



Ashley Adams

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**WINNING
POKER
IN 30 MINUTES
A DAY**
ASHLEY ADAMS



POKER

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Preface

Why This Book?

Let's be clear about one thing first. This is a book about just one of the many games you might find in a public poker room: No Limit Texas Hold'em cash games. Even so, there are so many no limit hold'em poker books on the market today, why add another one?

Truly, the question crossed my mind many times before I decided to take on this project. My answer is simple. Though there are plenty of poker books aimed at the good, winning no limit hold'em player, there are few books for the typical cash game player, who breaks even or loses a bit, and who simply wants to improve his game. I don't think there's a really good book that addresses the typical poker player who wants to stop losing and start winning in a public poker room.

I'm not talking about the rank beginner. There are plenty of books for them – teaching the rank of the hands, the origins of the game, and how to play. But I don't think the typical player needs to learn the rudiments of the game. They're already playing poker. But they are intimidated by a lot of the highly technical material out there today and may not want to commit the kind of time and energy it appears to take to get really good.

This book looks to turn losing, break-even, beginning and intermediate players into winning players. It presumes you know something of the

game – and have played it. But it also presumes that either you don't feel confident playing in a public poker room or that you don't seem to be consistently beating the game.

If you read this book and do the simple exercises I provide, I am confident that you will learn the way to win. You might not win very much at first. You will not be an expert capable of taking on the toughest players in the biggest games. But you will have the skills to defeat the typically bad and mediocre players you face in home games, house games, and public poker room games. You will also know how to spot the kind of players from whom you can win money.

The book is organized into broad chapters and short sections. Many of those sections have simple exercises at the end of them. You need to do the exercises. It will never take you more than 30 minutes to complete them. But you'll need to do them to make sure you've mastered the material. It's simple material to be sure. But it takes at least some reflection and practice to get a full handle on it.

I recommend that throughout the process you keep a poker notebook. Write down your experiences, your thoughts, and your questions. When you're done with the book, look back over the questions you asked. I suspect you'll know the answers to many of them once you're done.

I want you to learn the tools you'll need to beat the typical entry level, or slightly above entry level no limit hold'em game found in public poker rooms today. Specifically, that would be \$1/2 and \$1/3 games. Toward that end, you'll need to focus first on three very broad missions: find games that you can beat; beat those games with a simple, very tight and aggressive strategy; and learn the techniques for beating tougher players in tougher games.

When we are done, if you stay with this from start to finish, you will have all the tools you need to crush the \$1/2 and \$1/3 no limit cash games that are popular today. With good practice and self-control, you should become a consistent winner.

Ashley Adams, January 2020

Chapter Five

Estimating Ranges: What does Villain Have?

It's not sufficient for you to understand the absolute value of your own hand. You must be able to understand it in the context of what your opponent is likely to hold. It is not possible or practical to try to narrow this down to one specific hand. Rather, poker thinking requires that you put your opponent on a likely range of hands. In this chapter we will focus on exactly how you assess the range of hands your opponent is likely to be playing.

What you'll learn: How to best figure out your opponent's range.

Why it's important: You can exploit your opponent best when you have a good idea of what he's likely to be holding.

What is a Range?

Let's talk about ranges. What are they and how can answering that question assist you in winning more money at poker?

In short, you need to understand not only the value of your hand, but

how strong it likely is relative to what your opponent or opponents might have. You must always be thinking about them too. How do you stack up against the others? Thinking only of the absolute strength of your hand – or where it is on some chart – is the wrong way to view it.

Imagine that you are dealt a pair of kings. That's a great hand – unless your opponent has a pair of aces. Then it's bad. Similarly, imagine that you only have ace-high. That's bad – unless your opponent only has king-high. Then it's good.

Gauging your opponent's likely holding will help you interpret the impact of the flop, turn, and river. You can take into consideration his betting action – using it to figure out where your hand is likely to be relative to his hand.

For example, you almost surely have the best starting hand with $K\heartsuit-K\clubsuit$ pre-flop. But now imagine that you have those kings and the board looks like this: $Q\heartsuit-J\heartsuit-A\spadesuit-J\diamondsuit-9\heartsuit$.

Further, imagine that your opponent shoves the river. How are your kings looking now?

Just to put a finer point on it, it isn't that you know specifically what your opponent has. But you have a pretty good idea of the range of hands he might have. He might have two hearts for a flush, a jack for trips, a pair of queens, aces, or nines for a full house, all of which would have you crushed. A pair of kings is always a very strong starting hand, but it's not always the case by the river.

