

Black Jack Guide

Blackjack is a favorite among gamblers around the world, partly because it is mathematically beatable and players feel the odds are less random than the spin of a roulette wheel, or the pull of a slot machine handle. Blackjack uses a standard set of 52 playing cards and players compete against the dealer, not each other. The rules of Blackjack are actually very simple and can be learnt easily, however there is a strategy you can learn to increase your winning odds.

Values of cards

King, Queen, Jack, 10 = 10

2-9 = Face value

Aces = 11 or 1

The player wins when the total value of cards in his hand is closer to 21 than those held by the dealer, without exceeding 21. A hand with a value over 21 is called a "bust," and is an automatic loser. If you and the dealer have the same card total (17 and up) neither of you wins and your bet is returned to you in a "push".

The player wins one and a half times his bet if his first two cards total 21 (also called a natural Blackjack). The only way two cards can have a value of 21 is if one of them is an Ace, and the other is a 10-value card. (e.g. An ace and a king, and an ace and a queen are both blackjacks.) A blackjack beats all other hands except for another blackjack. If you have a blackjack, and the dealer has 3 cards that add up to 21, you still win the hand although you both have hands valued at 21.

Blackjack is the most widely played casino game in the world in land based casinos, and in online casinos slot is even more popular. Blackjack is a game that is attractive to just about any casino gambler for a number of reasons. The simplicity of the game make it possible for anybody to learn. And for those who are more concerned with strategy, it is a game that can actually be beaten if properly strategized. Blackjack is a game of chance, and a game of strategy, which is why it appeals to so many genres of players. It is a great game to play for fun, or for monetary purposes in an online casino setting.

{mospagebreak title=Playing Options}

2. Playing Options

Split

If your first two cards have the same point value, you may split them into two separate hands by placing a second bet equal to the original bet. You then proceed to draw cards. You are able to draw as many cards as you like on each split hand, but if you split two aces, you receive only one additional card for each ace. If you split two aces and one of your hands totals 21, it is counted as 21 and not blackjack. Any two ten value cards can be split, for instance a 10 and queen, however splitting ten value cards is never recommended. Two aces can, and should be, split. It is always recommended to split Aces and 8s. Normally the casino will also allow you to re-split after the original split. For example, you split two eight's and now are dealt again an eight as the second card of one of those two hands. You can split this hand again and now play three hands. Some casinos have limits on re-splitting aces. Be sure to know the rules of your casino before starting to play.

Double

After you are dealt two cards, and think that another card will allow you to beat the dealer's hand, you can increase your bet by an amount up to your original bet or double your bet. This is also known as 'doubling down'. Once you decide to 'double down' you are allowed to receive just one more card. You cannot stand on your original hand or take more than

1 additional card. For example, you may be dealt a 5 and a 6 for a total of 11. You can now double down, hoping to get a 10 value card (the most frequent value card in an unplayed deck). The casino house rules vary for doubling down. For example some allow only doubling down on 10 and 11 totals while others allow it on any two-card total. Some casinos allow it only on original hands and not split hands, while others allow doubling down after splitting.

Insurance

Insurance is designed to protect you when you think that the dealer may have blackjack. When buying insurance, you place 1/2 of your initial bet by pressing the 'Insurance' Button. If the dealer does have blackjack, you are paid 2 to 1 on your insurance bet. If the dealer does not have blackjack, you lose your insurance bet.

The Value of Winning payouts

Winning Hand 1 to 1 Insurance 2 to 1 Blackjack 3 to 2 If you lose a hand, you lose the amount you originally bet - no more, no less.

{mospagebreak title=Basic Strategy}

3. Basic Strategy

Step into any casino in America and you are certain to see one thing. Actually, there are a number of things you will probably see, all of them competing in a mad rush for your attention. But for the purposes of this article, I would like to specifically deal with the ubiquity of Blackjack. Yes, this is perhaps the most universal card game found in modern casinos, and arguably the most democratic.

What do I mean by that last statement? Simply that Blackjack is a game which makes itself assessable to the widest range of casino visitors. It can be played by rank novices as well as true professionals and always be entertaining. This game is unique in that it entails a potent blend of chance and skill. Though a much simpler game than most poker variants, Blackjack is an evergreen favorite of the masses.

I like to advise gamblers never to become complacent with Blackjack, especially when real money is involved. No matter how often you've played this game, it has the capacity to surprise you. One important thing to never forget is that the house has a statistical advantage over the players that will always come to the fore in the long run.

However, in Blackjack each player can reduce the casino advantage to a small degree by playing what is known as basic strategy. This strategy strictly dictates when to hit and when to stand, and also determines when doubling down or splitting is the correct action.

