



Online Poker Statistics Guide

*A comprehensive guide for
online poker players*

*This guide was created by a winning poker player on behalf of [Poker Copilot](#).
[Poker Copilot](#) is a tool that automatically records your opponents' poker statistics,
and shows them onscreen in a HUD (head-up display) while you play.*

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Online Poker Statistics Guide

Our ten-chapter guide walks you through the most important poker statistics to use preflop and postflop to guide your decisions. Understanding the following ten stats is essential to beating the games of today.

Chapter 1: VPIP and PFR

Voluntarily put money in pot (VPIP) and preflop raise (PFR) are the two most basic and important poker statistics to rely on. Poker Copilot automatically takes information on your opponent's preflop tendencies, which allows you to quickly determine whether you are up against a professional player, a weak passive player, an insane gambler, or an overly tight rock.

Read our guide to [VPIP/PFR](#) to find out how to identify the types of players you are up against.

Chapter 2: Unopened Preflop Raise (UOPFR)

While VPIP/PFR gives you an overall view of your opponents, UOPFR lets you understand their game according to their positions at the table. Poker Copilot tracks the percentage of times that each player raises from each position, allowing you to put your opponents on a "range of hands." A range of hands is a specific number of possible cards they could have from each position, which is essential information for determining how to play against them.

The UOPFR statistic is the basis of creating a strategy to counter your opponent from each spot at the table. Our guide also includes detailed [opening ranges for beginners](#).

Chapter 3: Blind Stealing

Poker revolves around the blinds. Without them, there is no game. Are you attacking the blinds enough preflop? Are you defending properly against your opponents' blind steals? This article is an in-depth guide to protecting your big and small blinds from different



opponent types. It also shows you which players are the easiest to steal the blinds from. Learn [how to steal and defend the blinds](#).

Chapter 4: 3-betting and 4-betting

A 3-bet occurs when one player raises and another re-raises preflop. A 4-bet happens when someone re-raises the 3-bet! These pots are always larger than single-raised pots and are integral to your long-term win rate. It doesn't matter how many small pots you win if you end up losing one large 3-bet pot that erases your profit. Learn how to 3-bet, 4-bet, and defend against these plays with our [guide to 3-betting](#).

Chapter 5: Donk Bets

For new players in particular, there can be nothing more frustrating than facing a donk bet. A donk bet occurs when, after you raise preflop, your out-of-position opponent bets the flop before you have a chance to decide if you want to continuation bet or not.

Once you finish this article, however, donk betting is not going to be a problem. Instead of feeling frustrated, you are going to have a smile on your face when your opponent decides to donk into you. Poker Copilot takes detailed information on the percentage of times your opponent is donking, and we explain how to interpret this statistic and use it to exploit your opponent.

You might be surprised to learn that there are certain situations in which you should be making a donk bet! We walk you through when to make a donk bet, and why. Learn more with our [donk betting guide](#).

Chapter 6: Continuation Bets (cbets)

This may be the most important chapter in our guide. Continuation betting occurs when a player raises preflop and then bets the flop. If you are continuation betting incorrectly, you could be missing out huge amounts of value against weak players, and setting yourself up to torch your cash in other situations in which you had a clear check. Learn the difference between value betting, semi-bluffing, and bluff-catching with our very important [postflop guide to cbets](#).



Chapter 7: Check-Raising

Once you've mastered continuation betting, you need to know how to face a check-raise. A check-raise occurs when a player checks in position, and then re-raises when their opponent bets. Our guide walks you through what to do when you get check-raised, and how to create a balanced check-raising range of your own. Read our guide to the [check-raising poker statistic](#).

Chapter 8: Squeeze Bet

When one player raises preflop and another player then calls, a profitable opportunity to 3-bet occurs with lots of dead money in play. Find out how to capitalize on squeeze opportunities and how to react to squeeze bets with our guide to the [poker statistic squeeze bet](#).

Chapter 9: Big Blinds Remaining

“Big blinds remaining” is a poker statistic that shows opponents' stacks in terms of how many of the big blinds they can afford to pay. Our guide to [big blinds remaining](#) explains how to play when short-stacked and how to play against short stacks in both multi-table tournaments and cash games.

Chapter 10: Float Bets

When you decide not to continuation bet a flop, you often have to face opponents who, sensing weakness, put in a bet. If you have ever wondered what to do when you face a float bet or when to make a float bet of your own, you need to read our [guide to float bets](#).



Chapter 1: VPIP and PFR

What are VPIP and PFR and how do they affect your game?

VPIP and PFR are two basic but powerful poker statistics. Combined, they give you a clear picture of how your opponents are playing and ways to exploit their mistakes.

VPIP: Voluntarily Put In Pot

VPIP tracks the percentage of hands in which a particular player voluntarily puts money into the pot preflop. VPIP increases when a player could fold but instead commits money to the pot preflop. This includes limping (merely calling the big blind), calling, and raising.

Posting the small and big blinds does not influence the VPIP statistic. These actions are involuntary and therefore give no useful information on player tendencies.

PFR: Preflop Raise

PFR tracks the percentage of hands in which a particular player makes a preflop raise when having the opportunity to fold or call instead. This includes reraises.

The relationship between VPIP and PFR

VPIP is always higher than PFR. All preflop raises increase VPIP, but not all actions that influence VPIP will affect PFR. For example, limping preflop will increase VPIP but not PFR.

New players usually call too much preflop. Calling far more often than raising causes your VPIP to rise higher than your PFR, creating a gap between the two stats. This is a warning sign that you are moving away from the aggressive strategy essential to winning at poker. Winning players have a tight gap between their VPIP and their PFR.



A quick rule of the thumb is that the higher the PFR, the more aggressive a player is. The bigger the gap between VPIP and PFR, the more passive a player is.

Identifying player types using VPIP/PFR

VPIP and PFR are the key indicators of how your opponents understand the game of poker and of their overall strategy. Within 10 hands, Poker Copilot will give you a rough outline of an opponent's play style. 100 hands are enough for a good idea of whom you are playing against, and 1000 hands give you a very clear picture of a player's preflop strategy.

These are examples of six-handed poker VPIP/PFRs and the player types associated with each statistical breakdown.

Very high VPIP and low PFR: 75/10, 52/5, 60/15

A player with a high VPIP and low PFR is one you want at your table. These opponents play far too many hands, and they usually play them very passively. Players who have a very high VPIP and low PFR call far too much preflop. When they do raise, they are weighted towards value. These are passive players, and are known as "whales."

High VPIP and low PFR: 40/15, 35/12, 30/5

These statistics, like the above, are also associated with losing players. These players prefer to call too frequently and raise too infrequently, but not to the extent of the whale.

Remember that passive play preflop is often an indicator of passive play post-flop.

Normal VPIP and low PFR: 18/1, 22/3

These statistics are associated with very tight players, known as "rocks." They wait patiently for aces and kings, and only like to raise with their best hands. These players may, however, enjoy trapping and playing tricky, and will sometimes employ a limp/reraise strategy.

Bear in mind that their raises are almost always weighted towards very strong value hands.



Low VPIP/PFR: 10/8, 14/12

Players with a low VPIP and PFR but with a tight gap between their stats are what poker players call “nits.” They play a very tight range of hands, and usually play their range advantage aggressively post-flop.

Reg (professional) VPIP and PFR: 15/14, 19/17, 22/18, 28/23

Regs are almost always winning or break-even players. These players have small gaps between their VPIP and PFR. Regs can range from very tight to very loose. At one end of the spectrum, a player with 15/14 statistics will be an overly tight regular. At 28/23, the player may be playing too loose and aggressively.

Solid regulars generally have a VPIP/PFR between 19/17 and 25/23. As you move up in stakes, the rake (the amount taken from each pot by the poker room) decreases as a percentage of the pot and players are able to use wider ranges. Winning regulars often have statistics closer to 28/20 or 27/19 at the higher stakes.

Really, there is no incentive to playing more pots against good regulars. In poker, you should be trying to play as many pots as possible with losing players, known as “fish.” VPIP and PFR indicate who these fish may be, and ways to target them.

VPIP and PFR for Six-Max vs. Full Ring

The VPIP/PFR of a winning player at a six-handed table is different from that at a full ring, nine-handed table. The additional players in full ring necessitate a tighter playing style. This is because you are opening from the first positions into more players, and are therefore more likely to run into a hand that can call or reraise you.

When players open from early positions, they often have stronger holdings, which means other players are less likely to call or reraise them. This combination causes lower VPIP/PFR statistics for full ring games.

Winning regulars generally have a VPIP/PFR of between 11/8 and 16/14 in full ring games. The higher the skill level, the wider they can be, and some regulars are able to profitably play statistics like 22/20 at full ring.



Tournament VPIP/PFR

VPIP/PFR in tournaments depends on the structure and the stage of the tournament.

Multi-table tournaments (MTTs) can have thousands of players and generally start out with large stacks compared to the blinds. This leads to play that can be even tighter than full ring poker. In the early stages of tournaments, expect to see good regulars with stats that would be considered nitty even in full ring.

In the later stages of the tournament, however, as the blinds increase and stack sizes are smaller in comparison, you will see looser statistics. The shorter stack sizes necessitate a more aggressive style of play.

Aggression is also influenced by the “ante.” Usually, in the later stages of tournaments an ante will be in play. The ante functions like a smaller version of the small blind that each player must post before each hand. This causes play to loosen up considerably. You will find that strong players will have a much looser VPIP/PFR the later the tournament runs.

Turbos and hyperturbos are shorter, faster-paced tournaments. They have rapidly increasing blinds, which means that an aggressive, loose style of play is required. In these tournaments, VPIP/PFR will be much higher.

VPIP and PFR are the most important poker statistics

Long-term winning players will almost always fall within VPIP/PFR ranges for their chosen game type. Those who are outside these ranges can be easily identified and exploited. Understanding and utilizing VPIP and PFR is the first step towards greatly improving your own game.



Chapter 2: Unopened Preflop Raise (UOPFR)

What is the Unopened Preflop Raise poker statistic?

Unopened Preflop Raise (UOPFR) tracks the percentage of hands in which a player raises preflop when the action folds to him. This allows you to understand a player's tendencies at a deeper level than the VPIP/PFR poker statistic does. VPIP/PFR gives you a general idea of the player type of your opponent. UOPFR gives you detailed information on the range of hands your opponent is playing from each position.

What is a hand range?

