents will fold right away, letting you win the pot without showing your cards.

Once, in a big tournament, I found myself in a spot where I was almost sure my opponent had a better hand than mine. But something in his behavior told me he was worried about the cards on the board. At that moment I decided to do something unusual: I bluffed with a big bet. My opponent thought for a long time, was completely thrown by my move and finally folded. That move took me all the way to the closing stages of the tournament.

I wasn't the most experienced player there, and I didn't have the best cards. But what I did have was the ability to spot my opponent's weakness at the right moment and act decisively. That's what makes bluffing such a powerful strategy in the right hands.

Bluffing is an art, a game within the game, and once you understand how and when to use it properly, you become a far more dangerous player than you ever imagined. In poker, as in life, sometimes what matters isn't just what you're holding, but how you use the information in front of you.

The most common beginner bluffing mistakes

- **Bluffing too often:** If you're always bluffing, your opponents will quickly learn not to believe your bets.

Put another way: **the more often you bluff, the less believable you become**, and your opponents start calling your bets more often than they otherwise would. A successful bluff is like seasoning in good food: fantastic in just the right amount, but it easily ruins the dish if you add too much. So bluff now and then, but play it straight most of the time.

- **Bluffing with small bets:** A small bet will almost never scare an opponent into folding. If you bluff, do it decisively and with a big enough bet.

- **Bluffing against bad players:** Against weaker players, it's much better to wait for good cards than to bluff, because bad players often call even with weak hands.

Why is it sometimes good to show a bluff?

If you occasionally show a successful bluff, you can gain a psychological edge in the hands that follow. Your opponents will become unsure of themselves and find it harder to read your game. But do this rarely, and only when you want your opponents to get suspicious; don't give them too much information.

Bluffing is an important part of poker, but it shouldn't be the foundation of your game. Use it as a tool you pull out now and then, not as your core strategy. Once you learn to bluff selectively and strategically, you become a much more dangerous opponent at every table you sit down at.

Why folding is sometimes the best decision

One of the most important poker lessons you'll ever learn is that folding isn't weakness; it's one of the most valuable skills in the game. It looks simple, but it's one of the moves beginners struggle with most. In this section we'll explain why folding is often the best decision, and how a smart fold can significantly improve your overall game and your profit in the long run.

Remember this simple rule:

Money you don't lose is worth just as much as money you win.

The psychology of folding: why is it so hard to let go?

Folding looks easy, but in practice it isn't that simple. Players often fall into an emotional trap and refuse to give up on a hand they've already put money into. This is called **"pot commitment"**: the feeling that you have to call just because you've already put money in.

To succeed at poker, you have to get past this mindset. You have to be ready to assess the situation honestly and let go of a bad hand, no matter how much you've already put in. In the long run, this approach will save you far more money than it costs you.

Specific situations when you should fold

Here are a few common situations where folding is the best and smartest option:

- **When you have a decent hand, but your opponent is playing aggressively**

If you have cards like K-J or A-10, as solid as they look, you need to be ready to fold if your opponent keeps raising or goes all-in. In spots like that, it's often much safer to wait for a better opportunity.

- **When the flop clearly favors your opponent's range**

If the flop comes something like A-K-Q and you're holding lower cards (e.g., a pair of nines), there's no point in continuing. There's a good chance your opponent has made a strong pair or even something better.

- **When you have a good hand but aren't sure how strong your opponent is**

For example, if you're holding a pair of tens and your opponent bets big after a flop full of high cards, think about whether it's worth the risk. A careful fold can be a sensible decision, even when you have a solid hand.

A great fold in practice

Imagine you're holding **A♠ J♠**. The flop comes **J♦ 9♦ 7♣**. You have top pair (Jacks), but after you bet, your opponent raises with conviction. In this spot a lot of beginners call, because they've got top pair. An experienced player, however, will be cautious, because there's a real chance the opponent has a stronger hand (two pair, a set or a straight).

If you're not sure you have the best hand, a smart fold is a far better choice than a big loss. Remember, you won't win every pot: the goal is long-term profit, not winning every single hand in the short term.

How do you learn to fold more easily?

Folding is a matter of mental discipline. Here are a few practical tips to make it easier:

- **Always ask yourself this question:** "Do I realistically have the best hand here?" If you're not sure, folding is usually the right decision.
- **Remember that folding is a profitable move in the long run:** Every time you let go of a bad hand, you're actually saving money for a spot where you'll have a better chance to profit.
- **Practice patience:** Poker isn't a game of quick results. Sometimes you have to wait a long time for the right cards. Folding is part of that waiting process.

Why folding is a great online strategy at Poker Klub Kiril

Online poker has special advantages that make it easier to make correct decisions like folding. At **Poker Klub Kiril** you can play at tables with different blind levels, which means you can fold bad cards freely and without pressure, knowing new opportunities and new hands are just around the corner.

In our club, on the **ClubGG** app, you get to play a lot of hands, so one fold isn't the end of the game, just a short pause until the next opportunity. That means you can afford to be patient and disciplined, waiting for good spots without feeling like you have to play every pot.

Remember that at Poker Klub Kiril you also have **freeroll tournaments** every day, free to enter, where you can practice patience and discipline with no risk at all. And at the first real-money tables, with €0.10/€0.20 blinds, you can earn a €25 bonus after just your first 500 hands, which means you can play more relaxed, knowing you're getting an extra reward for disciplined play.

In the end, folding isn't a sign of weakness but of poker maturity

Good poker players aren't the ones who never fold; they're the ones who know exactly when folding is the most profitable move. Once you learn to fold cleanly, quickly and without emotion, you'll significantly improve your poker style and your results.

So the next time you face a tough decision at the table, don't forget: sometimes the best way to make money is simply not to lose it.

Bankroll management: your poker economy

Let's switch gears a little. So far we've talked a lot about strategy: which cards to play, how to use your position, when to bluff and when to fold. But there's one part of the game that beginners rarely think about, and it's crucial to any serious poker success: **managing your money (bankroll management)**.

Your poker bankroll isn't ordinary money: it's money you set aside specifically for playing poker. It's not money for bills or everyday life. It's your capital, and it should grow over the long term, just like an investment in a business.

Why is bankroll management so important?

Think of your bankroll as fuel for a car. However good your car is, you won't get far without fuel. Poker works the same way: however talented or good a player you are, if you don't manage your money properly, sooner or later you'll lose it.



Good bankroll management does two things for you:

- It keeps you from losing all your money.
- It lets you play freely without pressure, even when the bad stretches come.

This is especially important in poker, because no matter how skilled you are, you'll have stretches of bad luck from time to time. A proper bankroll protects you from those bad stretches.

How much money should you have in your bankroll?

This question is key. Here are some straightforward guidelines for Texas Hold'em:

- **For cash games**: the recommendation is at least **20 to 30 full buy-ins** for the level you're playing.

Example: If you play at tables with a €10 buy-in, your bankroll should be at least €200 to €300.

- **For tournaments**: the recommendation is between **50 and 100 buy-ins** for the tournaments you play.

Example: If you play €5 tournaments, ideally you'll have a bankroll of €250 to €500.

These numbers may look big, but they're the only way to make sure you survive a run of bad results (a so-called "downswing").

The 5% rule: the golden rule of bankroll management

One simple rule that successful players often use is called **the 5% rule**. The logic behind it is very simple: *never put more than 5% of your total bankroll into a single game or tournament.*

For example, if your bankroll is €500, the maximum buy-in you should play is €25. Setting a clear limit like this protects you from big losses, even if you have a bad day or a bad run. Keep in mind that 5% is an upper limit,

not a target. For tournaments, where the swings are bigger, stick to the recommended 50 to 100 buy-ins, which works out to 1–2% of your bankroll per tournament.



How do you pick the right level for you?

One of the most common beginner mistakes is playing at stakes that are too high for their bankroll. In poker, the goal is long-term profit, not a quick win. So play at a level where you feel comfortable.

Here are some simple guidelines:

- If your bankroll drops below the recommended limit, move down a level.
- Only once your bankroll has grown enough should you think about moving up.

Your bankroll isn't static. If you're on a good winning streak, your bankroll grows, and then it's perfectly fine to gradually move up to higher stakes. But be careful: if your bankroll drops significantly (say, by 20 or 30%), it's time to move down so you protect your money for future games. The most important thing is to be flexible: **always adjust your level of play to the state of your bankroll.**

Practical tips for better money management

- **Set clear loss and win limits**

Every time you sit down at a table, decide in advance the most you're willing to lose.

For example, tell yourself: "If I lose three buy-ins today, I stop right there."

- **Don't try to win back lost money right away**

If you're having a bad day, take a break. Don't move up in stakes trying to win back what you've lost straight away. That's a recipe for disaster.

- **Don't mix your bankroll with your personal finances**

Always keep your poker money separate from the money you live on. If your bankroll isn't big enough to play, play lower stakes or freeroll tournaments.

An example from the club

Let me introduce you to Jelena. She's an excellent player who often wins tournaments at Poker Klub Kiril. But recently Jelena made a big mistake: after a few bad days, she decided to play higher stakes than she should have, to "win the money back fast." Within two days she'd lost almost her entire bankroll.

Realizing her mistake, Jelena decided to stick strictly to the rules of bankroll management from then on. She started over, this time at lower stakes. Two months later, Jelena hadn't just won back what she'd lost; she'd made more than before. Now she knows that bankroll management is key to her long-term success.

How can Poker Klub Kiril help your bankroll?

Our online poker club gives you some special opportunities for great bankroll management:

- **Freeroll tournaments**: Every day you have the chance to win free tickets to real-money tournaments, which lets you grow your bankroll with no risk.
- **New player bonus**: At the €0.10/€0.20 tables you get a €25 bonus after your first 500 hands. That gets your bankroll off to a great start, because you can play more relaxed and with less financial pressure.
- **Lower-stakes games and regular bonuses**: Poker Klub Kiril offers plenty of both, which makes it ideal for beginners: you can take things slowly but surely, gain experience, strengthen your bankroll, and only then move on to more serious games.

At Poker Klub Kiril you can play responsibly and with discipline, and watch your bankroll grow.

What we've learned

Money management in poker isn't complicated, but it isn't just an extra tip either: it's the key to your success or failure. Without good bankroll management, even the best players in the world can easily lose all their money, while players who manage their money properly almost always last longer at the table, have more fun and get better results than those who ignore it.

If you take these tips seriously and put them into practice, you'll soon see how much easier it is to play when you know you've got a safe cushion of money behind you. Then you'll be able to play without fear and without pressure, and make the clear-headed decisions that lead to long-term poker success.

How to analyze your hands and improve fast

Poker rewards those who learn from their own moves, both the good ones and the bad ones. Yet most players make the same mistake: they play a session, win or lose, close the app or leave the table, and never think about the hands they played again.

That's a huge missed opportunity.

Analyzing the hands you've played is one of the fastest ways to seriously improve your game. Here's a simple, quick but effective approach to reviewing your poker decisions:

Step 1: Note down key hands while you play

Every time you play an important hand (won or lost), take a quick screenshot or jot down the details. You don't need to record every hand; it's enough to save the ones where you're not sure you did the right thing.

Quick tip: If you play online, apps often have an option to save your hand history automatically. Use it!

Step 2: Ask yourself three key questions

When you analyze each hand, it's important to ask yourself three blunt questions:

1. **Was my starting hand selection good?**

If you're not sure, go back to the section on choosing your cards and check.

2. **Did I play the flop, turn and river well?**

If the answer is "I don't know," try to figure out why you're not sure.

3. **Did I understand what my opponent was doing?**

If you didn't know what your opponent was trying to do, you probably misread their game.

Step 3: Get other players' opinions

There's no need to do every analysis on your own. One of the most useful things in poker is sharing a hand you've played with other players. They can often spot something you've missed.

A quick way to do it:

- Send the hand to a friend who also plays poker.
- Post the hand on a forum or in a poker group on social media (or even with us at Poker Klub Kiril on Instagram).
- Ask other players directly at the table, if the atmosphere is good.

Step 4: Look for mistakes, not just bad luck

When you analyze hands, don't just focus on whether you were "lucky" or not. Poker isn't just a game of luck; it's also a game of skill. Ask yourself one simple question:

- "Could I have done anything differently in this hand?"

If the answer is "yes," you've found room for improvement. Even if you won the hand, you can find mistakes you'll avoid next time.

Quick tips for effective analysis (without overthinking it)

- **Don't analyze right after a loss** — take a break and come back with a cool head.
- **Analyze the hands you won, too** — the biggest mistakes are often hiding in the hands we won.

- **Focus on the big decisions** — small mistakes don't matter that much, but mistakes in big pots cost a lot.
- **If you're not sure about your analysis**, ask someone who is; there's no need to guess.

Hand analysis isn't complicated or time-consuming. Even 15 minutes of review after a session can be enough to see where you went wrong, and what you did well.

Every time you do a review, your game gets clearer, sharper and more profitable. If you do it regularly, you'll improve quickly, and your results will be the best proof.

How to keep improving: developing and refining your poker skills

Poker is one of those rare games where the learning really never stops. However good you are, there's always room to grow and improve. Even the best players in the world work on themselves and their game every day. So if you want to keep improving, there are a few things you should do regularly.

Learn from players better than you

The fastest way to improve your game is to learn from more experienced players. Follow top players, read their analyses and advice, and try to understand their decisions. A great way to do this is to join communities like **Poker Klub Kiril**. Besides getting the chance to play, here you can talk to other players, swap experiences and learn from those who've been playing longer and better than you. A community like this is often just what you need to stay motivated and inspired to keep improving.

Set clear goals for further progress

It's not enough to just play and hope for better results. For your game to really improve, you need to define your goals. **Set yourself concrete, realistic goals:** for example, to win a certain number of tournaments in the next six months, or to grow your bankroll by a certain percentage. When you have a clearly defined goal, it's much easier to track your progress and stay motivated to play even better.

Keep reading and exploring

One of the best ways to keep improving your game is to keep reading and exploring. Poker is a game that's always evolving: strategies that were good a few years ago may not be good enough today. **Read books, watch poker tutorials and follow hand analyses online.**

Also, keep an eye on how the world's best players play: learn from their moves, their approach and their thinking.

Poker is, above all, a game of knowledge and constant improvement. The more you know and the more you work on your game, the more you'll enjoy yourself at the table and the better your results will be. Don't forget that every time you sit down at a table, whether it's at your favorite poker club or online, you're doing it because you love the game and because you want to grow as a player.

Stay curious, always open to new knowledge, and poker will keep offering you new challenges and even more satisfaction. Good luck at the tables!

CHAPTER 5

Online Poker: Quirks, Perks and Practical Tips

Online vs. live poker: what changes in your game?



One of the most common questions beginners wrestle with is this one:

"Is online poker different from playing live?"

The answer is simple: yes, it is, and you'll be surprised how different these two worlds really are. At first glance, poker is poker: both online poker (played over the internet) and live poker (played in person, say at a casino or a local poker club) follow the same rules. But they differ in the way the game is played, the speed, the opponents and the specific skills they demand from you as a player. Let's first look at the advantages each approach brings, and then at what those differences change in your game.

Online poker: a game without borders

Picture this: you're curled up at home in your favorite armchair or stretched out on the bed, you grab your phone or laptop, open the app and start playing right away. That's online poker: accessible, simple and literally available **any time you want**. Whether it's 3 p.m. or 3 a.m., the online tables are always open.

What else do you get by playing online?

- **Different levels of play:** Online, you can find a game for every budget, from freeroll tournaments that cost nothing and super-affordable tables at a few cents, all the way up to high stakes for experienced players.
- **Stats and analysis:** Online poker apps let you track your play, analyze your mistakes and keep getting better.