Imagine for a moment that you could see your opponent's cards when you made your betting decision. It would be an unbeatable advantage, wouldn't it? You'd be able to regularly knock him out of the hand with a well-placed bet, knowing when he missed his draw. You'd be able to call him down when he was representing a hand he didn't have. You would be invincible.

As a practical matter, unless you're cheating, you can not know with certainty the specific hand that your opponent holds. There are just too many possibilities – even if you are a great hand reader, a master of tells,

very aware of your opponents' style of play, their betting patterns, and their read of you and your betting. It's just practically impossible to narrow down your opponents' likely hands to just one.

So, rather than focusing on figuring out the specific hand your opponent holds, it makes more sense to consider a range of hands – the broad spectrum of hands that he is likely to be holding – and compare your hand to that range. That's what we mean when we talk of an opponent's "range" – and it's what thoughtful players focus on when they are deciding whether and how to play their own hand.

You need to do so as well. You need to think about your opponent's range.

Determining an Opponent's Range

Let's look at a few scenarios and attempt to figure out our opponent's range as a hand progresses. We'll look at their hands pre-flop and on the flop. I'll then give you a few problems to work out on your own.

The purpose of this analysis isn't to teach you how to respond to these specific situations. Rather, it's to encourage you to think about your hand in the context of the likely holding of your opponent.

Range Analysis: Example Hand 1

Here's a pre-flop example.

You hold a pair of jacks in UTG+3. UTG raises to 3BB.
What's his range? What should you do?

You know him well. He is a very tight, straightforward player who rarely gets out of line. He is known as a "rock". Though you don't know exactly what he is holding when he makes that raise, you know with near certainty his range. His range is a high pair: A-A, K-K, Q-Q, J-J. But since you have J-J, you discount that specific hand and subtract it from his range. Were he not as tight and predictable you might expand it to also include A-K. But he's a very predictable rock. So you give him credit for Q-Q+.

You combine his playing type, with his position, and his betting action, and you infer his range is Q-Q+.

That's his range: Q-Q+.

You use that range to decide on your action. Your J-J is an obvious fold, as there are no cards in his range that warrant a call or a raise from you. You are very far behind all three hands he might be playing. You don't need to know which one specifically. You're far behind all of them.

If he were a little looser, you might have given him credit for raising with A-K. But even then, your jacks are practically no favorite at all. So even in that situation, you'd surely be inclined to fold. You'd be roughly tied with the 12 combinations of A-K and woefully behind the 18 combinations of the three premium pairs. The only possible exception would be if you decided to try and steal the hand from him with a raise of your own – but in the circumstances, that would be a bluff. If he called you, you'd only have the two remaining jacks as outs to beat him. That would make you a 96 percent to 4 percent underdog to hit it by the next card.

Furthermore, you are in a bad table position. One of your other opponents might choose to get involved too and defeat your plan.

Combining all this: the vulnerability of your hand, the fact he's unlikely to fold Q-Q, K-K, or A-A to your raise, and your bad table position, you shouldn't give this notion a second thought. When you consider his range, folding is the best option.

Conclusion: Fold.

Range Analysis: Example Hand 2

Most situations are not so clear cut. Imagine a slightly different scenario.

You are on the button with J-J. A moderately loose and aggressive player, with some bluffs in him, opens the pot by raising to 4BB in the hijack seat, after everyone has folded. What's his range? What do you do?

As a loose aggressive player, in late position, he would have a much

broader range than the tight competitor in the first example. This player in the HJ might be raising with any number of possible hands: medium pairs or better, middle suited connectors or better, big unsuited connectors, any two Broadway (10♠ or higher) cards, and maybe even any suited ace. Written in the range shorthand it would be: 7-7+, 10-9s+, A-10+, K-10+, Q-10+, A-2s+.

Considering your opponent's broad range, you should surely not fold your J-J on the button. Your J-J is far ahead of most of his range – all the non-pair combinations with one or both cards jacks or lower. You are a slight favorite against the three combinations of Broadway over-cards (A-K, A-Q, K-Q). You are only significantly behind the three higher pairs.

Accordingly, if he made this pre-flop move on you, your best course of action would probably be to raise him back (known generally as “three-bet”).

Conclusion: Raise (three-bet).