A hand range is the possible hand combinations with which a player opens from each position. Understanding your opponent's range of hands from each position is key to developing your preflop cold-calling range, your blind defense ranges, and your 3-bet ranges, all of which will be discussed later. This guide introduces you to preflop hand ranges and calling raises in position. This knowledge is the foundation of your poker strategy and is essential to thinking about the game at a deeper level.

The images included in this poker guide are taken from a free program called Equilab. Most online poker sites do not allow you to run Equilab while playing, as it gives you an advantage they deem unfair. However, it is a useful tool for study and review.

What is a good UOPFR for beginners from each position?

Playing winning poker starts with raising the correct range of hands from each position. These images show beginner hand ranges for six-max tables. For full ring tables, the first positions must play even tighter.

As a beginner, we recommend that you never open limp. "Open limping" means that instead of raising as the first player into the pot, you merely call the big blind. But it is



almost always better to raise preflop. It makes your decisions and actions much clearer both preflop and postflop.

You need to start with a selective range of hands. These hands are picked to flop strong holdings and powerful draws to make your postflop decisions easier and more profitable. As you grow stronger in your poker strategy, you will be able to widen these ranges by roughly 20%.

How to use Equilab hand charts

Each image below shows the percentage of hands that you can open with profitably according to your position. These hands are marked in blue. Consider keeping this guide open as you play, and refer to it for each position until you are familiar with the hand ranges.

Under the gun (UTG) – 12%

The first position is “under the gun,” which is three seats before the dealer button. This position is first to act preflop. Because you have so many players acting after you, and you are forced to play pots out of position when any player other than the blinds calls, you need to have a range advantage against your opponents. You win money from this position by playing strong hands.

AA	AKs	AQs	AJs	ATs	A9s	A8s	A7s	A6s	A5s	A4s	A3s	A2s
AKo	KK	KQs	KJs	KTs	K9s	K8s	K7s	K6s	K5s	K4s	K3s	K2s
AQo	KQo	QQ	QJs	QTs	Q9s	Q8s	Q7s	Q6s	Q5s	Q4s	Q3s	Q2s
AJo	KJo	QJo	JJ	JTs	J9s	J8s	J7s	J6s	J5s	J4s	J3s	J2s
ATo	KTo	QTo	JTo	TT	T9s	T8s	T7s	T6s	T5s	T4s	T3s	T2s
A9o	K9o	Q9o	J9o	T9o	99	98s	97s	96s	95s	94s	93s	92s
A8o	K8o	Q8o	J8o	T8o	98o	88	87s	86s	85s	84s	83s	82s
A7o	K7o	Q7o	J7o	T7o	97o	87o	77	76s	75s	74s	73s	72s
A6o	K6o	Q6o	J6o	T6o	96o	86o	76o	66	65s	64s	63s	62s
A5o	K5o	Q5o	J5o	T5o	95o	85o	75o	65o	55	54s	53s	52s
A4o	K4o	Q4o	J4o	T4o	94o	84o	74o	64o	54o	44	43s	42s
A3o	K3o	Q3o	J3o	T3o	93o	83o	73o	63o	53o	43o	33	32s
A2o	K2o	Q2o	J2o	T2o	92o	82o	72o	62o	52o	42o	32o	22



Middle position (MP) – 14%

Middle position, which can also be called the “hijack” (HG), is two seats before the dealer button. You are opening almost as tight as UTG for the same reasons of positional disadvantage. You win money from this position primarily by playing strong hands.

AA	AKs	AQs	AJs	ATs	A9s	A8s	A7s	A6s	A5s	A4s	A3s	A2s
AKo	KK	KQs	KJs	KTs	K9s	K8s	K7s	K6s	K5s	K4s	K3s	K2s
AQo	KQo	QQ	QJs	QTs	Q9s	Q8s	Q7s	Q6s	Q5s	Q4s	Q3s	Q2s
AJo	KJo	QJo	JJ	JTs	J9s	J8s	J7s	J6s	J5s	J4s	J3s	J2s
ATo	KTo	QTo	JTo	TT	T9s	T8s	T7s	T6s	T5s	T4s	T3s	T2s
A9o	K9o	Q9o	J9o	T9o	99	98s	97s	96s	95s	94s	93s	92s
A8o	K8o	Q8o	J8o	T8o	98o	88	87s	86s	85s	84s	83s	82s
A7o	K7o	Q7o	J7o	T7o	97o	87o	77	76s	75s	74s	73s	72s
A6o	K6o	Q6o	J6o	T6o	96o	86o	76o	66	65s	64s	63s	62s
A5o	K5o	Q5o	J5o	T5o	95o	85o	75o	65o	55	54s	53s	52s
A4o	K4o	Q4o	J4o	T4o	94o	84o	74o	64o	54o	44	43s	42s
A3o	K3o	Q3o	J3o	T3o	93o	83o	73o	63o	53o	43o	33	32s
A2o	K2o	Q2o	J2o	T2o	92o	82o	72o	62o	52o	42o	32o	22

Cut-off (CO) – 24%

The “cut-off” is the seat right before the button. This position is where you start playing a wider range of hands. You win money in this position not only by playing strong hands, but also by picking up the blinds preflop. You have positional advantage against all players except the button. This position will win you the second most money of all the positions over the long term.



AA	AKs	AQs	AJs	ATs	A9s	A8s	A7s	A6s	A5s	A4s	A3s	A2s
AKo	KK	KQs	KJs	KTs	K9s	K8s	K7s	K6s	K5s	K4s	K3s	K2s
AQo	KQo	QQ	QJs	QTs	Q9s	Q8s	Q7s	Q6s	Q5s	Q4s	Q3s	Q2s
AJo	KJo	QJo	JJ	JTs	J9s	J8s	J7s	J6s	J5s	J4s	J3s	J2s
ATo	KTo	QTo	JTo	TT	T9s	T8s	T7s	T6s	T5s	T4s	T3s	T2s
A9o	K9o	Q9o	J9o	T9o	99	98s	97s	96s	95s	94s	93s	92s
A8o	K8o	Q8o	J8o	T8o	98o	88	87s	86s	85s	84s	83s	82s
A7o	K7o	Q7o	J7o	T7o	97o	87o	77	76s	75s	74s	73s	72s
A6o	K6o	Q6o	J6o	T6o	96o	86o	76o	66	65s	64s	63s	62s
A5o	K5o	Q5o	J5o	T5o	95o	85o	75o	65o	55	54s	53s	52s
A4o	K4o	Q4o	J4o	T4o	94o	84o	74o	64o	54o	44	43s	42s
A3o	K3o	Q3o	J3o	T3o	93o	83o	73o	63o	53o	43o	33	32s
A2o	K2o	Q2o	J2o	T2o	92o	82o	72o	62o	52o	42o	32o	22

Button (BTN) – 45%

The button is the best seat in the house. This position has postflop advantage against all players, as it is seated to the right of the blinds and is therefore the last to act. You win most of your money by stealing blinds and by playing in position against the blinds. Winning players can open as much as 65% from the button against certain opponents, but beginners should start with a tighter range.

The button is where you can “steal the blinds,” a concept that is explained in depth in the [blind stealing section](#) of our poker statistics guide.

AA	AKs	AQs	AJs	ATs	A9s	A8s	A7s	A6s	A5s	A4s	A3s	A2s
AKo	KK	KQs	KJs	KTs	K9s	K8s	K7s	K6s	K5s	K4s	K3s	K2s
AQo	KQo	QQ	QJs	QTs	Q9s	Q8s	Q7s	Q6s	Q5s	Q4s	Q3s	Q2s
AJo	KJo	QJo	JJ	JTs	J9s	J8s	J7s	J6s	J5s	J4s	J3s	J2s
ATo	KTo	QTo	JTo	TT	T9s	T8s	T7s	T6s	T5s	T4s	T3s	T2s
A9o	K9o	Q9o	J9o	T9o	99	98s	97s	96s	95s	94s	93s	92s
A8o	K8o	Q8o	J8o	T8o	98o	88	87s	86s	85s	84s	83s	82s
A7o	K7o	Q7o	J7o	T7o	97o	87o	77	76s	75s	74s	73s	72s
A6o	K6o	Q6o	J6o	T6o	96o	86o	76o	66	65s	64s	63s	62s
A5o	K5o	Q5o	J5o	T5o	95o	85o	75o	65o	55	54s	53s	52s
A4o	K4o	Q4o	J4o	T4o	94o	84o	74o	64o	54o	44	43s	42s
A3o	K3o	Q3o	J3o	T3o	93o	83o	73o	63o	53o	43o	33	32s
A2o	K2o	Q2o	J2o	T2o	92o	82o	72o	62o	52o	42o	32o	22



What about the small and big blinds?

Defending and raising from the blinds is dependent on the players at your table. Using a hand chart for this would be doing a disservice to your long-term strategy. For more information on the blinds, please consult [our guide to blind stealing](#).

When can you widen your UOPFR range?

If you are a new player, or a recreational player who is breaking even or losing at the low stakes, we recommend that you start with these hand ranges for at least 1,000 to 10,000 hands. After 1,000 hands and [using our guide to identifying player types using VPIP/PFR](#), you should be skilled enough to start widening these ranges by roughly 20% when you notice weaker players at the table. For example, if you have a very tight player in the big blind who is folding to 75% of button raises, you can start widening your range considerably.

The main reason for widening your range is that you have a skill advantage on your opponents and no longer require as much of a range advantage.

If you are at a passive table where players are calling too much, the value of pocket pairs goes up dramatically. At a table like this, even 22 can be an open from the first position, because if you do hit your set and players are calling too much, then you can win a massive pot. This is using a concept called “implied odds,” which we explain further below.

Flat calling using UOPFR

A flat call occurs when one player raises and a player in a later position then calls behind. For example, the UTG player raises preflop and the BTN player calls in position.

Unless you are in the big or small blinds, you will have positional advantage over your opponent. But you will also have the disadvantage of having a range of hands that does not include your strongest holdings, because with those you will be 3-betting (that is, re-raising the initial raise) for value.



You flat call a hand because it is ahead of their opening range, but behind the range of hands that they will call against a 3-bet. Let's go through an example hand.

Your opponent has an UOPFR of 10% UTG, and a "fold to 3-bet" of 50%. You are in MP with JJ facing an UTG raise. Here is a visual representation of a 10% range. Use this to narrow your opponent down to a range of hands.

