

# GAMING

## GUIDE



# Poker

If there is one iconic casino card game, it's poker. This classic game has emerged as a cultural phenomenon in recent years, often featured on national television in prime time.

Why all the attention? Because it's fun.

Poker involves reading the emotions and intentions of a whole group of people who may or may not be telling the truth. It's a real-life drama that unfolds with every hand.

Becoming a good poker player takes time and experience, as any of those professionals on TV can tell you. It's all about controlling your emotions, understanding how to handle every situation and being acutely aware of the people around you — more of a social game than simply gambling with numbers.

It's also one of the few casino games where your own skill level can work to your advantage. A few people who have a knack for bluffing and making the right calls can even turn poker into a full-time job.

## POKER HANDS | AT A GLANCE



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### WHY PLAY IT

It takes skill, not just luck. While the luck of the draw will always be a part of the game, a big portion of a player's success depends on the decisions they make.

### WHAT TO KNOW

Every version of poker is a little different, and it pays to know the details before you make big wagers. Texas Hold 'Em is the most popular version today, but it's got important differences from the classic seven-card stud poker or the complex Omaha variety, which requires playing two hands.

### TIPS & ADVICE

- This game is all about psychology, so study up. It takes time to not only be a good bluffer — after all, some people are better natural liars than others — but also to read the emotions of the players around you.
- Learn all about “tilts” and “tells,” and try to understand how players react in different circumstances.
- If you're serious about the game, keep good records. You can look back over time to see how changes are affecting your game, how much you've won and lost, and which locations and games are most and least profitable for you.
- Study the game. While trying to beat pure games of chance is futile, poker is a game you can actually learn to get better at over time.

# Slots

**O**ut of all the games you can play at a casino, the most popular has remained the same for decades: slot machines.

The slots are an easy way to get a big rush from gambling without necessarily making big bets, and the game's beauty is in its simplicity.

On a typical slot machine, all you have to do is insert a coin and pull a lever, or sometimes press a button. The wheels will spin, and the player is paid based on the pattern that appears when they stop spinning. It couldn't be simpler.

There are all kinds of elaborate variations on the slots. The newest versions have high-tech graphics, multi-machine networks and the ability to interact with other players.

No matter how advanced the games themselves get, or how high the jackpots can climb, the appeal of slot machines remains the same: a simple, often low-cost way to test your luck.



## WHY PLAY IT

You don't need any special skills or experience to win. Most machines are based entirely on chance, and beginners can have a great time without having to invest lots of time learning a complex game.

## WHAT TO KNOW

The best slot machines are as much about entertainment as they are about winning money. Technology is transforming slots from the days of the "one-armed bandits," adding 3-D graphics and surround sound on the high-end, immersive slot machines.

## TIPS & ADVICE

- Slots are perfect for newcomers to a casino. If you're new to gaming, you can have a lot of fun without spending a lot of money.
- Progressive jackpots, meaning those that grow bigger as more money is fed into the machines, can be a lot of fun. But in general, the bigger the jackpot, the lower your odds of winning it.
- Look for rewards programs. Many casinos offer cards to slot players that make it easier to play and also offer free meals and other perks for good customers.
- When possible, use machines that specify a high payout percentage. "Up to 98%" is very different from a machine labeled specifically as "98%."

# Roulette

**R**oulette is believed to be the oldest casino game still being played today. Its current layout was created in France in the early 19th century.

While it seems easy at first glance — you're basically just betting on what number a ball will land on when spun on the roulette wheel — it's more complex than that.

Like all casino games, roulette has a slight mathematical advantage to the house, but players can test their luck with a variety of strategies and bets.

Here are a few examples:

— **STRAIGHT UP:** A bet on a single number, paying 35-to-1.

— **SPLIT:** A bet on two numbers, paying 17-to-1.

— **CORNER OR QUAD:** A bet on four numbers, paying 11-to-1.

— **BLACK, RED, EVEN OR ODD:** These are all even-money bets.

— **DOZENS:** You can bet on 1-12, 13-24 or 25-36, paying 2-to-1.

Once you've placed your bet, the dealer will roll the ball in the opposite direction of the wheel's spin. The ball will bounce, hop and finally land on a random number on the wheel, hopefully in a place that results in money for you.