Narrowing a Range

Range Analysis on the Flop

Ranges are not static throughout the hand. They exist for one betting round only. Once there is a flop, a turn, or a river your assessment of an opponent's range should change based on the cards that appear and the betting action that may follow. And, of course you must take into consideration your opponent's position, the type of player he is, and the type of player he thinks you are.

Let's say you put your loose-aggressive opponent on a broad range pre-flop like the one above. The flop comes. He's someone who frequently makes continuation bets. How do you think his range would narrow?

The answer is that it probably wouldn't. Here's an example of that.

Range Analysis: Example Hand 3

Let's say, for whatever reason, you didn't raise in the example above – when you had J-J on the BTN against a loose aggressive player. You just

called his pre-flop raise and you both saw a flop. The flop always forces you to re-analyze your opponent's range. In the above example, let's make a few assumptions about your opponent. He's not a rock; he's somewhat loose and aggressive; and he sees you as a very tight and conventional player. You also know that when he raises pre-flop he always, or nearly always, bets the flop. In poker-speak, he has a high continuation-betting (c-bet) frequency.

For this example hand, let's say the flop is A♥-9♠-2♦. Your opponent makes a bet of a little more than half the pot. How do you think this changes his range? What should you do in response? Let's look at it closely.

A♥-9♠-2♦ is a very "dry" board. That is, it does not lend itself to making straights or flushes. With the single high card, it invites someone to represent that they now have a premium pair. With you perceived as a very tight and conventional player, it's an invitation to your opponent to make a c-bet. You're a lone opponent. You are seen as a tight player in this scenario. You will have a high frequency of folding to a bet.

You know in this example that your opponent frequently makes c-bets. When he bets into you, how do you think his range has changed from his pre-flop range? Looked at another way, are there any hands that you thought were in his range pre-flop that you can now take out of his range – based on the new information on the flop?

It's likely that his range hasn't changed much at all, isn't it? Given the circumstances, the c-bet is almost automatic. It would be made nearly 100 percent of the time – with the exact same range as he had pre-flop.

There's only one exception. You can probably take out exactly A-A from his range. It's highly unlikely that this player would push you to fold with a bet if he were holding top set. But aside from that, he might c-bet every single hand in this spot – meaning that he would bet the flop no matter what it was. When that's the case – with a 100 percent c-bet – you don't adjust your opponent's range one bit. You combine it with the

flop to see how it stacks up against your hand.

It is the same as it was pre-flop. Since you estimated that you were far ahead pre-flop, if you find yourself on the flop against this player with the same range, you should combine it with the flop and see where he is likely to be now. The flop was: A♥-9♠-2♦.

Look at the range you put him on pre-flop: 7-7+, 10-9s+ , A-10+, K-10+, Q-10+, A-2s+. You're ahead of all of the four pairs up to 10-10. You're behind the two big pairs: Q-Q and K-K. You are ahead of the suited connectors that don't contain an ace (all but one). You're ahead of the five Broadway card combinations that don't contain an ace but behind the four that do. And you're behind the remaining suited ace combinations A-2s to A-9s. All totaled, after considering all of the factors, your J-J is quite far ahead of your opponent's range. And once again, you should raise.

Conclusion: You're ahead of his range. Raise.

Range Analysis: Example Hand 4

You and the pre-flop raiser are in the same position again – but some other factors have changed in this match up.

Imagine that you are perceived as a relatively loose player who tends to call bets on the flop. And imagine that your opponent is not very deceptive at all, and only occasionally makes a c-bet on the flop. Now imagine a flop of K♥-Q♣-6♥ – two consecutive cards and two suited cards. That's called a wet board. It's likely to help many drawing hands.

If you're facing a knowledgeable opponent, likely to weigh good and bad opportunities for c-betting, it's likely that he wouldn't routinely bet this hand unless he had something at least fairly strong. He would be concerned that you had a wide range of hands that would be helped by this board. Therefore, if he did bet, it would likely mean that his hand would tend to be limited to the higher end of his starting range. Put simply, if he bet this flop he'd be more likely to actually have something.

Looked at another way, a bet on the flop from an opponent who is more selective in his c-betting means more than a flop bet from someone who c-bets all the time. Accordingly, you should tend to narrow the range

of the selective c-bettor who bets the flop, and respond more cautiously. He is being more selective and you should respond accordingly.

