
OFFICIAL RULES

updated 1-1-08



The purpose of the league is to provide **entertainment** for Texas Holdem enthusiasts in an atmosphere where there is no cash wagering of any kind. FREE poker means no entry fee of ANY kind! Establishments may NOT require minimum drinks, etc to participate.

PROMOTIONAL RULES

1. ELIGIBILITY

21 & over only. However, exceptions can be made for 18+ if ALL the following conditions are met; 1) Individual league location allows players under 21 (determined by management). The establishment also has the right to refuse any person for any reason. 2) Player meets the age requirements to play in the Grand Prize Event (21 & over for most events). 3) Playoff locations allow players under 21 or will make a one-time exception. It is recommended that hosts call the league office with any questions. If a player is deemed ineligible because of age or disqualified by the league, all previous tournament results will stand, however that player will be removed from the league qualifier list and the next person will be moved ahead.

2. LEAGUE DATES

The sponsor location may establish league tournament dates which coincide with the promotion time frames. Promotion lengths vary, usually from 6 to 12 weeks. Common format is for weekly tournaments. Special schedules can be accommodated (make-up dates, double-sessions, etc.)

3. SCORING SYSTEM (POINTS BASED)

Players accumulate points by finishing in approximately the top 30% of individual tournaments, based on the number of entrants (see scoring charts). Depending on the contest/promotion, attendance points/bonus may be awarded to encourage participation. The tournament host must keep a record of the results of each tournament and report the scores directly to the website or league office. Players do not combine points from multiple locations as each location is a separate league.

4. PLAYOFFS & CHAMPIONSHIP

Each league will advance their highest ranking players (usually top 20%) to regional playoffs. The number (# of players) used to determine the top 20% is based on average attendance. Scoring calculation details available upon request. Players may compete at multiple league locations but may only qualify from one location. See #8. Players/hosts who are caught tampering with points or standings are subject to disqualification or other penalties. League office has final say on all issues.

5. TOURNAMENT HOST

The tournament host oversees the setup of the tables/chairs, starting chip stacks, player registrations, chip management, moving players & breaking down tables, and reporting the results to the website. The tournament host also serves as "tournament director" and will settle any disputes that arise during tournament play (see "Tournament Rules").

6. PLAYER REGISTRATION

Players must sign-in for each event with the tournament host and must draw for a random seat assignment. New players will be required to submit full name and email address. Substitutes are not allowed, each person can only play for themselves. Playoff events are reserved for qualifiers only.

7. LATE/RESERVE PLAYERS

No late or reserve players will be allowed after the first break (chip-up). NOTE: Individual locations may vary their late player policy. Players should confirm with the bar they are interested in playing at in regards to their policy. Allowing late players is completely optional and up to the tournament host. Any abuse by player's or host's should be reported to the league office. We recommend bars allow late players to encourage participation. The easiest way to deal with late players is to simply establish a time limit and seat late players with a full starting stack at an open seat (this is acceptable). The preferred method is to post dead stacks and blind them off.

Reserve players are used in the case where the tournament is full/no seating available. In this case you simply seat your player/s with a full stack as seats become available (now becoming common in large tournaments such as the WSOP).

8. PLAYERS WHO PLAY AT MULTIPLE LOCATIONS/DOUBLE QUALIFIERS

Players may participate at multiple locations. Qualifying rules for "Double Qualifiers" can vary from promotion to promotion and can always be found on our website and on the forum.

TOURNAMENT RULES

1. NO SIDE BETS

All players are prohibited from placing any form of currency on the table. There will be NO EXCEPTIONS to this rule and violators will be asked to leave immediately. Anyone found to be placing side bets will be banned from the league indefinitely. Any bar allowing such activity will be removed from the league.

