

# POKER TOURNAMENT RULES

## ***General Concepts***

### **1: Floor Decisions**

Floorpeople must consider the best interest of the game and fairness as top priorities in the decision-making process. Unusual circumstances can on occasion dictate that decisions in the interest of fairness take priority over the technical rules. The floorperson's decision is final.

### **2: Official Terminology of Tournament Poker**

Official betting terms are simple, unmistakable, time-honored declarations like: bet, raise, call, fold, check, all-in, pot (in pot-limit only), and complete. Regional terms may also meet this standard. The use of non-standard language is at player's risk because it may result in a ruling other than what the player intended. It is the responsibility of players to make their intentions clear. See also Rules 40 & 49.

### **3: Electronic Devices and Communication**

Players may not talk on a phone while at the poker table. House rules apply to other forms of electronic devices and electronic communication.

### **4: Official Language**

The English-Arabic rule will be enforced during the play of hands.

## ***Seating Players; Breaking & Balancing Tables***

### **5: Random Correct Seating**

Tournament and satellite seats will be randomly assigned. A player who started the tournament in the wrong seat with the correct chip stack amount will be moved to the correct seat and will take his current total chip stack with him.

### **6: Seating of Alternates, Late Registrations, and Re-Entries**

Alternates, players registering late, and re-entries will be sold full stacks.

### **6: Special Needs**

Accommodations for players with special needs will be made when possible.

### **8: Breaking Tables**

Players going from a broken table to fill in seats assume the responsibilities of the position. They can get any seat including the big or small blind or button. The only place they cannot be dealt a hand is between the small blind and the button.

## **9: Balancing Tables**

**A:** To balance tables in flop and mixed games, the player who will be big blind next is moved to the worst position, including taking a single big blind when available, even if that means the seat will have the big blind twice. Worst position is never the small blind. In stud-only events, players are moved by position (the last seat to open at the short table is the seat filled).

**B:** In mixed games (ex: HORSE), when the game shifts from hold'em to stud, after the last hold'em hand the button is moved exactly to the position it would be if the next hand was hold'em and then is frozen there during the stud round. The player moved during stud is the player who would be the big blind if the game was hold'em for that hand. When hold'em resumes the button for the first hand will be at the position where it was frozen.

**C.** The table from which a player is moved will be specified by a predetermined procedure.

**D.** In full-table events, play will halt on a table 3 or more players short of the table with the most players. Play will halt on other game formats (ex: 6-handed and turbos) at TDs discretion. Not halting play is not a cause for a misdeal and TDs may elect not to halt play at their discretion. As the event progresses, when manageable & appropriate for the type of game, at TD's discretion tables will be more tightly balanced.

## **10: Number of Players at Final Table**

Final tables will have the number of players at a full table for the event, plus one more player. (ex: 9-handed events seat 10 at the final table, 8-handed stud seats 9, 6-handed seats 7, etc.). No final table should seat more than 10. This rule does not apply to heads-up events.

## ***Pots / Showdown***

### **11: Declarations. Cards Speak at Showdown**

Cards speak to determine the winner. Verbal declarations of hand value are not binding at showdown. However, deliberately miscalling a hand may be penalized. Any player, in the hand or not, should speak up if he thinks a mistake is being made in the reading of hands.

### **12: Tabling Cards & Killing Winning Hand**

**A:** At showdown, a player should put all cards on the table so the dealer and players can read the hand clearly. "All cards" means both hole cards in hold'em, all 4 hole cards in Omaha, all 7 cards in 7-stud, etc. Dealers cannot kill a hand that was tabled and obviously the winning hand.

**B:** If a player does not fully table his cards, then mucks thinking he has won, he does so at his own risk. If the cards are not 100% identifiable and the TD rules that the hand could not

clearly be read, the player has no claim to the pot. The TDs decision on whether a hand was sufficiently tabled is final.

### **13: Live Cards at Showdown**

Pushing non-tabled cards forward face down does automatically kill them; a player may change his mind and table his cards if they did not touch the muck. However, the cards are at risk of being killed by the dealer when he pushes them into the muckpile.

