

ROBERT'S RULES OF POKER

This version of Robert's Rules of Poker is for private games

“Robert's Rules Of Poker” is authored by Robert Ciaffone, a leading authority on cardroom rules. He is the person who has selected which rules to use, and formatted, organized, and worded the text. Nearly all these rules are substantively in common use for poker, but many improved ideas for wording and organization are employed throughout this work.

This PDF contains some of the important rules you should have at your home game. The original copy of rules is 63 pages long.

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1 - PROPER BEHAVIOR

CONDUCT CODE

We will attempt to maintain a pleasant environment for all our players, but are not responsible for the conduct of any player. We have established a code of conduct, and may deny the privilege to play in our game to anyone who violates it. The following is not permitted:

Collusion with another player or any other form of cheating.

Verbally or physically threatening anyone.

Using profanity or obscene language.

Creating a disturbance by arguing, shouting, or making excessive noise.

Throwing, tearing, bending, or crumpling cards.

Destroying or defacing property.

Using an illegal substance.

Carrying a weapon.

POKER ETIQUETTE

The following actions are improper, and grounds for warning, suspending, or barring a violator:

Deliberately acting out of turn.

Deliberately splashing chips into the pot.

Agreeing to check a hand out when a third player is all-in.

Reading a hand for another player at the showdown before it has been placed faceup on the table.

Telling anyone to turn a hand faceup at the showdown.

Revealing the contents of a live hand in a multihanded pot before the betting is complete.

Needlessly stalling the action of a game.

Deliberately discarding hands away from the muck. Cards should be released in a low line of flight, at a moderate rate of speed.

Stacking chips in a manner that interferes with dealing or viewing cards.

Making statements or taking action that could unfairly influence the course of play, whether or not the offender is involved in the pot.

2 – RUNNING THE GAME

DECISION-MAKING

1. Taking a seat in a poker game means you agree to abide by the rules for that game and the decision-making process used in it.
2. The proper time to draw attention to an error or irregularity is when it occurs or is first noticed. Any delay may affect the ruling.
3. If an incorrect rule interpretation or decision is made in good faith, there shall be no liability incurred by the decision-maker.
4. A ruling may be made regarding a pot if it has been requested before the next deal starts (or before the game either ends or changes to another table). Otherwise, the result of a deal must stand. The first riffle of the shuffle marks the start for a deal.
5. If a pot has been incorrectly awarded and mingled with chips that were not in the pot, but the time limit for a ruling request given in the previous rule has been complied with, the betting may be reconstructed, and the proper amount transferred to the respective players.
6. To keep the action moving, it is possible that a game may continue even though a decision is delayed for a short period. In such circumstances, a pot or portion thereof may be impounded while the decision is pending.
7. The same action may have a different meaning, depending on who does it, so the possible intent of an offender will be taken into consideration. Some factors here are the person's amount of poker experience and past record.

PROCEDURES

1. The poker form and stakes that had been agreed upon when the game was started shall not be changed if more than one player objects.

2. Cash is not permitted on the table. All cash should be changed into chips in order to play.
3. The establishment is not responsible for any shortage or removal of chips left on the table during a player's absence, even though everyone should try to protect the game as best they can.
4. All games are table stakes. Only the chips in front of a player at the start of a deal may play for that hand, except for chips not yet received that a player has purchased. The amount bought must be announced to the table, or only the amount of the minimum buy-in plays.
5. If you return to the game within one hour of cashing out, your buy-in must be equal to the amount removed when leaving that game.
6. All chips must be kept in plain view.
7. Playing out of a chip rack is not allowed.
8. Only one person may play a hand.
9. No one is allowed to play another player's chips.
10. Playing over may be allowed if that is customary, but only with permission from the absent player (unless he has left the premises for some length of time) and protection for that person's chips.
11. Pushing bets ("saving" or "potting out") is not allowed.
12. Pushing an ante or posting for another person is not allowed.
13. Splitting pots by agreement will not be allowed. Chopping the big and small blind by taking them back when all other players have folded may be allowed in non-tournament button games, if that is customary.
14. Insurance propositions are not allowed. Dealing twice (or three times) when all-in is permitted at big-bet poker.
15. Players must keep their cards in full view. This means above table-level and not past the edge of the table. The cards should not be covered by the hands in a manner to completely conceal them.

