

# PLAY POKER LIKE JOHNNY CHAN



## BOOK ONE GETTING STARTED

JOHNNY CHAN AND MARK KAROWE

Widely regarded as the world's best poker player, Johnny Chan has been beating the highest buy-in tournaments and big money cash games everywhere for the past twenty years. Because he worked his way up to the top of the poker world by starting in the smallest games, Johnny is the perfect person to teach you how to do it. Whether you are a beginning or intermediate player, this book will help you on your road to expert status. All of the popular casino poker games are covered in a clear and easy to understand fashion.

Win just one extra pot and this book will have paid for itself!

“Johnny Chan is the toughest No-Limit opponent I have ever faced.”  
Doyle Brunson - *Winner of nine WSOP Titles*

“I play with Johnny on a regular basis in the highest games in the world and there is no tougher all around player.”  
Chip Reese - *World Class Player*

“I have been playing poker with Johnny Chan for over twenty years and he's still the greatest player I have ever played against.”  
Bobby Baldwin - *CEO of Mirage Resorts - 1978 WSOP Champion*

“Johnny Chan is a great poker player. I've learned a lot from watching him play.” Phil Ivey - *Winner of four WSOP Titles*

“Johnny Chan is the best tournament player I have ever played against.”  
Phil Hellmuth - *Winner of nine WSOP Titles*

Some of Johnny's titles include:

- 1985 WSOP Limit Hold-em Champion
- 1987 WSOP Main Event Champion
- 1988 WSOP Main Event Champion
- 1988 Hall of Fame Main Event Champion
- 1989 WSOP Main Event Runner Up
- 1989 Hall of Fame Main Event Champion
- 1994 WSOP Seven Card Stud Champion
- 1997 WSOP Deuce to Seven Draw Champion
- 2000 WSOP Omaha Pot Limit Champion
- 2002 WSOP Match Play NLH Champion
- 2003 WSOP No Limit Hold-em Champion



**click the graphic to find out  
how to buy the book**



[WWW.PLAYLIKEQIAN.COM](http://WWW.PLAYLIKEQIAN.COM)

Copyright © 2005 by Johnny Chan and Mark Karowe

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any format by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the publisher, except for the inclusion of brief quotations in a review.

Top Player Media LLC  
409 N. Pacific Coast Hwy. 430  
Redondo Beach, CA 90277

[www.tpmlc.com](http://www.tpmlc.com)

[www.PlayLikeChan.com](http://www.PlayLikeChan.com)

Some photos of Johnny Chan provided courtesy of Larry Grossman of Las Vegas, Nevada.

ISBN 1-933074-30-2

0 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

## **The Top Players All Agree:**

**“It is a rare poker player that excels at tournaments as well as big money side games. Not only does Johnny Chan excel at both but in all types of poker as well.”**

Lyle Berman - *Chairman of the Board of the World Poker Tour*

**“Johnny Chan is the toughest No-Limit opponent I have ever faced.”**

Doyle Brunson - *Winner of nine WSOP Titles*

**“I play with Johnny on a regular basis in the highest games in the world and there is no tougher all-around player.”**

Chip Reese - *World Class High Limit Player*

**“I have been playing poker with Johnny for about twenty years and not only is he the toughest player I have ever played against, but a great guy as well.”**

Jerry Buss - *Owner of the Los Angeles Lakers*

**“Johnny Chan is a great poker player. I’ve learned a lot from watching him play.”**

Phil Ivey - *Winner of four WSOP Titles*

**“Johnny Chan is the best tournament player I have ever played against.”**

Phil Hellmuth - *Winner of nine WSOP Titles*

**“I have been playing poker with Johnny Chan for over twenty years and he’s still the greatest player I have ever played against.”**

Bobby Baldwin - *1978 WSOP Champion  
President and CEO of Mirage Resorts*

---

# HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book is geared toward beginning and intermediate players. The best way to use this book is to:

- 1) Read it over in a comfortable fashion, familiarizing yourself with its contents. Please use the glossary if necessary.
- 2) After you have a good idea of what it covers, you should then carefully read the individual sections that are of special interest to you.
- 3) Go into a public card room and practice what you have learned. While playing, try to remember hands and situations that make you feel uncomfortable. Make note of any hands during which you are unsure of proper play.
- 4) After each session, review the appropriate sections of the book and reflect on what happened in the card room.
- 5) The next time you encounter a similar situation while playing, try to adjust your play to incorporate what you learned through your study and reflection.