And maybe the best part of all: you can play online poker wherever you like, whether you're sitting in the park, riding the bus or waiting in line at the supermarket.

Live poker: the in-person experience and the buzz at the table

Live poker, on the other hand, offers something completely different: a special kind of experience and the social side of the game. If you love the casino atmosphere, hanging out with other players at the table and the feel of real cards in your hands, live poker will be a real treat for you.

Here's what makes live poker special:

- **Social interaction:** You deal with your opponents face to face, and you can see their reactions, facial expressions and gestures. For some people, that interaction is exactly what draws them to live poker.

- **The physical feel of the game:** Some players simply love holding the cards, tossing chips into the middle of the table and seeing with their own eyes what an opponent looks like while trying to bluff them.
- **A slower pace:** Live games move more slowly, which means you have more time to make decisions, but also to watch your opponents and think situations through.

Still, it's not all perfect. Live poker takes more time per game, and you have to actually go to a casino or poker club, which isn't always practical or possible.

Key differences you need to be ready for

No need for a lot of philosophy here; let's get straight to the key differences:

1. Speed: a different pace, a different strategy

Online:

- The game is much faster.
- You don't have to wait for the dealer to shuffle or for players to think for minutes at a time.
- In an hour online, you can play several times as many hands as you would live.

How does this change your strategy?

Online, it's easier to fold bad cards, because new hands come so quickly. Live, waiting for new cards often gets boring, so beginners are more likely to make the mistake of playing bad hands out of sheer boredom.

What should you do?

Online, always be ready to make faster decisions, play with discipline and don't lose patience because of the pace.

2. Physical "tells": no faces to read

Live poker:

- You can see your opponent right in front of you and watch their body language, facial expressions and other physical signals.

Online poker:

- You have none of that information, which means you have to learn to "read" opponents in a different way.

How does this change your strategy?

Online, you need to pay closer attention to your opponents' playing style, bet sizes and decision speed. Those signals take the place of physical "tells."

What should you do?

Focus on tracking your opponents' habits (how often they play, how aggressively they play) instead of their physical reactions.

But this difference can be a big advantage too: your opponents can't see you either, so online it's much easier to hide your nerves or your excitement. Live, it's the other way around: there you need good control over your emotions, because any movement or facial expression can give away your strength or weakness to the other players at the table.

3. Multi-tabling: playing several tables at once

Online poker:

- You can play several tables at the same time, which significantly changes your earning potential as well as your strategy.

Live poker:

- You're limited to one table.

How does this change your strategy?

If you play several tables online, you have to stay focused and disciplined and be ready to make decisions quickly and decisively. Live, you have more time to think about each decision.

What should you do?

If you're just starting out, begin with one table and gradually add more only when you feel comfortable. Multi-tabling isn't mandatory, but it can be great for your profits if you use it properly.

4. Your opponents: online players play differently

Online:

- Opponents are often more aggressive, because they can easily move to a new table if they lose.
- You'll often run into players who use special software and tools.

Live poker:

- Opponents usually play more cautiously, because nobody wants to leave the table early.

How does this change your strategy? Online, you have to be ready for more aggressive play: frequent raises and plenty of bluff attempts.

Live, you can play a bit more cautiously, because players are generally more careful.

What should you do?

Online, learn to respond quickly and decisively to aggression, and don't give up easily if you sense an opponent bluffs a lot. Live, be patient and take advantage of good opportunities when they come up.

5. Availability: online poker never closes

Online:

- Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- You always have a huge choice of tables and opponents.

Live poker:

- Depends on the opening hours of casinos, clubs and tournaments.
- It's not always easy to find a game.

How does this change your strategy?

Online gives you complete flexibility: you can play whenever and as much as you want, so there's no need to rush or play under pressure.

What should you do?

Plan your playing time. Don't play on impulse just because a game is available. Online poker is always there, but that doesn't mean you have to play nonstop.

Summary: the key differences between online and live poker

Feature	Online poker	Live poker
Speed of play	Fast	Slower
Physical signals	None	Available
Number of tables	Several at once	One table
Opponents' style	More aggressive, looser	More cautious
Availability	Always open	Limited

Each of these differences means adapting your strategy, and it's your ability to adapt that will determine how successful you are at online poker.

If you understand this from the start, you'll have a huge advantage over other beginners who try to play online the same way they play live. That advantage will help you quickly master the specifics of online play and start turning a profit from your very first hands.

So which is the better choice for you?

The best thing is to try both and see what suits you personally. Lots of players like to mix it up: they enjoy the speed and convenience of online play, but every now and then they like the company of a live table too.

That said, if you're just starting out, **playing online is probably the best way to gain experience**. Why? Because you can play for small stakes (or for free, in freeroll tournaments), build a routine faster and adapt to the game more easily.

Online poker is the perfect training ground before you sit down at a live table in a casino or local club for the first time. Once you've built up enough confidence and skill online, live play will feel much easier and more enjoyable.

Either way, poker is great fun, and the good news is that you get to choose exactly what works for you. You don't have to make any final decisions right now: just start online, try it out and gradually discover which style of play suits you best.

How to choose the best online poker platform

Choosing a good poker platform is one of the most important steps you'll take at the start of your poker adventure. You're probably wondering, "Why does this matter so much?" Well, simply put, where you play can have a big impact on your results, your motivation and how much you enjoy the game.

That's why I want to give you some concrete tips to help you find the right place for you right away.

Reliability

The first and most important thing to check is **whether the platform is reliable and safe**. Check the following:

- Does it have good reviews from other players?
- Does it pay out winnings promptly and without hassle?
- Does it protect your personal data?
- How long has it been around, and what's its reputation? (Poker Klub Kiril, for example, is a well-regarded community where safety comes first.)

- Does it have good customer support? Can you get a fast answer to any question or problem at any time, via chat, email or messages?

Without these, nothing else matters. If you feel safe and at ease on a platform, you'll be able to focus fully on your game.

Ease of use

When you sit down at a virtual table, you want to be fully focused on your cards and your decisions, not fighting technical problems. A great platform has to have:

- A clean design.
- Simple navigation.
- A fast, stable app.

A good way to check this is to play a few freeroll tournaments or a few hands at the lowest-stakes tables before you put in more serious money.

A variety of games and stakes

At the start of your online poker career, you'll probably want to play lower stakes. That's why it's important for the platform to have tables at different levels:

- Tables with very small stakes (like €0.10/€0.20).
- Mid-level stakes you can move up to later.
- Freeroll tournaments, where you can practice with no risk at all.

That way you won't have to keep switching platforms and wasting time constantly getting used to new surroundings.

Bonuses and rewards for new players

Almost every platform offers some perks for new players. Pay attention to the following:

- What bonuses can you get right at the start?
- Are there special perks or rewards if you play regularly?
- What are the conditions for using those bonuses?

If you understand these things, you'll be able to make the most of what the platform has to offer.

The poker community: the vibe on the platform

You've probably noticed by now that poker isn't just a game; it's a social activity. So look for a platform that has:

- An active, friendly community.
- People who like to chat, play fair and swap experiences.
- Tournaments or special events that create an extra sense of togetherness.

When you play with people you can talk to and learn a thing or two from, your playing experience will be incomparably better.

An example of a good platform: Poker Klub Kiril on ClubGG

To give you a concrete example of a platform that ticks all these boxes, let me briefly introduce Poker Klub Kiril, which runs on the well-known poker app ClubGG.

Poker Klub Kiril offers:

- **Reliability:** Guaranteed security and fast payouts.

- **Simplicity:** A clear, fast, hassle-free app.
- **Variety:** Tables for beginners and more advanced players, plus regular freeroll tournaments.
- **Bonuses for new players:** For your first 500 hands at €0.10/€0.20 you get a €25 bonus, which makes your first steps in poker that much easier.
- **Community:** Active players, regular interaction and a friendly atmosphere where you'll feel welcome.

Of course, this club is just one example. But if you want somewhere to start your online poker adventure without overthinking it, Poker Klub Kiril could be a great choice for you.

And finally, remember: the online platform you choose will be your poker home, the place where you spend your time, meet new people, learn and develop your skills. That's why it's important to choose carefully, because the right choice lets you lose yourself in the game and enjoy every moment.

And that's what poker is all about: a game where you feel comfortable and safe, and that gives you more than cash prizes. It gives you satisfaction, friendships and a good time.

Online poker bonuses and promotions: how to get the most out of them

One of the best things about online poker is the bonuses and promotions platforms offer their players. But many beginners aren't sure how to use these bonuses properly, so they often miss out on great opportunities. In

this section I'll walk you through everything you need to know about online poker bonuses, directly and practically, so you can get the most value out of them.

Types of poker bonuses you should know

These are the types of bonus you'll come across most often:

- **Welcome bonus** — You get it when you first sign up or make your first deposit.
- **Reload bonus** — An occasional bonus you get for making additional deposits to your account.
- **Freeroll tickets** — Free tournaments where you can win real money or tickets to real-money tournaments.
- **Rakeback (RB)** — A special bonus that gives you back part of the rake, the small fee the poker room takes from the pot. In the long run, this makes a real difference to your game.

Each of these bonuses has its own value, but rakeback is especially important, because it lowers your cost of playing over the long term.

How exactly does rakeback (RB) work?

Poker rooms take a small percentage of every pot as a fee; this is called the rake. However, most platforms give players back part of that amount through a system we call rakeback.

For example, at our Poker Klub Kiril, as soon as you've collected your €25 starting bonus (which you get after playing your first 500 hands), you immediately start on a basic rakeback of 20%. In practice, that means that every week you'll get back 20% of the total rake you generate while playing.

Even better: the longer and more regularly you play with us, the more your rakeback grows, so active players can reach significantly higher rakeback percentages.

How do you make the most of every bonus?

The first thing to do when you see a bonus is to read its terms and conditions carefully. Pay attention to the following:

- **How quickly do you have to use the bonus?** (some bonuses expire)
- **What are the playing requirements?** (how many hands you have to play before you can withdraw the bonus)
- **Are there any special conditions?** (for example, do you have to play certain tables or stakes to earn the bonus?)

If these conditions suit you, don't wait: claim the bonus as soon as possible, because every bonus you use wisely improves your chances of long-term profit.

Common beginner mistakes with bonuses (and how to avoid them)

- **Ignoring the bonus terms** — Many players don't read the details and end up disappointed later. Avoid this by reading the terms carefully.
- **Passing up good bonuses** — Some players ignore smaller bonuses, thinking they're not worth the effort. Even small bonuses add up to real value over the long run.
- **Playing only for the bonus** — A bonus should be an extra on top of your game, not the main reason you play. Play smart; the bonus is just a nice perk.

A practical example of using a bonus well

Imagine you sign up on a platform that gives you a €25 bonus after you play a certain number of hands (like at Poker Klub Kiril). First you check the bonus terms (500 hands at €0.10/€0.20). Then you organize your play so you can meet those terms easily, and as soon as you've earned the bonus, you use it to grow your bankroll or to play slightly higher stakes. Right after that, thanks to your active play, you also start getting 20% rakeback, which further increases your overall earnings from the game.

Bonuses aren't complicated; they just take a little attention and good organization. If you use them properly, you'll see their value in your game, and you'll quickly understand why the best poker players always take advantage of every perk and promotion available.

Remember, a bonus isn't the main reason you play, but it can be a real help and a great motivator, and that's why you should always use bonuses wisely to your advantage.

Playing several tables at once efficiently: multi-tabling

If you've ever watched experienced online players, you've surely noticed that they often play several tables at the same time. This way of playing is known as **multi-tabling**, and the reason experienced players love it so much is very simple: more tables means more action, more hands played and potentially more profit.

However, multi-tabling isn't quite as easy as it looks. So in this section I'll explain everything you need to know about playing several tables at once, and how to do it efficiently, without mistakes and without hurting your game.

What exactly is multi-tabling, and what are the benefits?

Multi-tabling means playing two, three, five or even ten or more tables at the same time.

The biggest advantages of multi-tabling are:

- **Bigger profits over the long run** (more hands played means potentially bigger winnings if you play well).
- **Less boredom** (more tables means less waiting between hands).
- **Faster progress** (the more hands you play, the faster you gain experience).

Still, to multi-table successfully, you need to be well organized, focused and disciplined.

How do you get started with multi-tabling?

If you're new to multi-tabling, the best advice is to start slowly and first work out the optimal number of tables. I recommend playing two, or at most three, tables at first, because that way you'll be able to follow the action easily without stress. Once you're used to that, you can add another table or two, but don't rush: increase the number of tables gradually, as your confidence and skills grow, and only once you feel completely comfortable with the number you're playing.

Keep an eye on yourself: if you feel stressed or see that you're making too many mistakes, go back to fewer tables. The goal of multi-tabling isn't to play as many tables as possible; it's to play well at every table you choose.

How can you make multi-tabling easier on the technical side?

Here are a few practical, concrete tips to help you multi-table efficiently without losing focus:

- **Organize your screen:** Arrange the tables on your screen so you can easily follow all the action. Ideally, use a bigger monitor or even two monitors, so you always have a good view of every table.
- **Set up auto-fold options:** Use features that automatically fold bad cards, so you have fewer decisions per table and less stress.
- **Use software:** Experienced players use specialized poker software that makes multi-tabling easier (like table-manager apps). Beginners, though, usually don't need anything more than a well-organized screen and simple action controls.

Also remember that the key to successful multi-tabling isn't just the number of tables and a well-organized screen, but how you manage your attention and concentration. At first it'll be hard to follow every detail; as you gain experience, besides tools that automatically arrange your tables on the screen, programs that show key information about the players at each table can help too. And a clear routine, like regular breaks every hour, can help enormously in keeping your concentration and reducing the risk of costly mistakes.

The most common mistakes new multi-tablers make (and how to avoid them)

If you decide to play several tables, watch out for these mistakes beginners often make:

- **Playing too many tables at once:** Judging by the experience of successful online players, this is the most common beginner mistake. Many players overestimate their abilities and jump straight into six, eight or even ten tables, which inevitably drags down the quality of their decisions. If you feel you're making impulsive or bad decisions, cut down the number of tables.

- **Losing focus because the game is too fast:** At every table, play deliberately and patiently. Don't make decisions just because you feel pressure from your other tables.
- **Neglecting the quality of your decisions:** It's more important to play well at fewer tables than to play badly at more.

When it comes to mistakes, another big trap for beginners is trying to play too complicated a game at each table. When you multi-table, it's often better to stick to simple, effective, proven strategies. **Don't complicate your game with unnecessary bluffs or sophisticated moves you can't analyze quickly enough.** Successful players carefully choose the situations where they'll play aggressively, and in all other situations they stick to a solid, clear basic strategy.

If you avoid these mistakes, multi-tabling will bring you great results in the long run.

When can multi-tabling hurt you?

Although multi-tabling has plenty of advantages, there are situations where you need to be very careful:

- **If you're tired or on edge** — multi-tabling increases the mental strain, so play fewer tables if you're not completely ready.
- **If you haven't fully mastered the basic strategies or you struggle to control your emotions** — multi-tabling isn't for everyone. It demands a high level of concentration, organization and the ability to make good decisions quickly, so it isn't a good option for complete beginners. Before you try it, think about your current level of play: first get good at playing one table, then slowly move on to more.
- **If you notice you're losing more money than usual** — multi-tabling can lead to bigger losses if you're not focused.

When you notice multi-tabling is doing you more harm than good, take a break, go back to one or two tables and find your rhythm again.

Although multi-tabling has its challenges, many players use this technique successfully to significantly increase their earnings. At Poker Klub Kiril, where experienced players often practice, you can see how useful multi-tabling can be when it's done right. Players who've mastered playing several tables here say this technique has let them not only increase their earnings but also manage their time better.