16. Any player is entitled to a clear view of an opponent's chips. Higher denomination chips should be easily visible.
17. Your chips may be picked up if you are away from the table for more than 15 minutes, unless you have made a specific arrangement to leave for a longer length of time. Frequent absences may cause your chips to be removed from the table.
18. A new deck must be used for at least a full round (once around the table) before it may be changed, unless a deck is defective or damaged, or cards become sticky.
19. Looking through the discards or deck stub is not allowed.
20. A player is expected to pay attention to the game and not hold up play. Activity that interferes with this such as reading at the table is discouraged, and the player will be asked to cease if a problem is caused.
21. A non-player may not sit at the table.
22. You may have a guest sit behind you only if no one in the game objects. It is improper for a guest to look at any hand other than your own.
23. Speaking in a foreign language during a deal is not allowed.

SEATING

1. When a button game starts, active players will draw a card for the button position. The button will be awarded to the highest card by suit.
2. In starting a game, the player who arrives the earliest gets first choice of remaining seats. A certain seat may be reserved for a player for good reason. Example: to assist in ease of reading the board for a person with a vision problem.
3. A player who is already in the game has precedence over a new player for any seat when it becomes available. However, no change will occur after a new player has been seated and received chips. For players already in the game, the one who asks the earliest has preference for a seat change.

SECTION 3 - GENERAL POKER RULES

THE BUY-IN

1. When you enter a game, you must make a full buy-in for that particular game. A full buy-

in at limit poker is at least ten times the maximum bet for the game being played, unless designated otherwise. A full buy-in at pot-limit or no-limit poker is forty times the minimum bring-in (usually, the size of the big blind), unless designated otherwise.

2. Only one short buy-in is allowed per session.
3. Adding to your stack is not considered a buy-in, and may be done in any quantity between hands.

THE SHUFFLE AND CUT

1. The pack must be shuffled and cut before the cards are dealt. The recommended method to protect the integrity of the game is to have three people involved instead of only two. The dealer on the previous hand takes in the discards and squares up the deck prior to the shuffle. The player on the new dealer's left shuffles the cards and then slides the pack to the new dealer, who gets them cut by the player on his right.
2. The deck must be riffled a minimum of four times. The cut must leave a minimum of four cards in each portion.
3. The bottom of the deck should be protected so nobody can see the bottom card. This is done by using a cut-card. A joker may be used as a cut-card.
4. Any complaint about the shuffle, cut, or other preparation connected with dealing must be made before the player has looked at his hand or betting action has started.

MISDEALS

1. The following circumstances cause a misdeal, provided attention is called to the error before two players have acted on their hands. (If two players have acted in turn, the deal must be played to conclusion, as explained in rule #2)

GENERAL POKER RULES

- (a) The first or second card of the hand has been dealt faceup or exposed through dealer error.
- (b) Two or more cards have been exposed by the dealer.
- (c) Two or more boxed cards (improperly faced cards) are found.

- (d) Two or more extra cards have been dealt in the starting hands of a game.
 - (e) An incorrect number of cards has been dealt to a player, except the top card may be dealt if it goes to the player in proper sequence.
 - (f) Any card has been dealt out of the proper sequence (except an exposed card may be replaced by the burncard).
 - (g) The button was out of position.
 - (h) The first card was dealt to the wrong position.
 - (i) Cards have been dealt to an empty seat or a player not entitled to a hand.
 - (j) A player has been dealt out who is entitled to a hand. This player must be present at the table or have posted a blind or ante.
2. Action is considered to occur in stud games when two players after the forced bet have acted on their hands. In button games, action is considered to occur when two players after the blinds have acted on their hands. Once action occurs, a misdeal can no longer be declared. The hand will be played to conclusion and no money will be returned to any player whose hand is fouled.

