

ABOUT THE STRATEGY IN GOLDRUSH FEVER POKER GAME:

Thanks for buying our game!

The Poker players in Goldrush Fever play fair, which is to say they will never look at your hand or cheat via colluding with each other. If they win, it is because they got lucky or their preprogrammed strategies worked.

Sadly, the cell phone players are pretty dumb. Most cell phones don't have the processing power to allow them to think through all the possibilities. Each player has their own strategy. Some players call too much, some people fold too much, some bet too much and some play the best Poker game we could program on that platform. Generally as you head further north, you will see the better players in the higher stake games.

A number of testers found the Maniacs (those who bet too much, especially with weak hands) very aggravating. When the blinds are low, you can wait them out, folding until you have a strong hand. When the blinds are higher, then you have to jump in with weaker hands and hope you get lucky.

But in games with few players and high blinds or antes, a very aggressive style is close to correct play. So don't be surprised if the Maniacs win more than their fair share of the tournaments.

On this site, we assume you know how to play Poker and Texas Hold'em. If you are not, please read the help text on your phone.

If you find the game too hard, you can adjust the difficulty of the game in the option menu. For more general Poker strategy, see below:

Poker Starts with the Ante / Blinds:

If there were no blind bets or antes there would be a perfect strategy for Poker. Always fold until you get the best possible hand. (For example, wait for a royal flush in draw Poker, 3 aces in 7 card stud or a pair of aces in Texas Hold'em.) If you didn't take this strategy you could be defeated by anyone who did.

Poker wouldn't exist if that was all there was to it. So in Poker, before any cards are dealt, some money is put into the pot using antes or blind bets. This makes it worth while to go in with weaker hands. With all but your strongest hands, you should be happy if you are able to win the blinds or antes.

(From this point forward, I'll just call the blind bets and or antes just 'blinds'.)

Now if the blinds are very small compared to your stack of chips you can wait for very strong hands and fold everything else. However if the blinds are a significant fraction of your stack of chips, you need to go in with weaker hands or the blinds will suck away all your money.

The nice thing about tournaments is that the blinds steadily increase. That puts increasing pressure on players to jump in and mix it up with bets and raises. So early in the tournament, you can wait for the large cards and large pairs. Later on, (especially with fewer players) you must be courageous with weaker cards.

Related to the size of the blinds is how many players are in the game. If you are playing Hold'em with 10 players, then 1/10 of the time you will start with the best hand. If you could somehow know that you had the best hand at that time, you could put money in on those hands, fold the rest and be well on your way to being a world champion.

Of course, you do not know for sure when you have the best hand. But strong Poker players fold all but the strong starts quickly. (Unless they think they can bluff and steal the blinds.)

But in a 3 player game 1/3 of your starting hands are the best hand going in, so 1/3 of the time (at least) you should be betting them. So as the number of players declines, the quality of hands that you should be aggressive with increases.

In our game we start with a short handed table with 5 players and the blinds soon get very high. This is a situation where aggression is rewarded. If someone is pounding on you with weak hands wait until you have some thing fair and then try to get into a raising war. In a short handed game a medium sized pair is often enough to win in Hold'em. Heads up (when just you and one other player are in a hand), an ace high will often win.

Basic Poker Strategy:

Your basic goal is to bet or raise when you have the best hand, call when you have a good draw (defined below) and fold everything else.

What is the Best Hand?

To know when you have the best hand is normally impossible (expert players can often get a very good idea though, by observing your play and reactions). However, with some study you can learn what starts are likely to be the best hands and go from there. Briefly we will look at powerful Hold'em starting hands.

Big Pairs (AA, KK, QQ, JJ) are very powerful starts. When you have these, you can bet and raise. They like to be played one on one so normally you bet them hoping that you can get the hand down to just one or two opponents. (Ace - Ace is so strong you will bet it to put more money in the pot and don't mind too much if you keep several players.)

