

Pai Gow Poker

2-7 players

52 cards

Difficulty: Medium

Duration: Medium

Split 7 cards into a 5-card and 2-card hand that both beat the dealer.

SETUP

- Each player places a wager.
- Deal 7 cards to each player and the dealer.

SCORING

- Win both hands: win even money minus 5% commission.
- Lose both: lose your wager.
- Split: push (bet returned).

Tip: Split two pairs between hands when one pair is Aces or Kings to strengthen both hands.

ON YOUR TURN

- Arrange your 7 cards into a 5-card high hand and a 2-card low hand.
- The 5-card hand must outrank the 2-card hand.
- Compare both hands against the dealer's hands.

Pai Gow Poker is a casino card game derived from the Chinese domino game Pai Gow. Each player receives seven cards and must split them into a five-card hand and a two-card hand, with the goal of beating both of the dealer's corresponding hands. It is known for its slow pace and low volatility, making it a popular choice for players who want extended play.

Objective

Split your seven cards into a five-card high hand and a two-card low hand that both beat the dealer's respective hands.

Setup

1. **Players:** 2-7 (typically played against a dealer)
2. **Deck:** Standard 52-card deck plus one Joker (53 cards total)
3. **Deal:** Each player and the dealer receive 7 cards face down

Gameplay

1. **Arrange hands:** Examine your 7 cards and divide them into a 5-card hand (the high hand) and a 2-card hand (the low hand).
2. **High hand rule:** The 5-card hand must rank higher than the 2-card hand using standard poker rankings.
3. **Joker usage:** The Joker can be used as an Ace or to complete a straight, flush, or straight flush in the 5-card hand. In the 2-card hand, it always counts as an Ace.
4. **Reveal:** Once all players have set their hands, the dealer reveals their cards and sets their own two hands according to house rules (the house way).
5. **Comparison:** The player's 5-card hand is compared to the dealer's 5-card hand, and the player's 2-card hand is compared to the dealer's 2-card hand.

Scoring

1. **Win both hands:** Player wins even money (minus a 5% commission to the house).
2. **Lose both hands:** Player loses their wager.
3. **Split (win one, lose one):** The hand is a push and the player's bet is returned.
4. **Tie (copy hand):** If a hand is an exact tie in rank, the dealer wins that hand.

Variations

- **Fortune Pai Gow:** Adds a bonus side bet that pays based on the quality of the player's 7-card hand.
- **No Commission Pai Gow:** Eliminates the 5% commission but the dealer wins on certain hands like a Queen-high Pai Gow.
- **Progressive Pai Gow:** Includes a progressive jackpot side bet for premium hands like a 7-card straight flush.

Tips and Strategies

- Always set the highest possible 2-card hand without weakening the 5-card hand below it in rank.
- If you have no pairs or better, place the highest card in the 5-card hand and the next two highest in the 2-card hand.
- With two pairs, consider splitting them if one pair is Aces or Kings to strengthen both hands.
- Never put a pair in the low hand if it leaves the high hand with nothing, since the high hand must rank higher.

Tips & Strategy

Focus on making the strongest possible two-card hand without weakening your five-card hand. Split two pairs when one pair is high (Aces, Kings). Keep full houses together in the high hand and place the remaining cards in the low hand.

The key strategic decision is how to split your seven cards. With a full house, always split it by placing the three of a kind in the high hand and the pair in the low hand. This maximizes your chance of winning both hands.