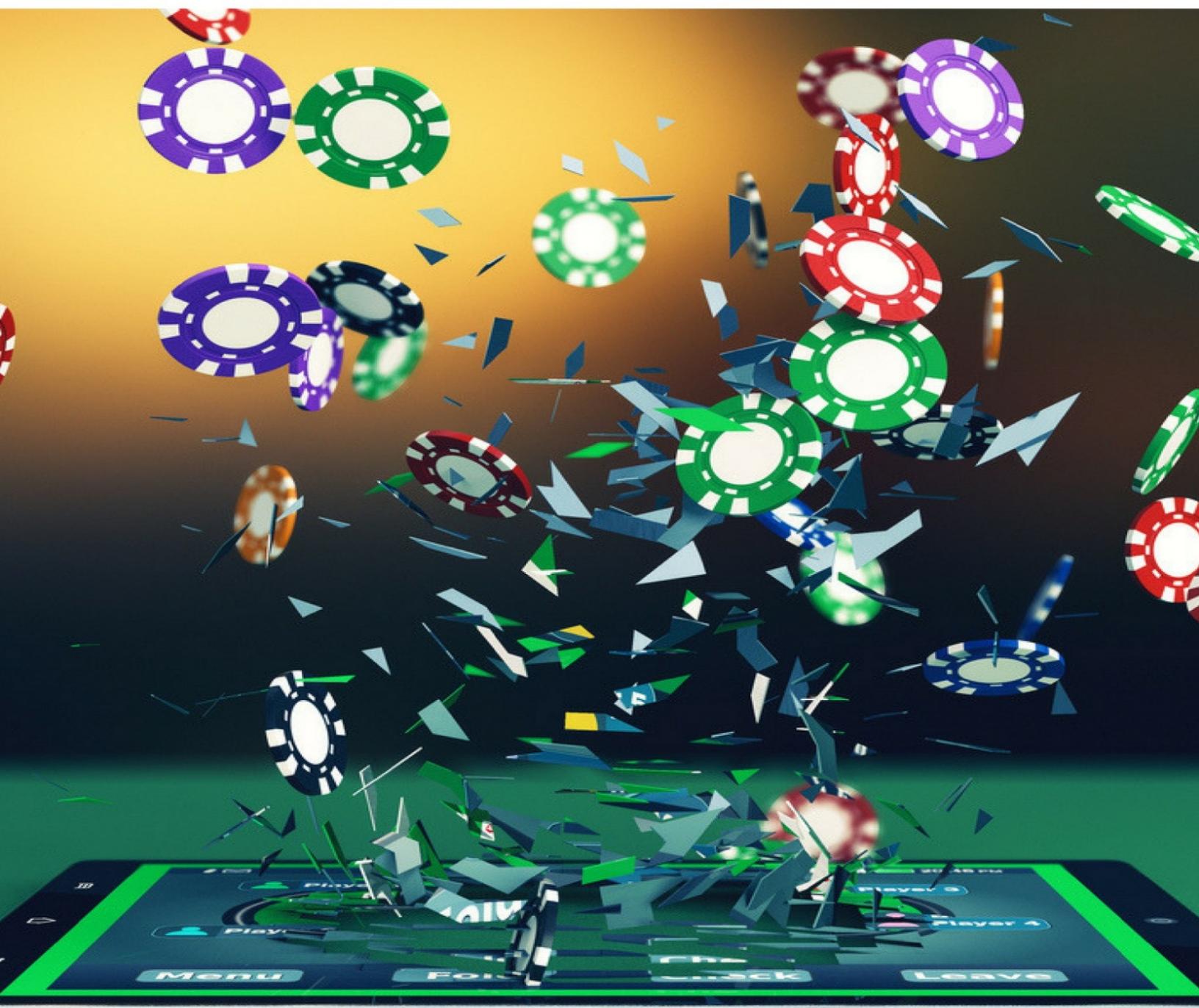


# The Dummy Proof Guide to Online Poker

PokerProCollab



The  
DuMMY  
Proof Guide to  
Winning At  
Online Poker

The  
DuMMY  
Proof Guide to  
Winning At  
Online Poker

2018 Edition

Increase Your Winning  
Percentage Overnight!!!!!!!

**This Ebook is a collaboration of a group of online pro's who want to share their** beginner's guide to online poker with tips **to give you an edge. It features advice written specifically for the poker player new to the online poker and prepare you for the online poker world.**

**This EBook will cover subjects concerning why poker is so popular and why the correct strategy is so crucial in the virtual poker room. Along with useful advice avoiding the mistakes that many new online players routinely make.**

**Read,Learn,Practice and**

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# Beginners' Guide to Online Poker

Online poker is going through another boom right now, and it's never been a better time to play on the web for [real money](#)

Sites have come and gone, the scandals have largely gone away, and some sites are pulling out of unregulated jurisdictions around the world.

That's why it's never been safer or easier for beginners to get playing [Texas Hold'em](#), [Stud](#) or [Omaha](#) online.

On this page, we list a few of the key things you'll need to do to get you up and running, from setting up an account and choosing the right games to depositing and brushing up on your strategy.

Hopefully, with this easy-to-follow beginners' guide you'll be able to register for your first online account and get playing in no time

## 1 Getting Started: Choosing a Site

More important than bankroll, skill or what username you choose is which site you end up playing at.

Choose a site carefully and make sure the online room works for you. Every player is different, but some sites are better suited to beginners than others.

These may have a lot of easy cash games, plenty of freerolls which offer free daily cash, and perhaps a lot of casual players filling up the tables. You don't want to play at a site where you're going to struggle for a game or get eaten up by sharks.

Pick a reputable site with a good track record of paying out fast to players and one that has reliable security. You can find the best sites listed right here on [OnlinePoker.com](#).

## 2 Downloading and Setting Up An Account

Poker rooms are divided between download and no-download sites. Download clients save onto your desktop and will work with PCs (some work on Macs too). [No-download](#), "instant play" rooms are accessed via your web browser. These can be good options if you're [playing on a Mac](#) or you want to log-in to a poker account from a variety of mobile devices and other machines.

Whichever format you choose, you'll have to pick a username and password when registering for an account.

There's more information on our 'Opening an Account' page but there are some simple tips to

choosing a log-in: make sure the username and password are hard to guess (warding off any hackers), and pick an on-screen Alias (different to your username) that stands out. Some sites also let you upload an image to accompany your username at the tables.

### 3 Making a Deposit

Unless you've won a bunch of cash via freerolls (see below), real-money players will have to make an initial deposit.

Banking options vary from site to site, and from jurisdiction to jurisdiction depending on where you live, but choose a method that works for you. If you want to find out more about deposit options, visit one of our dedicated pages on this site.

Making a quick deposit is as easy as selecting the banking method from the Cashier, entering your card number or e-Wallet log-in, and clicking the deposit button.

First-time depositors may have to go through a verification process first in order for the funds to be processed, but this is normally quick and just requires sending scans of your ID documents to the poker site.

### 4 Picking The Right Games For You

It's easy to be dazzled by the bright lights and big-stakes games in the lobby. They're so accessible there's often no fear in just clicking on a high-stakes game and sitting down. You would never do it in a land-based casino, so why do it online?

Poker is all about mastering the level you're on at that moment. So start off low, understand and **regularly** crush the micro-stakes levels, and find sites with the most fish. If you're a tournament player, the low buy-in Hold'em tourneys will have lots of casual players just dying to give their money away.

### Top Tip: Try Out Freerolls

Every top site (check our dedicated page on finding the best freerolls) will run daily and weekly freerolls offering free cash or player points. There's no fee to enter (some may require player points as a 'buy-in') and they can be a good way to learn the mechanics of an online poker table or to get used to a new poker site.

Don't see freeroll tournaments as a way of making long-term profits or improving your game; most freerolls are packed with players either from countries where real-money poker is outlawed or bored players with a couple of hours free.

That means you're more likely to see lots of loose, crazy play during tournaments: players may open bets with terrible hands, go all-in with garbage and bluff crazily with marginal holdings.

But if you employ a sensible, solid ABC game, there's no reason why freerolls can't prepare you for the more serious real-money action later on.