Over time, this process will be very helpful in facilitating your progression from beginning to intermediate player. Although this book contains a lot of very useful information, playing winning poker

---

is both an art and a skill. You need to practice and gain experience to progress. There are a lot of very intelligent, capable, hard-working players trying to do the same thing you are. This means that you must put in an appropriate amount of effort to attain winning player status. The amount of work you'll have to put in depends upon what your goals are. Learning to beat low level games will take less effort than learning to beat higher games. Even if you are a complete novice, the tools you need to become an expert player are available to you. Books like this one and others in the "Play Poker Like Johnny Chan" series are valuable resources on your road to becoming a long term winner, but the most important resource you have is your own determination. The more you practice, the better you will become.

If you are a beginner, I strongly suggest you try to follow as closely as possible what I teach in this book. In low limit games, there is no need to get tricky. Solid, straightforward play will get the money. When you are just starting out, it is important to keep things as simple as possible. I've made an effort to outline clearly the types of cards you are best off playing and the kinds of situations you should be looking for. Beginning players will do well if they follow this advice until it is second nature.

After you gain a reasonable amount of experience and progress to the intermediate level, there will be times you may not agree with what this book tells you to do. The fact that you have considered my advice, and question it, is a positive step along your road to becoming an expert player. Poker is a very dynamic situation, and there are very few cut and dried absolutes. The best players are constantly evaluating all their alternatives and are flexible in their approach to difficult situations. The majority of the time, the approach I suggest will serve you best, but it is good for you to keep an open mind and be willing to experiment. If you decide something I teach will not work for you, that's not a problem. Over the long run, it's important for you to develop your own style of play.

Also, be sure to visit our website: [www.PlayLikeChan.com](http://www.PlayLikeChan.com), where you will find lots of useful information on poker and gambling in general.

# CONTENTS

<b>Chapter One</b>	<b>Hand Rankings</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Chapter Two</b>	<b>My Early Years</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Chapter Three</b>	<b>General Poker Concepts</b>	<b>29</b>
	The Basics	33
	Number Of Players	33
	Table Seating	33
	Antes	33
	Blinds	33
	The Button	33
	The Deal	34
	The First Betting Round	34
	Folding	34
	Checking	34
	Calling	35
	Raising	35



	Re-raising	35
	Check Raising	35
	Draws	36
	Connectors	36
	Suited Connectors	36
	Live Cards	36
	Pot Odds	36
	Implied Odds	37
	The Board	37
	The Nuts	37
	Outs	37
	Free Cards	37
	Kickers	37
	Value	38
	Slow Playing	38
	Subsequent Betting Rounds	38
	Tells	38
	Bluffing	39
	Reading Hands	39
<b>Chapter Four</b>	<b>What To Expect In the Casino</b>	<b>40</b>
	Waiting Lists	41
	Game Selection	41
	Getting Chips	42
	Personalities	42
	Tipping	43
	Collection or Rake	43

---

	Jackpots	44
	Eating At the Table	45
	Some Important Rules	45
	Acting In Turn	45
	Table Stakes	46
	String Bets	46
	Cards Speak	47
	Called Hands	47
	English Only	48
	Seating Rights	48
	Live Hands	48
	Showing Hands on the End	48
	Broken Games	49
<b>Chapter Five</b>	<b>Limit Hold-em</b>	<b>50</b>
	The Button	50
	First Two Cards	51
	Early Position	52
	Middle Position	56
	Late Position	56
	Raised Pots	57
	The Blinds	57
	The Flop	57
	Fourth Street	75
	The River	78
	Inducing Bluffs	78
	Summary	79

