

Hold'em – A Quick Look

Texas Hold'em is the most popular poker variation played around the world. If you're just starting out, this is the game to learn.

Play in Texas Hold'em goes through four sequential rounds of betting: pre-flop, on the flop, the turn and the river. Each of these rounds is described below in a separate section.

To start the hand, the deck is shuffled, the blinds are posted and each player is dealt two cards face down, his hole cards. There is a round of betting that is limited to one bet and three raises.

When this first round of betting action is complete the dealer will place three cards face up on the table. These three cards are called the flop. All cards dealt face-up on the table are community cards. That is they "belong" to all players and may be used by any player in any combination with his hole cards to make his best possible poker hand.

The flop is followed by another round of betting. In limit games this second round of betting is the last round at the lower limit. After this round all bets and raises will be at the higher limit.

After this on the flop action is complete the dealer will place a fourth card, face-up, on the table. This is the turn card and is another community card that any player may combine in any way with his hole cards.

After the turn card is dealt there is a third round of betting. This third round of betting is at the higher limit in limit games. When the action on the turn is complete the last card, the river card, is dealt face-up on the board.

After the deal of the river card the fourth, last, round of betting begins. As with the other round this round is limited to one bet and three raises. When the action is complete, the pot is awarded to the best hand.

The pot is awarded, the dealer button is moved one position in a clockwise direction, the blinds are posted and another hand begins.

Before we start please find a short list of some of the terms we will be using to explain how to play Texas Hold'em. For a much more complete list of poker terms, please see our [Poker Dictionary](#).

Basic poker terms used in this section:

Action – The betting. When it is said that the action is to a certain player it means it is his turn to act. He may bet, check, raise or fold.

Action Pointer – A small blinking arrowhead that points to the player who is next to act.

Bet, Check, Raise, Fold – As the action for a particular round begins each player in turn has the option to fold which is to throw his hand away and sit out the current hand, check, that is pass the action without putting money in the pot, or to bet. The first person to put money in the pot on any given round of betting is the bettor. After this first bet is made subsequent players have three choices; call (put an amount that matches the bet into the pot), raise (put an amount that is equal to twice the bet into the pot) or fold (when a player folds he surrenders his

cards and removes himself from contention for the pot). After a raise has been made subsequent players also have three choices; call the raise, re-raise or fold.

Blinds – These are forced bets that begin the action. In Hold'em there are two blinds. The Little Blind is placed by the player to the left of the dealer button and is usually equal to 1/3 – 2/3 the amount of the Big Blind. The big blind is equal to a bet at the lower limit. In a \$10/\$20 game the small blind is \$5 and the big blind is \$10. Both of these blinds are live, which means when the betting reaches the blinds they may raise. This is the only place in poker where a player may raise his own bet.

The Flop – After the first round of betting the dealer places three cards on the board face-up. These three cards are community cards and are called the flop.

Community Cards – These are the cards that are dealt face-up on the board. They may be used in any amount in any player's hand to make his best poker hand. [Click here](#) to see a complete list and ranking of all recognized Hold'em poker hands.

Dealer Button – In Hold'em there is a button that rotates around the table in a clockwise direction. Cards are dealt in a clockwise direction starting with the player to the immediate left of the dealer button. After the hand is completed and the pot awarded, the dealer moves the Dealer Button to the player to the immediate left of the player who just had it. This is done, because there is an advantage to having to act last and so each player gets his fair share of early, late and middle positions.

The Pot – Where all the bets and raises are collected. This is the pile of chips in the center of the table. Players are in the game to win the pot.

The Turn – The turn card is the 4th community card and is placed on the table after the betting on the flop is complete. The betting on the turn is the third round of betting and at twice the stakes of the first two rounds.

The River – The last round of betting and the last, 5th, community card. When the river card is placed on the board, the dealing is done. When the betting on the river is complete, the hand is over and the pot is awarded.

In the text and graphics below you will see a clear demonstration of the look of the table and the conduct of play for each of the four rounds of betting in a typical limit Hold'em game.

