

In poker, “high,” “low,” and “hi-lo” describe what a game rewards—not three different names for the same ranking chart. In a high-hand game such as Texas Hold’em, the strongest standard poker hand wins. In a lowball game, the winning hand is determined by a lowball variant’s rules. In a hi-lo game, the pot may be divided between the best high hand and the best qualifying low hand.

That distinction changes how you evaluate cards, draws, and even the value of a pair. This guide covers Texas Hold’em hand rankings, common lowball poker rules, Omaha hi lo basics, and useful odds for made hands and draws. It also explains how printable cheat sheets and equity charts can help you study without mixing up the rules.



High-hand poker: the familiar ranking system

In high hand poker, hands are ranked from strongest to weakest. Texas Hold’em uses the standard ranking: players make the best five-card hand they can from their two hole cards and the five community cards. You may use both hole cards, one, [straight flush odds holdem](#) or neither.

Rank Hand Example
1Royal flushA-K-Q-J-10, all one suit
2Straight flush9-8-7-6-5, all one suit
3Four of a kindFour queens
4Full houseThree jacks and two fives
5FlushFive cards of one suit, not in sequence
6StraightFive consecutive ranks, mixed suits allowed
7Three of a kindThree eights
8Two pairTwo kings and two fours
9One pairTwo tens
10High cardNo pair or stronger combination

When players have the same hand category, the ranks of the cards decide the winner. For example, a pair of kings beats a pair of queens. If the pairs match, compare the remaining cards—called kickers—from highest to lowest. If you have A-K and your opponent has A-Q on a board where both players make a pair of aces, your king kicker beats their queen kicker, unless the board or another card changes the best five-card hand. Suits never break a tie in standard poker.

Hand odds: know what the number describes

Odds depend on the number of cards available and the point at which you evaluate the hand. A five-card draw hand, a seven-card Hold’em hand, and a four-card Omaha hand do not have identical probabilities. Always check

whether an odds table describes a five-card hand, a final seven-card hand, or a draw from the flop.

For a standard five-card hand, the odds of being dealt four of a kind are **0.0240% (1 in 4,164)**, also stated as **about 1 in 4,165**. The tiny difference between those “one in” figures comes from rounding the probability and the reciprocal. This is a five-card deal statistic—not the chance of ending with quads in Texas Hold’em after seeing seven cards.

In Hold’em, you usually begin with only two private cards and see community cards over several betting rounds. Your chance of making a particular hand therefore depends on your starting cards and the board. A probability chart is a useful reference, but it cannot replace the context of the hand.

Lowball poker rules: “low” depends on the game

Lowball does not have one universal ranking system. In many lowball games, the weakest-looking five-card hand wins, but the rules specify how to treat aces, straights, flushes, and pairs. Two common systems illustrate why you need to know the exact variant:

- **Ace-to-five lowball:** Aces count as low, and straights and flushes do not count against a low hand. Pairs are generally undesirable. A-2-3-4-5 is the best possible low.
- **Deuce-to-seven lowball:** Deuces are low, but aces count as high. Straights and flushes count as high hands and hurt your low. The best low is 7-5-4-3-2, with cards not all in one suit.

So “low cards” alone do not guarantee a winning lowball hand. In deuce-to-seven, for instance, an ace is a high card, and a straight can be a problem. In ace-to-five, the same ace is helpful, and a straight does not disqualify the low. Check the rules before applying a lowball chart.

Hi-lo poker: one pot, two possible winners

In a hi-lo game, the pot can be split between the best high hand and the best qualifying low hand. The high half uses the regular high-hand rankings. The low half is judged by the variant’s low qualification rules. A player may win both halves—often called “scooping”—or different players may take the high and low portions.

Omaha Hi-Lo, often played as Omaha eight-or-better, is a popular example. The low hand must qualify as five distinct ranks of 8 or lower, with ace counting low. Straights and flushes do not prevent a hand from qualifying for low. If no qualifying low is possible, the best high hand wins the whole pot.

Omaha Hi-Lo basics

The most important Omaha rule is that you must use **exactly two** of your four hole cards and **exactly three** community cards to make each hand. You make the high and low separately, but the two-card/three-board-card requirement applies to both.