If you decide to go down the multi-tabling road, do it carefully and gradually. Start with fewer tables, analyze your progress, and only raise the challenge when you feel ready. Over time you'll find the ideal balance between the number of tables and the quality of your game, which will let you enjoy all the advantages of multi-tabling without unnecessary risk.

Finally: multi-tabling as a path to more serious play

Multi-tabling is a great way to improve faster, boost your profitability and get more out of your online game. But remember that multi-tabling isn't a goal in itself; it's a tool you use to improve your results.

Used properly, multi-tabling will help you gain experience quickly, sharpen your game and, over time, become a much better poker player than you'd be playing just one table.

Online poker software: useful tools or needless complication?

When I first heard about poker software, I was a bit skeptical. "Why would I use extra programs?" I asked myself. Honestly, I didn't want to deal with anything extra while playing poker, because for me, poker was

always at its best in its simplicity: just you, your cards and your opponents. Still, curious as I am, I decided to give it a try, if only to see what everyone was talking about.

Poker software, in short, is an extra tool that tracks your play: how often you play, how much you win or lose, and even how often your opponents play certain cards. Sounds useful, right? In theory, yes. In practice, it depends on what kind of player you are and what you want out of the game.

The first time I installed a popular tracker, I felt like I'd just stepped into the cockpit of an airplane. Everything was packed with information: numbers, stats, charts, all sorts of things I'd never even considered important in poker. That's when I thought I might have made a mistake: the software was too complex and was distracting me from the game itself.

Still, I decided to give the tool a chance. After a few days I realized there's real value in poker software, but only if you use it smartly. For example, one of the great things was that the software made it much easier for me to track exactly how much money I was winning or losing each month. I was surprised how different my sense of my profits was from reality. In other words, the software gave me an objective view of my game, free of emotions and personal impressions.

On the other hand, I also noticed something less positive. I started relying too much on the information I was getting from the software: stats on my opponents, their habits, my percentage chances of winning in certain situations. Suddenly I was playing less on instinct and more by the numbers. For some players that's great, but I lost part of the enjoyment I used to get from playing freely, guided by my feel for the game.

Over time I learned my lesson: poker software can be extremely useful, but only in moderation. If you're the kind of player who loves precise analysis, stats and keeping clear records of your play, software will be a great friend. But if you see poker as pure fun and prefer to rely on your instinct, feel and creativity, you might be better off playing without extra tools.

My advice is simple: if you're not sure, try it. Most software has a trial period, so you'll quickly find out whether it suits you. Just don't feel obliged to use software only because the pros or your friends use it. Poker has to fit you: your personality, your playing style and the way you think.

At the end of the day, the best poker player isn't the one using the most software; it's the one who enjoys their game the most, knows exactly what they're doing at the table and trusts themselves more than any stat on the screen. Software is a useful tool, but it's only a tool. It can never be more important than you as a player.

Keeping your online poker account safe

In poker we're usually focused on cards, opponents, strategy and profit. But there's one thing people rarely think about: **the security of your online account**. I'll admit, I neglected this side of the game for a long time too. That is, until one day I heard the story of a friend whose account was hacked and whose winnings vanished overnight. That's when I realized how important it is to give it at least a little attention.

Of course, I don't want to make you needlessly paranoid. Fortunately, things like this are very rare. But it only has to happen once, and the damage can be serious. That's why I want to give you a few clear and very practical tips on protecting yourself, your money and your peace of mind while you play online poker.

The simplest and most important thing is **a good password**. I know what you're thinking: "Everybody knows that!" But you'd be surprised how many people still use simple passwords like *123456* or *password*. Instead, create a password that combines upper- and lowercase letters, numbers and special characters. And remember: don't use the same password for your poker account as for your email or social media. If it's hard to remember, you can use a secure "password manager," which will make your life easier and give you one less thing to worry about.

Another thing I learned the hard way is to **choose carefully which devices** I use to access my account. I once logged into my account from a friend's computer, which later turned out to have virus problems. Luckily nothing bad happened, but I realized how important it is to always check that a device is secure before entering my password. If you really have to log in from another device, always use a private window (*incognito mode*) and be sure to log out when you're done.

Besides your password, be careful with messages you get by email or on social media. You may have seen suspicious messages that look like they come from your poker platform, asking for your password or personal details. Remember this well: **no serious poker platform will ever ask for your password or personal details by message or email.** If you come across a message like that, report it to the platform's support team and ignore it. It's a classic scam attempt (known as *phishing*).

Another thing I do regularly is keep an eye on my account activity. Every time you log in, take a look at your balance, your login history and your activity. If you notice anything strange (for example, a login from a country you've never been to), contact the platform's support right away. Trust me, this simple habit can save you a lot of trouble.

If you really want to take your security up a notch, I recommend turning on **two-factor authentication (2FA)**. It sounds complicated, but it's very simple: every time you log in, the platform sends a unique code to your phone or email, which you have to enter to get in. That makes it much harder for anyone to get into your account without your permission. I've found out firsthand how much peace of mind this extra protection gives you.

And finally, remember one thing: your account's security isn't something to obsess over, just something worth thinking about and checking regularly. Just as you'd never sit down at a poker table with shady opponents or in a room where you don't feel safe, you shouldn't play online somewhere that isn't completely secure either.

Because poker should bring you enjoyment, profit and fun, and keeping your account secure makes sure it stays that way.

The most common mistakes new online players make (and how to avoid them)

We all made mistakes at the start. I remember my first month of playing online poker: I managed to make practically every mistake a beginner can make. The good news is that the mistakes didn't last forever, and the best thing I got out of it all was learning how to avoid them in the future.

If you're just getting started in online poker, it's perfectly normal to make mistakes, but here are a few of the most common ones, and how to avoid them easily without wasting time or money.

One of the most common mistakes, and one I made myself, is **playing stakes that are too big, too soon**. I remember how excited I was when I first sat down at a table. It seemed perfectly normal to put in a bit more

money right away, thinking I'd multiply it fast. Of course, it didn't take long to realize how things really work. So my advice is: **be patient, and play lower stakes until you've gained some experience.** The biggest wins in poker come gradually, not overnight.

Another common beginner mistake, and one that stuck with me for a long time, is **playing emotionally after a loss**. You surely know the feeling: you lose a hand you thought was a "lock," the frustration kicks in, and suddenly you want to win the money back right now. Poker players call this **"tilt,"** and it's one of the fastest ways to lose even more money. When you notice your emotions taking over your game, **take a break right away**, even if it's just five minutes. Get up from the computer, take a walk, calm down, and only then go back to playing. Trust me, this really works.

Something else I learned the hard way is the importance of **bankroll management**. I know we've talked about it before, but it's worth repeating, because it's a mistake that costs a lot. When you start playing poker, it can feel like there's always enough money. But if you don't stick to clear limits and rules on how much money you put in, you can easily lose it all. The best advice I ever got was this: **set a clear limit on how much money you can spend per day or per week, and never go over it.** That way you always play safely and without pressure.

Another thing I've noticed in new players (and I was one of them) is **constantly switching platforms, stakes or strategies**. When things go badly, it's natural to want to change your approach. But changing your surroundings or strategy too often means you never have enough time to really learn anything properly. My suggestion: **find a platform and a stake level where you feel comfortable, and play there long enough to really learn your strategy.** Once you know what you're doing, you can start making changes gradually.

Finally, I want you to remember this: mistakes aren't the end of the world. Every player makes them. What matters is that you learn from them, because every mistake can be a great lesson if you use it the right way. The most important thing is not to make the same mistakes over and over, but to come back to the table a little smarter and more experienced each time.

That way your online poker journey will be much more enjoyable, profitable and fun. And that's what we're here for: to enjoy the game, learn, and make a little money along the way.

Building a profitable online routine: get your game organized

When I first started playing online poker, I had no plan whatsoever. I played whenever I had free time, sometimes for hours on end. But I quickly realized that wasn't a good approach. Poker isn't a sprint; it's a marathon, a long-term game where the most successful players are the ones who organize their time well.

So I want to give you a few clear, practical tips on creating an efficient, profitable poker routine. Without too much theory, here's what an ideal routine might look like, one that can significantly improve your game:

The first question I often hear is: *"How long should a poker session last?"* Many new players overdo it. They sit down at the table and play for hours without a break. However, *experience has taught me that I play my best when sessions last between 60 and 90 minutes.* After that, concentration naturally drops and decisions get worse. A short break of 10–15 minutes after each session makes a big difference. Get up, take a walk, drink a glass of water, and you'll be ready for the next round.

Another thing I've noticed is how much *the time of day you play matters.* Some players get their best results early in the morning, when they're fresh and rested, while others prefer the evening hours, when the atmosphere is more relaxed. Personally, I've found I play best in the late afternoon: I have enough energy and good concentration. Try playing at different times of day and pay attention to when your concentration is at its peak. Once you discover your ideal time, stick to it as often as you can.

It's also useful to set yourself weekly or monthly goals. They don't have to be big goals like huge winnings or major tournament victories. Sometimes the best goals are the simplest: *how many hands you'll play each week, how much time you'll spend playing, or which stake level you want to master.* When you have clear goals, it's easier to track your progress, which boosts your motivation and helps you get better organized.

While a good routine is key, it's very important not to overdo it. Poker should be part of your life, but never your only focus. I've come to understand how important it is to strike a balance between poker and your private life. If you feel tired or notice poker is having a negative effect on other things, feel free to take a break for a few days or weeks. When you come back to the table, you'll play better than before, because you'll be rested and motivated.

Remember, a good poker routine doesn't mean you have to plan every minute of play down to the second, just that you have a clear framework that helps you stay productive, focused and happy with your game.

Finally, I want to leave you with a short thought that has helped me a lot personally:

Poker is a game of concentration, discipline and enjoyment, and a good routine helps you keep all three in balance.

Organize your time, play smart, take breaks, and you'll see the results come on their own. Because poker, when you play it right, isn't just a game of chance: it becomes your lifestyle, a source of satisfaction and, of course, a chance to earn.



CHAPTER 6

Poker Tournaments: From Beginner to Winner

In the chapter on the rules, you already learned what poker tournaments are, how they work and how they differ from cash games.

So why are tournaments especially good for beginners? Because they let you control exactly how much money you're risking. You pay the buy-in once, and that's it. You know up front how much you can lose, and the potential win can be much bigger. If you're good, patient and learn a few basic strategies (which we'll cover in the next sections), you'll soon see how easy it is to fall in love with poker tournaments.

And that's the beauty of tournaments: they're exciting, clear-cut and offer a shot at great prizes. Get ready to learn in the pages ahead how to make tournament poker your strongest weapon, whether you just want a bit of fun or serious profit from your game.

The start of the tournament: the early stage

The start of every poker tournament is a special moment. When you sit down at the table, everyone has the same number of chips, the same ambitions, the same desire: to make it all the way to the end and win as

big a prize as possible. In those first moments it's easy to be impatient or careless. Many players, especially new ones, make that very mistake and often get knocked out early.

That's why I want to give you an important piece of advice right away, one I learned from my own mistakes:

In the early stage of a tournament, the most important thing is to play patiently.

Of course, the goal isn't to avoid playing altogether, but to choose the hands you play carefully. Your basic strategy at this stage should be clear: play safe, play carefully and avoid unnecessary risk.

Which cards should you play early in a tournament?

In the first rounds, when the blinds are low, you'll often be tempted to play almost every hand. But this is where you need to be selective. My advice is simple: play only **quality cards**, meaning big pairs like AA, KK, QQ and JJ, plus hands like AK or AQ.

With other cards, like smaller pairs or suited connectors (consecutive cards of the same suit), play carefully and cheaply: if you can get into a hand for a minimal bet, go for it. But don't spend a lot of chips trying to hit the perfect hand. At this stage you need to protect your chips, because the real moments are still to come.

New players often try to dominate the table from the very first hand. I get it; I used to be like that too. But experienced players usually do the exact opposite: they wait for their chance, pick their moment to attack and don't let themselves be easily provoked.

Sometimes you'll even see players who start making big raises with weak cards right away, hoping to double their stack quickly. Don't be that player. Patience and caution in the early stage are often the key to success later on.

Watch your opponents and remember their habits

The early stage of a tournament matters not just because of your cards, but also because it's a chance to watch your opponents. Pay attention to how they behave, how they bet and what cards they show after a hand. This is the best time to get a clear picture of the people at your table.

Make a little mental note of who the *aggressive players* are, the ones who bluff or raise a lot, and who plays cautiously. Later, when the blinds go up and the stakes get more serious, you'll be able to use that information to your advantage.

I once won a big tournament precisely because in the first rounds I noticed a few opponents who often played aggressively without the cards to back it up. When I got into hands with them, I knew exactly what to expect, because I'd done my homework much earlier, back when everyone was still playing cautiously.

And to wrap up this section, I want you to remember one thing:

The early stage of a tournament might seem slow or even boring, but it's actually key to your later success. Be careful, be selective and pick your battles wisely. Once you understand how important patience is at this stage, you'll notice your results gradually improving, and the later stages of the tournament will become much easier.

So the next time you sit down at a tournament table, keep this simple thought in mind:

Patience at the start is the best investment for the end of the tournament.

The middle stage: time to change your strategy

Once you're through the cautious early stage, things start to get more interesting. The middle stage brings higher blinds, more action and a noticeable change in the atmosphere at the table. At this point players realize they can't wait for perfect cards anymore, and you'll have to adjust your strategy too.

If the early stage is like a leisurely drive on the open road, the middle stage is like driving through the city: you have to be more alert, more flexible and ready to react as the situation changes.

When is the right time to step up the aggression?

The right time for more aggressive play usually comes when the blinds have grown big enough to matter relative to your stack. You'll notice the table slowly changing: players will start getting into hands more often, trying to "steal" the blinds or simply build a bigger stack before the blinds get even more expensive.

At this point you need to assess a few things:

- How big is your stack compared to the blinds?
- What are the players at your table like (cautious, aggressive)?
- Do you have a chance to get into a hand with a weaker player?

If you have a bigger stack, **this is the ideal opportunity to play more aggressively**. Don't be afraid to raise now and then with cards that may not be perfect but have potential. Examples are suited connectors (e.g., 8♠

9♠), strong Ace-high hands (A♠ J♦, A♣ 10♥) or medium pairs like 77 or 88. The goal is to put pressure on players with smaller stacks, who'll often fold because they don't want to risk being knocked out.

But if your stack is relatively small, it's time to look for the right opportunities. Pick your moments carefully, but don't be too passive. When the blinds get big, you have to find a way to steal the blinds now and then or win an important pot; otherwise your stack will slowly melt away.

The middle stage is often what decides how the rest of the tournament goes. Early in my tournament career, I often made the mistake of staying too passive at this stage. I waited for ideal hands that simply didn't come fast enough. Only once I understood the importance of slightly more aggressive play did my results improve significantly.

Mistakes to avoid in the middle stage

The most common middle-stage mistakes are nothing out of the ordinary, but they can be very expensive:

- **Playing too many hands under pressure from rising blinds:** You'll often see players who panic and start playing almost every hand as soon as the blinds go up.

This is a mistake that usually leads to losing your stack fast.

- **Being too cautious (sticking with your early-stage strategy):** If you keep playing the same way you did at the start, your stack will gradually shrink. It's important to recognize when you need to adjust your strategy and become a bit more active at the table.

- **Taking unnecessary risks with marginal cards:** Being aggressive doesn't mean playing every single hand or completely ignoring the strength of your cards. It's important to choose the right moments to attack and know the difference between aggressive play and reckless risk-taking.

