



INSTRUCTIONS

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- Or you can change pages by using the left and right arrows on your PDF viewer's toolbar or the page navigation window.
- Wherever you see Ladbrokes mentioned, clicking on the name will transport you to Ladbrokes' website.
- Feel free to print out and keep our *Pocket Guide to Poker* or to pass on to your friends.

OMAHA

- 02 Treat Omaha like Hold'em and you'll perish. We arm you with the basics
- 05 Sound strategies are the key to surviving Omaha's furious action

OMAHA

Is Omaha Hold'em's ugly cousin? Big brother, more like



JAIMIE MCGOVERN

Many people see Omaha as the over-complicated ugly cousin of Hold'em, but we like to think of it as its older sibling. Whereas Hold'em players are used to seeing low ranking hands such as top pair winning the vast majority of Hold'em hands, Omaha is a game chock-a-block with straights, flushes, full houses, and more quads than an outdoor biking

adventure day. The possibilities within your four starting cards are enormous. It makes for a fun and exciting game and leads to killer showdowns between monster hands.

Don't let the fact that it's more a maths-led game than Hold'em put you off. If you're sick of Hold'em fish sucking out miracle cards against you on the river, Omaha is the game for you. Grey Raymer

ABOVE
Twice as
many cards
doesn't mean
twice as easy

– former World Series of Poker Champion – wouldn't be found dead playing any game online but Omaha, and there's a reason. Tune into TV coverage of big Omaha contests and you'll see familiar faces such as Daniel Negreanu and Phil Ivey fighting it out over the felt.

Read the next few pages for everything you need to get started at the pros' favourite game.

OMAHA: game of the champs



JAMIE MCGOVERN

For many pros Omaha is *the* poker game but it happens to be deceptively complicated – and Hold'em nuts expecting to clean up will perish

For a game that many Hold'em players see as complicated, Omaha takes literally seconds to explain. Each player gets dealt four cards, of which – in conjunction with three of the five cards on the board – they use two to make the best five-card poker hand. There. It's that simple. So, once again: two from your hand, and three from the board. Easy.

As in Hold'em, there are blinds in effect (and also antes in late-tournament stages), as well as betting rounds pre-flop, post-flop, turn and river. You'll tend to see more multi-player

pots in Omaha simply because the volume of cards in play lends itself to more drawing hands – often leading to some monster pots in relatively low-limit games.

Tasty starters

Many people suggest that in Omaha you 'see every flop and get lucky!' The science behind Omaha isn't quite that simple, but to a certain degree, no

To a certain degree, no starting hand is a big favourite over another

Omaha starting hand is a big favourite over another. Even if you were heads-up with the very best starting hand (Ah-As-Kh-Ks) you are still only 60-65% favourite against a random four-card hand. What you're really looking for are cards with lots of options that all work well together. You want to see suited, connected, paired hands, with no 'hangers' or 'danglers' [see 'Beware the dangler']. If you go to a flop knowing that your pair could turn into trips or a full house, or that your straight might complete, or that your suited cards could come into play for

the flush, well... then you're not far off playing good, solid Omaha.

If you treat your Omaha hand like a Hold'em hand, you will almost certainly be beaten. Many Hold'em players will look at an Omaha hand of Ah-As-6d-2d and start jumping up and down. But up against a seasoned Omaha player holding four multi-faceted cards, anything other than the perfect flop will see the pocket rockets zooming down the pan.

Don't forget that only two of your hole cards will be in play, so getting dealt quad Aces means that you'll only be able to contribute a pair of Aces to the five-card hand. You won't be involved in any straights or flushes, can't improve to trips, and can only hope beyond hope to get a full house.

If you are a regular Texas Hold'em player, the best thing you can do is to approach Omaha as an entirely different game. Sit on the play tables; enter a few freerolls; just simply sit and watch some top-level players.

Because Omaha doesn't get as much air time on our TVs as Hold'em, there aren't as many opportunities to soak up knowledge of this fascinating game, so be prepared to spend a bit of time researching before you donate your chips to the



Hands with flush and straight potential can win big

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seasoned players. Similarly, don't be scared to get involved at a level as low as you like.

