



## **POKER TOURNAMENT DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION**

### **2015 Rules Version 1.0, Aug. 20, 2015**

(For Recommended Procedures and Illustration Addendum, see longform version at TDA website)

The Poker TDA is a voluntary poker industry association founded in 2001. The TDA mission is to increase global uniformity of poker tournament rules. TDA rules supplement the rules of this house. In case of conflict with a gaming agency, the agency rules will apply.

### **General Concepts**

#### **1: Floor Decisions**

The best interest of the game and fairness are top priorities in decision-making. Unusual circumstances occasionally dictate that decisions in the interest of fairness take priority over technical rules. Floor decisions are final.

#### **2: Player Responsibilities**

Players should verify registration data and seat assignments, protect their hands, make their intentions clear, follow the action, act in turn, defend their right to act, keep cards visible and chips correctly stacked, remain at the table with a live hand, speak up if they see a mistake, call for a clock when warranted, transfer tables promptly, follow one player to a hand, know and comply with the rules, practice proper etiquette, and generally contribute to an orderly event.

#### **3: Official Terminology of Tournament Poker**

Official betting terms are simple, unmistakable, time-honored declarations like: bet, raise, call, fold, check, all-in, complete, and pot (pot-limit only). Regional terms may also meet this test. Also, players must use gestures with caution

when facing action; tapping the table is a check. It is the responsibility of players to make their intentions clear: using non-standard terms or gestures is at player's risk and may result in a ruling other than what the player intended. See also Rules 2 & 42.

#### **4: Electronic Devices and Communication**

Players may not talk on a phone at the table. Ring tones, music, etc. should be inaudible to others. House rules apply to other types of electronic devices and communication.

#### **5: Official Language**

English-only will be enforced in the U.S. during play of hands. At non-U.S. venues, the house will post & announce acceptable language(s).

### **Seating, Breaking & Balancing Tables**

#### **6: Random Correct Seating**

Tournament and satellite seats will be randomly assigned. A player who started in the wrong seat with a correct chip stack will move to the correct seat & take his current total chip stack with him.

#### **7: Alternates, Late Registration & Re-Entries**

Alternates, players registering late, and re-entries will be sold full stacks, randomly seated at any position, and dealt in except between SB and button.

#### **8: Special Needs**

Accommodations for players with special needs will be made when possible.

#### **9: Breaking Tables**

Players from a broken table will be assigned new tables and seats by a 2-step random process. They can get any seat including a blind or button and be dealt in except between the small blind and button. See Addendum.

### **10: Balancing Tables and Halting Play**

A: To balance in flop & mixed-games, the player who will be big blind next is moved to the worst position, including taking a single big blind when available, even if that means the seat has the big blind twice. Worst position is never the small blind. In stud-only, players move by position (last seat to open at the short table is the seat filled).

B: In mixed games (ex: HORSE), when the game shifts from hold'em to stud, after the last hold'em hand the button moves to the position it would be if the next hand was hold'em and is frozen there during stud. The player moved in stud is the player who would be big blind if the game were hold'em for that hand. Shifting to hold'em the button starts where it was frozen.

C: The table from which a player is moved will be specified by a predetermined procedure.

D: Full-table play will halt on tables 3 or more players short of the table with the most players. Play halts on other formats (ex: 6-hand and turbos) at TDs discretion. TDs may waive halting play and waiver is not a misdeal. As the event progresses, at TD's discretion tables may be more tightly balanced.

#### **11: Number of Players at Final Table**

Final tables will have a full table for the event, plus one. (9-handed events seat 10 at the final table, 8-handed stud seats 9, 6-handed seats 7, etc.). No final table should seat more than 10. This rule does not apply to heads-up events.

### **Pots / Showdown**

#### **12: Declarations. Cards Speak at Showdown**

**Cards speak** to determine the winner. Verbal declarations of hand value are not binding at showdown but deliberately miscalling a hand

may be penalized. Any player in the hand or not should speak up if he thinks a mistake is being made in reading hands or awarding the pot.

### **13: Tabling Cards & Killing Winning Hand**

A: Proper tabling is both 1) turning all cards face up on the table and 2) allowing the dealer and players to read the hand clearly. "All cards" means both hole cards in hold'em, all 4 hole cards in Omaha, all 7 cards in 7-stud, etc.