## **5 Learn Your Way Around The Screen**

OK, so you've set up an account, you've chosen an alias, and you've picked a friendly \$0.05/\$0.10 cash game to sit down at. Now you need to get your bearings at the table.

There can be so much going on at an online game you can sometimes lose your way when all you want to do is play.

Most sites have different software to one another but essentially the layout is the same: a chatbox in the bottom corner to follow the action and talk to other players, links to the Cashier and Hand History at the top, and a betting adjuster in the bottom-right corner.

Have a play with where everything is before you've even started a hand (you can always select the 'Sit Out' option to remove yourself from the game temporarily) and make sure you're familiar with all the jargon.

The Hand History tab can be helpful if you want to review past hands or see a hand an opponent mucked at showdown. If you hover the cursor over your opponents' screen names you will also find information on where the player is from and their stack size.

## **6 Learn the Basic Rules: Texas Hold'em**

Although you don't need to become a World Series of Poker-conquering legend to succeed in poker, it's good to learn a few moves like bluffs, continuation bets and decent hand selection.

Check out our in-depth guides on OnlinePoker.com for solid Texas Hold'em tips to get you started. However, to get you started, here are a few decent beginners' tips for Hold'em players.

Texas Hold'em is the most popular form of poker in the world. And it's easy to see why: the game is fun, fast and easy to pick up. But even new starters can do with a few pointers.

Hold'em is a poker variant played with 2-10 players on a table. Each player receives two cards 'in the hole' which are hidden to everyone else.

The players must make the best five-card hand formed of ANY 5 of their two hole cards and five 'community cards' dealt face up in the middle of the table - the 'board'. Betting rounds take place before the first three cards are dealt (pre-flop), after the flop (post-flop), after the fourth card (the turn) and a final round after the fifth card has been dealt (the river).

If there are two or more players left in a hand at the end, a showdown takes place and the best hand takes the pot.

Bets run clockwise from the Dealer (Seat 1) and start with two forced bets - the Small Blind and Big Blind. The Seat 3 player (Under the Gun) is next and bets proceed on from there.



The blinds will increase during a tournament to keep the action progressing to a conclusion, but always stay the same in a cash game.

## Hand Selection & Betting Size

Next, learn to gauge your bets. You'll see a bar at the bottom of the screen where you can size your bets. Some sites let you programme these in automatically (quarter-pot, third-pot, half-pot, 3x BB etc) to make your decisions easier. This is particularly helpful if you're playing multiple tables.

With basic Hold'em, especially in cash games, it's good to stick to betting amounts. This makes both your decision-making easier and your opponents' ability to gauge your play harder.

A raise of 3x the big blind when holding strong hands is a good play as it's not too high you'll be forced to make a decision for all your chips, and not too low so as to attract lots of players.

A 3x raise usually forces out the majority of players in a hand; then you can concentrate on taking on one or two players after the flop.

Perhaps one of the most important tips a beginner player can learn is knowing when to fold. There's never any harm in tossing your hand into the muck if you think you're beat; many players have kept their money by knowing when it's a good time to fold.

You will see many more hands in a game of online poker than you will in a live game; there's always another hand around the corner. Learn a patient approach and stick to it.

Hand selection is key for all poker players, but most important when you're starting out. A strict range of hands will keep you disciplined in cash games and tournaments, and ensure you don't go broke.

A tight, solid strategy is good for beginners. In a game of Texas Hold'em, you need to be raising with strong pocket pairs like 10-10, J-J, Q-Q, K-K, and A-A, plus suited connectors like Q-J, K-Q and A-K.

While hand selection and ranges can alter depending on the opponents, the general aggressiveness of the table, and the chip-stacks, maintaining a basic, [strong hand selection](#) is a good strategy for beginners.

## 7 Learn to Multi-Table

After you've become adept at the basics, consider [multi-tableing](#). The beauty of online poker is that, unlike live poker, you aren't restricted to playing just one table at a time. All online sites let you play multiple tables at once. If you can handle it, load up two cash games, Sit 'n' Gos or tournaments, and play them simultaneously. Once you've got those mastered without

losing concentration, add another. And once you can comfortably crack three, add a fourth.

Making long-term profits in online poker is all about volume: the more hands you fit in per hour, the more money you can make, and the more hands you can play, the more you can handle the variance (long-term swings in luck).

Remember, all players (even the pros) go through periods when the cards just aren't with them. It's important to play enough poker to ride out the bad times. And if you're having a bad time of it, take a break from all poker for a week to recharge the batteries.

## **8 Hit the Tables and Earn Bonus Points**

Start low: load up a micro-stakes cash game like .02/.04 and choose a game like No Limit Hold'em that most casual players will know.

Now it's time to start getting used to the site, the software and the opponents and work up those levels.

Eventually, you'll be in a position to start taking advantage of a deposit bonus. These can be earned just for accruing frequent player points and exchanged for cash.

Rakeback and sponsor deals also exist for solid online poker players who are able to rack up a lot of time at the tables. These deals provide you with a bankroll and coaching to help improve your play

## **Open Several Poker Accounts**

If you think online poker is about picking out just one site and opening an account, think again.

No two poker rooms are alike: some have a wide range of micro-stakes cash games but the tournaments suck, while another room might have good online qualifiers to live tournaments but the cash games have no traffic.

It's easy to set up more than one account, so do it. Download about 4 or 5 clients to your desktop, or open a couple of no-download accounts, and shop around to find a good weekly schedule

Then, fill your diary with the best guaranteed midweek tournaments, a top-quality Sunday Major offering millions in prize money, and a room with lots of fishy cash players.

Online poker rooms are fighting for your money, so make them work for you.

# **Online Poker and Online Strategy – Learning the Game**

On the best of days, poker is a difficult game to wrap your head around at the highest levels. There are a number of different terms and some terminology that can confuse or even push people away from online poker.

## 5 Ways to Improve Your Bankroll Management

As any gambler will tell you, aiming too high too soon will eventually see your entire poker bankroll disappear faster than you can load up a Sit 'n' Go.

There's so much choice today in online poker that it can be easy to get carried away and try games that you don't understand at levels you can't comfortably beat.

Employing and understanding simple bankroll management is key to a happier real-money poker life. Managing your bankroll means you can handle the wins as well as the losses, and you'll be well-placed if you have any big swings in variance.

### 1 - What is Bankroll Management?

Essentially, bankroll management is having a strict betting structure in place when you choose what games to play.

If you're a cash player it means having a set amount of big blinds or buy-ins in your roll, and if you're a tournament or SNG player having enough buy-ins ready so that you can spread your cash wisely without going bust.

Playing within your bankroll, or playing within the correct limits, is essential if you want to be a profitable long-term player.

### 2 - How to Manage a Good Bankroll

Managing your funds is all about having the right buy-in to bankroll ratio. While there are no set-in-stone figures involved, you can follow a fairly simple plan for online poker.

For cash game players, it's good to have 20x the MAXIMUM buy-in at one table. If your level is .25/.50 No Limit Hold'em, and the maximum buy-in is 100 big blinds - or - you should have 20x that, or ,000.

Of course, if you want to crush online cash games and earn rakeback or trigger a welcome bonus, you'll want to be raking as much as possible. And that means multi-tabling.

So, as you improve, you might decide to add one or two more tables. For each extra table, add ,000 to your bankroll. The figures start adding up, don't they?

The same applies to Sit 'n Gos or MTTs (Multi-table tournaments). If you are playing SNGs, consider having 50x the buy-in in your account, or ,100. (And yes, include the tournament fees

in your roll.)

### **3 - Choosing Your Stakes and Games**

While basic bankroll management levels are fairly straightforward, having a big roll doesn't mean you're going to win; you also have to choose the right games.

There's no point loading up a .25/.50 NLHE table with ,000 if you don't know how to play cash poker.

Bankroll management is all about managing your skill level too. So, your roll acquires a lot more 'value' if you're comfortably crushing .02/0.04 cash games rather than you seeing a lot more variance at the .25/0.50 levels and above.

### **4 - Moving Up and Down the Levels**

Everyone has bad periods of poker, even skilful players. Variance is one of those things about poker and shows that the game isn't all skill.

Good bankroll management makes sure you can handle the swings and if you are on a massive downswing you won't go bust.

