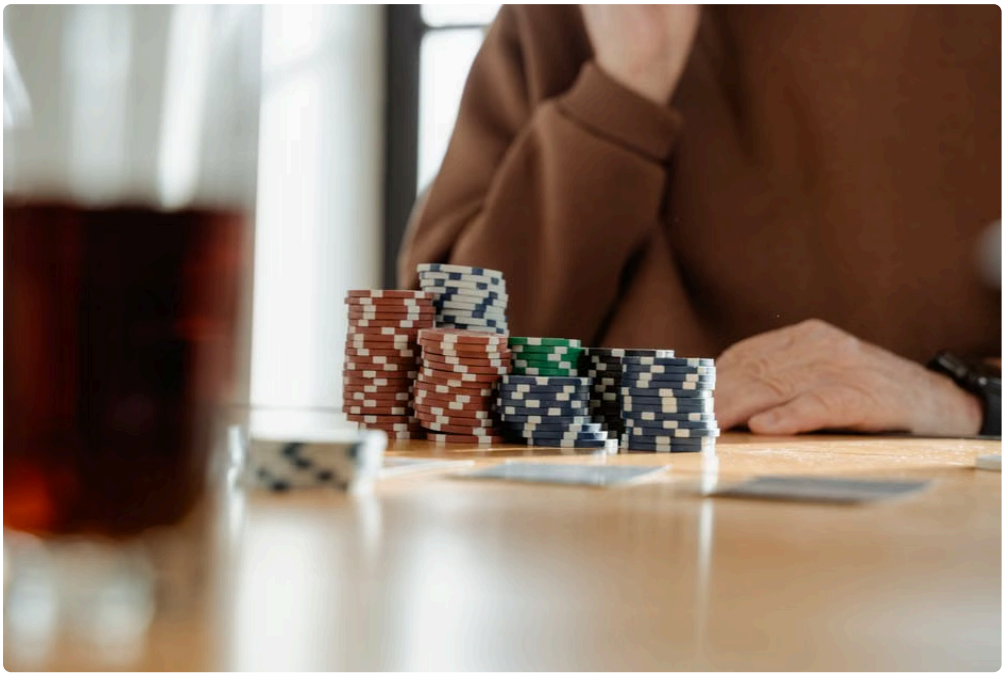
In Texas Hold'em, the small blind and big blind are forced bets—not permanent action positions. Once the flop is dealt, the first player still in the hand who sits to the left of the dealer button acts first. That is usually the small blind. If the small blind folded, action usually starts with the big blind.

The key is to follow the players who remain in the hand, moving clockwise from the button. Don't assume the big blind acts first just because it is the larger blind, or that the small blind always acts first regardless of who has folded. These small blind rules and big blind rules apply in cash games and tournaments, including low-stakes online games and home games.

The Short Answer: Postflop Action Starts Left of the Button

After the flop, the first active player to the left of the dealer button acts. "Active" means the player has not folded. That player can check if no bet is facing them, or bet if the action is unopened. If someone has bet, a player can fold, call, or raise, depending on the game and the action so far.

In a typical full-ring or six-handed hand, the small blind is immediately to the left of the big blind, and the big blind is immediately to the left of the small blind. The button is farther around the table. The button's position determines the order; the blind amounts do not.



Situation after the flop Who acts first? Small blind and big blind both remain in the hand Small blind Small blind has folded; big blind remains Big blind, if no other active player is seated before them clockwise from the button Both blinds have folded First remaining player to the left of the button Heads-up, with both players still in Big blind

How the Betting Order Works by Street

Before the flop

Preflop action begins to the left of the big blind. In a full table, that player is often called under the gun. Action moves clockwise. The small blind acts near the end of the preflop round, followed by the big blind, who can check if nobody raised or call, fold, or raise if there is a raise to them.

On the flop, turn, and river

After the flop, the first remaining player to the left of the button acts. The same basic order applies on the turn and river. If the small blind is still in, they normally act first; if they folded, action moves to the next active player, which may be the big blind or another player.

Action continues clockwise until every remaining player has had a chance to respond and the betting is complete. If all players check, the next community card is dealt. If there is a bet, players must respond to that bet before the next street can begin.

Heads-Up Play: The Important Exception to Remember

When only two players are in the hand, the button is also the small blind. Preflop, the small blind/button acts first. After the flop, the big blind acts first, and the button acts last. So in heads-up play, the small blind does *not* act first postflop when both players remain in.

This is a common source of confusion because “small blind acts first after the flop” is a useful shortcut at a multiway table, but it is not a universal rule. The reliable rule is always: start with the first active player left of the button. In a heads-up hand, that player is the big blind.

Examples: Who Acts First?

Example 1: Both blinds see the flop

The button is in seat 1, the small blind is in seat 2, and the big blind is in seat 3. Both blinds call or otherwise stay in the hand. After the flop, the small blind acts first. The big blind acts after them, followed by any other active players in clockwise order until action reaches the button.

Example 2: The small blind folds preflop

The small blind folds to a raise, while the big blind calls. If no other active player is between the button and the big blind in the clockwise action order, the big blind acts first after the flop. The small blind is no longer part of the hand and has no decision to make.

Example 3: Heads-up

The button posts the small blind, and the other player posts the big blind. Both players see the flop. The big blind acts first postflop; the button acts second. The button's advantage is acting last on the postflop streets, not acting first.

