

## Rules Of Black Jack

The rules of BlackJack differ slightly from area to area and /or from casino to casino. For example, a casino in downtown Vegas may have different rules than one of the Vegas Strip casinos which may have different rules from a casino up in Reno or Tahoe. The rules in a casino in Freeport Bahamas may differ from those in Atlantic City, etc. Therefore, it is important to research what the rules are for the area/casinos you plan on playing in.

The BlackJack table seats a dealer and one to seven players. The first seat on the dealer's left is referred to as First Base, the first seat on the dealer's right is referred to as Third Base. A betting square is printed on the felt table in front of each player seat. Immediately in front of the dealer is the chip tray. On the dealer's left is the deck or shoe and beside that should be the minimum bet sign, which you ought to read before sitting down to play.

On the dealer's immediate right is the money drop slot where all currency and tips (chips) are deposited. Next to the drop slot is the discard tray. Play begins after the following ritual is completed: the dealer shuffles the cards, the deck is "cut" by a player using the marker card, and the dealer "burns" a card. Before any cards are dealt, the players may make a wager by placing the desired chips (value and number) into the betting box.

Occasionally a player may sit out a hand or two for various reasons. I have sat out a couple of hands at times when the dealer was getting extremely lucky and everyone was losing. If you attempt to sit out too many hands especially if there are people waiting to play at your table, you may be asked to leave the table until you are ready to play.

Once all the bets are down, two cards (one at a time) are dealt from left to right. In many Vegas casinos, players get both cards face down. In Atlantic City and most every where else the player's cards are dealt face up. Should the cards be dealt face up, don't

make the faux pas of touching them! They are dealt face up for a reason, primarily to prevent a few types of player cheating.

The dealer receives one card down and one card up. The numerical values of the cards are: (10, J, Q, K) = 10 ; (Ace) = 1 or 11 ; (other cards) = face value (3 = 3). Since a casino can be very noisy, hand signals are usually the preferred method of signalling hit, stand, etc.

If the cards were dealt face down and you want a hit, lightly flick the cards across the felt two times. If the cards were dealt face up, point at the cards with a quick stabbing motion. You may also want to nod your head yes while saying "hit". The best way to indicate to the dealer that you want to stand regardless of how the cards were dealt is to move your hand from left to right in a level attitude with your palm down. Your hand should be a few inches or so above the table. Nodding your head no at the same time helps, while saying "stay" or "stand".

Single deck games are pretty much restricted to Nevada casinos. In the casinos that have one-deck games, the tables are usually full. Multiple deck games typically consist of an even number of decks (2, 4, 6, 8) although a few casinos use 5 or 7 decks. There are two main reasons many casinos use multiple decks: They allow the dealer to deal more hands per hour, thereby increasing the casino take, and they reduce (but in no way eliminate) the player advantage gained from card counting.

The rules the dealer must play by are very simple. If the dealer's hand is 16 or less, he/she must take a card. If the dealer's hand is 17 or more, he/she must stand. Note that some casinos allow the dealer to hit on soft 17 which gives the house a very small additional advantage. The dealer's strategy is fixed and what you and the other players have is immaterial to him/her as far as hitting and standing is concerned.

The player can do most anything he/she wants as far as hitting and standing goes. Should a player get a BlackJack (first 2 cards

are an Ace and a ten) the payoff is 150% more than the original bet ie, bet \$10.00 and the payoff is \$15.00. Doubling down is restricted to 2-card hands, usually totalling 9, 10, or 11 although some casinos allow doubling down on any 2-card hand. If your first two cards provide you with the appropriate total and your cards were dealt face down, turn them over and put them on the dealer's side of the betting square. If your first two cards provide you with the appropriate total and your cards were dealt face up, point to them and say "double" when the dealer prompts you for a card and simultaneously put an equal amount of chips next to (not on top of) those already in the betting box. The dealer will give you one more card only, then he/she will move on to the next hand.

If you have a pair that you want to split and your cards are dealt face down, turn them over and place them a few inches apart. If your cards were dealt face up, point to your cards and say "split" when the dealer prompts you for a card. The original bet will go with one card and you will have to place an equal amount of chips in the betting box near the other card. You are now playing two hands, each as though they were regular hands with the exception being that if you have just split two aces. In that case, you only get one card which will hopefully be a 10. If it is a ten, that hand's total is now 21 but the hand isn't considered a BlackJack. That is, you are paid 1:1 and not 1:1.5 as for a natural (BlackJack).

Combined example of above two plays: Say you are dealt two fives. You split them. The next card is another 5 and you re-split them. Three hands have grown out of one and you are now in for three times your original bet. But wait. Say the next card is a six. So one hand is a 5,6 which gives you eleven; another just has a 5 and the other hand has a 5. You decide to double down on the first hand. You are dealt a 7 giving 18 which you stand on. Now a ten is dealt for the second hand and you decide to stay at 15. The last hand is the lonely third 5, which is dealt a four for a total of nine. You decide to double down and get an eight giving that hand a total of 17. You started with a twenty dollar bet and now you are

in for a hundred! Better hope the dealer doesn't end up with a hand more than 18 lest you lose a C-note.

It was dangerous to split two fives because you are replacing a hand that is great for drawing on or doubling down on, by what will probably be two poor hands.

Insurance comes into play when the dealer's up card is an Ace. At this point all the players have two cards. The dealer does not check his/her hole card before asking the players if they want insurance, as the dealer can't give away the value of the hole card if the dealer doesn't know what the hole card is. If a player wants insurance, half the original amount bet is placed on the semicircle labeled "insurance" which is printed on the table. If the dealer has a BlackJack the player wins the side bet (the insurance bet) but loses the original bet, thus providing no net loss or gain since insurance pays 2 to 1. If the dealer does not have a BlackJack, the side bet is lost and the hand is played normally. If you are not counting cards, don't bother with insurance. The proper Basic Strategy play is to decline. The time to take insurance is when the number of non-tens to tens drops below a 2 to 1 margin since insurance pays 2 to 1.

Surrender is a fairly obscure option that originated in Manila in 1958 and isn't available in many casinos. There are two versions, "early surrender" and "late surrender". Early surrender allows players to quit two-card hands after seeing the up card of the dealer. This option provides the player an additional 0.62 percent favorable advantage (significant) and therefore the obvious reason why many Atlantic City casinos abandoned the option in 1982. Late surrender is the same as early except that the player must wait until the dealer checks for a BlackJack. If the dealer does not have a BlackJack then the player may surrender.

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