AA	AKs	AQs	AJs	ATs	A9s	A8s	A7s	A6s	A5s	A4s	A3s	A2s
AKo	KK	KQs	KJs	KTs	K9s	K8s	K7s	K6s	K5s	K4s	K3s	K2s
AQo	KQo	QQ	QJs	QTs	Q9s	Q8s	Q7s	Q6s	Q5s	Q4s	Q3s	Q2s
AJo	KJo	QJo	JJ	JTs	J9s	J8s	J7s	J6s	J5s	J4s	J3s	J2s
ATo	KTo	QTo	JTo	TT	T9s	T8s	T7s	T6s	T5s	T4s	T3s	T2s
A9o	K9o	Q9o	J9o	T9o	99	98s	97s	96s	95s	94s	93s	92s
A8o	K8o	Q8o	J8o	T8o	98o	88	87s	86s	85s	84s	83s	82s
A7o	K7o	Q7o	J7o	T7o	97o	87o	77	76s	75s	74s	73s	72s
A6o	K6o	Q6o	J6o	T6o	96o	86o	76o	66	65s	64s	63s	62s
A5o	K5o	Q5o	J5o	T5o	95o	85o	75o	65o	55	54s	53s	52s
A4o	K4o	Q4o	J4o	T4o	94o	84o	74o	64o	54o	44	43s	42s
A3o	K3o	Q3o	J3o	T3o	93o	83o	73o	63o	53o	43o	33	32s
A2o	K2o	Q2o	J2o	T2o	92o	82o	72o	62o	52o	42o	32o	22

Now, let's use a second feature of Equilab. This feature analyzes how a specific hand is doing against a range of hands. PokerStove runs simulations of hundreds of thousands of hands in order to calculate the percentage of times that one hand beats a range of hands in an all-in situation. This percentage is known as "equity."

Hold'em		Hand Distribution	Equity
Player 1	R/D	88+,A9s+,KTs+,QTs+,AJo+,KQo	43.109%
Player 2	R/D	JJ	56.891%

As you can see, JJ is a favorite against your opponent. This hand has great equity against their range. It is a clear call.

However, what happens if you 3-bet? Since your opponent is calling only 50% of the time, his 3-bet calling range is now roughly 5% of hands. Let's get a visual representation of this range.



AA	AKs	AQs	AJs	ATs	A9s	A8s	A7s	A6s	A5s	A4s	A3s	A2s
AKo	KK	KQs	KJs	KTs	K9s	K8s	K7s	K6s	K5s	K4s	K3s	K2s
AQo	KQo	QQ	QJs	QTs	Q9s	Q8s	Q7s	Q6s	Q5s	Q4s	Q3s	Q2s
AJo	KJo	QJo	JJ	JTs	J9s	J8s	J7s	J6s	J5s	J4s	J3s	J2s
ATo	KTo	QTo	JTo	TT	T9s	T8s	T7s	T6s	T5s	T4s	T3s	T2s
A9o	K9o	Q9o	J9o	T9o	99	98s	97s	96s	95s	94s	93s	92s
A8o	K8o	Q8o	J8o	T8o	98o	88	87s	86s	85s	84s	83s	82s
A7o	K7o	Q7o	J7o	T7o	97o	87o	77	76s	75s	74s	73s	72s
A6o	K6o	Q6o	J6o	T6o	96o	86o	76o	66	65s	64s	63s	62s
A5o	K5o	Q5o	J5o	T5o	95o	85o	75o	65o	55	54s	53s	52s
A4o	K4o	Q4o	J4o	T4o	94o	84o	74o	64o	54o	44	43s	42s
A3o	K3o	Q3o	J3o	T3o	93o	83o	73o	63o	53o	43o	33	32s
A2o	K2o	Q2o	J2o	T2o	92o	82o	72o	62o	52o	42o	32o	22

How is our JJ faring against this range?

Hold'em		Hand Distribution	Equity
Player 1		99+, AJs+, KQs, AKo	50.453%
Player 2		JJ	49.547%
Player 3			

Our JJ as a 3-bet is a slight underdog against our opponent. Even worse, they may 4-bet (re-raising the 3-bet) with hands such as AQ or AK that we have good equity against. If we are folding to a 4-bet, then we lose value when our opponent decides to 4-bet with AK and AQ. But if we call the 4-bet, we are now playing a massive pot against hands that include QQ, KK, and AA. Most players are not bluffing very often when they 4-bet, especially at the low stakes. This makes JJ very difficult to navigate against a 4-bet. Flat calling versus such a tight range is generally the better play.

Flat calling with implied odds

“Implied odds” means the money you expect to win when you hit your hand. A pocket pair hits a set on the flop roughly 12% of the time. That means that if you are against a very tight player and you call an open that is 2.5 times the big blind (2.5bb) with a hand like 77, you can win a huge pot when you hit your set because you are against a tight range of hands.



A set occurs when you have a hand like 77 and the flop comes AK7. As you can see, if your opponent has a range that is tight and therefore weighted towards hands like AQ, AK, AJ, or KQ, they are going to lose a very big pot against you on this sort of board when they hit the flop. Implied odds rely on the stack size of your opponent. If your opponent has a standard 100bb stack and calls too much postflop, hands like pocket pairs go up in value because you can win a very large pot when you hit your hand. If your opponent only has a 20bb stack, your implied odds are much lower. You only hit your set 12% of the time, and when you do you can only win up to 20bb.

Active players to your left reduce your implied odds

If you have active 3-betters to your left or players who like to squeeze (that is, who is like to make a large raise after there has already been a raise and a call), your implied odds of calling preflop is lowered. This is because you will often face a squeeze bet which forces you out of the pot, stopping you from realizing your equity against the original raiser. Tighten up both your UOPFR range and flat calling range when you have a strong, active player to your left! For more information on this, please read [Chapter 8: Squeeze Bets](#).

The ideal situation for calling hands like suited aces and low pocket pairs that have good implied odds is to be at a very passive table. Flat calling with hands with implied odds is an intermediate play that should be done only when you have a strong understanding of the game.



Chapter 3: Blind Stealing

Chapter 1 showed you how to use VPIP and PFR to identify weak and overly tight players. These are the prime targets of a successful blind-stealing strategy.

What is a blind steal?

A blind steal (BSA) is an unopened raise from the button or the small blind. An unopened raise occurs when all players acting before you fold preflop and you put in a raise as the first player to enter the pot.

When the action folds to you in the small blind or on the dealer button, your primary goal is to take down the blinds uncontested with a BSA.

Why is the blind-stealing poker statistic important?

A successful poker play may have a win rate as low as 3bb/100 hands. This means that if they are playing at stakes of \$0.50/\$1, they expect to earn \$3 for every hundred hands they play.

Each successful blind steal nets you a profit of 1.5bb. Two successful blind steals over 100 hands is the difference between breaking even and playing profitable poker.

Blind stealing is especially important at the low stakes, where players do not always defend their blinds properly. This means they fold either too often or not enough against blind steals. You can track this using the poker stat “Folded to Steal Attempt” (FB).

Stealing the blinds against weak, tight players with a high FB is the closest thing to printing money in online poker. If you are on the dealer button and are facing two players that have over 65% FB, you can open almost any two cards profitably.

Choosing a bet size for a blind steal

In general, you can open 2.5bb from any position. When making a blind steal, however, you can be a little more creative about your raise sizing because you are considering the tendencies of only one or two players who can act after you. This does not mean you should be sizing your raises larger with premium hands, as all but the most oblivious of



opponents will adjust to this strategy. What it means is that you can tailor your raise size to your opponents.

Against players who have a high FB, you can try using 2.25bb or the minimum 2bb raise sizes.

Against players who have a low FB, you can try using a 3bb raise with a tighter range of hands. These players will be willing to put more money in preflop against you with a range disadvantage.

How to respond to a blind steal

The truth about the small and big blinds is that you will lose money in the long term from these positions. It is unavoidable. If you are able to profit from the small and big blinds over a sample of more than 10,000 hands, you probably have such a skill edge over your opponents that it is time to consider moving up in the stakes.

When you are defending your blinds, you are trying to reduce your loss rate.

Let's look at the math.

If you fold 100% of your hands from the big blind, you will lose 100bb/100 hands from this position.

If you fold 100% of your hands from the small blind, you will lose 50bb/100 hands from this position.

The entire goal of defending your big blind is to reduce this loss rate. Losing in the small blind at around -20bb/100 is considered good, but it is possible to reach -15bb/100. Losing from the big blind at -35bb/100 is attainable.

Defending the big blind against a steal from the button

You will most often have to defend your big blind against a raise from the dealer button. In these cases the small blind will usually fold. You will have a postflop positional



disadvantage against the button: you will have to act first, which gives your opponent information on how to play against you.

Blinds-versus-button play is the loosest in poker. If you are against a competent player, they will be opening 45%–70% of their buttons against you. This means that the range of hands that they have is very wide, and you must defend a wide range of hands against them. Adjust your fold frequencies based on the player type that you are against. Against an overly tight player, fold more often. Against a looser player, call more often.

In addition to the looseness of the position, the cost to enter the pot is much lower for the big blind. While you will be at a positional disadvantage postflop, depending on the raise size of your opponent, you will need very little equity to continue. Equity is simply the odds that you are going to win the pot based on the strength of your hand preflop. To understand why you can call so light, we can look at the math. If the button opens to 2bb, and the small blind folds, the pot is now 3.5bb. If you call, you are investing 1bb to win a pot of 4.5 bb. You only need a 22% chance of winning the pot to break even.

You can call more often against smaller raises and fold more often against larger ones. If your opponent is using a bet sizing of 2bb, which is a min raise, you can defend (that is, flat call preflop or 3-bet preflop) roughly the top 50% of hands in the big blind.

Against a 2.5bb raise size you need to be tighter. You can defend roughly the top 30% of hands.

Defending the big blind against a steal from the small blind

Defending the big blind against the small blind is much simpler. You have positional advantage, and the cost to play the pot will be lower because you have already invested one big blind. Against all but the tightest of players, you can defend almost 100% of your range against a minimum raise. Against larger raise sizes, you need to look at the frequency with which your opponent tries to steal the blinds from the small blind. If they are opening over 40%, you can defend very light and play pots with positional advantage against a wide range of hands.

It is very simple to develop a strategy against those who do not steal enough: you simply fold more. But what do you do against aggressive players?



Dealing with an over-aggressive blind stealer to your right

You may be surprised at how aggressive you can be on the button. Good, winning players can put in steal attempts at frequencies of upwards of 60%. But when a player starts to get into the realm of 70% and above, you can consider them overly aggressive.

It can be frustrating to see them raising your blinds over and over. You know they often have nothing, and it is tempting to fight their aggression with aggression of your own.