### **14: Face Up for All-ins.**

All cards will be tabled without delay once a player is all-in and all betting action by all other players in the hand is complete.

### **15: Showdown Order.**

In a non all-in showdown, if cards are not spontaneously tabled, the TD may enforce an order of show. The last aggressive player on the final betting round (final street) must table first. If there was no bet on the final street, then the player who would be first to act in a betting round must table first (i.e. first seat left of the button in flop games, high hand showing in stud, low hand showing in razz, etc.). Except where house policy requires a hand to be tabled during the order of show, a player may elect to muck his hand face down.

### **16: Playing the Board at Showdown**

When playing the board a player must table all hole cards in order to get part of the pot.

### **17: Asking to See a Hand**

Players not still in possession of their cards at showdown, or who have mucked face down without tabling their cards, lose any rights or privileges they may have to ask to see any hand.

### **18: Awarding Odd Chips**

Odd chips will be broken into the smallest denominations possible. In board games with 2 or more high or low hands, the odd chip goes to the first seat left of the button. In high stud, razz, and if there are 2 or more high or low hands in stud/8; the odd chip goes to the high card by suit in the best 5-card hand. In H/L split, the odd chip in the total pot goes to the high side. If identical hands win both high and low (ex: 2 wheels in Omaha/8) the pot will be split as evenly as possible.

### **19: Side Pots**

Each side pot will be split separately.

### **20: Disputed Pots**

The right to dispute a hand ends when a new hand begins. See Rule 22.

## ***General Procedures***

### **21: New Hand & New Limits**

When time has elapsed in a round and a new level is announced, the new level applies to the next hand. A hand begins with the first riffle. If an automatic shuffler is used, the hand begins when the green button is pushed.

### **22: Chip Race, Scheduled Color Ups**

**A:** At scheduled color-ups, chips will be raced off, starting in seat 1, with a maximum of one chip awarded to a player. Players cannot be raced out of an event: a player losing his remaining chip(s) in a race will get 1 chip of the lowest denomination still in play.

**B:** Players must have their chips fully visible and are encouraged to witness the chip race.

**C:** If after the race, a player still has chips of a removed denomination, they will be exchanged for current denominations only at equal value. Chips of removed denominations that do not fully total at least the smallest denomination still in play will be removed without compensation.

### **23: Cards & Chip Stacks Kept Visible, Countable, & Manageable. Discretionary Color-Ups**

**A:** Players are entitled to a reasonable estimation of an opponent's chip count; thus chips should be kept in countable stacks. The TDA recommends clean stacks in multiples of 20 as a standard. Players must keep higher denomination chips visible and identifiable at all times.

**B:** TD will control the number & denomination of chips in play and may color up at their discretion. Discretionary color ups are to be announced.

**C:** Players with live hands must keep their cards in plain view at all times.

### **24: Deck Changes**

Deck changes will be on the dealer push or level changes or as prescribed by the house. Players may not ask for deck changes.

### **25: Re-buys**

A player may not miss a hand. If a player announces the intent to rebuy before a new hand, he is playing chips behind and is obligated to make the re-buy.

### **26: Calling for a Clock**

Once a reasonable amount of time passes and a clock is called for, a player will be given up to 50 seconds to make a decision. If action is not taken before time expires, there will be a 10-second countdown. If the player has not acted by the end of the countdown, the hand is dead. At TDs discretion, the time allowed under this rule may be reduced.

## **27: Rabbit Hunting**

No rabbit hunting is allowed. Rabbit hunting is revealing any cards “that would have come” if the hand had not ended.

## ***Player Present / Eligible for Hand***

### **28: At Your Seat**

A player must be at his seat when the last card is dealt on the initial deal or he will have a dead hand.

A player not then at his seat is dealt in, he may not look at his cards, and the hand is immediately killed after the initial deal. His blinds and antes are posted and if dealt the bring-in card in a stud-type game he will post the bring-in\*. A player must be at his seat to call time. “At your seat” means within reach of your chair. This rule is not intended to condone players being out of their seats while involved in a hand. [\*Note: In stud, house rules may require additional card(s) be dealt to the killed hand in certain situations.]