DEAD HANDS

1. Your hand is declared dead if:
- (a) You fold or announce that you are folding when facing a bet or a raise.
 - (b) You throw your hand away in a forward motion causing another player to act behind you (even if not facing a bet).
 - (c) In stud, when facing a bet, you pick your upcards off the table, turn your upcards facedown, or mix your upcards and downcards together.
 - (d) The hand does not contain the proper number of cards for that poker form (except at stud a hand missing the final card may be ruled live, and at lowball and draw high a hand with too few cards before the draw is live). [See Section 16 - "Explanations," discussion #4, for more information on the stud portion of this rule.]
 - (e) You act on a hand with a joker as a holecard in a game not using a joker. (A player who acts on a hand without looking at a card assumes the liability of finding an improper card, as given in Irregularities, rule #8.)
 - (f) You have the clock on you when facing a bet or raise and exceed the specified time

limit.

2. Cards thrown into the muck may be ruled dead. However, a hand that is clearly identifiable may be retrieved if doing so is in the best interest of the game. An extra effort should be made to rule a hand retrievable if it was folded as a result of false information given to the player.
3. Cards thrown into another player's hand are dead, whether they are faceup or facedown.

IRREGULARITIES

1. In button games, if it is discovered that the button was placed incorrectly on the previous hand, the button and blinds will be corrected for the new hand in a manner that gives every player one chance for each position on the round (if possible).
2. You must protect your own hand at all times. Your cards may be protected with your hands, a chip, or other object placed on top of them. If you fail to protect your hand, you will have no redress if it becomes fouled or the dealer accidentally kills it.
3. If a card with a different color back appears during a hand, all action is void and all chips in the pot are returned to the respective bettors. If a card with a different color back is discovered in the stub, all action stands.
4. If two cards of the same rank and suit are found, all action is void, and all chips in the pot are returned to the players who wagered them (subject to next rule).
5. A player who knows the deck is defective has an obligation to point this out. If such a player instead tries to win a pot by taking aggressive action (trying for a freeroll), the player may lose the right to a refund, and the chips may be required to stay in the pot for the next deal.
6. If there is extra money in the pot on a deal as a result of forfeited money from the previous deal (as per rule #5), or some similar reason, only a player dealt in on the previous deal is entitled to a hand.
7. A card discovered faceup in the deck (boxed card) will be treated as a meaningless scrap of paper. A card being treated as a scrap of paper will be replaced by the next card below it in the deck, except when the next card has already been dealt facedown to another player and mixed in with other downcards. In that case, the card that was faceup in the deck will be replaced after all other cards are dealt for that round.

8. A joker that appears in a game where it is not used is treated as a scrap of paper. Discovery of a joker does not cause a misdeal. If the joker is discovered before a player acts on his or her hand, it is replaced as in the previous rule. If the player does not call attention to the joker before acting, then the player has a dead hand.
9. If you play a hand without looking at all of your cards, you assume the liability of having an irregular card or an improper joker.
10. One or more cards missing from the deck does not invalidate the results of a hand.
11. Before the first round of betting, if a dealer deals one additional card, it is returned to the deck and used as the burncard.
12. Procedure for an exposed card varies with the poker form, and is given in the section for each game. A card that is flashed by a dealer is treated as an exposed card. A card that is flashed by a player will play. To obtain a ruling on whether a card was exposed and should be replaced, a player should announce that the card was flashed or exposed before looking at it. A downcard dealt off the table is an exposed card.
13. If a card is exposed due to dealer error, a player does not have an option to take or reject the card. The situation will be governed by the rules for the particular game being played.
14. If you drop any cards out of your hand onto the floor, you must still play them.
15. If the dealer prematurely deals any cards before the betting is complete, those cards will not play, even if a player who has not acted decides to fold.

BETTING AND RAISING

1. Check-raise is permitted in all games, except in certain forms of lowball.
2. In no-limit and pot-limit games, unlimited raising is allowed.
3. In limit poker, for a pot involving three or more players who are not all-in, there is a maximum of a bet and three raises allowed.
4. Unlimited raising for money games is allowed in heads-up play. This applies any time the action becomes heads-up before the raising has been capped. Once the raising is capped on a betting round, it cannot be uncapped by a subsequent fold that leaves two players heads-up. For tournament play, the three raise maximum for limit poker applies when heads-up as well.