Pre-Flop



Seats at poker tables are numbered from the dealer box in a clockwise direction.

In Texas Hold'em and in Omaha games there is an advantage in having a late position at the table. The advantage is that players in late position get to act after players in earlier positions and thus have information about the other players' intentions. Because of this advantage the cards are dealt and action begins from a dealer button that rotates around the table in a clockwise direction. This rotation takes the blinds, early, middle and late position to all players equally.

For each hand of Texas Hold'em; the cards are shuffled, the dealer button is placed, the blinds are posted and two cards are dealt facedown to every active player at the table beginning with the first player in a clockwise (to the left) direction from the dealer button. These two cards are each player's hole or private cards.

After the cards are dealt, the pre-flop betting action begins. On this round and this round only, the betting begins with the first player to the left (clockwise) from the big blind. On all subsequent rounds the action begins with the first player to the left of the dealer button.

In limit Hold'em the big blind is equal to a small bet. The small blind is usually 1/3 to 2/3 of the big blind. In the game pictured above the stakes are \$3/\$6. The big blind is \$3, which is equal to a small bet and the small blind is \$1, which is equal to 1/3 of the big blind.

In the pre-flop graphic above the Mikeatm, the player in seat #9 holds the dealer button. The player in the 10th seat posted the little blind and the player in seat #1 posted the big blind.

From our pre-flop graphic you can see that the player in the #2 seat was the first to act and has folded his cards - the player has no cards in front of him.

The player in the 3rd seat has elected to call the big blind and our player, ENPort in seat #4, with a powerful ace-king in the hole has raised the big blind. The action pointer indicates that the player in seat #5 is next to act. This player may call the raise, re-raise the raise or fold his cards.

The action will continue around the table until complete. At PartyPoker.com, in limit games, the action is limited to one bet and three raises.

When this round of betting is complete the dealer will place the three cards that are the flop, face-up, on the board and the action on the flop will begin.

Pre-Flop Tip for Beginners:

The most common mistake in Hold'em is to play too many hands pre-flop. Be very selective in the hands you play before the flop. Good players throw away/fold far more hands than they play.

On the Flop



In Texas Hold'em, five community cards are placed on the board face-up. The first three of those cards are called the flop and are placed on the board as soon as the pre-flop betting is complete. Community cards are cards that each and every player at the table may combine with his hole cards to make his best possible 5-card poker hand.

Sometimes just using the board cards and none of his hole cards makes a player's best possible hand. Sometimes a player will elect to use 4 of the board cards and one from his two hole cards. Most often players use 3 cards from the board and both hole cards to make the best possible poker hand.

Action Check Boxes:

Fold – When a player checks this box his cards will be folded when it is his turn to act regardless of any previous action.

Check/Fold – A check in this box indicates that the player wants to check/pass but if a bet or raise has been made before the action reaches him, he will fold. With this box checked, if no bet is made then the action will simply pass by the player and he will keep his cards. If a bet has been made the player's cards will be automatically folded.

Check – When a player clicks this box he is telling the software that he would like to check if there has been no previous action. If there is a bet or raise with this box checked the player would be notified and given options to call, raise or fold.

Check/Call – Here the player is telling the software that he would like it to check for him if there are no previous bets but call for him if there are.

Bet(3) – The game noted above is a \$3/\$6 game and all bets and raises on the flop are for \$3. A check in this box tells the software to automatically bet \$3 if there are no previous bets.

Bet/Raise – This is the most aggressive choice of all. It tells the software to bet if there have been no previous bets and raise if there have been previous bets.

In the example above the player ENEPort, in seat #4, has flopped a set. The 2 7's in the hole plus the 7 on the board make three 7's, which is referred to as a set. At this point ENEPort's best hand is 7, 7, 7, A, 3.

In the game depicted above, the action pointer shows that the player StreetFossi, in seat #5, is next to act. That player may check, bet \$3 or fold.

All bets and raises for this round will be for \$3. The action is limited to one bet and three raises.