### **29: At the Table with Action Pending**

A player with a live hand must remain at the table if any further betting action remains in the hand. Leaving the table is incompatible with a player’s duty to protect his hand and follow the action, and is subject to penalty.

## ***Button / Blinds***

### **30: Dead Button**

Tournament play will use a dead button.

### **31: Dodging Blinds**

Players who intentionally dodge any blind when moving from a broken table will incur a penalty.

### **32: Button in Heads-up**

In heads-up play, the small blind is on the button and acts first pre-flop and last on all other betting rounds. The last card is dealt to the button. When beginning heads-up play, the button may need to be adjusted to ensure no player has the big blind twice in a row.

## ***Dealing Rules***

### **33: Misdeals**

**A:** Misdeals include but are not necessarily limited to:

- 1)** 2 or more boxed cards on the initial deal;
- 2)** first card dealt to the wrong seat;
- 3)** cards dealt to a seat not entitled to a hand;

- 4) a seat entitled to a hand is dealt out;
- 5) In stud, if any of the players' 2 down cards are exposed by dealer error;
- 6) In flop games, if either of the first 2 cards dealt off the deck or any other 2 downcards are exposed by dealer error. Players may be dealt 2 consecutive cards on the button. House standards apply for draw games (ex: lowball).

**B:** If a misdeal is declared, the re-deal is an exact re-play: the button does not move, no new players are seated, and limits stay the same. Cards are dealt to players on penalty or who were not at their seats for the original deal, and their hands are killed after the re-deal. The original deal and re-deal count as one hand for a player on penalty, not two.

**C:** If substantial action occurs, a misdeal cannot be declared and the hand must proceed.

### **34: Substantial Action**

Substantial Action is either: A) any two actions in turn, at least one of which puts chips in the pot (i.e. any 2 actions except 2 checks or 2 folds); OR B) any combination of three actions in turn (check, bet, raise, call, or fold). See also Rules 34 and 38.

### **35: Four-Card Flop**

If the flop contains 4 (rather than 3) cards, whether exposed or not, the dealer shall scramble the 4 cards face down. A floorperson will be called to randomly select one card to be used as the next burn card and the remaining 3 cards will become the flop.

## ***Etiquette & Penalties***

### **36: Penalties and Disqualification**

**A:** A penalty may be invoked if a player exposes any card with action pending, throws a card off the table, violates the one-player-to-a-hand rule, or similar incidents occur. Penalties will be invoked for soft play, abuse, disruptive behavior, or cheating.

**B:** Penalty options include verbal warnings, "missed hands", "missed rounds", and disqualification. Missed round penalties are assessed as follows: the offender will miss one hand for every player (including the offender) at the table when the penalty is given multiplied by the number of penalty rounds. Staff can assess 1 or more missed-hand penalties; 1-, 2-, 3-, or 4-round penalties, or disqualification. Repeat infractions are subject to escalating penalties.

**C:** During a penalty, the offender must remain away from the table. Cards are dealt to his seat, his blinds and antes are posted, and the hand is killed after each initial deal. In stud-type games if he is dealt the bring-in card he must post the bring-in.

**D:** Chips of a disqualified player shall be removed from play.

### **37: No Disclosure**

Players are obligated to protect other players in the tournament at all times. Therefore players, whether in the hand or not, may not:

1. Disclose contents of live or folded hands,

2. Advise or criticize play at any time,
3. Read a hand that hasn't been tabled.

The one-player-to-a-hand rule will be enforced. Among other things, this rule prohibits showing a hand to or discussing strategy with another player, spectator, or advisor.

### **38: Exposing Cards and Proper Folding**

A player who exposes his cards with action pending will have a dead hand. When folding, cards should be pushed forward low to the table, not deliberately exposed or tossed high ("helicoptered"). See also Rule 57.

### **39: Ethical Play**

Poker is an individual game. Soft play will result in penalties, which may include chip forfeiture and/or disqualification. Chip dumping and other forms of collusion will result in disqualification.

### **40: Etiquette Violations**

Repeat etiquette violations will result in penalties. Examples include but are not limited to: delay of game, unnecessarily touching other players' cards or chips, repeatedly acting out of turn, betting out of reach of the dealer, abusive conduct, and excessive chatter.

