



POKER TOURNAMENT DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION

2011 Rules Version 1.0, July 30, 2011

The PokerTDA is comprised of poker room personnel from around the world whose objective is to draft a standardized set of rules for poker tournaments. The following TDA rules supplement the standard or "house rules" of this card room/casino. In case of conflict between these rules and the rules & regulations of the applicable gaming agency, the agency rules apply.

General Concepts

- 1. Floor People.** Floor people are to consider the best interest of the game and fairness as top priorities in the decision-making process. Unusual circumstances can on occasion dictate that decisions in the interest of fairness take priority over the technical rules. The floorperson's decision is final.
- 2. Official Language.** The English-only rule will be enforced in the United States during the play of hands. English will be used in international play along with the local or native language.
- 3. Official Terminology of Tournament Poker.** Official terms are simple, unmistakable, time-honored declarations like: bet, raise, call, fold, check, all-in, pot (in pot-limit only), and complete. Regional terms may also meet this standard. The use of non-standard language is at player's risk because it may result in a ruling other than what the player intended. It is the responsibility of players to make their intentions clear. See Rules 37 & 45.
- 4. Communication.** Players may not talk on the phone while at the poker table. House rules apply to all other forms of electronic devices.

Seating, Breaking & Balancing Tables

- 5. Random Correct Seating.** Tournament and satellite seats will be randomly assigned. A player who started the tournament in the wrong seat with the correct chipstack amount will be moved to the correct seat and will take his current total chipstack with him. For a player in a wrong seat with another player's chips, see Recommended Procedures at the TDA forum.
- 6. Special Needs. Accommodations for players with special needs will be made when possible. ***
- 7. Breaking Tables.** Players going from a broken table to fill in seats assume the rights & responsibilities of the position. They can get the big blind, the small blind, or the button. The only place they cannot get a hand is between the small blind & the button.
- 8. Balancing Tables.** A: In flop and mixed games when balancing tables, the player who will be big blind next will be moved to the worst position, including taking a single big blind when available, even if that means the seat will have the big blind twice. Worst position is never the small blind. In stud-only events, players will be moved by position (the last seat to open up at the short table is the seat to be filled). The table from which a player is moved will be as specified by a predetermined procedure. Play will halt on any table that is 3 or more players short.

B: In mixed games (example: HORSE), when the game shifts from hold'em to stud, after the last hold'em hand the button is moved exactly to the position it would be if the next hand was hold'em and then frozen there during the stud round. The player moved during stud is the player who would be the big blind if the game was hold'em for that hand. When hold'em resumes the button for the first hand will be at the position where it was frozen.
- 9. Number of Players at Final Table.** In flop games, the final table will consist of 10 players. In six-handed games, the final table will consist of 7 players. In stud games, the final table will consist of 9 players.

Pots / Showdown

- 10. Declarations.** Cards speak. Verbal declarations regarding the content of a player's hand are not binding; however, any player deliberately miscalling her hand may be penalized.
- 11. Face Up for All-Ins.** All cards will be turned face up once a player is all-in and all betting action for the hand is complete. The dealer & players should insist on timely compliance with this rule.
- 12. Showdown Order.** In a non-all-in showdown, at the end of the last round of betting, the player who made the last aggressive action in that betting round must show first. If there was no bet in the last round, the player to the left of the button shows first and so on clockwise. In stud, the player with the high board must show first. In razz, the lowest board shows first.
- 13. Contested Showdown / Playing the Board. All hole cards must be shown to win a contested showdown, even if playing the board. ***
- 14. Uncontested Showdown. In a non all-in showdown, when all opponent(s) cards have been mucked without being revealed, the last live hand wins. Opponents who muck at showdown without revealing their hands also lose the right to ask to see the winning hand.**
- 15. Asking to See a Hand. Except where house policy provides an express right to see a hand, asking to see a hand is a privilege granted at TD's discretion to protect the integrity of the game (suspicion of invalid hand, collusion, etc). This privilege is not to be abused.**
- 16. Killing Winning Hand.** Dealers cannot kill a winning hand that was tabled and was obviously the winner. Players are encouraged to assist in reading tabled hands if it appears an error is about to be made.
- 17. Awarding Odd Chips.** The odd chip goes to the high hand. In flop games when there are 2 or more high hands or 2 or more low hands, the odd chip(s) will go to the left of the button. In stud, the odd chip goes to the high card by suit. However, when hands have identical value (ex: a wheel in Omaha/8) the pot will be split as evenly as possible.

18. **Side Pots.** Each side pot will be split separately.

19. **Disputed Pots.** The right to dispute a hand ends when a new hand begins. See Rule #20.

General Procedures

20. **New Hand & New Limits.** When time has elapsed in a round and a new level is announced by a member of the tournament staff, the new level applies to the next hand. A hand begins with the first riffle. If an automatic shuffler is used, the hand begins when the green button is pushed.