Keep an eye on your bankroll and work out what you have left after a bad session. Recalculate your funds; if your entire roll drops below 10 buy-ins (e.g. at a .25/.50 NLHE table) consider dropping down to the .10/.20 tables to build up your money again. Once you've recouped your losses, move back to the highest level you're comfortable at.

Similarly, if you're on a good run and you are regularly crushing games at your level, consider moving up. Let's say you have a healthy roll of ,000 and are winning at the .25/.50 cash games, take a shot at the .50/.00 levels.

True, the skill levels will be slightly higher at most sites, but not so much that you will be struggling. Plus, you're still employing sensible bankroll management as your winnings are in safe territory.

### **5 - Making Your Bankroll Go Further**

The great thing about online poker is that sites are fighting for your custom, so why do all the hard work when they can help you with your roll?

Look for good, regular promotions at the top sites like rake races, reload bonuses and bigmoney guaranteed tournaments.

Bonuses like these can add lots of value to your account and help you make extra cash over the long-term. Making the sites work in your favor is a strategy every serious online player

should be mastering.

## Tilt Can Kill Your Bankroll

While some sensible bankroll management is important, discipline is also key to maintaining your cash levels.

Online poker is so readily available, it can be easy to load up a table when you're tired or bored, and there's nothing to stop you trying the big levels that are out of your league.

Filter out your lobby (many online sites allow this) to only display the games your bankroll will allow. Next, switch off all distractions like a second monitor with a web browser/Netflix/sports, etc. And never drink while playing; you will lose sight of not only your ability but also your bankroll.

Finally, going on tilt can result in you making bad decisions, taking a "gamble", and siphoning off valuable bankroll to a game you shouldn't be in. Avoid tilt and you will **avoid** decimating your bankroll.

## Six Top Poker Bluff Tips

It would be great to win every poker hand by holding the best hand every time. Unfortunately, poker doesn't work like that.

Poker is a game of bluffs and deceptions; constantly "telling stories" about your hand and forcing players out of pots they are probably ahead in.

While beginners can struggle with pulling off successful bluffs and making them seem natural, with a few tips anyone can force anyone else out of a big pot.

### 1. Whittling The Field Down

If you're thinking of pulling off an audacious bluff, you have to consider two things: the type of player you're up against, and the number of players. Before bluffing, assess your table over a few hands. A table full of weak-passive players who regularly fold to aggressive raises will be easier to bluff than a table packed with aggressive players who love to re-raise and won't lay a hand down.

Secondly, bluffing is easier to do when you're up against fewer players. You want to isolate one or two players ideally as it's much harder to force out more than that, and your marginal hand is more likely to be behind anyway.

### 2. The Continuation Bet

In low-stakes SNGs and cash games, the Continuation Bet, or c-bet, can be a very useful weapon in your armoury.

Effectively, the c-bet is an opening bet on the flop after you've raised pre-flop, regardless of what your hand is.

In micro-stakes cash games and Sit 'n' Gos, the c-bet will often get past opponents who've missed the flop. They will think as far as seeing that they missed the flop and are happy to fold to any bet. While the pots are often small, c-bets can accumulate to add valuable chips to your stack.

### **3. The False Tell**

Reading tells is an essential skill to assess your opponents' hand range or state of mind. However, giving off false tells to observant opponents is perhaps the greatest bluff you can pull off at a live table.

False tells can include agonizing over a decision (or even running the clock down) before making a re-raise with the absolute nuts, or making table talk. For example, saying something like, "If I fold, will you show me your hand?" is a good way of bluffing an opponent into thinking you have a semi-strong hand that requires some thought before calling.

### **4. Don't Be Scared to Show the Bluff**

Bluffing is as much about gauging what your opponent is holding as well as overrepresenting your own hand.

But if your bluff comes off, don't be afraid of showing your hand at showdown. Not only do you earn some bragging rights over your opponent for stealing a pot, but the rest of the table can see what kind of hand you're happy to bluff with.

Now, your "story" is set up going into the next hand and an image is set for the rest of the table

### **5. Stay Consistent**

Successful bluffs are about being consistent throughout a hand. There's no point checking a flop and turn, then betting strong on the river to steal a pot. Canny opponents will sense a bluff straight away and your "smart" bet on the river will turn out to be anything but. If the hand is no good on the flop and turn, don't try to "turn your hand into a bluff" come the final card. It can be the fastest way to lose valuable chips.

In addition, never get attached to a bluff that's going nowhere. If your bluff is being called down to the river and your opponent isn't buying the deception, let the hand go.

## 6. The Semi-Bluff

The semi-bluff is a hand that has potential to become the best hand once you get to the river but probably isn't the best hand at the start. While a straight bluff with a poor hand can be pulled off if you're up against a weak player prone to easy laydowns, a "semi-bluff" can win you a hand in two ways.

First, the semi-bluff can win by forcing weak players off a pot; secondly, the semi-bluff may actually connect with your outs to form the best hand.

For example, you may have raised in late position with 3h 2h and connected with a heart board like Ah Qh 4s. You can continue your bluff with a terrible hand but you have the potential to complete your heart flush by the river and win the hand that way.

## Bluffing Online

When playing online, you'll find a lot more bluffing than you will in a live cardroom. Because your opponents can't see you, they won't be giving away physical or verbal tells and they will therefore feel more comfortable firing off crazy bets.

The best way to combat bluffs online is to take notes on your opponents, and if they laid a hand down at showdown, revisit the hand histories to see what they held.

Without doubt, the most effective bluff online is the semi-bluff, so make sure you're in late position with those marginal hands that have connected with the board and bet strongly.

## Online Poker Bonuses

**Bonuses** at Internet poker sites are great for you as you can earn yourself some free cash, and good for the poker room as they keep you playing on their site.

Bonuses differ from room to room, and the dollar figures involved can vary dramatically, but essentially they work in the same way: make a real-money deposit, play as much poker as you can in a set time period (e.g. 30-60 days) and earn enough 'player points' to clear the bonus cash. Some sites will even pay your welcome bonus into your poker account as soon as you make your first deposit.

Most sites will tempt newbies in with big-money offers, but the really good sites will keep players there with regular bonus promotions and special limited-period offers. The trick, of course, is to know when and where to play, and what games are best for clearing the bonus.

## Getting Started

First, make a [real-money](#) deposit at your chosen site. The minimum and maximum deposit amounts for the bonus will be clearly displayed on the poker site, as well as the percentage

amount the room will pay back (look for 100% as minimum, so if you deposit \$500 you can aim to earn a free \$500 back from the site).

Once you've made your deposit and entered the promo code, you're ready to go.

## How Are Poker Bonuses Calculated?

Whether you're a new player depositing for the first time or a seasoned player making your 100th reload, bonuses work in the same way.

The more cash games and tournaments you play, the more 'points' you will earn, and the more points you earn, the faster you will unlock that bonus cash.

For playing cash games and tournaments, points ('player points', 'frequent player points', 'VIP player points' etc) are earned for every tournament/SNG fee you pay or every dollar of rake you contribute to a cash pot.

The site will then list a 'clearance rate' which describes a dollar amount awarded for every 100 or 200 player points you've earned. If you clear the required player points in the time limit, your bonus cash will be paid out to you (usually in increments).

## Bonus Example

Here's an example: you're a fairly experienced \$1/2 No Limit Hold'em player making a deposit at a big poker site. You've set up a new account and have entered the promotion code in the Cashier when making a funds deposit. Now you've got a strict deadline to clear the bonus points.

False tells can include agonizing over a decision (or even running the clock down) before making a re-raise with the absolute nuts, or making table talk. For example, saying something like, "If I fold, will you show me your hand?" is a good way of bluffing an opponent into thinking you have a semi-strong hand that requires some thought before calling.

At a cash game, the table will contribute, **as a whole**, a certain amount of rake in a pot. The site will then award player points to the whole table. Then, your **individual** contribution to that pot will be calculated and player points distributed accordingly.

Let's say a site awards 5 player points for every of contributed rake to a cash game and the bonus clearance rate is for every 200 points earned. To earn 200 points, and off your bonus amount, you would have to rake during your cash game play.

The same applies to tournaments or Sit 'n' Gos. If you're a multi-tabling SNG players crushing the +2 NLHE tables, you can earn 10 points (5 x ) for every game you play. If you're playing three tables at a time, and packing in 12 games a day, you will have earned 120 points.