## PLAYERS RESPONSABILITY

### **1: Player Responsibilities**

Players are expected to verify registration data and seat assignments, protect their hands, make their intentions clear, follow the action, act in turn, defend their right to act, keep cards visible, keep chips correctly stacked, remain at the table with a live hand, speak up if they see a mistake being made, transfer tables promptly, follow one player to a hand, know and comply with the rules, follow proper etiquette, and generally contribute to an orderly tournament.



## METHOD OF PLAY

### *Play: Bets & Raises*

#### 1: Verbal Declarations / Acting in Turn

**A:** Players must act in turn. Verbal betting declarations in turn are binding. Chips put in the pot in turn stay in the pot. An undercall (betting less than the current call amount) is a mandatory full call if made facing an opening bet multi-way on any betting round, or facing any bet heads up. In all other situations, TD's discretion applies. For purposes of this rule, in blind games the posted BB is the opening bet on the first round.

**B:** Players should wait for clear bet amounts before acting. Ex: A says "raise" (but states no amount), and B and C quickly fold. B and C should wait to act until A's exact raise amount is clear. All-in buttons can greatly reduce undercall frequency (See Recommended Procedure 1).

#### 2: Action Out of Turn (OOT)

**A:** Action out of turn is subject to penalty and is binding if the action to the OOT player has not changed. A check, call or fold does not change action. If action changes, the OOT bet is not binding and is returned to the OOT player who has all options including: calling, raising, or folding. An OOT fold is binding.

**B:** A player skipped by OOT action must defend his right to act. If there is reasonable time and the skipped player has not spoken up by the time substantial action (Rule 35) OOT occurs to his left, the OOT action is binding. The floor will be called to render a decision on how to treat the skipped hand.

#### 3: Methods of Calling

Standard and acceptable forms of calling include:

- A)** Verbally declaring "call";
- B)** Pushing out chips equal to a call;
- C)** Silently pushing out an overchip; or
- D)** Silently pushing out multiple chips equal to a call under the multiple-chip betting rule (Rule 7).

Silently betting chip(s) relatively tiny to the bet (ex: NLHE, blinds 2k-4k. A bets 50k, B then silently puts out a single 1k chip) is non-standard, strongly discouraged, subject to penalty, and will be interpreted at TDs discretion, including being ruled a full call.

#### 4: Methods of Raising

In no-limit or pot-limit, a raise must be made by:

- (A)** placing the full amount in the pot in one motion; or

**(B)** verbally declaring the full amount prior to the initial placement of chips into the pot; or

**(C)** verbally declaring “raise” prior to pushing out the exact amount to call into the pot and then completing the action with one additional motion. Under option C, if other than the exact amount to call, but less than a minimum raise is first put out, it will be ruled a minimum raise.

It is the player’s responsibility to make his intentions clear.

## **5: Raises**

**A:** A raise must be at least the size of the largest previous bet of the current betting round. If a player raises 50% or more of the previous bet but less than the minimum raise, he must make a full raise. The raise will be exactly the minimum raise allowed.

**B:** In no-limit and pot limit, an all-in wager of less than a full raise does not reopen the betting to a player who has already acted and is not facing at least a full raise when the action returns to him. In limit, at least 50% of a full raise is required to re-open betting for players who have already acted.

## **6: Oversized Chip Betting**

Anytime when facing a bet or blind, placing a single oversized chip in the pot is a call if a raise isn’t first verbally declared. To raise with an oversized chip, raise must be declared before the chip hits the table surface. If raise is declared (but no amount), the raise is the maximum allowable for that chip. When not facing a bet, placing an oversized chip in the pot without declaration is a bet of the maximum for the chip.

## **7: Multiple Chip Betting**

When facing a bet, unless a raise is declared first, a multiple-chip bet is a call if there is not one chip that can be removed and still leave at least the call amount. Example: preflop, 200-400 blinds: A raises to 1200 total (an 800 raise), B puts out two 1000 chips without declaring raise. This is just a call because removing one 1000 chip leaves less than the amount to call (1200). If the single removal of any one chip leaves the call amount or more, the bet is governed by the 50% standard in Rule 41.