Once you find the balance between careful judgment and the right dose of aggression, the middle stage becomes the ideal time to build a strong stack that will carry you into the next, crucial stages of the tournament.

So I want you to remember one thing I learned the hard way:

The key to success in the middle stage is adapting.

Read the table, watch your opponents and adjust your game to the new situation. Once you learn to manage your aggression effectively, you'll notice how often you're among the players heading into the final stages of the tournament.

And that's the beauty of this game: poker rewards those who can be flexible, smart and patient when it matters most.

The bubble: the key moment of every tournament

If you've ever played a poker tournament, or even just listened to others talk about them, you've probably heard the term *"the bubble."* But what does it actually mean, and why is this part of the tournament so unusual and so important?

The bubble is the stage when there's just one more player left than the number of places that get paid. For example, if a tournament pays the top 15 players, the "bubble" begins when 16 players are still in. The next player to bust goes home empty-handed, while everyone else is

guaranteed a share of the prize pool. That's why this part of the tournament is so emotional: nobody wants to be the unlucky player who goes out with nothing, one spot short of the money.

At this stage most players play extremely cautiously, sometimes too cautiously. Many will fold even very good cards just to avoid going out at the last moment. This is a situation you can turn to your advantage if you know how to play it.

Bubble strategies

There are a few simple rules that will help you get through this stage without much stress, and maybe even grow your stack:

If you have a big stack:

The bubble is your ideal opportunity. You'll see lots of players playing cautiously because they're afraid of being knocked out. Don't hesitate to raise with slightly weaker cards: your aggression will often be enough to make your opponents fold, even when they have decent cards. In this situation, **your goal is clear: pick up as many blinds and pots as you can, without taking too much risk.**

If you have a medium stack:

Your play should be careful, but not too passive. Look for chances to win pots easily, especially against players with fewer chips than you. Be careful in hands against bigger stacks, but don't play too scared. **Remember, you're safe as long as you pick the right battles.**

If you have a small stack:

Here there's not much of a dilemma: you have to be ready to take risks. But don't take risks without a plan. Pick a good hand for your decisive move, attack a cautious player who'll probably fold, and pick up the blinds

and antes without a fight. If you wait too long, the blinds will eat you alive, and you'll end up with nothing.

It's better to make one clear, bold move than to fade away quietly.

The bubble is the part of the tournament where your knowledge of your opponents is especially important. During this period you can see which players are playing under pressure and which are trying to take advantage of it. Once, on the bubble, I had a fairly small stack, but I noticed a player who was carefully folding every round, afraid of being eliminated. I decided to put the pressure on him: three times I raised against him, and all three times he folded, which let me grow my stack significantly, and in the end I even finished among the top few players in the tournament.

In the end, the bubble isn't something to be afraid of. In fact, it's a great part of the tournament that shows how well you can stay calm under pressure. Remember this simple truth:

On the bubble, the players who play carefully but without fear usually do best.

Be one of them. Play patiently and boldly, and you'll see how easily you can turn a stressful bubble into a great opportunity to grow your stack and make it to the final stage of the tournament, where the biggest prizes are handed out.

Making the money: the final stage

You've reached the moment every player looks forward to: you're in the money! It's a great feeling, especially if you're new to tournament poker. But it's important to know that this isn't the time to relax. Quite the

opposite: now you have to be even more focused, because every step from here counts.

Many players, especially beginners, feel relieved at this stage. I know from personal experience how easy it is to say, "Great, I've made the money, now I can ease off." But that's the very mistake that can cost you a much bigger prize.

Remember one important thing:

The further you go, the bigger the prizes get.

Every place you climb means a significantly bigger payout. So once you're in the money, every move should have a clear purpose: getting further in the tournament.

How to adjust your game once you're in the money

Once you're among the players who are winning money, you'll often notice two types of player:

- Those who play **very cautiously**, just waiting for others to bust, hoping for a bigger prize.
- Those who play **much more aggressively**, because they want to reach the very top and the biggest prizes.

Your strategy should sit somewhere between these two extremes. Here's how:

Be aggressive, but not reckless.

Now's the time to take advantage of players who are too cautious. You'll notice players who fold a lot and rarely get into pots. Don't hesitate to raise against them more often, especially when you have solid cards or

good position at the table. They'll rarely put up a fight, because their main goal isn't winning, just a slightly bigger prize.

On the other hand, you'll have players who are ready to take risks. Against them you need to be more careful, especially if they have a bigger stack than you. If you have a good hand or a great spot, you can lie in wait and take advantage of their excessive aggression, but don't let them drag you into unnecessary risks.

I had a situation in a big tournament where, thanks to this very strategy, I managed to climb from a min-cash all the way to the top. I noticed a player who was constantly putting pressure on the shorter stacks, often with very bad cards. I decided to wait for the right hand and the right moment, and when it came, I won a huge pot that launched me into the top three.

At this stage of the game, the key is to judge when the time is right to take a risk. If you have a smaller stack, be ready to get it in the middle at the right moment, but don't do it without a plan. If you have a bigger stack, use your advantage carefully, putting pressure on the players with smaller stacks without taking too much risk. This balance between caution and aggression often decides whether you finish among the best or as just another player with a smaller prize.

Finally, I want you to remember this simple but important piece of advice:

Once you're in the money, every step up can significantly increase your winnings.

Don't settle for a min-cash: play with the goal of winning as much as possible. But at the same time, don't let wanting it too badly lead you into mistakes. Find the balance, play smart and focused, and you'll see how quickly you start getting much better results in tournaments.

The final table: a strategy for winning the tournament

You've made the final table. Congratulations! This is the high point of any tournament. Every player dreams of this moment, but when it finally comes, you may suddenly feel a lot of pressure. All eyes are on you, the prizes are big, and every mistake can be costly. That's why it's crucial to play your very best now, both mentally and strategically.

You probably know how easy it is to lose your cool at this stage and make a mistake under pressure.

But this is where your mental strength makes a huge difference.

Mental preparation: stay calm under pressure

At the final table, your biggest opponent isn't the other players; it's your own emotions. I vividly remember my first final table: my hands were shaking, my heart was pounding and I could barely think straight. Since then I've learned one thing that completely changed my game:

Approach the final table as if every hand were a brand-new game.

Don't think about how much money you can win or lose. Focus only on the next decision. Breathe deeply, play slowly and deliberately, and you'll feel the pressure ease. Once you start playing without fear, you'll notice the other players sensing your calm and starting to play more cautiously against you.

How to play the final table: tactics for winning the tournament

Now that your emotions are under control, it's time to think about strategy. The final table calls for special tactics:

First, watch the other players more closely than ever.

Every player at the final table is there for a reason. Watch how they behave, how often they raise and when they play passively. Who's showing nerves? Who's too aggressive? This information can be worth its weight in gold.

Second, pick your battles wisely. There's not much room for mistakes at the final table. Only get into pots where you know exactly what you want to achieve. Don't charge into dangerous situations with mediocre cards. But when you have a chance to win a big pot against a player who's scared or overly aggressive, you can't let it slip.

In one tournament, right at this stage, I had the chance to play a key hand. There were four of us left, and I noticed that the player with the biggest stack bluffed a lot and was trying to dominate the table. I decided to let him get himself into trouble. When he came out with a big bet, I had solid cards — not perfect, but good enough for a clear move. I re-raised him without much hesitation, which threw him off, and he gave up on the hand. I won the pot, and it carried me to the top prize.

At the final table it's important not to be afraid to raise when the situation calls for it, but at the same time you have to be ready to let go if you're not sure. That balance between aggression and caution is what separates the players who finish in the lower spots from those who win tournaments.

To close this section, I want to give you one clear, simple piece of advice I've learned from experience:

The winner at the final table isn't the player who always has the best cards, but the one who handles themselves best and picks the right moments to make their moves.

Play smart, play calm, play with a clear head. Any decision could be the one that leads you to victory.

Once you understand that, you'll be ready for your first trophy — and many more after that.

Special tournament types: freerolls, bounties, satellites and deep stacks

When you first step into the world of poker tournaments, you tend to think they're all the same. But you soon realize there are lots of special variants that offer unique challenges and fun, along with new chances to win. So I want to briefly introduce you to some of the most popular special tournaments: freerolls, bounties, satellites and deep stacks.

Freeroll and bounty tournaments: a different dynamic

Freeroll tournaments are special because there's no risk at all: there's no buy-in, which means you're literally playing for free, but you can still win real prizes or tickets to bigger tournaments. These tournaments are a great way to practice your game without pressure, but precisely because of that, the play in them is often looser and sometimes downright chaotic.

My advice for freerolls is very simple:

Play patiently, because you'll often see lots of players playing recklessly precisely because they have nothing to lose. When you get solid cards, you'll have no trouble taking their chips.

Bounty tournaments, on the other hand, bring a completely different atmosphere. Every player carries a "bounty," an extra reward for knocking them out. So every time you eliminate a player from the tournament, you win some money on the spot. This detail changes the game significantly, because players often take bigger risks to collect as many bounties as possible.

When you play bounty tournaments, have a clear strategy:

Be aggressive in spots where you can easily knock out a player with a small stack, but be careful not to risk too much. A bounty is a nice bonus, but don't lose sight of the main prize.

Satellite and deep-stack tournaments: when patience makes the difference

Satellite tournaments are a category all their own. The goal isn't to win money directly, but a ticket to a bigger tournament that you otherwise might not be able or willing to pay for. I've personally used satellites many times to get into big tournaments with high buy-ins, and I can tell you that winning a seat in a big tournament through a satellite feels amazing.

Your satellite strategy needs to be extremely focused:

Don't chase first place at all costs. All that matters is winning the ticket, so your play has to be careful and very well calculated, especially toward the end of the satellite as you get close to the prize you're after.

Deep-stack tournaments, on the other hand, give you a big starting stack, which means the game lasts much longer. These tournaments call for patience, composure and precise strategy from start to finish.

If you play a deep-stack tournament, remember this:

The blinds go up more slowly, so you have time to wait for good opportunities. Don't rush to build a big stack early: time is on your side, so use it wisely.

These special tournament types aren't just good fun; they're also a great way to improve your game. Freerolls let you experiment, bounties teach you aggressive play, satellites give you a taste of big-tournament atmosphere without a big price tag, and deep stacks develop your patience and strategy.

So try each of these tournament types: each one has its own charm, and you'll soon find the ones that best fit your playing style and your goals. And trust me, every new type of tournament you try will help you become an even better player, ready for everything poker has to offer.

The most common tournament mistakes (and how to avoid them)

Mistakes are part and parcel of learning poker: we all make them, especially at the start. I remember my first few tournaments, when I made some really big mistakes that cost me dearly. But those same mistakes were also the best lessons I ever had. I want to help you recognize them, so you can avoid them more easily and become a better player much faster than I did.

The most common mistakes and simple ways to avoid them

Too much aggression at the wrong moments

Many new players believe aggression is the key to success, which is basically true, but only if you know when the time is right. If you keep trying to bluff or dominate the table without a clear plan, you'll run out of chips fast. That's why it's crucial to learn to recognize the situations where aggression is the right decision.

My advice: Always have a clear idea of what you want to achieve with an aggressive move. If you're not sure, it's better not to risk too much.

Playing too passively out of fear of busting

This mistake often comes from the fear of getting knocked out. Ironically, that can be the very reason you end up losing all your chips. Playing too cautiously means slowly bleeding chips until the blinds knock you out.

My advice: Play carefully, but make the most of your chances when you get good cards. Poker is a game of risk; the important thing is to be smart about which risks you take.

Ignoring the blinds and the tournament structure

Every tournament has its own structure: the blinds go up, the dynamics change, and your strategy has to adapt. Many beginners don't pay attention to this and play the same way throughout the tournament, which often costs them good finishes.

My advice: Keep a close eye on the blinds and the structure. When the blinds go up, you need to get more active. When the blinds are low, you can play more cautiously.

Ignoring the signals your opponents send

Poker isn't just a game of cards; it's a game of people. I've often seen players who are completely focused on their own cards, ignoring obvious signals from their opponents. If you pay attention, you'll notice who's nervous, who's playing cautiously and who likes to bluff. That information is often more important than the cards you're holding.

My advice: Always watch your opponents carefully. They're giving you far more information than you think.

And remember, a mistake isn't a reason to get discouraged, but a great opportunity to learn something new. Treat every tournament as a new lesson, analyze what you did wrong, and next time you'll be much better. The most important thing is not to make the same mistake twice, because that's when you start becoming a player who knows exactly what they're doing at the table.

The mental game in tournaments: how to stay calm and focused to the end

When I first started playing poker tournaments more seriously, I often thought the key to success was just good strategy and a bit of luck with the cards. But I quickly realized there's one part of the game many people neglect, and it may actually be the most important of all: **mental strength**.

Picture this: you're playing well all tournament, you feel in control, and then suddenly you lose a big hand to bad luck or your own mistake. Your emotions start to overwhelm you, you lose your composure, you get annoyed, and then you make even bigger mistakes. Sound familiar? I'm sure it does, because this happens to every player, especially at the start of their poker career.

That's why I want to show you how to build mental toughness, keep your emotions under control and stay focused right to the end of the tournament.

Practical tips for staying focused and keeping your emotions in check

Calming down quickly after a bad hand

One of the best pieces of advice I've ever received is to take a short mental break after a badly played hand or a big loss. Close your eyes for a few seconds, breathe in deeply, breathe out, and tell yourself:

"It's okay, this is part of the game. The next hand is a new chance."

Seems simple, right? But you'll see how powerful this little ritual is. It's helped me get back into the game countless times and avoid much bigger mistakes.

How to stay focused during long sessions

Tournaments can last for hours, and it's perfectly normal to feel tired and lose concentration after a while. My personal trick for staying focused is to set myself mini-goals during play. For example, I tell myself: *"By the next break, I want to grow my stack by at least 10%."* Setting small, clear goals helps me hold my attention and gives me a constant little challenge that pushes me to try hard and play my best game.

Why short breaks matter

Another thing that seems so simple but makes a huge difference is taking short breaks during play. When you notice you're losing focus, get up for a minute or two, stretch, drink some water or look out the window. That brief shift of focus away from the screen will quickly restore your attention and help you make good, clear-headed decisions when you sit back down.

Trust me, a break of just two minutes can completely change your level of play for the next hour.

I've personally tested every one of these tips, and it's thanks to them that I've significantly improved my tournament results. Because in poker, as in life, the key to success isn't never making mistakes or never failing; those things are unavoidable. The key is to recognize them, accept them and learn how to stay calm and focused even when things go wrong.

So remember this simple but powerful thought:

The biggest difference between an average poker player and a great one isn't the cards, but how you react when things don't go to plan.

Build your mental strength, stay calm under pressure, and you'll see your game get better day by day. Poker isn't just a game of cards; it's a game of the mind. Learn to master your own thoughts and emotions, and then

you'll understand what it means to be a real winner at the poker table.

How to analyze your tournaments and improve fast

One of the most important things I've learned over years of playing poker is that a tournament never ends for me the moment I bust or cash. For me, the real end of a tournament only comes after I've taken some time to analyze what I did well and what I could have done better. Without this analysis, you can easily find yourself repeating the same mistakes over and over while your results stay mediocre.

You might think: "Why should I analyze my game? I already know what I did." But trust me, when you take some time for careful analysis, you'll be surprised how many new things you can discover about yourself and your game.

A practical guide to analyzing your tournament

Which situations should you analyze?

The most important thing is to focus on the key hands or situations that decided whether you survived or got knocked out. Write down, or remember, the moments when you weren't sure about your decision: those are golden opportunities to learn something.

