

Texas Hold'em

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Introduction

Texas Hold'em is a shared card poker game. Each player is dealt two private cards and there are five face up shared (or "community") cards on the table that can be used by anyone. In the showdown the winner is the player who can make the best five-card poker hand from the seven cards available.

Since the 1990's, Texas Hold'em has become one of the most popular poker games worldwide. Its spread has been helped firstly by a number of well publicised televised tournaments such as the World Series of Poker and secondly by its success as an online game. For many people nowadays, poker has become synonymous with Texas Hold'em.

This page assumes some familiarity with the general rules and terminology of poker. See the [poker rules](#) page for an introduction to these, and the [poker betting](#) and [poker hand ranking](#) pages for further details.

Players and Cards

From two to ten players can take part. In theory more could play, but the game would become unwieldy.

A standard international 52-card pack is used.

The Deal and Betting

Texas Hold'em is usually played with no ante, but with blinds. When there are more than two players, the player to dealer's left places a small blind, and the next player to the left a big blind. The big blind is equal to the minimum bet and the small blind is typically half that amount. When there are only two players (a "heads-up" game), the dealer places the small blind and the non-dealer the big blind.

The cards are shuffled and cut, the dealer "burns" one card and then deals the cards one at a time face down until each player has two cards. These are known as the player's **hole cards** or **pocket cards**. Players may look at their two hole cards and must not show them to any other player.

The first betting round is begun by the player to the left of the big blind. The blinds count as bets, so the small blind need only pay the difference between the blinds to call. The big blind player acts last and is allowed to raise, even if the other active players have all called.

After the first betting round the dealer burns one card and deals three cards face up to the table. These three cards are known as the **flop**. There is then a second betting round begun by the first active player to the left of the dealer seat.

When the second betting round is complete, the dealer burns a card and then deals one card face up to the table. This card is known as the **turn** or **fourth street**. There is then a third betting round, again begun by the first active player to the left of the dealer seat.

After the third betting round the dealer burns another card and deals one more card face up - the **river** or **fifth street**. There is fourth and final round of betting before the showdown, again begun by the first active player to the left of the dealer seat.

In a fixed-limit or spread-limit game, any betting round that has more than two active players at the start is normally limited to one bet plus three (sometimes four) raises. In the first (pre-flop) betting round the big blind counts for this purpose as the first bet. If a betting round begins with only two active players, there is no limit on the number of raises.

In limit poker, the betting limits are usually doubled before the third betting round. So for example a \$10-\$20 game would typically have blinds of \$5 and \$10, bets of \$10 in the first two rounds and bets of \$20 in the last two.

The Showdown

Active players show their hands in clockwise order, beginning with the player who was the last to bet or raise in the final betting round. If everyone checked in the final betting round, the first active player to the left of the dealer seat is the first to show. See the [betting and showdown page](#) for further details.

Each player makes the best possible five-card poker hand from the seven available cards: the player's two hole cards and the five face-up table cards, which are known as **the board**. This can be in any combination: both hole cards with three from the board, one hole card with four from the board, or just the board cards without using the hole cards at all, which is known as **playing the board**.

Note that:

- For a hand to be considered for winning the pot, the player must show **both** hole cards, even if only one or neither of them is used to make the best hand.
- The cards speak for themselves: the best hand is entitled to win the pot if shown, even if the owner does not realise that it is the best hand.
- As always, poker hands consist of just five cards. The two unused cards have no bearing on whether one hand is better than another.

Example. On the board is ♣A-♦Q-♥Q-♠9-♥6. Player A has ♥K-♦9; player B has ♥9-♠6; player C has ♣9-♣3. This is a three-way tie, since all three players have Q-Q-9-9-A as their best hand. The pot is split equally between A, B and C.

Strategy

Because of its great popularity as a tournament and online game, much has been written about the strategy of Texas Hold'em.

The [Poker Strategy](#) page provides a list of sites with useful [Texas Hold'em Strategy](#) articles.

The [Poker Books](#) page reviews a couple of good books about how to play Texas Hold'em.

Variations

The game described above is Texas Hold'em as played formally in public card rooms. When it is played at home, the same procedure can be used, but in some informal games the burning of cards is omitted, and the five community cards are dealt face down to the table at the start. Three of these cards are turned face up after the first betting round, one after the second and one after the third. The result is similar to the formal game, but there is an increased risk that a player might, by accident or by cheating, learn the identity of some of the table cards before they are officially exposed.

The practice of dealing the community cards to the table at the start and turning them face up later is commonly found in community card poker games with more complex layouts, such as Iron Cross and Tic-Tac-Toe. Several of these are listed on the [Poker Variants](#) page.

Pineapple

This is played the same way as Texas Hold'em, except that each player is initially dealt three hole cards and must discard one of them before the first round of betting.

Crazy Pineapple

As in Pineapple, each player is dealt three cards, but in Crazy Pineapple they are kept until after the second betting round. Each active player must discard one card immediately before the fourth board card (the turn) is dealt.

Crazy Pineapple Hi-Lo 8 or Better

Crazy Pineapple is often played in such a way that the pot is shared between the players with the highest and lowest hands. The deal and betting are exactly as in Crazy Pineapple. At the showdown, as well as making their best hand, each active player makes the lowest possible hand from their seven cards. When making a low hand, the five cards must all be of different ranks, the aces count as low, straights and flushes do not count, and no card can be higher than an 8. So the best low hand is A-2-3-4-5 and the worst is 8-7-6-5-4. Cards are compared from the top down, so 7-5-4-3-2 is better than 7-6-3-2-A because the 5 is lower than the 6. Players can use a different selection of cards for their high hand and their low hand.

The pot is split equally between the highest hand and the lowest hand. If none of the active players qualifies for low (which will automatically be the case if there are three cards higher than 8 on the board), then the player with the highest hand wins the whole pot.

Irish

This Texas Hold'em variant is similar to [Crazy Pineapple](#), but each player is initially dealt **four** hole cards. These can all be kept until the end of the second round of betting. Before the fourth board card (the turn) is dealt, each active player must discard two of their hole cards, keeping just two for the turn and river.