

Texas Hold'em Tournament: House Rules

Overview:

- **Rules** – The rules that follow are designed to provide a fair and level playing field for all tournament participants and to ensure that the tournament runs as smoothly as possible. Therefore, it is necessary to follow all rules at all times in order to ensure the integrity and fairness of the game.
- **Decisions** – In order to ensure a fair tournament, the tournament director will be responsible for resolving any issues regarding the rules that may arise during the course of play. All information will be evaluated and weighed against the rules and a decision will be rendered. Remember, there is seldom a decision that makes everyone happy. Every hand has to have a winner and a loser, but when it comes to decisions, remember, **the tournament directors' decisions are final.**
- **Chips**—Each player will begin with \$10,000 in chips.

Game Play:

In Texas Hold 'Em, players receive two down cards (also referred to as hole cards or pocket cards), after which there is a round of betting. Three community cards are then turned over simultaneously (called the "flop") and another round of betting occurs. The next two community cards are turned one at a time, with a round of betting after each card. The community cards (also referred to as "the board") are used by all players to make the best possible five-card combination from among the board and their personal cards. A player may even use all of the board cards and no personal cards to form a hand (play the board).

Object: The best possible five card poker hand, using any combination of hole cards and community cards, wins the pot.

Betting Rounds:

1. The dealer deals each player their own two cards face-down (pocket cards)
2. 1st betting round
3. The dealer burns a card then turns over three community cards face-up (The Flop)
4. 2nd betting round
5. The dealer burns another card then turns over 1 more community card (The Turn, 4th street)
6. 3rd betting round
7. The dealer burns another card then turns over 1 final community card (The River, 5th street)
8. Last betting round
9. Showdown (Every remaining player shows hand with bettor showing first)

All remaining players must use one of the following choices at the showdown:

- Two pocket cards & three board cards
- One pocket card & four board cards
- No pocket cards & five board cards (called playing the board)

Rules During Hands:

- There is absolutely **NO TALKING** about the hand allowed while the hand is being played. Do not reveal any information about your hand to anyone regardless of whether you are still in the hand or not.
- **DO NOT** show your cards to anyone during the hand. The rule is "show one, show all". If you, accidentally or otherwise, show your hand to someone during the hand, you must show **everyone** your hand. There can be **NO** unfair advantage given to anyone that is not shared by everyone.
- The order of betting (action) must be followed. Do not act out of turn. You must wait your turn to check, fold, bet, or raise. If there has been no bet, please do not fold your hand.

- Do not show your hand before action is complete. This is VERY important. It can influence the remaining bettors and will not be allowed.
- When folding, do not throw your cards. Place your cards on the table in a manner that will not case them to be disruptive to the game or get mixed in with the other cards.
- Please make your intentions clear. Whether it be betting, raising, checking or folding. A proper check is either a verbal declaration that can be clearly heard by your entire table, or a tapping motion on the table
- The cards play themselves. A player does not have to declare what combination of hole cards and board cards are being played. Once a hand is exposed to the table, the dealer will determine what the best possible hand is, regardless of what the player may have declared.

Betting

- **Blinds** - The person to the immediate left of the dealer posts the small blind (1/2 of the minimum bet for that round), and the person 2 to the dealers left posts the Big Blind (the full value of the minimum bet for that round).
- **Skipping Blinds** – No player will be allowed to skip a blind or be forced to pay a blind twice in a row. If a player who is the small blind is eliminated, the button does not move. This ensures the big blind is not missed by the next player in order. If a player who is the big blind is eliminated, the button does not move and only the big blind will be posted for that round as the player who would have posted the small blind is no longer in the game.
- **Order of Betting** – During the pre-flop betting round, the player to the immediate left of the Big Blind will start the betting. During this round, the players have the option of matching the Big Blind, folding, or raising. The Big Blind is he last to act during this round and has the option to either check (if no raises have been made), raise, or fold (only if a raise has been made). For all subsequent betting rounds, the betting will start with the player immediately to the left of the dealer.
- **Betting Amounts** – Since this is “no limit” hold’em, the maximum you can wager is the amount of chips you have. If you bet all of your chips, you are going “all in”. The minimum amount you can wager is the amount of the level structure you are currently playing. For example, if the blinds are currently \$100/\$200, the minimum bet for the pre-flop and post-flop betting rounds would be equivalent to the big blind bet of \$200. The minimum bet for the turn (fourth card) and the river (fifth card) betting rounds would be the double that of the big blind, or \$400.
- **Raises** – If you wish to raise, you must at least double the last bet/raise. Example, player 1 wagers \$100, player 2 wants to raise. Player 2’s options are to raise to \$200 (doubling the bet) or up to the limit of his/her chips. There are a maximum of 3 raises allowed. The first bet and three raises caps (stops) the betting for that round.
- **String bets/raises** – A string bet/raise is defined as a bet/raise making more than one motion. For example, declaring bet/raise, placing \$100 on the table, then going back to your stack and grabbing additional chips and placing them with the first \$100. This would be 2 motions. If you declare the amount of your bet/raise **before** you place chips on the table, you may make as many motions as you need to cover your wager. There are NO string bets/raises allowed. All bets/raises must be announced by the player before chips are placed.
- **Verbal Declaration** – If you say bet or raise, this is considered a verbal declaration and you will be held to that declaration. If no amount was declared, you must bet/raise the minimum of the current betting round, to the maximum of your chips
- **Location of bets** - Bets must be placed immediately in front of each player. Placing bets in a manner that causes them to partially go into the pot is known as “splashing the pot” and will not be tolerated. Please be careful with your chips so you don’t splash the pot. If you splash the pot in such a manner that it is impossible for the dealer to determine how many chips you bet, those chips will be surrendered to the pot and you will be required to bet again or fold.