# Types of Bonus

## Welcome Bonuses

### How Does It Work:

Welcome bonuses attract new real-money players to a site and keep them there.

### Benefits:

The best thing about welcome, or first-deposit, bonuses is that they are usually generous. But they're generous for a reason; online poker players are a loyal (and lazy) bunch, and tend not to move accounts too much if they can help it.

Good rooms will also add on extras such as freerolls for new depositors, available exclusively to anyone making a first cash deposit.

## Reload Bonuses

### How Does It Work:

Reload bonuses are good for loyal customers who might miss out on welcome bonus deals for new players.

The idea is the same: make a real-cash deposit with a special promotion code and clear a points total within an allotted time. Reload bonuses might not be as generous as welcome bonuses, but if you're a solid raking player they can add a little more cash to your bankroll.

### Benefits:

While the dollar amounts of reload bonuses can be small, the clearance rates are usually lower too. For example, where a welcome bonus may require 200 player points to earn, a reload bonus may reward you win for clearing less than half of that.

## VIP Schemes

### How Does It Work:

For very active players, loyalty schemes operate at the bigger sites that reward you with free cash, VIP treatment and exclusive tournaments.

Of course, these are reserved for players clearing many thousands and thousands of player points, although every site that operates VIP schemes like this have a tiered system where even small points-earners can benefit.

### Benefits:

VIP programs require regular play (e.g. clearing over 100 player points every month) but the benefits can be huge. Loyalty schemes guarantee cash rebates, VIP tournaments and live party invites. Of course, there's also the kudos of becoming a VIP online player and having

your level displayed on your avatar at the table while playing.

## Top 3 Tips For Getting a Good Deal

- 1 - Opening multiple poker accounts online is a good way to maximize your bonus potential. But shop around first; it's a good idea to open one account for, say, SNGs, and another one for cash games.
- 2 - Choose a room that has lots of traffic at the level you want in the games you want; if you have a strict time limit on your bonus, there's no point missing it because you couldn't get a game.
- 3 - Shop around: not all poker rooms offer the same level of bonus, and some have clearance rates that are more prohibitive than others. One room may require only 100 points to be earned over two months but only award \$1 per 20 points. Another, meanwhile, may require 200 points and offer \$5 per 20 points but the bonus period may only be two weeks.

## Choosing a Good Deposit Method

Whatever you're playing, and however good your bonus, make sure you pick a top realmoney poker room that has a good range of deposit methods and reliable cashout times.

There's no point triggering a bonus only to be left waiting six weeks or longer for your cash. Check out our guide at [OnlinePoker.com](http://OnlinePoker.com) to find a deposit method that works for you and read reviews of the best, most secure rooms online.

## Simple Cash Game Strategy

In the poker world there's an old saying that goes: "Tournaments for show, cash games for dough."

Although this term was originally coined in the live arena and MTTs were less frequent, it's still as applicable today as it was back then.

Although online tournaments are a great way to make money, earning a consistent wage from these can be tough unless you're someone like Chris "moorman1" Moorman (\$7 million in career winnings and counting).

Fortunately, online cash games are as lucrative as they've ever been and if you follow a few simple principles you can make some serious cash at our recommended poker sites.

## Best Cash Game Strategy

Before you step into the online arena and begin betting like you're Phil Ivey, you need to master some cash game basics. Although it may seem somewhat weak to simply play ABC poker, the best cash game players actually don't do as many crazy things as you might expect.

And because there are enough weak players currently in the online game, you can simply feed off their mistakes and boost your bankroll with the minimal amount of effort.

## Tight is Right

It might be a boring way to play but sitting back and waiting for good hands can often be a great way to win a lot of money at the table. Today's poker climate is one in which players are trying to be as aggressive as possible, so playing a lot of hands can be extremely difficult unless you are either reckless or brave. Take advantage of people's aggression and stick to ABC poker if you want to make a steady profit.

## Stay in Position

The lack of complete information in poker makes it extremely tough to win but you can make your job infinitely easier if you only play hands in position.

Obviously there will be times when you're forced to play out of position, but if you can always choose the former you'll be more successful. Acting last gives you the advantage of seeing what everyone else has done and, therefore, enables you to make more sensible decisions.

## It's Never Too Late to Fold

Sometimes at the poker table pride can get in your way and you become stubborn. Indeed, it can often be the case that you become involved in a hand and even if it looks like you're behind you convince yourself not to fold because your hand "was" good pre-flop.

This attitude has caused many people to go broke and is one you should eliminate from your game. Don't be too proud to give up your pocket aces if there's a possible straight or flush on the board. Discretion is often the better part of valour at the poker table.

## Be More Aggressive

There's often a temptation to play your hand passively if you're unsure of its strength, but playing this way will cost you money.

There's an old adage in poker that says: "If a hand is not worth raising, then it's not worth playing." Being aggressive means you take control of the pot and have a greater chance of taking it down.

## Always Look to Your Left

Whether you're playing online poker or live poker, it's important to consider the player on your left. Whenever you make a move they will be the person next to act so you need to know what they're capable of.

If they raise a lot then be prepared to play pots with strong hands; if they fold a lot then you

can raise more liberally when everyone folds to you.

## Getting an HUD

If you use a product such as Holdem Manager 2 (HM2) you'll have access to an HUD (Heads Up Display). This piece of software allows you to track and view and track every move your opponent's make.

For example, HM2's HUD allows you to see how often someone is raising pre-flop, how many times they 3-bet, the frequency with which they fold on the river and even how often they raise out-of-position.

Basically, any move your opponent can make, HM2 allows you to monitor it, record it and, ultimately, exploit it.

## Keeping Records and Notes Online

In addition to using historical data gleaned from using a HUD, it's also important to take notes when you play online. To successfully implement a solid cash game strategy, you need to know who you're playing against and how they play. The best way to do this is use the note feature offered by all the best cash games sites.

Double clicking on an opponent's icon will allow you to note something you deem relevant. For example, if you saw that your opponent didn't bet on the river when they had the second nuts you can write this down and use it to your advantage at a later date.

The key to taking notes in online cash games is to be selective. Only note down the most relevant things you see and always edit what you've written to make it easier to read.

## Find the Best Online Cash Games in 2018

The best online cash games will contain a high ratio of fish to grinders and it's possible to spot these games by checking out the lobby.

### Benefits:

Our experts have trawled through all the major online poker rooms and picked out the platforms with the greatest number of soft games. Although you'll still have to make sure you choose the right option for your once you've loaded up the software, we can assure you that all of our recommended cash game sites offer the best playing conditions possible.

## Bonus Cash Game Tip

Aside from knowing how to handle yourself in the heat of battle, you should also know how to handle your money.

Bankroll management is crucial when you're playing cash games as playing above your limits can be financially devastating.

As a general rule, you should have at least 50 buy-ins for the level you wish to play.

For example, if you were planning on playing NLHE, you should have a bankroll of ,500 to comfortably compete with the top players.

## **VIP Schemes**

### **How Does It Work:**

For very active players, loyalty schemes operate at the bigger sites that reward you with free cash, VIP treatment and exclusive tournaments.

Of course, these are reserved for players clearing many thousands and thousands of player points, although every site that operates VIP schemes like this have a tiered system where even small points-earners can benefit.

### **Benefits:**

VIP programs require regular play (e.g. clearing over 100 player points every month) but the benefits can be huge. Loyalty schemes guarantee cash rebates, VIP tournaments and live party invites. Of course, there's also the kudos of becoming a VIP online player and having your level displayed on your avatar at the table while playing.

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reviews of the best, most secure rooms online.

## Freeroll Strategy

Freerolls are, as the name suggests, free-to-enter online poker tournaments which are laid on to attract casual players and to help you to build a bankroll.

Most big poker sites will offer daily or weekly freerolls with \$1,000 or \$2,000 prizepools up for grabs. You might be required to use some player points to enter, but generally they're open to anyone with a real-money account.

Freerolls are great as they offer little risk, you can get used to a new site's software, and practise your Hold'em strategy before attacking the real-money games.

So, how can you best optimize your freeroll play and ensure you're hitting the money places every time? Let's take a look at some key tips you can utilize next time you're in the freerolls.