For example, if you often bust out of tournaments because of bad decisions on the bubble, it's time to think hard about why you're making those mistakes and what you can do differently next time.

How do you spot and eliminate recurring mistakes?

Everyone has their own typical mistakes that they make again and again. Maybe you bluff too much, maybe you play marginal cards too often, or maybe you don't take advantage of good spots to raise. It's important to

recognize them and call them by name, because that's the only way you'll be able to eliminate them from your game.

Here's a practical tip: write a short note after every tournament and identify at least one mistake you want to fix in the future. Over time you'll see those mistakes become rarer and your results get better.

Analyzing your opponents and how you approached them

Don't just analyze yourself: analyze your opponents too. Ask yourself: Did you correctly recognize the playing styles of the opponents at your table? Could you have taken better advantage of their weaknesses? What could you do differently next time?

One great way to analyze opponents is to go back after the tournament and review a few key hands you played against the same players. This will help you develop the ability to size people up quickly and adjust in future games.

This kind of analysis has helped me win tournaments at Poker Klub Kiril many times. Playing in the club, I often faced the same players, which let me understand them better and adjust my game accordingly, especially during our leagues and the tournaments we run every day.

If you play regularly at Poker Klub Kiril too, take advantage of the fact that you know most of the players: write down or remember their habits, playing styles and how they react. You'll very quickly notice how much of an edge that information gives you the next time you meet.

Finally, I want you to remember one simple but important thing:

Analyzing your game continuously is the key to improving fast at poker.

No matter how well you play, there's always room for improvement. The faster you learn to analyze your mistakes, the better your results will be, and you'll soon be surprised how much your skills grow from week to

week.

Poker is a game of constant learning. Make analyzing your game a routine, because that's what separates average players from those who become regular winners.

CHAPTER 7

Poker Strategy: From Beginner to Advanced Techniques

Post-flop strategy: making the right decisions

If I had to pick one moment in poker that has the biggest effect on my chances of winning the pot, it would definitely be the flop. The flop is the turning point of every poker hand, because suddenly you get a lot more information. Now you can see three cards face up on the table, and you know exactly what your starting cards are worth.

I remember how, at first, I made the mistake of thinking the flop was just a formality: "I'll see the cards and decide what to do next." But in fact, the decisions you make after the flop are often the ones that decide your results.

Different situations after the flop

Imagine you have solid cards, say A♠ K♣, and the board comes K♦ 8♥ 2♠. This is what I call "a flop that hits your hand well." You have top pair with the best kicker. In this situation, you need to take the initiative. That doesn't mean shoving all your chips in right away, but it's important to take control of the pot and play so that your opponents have to decide whether it's worth staying in. Be active, because this is an opportunity you don't want to miss.

But there are also situations where the flop isn't perfect but gives you the potential for something even better. For example, you have J♠ 10♠ and the flop comes Q♠ 9♦ 2♠. You don't have a made hand yet, but you have a really good chance of making a straight or a flush. This is a situation where you need to be careful, but also ready to call bets that aren't too big. You know you'll often make something big, but still, don't take too many risks: at this moment, the balance between patience and aggression is key.

The most important, and probably most common, situation is when the flop completely misses your cards. Say you have A♥ K♥ and the flop is 8♦ 6♣ 3♠, totally unconnected to your hand. At times like these, don't feel obliged to keep playing. Many players think they have to prove something, so they carry on even though they obviously have no real chance. Sometimes you can try a bluff, but usually it's wiser to simply back off and wait for a better opportunity.

A common post-flop mistake that's easy to avoid

I used to make a big mistake that I often see other players make too: I stayed in a hand too long just because I'd started with good cards. Say I had AA, but the flop brought cards that could easily give an opponent a flush or a straight. There's no point stubbornly clinging to how strong your cards were at the start. Poker is a dynamic game: your hand is only worth what the board says it's worth right now.

So remember to ask yourself one short question after every flop:

"How strong is my hand really, given the cards I see on the board?"

Don't be the player who falls in love with their starting cards. Every flop is new information you have to take seriously. Learn to judge quickly what the flop really means for your hand, and you'll already be a much better player than you think.

Now let me ask you something before you read on:

Have you ever stayed in a hand too long just because of how strong your cards were before the flop?

How did that work out for you?

Think about it for a moment. You might realize this is where you're making a mistake you can easily avoid the next time you sit down at a poker table.

Slow play: the art of hiding a strong hand

One evening a few years ago, I was playing in a tournament where things went perfectly for me from the start. After a few average hands, I was finally dealt the cards every player dreams of: two Kings (K♠ K♦). My first impulse was to come out swinging with a big raise, but then I looked around and stopped. The table I was at was very aggressive: most players raised regularly, often without much to back it up. I realized this was the perfect moment to try something completely different, and I decided on what we call a "slow play."

Instead of a big bet, I decided to just call, as if nothing special was going on. The flop brought harmless low cards (3♦ 8♠ 2♥), which couldn't have been better for me. The players around me kept raising, obviously convinced I had weak cards. I just kept calling, slowly and patiently.

When another low card came on the turn (6♣), I noticed one of the players looking confident. I decided to stick with my cautious approach and wait for him to bet first. Sure enough, he made a big bet, obviously trying to push me out of the hand. With a little acting and some fake worry, I just called again.

Finally, the river brings the J♦, a card that doesn't hurt me at all. My opponent, frustrated that I still haven't folded, pushes almost all his chips into the middle. I call and slowly turn over my two Kings. The look on his face was unforgettable: he'd been absolutely sure he had the best hand. But it was that "slow play" that let me take almost all of his chips in a single hand.

This technique is great, but dangerous. Why? Because it doesn't work in every situation. The biggest mistake beginners make is slow-playing too often, even when the table isn't aggressive enough or when the board gives opponents obvious ways to make a better hand.

Here's one important thing to always keep in mind: **slow-playing works best when you have an extremely strong hand and the board doesn't give your opponents many ways to beat you**. If you see lots of possible flushes or straights on the board, slowing down is a big risk. Your strong hand can then easily turn into a losing one.

That's why it's important to always assess the situation at the table. If players often fold to a small bet or seem cautious, it's better to play it straight and make it clear you have a good hand. But if the table is aggressive, like the one in my example, a slow play can be extremely profitable.

One more important detail: for a slow play to be convincing, you have to look natural. If you seem nervous or too sure of yourself, your opponents will very quickly suspect something's up. **The best slow play is the one that looks spontaneous, with no acting and no visible strategy**.

Once you master this technique, you'll realize how much fun poker can really be. It's a game where your ability to stay calm, cool and collected makes a real difference between average players and great ones.

Slow-playing is much more than just a strategy: it's the art of hiding the true strength of your cards, something that sets experienced players apart from those who've just stepped into the world of poker. Once you learn to use this technique properly, you'll be surprised how often you get the chance to pick up big pots where others expected you to fold.

How to read your opponents (online and live)

In poker it's not enough to know your own cards well; the key to success often lies in how well you can "read" your opponents. But don't let that scare you. You won't become a professional psychologist in this section, but you will learn a few practical tricks that will immediately help you understand what your opponents are trying to hide.

Many beginners think "reading opponents" only happens in poker movies: they picture characters in dark glasses staring their opponents straight in the eye, trying to catch a "tell" (a telltale giveaway). But the reality is much simpler and more down-to-earth. Here's how you can easily gauge the strength of your opponents' cards, whether you're playing online or live.

"Reading" opponents online: what do you watch for?

Unlike in a live game, in online poker you can't watch your opponents' physical reactions. But that doesn't mean you can't "read" them. In fact, there are some very clear signals:

- **Speed of decisions**

Opponents who decide quickly (an instant bet or raise) often have easy decisions, usually because their cards are either very good or very bad. When you see an opponent thinking for a long time, it's often a sign of

uncertainty and a medium-strength hand.

- **Bet size**

When someone makes big raises or goes all-in, they often want to end the hand quickly, which can point to a strong but vulnerable hand. Smaller raises, on the other hand, often point to weakness or a medium-strength hand.

- **How often they play (stats)**

Online poker makes it easy to notice how often your opponents get involved in hands. Players who enter lots of pots usually play far too wide a range of cards, which means you can tangle with them more freely.



Practical tip:

If you notice an opponent quickly checking or calling your bets on the flop and turn and then suddenly making a big raise on the river, be careful: it's often a sign they've just hit a very strong hand.

When I was just starting out in online poker, one of the things that bothered me most was how anonymous my opponents were. I was playing against "invisible people," players I knew nothing about: not how they thought, not what mattered to them, not what kind of temperament they had. In live poker it was simpler: you see the face, the movements, the emotions. Online you don't have any of that. Or at least, that's how it seems.

In fact, I soon realized that online players have their own unique "handwriting," a distinct playing style that reveals a lot about them. All you have to do is carefully watch how they bet, how fast they make decisions and the habits they show from hand to hand. Once you learn to do that, your opponents stop being invisible and become very easy to read, sometimes even easier than live.

How to spot your opponents' emotional signals online (online poker tells)

Even though online poker doesn't give you direct contact with your opponents, emotions still affect their decisions and their play. If you can recognize your opponents' emotional signals (so-called "online tells"), you'll gain a huge advantage. Here are a few simple ways to do it, starting with your very next game.

Reaction speed as an emotional signal

Pay attention to how quickly your opponents make decisions:

- **Betting or calling fast** can also point to *nerves or excitement*. For example, if an opponent instantly calls a big bet, they may be trying to cover up their uncertainty quickly, or they may be on edge about the strength of their hand.
- **Thinking for a long time** before betting can signal that a player isn't sure about their decision or doesn't have strong enough cards.

Your assignment:

In your next online session, keep track of how quickly your opponents make decisions. Write down a few examples of quick or slow reactions and try to guess what they were holding. After the game, check how accurate your guesses were.

Changes in betting patterns

Opponents often unconsciously change their bet sizes depending on their emotional state:

- **A sudden increase in bet size** can mean frustration or nerves after losing a previous hand.
- **A sudden drop in bet size** can be a sign that the opponent has lost confidence after a few losses or weak plays.

Your assignment:

Over your next few games, keep a close eye on your opponents' bet sizes. Notice when someone suddenly starts playing differently than before. Write down what happened just before the change and try to understand the emotional reason behind it.

The chat as an emotional signal

Online poker often lets players communicate through chat, which can be a great way to read your opponents' emotions:

- **Players who send lots of messages or complain in the chat** are usually showing frustration, nerves or weakness.
- **Players who suddenly stop chatting after losing a big hand** are probably trying to regain emotional control.

Your assignment:

In your next session, pay attention to the chat. Write down examples of your opponents' emotional reactions in the chat and see what their next move was. That'll make it easier to understand the link between chat reactions and how they play.

Tracking changes in an opponent's strategy

A sudden change in the way someone plays often means the opponent is emotionally rattled:

- If a player suddenly switches from passive to extremely aggressive play, they may be under emotional pressure and trying to win back lost money fast (tilt).
- Conversely, if an aggressive player suddenly becomes very passive, they've probably lost confidence after a few big mistakes or losses.

Your assignment:

Pick one or two players in your next online game and follow their moves closely throughout the session. When you notice a change in strategy, try to understand the emotional reason for it.

Recognizing online emotional signals can dramatically improve your game. Once you can read an opponent, you'll know when to play more cautiously and when you can play more aggressively and take advantage of their emotional weakness. You'll quickly take your results to the next level, starting with your very next game!

And how do you read them live?

Live poker is a little different: there you have the advantage of being able to watch players' physical signals. Here are a few things to pay attention to:

- **Hands and chips**

Players with strong hands often unconsciously reach for their chips before it's their turn, because they're itching to bet. By contrast, players without good cards often seem uninterested and withdrawn.

- **Eye contact**

Opponents with weak cards usually avoid eye contact, trying to stay unnoticed. Those with strong cards often seem more confident, even challenging.

- **Nervousness or excessive calm**

Contrary to popular belief, nervous players usually have good cards, because they're caught up in the excitement of a potential win. Calm, cool players are often holding medium or weaker cards.

Quick tip:

If a player who's been calm and relaxed all game suddenly starts chatting, cracking jokes or acting overly relaxed after putting money in, they're probably trying to hide weakness, or bluffing.

Reading opponents: advanced techniques for gauging hand strength

When an opponent suddenly changes their behavior at the table, there's almost always a reason. Pay attention: if someone is usually relaxed and chatting with others, and then suddenly goes quiet and very focused when they get their cards, *they've probably just been dealt a very strong hand*. Players often try to hide their excitement by becoming overly serious.

On the other hand, if an opponent suddenly gets too loud or aggressive in the way they put their chips in, they may be trying to scare you because they don't have much. *Overconfidence often gives away weakness: after all, why would someone with really strong cards risk scaring off the other players?*

How fast someone decides says a lot about the strength of their hand. When someone calls quickly, it usually means they have a solid but not necessarily perfect hand: they want to stay in without drawing too much attention. But if someone thinks for a long time, especially before deciding to call, it often means they have a marginal hand: strong enough to continue, but not strong enough to feel sure.

Watch the details of how opponents look at their cards. Some players, when they have great cards, look at them only once, quickly and confidently. But when a player checks their cards several times, it can mean they don't feel completely sure. *The longer they look at their cards, the more likely they are to need extra reassurance about their hand.*

Another very useful signal: how do your opponents react to the cards that come on the board? If someone suddenly looks away or shows obvious displeasure after new cards are turned over, there's a good chance those cards didn't help them. On the other hand, if they suddenly pay more attention, sit up a little in their chair or unconsciously lean toward the table, it's a sign their situation may have just improved.

Watch how an opponent picks up their chips before betting. If a player's hands shake a little as they move their chips, that's more often excitement than fear — as we said earlier, shaky hands usually hide strong cards. Conversely, when they grab their chips confidently, without thinking, and bet quickly, it often means they've made up their mind, whether they're strong or bluffing. But if they go quiet after betting and seem almost uninterested, without any chatter or jokes, they're usually very strong: they're faking weakness to lure you in.

An important note: none of these signs is completely reliable all the time. **The key is to always look for a combination of several signs at once.** The more details you notice about an opponent in a single hand, the better your chances of judging their real strength.

And remember one thing: your opponents are reading you at the same time. Try turning the tables now and then: change the way you bet, think longer or shorter than usual, or change your rhythm. That way you'll become much harder to read, and that will make your moves far more effective than you might think.

A final exercise (!)

Let's do a quick exercise now:

Picture this: you're playing online at **Poker Klub Kiril**. At the €0.50/€1 tables, an opponent has been calling quickly on the earlier streets, looking uninterested, and then suddenly, on the river, when a third spade appears on the board, he makes a big raise. Your hand is solid but not perfect (you have two pair).

How do you read this move?

- **Answer:** Your opponent most likely has a flush or is making a very bold bluff. However, his earlier play (passively calling bets) suggests he probably hit his flush on the river. The smart move is a careful fold, unless you have other reasons to suspect he's a bluffer.

In short: what have you just learned?

- Online poker has its own ways of revealing the strength of your opponents' cards (speed, bet size, stats), as well as their emotional state (sudden changes in betting and strategy, chat messages).
- Live poker offers physical signals you need to watch carefully (eye contact, body language, nervousness).
- It's important to recognize your opponents' general playing styles and adjust your strategy to them (more on that in the very next section).

The better you learn to read your opponents, the better your decisions at the table will be, and the faster your results will improve. Don't worry, you won't be perfect right away, but every small step forward counts, both for your game and for your bankroll.

