

# Three Card Poker

2-7 players

52 cards

Difficulty: Easy

Duration: Short

Beat the dealer's three-card hand with your Ante/Play bet, or get a pair or better for Pair Plus.

## SETUP

- 1-7 players against the dealer with a 52-card deck.
- Place Ante and/or Pair Plus bets.
- Receive 3 cards face-down.

## SCORING

- Ante pays even money; Play pays even money if you beat the dealer.
- Pair Plus pays independently: pair 1:1, flush 4:1, straight 6:1, trips 30:1, straight flush 40:1.

*Tip: Play with Queen-6-4 or better, fold anything worse — this is the mathematically optimal strategy.*

## ON YOUR TURN

- Look at your three cards.
- Place a Play bet equal to your Ante, or fold.
- Dealer reveals; must qualify with Queen-high or better.

Three Card Poker is a fast-paced casino table game invented by Derek Webb in 1994. Players receive just three cards and can place two independent bets: Pair Plus (betting on getting a pair or better) and Ante/Play (competing against the dealer). The simplified hand rankings and quick gameplay have made it one of the most popular casino card games worldwide.

## Objective

In the Ante/Play game, beat the dealer's three-card hand. In the Pair Plus game, simply be dealt a pair or better to win regardless of the dealer's hand.

## Setup

1. **Players:** 1 to 7 players against the dealer.
2. **Deck:** Standard 52-card deck.
3. **Bets:** Players may place an Ante bet, a Pair Plus bet, or both before cards are dealt.
4. **Deal:** Each player and the dealer receive 3 cards face-down.

## Gameplay

1. **Examine cards:** Players look at their three cards and decide their action.
2. **Ante/Play decision:** Players who placed an Ante bet must either make a Play bet equal to their Ante or fold and forfeit the Ante.
3. **Pair Plus:** This bet is resolved independently — if the player has a pair or better, they win regardless of the dealer's hand or the Ante/Play outcome.
4. **Dealer reveals:** The dealer turns over their cards and the hands are compared.
5. **Dealer qualification:** The dealer must have Queen-high or better to qualify. If not, the Ante pays even money and the Play bet pushes.

## Scoring

- **Three-card hand rankings (high to low):** Straight flush, three of a kind, straight, flush, pair, high card. Note: three of a kind beats a straight in three-card poker.
- **Ante bonus:** Most casinos pay an automatic bonus on the Ante for a straight or better, regardless of the dealer's hand.
- **Pair Plus payable:** Pair pays 1:1, flush pays 4:1, straight pays 6:1, three of a kind pays 30:1, straight flush pays 40:1.

## Variations

---

- **Six Card Bonus:** A side bet based on the best five-card hand made from the player's and dealer's combined six cards.
- **Prime:** A side bet that pays if all three of the player's cards (or all six combined cards) are the same color.

## Tips and Strategies

---

- The optimal strategy for the Ante/Play bet is simple: play with Queen-6-4 or better, fold with anything worse.
- The Pair Plus bet has a house edge of about 2.3%, making it one of the better side bets in casinos.
- Both bets can be played simultaneously for maximum excitement without significantly increasing the house edge.

## Tips & Strategy

---

The Q-6-4 rule is the key: play any hand of Queen-6-4 or better and fold the rest. The Pair Plus bet is independent and has a reasonable house edge on its own.

With only one decision point (play or fold), the strategy is elegantly simple. The Q-6-4 threshold exists because below that hand, the player's chance of beating a qualifying dealer drops below break-even.