

WINNING AT TEXAS HOLD 'EM

WINNING STRATEGIES FOR BEGINNERS



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INTRODUCTION

It's becoming almost as big as baseball, football, hockey, and other sporting events. Television has increased its popularity. With the Internet, it's coming into our homes at a lightning fast rate. The rage that's sweeping the nation - poker!

Although the game has been around for years played in family recreation rooms, smoky bars, casinos, and even retirement homes, these days, poker has become the game of choice for hundreds of thousands of people.

Family game night used to mean getting out the Monopoly board and battling over Park Place and Broadway. Now, family game night is more likely to be characterized by breaking out the poker chips and battling each other for the best hands.

More and more people are talking about their bad beats, their great hands, and their prowess for play. Popular on college campuses, fraternal clubs, and even retirement homes, poker has become our new game of chance, and our new game of choice.

What has led to the rise of this game? Most likely, it has been television and the media. On any given evening, the average person can flip on the TV set and find a poker game being aired.

The World Series of Poker, Celebrity Poker Showdown, and Ultimate Poker Showdown are rising in the ratings as we tune in to see professionals battle it out and compare our play to theirs.

Nearly every home these days has at least one computer. The Internet has become our lifeline, in ways, for information, contact with the outside world, and – yes – our portal to the world of poker beyond our kitchen table. Now ordinary people can log on and play poker with people other than our parents, kids, and friends. Many professional players sponsor online website where they are required to play allowing Average Joe to match his poker skills with the likes of Howard Lederer and Chris Ferguson.

Perhaps the biggest rise in poker popularity – specifically online poker – stems from one man’s \$40 online buy-in leading to the Cinderella story of the industry. Chris Moneymaker qualified for The World Series of Poker main event through a small buy-in satellite event at Poker Stars.

At the Series, he outlasted a field of 839 entrants – the largest in World Series of Poker history at the time. He pitted heads against some of the most well-known poker professionals in the world – and won! Moneymaker’s first-place finish netted him \$2.5 million dollars, which wasn’t bad considering it was his first live tournament.

Many people looked at Moneymaker’s win as monumental. After all, he was just an average guy. He could be anyone’s next door neighbor or co-worker, and he went up against the pros and won. Chris Moneymaker opened the door for everyday people to dream about being the next professional poker player.

In fact, the 2004 World Series featured triple the number of players over the 2003 turnout. At least four players in the WSOP final table won their entry through an online card room. Like Moneymaker, 2004 winner Greg “Fossil man” Raymer also won his entry at the Poker Stars online card room.

There are a myriad of tips and tricks for playing the game of poker. Everyone seems to have an opinion on the best way to play the game.

True, poker is a game of chance, and many would argue that there really is no secret to winning the game. However, there is a best way to play. As Kenny Rogers sang in “The Gambler”, you’ve got to know when to hold ‘em and know when to fold ‘em. Know when to walk away, and know when to run.

There are many variations on the game of poker, but the one most popular today has got to be Texas Hold ‘Em. It’s a relatively simple game, but like all poker, it can change with the deal of every card. In this book, we’ll explore different ways to play the game online to maximize on your buy-in. We’ll touch on tournaments as well.

Online poker can be fun and even profitable when you play smart and follow the advice of those in the know. Whether you’re playing for fun or for money, the game can easily become an obsession, so we’ve also given you information about getting help with a gambling problem.

We won’t make you a professional – that’s up to you! But we will try to give you some food for thought when the cards are dealt and it’s time to bet.

So, let’s talk poker!

HISTORY OF POKER

The history of poker is a matter of some debate. The name of the game likely descended from the French word *poque*, which descended from the German word *pochen* ('to knock'), but it is not clear whether the origins of poker itself lie with the games bearing those names. It closely resembles the Persian game of *as nas*, and may have been taught to French settlers in New Orleans by Persian sailors.

Poker is commonly regarded as sharing ancestry with the Renaissance game of *primero* and the French *brelan*. The English game *brag* (earlier *bragg*) clearly descended from *brelan* and incorporated bluffing (though the concept was known in other games by that time). It is quite possible that all of these earlier games influenced the development of poker as it exists now.

English actor Joseph Crowell reported that the game was played in New Orleans in 1829, with a deck of 20 cards, four players betting on which player's hand was the most valuable. Jonathan H. Green's book, *An Exposure of the Arts and Miseries of Gambling* published in 1843 described the spread of the game from there to the rest of the country by Mississippi riverboats, on which gambling was a common pastime. As it spread up the Mississippi and West during the gold rush it is thought to have become a part of the frontier, pioneering ethos.

Poker initially was played with one round of betting. Players were dealt five cards face down and there was no draw of cards. Professional gamblers later modified the rules to increase the profitability of the game to them. After 1850, wild cards and bluffing became common practices and drawing cards was introduced as well.