



Presents...

How to Beat
No-Limit Hold 'Em
6-max Cash Games

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Part V: The Concepts

Chapter 22: Hand Ranges & Equity

One of the most important aspects of hold 'em is figuring out what your opponent has and acting accordingly. We refer to this as figuring out our opponent's hand ranges. Every time you play poker, you are using your deductive skills to figure out your opponents hands, even if you don't realize it.

For example, when you have a pretty good hand and you bet on the flop, turn and river, you're putting your opponent on a hand: a worse one than yours. When you flop nothing and continuation bet and get raised, you're putting your opponent on a hand: a better one than yours. This is a basic example but shows that in some way you are always considering what your opponent has.

To get really good at this game you need to be constantly putting your opponent on their hand range. What I'm about to say is one of the most important concepts in poker: **put your opponent on a hand range and choose the best play based on this information.** That's it. That is a HUGE part of winning poker, especially as you increase in limits.

Start right away

You always need to put your opponent on a range starting with preflop, then adjusting it as you gain more information about his hand.

Some things to observe are what position your opponent is raising, limping, or calling from. If we are facing a tight player, with preflop stats of 16/14, and he raises UTG, he has a good hand. If we are facing a looser player with preflop stats of 22/18, and he raises the button, he has a very wide range (even looser than the preflop chart I have provided).

Thus we take this information and act accordingly. For instance, in the above example when the tight player raised UTG you wouldn't even play a hand as strong as **AJs**. You certainly wouldn't 3-bet him and put a lot of money in with a hand like **AQo**. Why? Well, he's tight, even tighter than us. We know the kind of hands we raise UTG and he's so tight that he's even folding hands like **ATs, KQo, 77** and **66**. A hand like **AJs** performs very badly against the majority of hands that he is raising, so we stay away.

In the example of the loose button raiser, we know he's raising so many weak hands, we can start 3-betting weak hands ourself, such as **76s**, to steal the pot away and to keep him from stealing our blinds so frequently.

Again, this is preflop play, so it's going to be easier to decide what to do against his hand range. But the concept remains the same throughout every hand, against every opponent and in every situation from a flop check-raise to a river value bet: **put your opponent on a hand range and choose the best play based on this information.**

Knowing how to make the best play based on hand ranges

This is another one of those sections where I can only tell you so much. You're going to have to get some experience and play hands in all sorts of situations against all sorts of players to get a hold on this.

There are going to be spots where your hand is good but not great, like flopping an [overpair](#) and facing a flop raise from a tough, solid opponent. His hand range will be

hard to put together: he can be making a move, he can be raising a good draw, or he can have us drawing nearly dead against his set or bigger overpair. It may seem like there's not a great option and that's somewhat true. Strong arguments could be made for calling, raising or folding in this spot.

However, spots like this won't have a huge impact on how money you make. How's that? Since every option is so close, it is almost neutral in the long run if you always put your stack in here or always fold. Of the money we will make at poker, 90% will be from putting our opponents on hands and making the correct decision when it's clear what the correct decision is.

Stacking off with [top pair good kicker](#) against a tight player will usually be a very bad decision and will cost you a TON of money in the long run. Not value betting top pair good kicker on the river against a huge fish who doesn't fold anything is a huge mistake and will cost you a ton of money in the long run.

Let's go back to what I keep repeating: put your opponent on a hand range and choose the best play. If you keep thinking during every hand, you will start to notice the best play. When a tight player raises us on a flop of **J♣9♦6♥**, and we have **K♦J♠**, we're crushed. We put him on a hand range of at worst, **A♣J♦**, and most likely an overpair or a set. When a maniac raises us on a flop of **J♣9♦6♥**, and we have **K♦J♠**, we don't fold the hand. We put him on a hand range... well, he's a maniac, he can have almost anything. In these spots, a maniac's range is so wide that you just don't fold a good hand.

I'm about to get complicated: Using hand ranges with equity

What I'm about to talk about is a very advanced concept. I'm including it because just having a small understanding of it will help you get a leg up on the competition and help you understand why you are doing what you are doing.

When poker players refer to equity, they are talking about their chances of winning versus the assumed hand range of their opponent. It is sort of like figuring out pot odds: we are figuring out what our chance to win the pot is, except often times we are figuring out how often we are losing to him, how often we are winning against him and if there is enough money in the pot to justify putting our money in the pot.

Let's say I'm playing \$1/\$2. The CO, a TAG regular whose stats are 18/15 with a high postflop aggression factor, opens the pot to \$6. I'm on the button with **Q♦Q♥**, and I reraise him to \$20. The TAG calls.

Immediately I'm processing my opponent's hand range. For him to call my reraise, I think he has a big [broadway](#) like **AKs** and **AKo**. My opponent is a little on the tighter side, so I think he folds **AQs** and worse. He's calling any pocket pair from **22** to **99** to try to flop a set on me, and he's calling **TT** through **AA** to try to trap me.

The flop comes down **9♣ 5♣ 4♥**. My opponent checks and I bet \$30 into the \$43 pot. My opponent quickly shoves in the rest of his stack for \$150 over the top of my bet.

I'm processing his hand again. We can eliminate every **AK** except for **A♣K♣**, which he'd shove as a semibluff. He's folding **88, 77, 66, 33** and **22**. He's shoving **AA, KK, QQ, JJ, TT, 99, 55** and **44**.

My exact hand range for my opponent is: **A♣K♣, AA, KK, QQ** (which is very rare given that I have the other two,) **JJ, TT, 99, 55** and **44**.

I'm slightly behind **A♣K♣** with a 45% chance to win. I'm crushed by **AA** and **KK**, with only an 8% chance to win. I'm also crushed by his sets with only a 9% chance to win versus **99, 55** and **44**. However, I'm crushing **JJ** and **TT** with a 90% chance to win.

Since we have his hand range, we need add all those percents together to get a total of our % to win against his entire hand range and then look at the pot odds we are getting and seeing if we are winning enough of the time to call.

How the hell would you ever do that math at the table? Don't worry, you won't. What you do need to do is download a program like [Poker Stove](#) that lets you plug in hand ranges and start getting an idea of the percentages you need to win. You'll have to do this when you're not playing as it's too complicated to deal with in the 15 seconds you have to act online.

For the above example I plugged everything in. Our **Q♦Q♥** has a 38.2% chance of winning versus villain's hand range. We're losing most of the time, but we can't fold yet.

After I bet and villain shoves, I have to call \$150 to win \$253. I got the latter number by adding what was in the pot before the amount raised ($\$43 + \$30 + \$30 = \103), then adding that amount to what I have to call (\$150). Then to get our percentage

to win, we add 150 to 253 and we get 403, which we now divide by the amount we have to call, 150. Thus, we need a 37.2% chance to win to make a profitable call.

Wow, it's pretty close! We just have enough equity of winning against villain's hand range given the pot odds to make a call.

Again, this is pretty complicated stuff and it's not feasible to apply all this math while at the table. But if you spend the time you're not playing with understanding the math behind hand ranges, equity, and your decisions, this kind of stuff will become second nature and you'll start making the best play.

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