## WHY PLAY IT

It's a fun game of chance. You can try different strategies to see if you can beat the house. With a history steeped in old-world Europe, it feels like a more sophisticated way to spend your time than with slot machines.

## WHAT TO KNOW

Even after the dealer spins the ball, you're still allowed to make bets until he calls out "no more bets." And after the ball stops rolling, be patient. The dealer will need to place a marker on the winning number, and you're not allowed to make a new bet until the marker is picked up.

## TIPS & ADVICE

- If another player has already placed their chips in the same place you want to bet, that's OK. You can stack your chips on top of theirs. That's why roulette chips are a different color for every player.
- When given the choice, opt for the European roulette wheel. The American wheel has two zeroes — labeled "0" and "00" — while the European wheel only has one zero. It's a slight difference, but it improves your odds if you can find it.
- To make your money last longer, make lots of small, spaced-out bets around the wheel. Putting big bets on one lucky number can be fun, but you'll get fewer wins than if you spread your money around.
- Roulette chips are different from other games, so remember to cash them in before you leave the table.



# Blackjack



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**B**lackjack is a simple card game that involves basic math, high-pressure decisions and a bit of luck.

The objective of the game is to get cards with a face value of 21 — or as close to that as possible — without going over 21. Aces are worth either 1 or 11, face cards are worth 10, and the numbered cards are worth their face value.

Blackjack players always play against the dealer. You can “hit” to get an additional card or “stand” to call it quits. That’s basic enough.

There are a couple of twists, though. You can call “double” to double your bet and get just one additional card before the turn ends. And if you get two cards with the same number, you can “split” to get an additional hand.

After all the players have had their turns, the dealer reveals their card. Everyone who has a hand that beats the dealer, without going over 21, wins.

## WHY PLAY IT

It’s a fun card game that takes some skill but is not overly complex. It’s the most popular table game at most casinos for a reason: high payouts and a fun concept.

## WHAT TO KNOW

Blackjack has a slight house advantage mathematically, but it’s lower than many casino games, which increases your chance to win money in the short term. The decisions you make can keep that house advantage very low if you play your cards right.

## TIPS & ADVICE

- If the player and the dealer both go over 21, the player loses the hand. Keep that in mind if you think there’s a good chance the dealer will bust.
- Know the casino’s rules. Some will only allow you to double down if your first two cards total 10 or 11, for example.
- If a dealer’s face-up card is an ace, know whether you can take “insurance.” This will typically pay you 2-to-1 if the dealer’s next card has a value of 10.
- Decide your bankroll before you start playing. You don’t want to spend money you don’t have in the heat of the moment.

# Craps

**C**raps is a fun and exciting dice game based on the number 7. It involves placing bets on which numbers you think will be rolled next.

It can also feel like one of the most intimidating games in a casino. The table itself looks like a bizarre puzzle of sorts, with a seemingly endless array of possible bets and outcomes.

If you're new to the game, there's just one bet you need to know: the pass line.

To make a pass-line bet, put your chips in the part of the table marked "pass line." Each player will take turns shooting the dice, and the numbers rolled will determine whether you win or lose.

If the dice roll a 7 or 11, you win on a pass-line bet. If they roll a 2, 3 or 12, you lose.

If the roll totals anything else, you will enter the point round. The dealer will place a marker on the number that was rolled, which is called the point. You win if the dealer rolls the point before a 7 comes up.

If the dealer rolls a 7, it's called "sevens out," and you lose.

Craps can be a fun, fast-paced game, but it's a good idea to start out with simple bets that you understand before jumping into the more complex wagers.



## WHY PLAY IT

It's the fastest moving game in the casino. It can be a fun social game, too, as players gather around the table and share in the fun when someone is on a lucky streak.

## WHAT TO KNOW

First-time players might be intimidated by the quick pace and the craps lingo, but they shouldn't be. Casinos wouldn't attract customers if their games were too hard to play. Spend some time around the table, and you'll get comfortable about it and learn the language soon enough.