5. In limit play, an all-in wager of less than half a bet does not reopen the betting for any player who has already acted and is in the pot for all previous bets. A player facing less than half a bet may fold, call, or complete the wager. An all-in wager of a half a bet or more is treated as a full bet, and a player may fold, call, or make a full raise. (An example of a full raise is on a \$20 betting round, raising a \$15 all-in bet to \$35).
6. Any wager must be at least the size of the previous bet or raise in that round, unless a player is going all-in.
7. The smallest chip that may be wagered in a game is the smallest chip used in the antes and/or blinds. Smaller chips than this do not play even in quantity, so a player wanting action on such chips must change them up between deals. If betting is in dollar units or greater, a fraction of a dollar does not play. A player going all-in must put all chips that play into the pot.
8. A verbal statement denotes your action and is binding. If in turn you verbally declare a fold, check, bet, call, or raise, you are forced to take that action.
9. Rapping the table with your hand is a pass.
10. Deliberately acting out of turn will not be tolerated. A player who checks out of turn may not bet or raise on the next turn to act. An action or verbal declaration out of turn may be ruled binding if there is no bet, call, or raise by an intervening player acting after the infraction has been committed.
11. To retain the right to act, a player must stop the action by calling "time" (or an equivalent word). Failure to stop the action before three or more players have acted behind you may cause you to lose the right to act. You cannot forfeit your right to act if any player in front of you has not acted, only if you fail to act when it legally becomes your turn. Therefore, if you wait for someone whose turn comes before you, and three or more players act behind you, this still does not hinder your right to act.
12. A player who bets or calls by releasing chips into the pot is bound by that action. However, if you are unaware that the pot has been raised, you may withdraw that money and reconsider your action, provided that no one else has acted after you.
13. In limit poker, if you make a forward motion into the pot area with chips and thus cause another player to act, you may be forced to complete your action.
14. String raises are not allowed. To protect your right to raise, you should either declare your

intention verbally or place the proper amount of chips into the pot. Putting a full bet plus a half-bet or more into the pot is considered to be the same as announcing a raise, and the raise must be completed. (This does not apply in the use of a single chip of greater value.)

15. If you put a single chip in the pot that is larger than the bet, but do not announce a raise, you are assumed to have only called. Example: In a \$3-\$6 game, when a player bets \$6 and the next player puts a \$25 chip in the pot without saying anything, that player has merely called the \$6 bet.
16. All wagers and calls of an improperly low amount must be brought up to proper size if the error is discovered before the betting round has been completed. This includes actions such as betting a lower amount than the minimum bring-in (other than going all-in) and betting the lower limit on an upper limit betting round. If a wager is supposed to be made in a rounded off amount, is not, and must be corrected, it shall be changed to the proper amount nearest in size. No one who has acted may change a call to a raise because the wager size has been changed.

THE SHOWDOWN

1. A player must show all cards in the hand face-up on the table to win any part of the pot.
2. Cards speak (cards read for themselves). The dealer assists in reading hands, but players are responsible for holding onto their cards until the winner is declared. Although verbal declarations as to the contents of a hand are not binding, deliberately miscalling a hand with the intent of causing another player to discard a winning hand is unethical and may result in forfeiture of the pot. (For more information on miscalling a hand see "Section 11 - Lowball," Rule 15 and Rule 16.)
3. Anyone who sees an incorrect amount of chips put into the pot, or an error about to be made in awarding a pot, has an ethical obligation to point out the error. Please help us keep mistakes of this nature to a minimum.
4. All losing hands will be killed by the dealer before a pot is awarded.
5. Any player who has been dealt in may request to see any hand that has been called, even if the opponent's hand or the winning hand has been mucked. However, this is a privilege that may be revoked if abused. If a player other than the pot winner asks to see a hand that has been folded, that hand is dead. If the winning player asks to see a losing player's hand, both hands are live, and the best hand wins.