How to adjust your strategy to different types of players

You've already met the fish, sharks, nits and maniacs in the poker dictionary. Now we're going a step further, because reading opponents isn't just about following individual moves: you also need to understand their long-term tendencies. At the table, and especially online, you'll come across different types of players, just like in real life. Every player has their own psychology and their own way of making decisions. That's why it's important to know who you're dealing with and how to adjust your game. Here are the types you'll meet most often, some of them presented a little differently: as fun "ID cards."

1. The hyperactive aggressor

- **Playing style:** Bets often, raises aggressively and rarely misses a chance to put pressure on his opponents.
- **Favorite phrase:** *"Raise, obviously!"*
- **Biggest weakness:** Often overestimates his strength because of his own aggression.

How to play him: **Let him do the damage to himself.**

We all know him well. He's the player who attacks almost every hand with big bets and raises aggressively, even when he doesn't have good cards. *You'll spot him easily, because he rarely folds and is always trying to dominate*

the table. When you run into this type of player, the key is to lie in wait and let him walk into your trap. **Patience is everything.** Don't try to match his aggressive style; instead, wait for good cards and let him get himself into trouble. The more he raises, the more likely he is to get caught in his own net.

You'll run into players like this very often online. Play your strong cards carefully and don't scare them off too early with big bets: give them room to keep attacking, and be ready to catch them bluffing (but with a stronger hand). When you have a sure hand, calmly collect their chips.

2. The passive player

The opposite of the aggressor, this type of player almost never raises. *He always calls, rarely bluffs and often folds as soon as he sees any sign of aggression from others.* If he has a solid hand, he won't let it go easily, but he's rarely brave enough to attack a pot seriously. The best strategy against him is **moderate aggression**: raise often, but don't overdo it. Your aggression has to be clear, but careful enough not to scare him off right away. That way, little by little, you'll pull him into pots he's not ready to defend seriously, and, if you do it right, you'll easily collect his chips.

Passive players are the silent majority at the tables, and although they seem harmless, they're not always easy targets. With small raises you test how strong their hand is: as soon as you notice they keep calling your smaller bets, it's a sign they don't have a strong hand. That's the ideal moment to turn up the pressure, and they'll often back down without much resistance.

3. The cautious skeptic

- **Playing style:** Very cautious, rarely gets into pots, often doubts his cards and his decisions.

- **Favorite phrase:** *"Hmm, maybe I'd better fold..."*
- **Biggest weakness:** Easy to scare into folding.

How to play him: **Stay active and apply constant but moderate pressure.**

This kind of player will often back off as soon as you raise a little. If you notice him starting to retreat, show him he has good reason to doubt his cards, even when you don't have the best hand.

Still, don't forget the other side of the coin: when a cautious, or **tight**, player like this does get into a hand, he usually has very good cards. That's why he's not an easy opponent: he doesn't give you many chances for easy money. Against him, play patiently, and when you notice him suddenly making a bigger bet or raising, that's a clear warning sign. You're better off folding, unless you have a really great hand.

4. The inexperienced beginner and the careless player

He's easy to spot: *he often makes obvious mistakes, seems confused or unsure, and frequently plays too many or too few hands*. This type of player often doesn't fully know the rules, let alone strategy. How do you play against him? **Carefully, but decisively.** This player can be very unpredictable, so be careful not to fall into the trap of being overly aggressive against him. The best approach is to lead him into mistakes: raise a little whenever you sense he's unsure. Very soon he'll make a mistake that lets you pick up his chips.

A close relative of the beginner is the careless, or **loose**, player: the type I liked best at first. Players like this get into a huge number of hands, often play weak cards, go all the way with weak holdings and put too much money into them. They're the perfect opportunity for you: wait for quality cards, patiently take advantage of their carelessness, and then play more

aggressively, because they'll often call your bets. Just make sure you don't get too comfortable and start playing too many hands yourself — it can be contagious.

5. The annoying chatterbox (the chat maniac)

- **Playing style:** Constantly uses the chat, sends emojis and comments on every hand, trying to provoke you.
- **Favorite phrase:** *"Haha, do you seriously think you can win this hand?"*
- **Biggest weakness:** Reveals too much about his emotional state through the chat.

How to play him: **Ignore his chat, but read his emotions carefully.**

His chattiness often gives away nerves or frustration. When he starts talking a lot, it usually means he's losing confidence. That's the best time to turn up the pressure and show him who's really boss at the table.

6. The seasoned (silent) pro

- **Playing style:** Plays extremely calmly, quietly and with discipline. Rarely makes mistakes and often seems very self-assured.
- **Favorite phrase:** *(silence...)*
- **Biggest weakness:** He's so consistent that he becomes predictable: when he suddenly puts in a big bet, he almost always has a strong hand.

You'll recognize him by his calm, his confidence and his almost perfect control over the game. *He rarely makes obvious mistakes, always seems composed and is otherwise (except when he suddenly bets big) very hard to read.* Against a player like this, there's no point playing straightforwardly or too aggressively. The most important thing is to make your game as

unpredictable as possible: **mix up your style, your tactics and the way you bet**. Pros are always trying to read your game, and if you manage to confuse them now and then or push them into a wrong read, you'll gain an edge. Your biggest chance lies in the fact that they aren't perfect either: the more you make them think and doubt, the better your chances.

How to play him: **Avoid direct confrontations unless you have a genuinely strong hand.**

With a player like this, the lack of reaction says a lot. He's not trying to provoke you; he's just calmly waiting for the right opportunity. When he suddenly raises, trust that he has something good. Against this type, it's best to play carefully and wait patiently for your chance, without unnecessary risks.

The bottom line

Each of these player types has its own strengths and weaknesses. Once you recognize your opponent, you'll have a big psychological edge. In online poker it's important to always watch how your opponents behave, even if you can't see them in person. Remember these short profiles, because the better you understand your opponents, the easier it'll be to figure out how to approach each of them and take your game to the next level.

Over the course of my own play, I changed my approach many times. I realized that a real poker player isn't someone with one perfect strategy, but someone who adapts quickly. Every hand, every table, every opponent calls for a small change in how you play. There's no magic formula; there's only careful observation of your opponents and quick adjustment to the situation.

So the next time you sit down at an online table, don't get annoyed that you can't see the face of the player across from you. Instead, pay close attention to how they behave, how much they bet, how often they play and what decisions they make. Every one of those little details is like a little clue they leave behind.

Once you learn to recognize those clues, online poker will no longer be just an "anonymous game against a computer." It'll become a fun game of people, strategy and psychology, just like the real thing at a live table. And that's the beauty of poker: whether you play at a real table or online, it's always a game won by the people who know how to listen, observe and adapt smartly to their opponents.



Advanced strategies: the semi-bluff, floating and the squeeze play

If you want your poker skills to move from the level of an average player to that of someone who regularly finishes in the money, you'll need some slightly more advanced techniques. Don't worry if you haven't heard these terms before: once you understand them, you'll see how fun and useful they are in real games.

Let me introduce them simply, with short examples you'll find easy to remember.

The semi-bluff

Unlike a regular bluff, a semi-bluff isn't just an attempt to win the pot right away. **A semi-bluff means betting or raising when you don't have a made hand yet, but you have a real chance of making a great one on the next card.**

Say you're holding J♠10♠ and the board is 8♠Q♦3♠. Right now you have nothing concrete, but there's a good chance you'll make a flush or a straight on the next card. If you bet or raise now, you're semi-bluffing. *Your opponent may fold right away (which is great for you), and even if they continue, you still have a good chance of winning the pot with the next card.*

Floating

Floating is a technique where, at first glance, you call your opponent's bet without an obviously good hand, but with the clear goal of making them fold later. **Floating means calling your opponent on the flop or turn, planning to take the initiative on the next street.**

For example, your opponent bets on a flop of 7♦2♣9♠. You have A♣ J♦, which isn't a strong hand right now, but you decide to call: this is floating. If your opponent shows weakness on the next street and passes up the chance to bet, you now take the initiative with a bet of your own, showing strength and winning the pot. *Floating is very effective against players who often attack aggressively but give up easily once their first attempt fails.*

The squeeze play

The squeeze play is a technique where you try to "squeeze" your opponents out of the hand with a big re-raise after one player has raised and another has just called. **It's ideal when you believe the first player is raising with weak cards and the second is calling without a clear plan.**

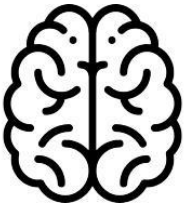
Here's a simple example: the first player makes a small raise, and the second calls. Even if you don't have a particularly strong hand, you make a big re-raise. This move puts enormous pressure on both players, because the first one also has to worry about the player behind him (the one who called), while the second usually doesn't have a strong enough hand to take on such a big risk. *This often ends with both of them folding, leaving the pot all to you.*

Once you understand them, these advanced techniques become invaluable parts of your poker strategy. They make your game much less predictable and much more interesting, and they leave your opponents confused and frustrated.

And once you manage to use the semi-bluff, floating or the squeeze play at the right moments, you'll feel the difference. Your game will become much more varied, your opponents will have a harder time reading you, and your results will start to improve noticeably. And in the end, you'll realize how much fun poker can be when you start using these small but powerful strategies.

CHAPTER 8

The Psychology of Poker: Master the Mental Game



Why does psychology matter in poker?

When you first start playing poker, it's natural to focus most of your attention on your cards, your betting strategy and various playing techniques. And that's perfectly fine. But there's one important side of poker that beginners often overlook, and it's the very thing that makes the biggest difference between average players and great ones: **the psychology of the game**.

I'm sure you've seen it happen at least once: a player with worse cards wins the pot just because they're calmer, more self-assured or simply better at "reading" their opponents. Psychology in poker isn't some secret skill; it's part of the game that you learn, develop and use every time you sit down at the table.

For example, at our **Poker Klub Kiril** we regularly run poker leagues and tournaments. Why do I mention them? Because that's where you can really see what a difference the mental approach makes. The players who consistently get the best results aren't necessarily the ones with the most experience or the best cards. Often they're the players who manage their emotions best, understand their opponents and stay calm even when the situation looks completely lost.

If you want a practical example, picture this: you have great cards, but you unexpectedly lose a big pot. In that moment it's easy to lose control and start playing recklessly, trying to win the lost money back fast. Meanwhile, a player who stays calm, clear-headed in their decisions and aware that one loss isn't the end of the world can easily turn the game around in the hands that follow.

That **emotional control**, the ability to stay calm in a stressful situation, is often what makes the key difference. You don't have to be the most experienced player at the table to have mental strength. It's a skill you build with every new game, every situation you analyze and every new experience you gain.

So if you want to take your game to the next level, pay attention to the psychological side of poker. Learn to understand yourself, learn to read your opponents, and above all, learn to control your emotions while you play.

Believe me, that's where your biggest advantage lies, because anyone can get good cards, but only the best have mental toughness. You'll see this for yourself the next time you sit down at a table, whether you're playing with friends or taking part in one of our leagues at Poker Klub Kiril.

Discipline and emotional control: the key to long-term success

Poker isn't just a game of cards and math. You've probably heard the famous saying:

"Poker is an easy game if you can control yourself."

In reality, poker is one of the most emotionally demanding games there is. You may not even realize how much your emotions affect your decisions, but in this section we'll show you why emotional control is the key factor that separates successful poker players from everyone else.

Here we're going to change our approach a little and talk as friends, because this is something every poker player goes through. We'll talk openly, honestly and directly, because if you want to be a good player, first you have to win the battle against yourself.

What is discipline in poker, really?

Discipline isn't just the ability to stay calm when you're losing. Discipline means:

- **The ability to stick to your plan** even when things go badly.
- **The ability to play patiently** and wait for good cards, even when you've gone a long time without any action.
- **The ability to let a hand go (fold)** when you know it's right, even if you've already put in a lot of money.

This is much harder than it sounds. Many players fall apart precisely because they can't control the urge to win back lost money right away (so-called "tilt").

What is "tilt" and why is it so dangerous?

Tilt is a state of emotional upset in which a player starts making bad decisions because of earlier losses or frustration. When you're on tilt, your decisions stop being rational: you start playing more aggressively, calling bad bets and risking far more than you should.

The most common causes of tilt are:

- **Bad beats** — when you lose a hand you were a big favorite to win.
- **Losing larger amounts of money** — the feeling that you have to win it back right now.
- **Frustration with bad opponents** — getting worked up because a bad player beat you through pure luck.

Every poker player goes on tilt; it's unavoidable. But what sets the best players apart is that they quickly recognize when they're on tilt and take immediate steps to get back to normal.

How do you know you're on tilt?

Some clear signs that you're on tilt:

- **Impatience:** You start playing too many hands, even bad ones, or making decisions too fast.
- **Frustration:** After losing a hand you get nervous, angry or desperate and can think only about getting back what you've lost as fast as possible, so you make decisions on impulse.
- **Rash moves:** You raise without a good reason, forcing the action in a rush to "get even."
- **Loss of concentration:** You stop thinking clearly about your opponents' moves and make obvious mistakes you normally wouldn't.

When you notice any of these signs, you need to react right away. The best way is to take a short break, take a deep breath and remind yourself of your long-term strategy.

How do you control your emotions at the table?

Here are a few simple but powerful tips for keeping your emotions in check:

- **Take a short break after a bad hand**

Get up from the table, take a walk or just step away for a few minutes. A short break makes a huge difference in calming down.

- **Remember that poker isn't one hand**

Poker is a long-term game. One bad hand or one bad day means nothing if you're in the black at the end of the month.

- **Play within your budget**

Always play at a level you're comfortable with. The less financial pressure you feel, the less likely you are to fall into an emotional trap.

- **Accept that losses are part of the game**

You can't win every hand. Poker is a game of variance — sometimes you win, sometimes you lose — and the sooner you make peace with that, the better you'll play in the future.

Techniques for calming down fast

When you feel the first signs of tilt, use these short, effective techniques:

- **Deep breathing:** A few deep, slow breaths in and out will help ease the tension of the moment.

- **Take a breather:** Fold the next few hands and give yourself a short mental break.
- **Shift your focus:** For a moment, think about something that has nothing to do with poker. It'll help you regain your balance quickly.

How to prevent tilt before it happens

The best way to avoid tilt is to prevent it:

- **Set clear limits:** Decide how much money or how many chips you're willing to risk before you sit down at the table.
- **Take regular short breaks:** If you're playing long tournaments or sessions, get up from the table regularly, even for a minute or two, to release built-up stress.

What you should NEVER do on tilt

It sounds obvious, but lots of players do exactly this in emotionally charged moments:

- **Don't try to win back your losses fast:** This strategy almost always leads to bigger losses.
- **Don't raise your stakes dramatically:** Don't move up aggressively without a clear reason.
- **Don't blame your opponents or the cards:** This kind of thinking only deepens your frustration and keeps you from regaining your balance.

A story from the tables

Let's imagine a player; we'll call him Marko. Marko is a good player who knows his strategy, but he has a big problem controlling his emotions. After losing one hand to bad luck, Marko got angry and started playing on

impulse. He wanted to win his money back right away, so he got into several hands with weak cards and lost almost his entire bankroll for the day.

Marko later realized how much his emotional reaction had cost him. The next day he decided to set himself a rule: every time he feels angry or frustrated, he immediately takes a five-minute break. This small change completely transformed his game. Now, when he loses a hand, he gets up from the table right away, takes a walk and comes back a few minutes later completely calm. His results have improved significantly.

This story matters because it shows how small changes can make a big difference to your poker success.

Key tips in a nutshell

- **Recognize tilt:** Listen to your emotions and spot the first signs of tension.
- **React fast:** As soon as you feel tilt coming on, use simple calming techniques.
- **Prevent it before it starts:** Set clear limits and take regular breaks.
- **Avoid the typical mistakes:** Never try to win back losses fast, and don't get angry at your opponents or bad cards.