<b>Chapter Six</b>	<b>Seven Card Stud</b>	<b>80</b>
	First Three Cards	82
	Fourth Street	92
	Fifth Street	93
	Sixth Street	94
	Seventh Street	95
<b>Chapter Seven</b>	<b>Eight Or Better Stud</b>	<b>97</b>
	Third Street	98
	Fourth Street	103
	Fifth Street	105
	Having Half the Pot Locked Up	107
	Sixth Street	108
	Seventh Street	108
	Playing High Hands	112
	Summary	115
<b>Chapter Eight</b>	<b>Omaha High</b>	<b>116</b>
	Understanding Starting Hands	117
	Position	119
	The Flop	123
	Draws and Redraws	124
	Summary	128
<b>Chapter Nine</b>	<b>Omaha Hi-Low</b>	<b>129</b>
	Have an Ace-Deuce or Ace-Three	129
	Play Related Cards	129

---

	Scooping	130
	Getting Quartered	130
	Position	130
	Raising Before the Flop	130
	Multi-Way vs. Head-up	131
	Getting Counterfeited	131
	Jammed Pots	131
	Having Extra Outs	132
	Don't Play Trap Hands	132
	Bluffing	132
	Starting Hands	133
	High Hands	139
	Three of a Kind	140
	On the Flop	142
	Flopping the Nut Low Draw	143
	Flopping the Nut Low	143
	Flopping the Nut High Draw	143
	Flopping the Nut High	144
	Fourth Street	144
	The River	145
	Bluffing On the End	146
	Summary	146
	<b>Photos</b>	<b>148</b>
<b>Chapter Ten</b>	<b>No-Limit Hold-em</b>	<b>173</b>
	General Concepts of No-Limit	174

---

	Developing A Style	178
	My Style Of Play	179
	The “All-in” Player	181
	The Real Secret	183
	Losing Is Nothing To Be Ashamed Of	184
	Pot Limit vs. No-Limit	185
	Building Pots	185
	Hand Selection	186
	Some Additional No-Limit Thoughts	190
	A Little About Pot Limit Omaha	193
<b>Chapter Eleven</b>	<b>A Bit About Tournaments</b>	<b>196</b>
	Playing Small Tournaments	197
	Short Stacks	198
	Final Table Play	198
	The Key	200
	Final Table Deals	201
	Travel	201
	Camaraderie	201
<b>Chapter Twelve</b>	<b>Introduction To Internet Poker</b>	<b>202</b>
	Online vs. Brick and Mortar	205
	Reading Players	205
	Player Notes	205
	Multiple Tables	206
	Comfort and Convenience	211
	Waiting Lists	211

	Number of Hands Per Hour	211
	Rake	212
	Playing Mistakes	213
	Moving Up	213
<b>Chapter Thirteen</b>	<b>Taking It To The Next Level</b>	<b>214</b>
	Bluffing	214
	Money Management	216
	Play Longer When You Are Winning	217
	Play Where You Are Comfortable	218
	Play In the Best Games	218
	Vacations	219
<b>Chapter Fourteen</b>	<b>Some Players I Have Played With</b>	<b>220</b>
	Doyle Brunson	221
	Chip Reese	221
	Stuey Ungar	222
	Amarillo Slim	223
	Sailor Roberts	223
	Roger Moore	223
	Billy Baxter	223
	Bobby Baldwin	223
	Danny Robison	223
	Billy Smith	224
	O'Neil Longston	224
	Lyle Berman	224
	Archie Karras	225

Bob Stupak	225
Yosh Nakano	225
Andy Beal	225
Jerry Buss	226
Barry Greenstein	226
Ted Forrest	226
Larry Flynt	226
Phil Hellmuth	226
T.J. Cloutier	227
Jennifer Harman	227
Howard Lederer	227
Erik Seidel	227
Phil Ivey	227
Danny Negreanu	228
Gus Hansen	228
<b>Glossary</b>	<b>229</b>
<b>www.PlayLikeChan.com</b>	<b>240</b>

