

**Rules**

1. Player makes an ante wager plus an optional $1 progressive side bet
2. Each player and the dealer get five cards each. All cards are dealt face down, except one dealer card is exposed. The player may examine his own cards but sharing of information is not allowed.
3. Player must fold or raise.
4. If player folds he forfeits his cards, ante bet, and side bet (if made)
5. If player raises then he must make a raise wager exactly equal to twice the ante
6. The dealer will turn over his other four cards
7. The dealer must have an ace and a king or higher to qualify. In other words, the lowest qualifying hand would be ace, king, 4, 3, 2 and the highest non-qualifying hand would be ace, queen, jack, 10, 9. If the dealer does not qualify the player will win even money on his ante wager and the raise will push.
8. If the dealer qualifies and beats the player, both ante and raise will lose.
9. If the dealer qualifies and loses to the player, then the ante will pay even money and the raise according to the posted pay table. The U.S. pay table is shown below.
10. If the player and dealer tie, both ante and raise will push.
11. The progressive side bet will be entirely based on the poker value of the player's hand. Various pay tables are available.

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| **U.S. Raise Pay Table** |
| **Hand** | **Pays** |
| Royal flush | 100 to 1 |
| Straight flush | 50 to 1 |
| Four of a kind | 20 to 1 |
| Full house | 7 to 1 |
| Flush | 5 to 1 |
| Straight | 4 to 1 |
| Three of a kind | 3 to 1 |
| Two pair | 2 to 1 |
| All other | 1 to 1 |

**House Edge**

The following table shows all the possible outcomes, assuming the U.S. pay table is used and the player follows optimal strategy.

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| **U.S. Rules Return Table** |
| **Event** | **Pays** | **Units Won** | **Combinations** | **Probability** | **Return** |
| Player wins with royal flush | 100 to 1 | 201 | 16759740 | 0.000001 | 0.000169 |
| Player wins with straight flush | 50 to 1 | 101 | 156929720 | 0.000008 | 0.000795 |
| Player wins with four of a kind | 20 to 1 | 41 | 2832435800 | 0.000142 | 0.005826 |
| Player wins with full house | 7 to 1 | 15 | 16624475280 | 0.000834 | 0.01251 |
| Player wins with flush | 5 to 1 | 11 | 21856990280 | 0.001097 | 0.012062 |
| Player wins with straight | 4 to 1 | 9 | 43805516100 | 0.002198 | 0.019779 |
| Player wins with three of a kind | 3 to 1 | 7 | 234242908320 | 0.011751 | 0.08226 |
| Player wins with two pair | 2 to 1 | 5 | 488012139360 | 0.024482 | 0.122412 |
| Player wins with pair or less | 1 to 1 | 3 | 2343248003808 | 0.117555 | 0.352665 |
| Dealer doesn't qualify |  | 1 | 4532514033720 | 0.227385 | 0.227385 |
| Push |  | 0 | 321623100 | 0.000016 | 0 |
| Fold |  | -1 | 9523005974460 | 0.477745 | -0.477745 |
| Dealer wins |  | -3 | 2726592727512 | 0.136786 | -0.410359 |
| Total |  |  | 19933230517200 | 1 | -0.052243 |

The lower right cell in the above table shows a [**house edge**](http://wizardofodds.com/gambling/glossary/#house_edge) of **5.224%**. However, I think this makes Caribbean Stud look like a worse bet than it really is. The house edge is traditionally defined as the expected loss to the original wager. In Caribbean Stud Poker the optimal strategy player will raise 52.23% of the time, for an average total wager of 2.045 units. For comparing one game against another I prefer to use the [**element of risk**](http://wizardofodds.com/gambling/glossary/#element_of_risk), which is the expected loss to the average wager, which in this case would be 5.224%/2.045 = 2.555%.

**Strategy**

Optimal strategy in Caribbean Stud is very complicated. The number of people who know it perfectly is probably zero. However, we can make two generalizations that cover most hands.

1. Always raise with a pair or higher.
2. Always fold with less than the dealer's qualifying hand (ace/king)

It is the ace/king hands that are tricky. In general it helps if the three singletons are high or the dealer's up card is jack or less and matches one of the player's cards (making is less likely the dealer will form a pair). I personally developed the following strategy, which results in a house edge of 5.225%, just 0.001% less than optimal. If that isn't enough for you I do have the [**Caribbean Stud optimal strategy**](http://wizardofodds.com/games/caribbean-stud-poker/optimal-strategy/).