Medium Pairs (TT, 99, 88, 77) are pretty good. If people are folding when you bet they can be treated much like large pairs as you want to play one on one with someone. If everyone calls when you raise with these then they should be treated more like the small pairs below.

Big Aces (AK, AQ, AJ) are also very powerful starts. They need to hit an Ace or the other card on the flop (so really they are drawing hands hoping for a good flop). The advantage is that it is easy to tell if you make a strong hand. If you miss, you can cheaply fold. If the game has so few players that Ace high will often win, then they should call or bet to the end of the hand.

Random Big Cards (KQ, KJ, KT, QJ, QT, JT) are two cards ten or above not yet mentioned. These are weaker than they seem. It is hard to know where you stand with these as your opponent could easily have a hand that is helped more by the flop and you can't be sure of the relative strength of your two hands. However, as the number of players drop, the chance of someone having a better hand than you decrease so you can be more aggressive with them.

Small Pairs (66, 55, 44, 33, 22) are quite weak hands. What you hope to do is get in with them for a small amount of money with lots of players and then flop a 3 of a kind. If that happens you can be very aggressive with them. If you don't flop 3 of a kind, then you quietly fold. As the number of players decrease the chance of getting 4 or 5 people in the pot is remote but when you only have 2 or 3 people left in the tournament these hands start getting more powerful again because hands start being won with no pairs at all (which you of course can beat). When you are playing heads up with just 2 players left in the tournament, any pair is now a powerful hand.

Suited connectors (e.g 7 of spades & 8 of spades, 4 of hearts & 5 of hearts, jack of clubs & ten of clubs) are two cards with adjacent ranks and the same suit. In full handed (10 player) Hold'em these hands are often worth playing. In short handed games being suited is a nice bonus, but the main concern is the size of the cards. So normally you will be playing fewer suited connectors short handed and more big cards.

When VERY Short Handed:

When there are only 2 or 3 players left in the tournament I start looking at any of the following as being strong starting hands:

Any pair.

An Ace with any other card.

A King with any card 6 or higher.

Any two cards that are both 8 or higher.

Strongest Hand After the Flop:

The flop will improve a player roughly 1/3 of the time. If you have started off with a reasonable hand and the flop improves you then usually you should bet it.

Things are trickier when your hand does not improve and the other players bet into you. If there are 3 or 4 other players still in the hand and your hand does not improve you must seriously consider if you are beat. If so fold and save your money.

If there are one or two other players in the hand the flop may miss you and may well have missed them as well. If they bet with nothing and you always fold if you miss, then they will almost certainly win the tournament. (The saying is that 'tournaments are not won, they are stolen'.) If you are fighting a player that is betting & raising with garbage you must occasionally take the stronger of your hands that miss, and raise them back. There is no easy strategy here. Watch your opponents, figure out who bets with garbage and be aggressive when you think you have them beat. You will some times miss but that is better than letting them run over you and steal all those pots.

Drawing Hands:

The basic Poker strategy says bet or raise when you have the likely best hand and call when you have a good draw. What is a good draw?

A drawing hand is a hand that is NOT the best hand now. For example, if you have a pair of kings and I have a pair of aces you have a powerful hand but it is not the best. You hope to draw and improve your hand to beat me. Now the number of cards that will improve you to the best hand is termed an 'out'. So in the example above, you have two outs. Either of the other two kings would make your hand better than my pair of aces.

It is possible to have many more outs than just 2. For example, let us say that you have this hand: **Qh, Jd** (You have the Queen of hearts and the Jack of diamonds.)

The flop is: **3c, Ks, Td.**

So you have a nothing hand right now. King – Queen high. Any ace or any pair will beat you so this hand is not much yet. But if the last two cards include an Ace or a 9 then you will have a straight. A straight that can be completed on both ends is an open ended straight. There are 4 aces that you have not seen and four 9's you have not seen so you have 8 outs that will improve you to the (likely) best hand.

