Seven-Card Stud

2-8 players | 52 cards | Difficulty: Hard | Duration: Long

Make the best five-card hand from seven cards dealt individually to you.

SETUP

- 2-8 players with a standard 52-card deck.
- All players post an ante.
- Deal 2 cards face-down and 1 face-up to each player.

ON YOUR TURN

- Lowest door card posts the bring-in on third street.
- Receive one face-up card per round on fourth, fifth, and sixth streets.
- Seventh street card is dealt face-down.
- Best exposed hand acts first from fourth street onward.

SCORING

- Standard poker hand rankings apply.
- Best five-card hand from your seven cards wins.

Tip: Track every exposed card on the table to know exactly which of your outs are still live.

Seven-Card Stud was the dominant poker variant in America before Texas Hold'em took over in the 2000s. There are no community cards; instead, each player receives seven cards of their own — three face-down and four face-up — and must make the best five-card hand. The game rewards memory, observation, and disciplined play.

Objective

Form the best five-card poker hand from the seven cards dealt to you individually, using careful observation of opponents' exposed cards to guide your decisions.

Setup

1. **Players:** 2 to 8 players.
2. **Deck:** Standard 52-card deck.
3. **Ante:** Every player posts a small ante before the deal.
4. **Deal:** Each player receives 2 cards face-down (hole cards) and 1 card face-up (door card).

Gameplay

1. **Third Street:** The player with the lowest door card posts the bring-in. Betting proceeds clockwise with players calling, raising, or folding.
2. **Fourth Street:** Each remaining player receives a second face-up card. The player with the highest exposed hand acts first.
3. **Fifth Street:** A third face-up card is dealt. Betting limits typically double from this street onward.
4. **Sixth Street:** A fourth face-up card is dealt, followed by another betting round.
5. **Seventh Street (the River):** A final card is dealt face-down to each remaining player, followed by the last betting round.
6. **Showdown:** Players reveal their hands and the best five-card hand wins.

Scoring

- **Hand rankings:** Standard poker hand rankings apply.
- **Bring-in:** The player with the lowest door card must post the bring-in, a forced bet smaller than the minimum bet.
- **Pot:** The best five-card hand at showdown wins the entire pot.

Variations

- **Stud Hi-Lo (8 or Better):** The pot is split between the best high hand and the best qualifying low hand.
- **Razz:** A lowball variant where the lowest hand wins (see separate entry).
- **Mississippi Stud:** Removes one betting round by dealing the last two cards together.

Tips and Strategies

- Pay close attention to exposed cards — knowing which cards are dead dramatically affects your drawing odds.
- Start with strong door cards or concealed pairs; folding weak starting hands early saves money over time.
- If your key cards are visible in opponents' hands, your draw is compromised and you should likely fold.

Tips & Strategy

Memory is your greatest asset in Stud — track every exposed card to calculate your live outs. Start with three cards that can improve to strong made hands and avoid chasing without live draws.

Starting hand selection and card memory are the two pillars of strong Stud play. The ability to remember folded cards gives you a significant edge in calculating live outs.