2. PROBLEM RESOLUTION

The tournament host's decision is final on all disputes during tournament play. Tournament hosts are to consider the best interest of the game and fairness as the top priority in the decision-making process. Unusual circumstances can on occasion dictate that decisions in the interest of fairness take priority over the technical rules. Please email or call the league to report problems. **Please understand that the host's decision is final once the next hand is played, even if that decision is technically incorrect.**

3. TOURNAMENT STRUCTURE

Regular season tournaments:

Starting stack is 2,000 chips with 20 minute blind levels. Chip values are as follows:

(8) 25 chips, (8) 100 chips, (2) 500 chips – (Recommended)

Championship tournament structure: 10,000 chips, 1/2 hour levels, and an expanded blind schedule.

Blind schedule – see website or host binder for complete table.

25/25, 25/50, 50/100, 75/150, Break (chip-up 25's), 100/200, 200/400, 300/600, 400/800, Break (chip-up 100's), 500/1000, 1000/2000, 2000/4000, 3000/6000, 4000/8000, 5000/10000, 6000/12000

Please note: in some rare cases, the tournament host may revise the structure in order to meet the needs of the bar, otherwise the blind structure should not be changed.

Depending on the number of players starting the tournament, it is not necessary to increase the blinds when the amount of the blinds reaches 10% of the total chips in play. This results in better final table play.

Chip Up – During the breaks, unnecessary small chips will be chipped up. For example, at the end of Level IV, 25's are no longer needed. 25's are rounded up to the nearest 100.

When time has elapsed in a round and a new level is announced by the tournament host, the new level applies to the next hand. A hand begins with the first riffle (shuffle).

4. DEALING PROCEDURE

A. DEALER BUTTON. To begin play at the start of the tournament, players will "high card" for the dealer button. This means the player who draws the highest card will start with the button. (The button determines who gets the first card, etc., and also determines the position of the "blinds".) In case two players get the same card, suit preference is **spades-hearts-diamonds-clubs** (spades being highest).

B. BLINDS. The person immediately to the left of the button will post the SMALL BLIND. The person immediately left of the small blind will post the BIG BLIND. See blind schedule. League will use the "Dead Button" rule if a player is knocked out in the blinds (see dead button rule diagram on website or host binder). "Straddles" are not allowed.

C. SHUFFLE. Players take turns dealing. The deck should be shuffled 3-5 times and passed to the right for a "legal cut" (must cut at least 2 cards, cannot "tap" deck). The tournament host may allow a designated dealer on each table on larger tables. Please do not overshuffle. A two-deck system (different design) is permissible.

D. THE DEAL. Starting with the small blind position, each player is dealt two cards, one at a time. Once betting action (see BETTING PROCEDURE) is over (pot is "right"), the dealer will then "burn" the top card on the deck, and turn up three consecutive cards ("Flop"). 2nd Betting Round. The dealer burns the next card before placing the 4th card ("Turn" or "4th Street"). 3rd Betting Round. The dealer burns the next card before placing the 5th card ("River" or "5th Street"). 4th & Final Betting Round.

E. HEADS UP. When only two players remain in the tournament, the player due to assume the Big Blind will do so, and the Small Blind will get the button. The Small Blind/Button will act first prior to the flop and last after the flop.

F. COMMON ERRORS

	Problem	Solution
1	Dealer reveals burn card.	Revealed card is shown to all players. Dealer then reveals the appropriate card.
2	Player (A) shows hand before player/s (B and/or C) has opportunity to act.	Player (A) must play the rest of the hand with his/her cards exposed but can still win the pot and place bets.
3	Player acts (bets, calls, raises, re-raises, folds) out of turn.	Player must wait until his/her turn. Action out of turn will be binding if action to that player has not changed. Checking, calling, and folding is not considered action changing.
4	Player shows hand, but fails to state his/her intention (call, fold) when it is his action at showdown.	Player's hand must be considered folded (mucked). Example: player A goes all-in, player B shows hand without stating their intention to call or fold.
5	Dealer reveals "turn" or "river" card before action is complete.	Exposed card is put back in deck (burn card would remain on table), action is completed, deck is reshuffled, cut and appropriate card is shown (no burn).
6	Card is dealt face-up or exposed.	If exposed/face-up card is one of first 2 cards out of the deck, then it is a misdeal. Otherwise, continue dealing and give player with exposed card the burn card. Two exposed cards is a misdeal.
7	Player is dealt 3 or more cards	If player has yet to act in the hand, then it is a misdeal. If player has already acted, then discover the error, their hand is dead.