The best strategy against overly aggressive players is to simply play solid, winning poker. When you start to develop postflop poker statistics on overly aggressive blind stealers, you can call them light and make moves against them. But until you have a strategy for exploiting them, the easiest way to beat an overly aggressive play style is to simply continue playing tight, aggressive poker and win with your hand range advantage.

The simplest adjustment to be made against overly aggressive players is to call a wider range against them preflop.

When defending the big blind, you are not trying to win every pot. You are going to lose more often than you win because of your positional disadvantage postflop. Simply focus on the long-term plan of reducing your big blind loss rate.

Defending the small blind against a steal

The small blind is a different beast from the big blind. It is much harder to defend. If you flat call the original raiser, you then have the big blind acting behind you. The big blind can raise, putting pressure on you with a **squeeze bet**, or can flat call, getting an extremely good price to see the flop. If the big blind calls, you are put into the tricky position of playing as the first player to act postflop.

The easiest way to deal with defending the small blind is to use a 3-bet or fold strategy with almost the entirety of your range. 3-betting is a very effective tool for defending both your big and small blinds.



To continue developing your preflop game, continue with [Chapter 4: 3-betting and 4-betting!](#)

There are also some good reasons to use a flat-calling strategy instead of a 3-bet/fold strategy. You should flat call in the small blind when there is a very weak player in the big blind whom you want to have in the pot against you. Flat calling can also be better against early position raises from tight players with a low percentage of fold to 3-bets preflop.



Chapter 4: 3-betting and 4-betting

What is a 3-bet?

A 3-bet occurs when the original preflop raiser is re-raised by another player.

A 4-bet occurs when a 3-bet is re-raised by any player.

The reason it is called a 3-bet is that the automatic posting of the blinds is considered the first bet; the second bet (2-bet) is when a player raises the blinds instead of calling them; and the third bet (3-bet) is the re-raising of the 2-bet.

3-bet poker statistics take much longer to yield useful data when compared to common poker stats such as VPIP and PFR. Once you get at least 1,000 hands on your opponent, you can be reasonably certain that you have good information on their tendencies. If you only have 100 hands on your opponent, be very careful before changing your strategy too much.

What do we mean by changing your strategy?

Remember, you need to learn to play solid poker first. Only after that should you exploit your opponent's major flaws. As beginners, many players 3-bet only very strong hands. A major step in the journey from beginner to intermediate player is understanding 3-betting at a deeper level and moving into a wider 3-betting range.

Why do we 3-bet?

There are two reasons to make any bet in poker. The first is for value. The second is to bluff. Thus, all 3-betting will either be for value or to bluff your opponents off their hands.

A good first concept to understand is capped versus uncapped ranges.

A player opening from the first position can have hands in their range as strong as AA and KK. This player's range is considered uncapped.



However, if a second player flat calls the first player preflop, then that player has a capped range. Because the second player would almost always 3-bet hands as strong as AA and KK, these hands are essentially removed from their range. The second player is therefore going postflop with a capped range against an uncapped range.

However, if a player 3-bets the original raise, then AA and KK can now be in their range. If the original raiser simply calls, then that player is the one with the capped range, as they would most likely 4-bet a hand as strong as AA or KK.

When you 3-bet, you have an uncapped range, which makes it more difficult for your opponent to play against you. You go to the flop with the initiative and you have all your strongest hands available to you.

What is a good 3-bet percentage?

Strong, winning players do not 3-bet only their strongest hands. At the low stakes, a good 3-bet percentage will be around 5%–9%. Players can win aggressively with 3-bet percentages as high as 11%, however generally for beginners it is much easier to play with a tighter 3-bet range.

It is much easier to play against a player that 3-bets only 2%–3% of their hands compared to a player who 3-bets 6%–8% of their hands. When you are against the first player, you know that they probably only have JJ+ and you can therefore easily fold hands against their 3-bet range.

When should you 3-bet?

It is easy to understand 3-betting for value. When playing solid, aggressive poker, a good rule is to always 3-bet your strongest hands. This allows you to play much larger pots with your strongest hands, and it balances your 3-bet range when you want to include bluffs and weaker hands.

This is just scratching the surface of 3-bet theory, however.


When you are deciding to 3-bet, you must look at the hand range that your opponent is opening from each position using the unopened preflop raised statistic (UOPFR). Using a hand range program like Equilab, you can estimate the range of hands they are opening, and decide what range of hands to flat call or re-raise with. In order to profitably flat call



your opponent's opening range, you ought to have hands strong enough to have an equity advantage against their range. (Equity just means your chance of winning the pot based on the strength of your hand.) This equity advantage combined with your positional advantage postflop needs to be large enough to overcome the fact that you have a capped range against their uncapped range.

When choosing hands to re-raise in a polarized strategy (which will be explained further below), you need to be raising hands that are stronger than their range (value) and slightly too weak to call (your bluffs). It does not make sense to start 3-bet bluffing as a beginner with a hand like 34 suited. It is much better to use a hand like A4 suited, which does much better against their calling range, while also blocking their strongest hands.

For example, if you are all in preflop against KK with your bluff hand of A4 suited, you win roughly a third of the time!

Hand range		Equity
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	 A4s	32.97%
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	 KK	67.03%

The additional advantage of using a hand like A4s in your bluffing range is that it makes it less likely for your opponent to have strong hands like AK or AA, because you have one of the only four aces in the deck.

Before you attempt a 3-bet, however, you need to understand the relevant poker statistics and their acronyms in poker tracking software such as Poker Copilot. They are:

- Fold to 3-bet preflop in position (F3B IP)□;
- Fold to 3-bet preflop out of position (F3B OOP)□;
- Folded to cbet on flop in 3-bet+ pot (FCB_3)□;
- 4-bet preflop (4B).

Fold to 3-bet

The fold to 3-bet statistic is the most important one to understand. In a balanced strategy, you will have a fold to 3-bet of somewhere near 55%. However, at the lower stakes this will usually be higher, because players there are generally weighted towards value when they 3-bet.



If a player is folding 30% or less to 3-bets, then you need to raise them primarily for value. This will involve using a depolarized range.

If a player is folding 65% or more to 3-bets, then you need to raise them primarily as a bluff. This will involve using a polarized range.

The percentages of fold to 3-bet work on a sliding scale. The closer they are to 30% or less, the more you want to be weighted towards value. The closer they are to 65%, the more bluffs you want to work into your range.

Folded to cbet on flop in 3-bet+ pot

The most useful statistic that will determine your preflop strategy is “Folded to continuation bet on flop in 3-bet+ pot”.

This statistic can change the way that you create your ranges. Against players who have a high fold to flop continuation bet, you can start opening your range to have a slightly higher concentration of bluffs.

4-bet preflop

Be wary of 3-betting a player who has a high 4-bet percentage. Against these players, you can develop a strategy of 3-betting a tighter range and 5-betting them (which is often an all-in preflop) if they are calling too much, or flat calling their 4-bets with your range advantage and playing postflop.

Depolarized versus polarized 3-betting ranges

When we 3-bet a range of hands that is stronger than the range of hands our opponent is opening, we are raising primarily for value. This is called a depolarized strategy.

A depolarized range might look like this:



AA	AKs	AQs	AJs	ATs	A9s	A8s	A7s	A6s	A5s	A4s	A3s	A2s
AKo	KK	KQs	KJs	KTs	K9s	K8s	K7s	K6s	K5s	K4s	K3s	K2s
AQo	KQo	QQ	QJs	QTs	Q9s	Q8s	Q7s	Q6s	Q5s	Q4s	Q3s	Q2s
AJo	KJo	QJo	JJ	JTs	J9s	J8s	J7s	J6s	J5s	J4s	J3s	J2s
ATo	KTo	QTo	JTo	TT	T9s	T8s	T7s	T6s	T5s	T4s	T3s	T2s
A9o	K9o	Q9o	J9o	T9o	99	98s	97s	96s	95s	94s	93s	92s
A8o	K8o	Q8o	J8o	T8o	98o	88	87s	86s	85s	84s	83s	82s
A7o	K7o	Q7o	J7o	T7o	97o	87o	77	76s	75s	74s	73s	72s
A6o	K6o	Q6o	J6o	T6o	96o	86o	76o	66	65s	64s	63s	62s
A5o	K5o	Q5o	J5o	T5o	95o	85o	75o	65o	55	54s	53s	52s
A4o	K4o	Q4o	J4o	T4o	94o	84o	74o	64o	54o	44	43s	42s
A3o	K3o	Q3o	J3o	T3o	93o	83o	73o	63o	53o	43o	33	32s
A2o	K2o	Q2o	J2o	T2o	92o	82o	72o	62o	52o	42o	32o	22

A depolarized range only contains value hands of varying strength. Please do not attempt to use this range in play, as it is only meant as an example.

When we 3-bet a range of hands that includes both hands that are stronger and hands that are weaker than our opponents' range, then we are raising both for value and as a bluff. We balance this range depending on their fold to 3-bet poker statistics. This is called a polarized strategy.

A polarized range could look like this:

AA	AKs	AQs	AJs	ATs	A9s	A8s	A7s	A6s	A5s	A4s	A3s	A2s
AKo	KK	KQs	KJs	KTs	K9s	K8s	K7s	K6s	K5s	K4s	K3s	K2s
AQo	KQo	QQ	QJs	QTs	Q9s	Q8s	Q7s	Q6s	Q5s	Q4s	Q3s	Q2s
AJo	KJo	QJo	JJ	JTs	J9s	J8s	J7s	J6s	J5s	J4s	J3s	J2s
ATo	KTo	QTo	JTo	TT	T9s	T8s	T7s	T6s	T5s	T4s	T3s	T2s
A9o	K9o	Q9o	J9o	T9o	99	98s	97s	96s	95s	94s	93s	92s
A8o	K8o	Q8o	J8o	T8o	98o	88	87s	86s	85s	84s	83s	82s
A7o	K7o	Q7o	J7o	T7o	97o	87o	77	76s	75s	74s	73s	72s
A6o	K6o	Q6o	J6o	T6o	96o	86o	76o	66	65s	64s	63s	62s
A5o	K5o	Q5o	J5o	T5o	95o	85o	75o	65o	55	54s	53s	52s
A4o	K4o	Q4o	J4o	T4o	94o	84o	74o	64o	54o	44	43s	42s
A3o	K3o	Q3o	J3o	T3o	93o	83o	73o	63o	53o	43o	33	32s
A2o	K2o	Q2o	J2o	T2o	92o	82o	72o	62o	52o	42o	32o	22

In this range, you would be 3-betting QQ, AKo, AK, AKs and AA for value, planning to 5-bet all in against a 4-bet. You would be 3-betting A2s–A5s as a bluff, and planning on



folding to a 4-bet. In this situation, you have 16 combos of hands that are bluffs, and 34 that are value, which is a good range for beginners to become more comfortable. Please do not use this 3-betting range in your games; it is only an example meant to illustrate how a 3-betting range can be constructed.