Ties

- If two or more players have the same hand (i.e. The board has 6, 9, 10, Jack, Queen and 2 or more players have a King, making a King-high straight for their highest possible hand), the pot is split equally between each hand. If there is an odd chip remaining, it goes to the player closest to the dealer button moving clockwise from the button.

Side Pots

- Players going all-in will sometimes cause the need for a “side pot” to be created. Side pots are necessary in order to ensure that a player cannot win more than the amount of chips that they are entitled to. For example, Player 1 bets \$2000. Player 2 calls the \$2000. Player 3 also calls but only has \$1000 left. Player 3 would then declare all-in and wager the \$1000. Since player 3 can't cover the full \$2000 wager, \$1000 from player 1, 2, & 3 are put into the main pot and a side pot is created with the additional \$1000 from Players 1 and 2. The side pot is kept separate from the main pot and any remaining betting between player 1 and 2 will go into this side pot. At showdown, only player 1 and 2 show their hands for the side pot. After the winner of the side pot is determined, the winner of that pot will show their hand against Player 3 to determine the winner of the main pot.
- There can be as many side pots during a hand as needed. In no limit hold'em, it's not uncommon to see two or three side pots. Don't let it get confusing. The dealer and the tournament directors are there to help. Try not to confuse them. It can happen if there are too many people trying to officiate the hand. Please allow them to do their job.

Consolidating Tables:

- In order to provide a level playing field for all players, the number of players at each table will be kept as even as possible. If a table loses a player which results in them having fewer players than other tables, a player the largest table will be moved over as quickly as possible.
- The goal of the tournament directors is to keep as many people playing at as few tables as possible. (i.e. Having 5 tables with 9 players each rather than 9 tables with 5 players each) so, if a smaller table loses a player and there are enough available seats at the other table to accommodate those players, the smallest table will be broken down.
- When there are enough seats open to break a table, there will be a random draw for the available seats. The random draw will consist of each player drawing a card that correlates to a table number and taking the available seat closest to their current position relative to the button. This breakdown will continue until we reach the final table(s).

Misdeals

- A misdeal can not be declared by a player. Only the dealer or floor officials may declare a misdeal. If a player feels that a misdeal should be declared, they should bring it to the dealer's attention immediately. Misdeals are not a discretionary condition. If any of the following conditions occur, a misdeal must be declared :
 1. If the first hole card dealt is exposed, a misdeal results. The dealer will retrieve the card, reshuffle, and recut the cards. If any other hole card 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 burn card. If more than one hole card is exposed, this is a misdeal and there must be a re-deal.
 2. If the flop contains too many cards, it must be re-dealt. (This applies even if it were possible to know which card was the extra one.)
 3. If the flop needs to be re-dealt because the cards were prematurely flopped before the betting was complete, or the flop contained too many cards, the board cards are mixed with the remainder of the deck. The burn card remains on the table. After shuffling, the dealer cuts the deck and deals a new flop without burning a card.
 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 burn cards 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.
 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 burn card. If the dealer mistakenly deals more than one extra card, it is a misdeal and the deck will be re-shuffled and re-dealt from the beginning.

6. You must declare that you are playing the board before you throw your cards away; otherwise you relinquish all claim to the pot.
7. If a player is not dealt a hand for some reason, all cards will be returned to the deck, it will be re-shuffled and all hands will be re-dealt.

*Rules 1-6 provided by Bob Ciaffone via ROBERT'S RULES OF POKER

Official Hand Rankings

The following are the official hand rankings from highest to lowest:

- **Royal Flush:** Ten, Jack, Queen, King, Ace of the same suit
- **Straight Flush:** Straight with all five cards in the same suit.
- **Four of a Kind:** Four cards of the same number or face value ("quads").
- **Full House:** Three cards of one number or face value and two cards of another number or face value. If more than one player has a full house, the full house with the highest ranking three of a kind ("trips") wins.
- **Flush:** Five cards of the same suit. If there is more than one flush, the hand with the highest card(s) wins (All 5 cards in the flush play).
- **Straight:** Five cards in sequence and of any suit. An Ace can be used in the highest straight (10, J, Q, K, A) and the lowest straight (A, 2, 3, 4, 5).
- **Three of a Kind:** Three cards of the same number or face value ("trips").
- **Two Pair:** If two players have two pair, the hand with the highest pair wins. If they have the same high pair, whoever has the second highest pair wins. If they have the same two pair, whoever has the highest fifth card ("kicker") wins.
- **One Pair:** Two cards of the same number or face value. If two players have the same pair, the highest outside card(s) wins.
- **High Card:** The hand with the highest card(s) wins.