B: At showdown a player must protect his hand while waiting for it to be read (See also Rule 60). If a player does not fully table his cards, then mucks thinking he has won, he does so at his risk. If the cards are not 100% identifiable and the TD rules the hand was not clearly read, the player has no claim to the pot. The TDs decision on whether a hand was sufficiently tabled is final.

C: Dealers cannot kill a hand that was properly tabled and obviously the winner.

### **14: Live Cards at Showdown**

Discarding non-tabled cards face down does not automatically kill them; a player may change his mind and table his cards if they remain 100% identifiable. Cards are killed by the dealer when pushed into the muck.

### **15: Face Up for All-Ins**

All hands will be tabled without delay once a player is all-in and all betting action by all other players in the hand is complete. No player who is either all-in or has called all betting action may muck his hand without tabling. All hands in both the main and sidepot(s) must be tabled and are live. See Illustration Addendum.

### **16: Non All-In Showdowns**

A: In a non all-in showdown, if cards are not spontaneously tabled or discarded, the TD may enforce an order of show. The last aggressive

player on the final betting round (final street) must table first. If there was no bet on the final street, the player who would act first if it were a betting round must table first (i.e. first seat left of the button in flop games, high hand showing in stud, low hand in razz, etc.).

B: A non all-in showdown is uncontested if all but one player mucks face down without tabling. The last player with live cards wins and he is not required to show his cards.

### **17: Asking to See a Hand**

A: Players not still in possession of cards at showdown, or who have mucked their cards face down without tabling, lose any rights or privileges to ask to see any hand.

B: If there was a river bet, any caller has an inalienable right to see the last aggressor's hand on request ("the hand he paid to see") provided the caller retains or has tabled his cards. TDs discretion governs all other requests such as to see the hand of another caller, or if there was no river bet. See Illustration Addendum [adopted 2013].

### **18: Playing the Board at Showdown**

To play the board a player must table all hole cards to get part of the pot (See Rule 13-A).

### **19: Awarding Odd Chips**

First, odd chips will be broken into the smallest denomination in play. A) Board games with 2 or more high or low hands: the odd chip goes to the first seat left of the button. B) Stud, razz, and if 2 or more high or low hands in stud/8: the odd chip goes to the high card by suit in the best 5-card hand. C) H/L split: the odd chip in the total pot goes to the high side. D) If identical hands win both high and low (ex: 2 Omaha/8 wheels) the pot is split as evenly as possible. See Illustration Addendum.

### **20: Side Pots**

Each side pot will be split separately.

### **21: Disputed Pots**

The right to dispute a finished hand ends when a new hand begins (see Rule 22). If a hand finishes during a break, the right to dispute ends 1 minute after the pot is awarded.

## **General Procedures**

### **22: New Hand & New Limits**

A new level will not be announced until the clock reaches zero. The new level applies to the next hand. A hand begins on the first riffle, push of the shuffler button, or on the dealer push.

### **23: Chip Race, Scheduled Color Ups**

A: At scheduled color-ups, chips will be raced off starting in seat 1, with a maximum of one chip awarded to a player. Players can't be raced out of play: a player losing his last chip(s) in a race will get 1 chip of the lowest denomination still in play.

B: Players must have their chips fully visible and are encouraged to witness the chip race.

C: If after the race, a player still has chips of a removed denomination, they will be exchanged for current denominations only at equal value. Chips of removed denominations that do not fully total at least the smallest denomination still in play will be removed without compensation.

### **24: Cards & Chips Kept Visible, Countable, & Manageable. Discretionary Color-Ups**

A: 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 of 20 chips each as a standard. Higher denomination chips must be visible and identifiable at all times.

B: TDs control the number & denomination of chips in play and may color up at their discretion. Discretionary color ups are to be announced.

C: Players must keep live hands in plain view at all times.

### **25: 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.

### **26: Re-buys**

Players may not miss a hand. If a player declares intent to rebuy before a hand, he is playing chips behind and must make the re-buy.

### **27: Calling for a Clock**

A clock will be approved only after reasonable time passes. Any player in the event may request a clock. If the floor approves the request, a player has up to 50 seconds to act. If action is not taken before time expires, there will be a 10-second count. If the player does not act by the end of the count, the hand is dead. A tie goes to the player. TDs may reduce the time allowed to act and take other steps to fit the game format and stop persistent delays. See also Rules 2 and 65.

### **28: Rabbit Hunting**

Rabbit hunting or revealing cards that would have come if the hand had not ended is not allowed.