3-bet sizing

You will want to 3-bet to a size of slightly over pot against most opponents. Against players who are folding too often against 3-bets, you can use a slightly smaller sizing and add in more bluffs. Against players calling too often against 3-bets, you can use a slightly larger sizing, and have a higher ratio of value to bluffs.

Using 3-bets to defend the blinds

3-betting is a very powerful strategy against players who are attacking your small and big blinds.

The small blind is the most difficult blind to defend. This is because if you flat call preflop, the player in the big blind will have a very good price to call compared to the size of the pot. This puts you into situations where you are forced to play out of position against two other players. Additionally, your opponents know that the range of hands you have is capped, because you would always be 3-betting your strongest hands.

A stronger strategy for beginners is to use a 3-bet or fold strategy from the small blind. Unless you have a very good reason to flat call (if, for example, you have a very passive player in the big blind and you have a pocket pair that has great implied odds when you hit your set), then you should be either folding your hand or 3-betting.

To defend your big blind, you will 3-bet depending on your opponent, but with the understanding that, because you are out of position against everyone but the small blind, you need to have a strong range.

In general, when faced with a steal attempt from the button, you can at least raise the top 15% of your hands. If you are against a player who is folding too much to 3-bets, folding too much to cbets in 3-bet hands, or opening too wide on the button, you can widen your 3-betting range in order to exploit the mistakes in their game.



Below is an example of a depolarized 15% range that can be used **when the button attempts to steal the blinds**. Like all of the hand ranges in this guide, it is designed for beginners and is therefore on the tight side. As you get more comfortable, or when you see good opportunities to 3-bet against weaker players, you can expand this range to include hands such as T9s–Q9s, all of the pocket pairs, and all of the suited aces.

AA	AKs	AQs	AJs	ATs	A9s	A8s	A7s	A6s	A5s	A4s	A3s	A2s
AKo	KK	KQs	KJs	KTs	K9s	K8s	K7s	K6s	K5s	K4s	K3s	K2s
AQo	KQo	QQ	QJs	QTs	Q9s	Q8s	Q7s	Q6s	Q5s	Q4s	Q3s	Q2s
AJo	KJo	QJo	JJ	JTs	J9s	J8s	J7s	J6s	J5s	J4s	J3s	J2s
ATo	KTs	QTo	JTo	TT	T9s	T8s	T7s	T6s	T5s	T4s	T3s	T2s
A9o	K9o	Q9o	J9o	T9o	99	98s	97s	96s	95s	94s	93s	92s
A8o	K8o	Q8o	J8o	T8o	98o	88	87s	86s	85s	84s	83s	82s
A7o	K7o	Q7o	J7o	T7o	97o	87o	77	76s	75s	74s	73s	72s
A6o	K6o	Q6o	J6o	T6o	96o	86o	76o	66	65s	64s	63s	62s
A5o	K5o	Q5o	J5o	T5o	95o	85o	75o	65o	55	54s	53s	52s
A4o	K4o	Q4o	J4o	T4o	94o	84o	74o	64o	54o	44	43s	42s
A3o	K3o	Q3o	J3o	T3o	93o	83o	73o	63o	53o	43o	33	32s
A2o	K2o	Q2o	J2o	T2o	92o	82o	72o	62o	52o	42o	32o	22

What do you do if you are facing a 3-bet?

If you have raised preflop and are facing a 3-bet, the first step is to look at your opponent's 3-bet percentage from the position they are in. For example, good players usually have a much higher 3-betting range from the small blind than from middle position.

You can then use a program like Equilab to input their percentage and get a good idea of what hands they are 3-betting. For example, a player with a 4% 3-bet from the button may be only 3-betting 99+ and AQs+.

What do you do in this case? With almost all your range, you fold. Why? Against someone who is 3-betting purely for value, you beat them by folding exploitatively.

4-betting preflop

4-betting depends completely on the 3-bet range of your opponents. If your opponent is only 3-betting AA and KK, then you can only 4-bet AA against your opponent.



You can use the poker statistic folded to 4-bet preflop (F4B) to help with your decision. If a player is folding 40% or less to 4-bets, then the range of hands that you 4-bet with needs to be primarily for value. If your opponent is folding 60% or more against 4-bets, then your range of hands to 4-bet can be more focused on bluffs.

Good hands to think about as 4-bet bluffs are small suited aces.

What do you do against an active 3-better to your left?

It can be incredibly frustrating to play at a table where someone seems to be 3-betting your opens again and again. Against a weak, overly aggressive player, you can combat their strategy by either 4-betting light or simply calling them with a strong range of hands and letting them bluff off their stack when you catch a piece of the board.

Against a strong, aggressive 3-better to your left, you will be playing large pots out of position with a capped range versus their uncapped range when you flat call. This is one of the toughest spots to play profitably in poker. While using a good 4-betting strategy and analyzing their 3-bet range to discover which hands to call with is the long-term strategy for success, as a beginner it simply may be better to leave the table.

If you do decide to stay at the table (maybe because there are many other poor players there), then the quickest and easiest way to adapt is to simply start raising a tighter range of hands first into the pot so that your range can handle the heat of their active 3-betting.



Chapter 5: Donk Bets

What is a “donk bet”?

The standard postflop action in poker is for the out-of-position preflop caller to check 100% of the range of hands to the preflop raiser. A donk bet occurs when the out-of-position preflop caller leads out on the flop before the preflop raiser has a chance to make a continuation bet.

Donk betting is only relevant in heads-up pots between a single preflop caller and a single preflop raiser. In a multiway pot, raising out of position is called a “lead” and is generally a strong holding.

A donk bet on the turn or river occurs when the preflop raiser has made a continuation bet on the previous street, and the preflop caller decides to lead the turn or river. Donk betting on the turn and river can be a strong play for advanced players on specific boards, but *donk betting on the flop is almost always a mistake.*

Why donk betting has a negative image

Donk betting has a negative image because it makes you easy to exploit. Donk betting creates an imbalance in your checking range that even weaker players are going to pick up on.

Having balanced ranges means that you are difficult to predict. If you are donk betting any pair and better on the flop, for example, players can exploit you by folding their weak hands, raising a value range, and calling their draws. When you check, your opponent knows that you have a weak hand and can bluff very profitably.

Players sometimes become frustrated by donk bets. If you do not understand why your opponent is donk betting, you will be put into situations where you feel lost.

When you face a donk bet, never act instantly. Breathe, think, and plan.



How to respond to a donk bet

Do not get frustrated by players who donk bet. Be happy that they are playing incorrectly against you. Donk betting is almost certainly a poor play, and one you can exploit.

Facing the “min donk”

One common donk betting strategy is the “min donk,” which is when a player donk bets one big blind. You can usually treat this as a check, simply calling all hands you would check and continuation betting normally. However, you need to take notes on the range of hands your opponent does this with, and on the response to your continuation bets after min-donking compared to checking. If you get a read that your opponent is folding 90% to cbets after min-donking, you can bet your entire range!

Donk betting poker statistics

The two most important poker statistics in Poker Copilot for dealing with donk bets on the flop are “donk bet on flop” and “folded to continuation bet on flop.” These two statistics combined will give you a clearer view of your opponent’s donk betting strategy.

Be careful using these statistics before you have at least 100 hands. It takes nearly 1,000 hands for a strong sample size.

Players with donk bet and fold to cbet adding to 100%

The easiest opponents to play against are those who have a “donk bet on flop” and “folded to continuation bet on flop” that add up to roughly 100%. For example, a player may have a donk bet of 30% and a fold to cbet on flop of 70%. In this case, it is not difficult to see that in general your opponent is donking almost all the hands they are willing to continue with and check folding the rest of their range.

Playing against such players is very simple. When they check, you can bet and expect them to fold. This leads to very profitable bluffing and semi-bluffing opportunities.



When your opponents donk bet, they are telling you that they want to continue in the hand. You can generally call with your medium-strength made hands and strong draws, and re-raise for value.

How do you interpret donk betting poker stats?

0%–10%

This range is almost completely value. Unless your opponent has an extremely high “called preflop raise” percentage, even holdings such as top pair, top kicker are likely to be in trouble. The higher the VPIP, the weaker the player’s range is in total, including the donk betting range. You may find that opponents you identify as strong players have a donk percentage within this range. Many thinking players at the lower stakes cannot resist donk betting hands like “sets” on boards that contain flush and straight draws. These players understand that they have a strong hand, but are scared that their hand will lose to a flush draw that completes on the turn if they allow you to check your hand. On your part, you should be trying to understand the rationale of your opponents. Why are they donk betting instead of check-calling or check-raising?

11%–20%

This range is also almost entirely value. Proceed with caution. Your opponents might also donk bet their strongest draws. Take a note of the weakest hand you have seen them donk bet, and of whether you see them donk bet flush draws and straight draws, or only made hands, such as pairs or two pairs.

21%–35%

This donk range is starting to widen up. While your opponents are most likely donk betting some strong hands, they are also likely to have a lot of bluffs in their range. Players with this range of donk bets often have a fold to continuation bet on flop that correlates. For example, they may have a donk bet percentage of 30% and a fold to continuation bet on flop of 70%.

36%–50%

You should be getting very suspicious of opponents with this range. They are very likely to be donking a weak range of hands along with some value.



51%–100%

This is getting ridiculous. An opponent with this range has zero respect for your range of hands, and is donk betting a silly amount. This player is most likely here to gamble!

When to donk bet

The easiest player to exploit by donk betting is one who is not betting very often, but is calling too much. They may have a 35% or less flop cbet statistic, but very high calling stats, and a “went to showdown” of 30% and higher. This is a passive player. Against such players, you can donk bet a strong range of hands for value, as they are likely to check even strong hands like top pair, third kicker (JQ on a board of J45, for example). When you have a hand like KJ, you may need to start using donk bets in order to get three streets of value from their holdings that they prefer to check-call rather than bet themselves.

Make sure that you do not implement a donk strategy until you have strong reads on your opponent and a very good reason to do so.



Chapter 6: Continuation Bets (cbets)

What is a continuation bet?

