

Poker by the Regulars

Master Rules, Explanations, and Clarifications

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INTRODUCTION

This is the story of a brand of poker first played by a group of good friends that originally got together in San Jose, California. Since then, we have played in various locations in Northern

California, most often in San Francisco South Bay cities of Fremont, Sunnyvale, and San Jose. We also play in Elk Grove (near Sacramento) and we used to have special games in the mountains near Santa Cruz, (before Rob moved.) We should play more at Kevin's in Washington State (near Portland). We'd very much like to play in Santa Rosa, if Tim ever invites us. (That's Tim B, not Tim the Elder [M,] or Tim the Younger [R.] We also play in San Mateo and Placerville.

The styles and guidelines published in this document have been well-tested. They bring a high level of competition and some financial risk without bringing too much of a fear of money-loss that would detract from the player's enjoyment.

Personally, my goal at a poker game is always to earn enough money to pay for my beverage, with a little left over for the wife, if she's lucky.

REGULAR POKER

MATERIALS & PREPARATION

Use a standard 52-card deck with the jokers taken out. We typically do not use a bug (joker wildcard), but for exceptions see Master Rule #2. Chips, although not necessary, are fun and easy to use.

In the old days, standard color values were: White = Nickel, Red = Dime, Blue = Quarter, and later, Yellow = Half-buck, and later still, Black = Buck. These colors were the original values when we first started. Today we use special chips that Kevin graciously supplied. They don't even have any nickels!

Before the game starts, buy chips by placing money in a separate container called the Kitty. A good amount to start with is \$20.

MASTER RULES

There are 3 master rules for this style of poker.

1. HOUSE RULES

Whoever is hosting the game has primary declaration of the rules. Unless the Host makes a formal verbal declaration, the standard rules (as published here) will be used.

2. DEALER'S CHOICE

The dealer is almost omnipotent, meaning he can call any game or rules, as long as he follows these two guidelines:

- A. Do not break master rule # 1, and
- B. If playing a standard game, clearly declare any variations from these standard rules. You can play any new game, but you must clearly state the name and the rules of the game.

3. MAJORITY RULES

Any arguments that occur not covered by the verbal declarations shall be decided by a majority vote of all players.

POKER RANKINGS

For most games the standard poker rankings are used. Here is a quick run down from weakest to strongest:

High-card (ace-high), pair, two-pair, three-of-a-kind, straight, flush, full-house, four-of-a-kind, straight-flush, five-of-a-kind. Baby-strights and baby-flushes are not typically used. Suits do not play a part in hand ranking. Ties split the winnings between them.

THE DEAL

Once chips are purchased, the host should break the seal on a new deck, (yeah right) and, after counting and shuffling, proceed to deal one up-card to each player until a jack comes up. The player with the jack deals first.

The dealer must pay for the honor of dealing equal to 25¢ times the number of players for that hand. (We used 10¢ in the early days, but now we do not play with any dimes.) This takes place instead of the ante, and must occur before anyone sees any cards. After shuffling, the player to the right of the dealer must cut the deck once. The game should be stated clearly before the dealer sees any cards. Cards are dealt starting to the left, clockwise.

Any variation on the above dealing guidelines will result in a mistake penalty (see below, MISTAKES). An error in the deal can sometimes be corrected, if no one has seen a card, but if a card has been seen, a misdeal is declared and a penalty must be paid.

BETTING

Conventional poker betting is utilized. Open, call, raise, check, pass, or fold. We have added the following enhancements:

You must bet or call only on your turn (the bet proceeds clockwise from the player who opens). If you bet or call out of turn, the bet is a donation and does not count. Technically, money shall never be allowed to be removed from the pot once placed there, unless (1) you need to make change, or (2) are going light.

The last raise before the showdown should show his or her hand first, unless no one called his bet, in which he or she doesn't have to show at all.

LIMIT

\$1 is the most you can bet before eleven pm, after which you can bet up to \$2. There is a limit of three raises per round. (This is the last time the actual betting limit has been published. It has gone up, and it will again. Just make sure it is clear at the beginning.)

MISTAKES

Mistakes in dealing or playing are penalized by payment into the pot. The penalty grows by a dime for each mistake. The first mistake penalty is 10¢, the second is 20¢, the third is 30¢, etc. Mistake penalties are decided by majority rule.