6. If you show cards to another player during or after a deal, any player at the table has the right to see those exposed cards. Cards shown during a deal to a player not in the pot should only be shown to all players when the deal is finished.
7. If everyone checks (or is all-in) on the final betting round, the player who acted first is the first to show the hand. If there is wagering on the final betting round, the last player to take aggressive action by a bet or raise is the first to show the hand. In order to speed up the game, a player holding a probable winner is encouraged to show the hand without delay. If there is a side pot, players involved in the side pot should show their hands before anyone who is all-in for only the main pot.

TIES

1. The ranking of suits from highest to lowest is spades, hearts, diamonds, clubs. Suits never break a tie for winning a pot. Suits are used to break a tie between cards of the same rank (no redeal or redraw).
2. Dealing a card to each player is used to determine things like who moves to another table. If the cards are dealt, the order is clockwise starting with the first player on the dealer's left (the button position is irrelevant). Drawing a card is used to determine things like who gets the button in a new game.
3. An odd chip will be broken down to the smallest unit used in the game.
4. No player may receive more than one odd chip.
5. If two or more hands tie, an odd chip will be awarded as follows:
 - (a) In a button game, the first hand clockwise from the button gets the odd chip.
 - (b) In a stud game, the odd chip will be given to the highest card by suit in all high games, and to the lowest card by suit in all low games. (When making this determination, all cards are used, not just the five cards that constitute the player's hand.)
 - (c) In high-low split games, the high hand receives the odd chip in a split between the high and the low hands. The odd chip between tied high hands is awarded as in a high game of that poker form, and the odd chip between tied low hands is awarded as in a low game of that poker form.
 - (d) All side pots and the main pot will be split as separate pots, not mixed together.

BUTTON AND BLIND USE

In button games, If the players deal the cards themselves, “the button” refers to the person who dealt the cards. (If a non-playing dealer does the actual dealing, a round disk called the button is used to indicate which player has the dealer position.) The player with the button is last to receive cards on the initial deal and has the right of last action after the first betting round. The button moves clockwise after a deal ends to rotate the advantage of last action. One or more blind bets are usually used to stimulate action and initiate play. Blinds are posted before the players look at their cards. Blinds are part of a player’s bet, unless the structure of a game or the situation requires part or all of a particular blind to be “dead.” Dead chips are not part of a player’s bet. With two blinds, the small blind is posted by the player immediately clockwise from the button, and the big blind is posted by the player two positions clockwise from the button. With more than two blinds, the little blind is normally left of the button (not on it). Action is initiated on the first betting round by the first player to the left of the blinds. On all subsequent betting rounds, the action begins with the first active player to the left of the button.

RULES FOR USING BLINDS

1. Each round every player must get an opportunity for the button, and meet the total amount of the blind obligations. Either of the following methods of button and blind placement may be designated to do this:
 - (a) Moving button – The button always moves forward to the next player and the blinds adjust accordingly. There may be more than one big blind.
 - (b) Dead button – The big blind is posted by the player due for it, and the small blind and button are positioned accordingly, even if this means the small blind or the button is placed in front of an empty seat, giving the same player the privilege of last action on consecutive hands.
- [See “Section 16 – Explanations,” discussion #1, for more information on this rule.]
2. A player who posts a blind has the option of raising the pot at the first turn to act. (This does not apply when a “dead blind” for the collection is used in a game and has been posted).
 3. In heads-up play with two blinds, the small blind is on the button.