Let's get into some of the specifics you should bear in mind. The bedrock upon which basic strategy operates is the relationship of the player's point total and the dealer's visible card. Under good conditions from the player's point of view (which will almost always entail the use of a single deck), the house advantage over a basic strategy player can be as low as 0.16 percent. That's a massive difference from the norm. As a result of this, you will not find a whole lot of tables in the average casino that offers the game in this format. But if you ever should find one, by all means take advantage of this tremendous opportunity.

I think it is only fair to note that basic Blackjack strategy is not for ideally suited for all gamblers. This is largely a degree of personality. We are all familiar with players who scorn any type of system, claiming they are about as comfortable as a straightjacket when standing at the green felt. We must respect this viewpoint even if we do not embrace it.

A good system is hard to find, so I personally feel it's foolish not to take every advantage you can get when gambling in a casino. We must all admit that the deck is stacked against us whenever we play Blackjack, so why not do everything possible to win? Obviously, I am talking about methods deemed both legal and ethical by the casinos, which rules out cheating and card counting. Hopefully you knew that already.

{mospagebreak title=Black Jack Strategy}

4. Black Jack Strategy

To strengthen your chances at blackjack, you should follow a basic strategy. The dealer's hand is on the top and the player's hand is on the left of the box.

H is for Hit (take another card), S is for Stand (stay with what you have), D is for double-down (see above), and P is for split (see above).

Hard Totals

Hard Totals

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Pair Splitting

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Multi-Deck Game

Hard Totals

Hard
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17-20

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Soft Totals

Soft
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Pair Splitting

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{mospagebreak title=Tips For Blackjack}

5. Tips For Blackjack

Tips for Novice Blackjack Players

Blackjack is a great game for casino novices. This is because the game is easy to learn and it has relatively few rules. The premise of this game is to place a bet that you will be able to build a Blackjack hand that is closer 21 points than the dealer's hand. To accomplish this you draw cards until your hand total is as close to 21 points as possible without going over. However, while the premise of this game is very simple, there are a few tricks that you can use that will help you to minimize your losses and that will also help you to maximize your winnings.

Know How to Play the Game

The first tip for good blackjack players is to know how to play the game before you approach a blackjack table, be it an online Blackjack table or a live Blackjack table. You should know the rules of the game, how to calculate the value of your Blackjack hand, and you should know how to bet. All of these Blackjack basics can be learned online at one of the many online casinos that offer this game, at any one of hundreds of Blackjack information websites, or offline via a Blackjack instructional guide.

Know When to Take Insurance

The issue of requesting insurance during a Blackjack game is widely debated. Some Blackjack players say to take it whenever the dealer's upcard is an Ace, while others say that this is a useless strategy. If you don't know whether you should take out insurance when the dealer has an Ace you probably shouldn't. Just play the game normally.

Know When to Split Your Pairs

One of the common terms used in Blackjack is splitting pairs. If your opening hand is a pair then many strategy books suggest that you split your hand into two separate hands that you play independently of each other. This option is probably good advice if you have lower valued pairs, however, if you have a high valued pair you probably should just keep them together and play them as they are. For example if you have a pair of threes your opening hand is worth six points. This is a very low starting value and this hand can be easily split without hurting your chances of winning. However, if you have a pair of nines, tens, Jacks, Queens, or Kings your opening score will be 18 or 20 points. These high scores are good enough to win in most cases so splitting your hand doesn't make much sense. On the other hand if you have a high valued pair and the dealer's upcard is a ten point card or an Ace you may want to consider splitting to increase your chances at Blackjack, as the dealer could possibly have Blackjack which would beat your 18 points of 20 points. Again this is up to you.

{mospagebreak title=Etiquette and Manners}

6. Etiquette and Manners

- Blackjack like all other activities has some etiquette and rituals related to it. There is an appropriate behavior that needs to be followed while playing blackjack at the tables.
- If you are still unfamiliar with the rules start playing at a table with no other players and learn by yourself. It's important not to hold up the game for any reason.
- Tip the dealer from time to time, especially if you're winning. One way is to bet on behalf of the dealer by placing an additional bet outside your betting circle, in the dealer's direction.
- If the cards are dealt face up, don't touch them. You're only allowed to touch the cards if you're playing in a face-down game.
- Try to avoid drinking and being drunk at the game.
- Don't talk excessively and avoid instructing other players how to play or correcting their mistakes.
- Don't hassle the dealer for advice on strategy.
- If you want to be a spectator watch from a reasonable distance and don't interfere with the players' ability to concentrate.

Most of your decisions are communicated to the dealer via hand signals. The hand signals vary when you're playing a face up game versus a face down game.

In the Face Up Game

- You point at your cards when hitting
- Wave your hand over your cards, with your hand parallel to the table when standing
- Place a 2nd bet NEXT TO your original bet. Don't place the 2nd bet on top of your original bet when Doubling or Splitting

In the Face Down Game

- Scrape the table with your hand when Hitting
- Put your cards underneath your bet when Standing
- Turn your cards face up, and place a 2nd bet next to your original bet when Doubling or Splitting