If you have: **9c, 7h**

and the flop is: **Th, 6c, 3s.**

Then you have what is known as an inside straight draw for 4 outs. (Any 8 helps you.)

If you have: **As, 8s**

And the flop is: **7s, Js, 3d.**

Then you have 9 outs (any spade).

If you are lucky enough to get: **8h, 7h**

with a flop of: **6h, 5h, Kd**

Then you have 15 outs (any heart is 9 outs, and the **9s, 9d, 9c, 4s, 4d, 4c** are 6 more outs.)

As a rough (and often inaccurate) rule, if you have 8 or more outs you have a good draw. See below for a better way to judge if you have a good draw.

Drawing Hands: Pot Odds:

Let us say that after the flop there is \$50 in the pot and then your opponent bets \$10. Everyone else folds and you have an outside straight draw which you figure will win if you hit it. So you have 8 outs.

Should you call this bet?

Well you have seen five cards (your two card hand and three cards in the flop) so there are $52 - 5 = 47$ unknown cards left in the deck. 8 of them will let you win and the rest won't so you have an $8/47$ chance of making your draw in the next card. This is about $8/48 = 1/6$. So one time in 6 you will win, and 5 times in 6 you will lose. There is a 1:5 ratio of you winning on the next card. (Alternately we can say this is 5:1 against you.)

You are risking a \$10 call to try to win \$60. (The \$50 in the pot plus the \$10 bet.) Since the odds are equal or better than the ratio of what you're risking compared to what you will win if you make your draw, this is a good call. (In other words, the 6:1 payoff is better than 5:1 against you.)

Basically the more money there is in the pot, the more worth while it is to call hoping that you will make your draw and win it.

If there are two cards to come, then you have more chances to make your draw but you will have an extra bet to call. Usually you should just look at the chances of making your hand on the next card for the pot odds.

It might help to memorize this table. (Values are rounded off):

YOUR HAND:

2 outs (a pair hoping to improve to 3 of a kind)
4 outs (an inside straight)
8 outs (an outside straight)
9 outs (a flush draw)
15 outs (a flush and a straight draw)

ODDS OF IMPROVING WITH 1 CARD:

22 to 1 against you.
10 to 1 against you.
5 to 1 against you.
4 to 1 against you.
2 to 1 against you.

In a small game with 4 or fewer opponents you are unlikely to get a pot large enough to make draws of less than 8 outs worth while (that is why the rough rule above works in small games). If you only have one or two opponents, the only draws that are likely to be worthwhile are ones with 12 or more outs (which are very rare).

As the number of players decrease, most drawing hands become bad draws (since the pot odds are so poor) so you should fold most drawing hands.

Position:

Betting always flows in a clockwise direction around the Poker table. This means that you will see what those sitting on your right will do, be able to react, and then the people on your left will react to you. This is military intelligence, you have an advantage on those to your right and those sitting to your left have the advantage over you.

Position is so powerful in Hold'em that a button rotates around the table saying who's turn it is to act last. This way, everyone has a turn at playing the 'dealer' who acts last, and the blinds (who have to pay to play and must act first in the second and later betting rounds.)

Mike Caro (an entertaining Poker writer) once wrote that if you could make a satellite hover endlessly over a Poker table you would see money flowing clockwise around the table. Your job is to make the money flow stop at your seat.

By the way, a lot of this money is not full pots won or lost, but just earning an extra bet on this hand or avoiding putting in a bad bet in another. If you act last, and see everyone has checked (indicating that they have weak hands), you can bet a medium strong hand more safely. If you call with a medium strong hand in early position, and then someone raises and someone else re-raises you will have to throw away your hand losing your original call. These extra bets won or lost all add up.

Before the flop you should be very reluctant to call if the pot has been raised and re-raised. This means calling (or betting to a lesser extent) in early position is dangerous since you don't know how many people will be raising after you.

Calling with a draw in early position is risky. For a draw to be profitable, you may need two or three people to call the pot. If everyone folds except you, then you are not getting the pot odds you counted on to make your call a good call. In late position you can figure out exactly if you have the needed odds for a good call.

