

No limit Texas hold'em rules



Number of players: 2-10

Cards: standard deck of 52 playing cards

Buy-in

In no limit hold'em cash games the minimum and maximum buy-in amount are decided by the house (casino, online poker room, home game host). Often there will be no maximum buy in amount. A standard buy-in amount is 100 big blinds. The game plays best with enough chips of different denominations so that players can bet any amount they want (until all-in, all chips from a player's stack are in the pot). The small blind often determines the smallest chip denomination. Players can bring additional chips to the table (re-load) in between hands but not during a hand.

Dealer button

Every hand one player receives the dealer button, which means as much as that this player is assigned the function of dealer. When starting a new game, every player is dealt one card face up. The person with the highest card receives the button. The ranking of the cards from lowest to highest is 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, J, Q, K, A. For similar cards the suits are ranked from lowest to highest as clubs, diamonds, hearts and spades. Every next hand the dealer button is moved 1 player clockwise. If the players do not actually deal themselves or if one player does all the dealing, than the dealer button (function of dealer) keeps being assigned to one of the players as explained.

Blinds

Every hand the two players directly left to the dealer have to make a forced bet before the cards are dealt. These bets are called the blinds. The player directly left to the button pays the small blind. The player directly left from the small blind pays the big blind, which usually is twice the small blind. In cash games the blinds are pre-determined and stay the same throughout the game. In tournaments the blinds can go up following a pre-determined blind-schedule in which the size of the blinds and the duration of each level (usually a certain amount of time or number of hands) are stated. In cash games, the blinds determine the stakes of the game.

Dealing of the cards

After the blinds have been paid, every player is dealt two cards face down starting with the person directly left from the dealer (small blind) going clockwise. Every player receives one card at a time (two rounds of dealing).

Actions

Whenever it's a player's turn, he or she can choose from the following actions:

- **Check:** the player continues to play his cards without betting. This option is only open to a player if nobody has bet or raised yet.
- **Fold:** the player does not continue in the hand and 'mucks' his or her cards (returns the cards face down to the dealer, these cards or not used until the next hand).

- **Bet:** if no other players have bet yet, than the player can bet any amount with a minimum of the big blind and a maximum of his whole stack. The big blind is considered a bet in the first betting round.
- **Call:** if another player has bet earlier in the hand, calling will match this bet and the player continues with his hand.
- **Raise:** if another player has bet earlier in the hand, raising will make it more expensive for all the players to continue in the hand (to call). The minimum amount one can raise with is the initial bet. If a players stack is too small for this, than a player can go all-in.

Both a bet and a raise are said to ‘re-open the betting’. This means that the last player who has not yet folded to the right of the player who last bet or raised is last to act. There is no limit to the amount of times the action can come back to a certain player in no limit hold’em when, for example, players keep re-raising each other with minimal raises. The only exception here is the big blind in the pre-flop betting round. Although the big blind is considered a bet, the small blind will never be last to act. The big blind always gets a chance to act.

Betting rounds

In Texas hold’em there are four betting rounds or streets: pre-flop, the flop, the turn (also called fourth street) and the river (also called fifth street). A betting round is closed when all players have acted, either once or multiple times if the betting gets re-opened by a bet or a raise, or when a player has won the hand. If two or more players get all-in on a betting round before the river and no other players are left to bet, then all five community cards have to be dealt before a winner can be decided.

- **Pre-flop** betting starts as soon as the blinds are paid and the cards have been dealt. The first player to act is the player directly seated left to the big blind (the player ‘under the gun’). The big blind is considered a bet and therefore players can only call or raise. The player in the big blind always gets a chance to act (also see ‘Actions’).
- On **the flop** the top card of the deck (being face down) is burned (mucked) after which three community cards are dealt face up. Then a round of betting starts in which the player directly seated to the left of the dealer button (the small blind) is first to act.
- **The turn and the river** follow the same rules as the flop with the exception that only one card gets dealt instead of three.

Deciding a winner

A player has won the hand when all other players have folded or when this player holds the best hand when it comes to a showdown on the river. At showdown, the last player who bet or raised on the river has to show his hand first after which other players can choose to muck (discarding their hand unseen) or show going clockwise. If all players checked on the river, then the player left to the dealer has to show his hand first. A player must pick exactly 5 cards from the 2 hole cards and the 5 community cards together to form the best hand (even if that means playing all the community cards and no hole cards). If multiple players have the same best hand, than they equally split the pot (‘it’s a split pot’). In no limit Texas hold’em the four different card suits are not ranked.