A continuation bet is when a player raises preflop and bets the flop.

Continuation betting is a complex and nuanced concept. This guide is an introduction to the most important factors determining whether or not to continuation bet the flop.

You can also continuation bet the turn and river. This article, however, will focus on “heads-up” pots on the flop; that is, pots between the preflop raiser and a single preflop caller. In multiway pots, you need to play in a much more straightforward and value-oriented way, as you are against more players and need stronger holdings to value bet.

What does a continuation bet achieve?

Continuation betting is done for value, as a bluff, or as a semi-bluff. To begin with continuation betting, you should understand your own hand and understand your opponent.

Types of hands you should be continuation betting

Value-betting hands

If you have a strong hand then you should bet, as you want to play a larger pot. This is called “value betting.”

For example, let's say you hold **A♥K♥** on a flop of **A♦5♠3♣**. On this flop, you have a strong hand with top pair, top kicker. You generally want to be betting, as you can be called by many worse hands, such as weaker aces, straight draws, and underpairs (that is, pocket pairs that are lower than the highest card on the board; on an ace-high board, for example, **J♦J♥** is an underpair).

A value bet is a bet that you make when you can reasonably be called by worse hands.



With this holding on this board texture, you have a very clear value bet.

Semi-bluff hands

You want to lean towards continuation betting as a semi-bluff if you have a hand with low showdown value and high equity. Learning these two concepts is essential to understanding semi-bluffing. To illustrate, here is an example hand that has both low showdown value and high equity.

You hold **T♥9♥** on a board of **8♥7♥5♣**. In this case, your hand value is only ten high. If you go to showdown, you are going to lose against even a hand as weak as queen high, which would be very likely to fold on the flop against a continuation bet. Your hand therefore has very little showdown value.

But you also have a straight flush draw, which gives you plenty of equity. To understand equity, just imagine that both players are all-in on the flop. The percentage of times that your hand wins is your equity.

For example, what kind of equity do you have with this hand against a player that holds **2♥2♠**? Their pocket pair is currently ahead of your ten high in showdown value. You might be shocked, however, to find out that when you run the two hands against each other in a simulation program such as Equilab, **T♥9♥** has an equity of 70%! This means that 70% of the time, you are going to win if both players go all-in on the flop.

What happens if your opponent holds a strong hand, such as a pair of queens, which they decided to flat call rather than 3-bet preflop? You might be surprised to find out that **T♥9♥** is still ahead with 52% equity.

On this particular board, **T♥9♥** has high equity against your opponent and is a great candidate for a continuation bet based on equity alone.

Weaker hands

What do you do if you have a hand low in showdown value with less equity?

Even a weaker hand, such as **T♦9♥**, should be used as a semi-bluffing hand on a board like **8♥7♥5♣**. Your open-ended straight draw gives you good equity, but you have very little showdown value with simply ten high.



An open-ended straight draw (OESD) is a straight draw that can be completed at either end by one of eight cards. (It is also known as an up-and-down straight draw.) In this case any 6 or J gives you a straight.

A semi-bluff is a bet made when you can be reasonably certain that your opponent will fold better hands and hands that have better showdown value than yours.

Types of hands you should not be continuation betting

If you have a medium-strength hand, you ought to play a smaller pot. You should be more inclined to check and call with these hands. This concept is called “pot control.” Medium-strength hands have much better showdown value than the previous hands; therefore it is less important to bluff with them.

You can check and call against opponents who are overly aggressive, and check and fold against opponents who are tighter.

For example, let's say you hold $8♥8♠$ on a flop of $A♦3♥9♠$. In this case you should lean towards checking rather than betting. This is because most worse hands are not going to call your bet.

If you bet here, you will frequently be called by aces, some underpairs, and pairs of tens. Hands you currently beat that will call you include straight draws such as JQ and KQ, but there are simply not enough worse hands for you to bet and be called.

Pot control should be used when you have showdown value but low equity against the range of hands with which your opponent will call your continuation bet.

If you have a hand that is low in showdown value and in equity, then your decision to continuation bet is determined by your opponent. In general, you do not want to be continuation betting as a pure bluff. Do not be afraid to check and fold to aggression with your weakest hands!



Understanding your hand at a deeper level: Board texture and hand ranges

Your opponent is going to give you much more credit when you continuation bet on an A-high board if you have raised UTG rather than from the BTN. Why? As we show in our article on [unopened preflop raises](#), when you are opening only 12% rather than 45% of your hands, the chance that your hand contains a strong ace is much higher. Most opponents understand this.

Understanding your opponent

Understanding your hand is just one part of the puzzle. Another part is understanding your opponent. This is especially important for determining when a semi-bluff is profitable, and whether or not you can be called by worse hands.

The most important poker statistic for continuation betting is your opponent's "folded to continuation bet" (FCB) percentage. Poker Copilot breaks this down by the flop, turn, and river, as well as showing whether your opponent is in position or out of position.

Some of your hands will be straightforward decisions based on the strength of your hand, your showdown value, and your equity.

Other decisions, however, will be more nuanced. In this case, the guideline is that *the higher the percentage of hands your opponent is folding to continuation bets, the more fold equity you have*. This means that continuation betting can be done as a bluff more often. When your opponent has a low fold to continuation bet, you have less fold equity. In this case, you should be continuation betting less as a bluff and more for value.

Good opponents will usually have a fold to continuation bet somewhere around 42%–57% at the lower stakes. Opponents who stray from this range can be exploited.

One common mistake newer players make is basing their decisions on insufficient data. While the fold to flop cbet statistic starts to become useful after a few hundred hands, you need thousands, if not tens of thousands, of hands on your opponents before you can completely trust it!



A word of caution: do not continuation bet too often

It used to be thought that at the lower stakes players could profitably continuation bet at frequencies of 70% or higher. While this strategy may have been profitable a decade ago, online poker has evolved and it is profitable no longer.

In the current state of poker, many players will have a continuation bet frequency of 40%–60%.

Even if your opponent has a high fold to continuation bet, you should try to cbet hands as bluffs that have at least some equity. For example, having a single over-card, a backdoor flush draw, or a gutshot straight draw gives you a better chance of winning the hand.

A backdoor flush draw occurs when you have a hand such as $T♥9♥$ on a board of $2♦6♥7♠$. If the turn and river are both hearts, then you will make a ten-high flush. This hand also has what is called a “gutshot straight draw,” meaning that if you hit an 8 you will make a straight.

As a last lesson in continuation betting, imagine that you hold $T♥9♥$ on a board of $2♦6♥7♠$. Think of the situations in which you would decide to continuation bet and those in which you would not, bearing in mind your position at the table, your opponent's position at the table, the value of your hand, and the frequency with which your opponent is folding to continuation bets.

These are just the first steps to understanding when to continuation bet or not. [Our article on check-raising](#) will give you another piece of the puzzle.



Chapter 7: Check-raising

What is check-raising?

Check-raising is when a player checks the flop, turn, or river with one or more opponents acting afterward, and then raises if an opponent bets.

Constructing a check-raising range

You want to have a balanced strategy in which you check-raise some hands for value and some hands as semi-bluffs. This article is designed for the most common check-raising situation: when defending the small or big blind against a single preflop raiser.

Nevertheless, the concepts discussed below are fundamental for check-raising in other situations, too.

A good beginner strategy is to check-raise with your hands of two pair plus and with your medium-strength draws some of the time.

Here is an example. UTG opens and you defend the big blind on a board of $9\clubsuit 7\clubsuit A\spadesuit$. Below is your range for check-raising for value.

AA	AKs	AQs	AJs	ATs	A9s	A8s	A7s	A6s	A5s	A4s	A3s	A2s
AKo	KK	KQs	KJs	KTs	K9s	K8s	K7s	K6s	K5s	K4s	K3s	K2s
AQo	KQo	QQ	QJs	QTs	Q9s	Q8s	Q7s	Q6s	Q5s	Q4s	Q3s	Q2s
AJo	KJo	QJo	JJ	JTs	J9s	J8s	J7s	J6s	J5s	J4s	J3s	J2s
ATo	KTo	QTo	JTo	TT	T9s	T8s	T7s	T6s	T5s	T4s	T3s	T2s
A9o	K9o	Q9o	J9o	T9o	99	98s	97s	96s	95s	94s	93s	92s
A8o	K8o	Q8o	J8o	T8o	98o	88	87s	86s	85s	84s	83s	82s
A7o	K7o	Q7o	J7o	T7o	97o	87o	77	76s	75s	74s	73s	72s
A6o	K6o	Q6o	J6o	T6o	96o	86o	76o	66	65s	64s	63s	62s
A5o	K5o	Q5o	J5o	T5o	95o	85o	75o	65o	55	54s	53s	52s
A4o	K4o	Q4o	J4o	T4o	94o	84o	74o	64o	54o	44	43s	42s
A3o	K3o	Q3o	J3o	T3o	93o	83o	73o	63o	53o	43o	33	32s
A2o	K2o	Q2o	J2o	T2o	92o	82o	72o	62o	52o	42o	32o	22



You will notice that you are raising your two-pair hands, which are your A9s and A7s combos, as well as 97s. You will not have A9o and A7o, as these hands are better as a fold against the UTG range preflop.

Additionally, you can check-raise your sets for value. These are 99 and 77. You will not have top set (AA), as this would be a 3-bet preflop.

Now, you need to balance out this range with some bluffs. If you only check-raise for value, then your opponents can easily fold against you unless they have the very top of their range.

Your bluffing range could look like this.

AA	AKs	AQs	AJs	ATs	A9s	A8s	A7s	A6s	A5s	A4s	A3s	A2s
AKo	KK	KQs	KJs	KTs	K9s	K8s	K7s	K6s	K5s	K4s	K3s	K2s
AQo	KQo	QQ	QJs	QTs	Q9s	Q8s	Q7s	Q6s	Q5s	Q4s	Q3s	Q2s
AJo	KJo	QJo	JJ	JTs	J9s	J8s	J7s	J6s	J5s	J4s	J3s	J2s
ATo	KTo	QTo	JTo	TT	T9s	T8s	T7s	T6s	T5s	T4s	T3s	T2s
A9o	K9o	Q9o	J9o	T9o	99	98s	97s	96s	95s	94s	93s	92s
A8o	K8o	Q8o	J8o	T8o	98o	88	87s	86s	85s	84s	83s	82s
A7o	K7o	Q7o	J7o	T7o	97o	87o	77	76s	75s	74s	73s	72s
A6o	K6o	Q6o	J6o	T6o	96o	86o	76o	66	65s	64s	63s	62s
A5o	K5o	Q5o	J5o	T5o	95o	85o	75o	65o	55	54s	53s	52s
A4o	K4o	Q4o	J4o	T4o	94o	84o	74o	64o	54o	44	43s	42s
A3o	K3o	Q3o	J3o	T3o	93o	83o	73o	63o	53o	43o	33	32s
A2o	K2o	Q2o	J2o	T2o	92o	82o	72o	62o	52o	42o	32o	22

In this situation, your flush draws are generally strong enough to simply flat call. You can check-raise your non-flush-draw gutshots, such as 86, 85, and T6 of spades, diamonds, and hearts. If your opponent re-raises, you can easily fold these weak hands. If your opponent calls, you can continue bluffing or you can hit a straight. 87 suited is also included, as it is an open-ended straight draw, which gives you better equity against your opponent.