## **Player Present / Eligible for Hand**

### **29: At Your Seat**

A player must be at his seat when the last card is dealt on the initial deal in order to have a live hand. A player not then at his seat is dealt in, he may not look at his cards, and the hand is

immediately killed after the initial deal. His blinds and antes are posted and if dealt the stud bring-in card he posts the bring-in. A player must be at his seat to call time. "At your seat" means within reach of your chair. This rule is not intended to encourage players being out of their seats while in a hand. In stud, house rules may require additional cards be dealt to the killed hand in some situations.

### **30: At the Table with Action Pending**

Players with live hands (including players all-in or otherwise finished betting) must remain at the table until the showdown concludes. Leaving the table is incompatible with protecting your hand and following the action, and is subject to penalty.

## **Button / Blinds**

### **31: Dead Button**

Tournament play will use a dead button.

### **32: Dodging Blinds**

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

### **33: Button in Heads-up**

When heads-up, the small blind has the button, is dealt the last card, and acts first pre-flop and last on all other betting rounds. When starting heads-up play, the button may need to be adjusted to ensure no player has the big blind twice in a row.

## **Dealing Rules**

### **34: Misdeals**

A: Misdeals include but are not necessarily limited to: 1) 2 or more boxed cards on the initial deal; 2) first card dealt to the wrong seat; 3) cards dealt to a seat not entitled to a hand; 4) a seat entitled to a hand is dealt out; 5) In stud,

if any of the first 2 down cards are exposed by dealer error; 6) In flop games, if either of the first 2 cards dealt off the deck or any other 2 downcards are exposed by dealer error. House standards apply for draw games (ex: lowball).

B: Players may be dealt 2 consecutive cards on the button.

C: In a misdeal, the re-deal is an exact re-play: the button does not move, no new players are seated, and limits stay the same. Cards are dealt to players on penalty or who were not at their seats for the original deal, then their hands are killed. The original deal and re-deal count as one hand for a player on penalty, not two.

D: Once substantial action occurs a misdeal cannot be declared; the hand must proceed (See Rule 35).

### **35: Substantial Action**

Substantial Action is either A) any 2 actions in turn, at least one of which puts chips in the pot (i.e. any 2 actions except 2 checks or 2 folds) or B) any combination of 3 actions in turn (check, bet, raise, call, fold). See Rules 34-D & 40-B.

### **36: Four-Card Flops and Premature Cards**

If the flop has 4 rather than 3 cards, exposed or not, the floor will be called. The dealer then scrambles the 4 cards face down, the floor randomly selects one as the next burn card and the other 3 are the flop. For prematurely dealt cards, see Recommended Procedure 5.

## **Play: Bets & Raises**

### **37: Methods of Betting: Verbal and Chips**

A: Bets are by verbal declaration and/or pushing out chips. If a player does both, whichever is first defines the bet. If simultaneous, a clear and reasonable verbal

declaration takes precedence, otherwise the chips play.

B: Verbal declarations may be general (“call”, “raise”), a specific amount only (“one thousand”) or both (“raise, one thousand”).

C: For all betting rules, declaring a specific amount only is the same as silently pushing out an equal amount. Ex: Declaring “two hundred” is the same as silently pushing out 200 in chips.

### **38: Acting in Turn**

A: Players must act in turn verbally and/or by pushing out chips. Action in turn is binding and commits chips to the pot that stay in the pot.

B: Players must wait for clear bet amounts before acting. Ex: NLHE, A says “raise” (but no amount), and B quickly folds. B should wait to act until A’s raise amount is clear.

### **39: Binding Declarations / Undercalls in Turn**

A: General verbal declarations in turn (such as “Call” or “Raise”) commit a player to the full current action. See Illustration Addendum

B: A player undercalls by declaring or pushing out less than the call amount without first declaring “call”. An undercall is a mandatory full call if made in turn facing 1) any bet heads-up or 2) the opening bet on any round multi-way. In other situations, TD’s discretion applies. The posted BB is the opening first round bet in blind games. All-in buttons greatly reduce undercall frequency (See Recommended Procedure 1). This rule addresses when a player must make a full call and when, at TDs discretion, he may forfeit the underbet and fold.

### **40: Action Out of Turn (OOT)**

A: Any action out of turn (check, call, or raise) is subject to penalty and is binding if action to the OOT player does not change. Check, call or

fold by the rightful player does not change action. If action changes, the OOT action is not binding; any bet or raise is returned to the OOT player who has all options including: calling, raising, or folding. An OOT fold is binding.