This action will proceed in turn until complete. ENEPort, the player in seat #4 with 3 7's, will most probably elect to raise or re-raise.

When this round is complete, another card - the turn card will be placed face-up on the board and there will be another round of betting. In the game shown above all bets and raises on the turn will be for \$6.

On the Flop Tip for Beginners:

In this example, our player has flopped a set of 7s and should definitely continue with the hand. If the flop doesn't match your hole cards in any way and you don't have a very high pair in the hole, fold. On the flop you have 5 of a possible seven cards and without a strong hand or a strong draw it is unwise to continue to put money into the pot.

The Turn



Action on the Turn:

In limit games the stakes double on the turn. The game shown is a \$3/\$6 game so all bets and raises on the turn and river will be for \$6.

As before action on the turn is limited to one bet and three raises.

When the betting action on the turn is complete the river card, the final card, is placed on the board and the last round of betting begins.

In this particular game, you might note that the player in seat #1 has elected to take a break and sit out. At any time any player may elect to sit out and take a short break. Players are allowed to be away from the table for the time it takes to deal 20 hands, usually about 20 minutes. Should a player stay away longer he is removed from the table and the value of his chips is returned to his account.

In all cash games a small rake/fee is collected by PartyPoker.com. In this case you can see that so far \$1 has been collected and is shown in the rake tray for all to see.

The action pointer shows that player ENEPort, in seat #5, is next to act. The action choice buttons show that ENEPort may fold her cards, check the action or bet \$6. With 3 9's she will most probably bet \$6.

A Turn Tip for Beginners:

On the turn, bets will have doubled and players need a very strong reason to continue in the hand. With only 1 more card to come, knowledge of pot-odds, implied-odds and what constitutes an overlay will help you know whether or not or how to continue in the hand.

The River



Of note is that the game shown above is a jackpot game and there is an extra fifty-cent rake or drop in jackpot games. The regular \$3 drop is shown as is the fifty-cent jackpot drop.

The last card, the river card, the seven of hearts has been dealt and the last round of betting is about to begin.

On the river as on all other rounds the action is limited to one bet and three raises.

Once the action on the river is complete, the pot is awarded to the player with the best poker hand.

On the river, as on the turn, all bets and raises are for the bigger limit - in this case that is \$6.

There are three players left in the game shown above. The player in seat #3 has elected to check and now the action is up to ENEPort in seat #4. ENEPort has top pair with a pair of queens and a very respectable kicker so she will most probably bet.

A River Tip for Beginners:

With very big pots on the river, players often have the pot odds that can justify a value bet or call or even a pure bluff.

General Hold'em Tips for Beginners

- Take advantage of a wide range of available poker learning materials.
- Be very selective in the hands you play.
- Learn to estimate and use pot-odds, implied-odds and overlays.
- Tight and aggressive is the style that usually does the best.
- Top poker pros and all of us at PartyPoker.com agree that good poker manners make good poker sense, make the game more enjoyable and can add to your poker bottom line. Professional players know that to anger or offend other players can sometimes cause an otherwise very loose player to play more conservatively, a bad player to play better and when the game flow is adversely affected he sees fewer hands/opportunities per

hour. [Click here](#) to learn more about poker etiquette and PartyPoker.com's standards of acceptable behavior at the table.

You will find further information on a PartyPoker.com Site Tour from PartyPoker.com's FAQs or our extensive Poker Dictionary.

Most poker variations including Hold'em are played according to one of 4 betting schemes or protocols. These four betting structures are; limit, pot-limit, no-limit and spread limit. [Click here](#) to see a complete explanation of each.

At PartyPoker.com, Texas Hold'em is offered at 6, 9 and 10-handed tables. Hold'em is offered in cash game, single and multi-table tournament and play money formats.

In these links you will find a complete description of all of the tournament fees and cash game rakes collected at PartyPoker.com. Cash games are subject to minimum buy-in requirements and are played as table stakes games.

As always, if you have any questions as you explore this section, please feel free to contact our 24/7 Customer Care Support Team.