Common mistakes are misdeals, or the spoiling of someone else's deal by a misplay of some kind. Other valid circumstances that warrant a penalty are the spilling of any liquid on the playing surface, stacking your chips on your deal, complaining even though you won the hand, or telling a bad joke.

ACES

Aces can be played high or low, anytime, your choice, except where noted under specific games.

LOWBALL

In Lowball, the lowest ranking hand wins. We play the Western or Californian style of lowball, which means straights and flushes DO NOT count. Therefore, the best hand in Lowball is a Wheel (or Bicycle): A-2-3-4-5.

HIGH-LOW

When playing High-low, split the pot between the regular high hand and the lowball hand.

High-low games usually need to be declared before the showdown. For a simultaneous declaration, take 2 chips in your hands and bring them below the table. In your closed fist, place zero chips if you're going low, one chip for high, or two chips for Pig (both high and low.) Raise your closed fist above the table and open your fist at the same time as the other players.

If you go pig and tie another player, it works like any other tie. For example,

let's say we are playing 7/27 On-or-over.

- Whitney has ten-nine-eight, (27), and she goes high.
- Adele has four-duce, (6), she goes low.
- Katy has five-ace-ace, (7-27), and she goes pig.
- Katy takes half the pot for the low.
- Katy splits the other half with Whitney, they tied the high.

If you have a Wheel, you can play it as a straight or straight-flush in a high High-low hand, or the lowest possible low High-low hand, or as both if you go pig.

PROTECT YOUR CARDS

Every player should protect their cards by placing an object on top of their active down-cards, especially in Texas Hold 'em. By using a card protector, your cards can be safely placed in front of your chips where all other players and the dealer can see that you are still in the pot. By having the cards in front, not covered by your chips or your hand, no one should play out of turn, and the dealer can easily promote faster play by knowing where the action is at.

Players actively betting should be able to easily see who is in, and who is out, and not be surprised by a player hiding his cards at the other end of the table.

It truly sucks when winning hands are called dead because one player's cards hit another's as they were folding...or even worse, the dealer grabbed them because he thought they were folded.

THE GAMES

FAVORITES

ANACONDA

There are many variations of this great game, the most popular style of Non-Hold-'em poker with the Regulars. Our normal rules, listed below, are slightly unique.

This is a High-low game. Of seven down cards dealt you, pass two to the left and one to the right. Collect your three new cards. Throw away two cards. Place your five card hand in the order you want them to be shown, face down in front of you. All players roll a single card simultaneously and then bet. High card bets. Repeat until one card is left. Proceed with the simultaneous declaration and showdown.

Variations:

Santa Cruz Eight-toed Salamander

This is Anaconda with eights wild, my favorite.

Howdy-Doody

As with Anaconda, but with these wild cards: threes are wild if, and only if, the hand they are in is used to try to win the high pot. Kings are wild if, and only if, the hand they are in is used to try for the low pot.

Passing Gas

Anaconda, with the following changes: Each player passes three cards to the player on their left after the first round of betting. After the next betting round, everyone passes two cards to the player on their left. After another betting round, players pass one card to their left.

The player keeps all seven cards and chooses which to turn up. This allows the player to change from high to low depending on what is being played.

SEVEN TWENTY-SEVEN

This is a favorite game, even though it's not really poker. You must try to get the sum of all your cards to equal seven or twenty-seven. The closest to seven and the closest to twenty-seven split the pot at the end. Face cards are worth one half, aces are one or eleven, all others face value.

Deal two down and one up and bet. Dealer will ask each player if they would like another card. Bet after each round, taking turns clockwise. After a third pass you cannot take another card. Game's done when no one takes another card. Simultaneous declaration and showdown. Player closest to seven or twenty-seven without going over wins ties.

Variation:

7-27, On or Under

Seven Twenty-Seven, but you can't go over. Tim Malm's signature call, it makes for a cleaner game.

BASEBALL

Seven card stud. Threes and nines are wild. Fours allow you to take another down card.

Variations:

Baseball Kevin's Rules

Nines are free. Threes, match the pot or fold. Fours are 25¢.

Night Baseball (no-peekie)

Players do not look at their cards. Take turns turning cards over until you beat the previous player. If you do, you can bet, if you can't, you're out.