4. A new player entering the game has the following options:
 - (a) Wait for the big blind.
 - (b) Post an amount equal to the big blind and immediately be dealt a hand. (In lowball, a new player must either post an amount double the big blind or wait for the big blind.)
5. A new player who elects to let the button go by once without posting is not treated as a player in the game who has missed a blind, and needs to post only the big blind when entering the game.
6. A person playing over is considered a new player, and must post the amount of the big blind or wait for the big blind.
7. A new player cannot be dealt in between the big blind and the button. Blinds may not be made up between the big blind and the button. You must wait until the button passes. [See "Section 16 – Explanations," discussion #3, for more information on this rule.]
8. When you post the big blind, it serves as your opening bet. When it is your next turn to act, you have the option to raise.
9. A player who misses any or all blinds can resume play by either posting all the blinds missed or waiting for the big blind. If you choose to post the total amount of the blinds, an amount up to the size of the minimum opening bet is live. The remainder is taken by the dealer to the center of the pot and is not part of your bet. When it is your next turn to act, you have the option to raise.
10. If a player who owes a blind (as a result of a missed blind) is dealt in without posting, the hand is dead if the player looks at it before putting up the required chips, and has not yet acted. If the player acts on the hand and plays it, putting chips into the pot before the error is discovered, the hand is live, and the player is required to post on the next deal.
11. A player who goes all-in and loses is obligated to make up the blinds if they are missed before a rebuy is made. (The person is not treated as a new player when reentering.)
12. These rules about blinds apply to a newly started game:
 - (a) Any player who drew for the button is considered active in the game and is required to make up any missed blinds.
 - (b) A new player will not be required to post a blind until the button has made one complete revolution around the table, provided a blind has not yet passed that seat.

(c) A player may change seats without penalty, provided a blind has not yet passed the new seat.

13. In all multiple-blind games, a player who changes seats will be dealt in on the first available hand in the same relative position. Example: If you move two active positions away from the big blind, you must wait two hands before being dealt in again. If you move closer to the big blind, you can be dealt in without any penalty. If you do not wish to wait and have not yet missed a blind, then you can post an amount equal to the big blind and receive a hand. (Exception: At lowball you must kill the pot, wait for the same relative position, or wait for the big blind; see "Section 11 – Lowball," rule #7.)
14. A player who "deals off" (by playing the button and then immediately getting up to change seats) can allow the blinds to pass the new seat one time and reenter the game behind the button without having to post a blind.
15. A live "straddle bet" is not allowed at limit poker except in specified games.

SECTION 5 - HOLD'EM

In hold'em, players receive two downcards as their personal hand (holecards), after which there is a round of betting. Three boardcards are turned simultaneously (called the "flop") and another round of betting occurs. The next two boardcards are turned one at a time, with a round of betting after each card. The boardcards are community cards, and a player may use any five-card combination from among the board and personal cards. A player may even use all of the boardcards and no personal cards to form a hand (play the board). A dealer button is used. The usual structure is to use two blinds, but it is possible to play the game with one blind, multiple blinds, an ante, or combination of blinds plus an ante.

RULES

These rules deal only with irregularities. See the previous chapter, "Button and Blind Use," for rules on that subject.

1. If the first holecard dealt is exposed, a misdeal results. The dealer will retrieve the card, reshuffle, and recut the cards. If any other holecard is exposed due to a dealer error, the deal continues. The exposed card may not be kept. After completing the hand, the dealer replaces the card with the top card on the deck, and the exposed card is then used for the burncard. If more than one holecard is exposed, this is a misdeal and there must be a redeal.

2. If the flop contains too many cards, it must be redealt. (This applies even if it were possible to know which card was the extra one.)
3. If the flop needs to be redealt because the cards were prematurely flopped before the betting was complete, or the flop contained too many cards, the boardcards are mixed with the remainder of the deck. The burncard remains on the table. After shuffling, the dealer cuts the deck and deals a new flop without burning a card. [See “Section 16 – Explanations,” discussion #2, for more information on this rule.]
4. If the dealer turns the fourth card on the board before the betting round is complete, the card is taken out of play for that round, even if subsequent players elect to fold. The betting is then completed. The dealer burns and turns what would have been the fifth card in the fourth card’s place. After this round of betting, the dealer reshuffles the deck, including the card that was taken out of play, but not including the burncards or discards. The dealer then cuts the deck and turns the final card without burning a card. If the fifth card is turned up prematurely, the deck is reshuffled and dealt in the same manner. [See “Section 16 – Explanations,” discussion #2, for more information on this rule.]
5. If the dealer mistakenly deals the first player an extra card (after all players have received their starting hands), the card will be returned to the deck and used for the burncard. If the dealer mistakenly deals more than one extra card, it is a misdeal.
6. You must declare that you are playing the board before you throw your cards away; otherwise you relinquish all claim to the pot.

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