These simple but powerful emotional-control strategies will help you stay a clear-headed, calm and focused player, which, in the end, is what separates good players from the best.

IMPORTANT!

Remember that emotional control is a long-term project: nobody becomes perfect overnight. Every time you get the better of your emotions, you'll be one step closer to becoming a player who wins money in the long run.

Discipline and emotional control aren't just important; they're absolutely essential to your future in poker. And the best news: these are skills you can learn, train and perfect every day, at every table, online or live.

If you manage this, you'll be much more than an average player. You'll be a player capable of dominating the poker table, precisely because you can dominate yourself first.

Confidence in online poker: how to play without fear or doubt

When you first sit down at an online poker table, it's perfectly normal to feel a little nervous. You're not sure how you'll do, you don't know your opponents, and you may feel a certain amount of pressure. But that's where the advantage of online poker lies: you can play from the comfort of your home, anonymously, and slowly build your confidence step by step.

Start with low stakes and freeroll tournaments

One of the biggest advantages of online poker is that you can start playing at very low stakes, or even for free, in freeroll tournaments. That's why **it's smart to start at the smaller tables as a beginner**: without the pressure of big stakes, you'll find it easier to make decisions and feel much more sure of yourself.

At **Poker Klub Kiril**, for example, there are tables running every day with very affordable stakes of €0.10/€0.20, plus daily freeroll tournaments that are free to enter. Once you've gained experience and confidence at those smaller tables, it'll be easy to step up to bigger games later.

Set yourself achievable goals

An important step in building confidence in online poker is setting yourself simple, achievable goals. **Goals like "I'll play 50 hands today" or "I'll play three small tournaments this week" will help you build a routine and feel like you're making progress.**

Realistic expectations create a sense of control and security. When you see yourself reaching the goals you set, your confidence will naturally grow day by day.

Use the anonymity of online play to your advantage

Online poker has one big advantage for beginners: anonymity. That means nobody at the table knows who you are, what you look like or how experienced you are. Because of that, you'll often feel much more confident than when you play live.

Anonymity makes it easier to make decisions without fear of how your opponents will react. You can freely try out different strategies, make mistakes and learn from them, without worrying that anyone will see your uncertainty or inexperience.

Analyze and track your progress

One of the most effective ways to build confidence is to keep track of your progress. After every poker session, jot down briefly how you played, what you learned and what you can do better next time. **When you can clearly**

see your progress, your confidence will grow much faster.

For example, after each game you might write a short note like *"Today I had great control over my emotions and won a few nice pots."* Over time you'll notice how much you're improving, and that will boost your confidence for future games even more.

Confidence in online poker isn't something you get overnight; it's something you build through practice, by setting small goals and making the most of what online play offers. Poker Klub Kiril is the ideal place for this kind of growth: low risk, plenty of chances to learn, and a community where you'll quickly feel you belong.

So the next time you sit down at your online table, remember: every move, every hand you play and every small goal you reach brings you closer to becoming a confident, self-assured poker player.

Psychological pressure in online poker: how to get the upper hand

You might think psychological pressure only works at live poker tables, where you can see your opponents' facial expressions. But even in online poker there are powerful techniques you can use to put subtle pressure on your opponents and improve your chances of winning. In fact, precisely because they can't see you, your opponents may be even more sensitive to your psychological tactics.

Here's how you can do it effectively in your next online game:

Decision speed

How quickly you decide can be a great tool for psychological pressure in online poker. When you decide fast, opponents often assume you have very strong cards or a clear strategy. On the other hand, if you take a long time, you can create a sense of uncertainty and confusion in your opponents.

For example, *if you call your opponent's bet quickly or raise right away, you're signaling that you're completely sure of your hand*. That can easily make your opponent fold or play more cautiously in the rounds that follow.

Bet size as a tool of psychological pressure

Online poker gives you a great opportunity to use bet sizing as a psychological weapon. Small raises at key moments can easily cause frustration or uncertainty in your opponents.

Say *you make small raises several hands in a row. Your opponents will often suspect you're trying to lure them into a trap*. When you then suddenly make a much bigger raise, they'll very often be confused and fold, even if they have decent cards. This is a clear example of how bet size can be an effective psychological tool.

Controlling the rhythm of the game

In online poker, the rhythm of the game often decides who has the psychological edge. If you deliberately change your rhythm, sometimes slowing down and sometimes speeding up, you send your opponents a clear message that you're in control and playing by your own rules.

For example, *if you've been fairly quick for most of the game and then suddenly start deliberately slowing down your decisions, your opponents will start doubting their reads on your game.* This is a very subtle but powerful way to build an extra edge over your opponents.

Avoiding predictability

The biggest mistake you can make in online poker is becoming predictable. If your opponents can easily recognize your playing style, they'll quickly adjust, and you'll have a hard time surprising them.

The best way to keep your opponents psychologically off balance is to switch up your playing style. If you sometimes play very aggressively and sometimes completely passively, your opponents won't be able to "read" your intentions easily. That unpredictability will often lead them into mistakes you can easily take advantage of.

Psychological pressure in online poker is a powerful tool that, used properly, can dramatically improve your results. Try these techniques in your very next online game, and you'll see how easily you can control the dynamics of the game. Once you master this skill, your opponents will often be confused and unsure, while your confidence and results will grow quickly.

How to beat the jitters when you play online

If you've only just started playing online poker, it's perfectly normal to feel jittery and nervous. I know, it seems like everyone else at the table knows exactly what they're doing, while you doubt your every move. But remember: every experienced player was once right where you are now. Here are a few clear, practical steps to help you get over your nerves and feel much more confident when you play online.

Play in familiar surroundings

Your playing environment affects your confidence much more than you think. When you're just starting out with online poker, **it's important to play in an environment that feels familiar and comfortable**. For example, platforms like Poker Klub Kiril are great for beginners, because they offer a relaxed atmosphere, clearly defined rules and a community of players at your level. When you play on a platform like that, you'll feel less pressure and quickly forget your nerves.

Play more often, but in shorter sessions

If you're feeling really nervous, it's better not to force yourself to play long sessions. Instead, **play more often, but in shorter sessions**. For example, *instead of playing once a week for three hours, try playing 15–30 minutes a day*. That way it's much easier to get used to the situations that make you nervous, and your confidence grows with every hand you play.

Set up your own pre-game rituals

You've probably noticed that athletes often have certain rituals before a game or a competition. These little rituals help reduce nerves and boost confidence. You can do the same before every poker session. Here are a few examples:

- **Deep breathing** — take a couple of minutes before you play to calm down with deep breaths in and out.
- **Review your notes or a few quick tips** — run through your notes on poker strategy to remind yourself of the important stuff.
- **Listen to your favorite music** — pick something that relaxes you and puts you in a good mood before you start.

Rituals like these will quickly help you calm your nerves and feel more confident and ready when you sit down at the table.

Accept mistakes as part of learning

Perhaps the most important thing to know is that mistakes are an integral part of poker. There's no player who doesn't make them. **Accept the fact that you're going to make mistakes — it's no big deal.** What matters is that you learn something from them. If you see every mistake as a chance to learn, your jitters will disappear, and your nerves will settle a little more with every new game.

Every new beginning brings nerves, but trust me: with every new poker session, your nervousness will shrink. The important thing to understand is that the jitters go away when you play regularly, when you accept mistakes as part of the process and when you create a comfortable environment for your game.

So the next time you sit down at your online table, remember these tips and enjoy the game without pressure.

Your confidence will grow, and poker will become a game you enjoy more and more every day.

Mental strength in online poker: building perseverance and consistency

Mental strength is the key trait that separates top poker players from average ones. Whatever your current level of experience, long-term success in online poker depends on your ability to stay persistent,

disciplined and consistent in your strategy. Here are a few practical tips on how to develop and maintain this mental strength throughout your online poker career.

Long-term thinking as the foundation of success

Poker is a game where short-term results can swing wildly. That's why the ability to **focus on long-term goals instead of immediate outcomes** is crucial. Instead of looking at every hand in isolation or getting frustrated by short-term losses, try to see your game from a long-term perspective.

For example, *if you're down for the week or even the month, that doesn't mean you're a bad player. Understanding that poker is a long-term game will help you see your true progress more clearly and stay focused on the real goal: constant improvement.*

How to build mental resilience

To build mental resilience, you need to treat your game seriously and with discipline. **Regularity and self-discipline are the two pillars of your mental strength.** Set regular playing times, analyze your results after every session and set clear goals for the sessions ahead.

How you handle winning and losing streaks matters too:

- *When you're on a winning streak, stay disciplined and don't let yourself get overconfident, which can lead to mistakes.*
- *When you're on a losing streak, take an honest look at the causes, don't react impulsively and stay true to your strategy.*

Consistency as the key to progress

Being consistent in applying your strategy and approach has a decisive effect on your long-term results. **A consistent player is one who doesn't change strategy suddenly or impulsively, but sticks to the principles they know deliver results over time.**

If you keep changing your approach and strategy, you'll never really know what works. That's why it's important to find a strategy that suits you and stick with it long enough to judge its results objectively.

Getting through rough patches in online poker

Every poker player, no matter how experienced, goes through periods when the results don't match expectations. It's part of the game. What matters is how you handle these rough patches psychologically. **Your ability to bounce back quickly after bad sessions determines how far you'll go.**

When you hit a rough patch:

- *Take a short break and figure out where you're going wrong.*
- *Focus on analyzing your play, not on the result.*
- *Remind yourself of the long-term perspective and think back to times when you successfully overcame similar problems.*

Once you learn to see situations like these as opportunities to grow, your mental strength will increase significantly, which will have a positive effect on your game too.

Building mental strength isn't a one-off task; it's an ongoing process. Poker is a game that demands long-term commitment, perseverance and discipline. Once you've built these qualities, your results will improve steadily, and you'll enjoy the game far more than you can imagine.

CHAPTER 9

Advanced Online Poker Concepts: From Good to Great

Range balancing: the heart of advanced online play

In advanced online poker, one of the key skills you need to master is **balancing your hand range**, better known as *range balancing*. This concept refers to your ability to play a wide variety of hands in the same or a very similar way, which makes it harder for your opponents to figure out your cards and your strategy. In other words, a good player has to be almost unreadable, and a balanced range is what makes you unpredictable.

Why is range balancing crucial for advanced players?

Every time you play a hand a certain way, experienced opponents will try to analyze your range. If you always play the same way in a given situation (for example, you always bluff with weak hands or always raise with strong ones), your opponents will read you quickly. That makes your game vulnerable.

A balanced approach lets you disguise your real intentions. When your opponent isn't sure whether you're bluffing or betting for value, it becomes almost impossible for them to respond correctly to your moves. That gives you a strategic edge, because your opponents can't figure you out.

How do you balance your range properly?

Proper balancing doesn't mean playing all your cards at random. Quite the opposite: it means that in every specific situation you have a well-defined range that includes strong hands, but also the occasional bluff or weaker cards played the same way.

For example, if you're in the habit of regularly making a continuation bet after the flop (continuing to bet no matter what card comes), you need to make sure your continuation bets aren't always just strong hands or always just weak ones. If your opponent realizes you bluff more often than you bet for value, they'll easily exploit you. Instead, try to build your range so it includes strong hands like *top pair or a set*, but also the occasional bluff with *cards that could make a straight or flush*. That way your opponents will never be sure how strong you really are.

The most common range-balancing mistakes (and how to avoid them)

Even experienced online players often make the same mistakes when they try to balance their range.

The most common ones are:

- **Being too predictable** — for example, using certain bet sizes only with strong hands. Instead, mix up your bet sizes so you make similar bets with both strong and weaker hands.
- **Unnatural bluffs** — players often go wrong when they try to bluff with hands that make no sense in the situation. When you bluff, choose hands that have at least a small chance of improving in the later betting rounds.

To avoid these mistakes, analyze your own game carefully and change your tactics from time to time. Keep track of how your opponents react to different moves, and adjust your range to their reactions.

The long-term benefits of a balanced approach in online poker

Range balancing isn't just a tactic for one or two sessions; it's the foundation of stable, long-term success in online poker. Players who balance their ranges well become almost impossible to read and get much better results over the long haul. That's not just our opinion; it's the experience of many seasoned players who sharpen their skills every day playing at Poker Klub Kiril.

These players confirm that understanding range balancing makes the key difference between average and top-level online play. When your opponents have no clear idea what you might be holding, they'll find it hard to make good decisions, while you take control of the game.

It's this control that sets top players apart from average ones. By balancing your range properly, you'll be in a position to build your bankroll steadily and control the dynamics at your tables.

Exploitative play: how to take advantage of your opponents' weaknesses online

Exploitative play is an advanced approach to online poker in which your decisions depend directly on the weaknesses you've spotted in your opponents. Unlike strategies that call for balance or mathematically optimal play, the exploitative approach is based on careful observation and a clear understanding of the specific mistakes your opponents make. Once you've identified them, you can take full advantage of them and significantly improve your results.

Spotting weaknesses in your opponent's game

To apply an exploitative strategy successfully, the first step is to identify your opponents' mistakes and weaknesses. You do this by watching the following key factors:

- **Betting style** — if an opponent keeps raising without strong enough cards, they're showing a tendency toward excessive aggression that you can exploit.
- **Reaction speed** — opponents who react too fast or too slowly often unconsciously reveal their uncertainty or nerves.
- **History of previous decisions** — online poker lets you keep careful track of your opponents' past moves. If you notice them repeating mistakes, you've just found a weakness you can exploit.

Concrete examples of exploiting different weaknesses

Against overly aggressive players:

These players often bet without real strength in their cards. Against them, the most effective approach is to play from a position of strength: wait for a strong enough hand and let them build the pot aggressively for you. You can also occasionally turn their tendencies against them by re-raising as a bluff in spots where their aggression has no real foundation.

Against overly passive opponents:

Passive players rarely bet, and they often call even when their cards aren't good enough. Once you've identified them, you can often exploit them with smaller, regular bets that keep them constantly undecided. Also, use their passivity to control the size of the pot more easily, according to the strength of your cards.

When to use an exploitative strategy, and when to avoid it

Exploitative strategy isn't something you can apply everywhere. It's most effective when you're sure you've spotted clear weaknesses in a particular opponent. In situations where your opponents are unpredictable, or when you don't have enough solid information, it's better to use a balanced or GTO approach (an optimal strategy based on game theory).

So before you go exploitative, ask yourself:

- *Do I have enough information about my opponent?*
- *Are my opponent's weaknesses pronounced enough for me to exploit them?*

The risks of exploitative play (and how to minimize them)

Although exploitative play is very effective against certain players, it carries some risks. The main one is that your strategy may become too obvious to other, more experienced opponents who are carefully watching your game.

To minimize this risk:

- **Change your approach regularly** — don't always make the same moves in similar situations.
- **Combine exploitation with a balanced approach** — this will make your game almost impossible to read.

Poker Klub Kiril: proof in practice

At Poker Klub Kiril we play against every kind of player every day, which lets us test and develop exploitative strategies. Many of our players say that the exploitative approach is the key to their success in online poker,

because it lets them squeeze the maximum value out of every situation and keep improving their game.

Exploitative play may look complicated at first glance, but once you understand the principles, it'll become one of the most useful tools in your advanced online poker strategy. Watch your opponents carefully, identify their weaknesses and always think about how you can turn those weaknesses to your advantage. Once you've mastered this, your online results will improve dramatically.

The GTO (game theory optimal) approach to online poker: a game without weaknesses

Every serious online poker player sooner or later comes across the term "GTO," or Game Theory Optimal. What exactly is GTO, and why has it become so popular among experienced players around the world in recent years?