## **8: Previous Bet Chips Not Pulled In**

If a player faces a raise and has chips in front of him not yet pulled in from a prior bet, those chips (and any change due) may affect whether his betting response to the raise is a call or re-raise. Because several possibilities exist, players are encouraged to verbally declare their bet before putting out new chips on top of chips from a prior bet not yet pulled in.

## **9: Number of Allowable Raises**

There is no cap on the number of raises in no-limit and pot-limit. In limit events there is a limit to raises even when heads-up until the tournament is down to 2 players; the house limit applies.

## **10: Accepted Action**

Poker is a game of alert, continuous observation. It is the caller's responsibility to determine the correct amount of an opponent's bet before calling, regardless of what is stated by the dealer or players. If a caller requests a count but receives incorrect information from the dealer or players, then places that amount in the pot, the caller is assumed to accept the full correct action & is subject to the correct wager or all-in amount. As with all tournament situations, Rule 1 may apply at TD's discretion.

## **11: Pot Size & Pot-Limit Bets**

Players are entitled to be informed of the pot size in pot-limit only. Dealers will not count the pot in limit and no-limit. Declaring "I bet the pot" is not a valid bet in no-limit but it does bind the player to making a valid bet (at least a minimum bet), and may be subject to penalty. If the player is facing a bet he must make a valid raise.

## **12: String Bets and Raises**

Dealers will be responsible for calling string bets and raises.

## **13: Non-Standard & Unclear Betting**

Players use unofficial betting terms and gestures at their own risk. These may be interpreted to mean other than what the player intended. Also, whenever the size of a declared bet can reasonably have multiple meanings, it will be ruled as the lesser value. Ex: "I bet five". If it is unclear whether "five" means \$500 or \$5,000, the bet stands as \$500. See Rules 2, 3 & 40.

## **14: Non-Standard Folds**

Anytime before the end of the last betting round of a hand, folding in turn when there's been no bet to you (ex: facing a check or first to act post-flop) or folding out of turn are both binding folds and may be subject to penalty. However, at TD's discretion, an accidentally killed hand, can be played if the cards are 100% identifiable.

## **15: Conditional Statements**

Conditional statements regarding future action are non-standard and strongly discouraged; they may be binding and/or subject to penalty at TD's discretion. Example: "if – then" statements such as "If you bet, then I will raise".

## **16: Count of Opponent's Chip Stack**

Players are entitled to a reasonable estimation of opponents' chip stacks (Rule 24). Players may only request a more precise count if facing an all-in bet. The all-in player is not required to count; if he opts not to, the dealer or floor will count it. Accepted action applies (See Rule 46).

## **17: Over Betting Expecting Change**

Betting action should not be used to obtain change. Example: The opening bet is 325 to A and he silently puts out 525 (one 500 and one 25), expecting 200 change. This is a raise to 650 under the multiple chip rule. Putting out more than the intended bet can confuse everyone at the table. All chips pushed out silently are at risk of being counted as part of the bet.

#### **18: All-In with Chips Found Behind Later**

If A bets all-in and a hidden chip is found behind after a player has called, the TD will determine if the chip behind is part of accepted action or not (Rule 46). If not part of the action, A will not be paid off for the chip(s) if he wins. If A loses he is not saved by the chip(s) and the TD may award the chip(s) to the winning caller.

#### ***Play: Other***

#### **19: Chips in Transit**

Players may not hold or transport tournament chips in any manner that takes them out of view. A player who does so will forfeit the chips and may be disqualified. The forfeited chips will be taken out of play.

#### **20: Accidentally Killed / Fouled Hands**

Players must protect their own hands at all times. If a hand is fouled or a dealer kills a hand by mistake, the player has no redress and is not entitled to a refund of called bets. If the player initiated a bet or raise and hasn't been called, the uncalled bet or raise will be returned to him. However, at the TD's discretion, an accidentally killed hand may be played, if the cards are 100 identifiable.

#### **21: Dead Hands and Mucking in Stud**

In stud poker, if a player picks up the upcards while facing action, the hand is dead. Proper mucking in stud is turning down all up cards and pushing them all forward face down.