DRAW POKER

Standard Five Card Draw

Two bets, open on anything, draw up to four cards, depending on the number of

players. Do not re-shuffle the discards if you are using a wildcard.

Variations:

Jack-Off

Five card draw, one-eyed jacks wild. Jacks or better to open. Tim Beswick used to call this game often.

Jacks or Back

If no one opens, game switches to Lowball, open or fold.

Shotgun

Five card draw, add a bet after the third and fourth cards are dealt.

Double-Barreled Shotgun

After draw, roll cards one at a time, betting in-between, High-low.

Jackass

Shotgun Jacks or back.

Jacks to Open, Trips to Win

Played like 5-card draw, with the following differences: Only a player with a hand as good as or better than a pair of Jacks may open the betting. If someone has such a hand, they must open the betting. If nobody can open, the hand is discarded, everyone antes again, and hands are redealt. Once the betting is opened play continues as in 5 Card Draw until the showdown. At this time, anyone who has at least a 3 of a kind must reveal his hand. The best revealed hand takes the pot. If nobody reveals a hand (that is, nobody has at least 3 of a kind) everyone still in may make another exchange. Repeat this process (exchange, bet, check for winner) until someone wins.

STUD POKER

Five Card Stud

One down, four up. Four bets. The best up-hand gets to bet first.

Five Stud Lowball

Lowball means the worst poker hand wins. (See page 4.)

Six Stud Low

Same as five stud low except that you get a sixth card at the end, up or down, your choice. Dave Elkin's signature game.

Seven Card Stud

Two down, four up, one down. Five bets.

Variations:

Seven Stud Deuces

Deuces Wild

Seven Stud Low

Lowball

Seven Stud High-Low**Follow the Bitch**

7 Stud. The card following the last up queen is wild (for everyone). Queens are wild also. Another queen with a follower replaces the previous wildcard. If the last up card is a lady, queens wild only.

Variations: Pay for queens, and/or Queens are not wild.

Low Chicago

7 Stud. The lowest down spade splits the pot with the winner of the high hand. Aces are high.

High Chicago

7 Stud. The highest down spade splits the pot with the winner of the high hand.

Low Hold Wild

7 Stud. The lowest card in the hole (down card) at the time of the showdown is wild (for you). Aces are high.

Pick Your Hole

7 Stud. Choose any card in the hole for your wild card.

Dirty Schultz

As in 7 card stud, with the following variations: whenever a natural pair is dealt up to a player, the next card dealt up (and all cards of the same rank) becomes wild. If another pair is dealt up, the next up card replaces the previous wild as a new wild. If the second card of a pair is the last up card, nothing is wild. Pete Catherwood's signature game.

Variant:

Paying for wild cards. Usually, the required payment is to match the pot.

Helter-Skelter

7 Stud. When a seven is dealt up, game switches to lowball. Next seven switches it back, etc. (I invented this one.

Canadian Stud

Five-card stud. 4-card straight beats a pair, 4-card flush beats a 4-card straight, 2 pair beats a 4-card flush. This adds more hands to shoot for, making 5 card stud more interesting.

Spellunking

Five stud High-low. Start with 1 up, 1 down. Bet. Continue with 1 down, bet, 1 up, bet, 1 down, bet. Declare.

Roll Your Own

5 Card Stud or 7 Card Stud. Cards are all dealt down and player chooses which cards get turned up. Also known as Mexican Stud.

English Stud

As in 7 card stud, with the following exceptions:

Players only get 6 cards. Before the sixth card is dealt, each player

beginning at the dealer's left may exchange one card. If he discards an up card, he is dealt a new up card; if he discards a down card, he gets a new down card. A player may choose not to exchange. When all players have exchanged or stood pat, the sixth card is dealt. After the ensuing round of betting, players may make another exchange. This is followed by a final round of betting and a showdown.

Variations:

With 5 players, this game can be played with 7 cards. With 6 players, it can be played with 7 cards with the understanding that some players may be unable to exchange cards in the second exchange. If this is done, it is highly recommended that you also require players to pay for the right to exchange—this increases the chance that some players will not exchange, giving all players the opportunity to make the choice.

Choose your Own

7 card stud where the lowest hand showing gets to choose their card from several face up cards.