5. BETTING PROCEDURE

In No-Limit Texas Holdem a player may bet any amount of his chip stack during the course of play.

Before the flop: The player to the immediate left of the Big Blind is first to act (call, raise, or fold). The minimum raise would be the amount of the big blind. **However, a re-raise must be at least equal to the previous raise.** Example – Blinds are 50/100, raise to 200, re-raise to 300 is OK.

After the flop: The player to the left of the dealer button is first to act for remaining betting rounds. The **minimum bet** is the amount of the **big blind**. Any raise or re-raise must be at least equal to the previous action (bet or raise).

At the end of last round of betting, the player who made the last aggressive action in that betting round must show first. If there was no bet, the player to the left of the button shows first and so on clockwise. Remaining players form the best 5-card poker hand with the best hand winning the pot. Players must show both cards in order to have a valid hand and win the pot (unless there were no callers). CARDS READ THEMSELVES. If there is a "split pot" with 1 extra chip remaining, that chip is awarded to the remaining player closest to the left of the dealer button. Verbal declarations as to the content of a player's hand are not binding; however, any player deliberately miscalling his or her hand may be penalized.

A single oversized chip will be considered a call if the player does not announce a raise. If a player puts an oversized chip into the pot and states raise but does not state the amount, the raise will be the maximum allowable up to the size of that chip. After the flop, an initial bet of a single oversized chip without comment will constitute the size of the bet. To make a raise with a single oversized chip a verbal declaration must be made before the chip hits the table surface.

If a player puts in a raise of 50% or more of the previous bet but less than the minimum raise, he or she will be required to make a full raise. The raise will be exactly the minimum raise allowed. An all-in bet of less than a full raise does not reopen the betting to a player who has already acted.

If a player folds their hand, the cards must be placed in the muck pile and remain there. Players are not allowed to fish through the mucked cards. Cards thrown into the muck may be ruled dead. However, a hand that is clearly identifiable may be retrieved at the tournament host's discretion if doing so is in the best interest of the game.

6. ALL IN / SIDE POTS

If a player lacks sufficient chips for a blind or a forced bet, the player is entitled to get action on whatever amount of chips he has remaining. In this situation, a "side pot" could occur for players with remaining chips. The "All-in" player is only entitled to win the amount he has remaining from each player (even if one/both blinds are more than his all-in, the extra would be put in the "side pot").

Whenever a player is ALL-IN and all betting action is complete, all hands in play will be turned face up. When a player loses all his/her chips, they are eliminated from play and must LEAVE the table. **IN CASE OF A TIE:** In the case where multiple players bust out on the same hand, the player with the most chips going into the hand will finish higher. In the RARE case that both players had the same amount of chips going into the hand, then the best poker hand will be the tiebreaker. In the EXTREMELY RARE case that both players had the same hand, the highest card in each player's hand would be used (suit preference as final tiebreaker).

7. COMBINING TABLES/RESEATING

As the tournament progresses, players will be eliminated. To keep tables balanced with the same number of players, the tournament host will be required to reseal players. For example, you have 3 full tables (10 people), but one table has only 6 players. You should move 1 person from each of the full tables to balance each table with 9 players. Continue to move players as needed while players are eliminated. Players should be moved to the "short table" according to position from the dealer button.

New players (resealed/broken table) are dealt in immediately unless they sit down in the small blind or button position. In these

two cases they must wait until the button passes. If a new player is seated in the Big Blind position, the player must post the Big Blind and will be dealt in the hand, regardless of their previous position on their former table.