B: A player skipped by OOT action must defend his right to act. If there is reasonable time and the skipped player does not speak up before substantial action (Rule 35) OOT occurs to his left, the OOT action is binding. The floor will rule on how to treat the skipped hand. See Illustration Addendum.

### **41: Methods of Calling**

Standard and acceptable forms of calling include: A) saying “call”; B) pushing out chips equal to a call; C) silently pushing out an overchip; or D) silently pushing out multiple chips equal to a call under the multi-chip rule (Rule 46). Silently betting chip(s) relatively tiny to the bet (ex: blinds 2k-4k. A bets 50k, B then silently puts out one 1k chip) is non-standard, strongly discouraged, subject to penalty, and will be interpreted at TDs discretion, including being ruled a full call.

### **42: Methods of Raising**

In no-limit or pot-limit, a raise must be made by A) pushing out the full amount in one motion; B) verbally declaring the full amount prior to pushing out chips; or C) verbally declaring “raise” prior to pushing out the **exact** call amount then completing the raise in one additional motion. In option C, if other than the **exact** call amount but less than a minimum raise is first put out, it will be ruled a minimum raise. It is the responsibility of players to make their intentions clear.

### **43: Raise Amounts**

A: A raise must be at least equal to the largest prior bet or raise of the current betting round. If a player raises 50% or more of the largest prior

bet but less than a minimum raise, he must make a full minimum raise. If less than 50% it is a call unless “raise” is first declared. Declaring an amount or pushing out the same amount of chips is the same (See Rule 37-C). Ex: NLHE, opening bet is 1000, verbally declaring “Fourteen hundred” or silently pushing out 1400 in chips are both calls unless raise is first declared. See Illustration Addendum.

B: Without other clarifying information, declaring raise and an amount is the total bet. Ex: A opens for 2000, B declares “Raise, eight thousand.” The total bet is 8000.

### **44: Re-Opening the Bet.**

In no-limit and pot limit, an all-in wager of less than a full raise does not reopen betting for a player who has already acted and is not facing at least a full raise when the action returns to him. In limit, at least 50% of a full raise is required to re-open betting for players who have already acted. See Addendum.

### **45: Oversized Chip Betting**

When facing a bet or blind, pushing out a single oversized chip is a call if raise isn’t first 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 the chip. When not facing a bet, pushing out an oversized chip without declaration is a bet of the maximum for the chip.

### **46: Multiple Chip Betting**

When facing a bet, unless raise is declared first, a multiple-chip bet is a call if every chip is needed to make the call; i.e. removal of just one of the smallest chips leaves less than the call amount. Ex: preflop, 200-400 blinds: 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 to call (1200). If the single removal of just one of the smallest chips leaves the call amount or more, the bet is governed by the 50% standard in Rule 43. See Addendum.

#### **47: Previous Bet Chips Not Pulled In**

A: If a player bets when facing a raise and has chips in front of him not yet pulled in from a prior bet, the “prior” chips (and any change due) may affect whether his action is ruled a call or re-raise. Because several possibilities exist, players should declare their bets before putting out new chips on top of prior-bet chips not yet pulled in.

B: If facing action, clearly pulling back prior bet chip(s) binds a player to call or raise.

#### **48: Number of Allowable Raises**

There is no cap on the number of raises in no-limit and pot-limit. In limit play there is a limit to raises even when heads-up until the event is down to 2 players; the house limit applies.

#### **49: 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 others. If a caller requests a count but receives incorrect information from a dealer or player, then pushes out that amount, the caller has accepted the full correct action & is subject to the correct wager or all-in amount. As with all situations, Rule 1 may apply at TD’s discretion.

#### **50: Pot Size & Pot-Limit Bets**

A: Players are entitled to a pot count in pot-limit only. Dealers will not count the pot in limit and no-limit.

B: Pre-flop a short all-in blind will not affect calculation of the maximum pot limit bet. Post-flop, bets are based on actual pot size.

C: Declaring “I bet the pot” is not a valid bet in no-limit but it does bind the player to making a valid bet (at least a minimum bet), and may be subject to penalty. If the player is facing a bet he must make a valid raise.

#### **51: String Bets and Raises**

Dealers will call string bets and raises.