## CHAPTER TWO

### My Early Years

Although I spent the first nine years of my life in Hong Kong, my parents felt there was a better life in the United States, so I eventually ended up in Houston, Texas. In my first sixteen years I didn't find a lot of time for sleep because as soon as school ended there was always work to do. In Houston, immediately after school ended I'd rush back to the restaurant to work until about one in the morning. My family always had a very strong work ethic, so that was my routine for many years. Although I didn't realize it at the time, my poker career began when I was sixteen years old, on a table in the family restaurant. On the weekends, after the restaurant closed, all the chefs, waiters, busboys, and dishwashers would finish their side work and gather around one of the large restaurant tables to play poker. It was usually about two in the morning before the game would begin and we'd play straight through until after the sun came up. Between working, playing, and school, on many nights I was lucky to catch a couple of hours sleep. Back then we played everything and anything you can imagine. Hold-em, Stud, Hi-Low Split, Baseball, Mexican Cross, games with deuces and one-eyed Queens wild – you name it, we played it.



We all worked very hard and this was how we would relax and have fun. The stakes were small, usually one and two dollar games, but in those years that amount of money was significant. An hour or two after the sun had come up we'd call it quits and head over to Denny's for breakfast. The big winner would always pick up the tab. More often than not that was me. A decent win at that time was in the neighborhood of \$40, which was just about what the breakfast cost, but we loved playing, so if the winner blew all his profit on the meal it was no big deal.

Over time I did pretty well at those games, so eventually I wanted to broaden my horizon. I'd heard about a junket to Las Vegas where they'd pick up the airfare, hotel, and meals if you'd deposit \$2,500 with the casino and used it to play their table games like blackjack and craps. So I scrimped and saved both my paycheck and winnings until I had what I needed, made the deposit, and headed off to Las Vegas. I was still sixteen years old, so I guess they cared more about my money than my age.

You probably never heard of the hotel I stayed in; it was called the Landmark, and it was located across from the Hilton. The Landmark looked sort of like a smaller version of today's Stratosphere Hotel. It was a tall, round building with what looked like a flying saucer on top. It's long since been torn down, but I remember it fondly. They gave me a badge with my full name on it, but it didn't take long for everyone in the casino to start calling me "Mr. C."

I'd wander up to one of the table games and they'd say, "Mr. C, what d'ya need? What can I get for ya?"

I'd say, "Gimme twenty-five hundred."

It'd usually take me about half an hour to blow it. Then I'd wander around the casino for a while and eventually go up to my room and sleep until the plane was scheduled to leave. I went to Las Vegas on these junkets about once every eight months for the next four years or so, getting broke in short order every time, until finally I decided to explore the town a little more fully. I caught a bus to Glitter Gulch, which is what downtown Vegas is called, and sooner or later I found myself in the Golden Nugget Casino. To my surprise, they had a poker room. Before seeing that, I had no idea they played poker in Las Vegas. I looked the game over and felt pretty confident that I could beat it, but I had already lost all my money on the table games at the Landmark. The only thing of value I had was my gold necklace. I walked outside to Fremont Street, which was full of pawnshops, walked into one and got \$200 for my necklace. I then turned right around and headed straight back to the Golden Nugget and got into a \$10-\$20 Hold-em game. I played all night long and ran that \$200 into \$2,000. Well, after the sun came up I finally got myself a room and went to sleep. I was so excited that I couldn't sleep more than about six hours and when I woke up all I could think about was the poker game. In less than ten minutes I was on my way downstairs to put my name on the \$10-\$20 list.

When I entered the card room, Bill Boyd, who ran the Golden Nugget poker room, was getting together a Pot-Limit Hold-em game. There were a bunch of tough-looking regulars sitting around the table. They waved me over saying, "Johnny, you play this game, don't you?" It surprised me that they knew my name because I didn't know any of them, but I responded with, "Yeah, I guess so." I really hadn't played Pot-Limit too much, but I wasn't worried. To make a long story short, the game went for a couple of days straight and I ran that \$2,000 into \$30,000. I felt like I'd died and gone to heaven.

Although I had missed my plane back to Texas, I didn't care. Eventually the game broke and I went upstairs to get some sleep. When I finally awoke it was Monday morning. I went down, got some breakfast, and headed back to the poker room. To my dismay there wasn't a Pot-Limit game going. They didn't even have a \$10-\$20. So I wandered over to the blackjack pit, sat down at a table, and ran that \$30,000 into zero. About a month later, I decided to move to Las Vegas.