### Assessing Your Opponents

The first thing to understand in online freerolls is that the a) the quality of your opponents will generally be worse than in a real-money game, and b) they won't be taking the game too seriously.

While we'll accept for now that those are two big generalizations, on the whole you will come across an awful lot of ['fish'](#), newbies to the game, and players just killing time until the next tournament starts.

So, how do these players affect your game? Well, they may not respect your raises too often, they'll open with a ridiculously wide range of hands, and they may call you down to the river in the hope of hitting an unlikely two-outer.

### Starting Hands in Freerolls

While freeroll opponents can be the worst fish with the smallest attention spans, it's still important to practise some good hand selection early on. As long as you play solid, ABC poker, the skill factor will always come out on top over those outrageous bad beats.

Early on, stick to a tight range of starting hands. That means raising, from any position, A-K, Q-Q, K-K and A-A. In late position, consider throwing in K-Q suited, J-J or 10-10, depending on how aggressive the players at your table are. The rest of the hands? Just fold.

You want to be isolating players on the flop, so avoid getting into situations where you're 3 or 4-handed seeing a flop. If you have two or more players who ARE playing any two rags, it's

difficult to know where you are post-flop. So, stick to strong premium hands, and play them strongly on the flop if you connect.

## Post-Flop Tips

OK, so you've raised pre-flop with A-K, get three callers, and hit top pair on an A-3-9 board. What now? If one player bets and receives a call, consider an aggressive raise. Don't mess around with standard 3x or 4x raises, think about tossing your entire stack in

The aim, remember, is to take as big a stack as you can to the later stages. Most freerolls will be played Turbo (4 or 5-minute blinds) and you won't have a lot of time to survive with an average stack.

In freerolls, an aggressive 10x or all-in re-raise won't scare off everyone; you'll always get one joker who's willing to risk it all. So, if you have the nuts, be the one getting aggressive.

## Later Stages

Later on in the freeroll, when the blinds are getting big in comparison to stack size, you'll have much simpler options: fold or re-shove (re-raise all-in). The re-shove is a great weapon as it puts players to tough decisions late on and also ensures you get a few valuable blinds and antes to add to your stack.

A good re-shove stack is about 20-30x the big blind. Any less than this and you can continue with a 3x-big blind raising strategy, with a fold if someone shoves over the top of you.

## Final Table Play

If you're into the money, you'll notice that the play will loosen dramatically. Payouts will often be staggered pretty thinly, meaning everyone in the money gets paid something, and that's when you see plenty of crazy moves.

However, once it gets to the final table, and the bigger payouts, the play will slow up somewhat.

Look out for players raising in early position (EP); they may have the goods. Similarly, restrict your starting hands in EP to the premium hands we discussed earlier: A-A, K-K, Q-Q, J-J, AK etc.

In late position (LP), in unraised pots, consider widening this to include suited connectors like J-10 or Q-J and smaller pocket pairs. Don't bother with small re-raises if you have a good hand in late position; just go all-in.

Remember the time constraints: by the final table stage everyone will be on an average stack or worse so there's little value in being tricky with opponents. An all-in move is the play straight

from the off.

## **Building Up a Bankroll**

Freerolls are great for getting a feel of an online site and testing what the site traffic is like. For players new to poker they are great for practise, and you may even find freerolls in disciplines you're coming to for the first time (Stud, Omaha etc).

Do a little homework on where the best prize freerolls are, and set an online diary with the best ones through the week. In no time you'll have a nice little bankroll with which to attack the SNGs, bigger MTTs and cash games.

## **Top Freeroll Tips**

### **Find the Best Prizepools**

Every decent poker site runs regular freerolls for its players. Find ones with the biggest prizepools and keep a diary of the best ones.

### **Open Up Several Accounts**

Why stick with one poker account when you can open a dozen? Check our list of the best sites and open a real-money account with as many as possible.

### **Watch Out For LAGs**

At the start of a freeroll, consider that ALL your opponents are aggressive and don't have a clue; it will make taking them on so much easier.

### **Avoid Bluffing and Tricky Play**

Don't try to represent too many hands in a freeroll; there will be so much aggression that bluffs will rarely get through. Stick to premium hands, play them properly in position, and get all your chips in if you've hit.

## **Going Professional**

To hang with the world's top poker pros you need to think like one. Phil Ivey, Daniel Negreanu and Chris "moorman1" Moorman are all world-class poker players and, while their playing styles will differ, they will all share a certain number of traits.

Whether it's a lack of fear or a bulging bankroll, every top live and online poker pro will share a similar set of core skills that has allowed them to stay among the game's elite.

Of course, at OnlinePoker.com we can't make you a poker pro overnight but we can point out some of the qualities you'll need if you want to go pro.



## **Be Fearless**

One quality that virtually all poker pros share is a lack of fear. Being able to pull the trigger in a crucial pot, regardless of the dollars it may cost, is something that separates the weak from the strong. At heart, poker players are skilful, but they are gamblers too and they are willing to risk it all if they think they can win.

## **Be Disciplined**

Being fearless doesn't mean you have to be reckless. Although some poker pros may look like they're playing a crazy style, most of them are in full control of what they're doing. It's OK to be fearless and aggressive, but don't lose your discipline. Never bet more than you can afford and never lose sight of solid poker strategy.

## **Know Your Fundamentals**

In order to break the rules you need to master them and that means knowing your fundamentals. Before you can start pulling off complex bluffs and intricate value bets, you need to be comfortable with an ABC style of poker. Much like a jazz musician, you need to have the basics under your command before you start mixing things up and making sweet music.

## **Have Access to Cash**

Every poker pro needs to have a large bankroll. Although you don't need to play in the highest stakes games in order to make a living as a poker player, you do need to be solvent enough to take any opportunity as it arises.

Having money means having the ability to seize value as it presents itself. A poker player without a healthy bankroll will be forced to miss out on potentially profitable spots, so make sure you have enough cash behind you if you want to go pro.

## **Make Friends**

Having a solid network of friends in the poker community is crucial for two reasons: advice and backing.

All professional players need to refine their game and improve and the best way to do this is by talking to other top pros. Daniel Negreanu famously communicates with a host of players in order to pick up new ideas and plug his own leak

On top of this, having a selection of friends is also useful if you want help buying into a tournament. The cost of traveling the professional MTT circuit is extremely high and many pros sell pieces of their action in over to offset their expenses.

## Keep Calm

Regardless of whether you're winning or losing, your demeanor should never change. Whether you're playing and something goes your way or you're away from the felt and suffering a tough losing streak, the key to being a professional poker player is staying calm.

As long as you're [playing within your bankroll](#) and making the right plays, nothing else should matter. Taking the rough with the smooth is a major part of being a poker pro and something you need to be comfortable with if you want to compete with the game's elite.

## Never Get Above Yourself

Above all, when thinking about turning pro, you should think about your attitude.

Remaining humble and understanding that with a turn of a card you can go from hero to zero is crucial. Poker history is littered with stories of players becoming overconfident, only to find themselves struggling to put together a bankroll just a few years later.

Jamie Gold is a prime example of this. Back in 2006, [Gold won the WSOP Main Event](#) for million. However, through a combination of overconfidence and playing against players he couldn't beat, Gold is now virtually broke. Although he's still an active player, Gold's activities have been confined to small-stakes tournaments away from the public's gaze.

## Looking For the Best Poker Sites

If you thought finding the best poker sites was as easy as firing up the PC, [Mac](#) or tablet, think again.

There's so much that goes into making a top poker room that there are dozens of criteria you need to check off before you opt for a site to play at.

While players will have their favorite sites and there is no 'one size fits all' approach to online rooms, there are certain areas all players need to consider when hunting out a site. Let's take a look at some of the biggest factors you'll have to explore before taking out the credit card.

## A Good Range of Games

While many online players come to poker via [Texas Hold'em](#), finding a good game of the 'Cadillac of Poker' is just the start; you need to find sites that offer cash games catering for all wallets and tables that are regularly kept stocked.

Tournament players, meanwhile, should have at least one daily and one nightly game to play in, preferably with a guaranteed prizepool, and a handful of big weekly and monthly games.

Great sites will also offer online satellites into major live events so you can take your shot at prizes often worth millions of dollars.