If a table is reseated and 50% or more of the players are new to the table, then seats should re-drawn and a "high card" for the button immediately prior to resuming the session. The official time for the blind level should be paused during down time.

8. ENDING THE TOURNAMENT EARLY

Each tournament will simply continue until one player wins all the chips. In the unlikely event there is not enough time to finish the tournament, an end time will be announced at least 10 minutes in advance and the person with the most chips will receive 1st place. All remaining players will place according to their amount of chips. Any ties will high card for higher finish, IN THIS CASE ONLY.

9. MISC RULES OF PLAY/POKER ETIQUETTE

Player's cards & chips must remain on/above the table at all times, unless you are reassigned to another table. When moving to a new table, keep chips in plain view (not in pockets, etc.) Players must keep their higher denomination chips visible at all times.

One player per hand. You may NOT ask advice as to how to act during the action period. If you SHOW your cards to an ACTIVE player at the table, you must show all players immediately (Show one-show all). If you show your cards to a player that has already folded, you will be required to show your cards once the hand is completed. Any player at the table may request to see a hand that has been called (even if checked on river), even if the hand has been mucked. However, this is a privilege that may be revoked if abused. If the winning player asks to see a losing player's hand, both hands are live, and the best hand wins.

No "splashing" the pot. Players are to place their chips in front of themselves so everyone knows exactly how much they are betting.

No "string bets". A player must state their intentions (call, check or raise) before placing chips in front of them. Stating "Call and Raise" is considered a string bet. Remember, verbal action is always binding!

Please act in a timely fashion as the blind levels are only 20 minutes. Any player at the table can call for "time" on a player once a reasonable amount of time has passed. The tournament host would then give 30 seconds to act. If action has not been taken before time expires, there will be a 10-second countdown. If a player has not acted by the time the countdown is over, the player's hand will be dead.

No "Table Talk" about a hand still in play. Players/dealers should NOT talk about their hand (even if folded) if others are still playing. AFTER the hand is played out, let the moaning & groaning begin. 😊

10. CONDUCT/WARNINGS/PENALTIES

Players are expected to conduct themselves with POKER ETIQUETTE. Inappropriate behavior like throwing cards that go off the table or violating any league rule repeatedly may be penalized by the tournament host. Penalties will range from verbal warnings to "missed time" penalties. A severe infraction such as abusive or disruptive behavior or "chip dumping" may be punished by eviction from the tournament and possibly the league.

11. LEAVING EARLY/ABSENT PLAYERS

Absent players are always dealt in, if a player is not present for the hand when it is their turn to act, their hand is folded, even if they are in the big blind and there is not a raise.

#1) Players must be physically present to take their seat and play at least one hand to be eligible for participation points. The league may disqualify players for participation points if it is clear they have no intention of playing (for example: checking in, then IMMEDIATELY leaving). Also, playing "all-in" for the sole purpose of busting out to leave early will be considered BAD ETIQUETTE.

#2) Players may NOT post & fold for a period of MORE than (2) full blind levels (in addition to the current level). If a player leaves the tournament and does not return within this time frame, their chips shall be removed and their position in the tournament forfeited. See #3 & #4

#3) Any player who must withdraw from the tournament early should DECLARE they are leaving (alert the host to withdraw his/her chips). Participation points are still awarded.

#4) In the interests of our sponsors, players will NOT be rewarded if they withdraw from the tournament early. Exception: any player who withdraws from a tournament AFTER they have made it to the points round will be rewarded the place/rank they withdraw at. **Posting & folding (leaving temporarily), and permanently leaving (withdrawing from) a tournament are two separate actions. Players must declare their INTENTION if they are posting & folding because if they do not return they will sacrifice their points EVEN IF they have made it to the points round!**

12. SMOKING POLICY

At championship events, there will be no smoking allowed at the tables. Weekly and regional tournament smoking policies may be determined by the sponsoring bar.

League office phone - 701-293-9400, Email - info@freepokernetwork.com, Fax - 701-293-9408