That was in 1979, when I was twenty-one years old. I went through a lot of ups and downs in the first few years, but by 1982 I was beating the games pretty regularly. I continued to progress as a player until, in April of 1987, I won the \$10,000 buy-in main event at the World Series of Poker for \$625,000. Later that same year I won the main event at the Poker Hall of Fame Classic for \$325,000. Then in 1988 I won the World Series of Poker main event again for \$700,000, and also again won the main event at the Poker Hall of Fame Classic for \$375,000. And in 1989 I came in second to Phil Hellmuth in the World Series of Poker main event for another \$300,000. That's four firsts and one second in the five biggest tournaments of the time. That incredible run earned me the right to appear in the movie "Rounders" with Matt Damon and Ed Norton. In that movie, Matt Damon's character, a law student turned poker player, repeatedly watches a video tape of me winning the 1987 World Series of Poker, in an effort to improve his game. Later in the movie he ends up playing against me in Atlantic City.

Today I regularly play in the highest games in the world. Three or four nights a week I play \$2,000-\$4,000 seven-card stud in Los Angeles. When I'm not playing that you can often find me in Las Vegas at the Bellagio, playing Pot-Limit Omaha. We play \$1,000 and \$2,000 blinds, but to keep the game reasonable we've decided nobody can lose more than \$75,000 in any one hand.

Because I started from scratch and worked my way up through the ranks I feel I'm qualified to lend a helping hand to the beginning player who knows a little bit about poker but perhaps has not played in a casino environment. I know I've learned a lot since the time I was playing one and two dollar games in Houston, and in the course of this book I'll try to point you in the right direction with the hope that you'll be able to enjoy some of the same success I've had.

# LIMIT HOLD-EM

example pages

And, of course, any flop where you wind up with a set (three of a kind). If two of the cards are suited that will be fine for you, because you will make money on those players who are drawing to a flush. The same goes for flops with two to a straight. The hands with small pairs are good flops for you because if you are holding the big pairs, you will have raised before the flop and that decreases the likelihood that anyone has one of those small cards in his hand. When you have an overpair and a small pair flops and no one has three of a kind, you are in a very strong position. This is because it is now very hard for anyone to beat you with two pair. Just to make sure this is clear let me give an example.

Suppose you have:

and your opponent has:



and the flop comes:



Normally a ten on the turn would put you in a very bad spot. But with the small pair on the board you'd actually like it if your opponent makes a second pair. The only time you have to be concerned about your opponent making a second pair in this situation is when an Ace falls. That's because if your opponent pairs the Ace you will have only two cards in the deck that can win the hand for you (the remaining two Kings). This is one reason why a pair of Aces is much better than a pair of Kings. The same concept holds true for Queens and Jacks, except now you have a few more cards to be worried about on the turn.

There are a couple of reasons that flops like J-9-6 and 9-7-4 are good. They are unlikely to have made anyone two pair because most players don't play hands like J-6, 9-6, 9-4, or 7-4. People also will not normally play J-9 or 9-7 unless the hands are suited, or they are in late position and the pot has not been raised. The other reason those flops are good is that there is a decent likelihood that someone will have made a worse pair than yours. If someone makes the top pair on those kinds of flops, he will may think he has the best hand and give you a lot of action.

In poker you are almost always at risk, so you have to be happy with situations where you are a decent favorite and try to play in as many of them as you come across. If you repeatedly put yourself in situations where you have the best of it you will eventually become a big winner. The road to winning lots of money is not a straight ride up. Along the way you will experience many losses and sometimes even lose over an extended period of time. The trick is to keep your wits about you and always play your best game regardless of the circumstances.

# **SEVEN CARD STUD**

**example pages**



Let's say you have a three straight like:



or



These are strong hands (especially if you've got two of a suit), so you can take a lot of heat on third street with them. If you have a chance to steal the antes you should be the aggressor. If you feel you'll be up against a lot of players, you can just call coming in. It's okay to call a raise with this type of hand, and under many circumstances you can even call a double raise.