How often should you be check-raising for value?

This depends on whether or not your opponent is likely to call your check-raise.

You need to look at your opponent's fold to check-raise statistic. Bear in mind that it takes longer to develop a reasonable sample size for this statistic because of the rarity of check-raising.

1. If your opponent has a low fold to check-raise statistic, you should be betting a depolarized check-raising range (depolarized means betting a top percentage of your hands). In the above images, you would only be using the first value range.
2. If your opponent has a high fold to check-raise statistic, you should have a polarized check-raising range (polarized means that in addition to check-raising strong hands, you also check-raise some hands that are not quite strong enough to call). The more fold equity you have, the more semi-bluffs you can add to your check-raising range. A good beginner strategy for a balanced check-raise is to occasionally check-raise some medium-strength draws that can continue putting aggression on future streets depending on the turn and river cards.

Determining whether your hand is strong enough to check-raise for value

You need to assess your hand against the range of hands your opponent is likely to have. Hands like two pair plus are almost always strong enough to check-raise for value. Let's look at the factors that determine whether your hand is good enough to check-raise for value.

1. Your opponent's UOPFR from the position they are currently raising from. The tighter the range, the stronger their hands. Your hand needs to be stronger to check-raise for value. You have less fold equity against a strong range.
2. Your opponent's in-position flop continuation-betting statistic. The lower this is, the stronger the hands that your opponent is deciding to continuation bet on the flop. This statistic needs to be understood in relation to the UOPFR of your opponent. For example, 50% of a UTG hand range will be much different from 50% of a BTN hand range. The advantage of raising almost entirely for value against this range is that, because your opponent is only continuation betting strong hands, this player is



unlikely to fold against your check-raise. To learn more about UOPFR, [read our unopened pre-flop raising guide](#).

Determining whether your hand is at risk

The more at risk your hand is, the more you want to check-raise for value.

1. If there are draws on a board, such as straight draws or flush draws, even your strongest hands, like sets, two-pairs and overpairs, are at risk.
2. If the draw completes on the turn or river, even if you are still ahead of your opponent you can lose action as your opponent's relative hand strength will decrease.
3. Your opponent is more likely to put you on a bluff on a draw-heavy board than one with no draws.

If bluffing, is your opponent likely to continue to do so on the turn and river?

You should check-raise at a lower frequency on boards where your opponent is more likely to be bluffing and is likely to continue bluffing turns and rivers.

1. Players generally bluff more on ace-high and king-high boards, and more often continue their aggression on the turn and river.
2. You need to look at your opponent's cbet turn and river percentages. The higher they are, the more likely that your opponent is going to continue bluffing. You must understand your opponent's statistics on the flop and how they affect the turn and river ranges. For example, a player who is [continuation betting](#) only 30% on the flop and 60% on the turn will have a much stronger range of hands than someone betting 65% on the flop and 55% on the turn.

How do you decide whether you should check-raise as a semi-bluff?

If your opponent is folding to check-raises at a reasonable or high percentage, then you can use a polarized strategy of check-raising both for value and as a semi-bluff.



Understanding your fold equity

Your fold equity determines both the range and frequency with which you can check-raise against your opponent.

1. The higher your opponent's fold to check-raise percentage, the more fold equity you have.
2. The wider your opponent's preflop range, the more fold equity you have.
3. The higher your opponent's continuation betting percentage, the more fold equity you have.
4. The tighter your image at the table, the more fold equity you will have.

Making sure your hand is not good enough to call

If your hand is good enough to call a bet with, you do not want to turn it into a semi-bluff.

1. The higher your showdown value, the less often you should check-raise as a bluff.
2. If your opponent's range of hands includes many bluffs, medium-strength hands are better used to call than raise.

Choosing a range with equity to improve on turns and rivers

Your hand's equity is very important to check-raising as a semi-bluff. You want to choose hands that can improve on the turn, allowing you to continue bluffing. This is done for two reasons.

1. A hand with a backdoor flush draw and a gutshot has clear turn barreling options. (Barreling means to continue betting, in this case as a bluff. A "triple-barrel" bluff, for example, is when you bluff the flop, turn, and river.)
2. You can improve to the best hand and win a big pot.



How to respond to a check-raise

Understanding how to respond to a check-raise will depend almost entirely on your opponent's check-raised (CR) statistic in Poker Copilot.

Facing a value check-raise

If a player is check-raising 5% or less, it is extremely value-oriented. Your opponent is probably only check-raising sets, straights, and other very powerful hands.

Against this player, you should be inclined to fold all but your strongest hands. Even a hand like TPTK (top pair, top kicker; such as AQ on a board of Q78) is usually too weak to continue with. Think about the board and the range of hands your opponent is raising with. If someone is only raising 5%, then on the board of Q78 that player is usually check-raising with hands like 77, 88, 87, Q7, or Q8. Remember the images of a value range and bluffing range at the start of this article? Players with low check-raising percentages generally only have the value range.

Facing a bluff-heavy check-raising range

If someone is check-raising 10% or higher, this player is starting to become unbalanced in terms of bluffs.

Against these players, you can re-raise and get it in with your strongest draws and hands with top pair, good kicker or better; you can flat call your medium-strength hands; and you can fold the rest of your range.



Chapter 8: Squeeze Bets

What is a squeeze bet?

A squeeze bet occurs when one player raises, then one or more players call that raise, and then another player 3-bets. It is called a squeeze because the original preflop caller is getting “squeezed” out of the pot.

What does a squeeze bet achieve?

While the original raiser can have a strong range of hands, the preflop caller decided not to 3-bet and therefore has a “capped range” (this simply means that the preflop caller does not have the strongest hands, such as QQ+ and AKs, as these would have been 3-betted).

It is therefore very difficult for the preflop caller to continue. Players in this scenario will be forced to fold a large portion of their range.

When should you make a squeeze bet?

1. **As a bluff in order to take down the pot preflop**, when your opponents are over-folding to the squeeze play. This can be done in situations where your opponents' ranges are weak, such as when one of them opens from the dealer button and the small blind flat calls. You can use the poker statistics “folded to squeeze bet when raiser” and “folded to squeeze bet when caller” to get a better picture of your fold equity.
2. **To isolate a weak player**. Good players try to play more pots against weaker players, and as you watch your opponents' play style and use [VPIP and PFR to identify player types](#), you may notice that the strong players at your table are flat calling raises from fish at a higher frequency than they would with a strong player. This means that their range is weaker than usual. When you make a squeeze bet, you can often get the stronger player to fold, and then you can play a pot heads up against the fish.
3. **To build a pot for value**. When you have a strong hand such as a good pocket pair or strong Broadway cards like AK or AQ, you want to build a bigger pot.



Think about the kinds of hands that you want to be squeezing and which you prefer to just flat call and go to the flop multiway. A hand like AJ offsuit plays much better against a single opponent, whereas a hand like 44 or 89 suited plays very well against multiple opponents and is a better candidate to flat call.

How do you respond to a squeeze bet as the original raiser?

As the original preflop raiser, you have the advantage of having an uncapped range. To get a picture of what our opponent is doing, we need to look at the poker statistic “Squeeze bet.” The higher this percentage, the more likely it is that our opponent is making a squeeze bet as a bluff. If our opponent has a “Squeeze bet” percentage of 10% or more, it is very likely that they are using a wider range of hands. We can combat this strategy by folding less, and 4-betting a range of hands as bluffs. If our opponent has a “Squeeze bet” percentage of 5% or less, it is much more likely that they are making a squeeze play primarily for value. We can combat this strategy by folding more, and 4-betting mainly for value.

For more information, please read [Chapter 4: 3-betting and 4-betting](#).

How do you respond to a squeeze bet as the caller being squeezed?

Generally, it is stronger opponents that have squeeze plays in their arsenal. Against these opponents, you face a difficult situation. You need to look at the reason that you were flat-calling the original raise in the first place.

Was it because your hand is strong enough to call against the original preflop raisers opening range? If this is the case, you are probably not strong enough to continue against a squeezing range, and you must fold.

Was it because you felt you could outplay your opponent post-flop? In this case, you no longer have the incentive to continue if the preflop raiser folds against the squeeze play. If the preflop raiser calls, you need to look at how your hand is faring against the range of the squeezer.



It is very difficult to 4-bet once you have capped your range by flat-calling the original raiser. This means you'll often have to fold against the squeeze bet.

Planning the hand - avoiding the squeeze bet

The simplest way to combat squeeze plays is to identify players with position on you preflop that are active squeeze betters. If you have one or more of these players to your left, hands that were profitable preflop flat calls against a single raise can be folded.



Chapter 9: Big Blinds Remaining

What is “big blinds remaining”?

“Big blinds remaining” expresses the size of your stack in terms of how many big blinds it is worth.

In a standard cash game you can buy in to a maximum of 100 big blinds (this is written as 100bb). When talking about a stake, you talk about it in terms of a 100bb stack. For example, 100nl (no limit) is a cash game with a small blind of \$0.50 and a big blind of \$1.00. 10nl on the other hand would be a cash game with blinds of \$0.05 and \$0.10. If you are buying in to the maximum at a cash game, you will always have 100bb.

Why should you think in terms of "big blinds remaining"?

No matter how high stakes you are playing, you always want to think of your decisions in terms of the blinds. A \$200 stack when the blinds are \$0.25/\$0.50 is very different from a \$200 stack when the blinds are \$2.00/\$4.00. Thinking in terms of big blinds remaining is a standardized way of understanding the game.

What are the advantages of assessing player stack size in number of big blinds remaining?

Psychological factors

To make clear decisions, you need to understand poker in terms of big blinds rather than money. Distancing yourself emotionally allows you to make the best decisions.