What the Blinds Mean for Your Decisions

The small blind and big blind are positions with forced contributions, but they do not change the ranking of your hand or give your cards special value. The small blind has already put money in, but that does not mean you should call every raise. Treat the amount already posted as money in the pot, not a reason to put in more with a weak hand.

The big blind often gets a chance to check preflop when nobody raises, but that option does not carry over to the flop. Postflop, the big blind acts according to position and the action in front of them. If the small blind checks, the big blind can check behind or bet. If the small blind bets, the big blind must decide whether to fold, call, or raise.

Position matters because acting later gives you more information about what opponents do before you decide. It does not guarantee a win, and it does not turn a weak hand into a strong one. Pay attention to the board, the bet size, and your opponents—not just the fact that you posted a blind.

Texas Hold'em Hand Rankings: Know What You're Trying to Make

In Texas Hold'em, each player makes the best five-card hand available from their two hole cards and the five community cards. You can use both hole cards, one, or neither. Suits have equal value: no suit is stronger than another. When two players have the same hand category, compare the relevant ranks and kickers.

1. **Royal flush:** A, K, Q, J, 10, all in the same suit.
2. **Straight flush:** Five consecutive ranks in the same suit.
3. **Four of a kind:** Four cards of the same rank.
4. **Full house:** Three of a kind plus a pair.
5. **Flush:** Five cards of the same suit, not in sequence.
6. **Straight:** Five consecutive ranks, not all in the same suit.
7. **Three of a kind:** Three cards of the same rank.
8. **Two pair:** Two different pairs.
9. **One pair:** Two cards of the same rank.
10. **High card:** None of the above; compare the highest cards.

A straight and a flush draw are different things. A straight draw needs consecutive ranks; a flush draw needs cards of the same suit. For example, 8-9-10-J gives a possible straight draw if a 7 or queen completes the sequence. Four hearts among your hole cards and the flop can give you a flush draw, but the ranks do not need to be consecutive.

Kicker check: If the board shows A-K-8-5-2 and you hold A-J, you have a pair of aces with a king, jack, and other available cards as kickers. If your opponent has A-Q, their queen kicker beats your jack kicker. A pair of aces is not automatically a tie; the kicker can decide the pot.

Hand Odds and Probabilities: A Useful Price Example

Odds can help put rare hands in perspective, but make sure you know what the number describes. A standard five-card poker hand is four of a kind with a probability of **0.0240% (1 in 4,164)**, also stated as **about 1 in 4,165**. That is the frequency of being dealt a five-card hand containing four cards of one rank from a shuffled 52-card deck. It is not the probability of making quads in every particular Texas Hold'em situation, which depends on your hole cards, the board, and how many cards remain to come.

In Hold'em, the odds of completing a draw depend on your outs: the unseen cards that can improve your hand. Outs are not always clean. An opponent might still have a stronger hand, or a card that improves you could also complete an opponent's draw.

Draw Odds by Flop, Turn, and River

Here are common draw examples, assuming the draw has the stated number of outs and no unseen-card information changes the count. The percentages are approximate.

Draw on the flop Typical outs Chance to hit on turn Chance to hit by river Flush draw 9 About 19.1% About 35.0% Open-ended straight draw 8 About 17.0% About 31.5% Gutshot straight draw 4 About 8.5% About 16.5%

For a nine-out flush draw on the flop, there are 47 unseen cards if you know your two hole cards and the three flop cards. Nine of those cards complete the flush, so the turn probability is 9/47, or about 19.1%. If you get to see both turn and river, the chance of hitting at least once is about 35.0%.

From the turn to the river with nine outs, the chance is 9/46, or about 19.6%, because one more card is known. These are not guarantees: if an opponent holds a card of your suit, or the board pairs and a full house becomes possible, the practical value of your outs can change.

The "rule of 2 and 4" is a quick estimate: multiply your outs by 2 for one card to come, or by 4 on the flop to estimate the chance of hitting by the river. Nine outs gives roughly 18% for one card and 36% for two. It is handy at the table, but the exact figures above are better when you need precision.

Printable Cheat Sheets and Equity Charts

Beginners can benefit from printable cheat sheets that summarize hand rankings, the postflop action order, common pokerhānds draw outs, and quick odds. Keep one beside you during a home game or review it before playing online. A simple position chart can also make blind positions poker rules easier to remember: mark the button, then trace action clockwise to find the first active player after the flop.

Equity charts can help you compare how often a hand wins against another hand or a range of hands. Use them as learning tools, not as a substitute for reading the actual situation. Equity depends on the players' cards or estimated ranges, the board, and whether more cards are still to come. A flush draw can have substantial equity against one pair, but its value changes if an opponent already has a full house draw or a better made hand.

A Quick Postflop Checklist

- Find the button and move clockwise to the first player still in the hand.
- If the small blind is still in, they usually act first—except heads-up, when the big blind acts first.
- Identify your made hand and any genuine draws; do not confuse a straight draw with a flush draw.
- Count your outs, estimate the odds, and consider whether those outs are clean.
- Compare your hand with likely opponent hands, including kickers when pairs or high-card hands are involved.

Once you remember that postflop action starts with the first active player left of the button, the small blind and big blind rules become much easier to follow. The blinds affect where players sit and what they contribute preflop, but the button sets the action order. Keep that rule—and a reliable odds chart—close at hand while you learn.