On the other hand, if you've got something like:



you don't even want to call a raise. With this kind of hand the chances of your winning depend on making the straight. If you make a pair it's only going to give you the worst hand. So with

---

the smaller three-straights what you're looking for is unraised pots where the cards you need are not exposed.

With the previous starting hand, threes and sevens are the most important cards and twos and eights are of secondary importance. If you do happen to catch a card that gives you an open-ended four card straight on fourth street, you're going to make your hand about 43% of the time, depending on which cards are still live, so you still want to do whatever you can do to keep as many players as possible in the hand. If you catch a card that gives you a gutshot straight draw, like when you have seven-eight-nine, and you catch a five, you don't want to put much more money in the pot. If somebody bets at you and there's a chance you may be raised, you want to release it. You even want to consider seriously whether or not to take a card off for one bet. That would depend, of course, upon what you figured your opponents had. It will also depend upon how much money went in on third street.

**Fourth Street:** When fourth street rolls around you should still be trying to narrow down the field if you feel you have the best hand. There are a number of different ways to do this. If you're in a position to check-raise, making it two bets to somebody who has a weak hand, that's what you want to do. On the other hand, if you feel that by checking you'll be giving everybody a free card, then you would rather just bet right out. If you already have the hand down to a heads up situation, giving a free card isn't as dangerous as it otherwise would be. You can play it a couple of different ways. Either try for a check-raise right away, or just check and call, with the intention of raising later in the hand. If you do have the best hand against one opponent, your goal should be to get the most value out of the situation.

If you have a drawing hand on fourth street you usually want to keep as many players in as possible. This is an area where you

# **Seven Card Stud Eight or Better**

**example pages**

call two more bets, and you'll get a chance to raise one more time after that. Even if the high hand raises and the third player folds you still make the same or more than if you had bet out initially. If you bet out and the high hand raises, you probably will gain nothing on the end because the third player likely will fold. And if you bet out and the high hand just calls, you still will end up the same or worse than if you had check-raised.

Another situation that comes up a lot is when you are heads-up on seventh street and have busted out for low against one other player who is also going for low, but you have made a small pair like a pair of fours. If the player bets, you should call if you think you have a chance of winning half the pot with the small pair. Occasionally you will scoop if your opponent missed completely and is bluffing.

Sometimes you are going for low and are heads-up against a high hand that may only have one high pair. If you bust out for low but make two small pair you should bet it for value. If you get raised you can safely throw it away, but many times you will make the extra bet on the end when you get called by only one big pair.

An example of this situation would be when you have:



and your opponent shows something like:



or



In both of these situations your opponent will be forced to call you with one high pair because he knows you will bet any low hand. If you get raised you can safely assume your two pair is no good and throw it away.

This can also work in a situation where your opponent was drawing for low but has paired up. You may get paid off by one medium pair. In that situation, you should be more careful about folding on the end if raised, because your opponent may raise you with a great low and a worse high.

If you have a hand like sevens up or better you should usually bet into hands that may have missed and could have made a smaller two pair.

# **Omaha Hi-Low Eight or Better**

**example pages**

If any low card that doesn't pair the board comes, you are giving up at least half the pot. If a club falls on fourth street then any club that does not pair the board loses the pot for you on the river. The only way for you to be really safe is for the board to pair, but even then you will may win only half the pot. Trips are even worse when you flop a set to a low pair and two other low cards come on the flop. Don't fall into the trap of trying to flop a set every time you get a hand with a pair in it.

**On the Flop:** This is where you really see what your hand is worth. If you missed your hand entirely there is nothing to think about. Just release it, because attempting to bluff will not get you very far unless you are up against only one other player and you are certain he has missed as well. If the flop hits you it is time to decide how to proceed. The first thing to take into account is how many players there are in the pot. If there are three or more, you are going to have to have a good hand to continue. In multi-way pots, when you have only a low draw you may consider folding if it looks as if you will have to invest a lot of money. The reason for this is that you stand a fair chance of getting quartered when other players have the same low draw. You will be in particularly bad shape if there are others with the same low draw who also have a high hand or some draws to a high hand, or if they have the same low draw as you and have one or more additional low cards along with it.