For example, if your hole cards are A-2-K-K and the board is 3-4-8-J-Q, you can use A-2 from your hand and 3-4-8 from the board to make an 8-low. For high, you must also select exactly two hole cards and three board cards; you cannot simply play the board. If the board has three low cards but you hold only one low card, you cannot make a five-distinct-rank low using just one hole card.

For a low to qualify in Omaha eight-or-better, the five cards must have five different ranks, all 8 or lower. A-2-3-4-5 is an excellent low; a hand containing two fours is not a qualifying five-card low. If two players share the same best low ranks, they split the low half. Suits do not rank one low hand above another.

What changes in hand value?

- **In high-only Hold'em**, a pair can be a strong made hand depending on the board and action. A low card is not automatically useful just because it is small.
- **In lowball**, pairs, high cards, or straights may damage your hand, depending on the variant. "Low" does not always mean "ace is best."
- **In hi-lo**, a hand can have potential for high, low, or both. A hand that can win only half the pot may be less valuable than one with a credible chance to scoop.
- **In Omaha**, four hole cards create more combinations, but you still must use exactly two. Do not count a low or high hand that violates that rule.

In a split-pot game, also consider whether your low is likely to be shared. If you make the same low as another player, you may receive only part of the low half. A low draw can look promising while offering little chance to win the entire pot.

Draw odds by flop, turn, and river

In Hold'em, draw odds are often discussed by counting "outs"—unseen cards that may improve your hand. The chance of hitting at least one out is different when you have one card to come than when you have two. These figures assume all outs are clean; in real hands, an opponent may have redraws or some apparent outs may give them a stronger hand.

Draw example	Typical outs	Flop to turn	Turn to river	Flop to river (two cards)	Open-ended straight draw	8	About 17.0%
	About 17.4%	About 31.5%	Flush draw	9	About 19.1%	About 19.6%	About 35.0%
	Two overcards, if both are clean	6	About 12.8%	About 13.0%	About 24.1%		

An open-ended straight draw has eight usual outs: four cards at each end of the sequence. A flush draw with four cards of the same suit has nine unseen cards of that suit, assuming none are known to be in your hand or on the board. A flush draw is not a straight draw; they are different ways to improve and should not be confused.

These percentages use the unseen-card count for a typical heads-up Hold'em situation. On the flop, there are 47 unseen cards if you know your two hole cards and the three board cards. For nine outs, the turn chance is $9/47$, or about 19.1%. If you miss the turn, there are 46 unseen cards for the river, so the river chance is $9/46$, or about 19.6%. The chance to hit by the river is about 35.0%, not 38.7%, because the turn and river events are not independent.

A quick "rule of four" estimates a flop draw's chance to hit by the river: multiply outs by four. Nine outs gives roughly 36%, close to the exact 35%. On the turn, multiply by two: nine outs gives roughly 18%, close to 19.6%. These shortcuts are estimates, not exact odds, and they assume your outs really win.

Use cheat sheets and equity charts the right way

Printable cheat sheets are handy for keeping high-hand rankings, lowball rules, and Omaha's exactly-two/exactly-three requirement in view during study. Keep separate references for ace-to-five and deuce-to-seven lowball; merging their rules onto one unlabelled chart is an easy way to misread a hand.

Equity charts can show how often a hand wins or ties against another hand or a range, but equity is not the same as the chance of making a particular draw. A flush draw may have about a 35% chance to complete by the river, yet its total equity against an opponent depends on whether the opponent already has a pair, a set, a higher flush draw, or other outs.

When reviewing a hand, write down the game variant, count your actual outs, and identify possible kicker problems. If villain has top pair with an ace kicker and you have top pair with a king kicker, a matching pair may not be enough to win. In hi-lo, separately ask whether your high and low are both live—and whether another player can share or beat either half.

Takeaway

High-hand poker rewards the strongest standard five-card combination. Lowball rewards the best low according to a specific variant's rules. Hi-lo can divide the pot between a high winner and a qualifying low winner. Learn the exact ranking and card-use rules first, then use hand odds, draw percentages, printable cheat sheets, and equity charts as supporting tools—not substitutes for checking the board, the kicker, and your opponent's possible holdings.