21. **Chip Race.** When it is time to color-up chips, they will be raced off with a maximum of one chip going to any player. The chip race will always start in the No.1 seat. A player cannot be raced out of a tournament: a player who loses his remaining chip(s) in a chip race will be given one chip of the smallest denomination still in play. Players are encouraged to witness the chip race.

22. Chipstacks Kept Visible & Countable. Players are entitled to a reasonable estimation of an opponent's chip count; thus chips should be kept in countable stacks. The TDA recommends clean stacks in multiples of 20 as a standard. Players must keep their higher denomination chips visible and identifiable at all times. Tournament directors will control the number & denomination of chips in play and may color up at their discretion. Discretionary color ups are to be announced.

23. **Deck Changes.** Deck changes will be on the dealer push or level changes or as prescribed by the house. Players may not ask for deck changes.

24. **Re-buys.** A player may not miss a hand. If a player announces the intent to rebuy before a new hand, he is playing chips behind and is obligated to make the re-buy.

25. **Calling for a Clock.** Once a reasonable amount of time has passed & a clock is called for, a player will be given a maximum of one minute to make a decision. If action has not been taken before time expires, there will be a 10-second

countdown followed by a declaration to the effect that the hand is dead. If the player has not acted before the declaration, the hand is dead.

26. **Rabbit Hunting.** No rabbit hunting is allowed. Rabbit hunting is revealing any cards "that would have come" if the hand had not ended.

Player Present / Eligible for Hand

27. **At Your Seat.** A player must be at his seat by the time all players have been dealt complete initial hands in order to have a live hand. A player must be at his seat to call time.

28. **Action Pending.** A player must remain at the table if he has a live hand.

Button / Blinds

29. **Dead Button.** Tournament play will use a dead button.

30. **Dodging Blinds.** Players who intentionally dodge any blind when moving from a broken table will incur a penalty.

31. **Button in Heads-Up.** In heads-up play, the small blind is on the button and acts first pre-flop and last on all subsequent betting rounds. The last card is dealt to the button. When beginning heads-up play, the button may need to be adjusted to ensure no player takes the big blind twice in a row.

Dealing Rules

32. **Misdeals.** In stud-type games, if any of the player's two down cards are exposed due to dealer error it is a misdeal. In flop games, misdeals include but are not necessarily limited to: a) exposure of one of the first two cards dealt; b) two or more exposed or boxed cards; c) first card dealt to the wrong seat; d) cards dealt to a seat not entitled to a hand; e) a seat entitled to a hand is dealt out. Players may be dealt two consecutive cards on the button. If substantial action occurs, a misdeal cannot be declared and the hand must proceed.

33. Substantial Action. Substantial Action is defined as either: A) any two actions involving two players each putting chips in the pot (bet, raise, or call); or B) any combination of three actions (check, bet, raise, call, or fold).

34. **Four-Card Flop.** If the flop contains 4 (rather than 3) cards, whether exposed or not, the dealer shall scramble the 4 cards face down. A flooperperson will be called to randomly select one card to be used as the next burn card and the remaining 3 cards will become the flop.

Play: Bets & Raises

35. **Verbal Declarations / Acting in Turn.** Players must act in turn. Verbal declarations in turn are binding. Chips placed in the pot in turn must stay in the pot.

36. **Action Out of Turn.** Action out of turn will be binding if the action to that player has not changed. A check, call or fold does not change action. If action changes, the out of turn bet is not binding & is returned to the out of turn player who has all options: calling, raising, or folding. An out-of-turn fold is binding.

37. **Methods of Raising.** In no-limit or pot-limit, a raise must be made by (1) placing the full amount in the pot in one motion; or (2) verbally declaring the full amount prior to the initial placement of chips into the pot; or (3) verbally declaring "raise" prior to the placement of the amount to call into the pot and then completing the action with one additional motion. It is the player's responsibility to make his intentions clear*.

38. **Raises.** A raise must be at least the size of the largest previous bet or raise of the current betting round. If a player puts in a raise of 50% or more of the previous bet but less than the minimum raise, he must make a full raise. The raise will be exactly the minimum raise allowed (see exception for multiple same-denomination chips in Rule 40). In no-limit and pot limit, an all-in wager of less than a full raise does not reopen the betting to a player who has already acted.

39. **Oversized Chip Betting.** Anytime when facing a bet or blind, placing a single oversized chip in the pot is a call if a raise isn't first verbally declared. To raise with an oversized chip, raise must be declared before the chip hits the table surface. If raise is declared (but no amount), the raise is the maximum allowable for that chip. When not facing a bet, placing an oversized chip in the pot without declaration is a bet of the maximum for the chip.

40. **Multiple Chip Betting.** When facing a bet, unless a raise is first declared, multiple same-denomination chips is a call if removing one chip leaves less than the call amount. Example of a call: prelop, blinds are 200-400: A raises to 1200 total (an 800 raise), B puts out two 1000 chips without declaring raise. This is just a call because removing one 1000 chip leaves less than the amount needed to call the 1200 bet. Placing mixed denomination chips in the pot is governed by the 50% standard in Rule 38.