In late position if you have a weak hand and everyone folds to you, then you can try bluffing and stealing the blinds.

In a full, 10 player game, some experts suggest you play less than half as many hands in early position as late.

While all the above is true, it is less true in small game. In a ten player game, if you act first, then there are 9 people behind you that can surprise you. In a 5 player game this is only 4 other people. Still, you should be more picky about your hands when you have to act first.

Player Types:

Everyone is different but if a Poker player often makes mistake A, then there is a good chance that they will also make a similar mistake B. So we can divide Poker Players into 4 rough categories based on what sorts of mistakes they most often make. If you identify a player in one of these categories you can do better by adjusting your strategies to take advantage of their weakness.

THE FISH: The most common mistake a fish makes is to call with hands that they should fold. Fish are often very weak players that feel lost and are not sure what to do. If they think that they have any chance of winning the pot, they call to the end.

In Poker we are NOT trying to win all the pots! To do so we could always bet or call and we would win every pot it was possible to win. But we would quickly lose a huge amount of money while doing this. The goal in Poker is to win the most money by folding quickly your weak hands before you put any more money in with them, and bet your strong hands aggressively. (You call with the good draws.)

To take advantage of a fish, wait until you have a strong hand and bet it. Since fish often stay in with garbage cards, you can play more hands against a fish than against a stronger player.

THE ROCK: A rock is someone who folds too much. They like to wait until they have a really strong hand and then bet it. However they fold too many medium strength hands and sometimes fold good draws. (Folding good draws will lose money in the long run.) They are easy to notice as they fold early much more often than other players in the tournament.

Rocks like being right. Some rocks will never bluff or play unpredictably. Others will occasionally bluff on the end if they miss their draw. Rocks hate not knowing where they stand with a hand so they tend to wait until they have powerful holdings where it is easy to understand how to play it.

To take advantage of a rock's weakness you should bluff them by raising with weak hands early in the hand. Later in a hand they likely have something so be cautious about bluffing them.

If a rock bets or raises, fold any medium strength hands or weaker. Let them take a small pot with their power house cards. Against rocks try to steal the blinds as often as possible.

THE MANIAC: A maniac raises too much, often with garbage cards. In a small game with 5 or fewer players the correct formula for play is to be aggressive so (in our game) a maniac's play is not too far from being correct. Thus you are likely to find them aggravating players to deal with.

Consider two players; the first who always folds when you bet. Such a player would be easy to beat. Just always bet, they fold, and you steal their blinds until they are out. The second player is a maniac who always raises. Sometimes you will have the best hand and win a lot of money. Other times they will have the best hand and win a lot of money from you. And sometimes you will fold and they will win what ever is in the pot.

Playing a maniac is exciting. When they are unlucky they will lose a lot of chips fast. If they are lucky, they will win a huge pile of chips. By raising with weak hands they are making a mistake, again and again. But you have to call them and show down the best hand to beat them. There is a saying that: "in Poker you earn pots, by betting them". The maniac believes this and has it as his or her theme song.

Another advantage a Maniac has, is that if people know that someone is a maniac they will call them with weaker hands to avoid being bluffed out of the pot. So when a maniac gets a strong hand, they tend to make more money on it than (say) a rock whose play is predictable.

To beat a maniac, you have to wait for a moderately strong hand and stay with it until the end. If you let a maniac bluff you too often you will take a very profitable situation and turn it into a sure loss. If you have a maniac to your left, check your strong hands and when he or she bets, raise them when it comes back around to you. When a maniac raises you (and you have a strong hand), reraise. And don't try to bluff a maniac, they are likely to reraise against a bluff (which is excellent strategy by the way). To beat a maniac, first you get your hand and then get your man.

THE FOX: This is a player who is an expert and does not make any common mistakes. The fox strives to play correctly day in and day out. The fox has read lots of Poker books and understands the theory and math of Poker. A fox has studied and practiced Poker repeatedly.