**Caribbean Stud Poker Strategy**

Always raise with a pair or higher, fold with less than ace/king, and raise on ace/king if any of the following three rules apply.

1. Raise if the dealer's card is a 2 through queen and matches one of yours.
2. Raise if the dealer's card is an ace or king and you have a queen or jack in your hand.
3. Raise if the dealer's rank does not match any of yours and you have a queen in your hand and the dealer's card is less than your fourth highest card.

Following are details on various strategies. The "total loss" is the loss over all possible 19,933,230,517,200 combinations of hands, the [**house edge**](http://wizardofodds.com/gambling/glossary/#house_edge), and the [**element of risk**](http://wizardofodds.com/gambling/glossary/#element_of_risk).

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| **U.S. Raise Pay Table** |
| **Strategy** | **Total loss** | **House edge** | **Element of risk** |
| Perfect strategy | 1,041,372,912,372 | 5.224% | 2.555% |
| Wizard's Strategy | 1,041,417,758,724 | 5.225% | 2.554% |
| Raise on ace/king/jack/8/3 or higher | 1,059,715,400,580 | 5.316% | 2.596% |
| Raise if dealer's up card matches the rank of any player card | 1,063,176,931,284 | 5.334% | 2.616% |
| Raise on any pair or better | 1,090,272,101,460 | 5.470% | 2.738% |
| Raise on any ace/king or better | 1,132,600,203,540 | 5.682% | 2.672% |
| Playing blind (raise on everything) | 3,310,360,338,060 | 16.607% | 5.536% |

**Alternate Rules**

**Progressive Jackpot Side Bet**

In Caribbean Stud Poker the player has the choice to make a side bet of $1 which pays for hands of a flush or better.The specific payoff tables vary from place to place but always feature a progressive jackpot, paying 100% of the jackpot meter for a royal flush and 10% for a straight flush. In the very unlikely event that two players had a royal flush in the same hand the first one to the dealer's right would win the jackpot and the second would win whatever the jackpot is reseeded to, usually $10,000. The reason for this is the dealer pays players from right to left. In the event that two players received a straight flush at the same time, the first one to the dealer's right would get 10% of the meter and the second would get 10% of what was left after the first player was paid. I have heard (but can not confirm) that once in the same hand one player got a royal flush and another player got a straight flush. The player with the royal was closer to the dealer's right and thus got the full jackpot amount. The meter was then reseeded to $10,000 and the player with the straight flush got only 10% or that, or $1,000.

While the expected return varies depending on the size of the jackpot, it is a sucker bet the vast majority of time. The average house edge is 26.46%.

Here is how the jackpot meter works. For every dollar bet, 71 cents goes into the jackpot and the casino keeps the other 29 cents. A dealer at one of the Connecticut casinos said the contribution rate at his casino was only 65%. This rate of contribution can vary from place to place. All payoffs are paid right out of the meter. Every time somebody hits a royal flush the house contributes $10,000 (called the seed) to the next jackpot. The house edge is just under the cut per bet because the casino puts up the initial seed to start a new jackpot after somebody wins the previous one. At the Casinos, the house can expect to receive 18.84times as much money from the 29% cut as it pays to seed new jackpots.

The next two tables show 11 side bet pay tables I have seen or heard about. The pay table number and pay table itself are listed in the top rows. The third row from the bottom is how much the flat wins contribute to the return. The second row from the bottom is how much the progressive wins contribute to the return for each $10,000 in the meter. The bottom row is the break even point, or how high the meter would need to reach for the return to be 100%.

