

Poker Tip #1

December 08, 2012

Tip Subject: **Playing Too Many Hands.**

Situation: Many poker players, without realizing the downside, play way-too-many hands.

Daniel Negreanu: "Many players play many more hands than they should, not understanding the importance of starting with premium hands in different positions and situations. They must realize that playing poker means you'll go through long stretches of sheer boredom waiting for good cards."

Bill Burton: "The biggest mistake that losing poker players make is playing too many hands."

Contrast: A good contrast is "Blackjack," where you are required to play every starting hand dealt to you, which of course, includes all the weak and moderate hands.

Fortunately, one of the great things about poker is that you are not required to play the weak and moderate starting hands. You can simply fold them, and wait for something better.

Patience: Poker is said to be a game of patience. Try not to play too many hands.

- Different poker books suggest that you play, at a full table of 9 or 10 players, approximately 14% of hands dealt.
 - That works out to playing about 1 hand in 7.
 - Or, folding about 6 hands in 7.

Introspection: Are you playing too many hands?

A problem with this tutorial is that it will be natural for players to think, "Well....I don't play too many hands, so this doesn't apply to me."
When in reality they do.

They will read that they should only be playing about 1 hand in 7, and say, "Yeah, that's probably about what I'm playing."
When actually they are playing at least twice that many, and don't realize it.

If you are playing the correct hands for the position, you will average 1 hand in 7.

But you will commonly go through 15 or 20, and even 30 or more hands without getting a playable hand.

Then you will have several playable hands in a short period, and over the long run the average will be about 1 hand in 7.

So, there is a good way to judge yourself, as to whether or not you are playing too many hands.

Every so often, ask yourself “how long has it been since I folded 15 hands in a row?” If you can’t remember the last time, you are playing too many hands.

Folding: Lee Childs writes...”a key concept for maintaining a meaningful chip stack is Folding. This begins with folding hands that are not strong enough to win in the different positions. Folding is the most profitable play we can make in poker.”

It’s profitable because it preserves your chip stack.

Or, as Ken Warren puts it, “A bet not made, is money won.”

Conclusion: It all starts pre-flop.
Patience.
Folding is winning. Folding helps to maintain a meaningful chip stack.
Learn to fold those weak and moderate “Starting Hands” that are tempting to play.

Starting Hands: Next week, Poker Tip #2 will offer a suggestion as to which “Starting Hands” to play in which “Position.”
And of course, which hands not to play in which positions.

Additional Reading

Poker author Larry Phillips writes the following about the importance of Patience and folding and not playing too many hands.

He starts with an axiom: In poker you are going to be cold a lot more often than you are going to be hot.

And because of this, patience (folding) becomes a necessity.

He goes on:

“This is not to say that passivity is paramount, or that aggressive play is not required. But, a more balanced approach is necessary. This viewpoint has **deep roots in conventional poker wisdom**, and is required for a player to have a **solid foundation** for the game.”

Author’s Note: You can’t be a good poker player without a **solid foundation**.
And it all starts pre-flop.

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"How is patience translated into poker terms?

For the most part, the answer can be summed up in a single word: FOLDING."

"One of the problems with the concept of folding, is that the mind resists it...even rebels against it. In the spirit of competition, folding is against our nature."

"The secret to poker could be summed up in three words.....FOLD A LOT.

If players could keep these three words uppermost in mind, they would be light years ahead of their usual game."

"it means folding 86% (6 of 7) of your hands."

"You will hear people say: 'I know I should play fewer hands. Mentally, I know that. But I sit down at the table and something happens to me and pretty soon I'm right in their again, playing too many hands...I can't seem to stop myself...I keep doing it even though I know it's hurting my game.'"

"There will be long periods of folding.

Come to the game expecting it.

Accept it.

And rest assured there will be an attempt by the poker gods to wear you down.

This will happen. And it will happen on numerous occasions.

Know this ahead of time so you are mentally prepared for it when it happens."