What you are really looking for is flops that give you either an excellent draw along with other draws as well, or the nuts for half the pot along with some draws to the other end of the pot. In order to flop hands like this you generally need to start with all four cards working for you. You want to be the player that is freerolling with a chance to win three quarters or scoop the pot. If your hand does not have these possibilities you need to consider releasing it. After you play a while you will see how

easy it is to get quartered, or even get nothing, when you start out with a good flop. Because you are splitting so many pots you have to make sure you have extra outs on most of the hands you play. If you repeatedly play hands that have no redraws you won't win in the long run.

**Flopping the Nut Low Draw:** If you are in a multi-way pot and flop the nut low draw with only an Ace-deuce you should probably not play it fast. There are a few reasons for this. The first is that there is a good chance you're not the only one who has that draw. If so, it's not to your advantage to put a lot of money in the pot. You always have to be considering whether you're likely to get quartered. If, in a multi-way pot, you flop the nut low draw and have one or more low cards along with it you can play aggressively, particularly if you have a shot at winning the high end as well. There is a huge difference between having an Ace-deuce only, along with one or two other players, and having the Ace-deuce with a three when the other players just have the Ace-deuce.

**Flopping the Nut Low:** When you flop the nut low you have to be aware of what your chances are to win the high. If you have no chance to win the high and you think someone else has the same low as you do, you may consider folding to avoid getting quartered. If you believe you are alone with the low and there are three or more people in the pot you can play it aggressively. If you have a chance to win the high as well, better still.

**Flopping the Nut High Draw:** If you are in a multi-way pot and your draw is likely to stand up if you make it, you can play it aggressively. The key here to decide what the chances of being redrawn are if you make your hand.



# **NO LIMIT HOLD-EM**

**example pages**

Let's talk about suited hands with a King:



The hands above and all other hands with a suited King should be avoided. The reason is that they make the second best hand too often. Let's take a look at some flops you might face with these types of hands.

Suppose the flop came:



The situation is the same as the previous discussion regarding the Ace and a mediocre kicker. If you get much action you're probably beat. Too often you will find yourself up against hands like A-K or A-A or K-K. If you are against one of those hands you will lose your whole stack if you call them down. When you are against hands like Q-Q or J-J you won't win much due to the overcard on the board.

Suppose someone with a 5-6 or a 9-10 decides to raise you. What are you going to do? You'll probably throw it away because you'll be afraid you're beat. Also most suited hands with a Queen, Jack, or ten should be avoided.

In Limit you can play suited hands like:



but in No-Limit these hands tend to get you into trouble. The exception is when you are in position and nobody has raised. If I were to play a hand like J-9 suited in late position I would raise with it in an attempt to get hands like A-J, K-J, and Q-J out. That way if I flop a Jack or a nine I probably have the best hand. In that situation I'd really rather flop the nine because I'd feel very good about having the best kicker. If another player has a nine along with me in a raised pot he's probably playing suited connectors like 8-9 suited or 9-10 suited. Just the same, my suggestion is be very careful with these types of hands until you have a lot of experience.

As you'll see later in the chapter, I do play the medium suited connectors like:



but when I do I am often very aggressive with them before the flop because I like to be the only one in the pot playing that type of hand.

**Developing a Style:** In this next section I'm going to give you an idea of how I play No-Limit. Until you have gained a lot of experience, I caution you about trying to copy my style, because it is very aggressive and you can lose a lot of money if you don't implement it correctly. Instead I'd like you to consider why this style might work for me and, as you gain more experience, you can slowly add some of the things I do into your game. In order to be a great No-Limit player you have to develop a style that suits

you. Try to understand yourself and create a style with which you are comfortable. No-Limit is the most complicated form of poker and takes a long time to master. If you create a solid foundation and build on that you will have a much easier time learning.