And take a look at your preferred system. Good sites will work on PC, Mac, tablet/smartphone and [no-download](#) to keep that player pool as high as possible.

## Finding Lots Of Players (And Fish)

Games are only as good as the players in them, or more accurately, how BAD they are.

While it can be good to test your skills against solid players occasionally, for most casual players it's healthy to come up against plenty of fish.

Fishy players are normally beginners who have little regard for their bankroll and make regular, bad decisions. These fish are perfect for keeping your long-term profits in an upward direction; exploit them.

## Customer Support

If you need to resolve issues you have with the poker software, enquiring about slow cashouts, or reporting possible collusion, a good customer support team can be a saving grace.

Poker sites work differently, but good rooms should have email, phone and Instant Chat options available so you can make contact quickly.

## Banking and Cashouts

While major sites will accept virtually every deposit method on the planet, many don't. You need to pick a site that has a wide range of options so that you have as much choice as possible, particularly if you live in a jurisdiction where some payment methods are hard to use.

While credit cards can be good in one country, they can be a nightmare in another, so an eWallet or fast bank transfer might be a better proposition.

And when it comes to cashouts, you want a poker room that delivers on its promise of quick withdrawals so you aren't left waiting for your winnings. You can visit our dedicated pages at [OnlinePoker.com](#) to see how a range of banking methods works and which is best for you.

## Security and Licensing

If you are trusting a poker site with your personal data and card details, how do you know if it's going to be safe?

And when you're playing a big-stakes Hold'em game, how can you be sure the games aren't being hacked?

Great sites will have leading security in place so that your data is kept totally secure. They will also have auditing in place from firms like [eCOGRA](#) to ensure the software is random and runs smoothly.

Sites can be licensed in any one of a number of jurisdictions around the world, but with a license comes a legal obligation to protect players and their money. Signing up with a properly regulated site is paramount.

## Quality of Welcome Bonus

Most online rooms offer new customers a deposit bonus when they first sign up.

This can range from to ,000, and everywhere in between, but every site operates its loyalty program differently. Some will offer player points on certain games where another site doesn't, and the 'play-through' wagering requirement on games can vary dramatically.

If you're seriously thinking about playing a lot of poker online, it pays to shop around for the best welcome bonus deal.

## Using a Comparison Site

While new online poker players can be faced with a bewildering array of criteria when choosing a site to play at, it needn't be an ordeal.

Using a great comparison site like OnlinePoker.com is essential for finding yourself the best rooms quickly and easily.

Use our reviews and download a client that works for you. You'll soon notice the difference in your poker bankroll.

## Avoid the Crooks

In 2018 you're more likely to find trustworthy, licensed poker sites to play at.

But that's not to say there still aren't poker rooms out there with terrible records on cashouts, handling collusion, and offering crummy software.

Luckily, we have made a top list of 'blacklisted' poker sites which you can avoid when signing up for a real-money account.

Check out our list here and get your online poker journey off to the best possible start.

## Online Poker Security

How many times have you heard an online poker player moan that a site is "rigged", that a disproportionate number of aces are being dealt, or that someone, somewhere can see their hole cards?

Because online poker is often so anonymous, played at sites governed and based on servers often thousands of miles away, it's natural that players can get suspicious.

So, how safe is your site really?

## **Scandals and Security**

Recent scandals in online poker haven't helped with the industry's perception. Big scandals like the POTRIPPER case in 2007 (see boxout) have shown that without proper security, sites are open to transgressions.

And what if the operators themselves aren't defrauding players? How can you guard against collusion from other players at your table sharing information against you?

## **Seven Ways Internet Poker Sites Protect You**

### **1 Licensing and Regulation**

All poker sites should have gaming licenses from reputable jurisdictions which ensure fair software and regular auditing.

Check the homepage of the poker room to check for which Gambling Commission oversees the site and look for reputable jurisdictions which issue licenses like Gibraltar and Malta.

### **2 Dealing With Collusion**

Every reputable poker site has a dedicated procedure for handling complaints and allegations of wrongdoing or collusion).

Just contact the site with your complaint as the good rooms will have dedicated departments to investigate cases of possible collusion or cheating.

Sites are also good at spotting multi-accounting, the process where disreputable players log on to a site using multiple servers and accounts. This is a form of cheating that, while not common, has led to some high-profile cases in recent years. In almost all cases, multiaccounting is caught and dealt with.

And to protect you against players who shouldn't be on the site (banned players or underage), ID verification is usually practised by solid rooms. When you make a real-money deposit, you will be required on some sites to scan in photo ID like a passport or driver's license and send it to your site. Once approved, you will be free to play for real-money on the site. While a pain, age and ID verification is essential for a secure poker experience.

### **3 Protecting Your Money**

Good sites should have segregated funds, meaning that all player account cash is kept

separate from prizepools. This means that in the case of any problems, the site is able to pay back players' money that belongs to them.

Although hidden away, you'll find the site's policy of segregation (if applicable) in the terms and conditions.

## 4 Encryption Technology

The best poker sites have sophisticated encryption technology in place so that your personal details, username and passwords are kept secure.

128-bit SSL encryption is standard on most sites, but some go a little further and offer 1,024bit RSA or 448-bit encryption through Blowfish.

If that sounds bewildering, don't worry; it just means that your poker room is using the kinds of safety measures on financial transactions usually undertaken by major banks.

## 5 Random Number Generators (RNGs)

Safety doesn't just stop at protecting usernames and bank transactions; the shuffle of the deck needs to be trustworthy too.

That's why, just as a casino site uses a Random Number Generator (RNG) to oversee totally random roulette spins, so poker rooms use RNGs to make sure that the deck is shuffled properly before every hand.

In the early days of online poker, it's true that the shuffle of the deck was not totally random; at least, not random **enough** to guarantee an entirely fair game. These days, however, RNGs are sophisticated and, more importantly, regularly tested.

## 6 Independent and Regular Auditing

Part of the conditions of a gaming license being issued is that poker rooms must have their RNGs and security protocols regularly checked and audited.

There are several independent auditors, respected across the industry, who undertake the audits at poker rooms, and you can find their logos clearly on poker sites' homepages.

Look for major auditing firms like [eCOGRA](#), [TST](#) or [GLI](#); if they're checking RNGs they will be conducting annual audits to make sure everything is in order.

eCOGRA (eCommerce and Online Gaming Regulation Assurance) is an approved testing agency that services Internet poker rooms' software to make sure the games are completely fair. They also undertake 'penetration testing' to give the software a thorough work-over.

## 7 RSA Security Tokens

An [RSA Security Token](#) is a piece of physical hardware kit issued by some major poker rooms which can be used in addition to your password when logging in.

The Security Token features a 6-digit number on the screen. When you login at a poker site, you will be required to enter your RSA Security Passcode comprised of a four-digit PIN (sent by email) plus the six-digit Security Token number.

Security Tokens are a great way to improve security as you have to physically have the Token on your person, while a PIN number or password can be hacked and stolen remotely.

## Who Are eCOGRA?

eCOGRA stands for e-Commerce and Online Gaming Regulation and Assurance. A leading testing agency based in the UK, eCOGRA specializes in certifying online gaming systems.

As well as ensuring the RNGs are working in proper order (via a complex and thorough series of tests) they also work to protect customers' private information, and ensure poker rooms give players fast and accurate player payouts.

Elsewhere, GLI (Gaming Laboratories International) and its testing wing, TST, carries out regular independent checks on all bets placed at online poker tables to make sure the games are being dealt properly

Most good poker rooms will display their auditors' certificates in PDF form somewhere on their site.

## Online Poker Reward Schemes

Real-money poker players online love a freebie, whether it's a tournament overlay, a bigmoney [freeroll](#), or a healthy welcome bonus.

But what if you're a solid, regular player, contributing thousands of dollars in rakes and fees to your favorite poker room?

If you're a big grinder racking up the hours you could be eligible to join one of the many VIP rewards schemes available online.

## What's a Reward Scheme?

Reward, or VIP, programs award loyal players with cash, kudos and bonus prizes the more they play.

Although schemes vary from site to site, the idea is pretty much the same: you play realmoney cash games or tournaments and earn player points for every cash game pot you contribute rake to or every tourney you pay a fee to enter.