There is not much you can do against a fox. Your profit comes from the weaker players at the table. Foxes take advantage of predictable play so you must occasionally play unpredictably.

If there are too many foxes in your Poker game, it may be time to start searching for an easier game to play in.

Advanced Plays:

If you always play the same way, alert players can learn your habits and get a good idea of what hand you have. If you have any weaknesses they will tailor their tactics to take advantage of you. And if they know that the only time you bet, that you have a strong hand they will fold their weaker hands any time you show aggression.

Weak players won't notice so there is no need to put on an act. But against stronger players you should occasionally play 'incorrectly'. This means calling with strong hands and betting (bluffing) with weak ones.

You don't want to go overboard with this. Doing something unpredictable and strange too often will cause you to lose chips. But if done once in a while, it will plant the seeds of doubt in your opponent's mind and make you a tougher player to play against.

When you are strong and want to look weak:

THE CHECK RAISE: With this tactic when you have a strong hand in early position, you check (or call) rather than raising. You hope that someone will raise after you (this is almost sure to happen if a maniac is on your left). When the action comes back around to you, then you raise. Hopefully you will get two bets out of people that want to call rather than just one. Another advantage of doing this is that people will start to fear your checks as they think you might be slow playing a powerful hand. This makes them a little less eager to bluff you. The main disadvantage is that if the person to your left does not raise you have lost a bet you would like to make.

SLOW PLAYING: This is like a check raise but you do it for whole betting rounds. The minimum bets double on the turn and the river. So if you have a very powerful hand you can check or call on the early betting rounds to keep people in. Then on the later betting round you raise with the double sized bets. This is a very dangerous tactic as it gives people very good pot odds to try to complete their draws. (You like it when people don't charge you to try to complete your draws so it follows that they like it when you let them attempt to complete their draws for free.) To slow play, you must have a VERY strong hand.

Slow playing should only be done if the following are true: a) There is not much money in the pot; b) the free card you give is unlikely to let your opponents improve to a hand that will beat you; c) betting is likely to drive out opponents.

When you are weak and want to look strong:

THE BLUFF: Bluffing is when you have a terrible hand and bet it hoping that someone will fold a stronger hand and let you win the pot. You should only try to bluff one person at a time. If you bluff into a crowd, there is too good a chance that someone will call.

You do not want to try to bluff a fish, since they call everything. Normally you can bluff rocks and (occasionally) foxes who pride themselves in making correct folds. The danger of bluffing is that you are putting more money in a pot you have little chance of winning. But being caught bluffing a couple of times a night is no bad thing. Because people know you bluff, they will tend to call you more often which will make your strong hands pay off better.

THE SEMI-BLUFF: The semi-bluff is a bluff when you have outs. A semi-bluff has two ways of winning. First everyone may fold and you may win the hand. Second even if you are called, you might hit your draw and win the showdown. However, this does not mean you should usually bet your draws. You should only semi-bluff if you think that there is a fairly good chance that the person will fold to your bet.

It is tricky to defend correctly against a semi-bluff. If you think someone is semi-bluffing against you, then you should do the same thing as when you think they are bluffing. Raise.

Just like bluffs, you normally would not use a semi-bluff against maniacs or fish. It can be used against rocks and foxes.

Final Thoughts:

Our goal was to put a fun Poker game on the cell phone. Some of the games are limit (where the smallest and largest bets allowed are the same) and some are no limit (where there is no maximum sized bet). Some towns have games that are for small stakes and others for large. Some towns have games where the blinds increase slowly, and others where the blinds go up quickly. Some towns (mostly in the north) have tough players where as others feature weak players. And you can change the difficulty of the game as a whole.

Don't be shy about trying out games at different locations & try out different difficulty levels. It is our hope that you will find a town or two in our little gold rush where there is a game that suits you perfectly.

Sincerely, Rick and the team at Koolhaus.