#### **52: 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, if a declared bet can reasonably have multiple meanings, it will be ruled the lesser value. Ex: NLHE 200-400 blinds, player declares “I bet five.” If it is unclear whether “five” means 500 or 5,000, the bet is 500. See Rules 2, 3 & 42. See Illustration Addendum.

#### **53: Non-Standard Folds**

Anytime before the end of the final betting round, folding in turn if there’s no bet to you (ex: facing a check or first to act post-flop) or folding out of turn are binding folds subject to penalty.

#### **54: Conditional Statements**

Conditional statements of future action are non-standard and strongly discouraged. At TDs discretion they may be binding and/or penalized. Example: “if – then” statements such as “If you bet, I will raise.”

#### **55: Count of Opponent’s Chip Stack**

Players are entitled to a reasonable estimation of opponents’ chip stacks (Rule 24). A player may only request a more precise count if the action is on him and he faces an all-in bet. The all-in player is not required to count; on request the dealer or floor will count it. Accepted action applies (See Rule 49). The visible and countable chipstack rule (Rule 24) greatly helps accuracy in counting.

#### **56: Over-Betting Expecting Change**

Betting should not be used to obtain change. Pushing out more than the intended bet can confuse everyone at the table. All chips pushed out silently are at risk of being counted in the bet. Example: The opening bet is 325 to A and he silently puts out 525 (one 500 and one 25), expecting 200 change. This is a raise to 650 under the multiple chip rule (Rule 46).

#### **57: All-In with Chips Found Behind Later**

If A bets all-in and a hidden chip is found behind after a player has called, the TD will determine if the chip behind is part of accepted action (Rule 49). If not part of the action, A will not be paid off for the chip(s) if he wins. If A loses he is not saved by the chip(s) and the TD may award the chip(s) to the winning caller.

### **Play: Other**

#### **58: Chips Out of View and in Transit**

Players may not hold or transport chips in a way 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. The TDA recommends the house provide racks or bags to transport chips when needed.

#### **59: Lost and Found Chips**

Lost and found chips will be taken out of play and returned to tournament inventory.

#### **60: Accidentally Killed / Fouled Hands**

A player must protect his hand at all times, including at showdown while waiting for the hand to be read (Rule 13-B). If the dealer kills a hand by mistake or if in TDs judgement a hand is fouled and cannot be identified to 100% certainty, the player has no redress and is not entitled to a refund of called bets. If the player initiated a bet or raise and hasn’t been called, the uncalled amount will be returned to him. If a

hand is fouled but can be identified, it remains in play despite cards exposed in the process.

### **61: Dead Hands and Mucking in Stud**

In stud poker, if a player picks up the upcards while facing action, the hand is dead. Proper mucking in stud is turning down all up cards and pushing them all forward face down.

## **Etiquette & Penalties**

### **62: No Disclosure**

Players must protect other players in the tournament at all times. Therefore players, whether in the hand or not, must 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.

One-player-to-a-hand is in effect. Among other things, this rule prohibits showing a hand to or discussing strategy with another player, advisor, or spectator.

### **63: Exposing Cards and Proper Folding**

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. When folding, cards should be pushed forward low to the table, not deliberately exposed or tossed high ("helicoptered"). See also Rule 61.

### **64: Ethical Play**

Poker is an individual game. Soft play will result in penalties, which may include chip forfeiture and/or disqualification. Chip dumping and other forms of collusion will result in disqualification.

### **65: Etiquette Violations**

Repeat etiquette violations will result in penalties. Examples include but are not limited to: persistent delay of the game, unnecessarily touching other players' cards or chips,

repeatedly acting out of turn, betting out of reach of the dealer, abusive conduct, and excessive chatter.

### **66: Warnings, Penalties, & Disqualification**

A: Penalty options include verbal warnings, one or more "missed hands", one or more "missed rounds", and disqualification. Missed rounds are assessed as follows: the offender will miss one hand for every player (including him) at the table when the penalty is given multiplied by the number of penalty rounds. Repeat infractions are subject to escalating penalties. Players away from the table or on penalty may be anted or blinded out of a tournament.

B: A penalty may be invoked if a player exposes any card with action pending, throws a card off the table, violates one-player-to-a-hand, or similar incidents occur. Penalties will be invoked for soft play, abuse, disruptive behavior, or cheating.

C: A player on penalty must be away from the table. Cards are dealt to his seat, his blinds and antes are posted, and the hand is killed after each initial deal. In stud games if he is dealt the bring-in card he must post the bring-in.

D: Chips of a disqualified player shall be removed from play.