Understanding the effective stack

Understanding your own stack and your opponents' stacks in terms of big blinds gives you the “effective stack” of any situation. If you raise preflop with a 200bb stack and are called by a single player in the big blind who has a stack of 100bb, then you can only win or lose



up to 100bb. Therefore, the effective stack is 100bb. If the player in the big blind had 20bb, then the effective stack would have been 20bb.

How to play when "big blinds remaining" is low

In tournaments, you will find yourself in situations where your big blind remaining is low. Once you are in the range of 15bb or less, you should be open-shoving your hands preflop. (Open-shoving means going "all in" when the action is folded to you, in order to pick up the blinds and antes.)

The key is to use fold equity to take down pots preflop. A good beginner's resource is pushfoldcharts.com.

When you are in the range of 15–35bb, you have a "re-shove stack." This means that you go all in against a single raise or a 3-bet by an opponent using fold equity. (While our [guide to 3-betting](#) is focused on cash games, many of the concepts covered in it are also useful for re-shoving in tournaments.)

When you have this slightly larger stack size, you have more choices. Instead of having to always go all in preflop, you have a little more room to maneuver. You can raise preflop and decide whether to fold to aggression. The lower your big blinds remaining, the less you want to fold once you have invested money into the pot.

You need a basic understanding of the "Independent Chip Model" (ICM) to succeed at short-stack play. The ICM calculates the value of your chips in terms of the prize pool of a tournament. At the core of the ICM is the fact that your survival in the tournament is worth more than gaining chips. In a tournament, the negative effect of losing 30% of your stack is much greater than the positive effect of gaining 30% of your stack.

This is why shoving and re-shoving is such a powerful play. You can go all in with a range of hands that is wider than the range your opponent has.

Some aggressive professional tournament players prefer to go all in preflop at stack depths of under 25bb. Shoving wider can be beneficial with a hand like 55, which, while usually having good equity when called, is very difficult to play profitably postflop when you do not hit a set.



In general, beginners do not go all in with a wide enough short stack, nor do they call shoves wide enough.

How to play against an opponent whose “big blinds remaining” is low

First, you need to determine whether your opponent is strong or weak. This is done through observation of playing style and by using [VPIP and PFR to determine player type](#).

One of the most difficult opponents to play against is a strong player who has only a few big blinds remaining. In tournaments stronger players generally go all in preflop at a short stack depth with a wider range than weaker players, whereas weaker players tend to be too tight and do not understand correct shoving ranges.

In tournaments, you need to be very cautious opening a hand when you have short stacks to your left who can go all in and force you to fold. In fact, if all the stacks to your left are under 15bb, you may decide to simply go all in yourself, as the effective stack depth is short.

It does not matter if you have a stack of 100bb or 1000bb. If all the players to your left have 10bb, then you are effectively playing the hand with 10bb because you cannot win or lose more than 10bb. You are playing with an “effective stack” of 10bb.

Cash games can be incredibly tough when you have a strong “short-stacker” playing. There are some professional poker players who prefer to buy in at a stack depth of 40bb or less. They will 3-bet, 4-bet, and generally make your life miserable. Unless you have a good reason to stay at these tables, such as if there are one or more very poor players present, you may prefer to simply leave.

Weak short-stackers at a cash game are simple to play against. You simply need to determine whether they are calling too light or folding too much. Against the former, you can widen your value range and generally go all in on the flop or turn hoping for a call. Against the latter, you can use fold equity, and you may prefer to use a smaller raise sizing and simply fold to aggression.



When playing against a 100bb stack, you need to be able to play the turn and river. Against a short stack, the most important street is the flop. Our [guide to continuation betting](#) will give you a good, solid understanding of when to bet.

Quick tips for playing against short stacks

- Implied odds are low. Because you cannot get a large payoff when you hit a flush or straight, you should be less inclined to play hands like small suited connectors.
- The value of pairs and high cards are increased. A hand like A2o is much better against a short stack than against a big stack.

M-ratio

Another way to evaluate your stack in a tournament with antes is the M-ratio. This is a formula to understand your vulnerability in a tournament.

$$M = \text{Stack Size} / (\text{BB} + \text{SB} + \text{One Full Round of Antes})$$

For example, you have a stack of 2000 chips. The big blind is 100 and the small blind is 50. Antes are 1, and it is a 10-handed table, so one round of antes is 10 chips.

$$2000 / (100 + 50 + 10) = 12.5$$

In this case, we would have an M of 12.5.

M-ratio has the following guidelines:

- An M higher than 20 is a healthy stack. You can play as you wish.
- When M is between 10 and 20 you should take more risks.
- when M is between 6 and 10 you should focus on being first to act.
- when M is less than 6 you should be either going all in or folding.

In modern poker, most players prefer to understand their stack in big blinds remaining rather than M-ratio.



Chapter 10: Float Bet

What is a “donk bet in position,” or “float”?

“Donk bet in position” and “float” are two terms for the same statistic.

“Float” itself has two completely different definitions in poker, which can initially cause confusion. One definition is used when, after a player raises preflop and continuation bets the flop, the preflop caller calls the flop continuation bet with a weak hand with the intention of bluffing the turn or river to win the pot. This is called “floating the flop.”

The second definition, and the one on which this article is focused, is used when, after a player raises preflop and decides not to continuation bet, the preflop caller bets when checked to. This is called a “float bet.”

In Poker Copilot the statistic for float bets is filed under “donk bet in position.” For readability, we will use the terms “float” and “donk bet in position” interchangeably in this article. (Please do not confuse “donk bet in position” with the donk bet statistic. To learn more about donk betting, a common play made by weak players, please read our article on [donk bets](#).)

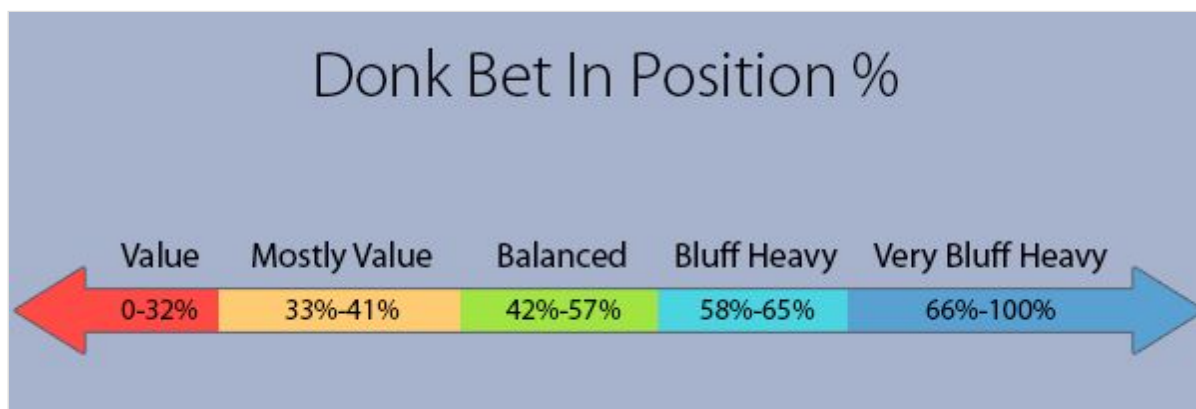
What to do when facing a float bet

You’ve been in this situation many times. You raise preflop, and then check the flop. Then your opponent bets against your weakness. It can be so frustrating to feel like your opponent is stealing pots from you every time you check!

The first step is to look at your opponent’s “donk bet in position” statistic.

Usually, you need roughly 800 or more hands on your opponent before this statistic starts to become reliable. Some players, however, will have a donk bet in position that is either much too high or much too low, and with these opponents you require a sample size of only 200 or more hands to get a good picture of their strategy.





Whenever you look at a statistic with percentages, you need to understand the percentage based on how loose or tight your opponent is. Opponents with a low VPIP/PFR with a 50% donk bet in position are going to have a much stronger range of hands than players with a high VPIP/PFR when they choose to float bet. If you're confused about VPIP/PFR, don't worry; we have an entire article that explains these statistics and how to use them to [identify player types in poker](#).

Now that you understand the donk bet in position statistic, how can you use it to help your gameplay?

This statistic works in conjunction with how your opponents react to check-raising and how aggressive they are on further streets. When you are deciding whether to [continuation bet](#), you need to ask yourself: will I make more money by betting or by checking?

Let's look at some different types of opponents.

High donk bet in position and high fold to continuation bet on flop

Against this opponent, you should be inclined to check and call with your strong hands. This is because your opponent is more likely to bet as a bluff than call with a weak hand. This is called "slow playing."

Logically, you should also be checking and calling with your medium-strength hands. This is because when opponents have a low fold to continuation bet on flop, they will usually be calling your bets with hands that are better than your medium-strength hands. However, if they have a high donk bet in position, it is likely that they are float betting weak hands that you can beat.



Low fold to continuation bet on flop and a low donk bet in position

Against these opponents, you should not slow play your strong hands. You make much more money by exploiting these players' low fold to continuation bet on flop and can value bet a wider range of hands.

Deciding whether to check-raise, call, or fold

When your opponent "donk bets in position," you have a choice to make. You can call, fold, or check-raise. With your weakest hands, you should fold. Your medium-strength hands are best used as a call.

With your strongest hands, you should either check-raise or simply call.

The more likely your opponents are to bluff on future streets, the more you want to continue calling and let them bluff away their money. The more passive they are on future streets, the more you want to get money in with your strong hands.

Please read our article on [check-raising](#) for an in-depth guide to the strategy.

When should you make a float bet?

While donk-betting is a strategy with a poor image, betting when the preflop raiser checks is a basic postflop skill to master. (Many of the concepts discussed in our [continuation betting](#) article are relevant to deciding when to make a float bet.)

Generally, the higher your opponents' continuation betting percentage, the more they will fold to a float bet.

This is because when your opponents are continuation betting wider, they start to bet their weaker and medium-strength hands. When they check, they usually have a very weak range of hands that cannot continue against aggression.

If your opponents have a low continuation bet percentage, they are checking some stronger hands and are more likely to slow play. Against these opponents, you should be less inclined to make a float bet with anything but a strong range of hands.



Keep track of how your opponents react to your float bets and the kind of board textures that they continuation bet on.

Some opponents, for example, will always bet any pair on a board that has a flush draw possible. Against these opponents, you can make a float bet with a wider range on boards that have a flush draw when faced with a check. In these cases, your opponents are telling you that they do not have a strong hand; if they did, they would have bet out of fear of the flush draw.



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