

**HOW TO PLAY BLACKJACK**

Some players call the game blackjack and some call it twenty-one. No matter what you call it, the object of the game is **Beat the Dealer**!

Blackjack is played with one, two, four, six or eight decks of cards. Some casino are also using continuous shuffling machine. In single and double deck games the dealer holds the cards and deals them out. In multi-deck games the cards are dealt out of a tray like box that is called a shoe. The casinos are starting to look at continuous shufflers that are a shoe that shuffle as well as hold the cards.

In hand held games the cards are dealt face down and the player is allowed to pick up his cards. In a shoe game the cards are dealt face up to the player and you are not allowed to touch your cards. The basic play for either game is the same.

**Objective**   
The objective of the game is to beat the dealer. If your cards total higher than the dealer's cards without going over 21 you win. You are not trying to get close to 21. If your hand or the dealer's hand goes over 21 you "Bust." If you bust you automatically lose. If the dealer busts and you do not, you win. The player must act first. If the player busts he loses regardless if the dealer busts or not.

**Card Values**   
The suits of the cards have no affect on the game. Cards 2 - 10 are counted at face value without regards to their suit. All face cards have a value of ten. An ace can count as either one or eleven. A queen and a five would equal 15. An ace and a five would total either 6 or 16. A hand that does not have an ace is referred to as a HARD HAND because it has only one value. A hand that contains an ace is referred to as a [SOFT](http://casinogambling.about.com/library/howto/htsoft.htm) HAND because the value can change. If you draw to a soft hand and the three cards total a number where counting an ace as eleven puts you over 21 then the hand becomes a hard hand. Example: You are dealt an ace and a three. You have 4 or 14. If you then draw a ten you now have a hard 14 because if you count the ace as 11 you would have 24, which would bust you.

**Blackjack Table**   
Blackjack is dealt on a special table that is shaped as a semi-circle. There is a separate circle or square for each player. When you sit down you must buy chips from the dealer or bring them from another table. The player puts his bet in the betting circle if front of his space. Only chips put in the betting circle count as your bet. After all bets are made the play begins.

For this example we will assume you are playing a multi-deck game and the cards are being dealt from a shoe. Each player is dealt two cards face up. The dealer receives one card face up and one card face down known as the hole card. After the cards are dealt the dealer will ask each player in turn to make their decision. The player to the left of the dealer acts first. This position is known as first base. The position of the last person to act is called third base. You will make your decision about how to play your hand based on the dealer's up card and the two cards that you were dealt. A rule of thumb for the beginner is to assume the dealer has a ten in the hole. (This is not always the case but it makes it easier to base your decision on this premise.) You will use a hand signal to make your decisions known. This keeps the game moving and it also helps insure there are no verbal misunderstandings while letting the eye in the sky keep track of the play. Remember that in a game dealt from a shoe you are not allowed to touch the cards.

**Blackjack**   
If you or the dealer is dealt an Ace and a ten-value card you have 21 known as a blackjack. This is a natural. If you get the blackjack you will be paid 3 to 2 for your bet providing the dealer does not get one at the same time. If you and the dealer have blackjack it is a push. If only the dealer has blackjack all players will lose.

**Hitting**   
To take a hit means that you want to draw another card. To signal the dealer for a hit you will tap the table in front of you or make a beckoning motion with your hand. If you wish another card after the first you would motion in the same manner.

**Standing**   
Once you are satisfied with either your fist two cards or after hitting, you signal the dealer that you wish to stand. This is done by waving your hand over the top of your cards.

**Doubling Down.**   
When you [double down](http://casinogambling.about.com/od/blackjack/a/bjdouble.htm) you are allowed to double your bet after receiving your first two cards. You then receive one card only on your hand. Most casinos will allow you to double down on any two cards (DOA). Some casinos limit your doubling to hands that total ten or eleven. DOA is a favorable rule to the player. To signal that you are doubling down you will place an additional bet next to your original bet. Most casinos will let you double down for less than your original bet providing it meets the table minimum. This is foolish. You only double in favorable situations and it is to your advantage to double for the maximum.

**Splitting**   
If you are dealt a pair (two cards of the same rank) you can split these into two separate hands. You must make an additional bet equal to your starting bet. You signal the dealer that you are splitting by placing your second bet next to your first bet in the betting circle. Do not put this bet on top of the original bet. Do not separate the cards. The dealer will do this for you. You will now play each hand one at a time. The dealer will give you a second card to go with the first split card. You will then decide to hit or stand. After you play out this hand and stand you will move on to the next split card and the process will be repeated. Some casinos will allow you to double down on your first two cards after splitting. You would play this as you would if you were doubling down on your first two cards. This rule is favorable to the player.

**Insurance**   
If the dealer's up card is an ace the dealer will offer insurance. You are not really insuring a hand. This is a side bet you make wagering half your original bet that the dealer has a ten in the hole. If you make the bet and he has the ten you are paid 2 to 1. You would then lose your original bet but win the insurance bet, which works out to being a push of your original bet. If you have a blackjack and the dealer has an ace you will be asked if you would like even money for your blackjack instead of 3 to 2. If do not take the even money you will have a push if the dealer has a blackjack. Both the insurance and the even money bet are sucker bets. The dealers will NOT have a ten more times than they will have one.

**Surrender**   
Some casinos will allow you to surrender your hand and give up half your bet on your first two cards after the dealer checks for a blackjack. This is known as late surrender. This option is not offered in many casinos. It is to the player's advantage when played correctly. Unfortunately when it is offered many players surrender more hands than they should thus giving up the advantage gained by this option.

As you see on the preceding page, there are many decisions that you must make when playing blackjack. If you play your hand properly you can reduce the house edge to less than one percent. To do this you must learn [Basic Strategy,](http://casinogambling.about.com/od/blackjack/a/bjbasic.htm) which is a mathematically proven method to determine when to hit and stand.

**A Simple Strategy:**   
Here is a simple strategy to get you started.

If your first cards total 12-16 you have a "Stiff" hand. (one than can be busted with a hit.)   
If the dealer's up card is a 2 - 6, it is a "Stiff" hand for the dealer.   
If you have 17 or better it is a Pat hand and you stand.   
If the dealer shows a 7 -Ace, you consider it a pat hand.

If you have a stiff and the dealer has a stiff you **STAND.**   
If you have a stiff and the dealer has a pat hand you **HIT**

Although this simple strategy will get you by for fist time you play the game, you really should make the effort to learn basic strategy. If you don’t want to memorize it you can bring a basic strategy chart to the casino with you. Most casinos will let you use them at the table if you don’t slow down the game.

Blackjack can be the best game in the casino with the lowest house edge if you play properly, however if you play by hunch it can be one of the worst games to play.