Imagine a situation where every move you make has a mathematically ideal answer. That's the essence of the GTO approach: a theoretically perfect strategy based on mathematics and game theory that makes your game almost impossible to exploit.

To make this concept easier to understand, we'll go through the most common questions online players have about the GTO approach.

How does GTO make your game practically unexploitable?

GTO strategy is based on the principle of equilibrium: your opponents can't predict your moves, because every move you make has a precisely calculated ratio of bluffs to value bets. In practice, your opponent has no way of telling when you're bluffing and when you have a strong hand.

For example, if you use GTO strategy correctly, your continuation bet after the flop won't be too frequent or too rare. Your opponents won't be able to gauge your strength, and so they can't easily make good decisions against you.

When is GTO the best choice, and when should you use another approach?

The GTO approach is ideal against experienced, unpredictable opponents who know exactly how to exploit other players' weaknesses. Against players like this, GTO ensures you're never in an obviously vulnerable position.

On the other hand, if you notice clear weaknesses in your opponents (for example, an opponent who always folds to your big bets), then it may be better to switch to an exploitative approach and deliberately depart from GTO play.

How do you apply GTO strategy effectively without drowning in math?

Even though GTO is based on complex mathematical calculations, you don't have to be a math genius to use it. Here are a few simple ways to start applying the GTO approach right away without much complication:

- **Use online poker calculators**: They can quickly help you work out the optimal ratio of bluffs to value bets.
- **Learn the basic principles**: It's enough to understand the basic relationship between hand strengths in typical situations. For example, in a given spot you might need to bluff one time in three to keep your opponent guessing.

How do players at Poker Klub Kiril use the GTO approach?

GTO isn't a theory reserved only for high-level professionals. At Poker Klub Kiril we see that even players who are just starting to play more serious games make significant progress once they start applying the GTO approach.

Kiril members who've adopted a GTO style report clear results: their game becomes more stable, they make fewer mistakes, and they become much tougher opponents, even for far more experienced players. These players often say that understanding and applying GTO principles has given a big boost to their confidence and their results at higher levels.

Does GTO mean you'll always play perfectly?

While GTO is ideal in theory, in practice you never play against perfect opponents. The reality of online poker is that your opponents are people who make mistakes, stray from ideal strategies and rarely play optimally. That's why you should see GTO strategy as a powerful tool, but not as your only strategy.

The best players always combine the GTO approach with exploitative play, using the best of both strategies depending on the situation at the table.

Remember, the real goal of the GTO approach isn't to always make the perfect decision, but to make your game unpredictable and balanced enough that your opponents can no longer easily make good decisions against you. Once you've mastered this, you'll have an edge that sets you apart from most online poker players.

Advanced continuation betting: getting the most out of the flop online

The continuation bet (or "c-bet") is a way of continuing your aggression after you've raised before the flop. Although most online players know the basic idea of the continuation bet, advanced players know how to use this technique at a much higher level.

In this section we'll go through a few concrete online situations so you can see when to use a c-bet and when it's better to back off.

Situation 1: A continuation bet with a strong hand on a dangerous flop

Imagine this: you have A♠K♠ and you raised before the flop. Two opponents called. The flop comes A♦J♦9♠, a very coordinated and potentially dangerous flop, with straight and flush draws possible.

Why is this a good spot for a continuation bet?

Your hand is strong (top pair with a great kicker), but the flop is dangerous enough that you need to protect your hand. Your opponents could easily have draws or medium-strength pairs.

How should you play it?

In a situation like this, make a medium-to-large continuation bet (around 60–75% of the pot). That way you protect your hand against potential draws and force your opponents into tough decisions.

Situation 2: A continuation bet against several opponents (a multiway pot)

Now imagine you have 10♣10♦. You raised before the flop, and no fewer than three opponents called. The flop comes Q♠7♣2♦, a relatively dry flop, but with a high card.

Is this a good spot for a c-bet?

It may look like a good c-bet opportunity because the flop is dry, but having three opponents in the hand significantly reduces your chances of the c-bet getting through unchallenged.

How should you play it?

In situations like this, it's often best to skip the continuation bet. Chances are that at least one of the three opponents has a hand they won't easily let go of, which makes your c-bet very risky.

Situation 3: A continuation bet as a pure bluff on a dry flop

You have 8♠7♠ and you raised in position before the flop. One opponent calls. The flop comes K♦3♣3♠, an extremely dry flop that rarely hits your opponent.

Why is this an ideal spot for a c-bet bluff?

It's very unlikely your opponent has made a hand on a flop like this. Even with no connection to the flop at all, you can profitably use a continuation bet as a bluff.

How should you play it?

A smaller continuation bet (around 40–50% of the pot) will be enough to make your opponent fold if they haven't connected with the flop. That keeps your investment small and your potential profit big.

Situation 4: When to skip the continuation bet

This time you have Q♣J♣ and you raised before the flop from early position. Two opponents called. The flop comes 6♦7♦9♠, an extremely coordinated flop that fits squarely into the range of hands your opponents could have.

Why isn't this a good spot for a continuation bet?

Even though you have decent cards, this flop hits your opponents' range far too well. The chances of both opponents folding are slim, and your cards aren't strong enough to withstand serious resistance.

How should you play it?

The best move here is to give up on the continuation bet and check. That way you reduce the risk of bigger losses and give yourself the chance to see how your opponents react before you invest any more.

Poker Klub Kiril: experience that backs up these strategies

Experienced players at Poker Klub Kiril use these advanced continuation-betting techniques every day. By analyzing real situations like these, they develop a feel for when the time is right for a continuation bet and when it's better to take a step back.

That's why players who play regularly on Poker Klub Kiril's platform say that understanding situations like these has significantly increased their profitability and reduced their mistakes online. Once mastered, this advanced skill becomes a powerful tool in your online poker strategy.

Overbetting in online poker: high risk, high reward

In the world of online poker, overbetting is one of the most powerful, but also the riskiest, moves experienced players use. An overbet means betting significantly more than the current size of the pot, and a move like that can provoke a big reaction from your opponent: either a quick fold or an impulsive call.

When should you overbet?

An overbet may look reckless, but there are clear situations where it's the best choice. Here are a few examples:

- **Against weaker or scared opponents:** If you notice an opponent often calls small or medium bets but folds to big ones, an overbet is ideal for forcing a quick fold, even when you don't have a strong hand.

Example: Your opponent obviously has middle pair or something weaker after the flop. An overbet on the turn can make them fold and win you the pot without a fight.

- **When you want it to look like a bluff:** Paradoxically, an overbet can look so extreme that opponents often think you're bluffing. If you really do have a strong hand, you can use an overbet to confuse your opponent and get much more value than you would with standard bets.

When can an overbet be a bad decision?

Despite its many advantages, an overbet isn't always the best choice. There are certain situations where an overbet can be very risky or completely counterproductive:

- **Against cautious, attentive players:** If your opponent reads your game well or is very disciplined, an overbet can lead to big losses if you're not completely sure of your hand's strength. Cautious opponents often call an overbet only when they have very strong hands.
- **When several players are in the pot (a multiway pot):** In pots with several opponents, the risk that someone has a strong enough hand to call you goes up a lot. Here you're much better off using less aggressive strategies.

The psychological power of the overbet online

The overbet is especially powerful in online poker because of the psychological effect it has on your opponents. When a player sees an unusually large bet, it often triggers an emotional reaction, which may come with fear or an impulsive response. You can use this to your advantage, because your opponent often feels forced to decide under heavy pressure, which frequently leads to mistakes.

Typical beginner mistakes with overbets

Players who are new to this technique often make certain mistakes that can cost them dearly.

Here are the most common ones to avoid:

- **Overbetting without a clear goal:** You always need a clear reason for overbetting, whether it's a bluff, protecting your hand or extracting maximum value.
- **Overbetting too often:** If your opponents notice you use this move a lot, they'll easily adjust and exploit your aggression.

- **Picking the wrong opponent:** An overbet works best against certain types of players. If you're up against opponents known for regularly calling big bets, you're better off using a more traditional betting strategy.

In online poker, it's the players who understand overbets and know how to use them properly who often get top results. This approach requires careful assessment of situations, knowledge of your opponents and excellent emotional control. Once you've mastered this technique, it'll become a powerful part of your arsenal at the tables, especially at critical moments in online play.

Heads-up play: adapting your strategy one-on-one (a case study)

In heads-up play, that is, one-on-one, your decisions, your strategy and how you adapt to your opponent matter more than ever. To better understand what's special about this kind of game, we'll analyze a realistic online poker situation step by step.

The situation and the context

Imagine this: it's the end of an online tournament, and you and your opponent are the last two players left. The stacks are almost even: you have 250,000 chips and your opponent has 230,000. The blinds are 2,500/5,000, which means you both have plenty of room to play and make tactical decisions. Throughout the previous hands, your opponent has played a balanced game, sometimes aggressive and sometimes passive, which makes him very hard to read.

Preflop analysis

You're dealt **A♠10♠** on the button (which is also the small blind). With this hand you have the option to play aggressively or cautiously, depending on the approach you choose. You go for a standard raise to 12,500 chips. Your opponent calls quickly.

This call could mean a wide range of hands, but for now we don't have a clear picture of exactly what he's holding. The important thing is that you didn't overvalue your hand but played it sensibly, which is a key part of a successful heads-up strategy.

Flop analysis

The flop comes: **A♦7♣4♠**

A great flop for your hand: you've made top pair with a solid kicker. Your opponent acts first and checks. This is the perfect time for a **continuation bet**, to protect your hand and get more information about your opponent's intentions. You bet 18,000 into a pot of 25,000. Your opponent calls fairly quickly.

This call suggests some connection with the flop, but he most likely doesn't have a better hand than yours, because with a strong hand he would probably have raised.

Turn analysis

The turn is the **9♦**

Your opponent acts first again and checks. This card is neutral for your hand, but it opens up a few new possibilities (straight draws for certain hands). You have two options here: build the pot further or play more

cautiously. You decide to bet again, but a bit more moderately: 35,000 into a pot of 61,000.

Your opponent thinks a little longer this time, which may point to some uncertainty. In the end he calls. His hesitation suggests he's somewhere between a medium-strength hand and a hand with potential (like a straight draw or a weaker pair).

River analysis and the final move

The river is the **2♣**

A practically harmless card. Your opponent unexpectedly decides to take the initiative and bets a hefty 75,000 chips into a pot of 131,000. This leaves you facing an important decision: does your opponent really have a better hand, or is this an attempt at a big bluff?

This is where your analysis of your opponent's style and previous moves becomes crucial. If he'd had a very strong hand (two pair or better), he would probably have raised earlier, on the turn, to get more value. His sudden bet on the river looks like an attempt to scare you off.

After a short think, you conclude that your opponent is probably trying to bluff or has overvalued his weaker pair. The decision is tough, but justified: you call.

Your opponent shows **K♣7♦**: a weaker pair (sevens) with a good kicker. Your decision was the right one: you've won a big pot and taken control of the game.

Key takeaways from this hand

In this case study, several heads-up strategy principles come to the fore:

- **Reading your opponent precisely:** Carefully watching his moves (from reaction speed to bet sizes) gave you the key information you needed for your final decision.
- **Aggressive but controlled play:** You put money into the pot, but you didn't risk more than you needed to, protecting your hand without taking excessive risks.
- **Emotional stability:** Despite heavy pressure, you managed to stay rational and make a decision based on facts, not emotions.

Situations like these teach you how crucial precise analysis and calm decision-making are to success in heads-up play. Every one-on-one match calls for special attention and careful strategic adjustment, and that's why top online players spend so much time developing their heads-up skills.

Afterword: More Than a Game

Who we are and how Poker Klub Kiril came to be

We are Poker Klub Kiril: a community of enthusiasts, friends and poker lovers who came together around one idea, bringing this wonderful game closer to every new player in a simple, friendly way. This book was born out of a sincere wish to make the first steps easier for anyone who's just entering the world of poker. When we were starting out, almost nothing was available in our language, so we decided to generously share our knowledge, our experience and even our mistakes with the community.

Poker Klub Kiril started out as a joint project with a vision of poker as much more than a game: a place for friendship, togetherness and fair play. The club's founder is our friend and colleague, someone we all deeply value and respect for their contribution to the growth of the poker community in Serbia and the region.

The name "Kiril" stands for our club's distinctive identity, originality and authenticity, as well as the friendly, warm atmosphere you'll find there. Today Poker Klub Kiril isn't just another place to play online; it's a community of people who share the same passion for poker, the same love of cards and a mutual respect. We hope this book will help you take your first steps in poker more easily, because every one of us once needed honest advice from a friend. And we can already announce a sequel: a book that will go one step further and help you take your game to an even higher level.

Why ClubGG?

When we decided to write this book and support Poker Klub Kiril's growth, one of the key reasons was our choice of platform: the ClubGG app. Few poker apps give players everything they need for quality online play in such a simple way.

The ClubGG app offers top-notch security and reliability, which matter more than anything to every player. When you play poker, you want to focus only on the game, without worrying about technical problems or security. That's why ClubGG has earned the trust of so many players around the world. The app's ease of use is a big advantage. Everything is clear, well laid out and suited to every player, regardless of experience. Even complete beginners will find their way around easily, which matters a lot to us, because the goal of this book is to bring poker closer to beginners.

But perhaps the app's biggest advantage is the great playing experience it offers. The graphics, the table design, the realistic feel of the game: it's all built so you can enjoy every card that's dealt. That experience is exactly why players keep coming back and why Poker Klub Kiril keeps growing.

Choosing ClubGG wasn't an accident: it's the app our players have praised most. Their positive reactions and our own satisfaction confirm that it's the perfect app for Poker Klub Kiril. If you're not part of our community yet, joining is easy: just message us on Instagram (@Poker_Klub_Kiril), and within a few minutes you can be part of the game and the community.

What's waiting for you at Poker Klub Kiril?

Poker Klub Kiril isn't just another online place to play poker. Here you'll find a friendly atmosphere, positive energy and a community of people who love poker as a game, as entertainment and as a chance to get together.

Whether you're just starting out or already have some experience, there's a place for everyone at Kiril. For beginners, we run regular freeroll tournaments, completely free, with great prizes you can use for your future play. If you like cash games, we offer a wide choice, from the smallest tables with €0.10/€0.20 blinds, ideal for beginners, to serious games with bigger stakes at €0.50/€1.

Our poker leagues are especially popular. They last about twenty days, and the top players win not only great cash prizes but also fantastic exotic trips for two.

Poker Klub Kiril was designed as the ideal place to take your first steps in poker: no pressure, just a friendly atmosphere and the support of other players, the perfect conditions for building your confidence and your love of the game.

If you want to enjoy poker, good company and valuable prizes, we're waiting for you at Poker Klub Kiril. Come and see for yourself that here, poker is much more than a game!

Our thanks to you, and a heartfelt invitation to Poker Klub Kiril

As we reach the end of our poker adventure together, we want to say a big, sincere thank you. Thank you for choosing to read this book and for taking your precious time to step into the exciting world of poker with us.

Writing this book has been a great honor and a pleasure for us. We hope you'll find it useful and that it will help you take your first steps in poker more easily.

If you'd like to continue your poker journey with us, we warmly invite you to join Poker Klub Kiril. Here you'll find good games and people who are ready to help you and share their passion for poker.

And this is only the beginning. We're already preparing a sequel to this book that will help you take your game to the next level. Because poker is a journey that never ends.

If you have any questions or want to swap experiences, feel free to get in touch. We'll be more than happy to help.

Once again, thank you so much for your trust, and see you at the Poker Klub Kiril tables!