Players are dealt two cards face down and one card face up, as in 7 card stud. After a round of betting, one card is dealt face up in the middle for every player. So if five people are playing, five cards are dealt face up. The player who has the lowest hand showing gets to pick which card they want. Hands are ranked as in low ball with ties going to the player closest to the dealer's left. After that, the next lowest hand chooses, and so on, until the highest hand takes the last card. Another round of betting is followed by another round of face up cards, with the lowest hand again choosing first. Players bet and there is a final round of face up cards that players choose from. After betting,

everyone is dealt one more card face down (for a total of seven) followed by a final round of betting and showdown. The player with the best five card hand takes the pot.

Variant: 5 Card Choose your Own.

Cowpie Poker

Deal and bet as in 7-card stud. After the betting round following the final down card, all remaining players split their hands into a 5-card hand and a 2-card hand. The 2-card hand must contain at least one down card. The 5-card hand must be a better hand than the 2-card hand. Following the split there is one more betting round. Highest 5-card hand and highest 2-card hand split the pot.

Sequence

As in 7 card stud, but:

If a 2 turns face up, all twos become wild. If after that a 3 turns up, all threes are wild instead. And so on, with each successively higher number replacing the previous wild card rank if it appears face up. Play High or High-low.

CARD SHARING GAMES

Anaha

This devil of a game was invented by Mr. McLeod in '05. It is a combination of Anaconda and Omaha. Deal six to each player. Pass one to the left, and one to the right. Throw away two, and bet. Then there will be five shared central cards, flop 3, turn, and river. You must use three hole cards and two central. No limit, Hi- lo! (It may be wiser to skip the no-limit part and use pot limit.)

Variation, called Doug-aha. Share only four central cards, but turn them one at a time.

Lame Brain Pete

Deal 3 cards down to each player, five cards down to the table. A round of betting is held after the deal, then one of the table cards is turned up. It is wild, along with all cards of the same rank. Another round of betting follows. Repeat until all four table cards are up. Each time a table card is flipped, if it is the lowest showing table card it (and all cards of the same rank) become wild, replacing the previous wild cards.

Omaha

Omaha is similar to Holdem in using a three-card flop on the board, a fourth boardcard, and then a fifth boardcard. Each player is dealt four holecards (instead of two) at the start. In order to make a hand a player must use precisely two holecards with three boardcards. The betting is the same as in holdem. At the showdown, the entire four-card hand should be shown to receive the pot.

Variation:

Omaha High Low

Omaha is often played high-low split. The player may use any combination of two holecards and three boardcards for the high hand and another (or the same) combination of two holecards and three boardcards for the low hand.

Spit in the Ocean

Each player shares a single central wild card with their four cards. Wild card is dealt when someone says "Spit!"

Texas Hold 'Em

This is the definition for use in regular dealer's choice poker. See the section at the end for rules pertaining to tournament no limit hold 'em played by the regulars.

2 cards down to each player, five cards down to the table. A round of betting is

held after the deal, then three of the table cards are flopped. Another round of betting follows. One more table card is turned, followed by another round of betting. The river (last) card is flipped, a final round of betting ensues, and finally a showdown in which players make their best hands using their 2 and the table's 5. Be sure to burn cards in between flop, turn, and river.

Variations:

Tahoe

3 cards down instead of 2. No more than 2 hole cards can be used in final hand.

Pineapple

3 cards down instead of 2. Each player must discard one before the first 3 table cards are flipped.

Super Hold 'em

3 cards down instead of 2, all of which may be used.

Twin Beds

I remember playing this game when the regulars first got together, back in 1979, in Tim B's apartment on 11th street in downtown San Jose. Rob, Kevin, and I were there.

Four cards dealt down to each player. Two rows of five cards are dealt in the center of table, face down. Betting interval. One card from each row is turned. Betting interval. Repeat. Last card is wild for that row. You may choose either row combined with your four to build your five card poker hand (lots of five-of-a-kinds in this game.)

WIERD GAMES

Butcher Baby

All cards are dealt face up one at a time. When any player receives a card which is of the same rank as a card previously

dealt, it is transferred to the hand of the player who has it. Same player gets to bet. Repeat, dealing to player who would have received the last card.