Table image is a very important aspect of No-Limit play. I work hard to project the image of someone who is not afraid to gamble. For this reason, I am able to pick up a lot of pots that other players can't win. When I sense weakness in my opponents, I don't hesitate to make a pot-sized bet in an attempt to pick up the money in the center. A lot of times I get caught and end up losing a small amount on the hand, but the flip side is that I win some monster pots when I have a good hand. This is because my gambling image often forces other players to call me down when I have the best hand. If I get called, and I think I'm beat, I can easily give it up. But if I think I've got the best hand I'll continue to bet and I often get paid off. If I believe my opponent is on a draw I'll continue betting with nothing as long as I think he's missed his hand.

I'm also not afraid to raise the pot with any two cards. Nobody knows whether I have two aces or 6-7 suited. I might even have J-4 offsuit and be trying to steal the antes. When you play that way you sometimes back into a big hand and end up winning a huge pot. I'm also very good at reading the other players. Because of all the time I've spent at the tables, I usually have a very good idea where I'm at in a hand. Once I know where my opponent is at, it's much easier for me to make the correct bets. I usually know whether my opponent is on a draw or has a made hand. And if he has a made hand I can often tell what the quality of his hand is. He might have me beat or perhaps he has top pair along with me, but with a worse kicker. In those situations I'm able to figure out how to get the most value out of my hands. And when I sense my opponent is not fully committed I often can

First you should learn how to play solid poker and then you can learn how to “dance around”. By dancing around I mean you can play small cards, medium cards, big cards, or combination cards in such a way that nobody can figure out what you have. That’s the whole key. And the best way to learn how to dance around is to practice. As opposed to how you would play Limit poker, you want to learn how to pick up all those small pots where no one has anything. In Limit poker someone is usually going to call you. In No-Limit, if you have the image of an aggressive player people will be reluctant to call you, because they may end up losing all their chips, so you will win a lot of the small pots uncontested.

For example, suppose you raise on the button with any two cards and the flop comes:



and everybody checks to you and you make a sizable bet. Most people will fold unless they have a great hand, because they will assume you have Ace-King or some other strong hand. They might even fold an Ace-Jack. Not only that, but someone with a good hand has only two choices, either fold or raise, because he will be afraid to give you a free card on fourth street. Now you’ve put him in a tough spot. Does he want to commit all his chips? It’s a lot easier for him to fold. And if he does raise, all he wins is the small pot and your bet on the flop, whereas when you flop a good hand and he raises, you end up with all his chips.

On fourth street, when it’s your turn to bet and you hold a hand

---

you think is the best and put your opponent on a worse hand, such as top pair with a mediocre kicker, you have to decide what to bet. I would usually bet about the size of the pot. If I think he has a draw, I would bet most of his chips because I'd rather he fold than draw to the hand. Part of the reason I like to lock draws out is because if I allow my opponent to play until fifth street and a scary card falls I won't know where I'm at. If he decides to bet a lot I may be forced to fold the best hand. I'd rather just win the pot with a bet before that happens. I like to bet enough on fourth street so that he doesn't have enough to bluff on the end. If I leave him with any chips I want it to be an amount that will not scare me out if he bets them. If he doesn't have many chips left and he bets them on the end, most of the time it means he has a real hand. To make that more clear, I would bet enough on fourth street so that if my opponent has a made hand he will raise me all in instead of just calling me. For instance, if I bet him sixty percent of his chips and he has a made hand he's not going to just call me. He will either fold or raise me the rest of his chips, because he will not want to give me a free card. If he has a draw, he will normally just call me, thinking he might fold on the end if he misses. That way I know what he has. If he raises me and I'm bluffing, I can just throw my hand away. If he just calls me and it appears as though he missed on the end, I would continue bluffing. If he raises me and I have a hand, I would make a judgment as to whether I have him beat and go from there. I also sometimes like to leave him enough chips so that if we are both drawing, or if I am bluffing and his unmade draw could beat me in a showdown, I can bet him out of the pot on the end.

I like to raise the pot in late position. Suppose I raise and four other players call and now I flop top pair. If everybody checks to me I like to bet the size of the pot to find out where I'm at. If one opponent just calls I can assume he does not have a set, so

**Go to**

**[www.playlikechan.com](http://www.playlikechan.com)**

**or click the graphic  
to find out how to  
buy the book**



**[WWW.PLAYLIKECHAN.COM](http://WWW.PLAYLIKECHAN.COM)**