CARD GAMES

How to play Texas Hold'em

The world's most popular poker game: make the best five-card hand from two face-down cards and five community cards, or bet so that everyone else folds.

Players	You need	Game length	Difficulty	Ages
2–10	A deck of cards	30–180 min	Takes some practice	18+

RULES IN 60 SECONDS

The small and big blinds go into the pot first. Everyone gets two hole cards. Four betting rounds follow: before the flop, after the flop (three shared cards), after the turn (a fourth) and after the river (a fifth). You can check, bet, call, raise or fold. The best five-card hand wins, or the last player left.

01 — GOAL

Win the pot with the best five cards

You play for the pot: all the chips bet during a hand. You win it in one of two ways: you hold the best five-card hand at the showdown, or you bet so that everyone else folds.

Your hand is the best five of seven cards: your two face-down cards (hole cards) and the five face-up community cards in the middle. You can use both, one or none of your hole cards.

Best five of seven: full house, kings full of sevens



02 — SETUP

Pick a dealer, post the blinds, deal two cards

You need a 52-card deck (no jokers), chips and a marker for the dealer (the button). Agree on how many chips everyone starts with.

1. Everyone draws a card. The highest card takes the button.
2. The player to the left of the button posts the small blind, the next player the big blind. Blinds are forced bets that go into the pot before the deal. The big blind is usually twice the small blind.
3. Everyone gets two cards face down, dealt one at a time clockwise in two rounds, starting with the player to the left of the button. The button gets the last card in each round.

Two players (heads-up): The player on the button posts the small blind, the other player the big blind. Before the flop the button acts first, after the flop the big blind.

After every hand the button moves one seat clockwise, so everyone takes turns paying the blinds.

03 — BETTING

Check, bet, call, raise or fold

- **Check:** decline to bet and keep your cards. Only allowed when you have nothing to match, meaning nobody has bet this round. Before the flop, only the big blind can check, and only if nobody has raised.
- **Bet:** put chips in when nobody has bet yet.
- **Call:** match the current bet.
- **Raise:** match the bet and put in more.
- **Fold:** give up your cards. Any chips you have already put in stay in the pot.

Before the flop, the player to the left of the big blind acts first, and the blinds count as bets. If nobody has raised, the big blind may still check or raise at the end. In every later round, the first active player to the left of the button acts first. A betting round ends when every active player has had a turn and all have checked or put in the same amount. A player who is all-in doesn't have to add any more.

All-in: You bet all your chips. You can do that even if they don't cover the full bet. You can then win at most as much from each opponent as you put in yourself. Anything the others bet beyond that goes into a side pot that only they play for.

Example: Anna goes all-in for 20 chips, and Ben and Carla each put 50 chips in the pot. The main pot holds 60 chips (3 x 20), which all three play for. The other 60 chips (2 x 30) form the side pot, which only Ben or Carla can win.

No-limit: The smallest bet is one big blind, and only your chips limit how much you can bet. A raise must be at least as big as the largest full bet or full raise so far in this round: if someone bets 10, you raise to at least 20. If someone raises the 10 straight to 35, a raise of 25, the next raise must go to at least 60. If an all-in isn't enough for a full raise, players who have already acted can usually only call or fold.
Limit: Bets and raises have a fixed size: one big blind before the flop and on the flop, double that on the turn and river. Usually one bet and three raises are allowed per round; when only two players are left, this cap often doesn't apply. Agree on which one you play before the first hand.

04 — THE BOARD

Flop, turn and river

1. **Preflop:** the first betting round, on your two cards only.
2. **Flop:** the dealer discards the top card face down (the burn card), then turns three cards face up in the middle. Betting round.
3. **Turn:** burn one, turn a fourth card face up. Betting round.
4. **River:** burn one, turn the fifth and last card. Final betting round.

The five face-up cards are the board. Every player still in the hand can use them. Nobody gets any more cards of their own. If everyone but one player folds before the showdown, the hand ends immediately and the remaining cards are not turned over.

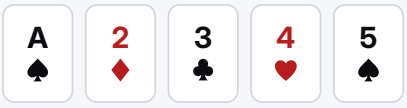
05 — HAND RANKINGS

Which hand beats which

Hand	What it is	Rank
Royal flush	A, K, Q, J and 10 of one suit: the highest straight flush	1
Straight flush	Five cards in a row, all one suit	2
Four of a kind	Four cards of the same rank	3
Full house	Three of a kind plus a pair	4
Flush	Five cards of one suit, not in a row	5
Straight	Five cards in a row, not all one suit	6
Three of a kind	Three cards of the same rank	7
Two pair	Two different pairs	8
One pair	Two cards of the same rank	9
High card	None of the above: the highest card counts	10

The ace counts high (10-J-Q-K-A) or low (A-2-3-4-5) in a straight, but a straight can't wrap around: Q-K-A-2-3 is not a straight. A-2-3-4-5 is the lowest straight. All four suits are equal: a suit never decides between equally good hands, and the pot is split.

The ace counts low: A-2-3-4-5 is the lowest straight



06 — SHOWDOWN

Show your cards, best hand wins

After the last betting round, the players still in the hand show their cards. The player who made the last bet or raise on the river shows first; if nobody bet on the river, the first player still in the hand to the left of the button shows first. Each player makes the best five-card hand from their two cards and the board, and the highest hand wins the pot. A player who is beaten may also muck: give up their cards face down without showing them. To win the pot, you have to show both cards.

All-in in tournaments: Under the Poker TDA tournament rules, all hands are turned face up immediately once a player is all-in and the other players have finished betting. From that point on, no player may muck.

- **Same kind of hand:** the higher cards win. A pair of kings beats a pair of queens. With the same pair, the remaining cards of the hand decide, highest first (the kicker). If the board is K-9-7-4-2, Anna holds K-Q and Ben holds K-J, Anna wins with the queen as her kicker. With two pair, the higher pair counts first, then the lower pair, then the fifth card. With three of a kind and four of a kind, the side cards break a tie; with a flush or high card, compare card by card from the top. Cards outside the best five don't count.
- **Exactly the same five-card hand:** the pot is split equally.
- **Side pots:** each pot goes separately to the best hand among the players competing for it.
- **Everyone else folds:** the last player wins the pot and doesn't have to show their cards.

Example: The board shows 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 of mixed suits. Only a player with a 10 makes a higher straight and beats the board. If nobody has a 10, all remaining players play the straight on the board and split the pot.

Then the button moves one seat clockwise and the next hand starts.

The board plays: only a 10 beats this straight, otherwise the pot is split



07 — SCORING

Who gets what

Best hand at the showdown	Wins the pot
Everyone else folds	Wins the pot, no need to show
Identical best hands	Pot split equally
All-in with the best hand	Wins the main pot and every side pot they are in; the other side pots go to the best hand among the players competing for them

08 — TIPS

Play smarter

- Start by playing only a few strong starting hands, such as high pairs or an ace with a high kicker, and fold weak hands before the flop.
- On the button you act last after the flop and see what the others do first, so you can play a few more

hands there than in early position.

- Always read the board: if it shows four cards of one suit, any player with one card of that suit has a flush.
- Decide before the first deal whether you play no-limit or limit, and what the blinds are.