This is a Hi/Lo game. When a player gets four-of-a-kind, games over. For low hand: pick your lowest five. You don't need to have five cards to win low.

Numbers

Five cards to each player and seven down cards on the table. A card on the table is turned over. Anyone holding cards of the same rank must discard them. There follows a round of betting (each round uses a rotating lead, beginning with the player to the dealer's left). After each round another card is flipped over and like cards discarded. If a card of the same rank as a previously flipped card is turned over, a new card is flipped from the top of the deck until an un-discarded rank is revealed. Thus, seven different ranks will always be discarded. If anyone loses all his cards, they instantly win the pot. Otherwise, after all cards have been turned up and the last betting round concludes, players declare high, low or both and have a showdown. Aces are worth 1 or 15, face cards are worth 10, and all other cards are worth their face value. WINNER: Highest and lowest totals split the pot.

Bid Poker

Cards are auctioned off one at a time. The highest bidder takes the card and puts the money in the pot.

Each player is dealt five cards face down which they can look at. One card is turned face up. The player to the left of the dealer starts the bidding. Bidding then proceeds to the left, with each player either topping the previous bid, or passing. Once a player passes, they can no longer bid on that card, but they can bid on subsequent cards. When

everyone has passed except one player, that player puts his bid in the pot and takes the card. He then discards any of his cards (including the one he just bought) face down in the discard pile. The dealer then turns the next card in the deck face up. The player to the left of whoever started the bidding the previous round starts the bidding for the new card. Play proceeds until everyone has started the bidding once. At this point, there is a showdown, with the best hand taking the pot.

Variants

Instead of going around once (every player getting a chance to start the bidding once), you can go around multiple times. Usually, once or twice around works best.

The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly

Deal 2 cards down, 1 up to each player, three down on the table. Play like 7 card stud with these modifications:

After the fourth card is dealt, flip the first of the table cards. This is The Good, and all cards of the same rank are wild (but The Good card itself is not shared).

After the fifth card is dealt, flip the second table card. This is The Bad, and all cards of the same rank must be discarded. After the 6th card is dealt, flip the last table card. This is The Ugly, and anyone who has an up card of the same rank must fold. WINNER: High hand.

Guts

Deal two cards down to each player. Everyone secretly puts a chip in their hand if they are staying in, otherwise they leave their hand empty. Players then hold their closed hands in front of them and open them simultaneously. Players who held chips (and thus stayed in) reveal their hands. The winner takes the pot and the losers have to match what the pot was. New hands are then

dealt. The game continues until only one player stays in, and thus the pot is emptied. WINNER: Highest hand, without straights and flushes.

Variations:

Deal 1, 3, 4, or 5 cards to each player.

WEENIE RULE

If nobody stays in, everyone reveals their hand and whoever has the best hand (and thus would have won) must match the pot.

Beat the deck

When only one player stays in, the top two cards from the deck are turned over. If these cards beat the player's hand, the player loses and must match the pot.

LIMIT MATCH

A limit is set on the amount players must pay if they lose. If the pot is more than this amount, players just pay the limit.

HOLD YOUR GUTS

If nobody stays in, play again with the same hands. Repeat until somebody stays in.

PASS YOUR GUTS

If nobody stays in, everyone passes 1-5 cards (decided beforehand) to the right, until someone stays in.

PROGRESSIVE GUTS

Start with 2 cards. If nobody stays in, everyone gets dealt another card. Repeat until someone stays in. Straights and flushes become legal at 5 cards.

Harem

All jacks and kings in your hand are wild unless you have a queen, in which case you have no wild cards. However, if you get 3 queens, you have a harem, which is an automatic win. This game can be played with any type of poker. We have found that it plays very well with 7-card no peek.

Jackal

High-Low game except Ace is low only. Deal 5 cards to each. Throw 3 away, turn 1 up simultaneously. Bet. Deal an up card. Immediate replacement: Starting with highest, each player discards or stands pat. Replacements are dealt afterward. Second bet. Fourth card dealt up. 3rd bet, 5th card, 4th bet, 2nd and final replacement: Same as the first. Final (5th) bet. Declare.