As long as you are playing enough real-cash games, and clearing enough player points every month, you will be entered into a VIP or Loyalty scheme, and the journey to the big VIP levels will start. (Check out our detailed page on triggering bonuses [here](#).)

## How Can I Reach VIP Status?

Most big poker sites will classify you as a 'VIP' as soon as you start paying rake and earning player points.

You'll start on the most basic level where you can use your player points to buy into exclusive tournaments or buy merchandise from exclusive online stores.

As you move up levels, you can earn bigger cashback deals, free tournament tokens and invites to live parties.

While VIP schemes vary from room to room, you will normally have to clear around 100-200 player points every month to maintain your most basic VIP level.

So, if you're clearing of rake in cash games every month, and the site awards 200 points for every contributed, you're on course to at least keep the level you're on and look at moving up to the next level.

## Benefits of VIP Schemes

Keep your play going, crush the big games and rack up thousands of hours, and you'll be at the top level.

You may have to rack up thousands, or millions of player points a year to achieve the highest VIP status but you might be eligible for cash credits, special reload bonuses, personal account managers and entries into exclusive online tournaments.

Some sites also reward you with a VIP level boost by winning special tournaments.

The key thing to remember is that to maintain your VIP level, you have to clear a certain amount of points every month. This ensures you keep your play rate up, and of course gives you the incentive to reach the next level.

## Other Kinds of Loyalty Schemes

As well as straight points schemes, sites are getting more and more innovative with their loyalty schemes.

In 2018, you are starting to see Leaderboard promotions which challenge players to outperform their fellow Sit 'n' Go, cash game and tournament players. Head the leaderboard and you'll be in line for big cash prizes.



With a move towards social gaming, some sites are even introducing special 'missions' which see small cash prizes awarded for achieving certain goals (winning a series of SNGs, winning tournaments with A-A, K-K, Q-Q, etc).

As well as rewarding players with tournament tokens and cash, these new 'mission' schemes earn real-money poker fans bragging rights over their friends as they share their achievements on social media websites.

## Shop Around For a Good Loyalty Scheme

Loyalty programs are changing all the time as the online poker scenery becomes more crowded and competitive.

With a move to attract more casual players, some sites are beginning to relax their points requirements.

So, where a big site may have once required 400 points a month to maintain the lowest VIP, you'll find that has been cut to around 50. Similarly, for the bigger levels, an 8,000 points/month requirement has dropped to 2,000.

These new loyalty schemes aren't one-offs; they are becoming the norm for sites keen to maintain as many casual and recreational players as possible.

## Understanding ROI and Variance

The online poker world can be a turbulent place to ply your trade. And while it's impossible to control the flow of action, you can get a better handle on the dynamics of the game by understanding two key concepts: Return on Investment (ROI) and variance.

Each of these mathematical concepts underpins how much money you win or lose over a given period of time. While some online poker players will measure their success in dollar amounts, the real pros look at their ROI.

Because they understand that the tide of luck will ebb and flow, pros prefer to focus on their win rate in percentage terms.

Essentially, there is a relationship between ROI and variance and the latter will always have an effect on the former. However, as much of an impact that variance has on a player's ROI, this measure of success is one you should focus on because over time it will give you a true reflection of your ability.

Unlike money, ROI isn't as widely affected by variance because it considers your complete body of results, rather than the current size of your bankroll.

To give you a better insight into ROI and variance, here's an outline of both online poker concepts.

## What is ROI in Poker?

When it comes to understanding ROI the first thing you need to understand is that it's related to online poker tournaments. Cash game players often focus on the bb/100 (big bets over 100) as the measure of their success, but MTT and SNG players look at their ROI.

Because of this, ROI can be simply defined as the average amount of money you're expected to make on per tournament.

This result is then expressed as a percentage of the average buy in. For example, imagine you had played 100 tournaments with a buy-ins. Your total earnings from these games is ,000, which would make your ROI:  $\frac{,500}{,000} \times 100 = 50\%$  (total investment) ,000 - ,500 = ,500 [gross win]

$,500 / 100 =$  [average win]

$= 63.6\%$  [ROI]

Using this number, you can get an idea of how often, on average, you can expect to make a profit from in the future. Of course, the above example would indicate a strong ROI and you need to have a large sample size to get an accurate estimate of your true ROI.

Although 100 tournaments might sound like a lot, in the online poker world it isn't. To get a more accurate picture of your ROI you need to play close to 1,000 MTTs. Although you'll never know your true ROI, because poker is a never ending proposition, you should be pretty close to true by the time you clock up 1,000 tournaments.

## Variance in Poker

The reason you need to play a large amount of games in order to get your true ROI is because of variance.

Although it's nice to live in the moment, poker is a long-term game and for the impact of variance to be watered down to the point where it's not skewing your results, you need to play a lot of sessions.

Let's take a look at what we mean by variance. In concrete terms variance is the statistical distribution of results over a long period of time. In reality this means the fluctuation of results during the course of each session as well as multiple sessions.

Because variance can swing both ways it will mean that sometimes you'll get lucky in certain situations and sometimes you won't, however, it's how you deal with it in both instances that will determine your success rate.

## You Can't Win Over Variance

A common trap most novice online poker players fall into is to think that when variance is on their side that it's a true reflection of their skill level. This kind of hubris is something that pushes players to become overconfident in their ability and play games that are beyond their limits; something which is obviously a major problem

And when variance is against a player, they often feel like nothing they do is going to work. Therefore, they often take risks that they normally wouldn't do. By ignoring the best move and submitting to luck is a sure-fire way for someone to lose their bankroll.

### Embrace Variance as Part of Poker

As you can see, variance is a technical way of describing the swings of good and bad luck in poker. Because the game contains an element of chance, you can never be 100% sure of your position in any situation and that's why variance will always have an impact on your results.

For example, you may go through a positive patch and win five tournaments in a row and feel like you're the best player in the world. However, this run can't last forever, even if you're making all the right moves, and that's the reason your ROI is so important. Instead of focusing on the fluctuations in your bankroll, you should be trying to improve your ROI as much as possible.

To do this, you need to play each hand to the best of your ability and always strive to make the optimal move. Doing this time and time again will limit the impact of variance on your game and improve your ROI dramatically. Once you manage to improve your ROI, the natural result is an increase in the size of your bankroll.

So, if you want to become a better online poker player, stop worrying about variance, forget about the dollars on the table and play as many hands as you can to the best of your ability. If you can do this then your ROI and financial health will improve dramatically.

## Starting Hands In Poker

Knowing what hands to play in poker and what ones to fold is probably the first (and most important) skill you'll acquire when beginning your poker journey.

Many players come to [Texas Hold'em](#) and immediately set about playing too wide a range of

hands, and in all the wrong positions. Pretty soon, they've gone broke, gone on tilt, and have given up the game for good.

Learning smart starting hand selection isn't rocket science, however, and even a basic understanding of starting hands can help you win (and save) a lot of cash over the long term.

## Basic Starting Hands - Texas Hold'em

*“What hands you play in Hold'em is as much about your position at the table as it is the hands yourself.”*

[Here's a useful downloadable chart explaining hand rankings and what starting hands you should play. Click to download.](#)

9-9, for example, is a good raising hand in late position if no-one has raised the pot beforehand, but in early position (the small or big blind) you can find yourself in trouble if you're first to act after the flop.

The first thing to do is group starting hands together: Premium, Semi-Premium and Marginal.

**Premium hands** are things like A-A and K-K. With these hands you'll be raising and reraising, in every position at the table.

Next, **Semi-Premium** hands are ones like A-K, Q-Q, J-J, 10-10 and K-Qs. With these you should raise in every position, and re-raise with them in late position only. A-K is OK to just call a raise with in early position, as if you're first to act you can comfortably check-call on a low flop, or bet out if you've hit top-pair. Remember, A-K is only 'ace-high', i.e. it has great value only if you make a pair with it.

Next, **Marginal hands** are a bigger group of cards. In this group you can put 9-9, J-10s, 10-9s, A-10s, A-Js, K-Js. Raise in late position only in an unraised pot and call in early position if you have value.

## Assessing the Table

So, what about the rest of the starting hands? Well, in late position, you can call or raise with small pairs like 5-5, 6-6, 7-7 etc, and suited one-gappers like Q-10s or J-9s, while folding everything else is a smart move.