## TIPS & ADVICE

- Craps has its own etiquette. If you yell out "seven," don't be surprised if the table clears because so many people think it's bad luck.
- Since there are so many bets in this game, each of which has different odds of winning, it can be a good idea to play a free online simulator before betting real money at the casino.
- Higher payouts correspond to higher risk. You might be tempted to bet on a big payout, but those bets will usually come with a higher house advantage mathematically.
- Learn the game at a reasonable pace. It moves fast, but you don't necessarily have to. Stick to bets you understand firmly before moving to more complex wagers.

# Baccarat

**K**nown for being popular with high rollers, baccarat is a card game in which you bet between a “player” and a “banker.”

The version most popular in America is a game of chance where each player hopes to have the most points from their hand. Numbered cards 1-9 are worth their face value, while 10s, kings, queens and jacks are all worth zero. Aces are worth one point.

But it takes an interesting twist: Your cards can't add up to two digits, so you ignore the first number in double-digit sums. Only the last number counts.

For example, if a player is dealt an 8 card and a 6 card, which totals 14, that hand is only worth 4. You only pay attention to the last digit.

While baccarat was first documented as a game in the 15th century, its popularity didn't really take off until the 1800s in Europe. Today it is still associated with aristocrats and, in popular culture, is known as the game of choice for James Bond.



## WHY PLAY IT

It often has very high minimum and maximum bets. Some casinos allow bets of \$10,000 or more for a single hand, while they commonly require at least \$25 to be wagered.

## WHAT TO KNOW

The stakes in baccarat can be huge for the players and casinos alike. At large casinos, it's not uncommon for millions of dollars to change hands in a single day. For publicly traded gaming companies, large baccarat losses and wins can be big enough to show up on their quarterly earnings statements.

## TIPS & ADVICE

- Betting on the banker has the best odds, but you usually have to pay a 5 percent commission. If you can find a low-commission table, or play a no-commission version of baccarat, it will make your bankroll last longer.
- It may feel weird betting against yourself, but it's typically best to bet on the banker. Keep in mind, this game isn't about who owns the cards but where you place the bet.
- Some players keep score by writing down the outcome of previous hands, hoping to spot trends or make big bets at the right moment. It's human nature to look for patterns, but it doesn't provide a true mathematical advantage.
- Baccarat hands are dealt quickly. That's great when you're on a winning streak, but it also means you can lose several hands in a row without thinking much about it. Make sure you're paying close attention to your bankroll and the game trends.

# Bingo



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**A** longtime favorite game for many people, bingo involves matching the numbers on your card to numbers chosen at random by a caller.

The most common bingo boards are five-by-five squares, with the middle square on the grid marked as a free space. The first person to complete the specified pattern — typically a straight line — calls out “bingo!”

If their card is verified, they win the game and a new round will begin.

There are plenty of variations

on bingo, though, in both the style of the cards and the rules of the game.

Some versions of bingo are even going high-tech. Computerized number pickers and bingo cards may be common at newer or larger casinos, but a lot of people prefer the more old-fashioned ways of picking numbers: a randomly shuffled deck of bingo numbers

on cards, a blower that tosses around numbered ping-pong balls, or turning a cage.

While bingo’s roots date all the way back to the 16th century, the modern version that so many people know and love today was created in the 1920s. It was wildly popular across America by the 1940s, and it’s been a beloved casino game ever since then.

## WHY PLAY IT

It’s easy to play and can be a fun way to spend time with people. You can bring a whole family or group of friends to play at the same time, or just go by yourself and meet new friends.

## WHAT TO KNOW

Bingo has been legalized in some states and localities, but it’s also increasingly popular at casinos. Both in Nevada and locations all across America, standalone bingo halls are being built to suit the large numbers of people who enjoy playing it regularly as a fun pastime.

## TIPS & ADVICE

- If possible, sit close to the caller. The faster you can hear or see the numbers that are picked, the faster you’ll be able to respond.
- Pay close attention. It’s not uncommon for two players to yell bingo after the same number being called, so don’t get distracted. You could lose your chance to win.
- Know all the rules. Every bingo hall will have their own house rules, so know what they are and be prepared to challenge someone who doesn’t follow them.
- Watch the patterns closely. For some people, it can help to bring a yellow highlighter to mark the winning patterns ahead of time. You can get to the game early and take your time preparing your cards.