Jack the Shifter

Normal seven card stud until a Jack is turned face-up. The player with the Jack may then name any 7 card stud game, and the rest of the hand is played out as that game. If another Jack is turned up, the owner of that Jack may name a different stud game, and so forth. The game named must be an accepted, named game within your poker circle—no calling 6's wild when you've got a pair of sixes (unless, of course, your group routinely plays a sixes wild game). A face-down Jack may be turned up at any time, at which point that player names a game. To prevent timing conflicts, before the final round of betting the dealer should ask each player, in turn, if they wish to reveal a jack, starting with the player with the best hand showing and proceeding clockwise. Any player who declines to show a Jack when asked at this time forfeits the ability to do so for the rest of the hand.

Juneau

No peek High-low. Like Night Baseball, but no wild cards or fours. You don't have to drop out if you don't beat the previous player. Last high player would retain the bet.

Love Thy Neighbor

Any style poker, but the high hand and the person to his left (who is still in) split the pot.

Sevens

Each player contributes a sum into the pot, say \$1. Deal out all of the cards, save extras, if any. Go around, each player plays a card, starting with sevens. Build up or down on the seven in the same suit. You can't play, you pay a dime. First one to play all of his cards wins, losers pay ten cents per card left.

The Price is Right

Deal two cards down to every player and two up cards in a row on the table next to the deck. Beginning with the player to the dealer's left and rotating around the table, each player has the opportunity to purchase a card. The leftmost up card costs a nickel, the second up card costs a dime, and the top down card from the deck costs 15 cents (feel free to adjust the amounts to suit your group. Some play nickel-dime-quarter, for example.) Up cards stay up, down cards stay down. If the nickel up card is bought, the dime up card slides down and becomes the new nickel card. If the nickel or dime card is bought, the topmost card of the deck is dealt up to become the new dime card. This continues until everyone has 7 cards. A showdown occurs after one round of betting.

3 Card Poker (3 Card Monte)

Use three card hands instead of five. Three-card flushes and straights count, but three-of-kind beats them. A straight beats a flush, then comes one pair. Bet after each card dealt for a bigger pot. Three Card Hi/Lo is super!

Trees

5 down to each player. Bet. Now every player can trade cards freely with every other player. Any number of cards can be exchanged, but a player must give the same number of cards he is receiving. When all no more trades are forthcoming, there follows a final round of betting before the showdown.

Vice President

Any style poker, but the second highest hand wins the pot.

TEXAS HOLD 'EM

INTRODUCTION

In 2003, Kevin McLeod introduced a brand of Hold 'Em to the Regulars that has come to be very popular. So popular, in fact, that we started having a mini-tournament every time we got together. Through some experimentation, we have created an effective way to play hold 'em, without spoiling our regular poker.

Even though much of the etiquette is the same, we do have some rule changes. There are no penalty payments, and there is no cut before the deal. The betting rules are different also.

NO LIMIT

In '03-'04 we usually played no-limit tournament style: Players were eliminated one at a time, when they ran out of chips. Starting early and having a hard-stop time helped prevent hold 'em losers from sitting around too long. Three hours is a good time limit for a full table. When time runs out, finish the round that is in progress, and then use the amount of chips players have to determine first, second, and third.

BUY IN and PAY OUT

Here's a typical scenario that worked well for tournament play: Players chuck in \$20 to play. The third-place finisher gets his buy-in back. The winner then should receive approximately two-thirds of the final pool of money, while the runner-up gets one third. For example, in an eight-player game, the winner gets \$90, and the second-place person gets \$50. This should be agreed upon at the start, depending on conditions.

POT LIMIT

In 2005, we switched to pot limit hold 'em, which allows for much more flexibility in regard to start times, and the typical people comings-and-goings. This amounts to a straight-forward continuous game, no tournament nonsense to worry about. You still get your share of "All-ins."

BLINDS

In the tournament scenario outlined above, start with \$0.25/\$0.50. When the second player is eliminated, the blinds raise to \$0.50/\$1.00. When the fourth player is eliminated, go to \$1.00/\$2.00. And so on.

With pot limit, we just leave the blinds at \$0.25/\$0.50.

TABLE STAKES

With this pot limit Hold 'em, it is very important to note that you CANNOT DIG for more money in the middle of a hand. However, there is no limit to the amount of cash you keep on the table to use for your Hold 'em betting, and you can use it all for betting, as long as it is visible to the other players.