However, it's worth paying attention to two things: the stage of a tournament and the types of player at the table.

While this relatively tight hand selection will serve you well early on in a tournament when the blinds are low, as the tourney progresses and your stack-to-blind ratio decreases, it might be time to expand your starting hands selection.

For example, if you're in the middle stages of a tournament and are in late position with Q10s while nursing a stack of 20 big blinds, it can be a good hand to shove all-in over the top of a raise. Much of the time you will force a fold and the value in building a pot can outweigh the odds of your hand winning.

Meanwhile, if you find yourself at a tournament table early on with lots of passive players who bet and call with a wide range of hands, you should tighten up and bet your premium hands stronger than you normally would.

## Assigning Hand Ranges

While knowing what hands **YOU** should start with, knowing what **your opponents** are playing is the next thing to learn.

As you improve, assigning hand ranges to other players is how you can learn to make value judgments on whether to call or fold.

Don't make the mistake of putting an opponent on one or two hands; it's important to assign a wide range of possible starting hands.

### Example 1

Let's say you're playing a tournament and you're into the second level when blinds are still low. You raise in early position with J-J and two players call, plus the player on the button.

Let's try to work out what that player on the button could have, as he's last to act and is in the best position. He's on the button, yet he's just called. You know he's tight but will raise with strong hands, so we can therefore strike off premium hands like A-A, K-K and A-K (and probably Q-Q) from his likely starting hands.

The flop comes 3d-7s-6s and you bet with your jacks. The first two players fold and the button player calls.

Now, what could he have? He's called a raise pre-flop and has just called a bet, so he won't have over-cards like A-Js, A-10s, Q-J, K-Q, K-Js etc. If he had pocket 7s or 6s he would have raised with his trips so those are out too.

He may well have called pre-flop with 7-6 or a strong 7 like A-7s, and the presence of two spades on the flop mean we can include flush draws like 10s-9s, 9s-8s, and 9s-7s.

The turn comes 9s and the opponent moves all-in after you bet out again. Your jacks now look very bad against his likely range of hands (trip sixes, trip sevens, a flush, a straight flush, or a straight) and you fold.

## Get a Starting Hand Chart

While there's no starting hands chart set in stone for Texas Hold'em, it's a good idea as a novice to keep a list of good starting hands printed out and kept by your monitor.

Hand selection changes with the style of players at the table or the stage of the tournament you're playing, as well as the number of players at the table. But being disciplined with your starting hands is the key to making profits early on in your career.

## Find a Hand Range Calculator Online

If you're into cash games online and are starting to use a Heads-Up Display (HUD), you will find the percentage of hands that your opponent is raising with.

This figure can be entered into one of many 'Hand Range Calculators' available online now. Just enter the percentage figure into the calculator and a list of selected hands will be displayed. For example, let's say your opponent is tightish and raises with 6% of hands. The calculator reveals that his range of hands is roughly as follows: A-A, A-Ks, A-Qs, A-Js, A10s, A-Koff, K-K, K-Qs, K-Js, Q-Q, J-J, 10-10, 9-9 and 8-8.

Although not an exact science, hand range calculators are good to get a rough estimate of your opponent's raising hands.

## Poker Skills

Becoming a better online poker player takes a blend of dedication, skill and a little bit of luck. Although it's impossible to influence the flow of luck you'll receive when you ante-up, it is possible to improve your skills.

Of course, becoming an overnight poker sensation like Daniel Negreanu or Phil Ivey is virtually impossible, but if you follow our simple poker strategy tips, you'll quickly be on the road to poker riches.

Although that road might be somewhat long and winding, we can assure you that if you stick with our key skills illustrated here, your long-term bankroll will thank you.

## Key Poker Skills in 2018

**Tight is Right:** It might be a boring way to play but sitting back and waiting for good hands can often be a great way to win a lot of money at the table.

Today's poker climate is one in which players are trying to be as aggressive as possible, so playing a lot of hands can be extremely difficult unless you are either reckless or brave.

Take advantage of people's aggression and stick to ABC poker if you want to make a steady profit.

**Stay in Position:** The lack of complete information in poker makes it extremely tough to win but you can make your job infinitely easier if you only play hands in position. Obviously there will be times when you're forced to play out of position, but if you can always choose the former you'll be more successful.

Acting last gives you the advantage of seeing what everyone else has done and, therefore, enables you to make more sensible decisions.

**Don't Be Afraid to Fold:** Sometimes at the poker table pride can get in your way and you become stubborn. It can often be the case that you become involved in a hand and even if it looks like you're behind you convince yourself not to fold because your hand "was" good preflop.

This attitude has caused many people to go broke and is one you should eliminate from your game. Don't be too proud to fold your pocket aces if there's a possible straight or flush on the board. Discretion is often the better part of valor at the poker table.

**Up Your Aggression Levels:** There's often a temptation to play your hand passively if you're unsure of its strength, but playing this way will cost you money.

There's an old adage in poker which says: "If a hand is not worth raising, then it's not worth playing." Being aggressive means you take control of the pot and have a greater chance of taking it down.

**Look to Your Left:** Whether you're playing online poker or live poker it's important to consider the player on your left.

Whenever you make a move they will be the person next to act, so you need to know what they're capable of. If they raise a lot then be prepared to play pots with strong hands. If they fold a lot then you can raise more liberally when everyone folds to you

**Don't Play Above Your Bankroll:** It's a time-old poker expression but playing above your means is a quick route to disaster.

Only play in games you can afford. For cash games make sure you have at least 30-40 buyins for a particular level. For poker tournaments make sure you never risk more than 2-5 percent of your bankroll. Learn more in our guide to [bankroll management](#)

## **Solid Foundations**

The modern online climate is a tough place to thrive. As players improve and margins get smaller, the road to riches is becoming a lot more treacherous if you're a novice.

However, as much as online poker has changed over the years, a few constants have stayed the same. Many of them related to solid poker strategy and great tips like these here will never change.

These solid skills may not seem interesting or creative, but they are crucial to helping form a winning formula and should give a solid platform from which to build a complex strategy.

## Calm Down and Take Stock

Whether you're winning or losing, staying in control of your emotions and riding the up AND downswings is an essential skill to profitable poker. In fact, we might say it's THE most important skill to have.

Winners can go on insane tears and end up broke, while losers will keep on chasing that loss and bemoaning the one bad beat that destroyed their livelihood.

Don't end up in the same situation; it's important to take regular breaks and take stock of your performance over a few sessions. That way, you can assess where you're going wrong - AND right - and go on to improve the next time you play.

### TIPS

You've worked out the rules of poker, and you're ready to play. Now for a few last tips before you hit the tables.

#### Pay attention

Watch who's playing aggressively or in a loose way (betting hard, playing a lot of hands) and who's playing tight (folding quickly, only playing good hands). Only go up against the tight players if you've got a strong hand.

#### Watch the chips

If someone has more chips than you, be careful – a mistake could knock you out. Fewer chips? You've got the upper hand.

#### No match

Cards don't match any of the community cards? Fold as soon as someone else bets.

#### Ace in the hand

An ace in your starting cards isn't necessarily a winner. Only play it if your other card is the same suit or a 10 or higher.

#### Starting hands with potential

Before the flop, go ahead if you have pairs (**7-7, 9-9**), two face cards (**K-Q, Q-J**), or cards that could make either a straight or a flush (**8-9, 6-7 of the same suit**). Anything else, fold – unless you're in the blind.

#### Good hand? Bet strong

In no-limit Texas Hold'em, you can bet any amount, any time, so when you do have great cards, back them up with a strong bet.

#### Watch and wait

Play fewer hands when you're one of the first players to act. You can't see what other players are doing, so if they raise, you'll be out on a limb.

#### Wait your turn



Play goes clockwise round the poker table.

## Be a 'bettor,' not a 'caller'

Remember, a lot of poker is psychological, so go out there and take control.

## Call their bluff

If someone in a late position raises, chances they're just trying it on, hoping to 'steal the blinds'. If you're in blind position and raise, you could scare them off and take the pot yourself. This move, known as going 'over the top', is probably the strongest play in no-limit Texas Hold'em.

## Be patient

Try not to act too quickly. Before you make a decision, think about how the betting has gone and what your opponent might have. Take your time.