Post-flop confusion

Easily one of the most bewildering aspects of Omaha to newcomers is recognising what you have post-flop or post-turn. As well as being able to make out what you hold, you also need to accurately identify what hands you might be drawing to. This is where

most new players struggle; finding it hard to quickly see the two 'live' cards from their hand and the three 'live' cards on the board. You also need to identify the currently 'inactive' cards in your hand, and realise how these could ultimately come into play as the texture of the board changes. Jump on the play tables to improve your recognition skills for free. It'll be second-nature before you know it. ■

BEWARE THE DANGLER

Just one poor card in Omaha can be a killer blow

■ Just as the weak kicker plagues Hold'em hands, 'The Dangler' is the scourge of the Omaha world. Hands such as 10h-10s-Js-3d or Jd-10h-9d-2s are classic examples of near-quality hands being ruined by a dangler. The definition of a good Omaha starting hand is one in which all four cards are of value. To play a hand including a dangler is to play at a disadvantage before the flop even arrives. Why would you put money forward when one quarter of your hand is already losing?





JAMIE MCGOVERN

CASH IN WITH OMAHA

We examine the best options online for Omaha, and present you with some basic strategies for surviving the fast and furious betting action

Ok. So we've convinced you to give it a go, have we? Good stuff. You're about to open your mind to a world of possibilities (well, depending upon how interesting your hole cards are, of course).

The first thing you need to look for is a site that not only supports Omaha games (and hi-lo, if that's something you'd like to play) but that also has a healthy number of active players. Like Draw and Seven-card Stud, Omaha tables can be among the online poker

world's less well-populated, yet some sites appear to attract more Omaha players than any other type. Ladbrokes is one such site, dedicating plenty of tables to both high and hi-lo games - including limit, no-limit, pot limit (easily the most popular variant) and heads-up games. Why not give them a go?

When choosing a table, the key is not to stretch your bankroll too thin

When choosing your table the key is not to stretch your bankroll too thin. Just because you're a Hold'em expert who's turned \$50 into \$500, doesn't mean you have to sit at the same limits you normally would. Ladbrokes offers tables ranging from \$0.05/\$0.10 and \$0.25/\$0.50 right up to \$300/\$600.

You'll also find 'sit and go' tournaments running 24/7 - ranging from \$2 buy-ins right up to \$200-plus games. Just take your time and work your way up.



LEFT
The Wrap.
Just doing its thing

RIGWHT
A nightmare flop for a mid-wrap



Play it tight

A simple starting strategy for new Omaha players is to play super-tight. You're playing at a level you can afford to finance for a decent number of blinds, so take your time, don't get involved when you are unsure of the strength of your hand, and *pay attention*. You'll get to see how your mucked hands might have developed, as well as see the kinds of hands that tend to showdown against each other. If you have moved over from Hold'em, you'll be surprised at how much action there is. Expect lots of family pots, plenty of betting and calling, and an abundance of multi-player showdowns - but remember, there's no shame in playing defensively to start with. As you become more comfortable with the game you'll find it easier to become looser pre-flop.

As far as which hands to get involved with, let's just say you need more than top pair with an Ace kicker. Top pair "with options", however, is just fine, so don't be afraid to stay in the pot as long as you have strong drawing options. At showdowns, don't just notice the winning hands shown, but look at your opponents' inactive cards and try to understand why they were being played. If "Metaldag"

If you have moved over from Hold'em, you'll be surprised at how much action there is

shows a straight, was he also in the hand because he was drawing to a flush? Generally speaking, quality Omaha players will be holding a good hand, but also be drawing to stronger improvements.

Limping's the thing

Don't play random, rainbow hands - you will lose over time. Hands with suited cards and connected cards are great investments in Omaha, and you'll find a different culture of pre-flop play. Whereas limping is punished in Hold'em, it's almost expected in Omaha. Pick your starting hand, see the flop, and work the maths from there.

You'll also find it's far more often the case that players who raise or re-raise pre-flop, go on to fold after the flop. Because of the number of cards in each player's hand, along with the number of players that tend to be in each hand, the likelihood of a three-suited board having completed a flush, or a pair on the board making trips for someone, is far greater than in Hold'em. You need to prepare to lay down some big hands when

you know the possibilities you could run into. Push top trips but don't be afraid to lay them down on the turn.

Above all, enjoy Omaha. It's a much more lively game than Hold'em, and probably the only game of poker you'll ever play where you can expect a full house more than once a week. Have fun! ■

OMAHA HI-LO



■ A popular variant of Omaha is Omaha hi-lo, where both the best and worst hands contest for the pot. A great Omaha hi-lo hand has the possibility to win both pots. A-2-3-4-5 could take the high pot as a straight, while also taking the low pot. Your whole hand must be made up of eights or lower to take the low hand.