41. **Number of Raises in Limit & No-Limit.** There is no cap on the number of raises in no-limit games. In limit games there will be a limit to raises even when heads-up until the tournament is down to 2 players; the house limit applies.

42. **Accepted Action.** Poker is a game of alert, continuous observation. It is the caller's responsibility to determine the correct amount of an opponent's bet before calling, regardless of what is stated by the dealer or players. If a caller requests a count but receives incorrect information from the dealer or players, then places that amount in the pot, the caller is assumed to accept the full correct action & is subject to the correct wager or all-in amount. Rule 1 may apply in certain situations at tournament director's discretion.

43. **Pot Size & Pot-Limit Bets.** Players are entitled to be informed of the pot size in pot-limit games only. Dealers will not count the pot in limit & no-limit. Declaring "I bet the pot" is not a valid bet in no-limit but it does bind a player to making a bet of a valid amount.

44. **String Bets and Raises.** Dealers will be responsible for calling string bets and raises.

45. **Non-Standard & Unclear Betting.** Players use unofficial betting terms and gestures at their own risk. These may be interpreted to mean other than what the player intended. Also, whenever the size of a declared bet can have multiple meanings, it will be ruled as the lesser value. Example: "I bet five". If it is unclear whether "five" means \$500 or \$5,000, the bet stands as \$500. See Rules 3 & 37.

46. **Non-Standard Folds.** Anytime before the end of the last betting round of a hand, folding in turn when facing a check or folding out of turn are both binding folds and may be subject to penalty.

47. **Conditional Statements.** Conditional statements of future action are strongly discouraged; they may be binding and/or subject to penalty. Example: "if- then" statements such as "If you bet, then I will raise."

Play: Other

48. **Chips in Transit.** Players may not hold or transport tournament chips in any manner that takes them out of view. A player who does so will forfeit the chips and may be disqualified. The forfeited chips will be taken out of play.

49. **Accidentally Killed / Fouled Hands.** Players must protect their own hands at all times. If a dealer kills a hand by mistake, or a hand is fouled, the player will have no redress and is not entitled to a refund of bets. If the player initiated a bet or raise and hasn't been called, the uncalled bet or raise will be returned to the player. *

50. **Dead Hands in Stud.** In stud poker, if a player picks up the upcards while facing action, the hand is dead.

Etiquette & Penalties

51. **Penalties and Disqualification.** A penalty may be invoked if a player exposes any card with action pending, throws a card off the table, violates the one-player-to-a-hand rule, or similar incidents occur. Penalties will be invoked in cases of soft play, abuse, disruptive behavior, or cheating. Penalties available to the tournament director include verbal warnings, "missed hand" penalties, and disqualification. Except for a one-hand penalty, missed hand penalties will be assessed as follows: The offender will miss one hand for every player, including the offender, who is at the table when the penalty is given multiplied by the number of rounds specified in the penalty. For the period of the penalty, the offender shall remain away from the table but will continue to be dealt in.

Tournament staff can assess a 1-hand penalty, 1-, 2-, 3-, or 4-round penalties or disqualification. A player who is disqualified shall have his or her chips removed from play. Repeat infractions are subject to escalating penalties.

52. **No Disclosure.** Players are obligated to protect other players in the tournament at all times. Therefore, players, whether in the hand or not, may not:

1. Disclose contents of live or folded hands,
2. Advise or criticize play at any time,
3. Read a hand that hasn't been tabled.

The one-player-to-a-hand rule will be enforced.

53. **Exposing Cards.** A player who exposes his cards with action pending may incur a penalty, but will not have a dead hand. The penalty will begin at the end of the hand.

54. **Ethical Play.** Poker is an individual game. Soft play will result in penalties, which may include forfeiture of chips and/or disqualification. Chip dumping and/or all other forms of collusion will result in disqualification.

55. **Etiquette Violations.** Repeated etiquette violations will result in penalties. Examples include, but are not limited to, unnecessarily touching other players' cards or chips, delay of the game, repeatedly acting out of turn or excessive chatter.

*NOTES. Changes and additions made pursuant to the 2011 TDA Summit are shown in red underline.

6: Special needs is not entirely a new rule. The word “physical” was removed, to broaden the range of handicaps / accommodations that might apply. The topic was also made a new rule in itself to accommodate any future clarifications that might help players in need.

13: This is not entirely a new rule, it is an expansion of the 2009 Rule that solely addressed Playing the Board. The topic was expanded in 2011 to address all contested showdowns (where two or more players table their hand for cards to speak at showdown). The word “both” was removed, to accommodate 3 cards in 7 stud / razz, 4 in Omaha, etc.

37: It is the player's responsibility to make his intentions clear*. This is not new language, but is underscored in the 2011 Version due to it's inter-relationship with Rules 3, and 45. It is a paramount consideration in all rulings.

49: Accidentally Killed / Fouled Hands is not an entirely new rule in 2011 but a significant clarification to the 2009 Rule “Unprotected Hands”