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| **Side Bet Pay Tables 1 to 5** |
| **Hand** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| Table | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Royal flush | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| Straight flush | 10% | 10% | 10% | 10% | 10% |
| Four of a kind  | $100 | $150 | $500 | $500 | $500 |
| Full house | $75 | $100 | $100 | $150 | $75 |
| Flush | $50 | $50 | $50 | $75 | $50 |
| Straight  | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 |
| Three of a kind | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 |
| Flat wins | 0.230323 | 0.278345 | 0.36238 | 0.483546 | 0.326369 |
| Return per 10K in meter | 0.029242 | 0.029242 | 0.029242 | 0.029242 | 0.029242 |
| Breakeven meter | $263205.26 | $246783.16 | $218045.79 | $176611.05 | $230360.53 |

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| **Side Bet Pay Tables 6 to 10** |
| **Hand** | **6** | **7** | **8** | **9** | **10** |
| Table | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Royal flush | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| Straight flush | 10% | 10% | 10% | $5000 | $20000 |
| Four of a kind  | $500 | $500 | $500 | $500 | $500 |
| Full house | $100 | $150 | $150 | $100 | $100 |
| Flush | $75 | $100 | $100 | $50 | $50 |
| Straight  | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 |
| Three of a kind | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 |
| Flat wins | 0.41152 | 0.532685 | 0.532687 | 0.431648 | 0.639425 |
| Return per 10K in meter | 0.029242 | 0.029242 | 0.029242 | 0.015391 | 0.015391 |
| Breakeven meter | $201241.58 | $159806.84 | $159806.32 | $369281 | $234280 |

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| **Side Bet Pay Tables 11 to 16** |
| **Hand** | **11** | **12** | **13** | **14** | **15** | **16** |
| Royal flush | 100% | 100% | 100% | $5000 | 100% | 100% |
| Straight flush | 10% | 10% | 10% | $1000 | $4000 | 10% |
| Four of a kind  | 1% | 5% | $250 | $500 | $400 | $600 |
| Full house | $150 | $150 | $150 | $100 | $80 | $100 |
| Flush | $75 | $75 | $100 | $75 | $40 | $60 |
| Straight  | $50 | $50 | $0 | $30 | $0 | $40 |
| Three of a kind | $0 | $0 | $0 | $7 | $0 | $0 |
| Flat wins | 0.559724 | 0.559724 | 0.472651 | 0.543123 | 0.345307 | 0.563025 |
| Return per 10K in meter | 0.053252 | 0.14929 | 0.029242 |  | 0.015391 | 0.029242 |
| Breakeven meter | $82677.75 | $29491.24 | $180336.84 |  | $425380 | $149431.58 |

**Casino Canberra**: I have heard the [**CanberraCasino**](http://www.casinocanberra.com.au/) follows pay table 7 but also pays $50 for a "deadman's hand" consisting of AA88x, where x is any other card. For the side bet to have no house edge in this game the meter would need to reach $149,389.47. For a $5 minimum game to have no house edge the meter would need to reach$238,716.85, and for a $10 game the meter would need to be $328,044.23.

**Player Collusion**

I've been asked lots of times if an advantage can be gained by sharing information with other players. Although the rules forbid this in the land of casinos, there are multi-player Internet casinos where this could be done very easily by phone. However, don't get your hopes up. According to the paper "An Analysis of Caribbean Stud Poker" by Peter Griffin and John M. Gwynn Jr. , in the perfect situation of having 7 colluding players it would be possible to narrow down the dealer's unseen cards to just 16 possible cards. Using a computer to analyze all 1,820 possible 4-card sets out of 16, the player would have an advantage of 2.3%. In a six player game the house would still have an edge of 0.4%. An article on this topic by Scott McIntosh at [Review Poker Rooms](http://www.reviewpokerrooms.com/articles/casino/caribbean-stud-collusion.html) also explores this topic and comes to similar conclusions.

Stealing a look at other player's cards can cutdown the house edge marginally. If you have a borderline ace/king hand it would help to see if the other player's cards match the dealer's up card. The more that match, the more inclined you should be to raise. While the Internet would be a perfect forum to share information in a multi-player table, the most number of seats I have ever seen is three.

**Player May Call**

If the player makes a bet for the dealer, in most casinos the player may call the tip as long as the player raises his own bet. This is good strategy if the player raises with a marginal hand. Following is the strategy for how to play the dealer's tip.

* With a pair of fives or less always call (unless you fold yourself).
* With a pair of sixes - call, except if all three singletons are sevens or higher.
* With a pair of sevens - raise, except if all three singletons are six or less.
* With a pair of eights or higher, always raise.

If the player were to play both hands according to the tipping strategy then the tip would have an advantage of about 50%! This is a possible idea for player/dealer collusion.