Go back to your opponent's pre-flop raising range from the HJ seat. We deemed it the following: 7-7+, 10-9s+ , A-10+, K-10+, Q-10+, A-2s+.

With a flop of K♥-Q♣-6♥, how might you redefine that range when he bets the flop in the HJ seat? Keep in mind that he is a player who is not given to much deception, and you have an image of moderately loose.

Let's first look at his initial range of pairs: 7-7+. With this flop we need to eliminate from his range those lower pairs – 7-7, 8-8, 9-9, 10-10, and J-J. He should be concerned that you might have a king or queen and that you would not fold to his bet.

Similarly, though it would be possible, it's unlikely he would play a big set by betting out – preferring to slow-play that hand. So it's unlikely he's holding a pair of kings or queens either. That leaves from his initial range of pairs only A-A.

Moving on to his other hands in his pre-flop range: which unpaired hands from his pre-flop range of 10-9s+, A-10+, K-10+, Q-10+, A-2s+ is he likely to continue to bet with the K♥-Q♣-6♥ flop?

Remember, he's a fairly straightforward player, not given to betting for no reason. With that in mind, he might bet the flop if he hit a pair of kings or queens or two pair. That would include the following seven hands: A-K, A-Q, K-Q, K-J, K-10, Q-J, Q-10.

Finally, look at all of the suited aces that were in his pre-flop range. It's unlikely that this player, not very creative, not prone to c-betting, in bad position, against a relatively loose opponent would bet a no pair hand on the flop. So we'd subtract these no pair, ace-high hands from his range. Instead, we'd only put him on A-K, A-Q, and maybe A-6s as possibilities. And we've already accounted for the A-K and A-Q when we listed the hands that gave him a big pair.

This leaves us with one other possible hand in his range, the A-6s. We

may retain that one because it does pair him – albeit with only a pair of sixes. Nevertheless, as he would be holding top kicker, giving him three outs to beat a pair of kings or queens, he might play it. So add it to his range.

Just to clean up that list, his betting range on this flop, in this circumstance, is now A-A, A-K, A-Q, K-Q, K-J, K-10, Q-J, Q-10, A-6s.

You've succeeded in narrowing his range. Now let's look at how it compares with your own hand.

Villain's Range Versus Your Hand

Figuring out your opponent's likely range isn't supposed to be just an academic exercise. It's meant to help you figure out how to play against your opponent. With that in mind, you need to do two things: understand how your hand's value stacks up against the villain's likely range, and then decide on your best betting action.

Let's look at the example above and see how we might best respond to his betting action. Let's recap the action and then see how we would respond to our opponent's likely action.

We have J-J. Our opponent in the HJ raised 3BB and we called. We saw the flop heads up. The flop was: K♥-Q♣-6♥. Our opponent bet 4BB. What's his likely range and how do we respond?

We put our opponent on a range of: A-A, A-K, A-Q, K-Q, K-J, K-10, Q-J, Q-10, A-6s. We are significantly behind against that range. We're behind all of the hands with kings or queens. The only hand we're ahead of is the last one – the pair of sixes with the ace kicker. Clearly, though J-J seemed like a fairly good hand in absolute terms, based on the way this hand developed, we need to fold.

Conclusion: fold.

Exercise 22

Range Finding

Now it's your turn. Here are six pre-flop hand situations. You're going to indicate the likely range of your opponent at this stage. Unless stated otherwise, assume 150 BB stacks.

1) Your opponent is UTG. He raised 3BB pre-flop and you called with A♥-K♥. He is a fairly tight player. His pre-flop range is best expressed as:

- a) 2-2+, A-10+, K-9+, suited ace, suited king, K-Q, K-J, Q-J, Q-10.
- b) 2-2+, suited ace, A-K, A-Q, A-J.
- c) J-J+, A-K.
- d) A-A.

2) Your opponent is a LAG on the button. There were four callers to him. He raised 5BB. His pre-flop range is best expressed as:

- a) Q-Q+, A-K.
- b) 2-2+, A-10+, K-9+, A-2s+, K-2s+, K-Q, K-J, Q-J, Q-10.
- c) 10-10+, A-K, A-Q.
- d) A-A.

3) Your opponent is a complete nit. He plays one hand in every two or three orbits, and raises even less frequently. He is in the LJ seat. There are three callers. He raises to 5BB. His pre-flop range is best expressed as:

- a) Q-Q+, A-K, A-Q, K-Q.
- b) 2-2+, A-10+, K-9+, suited ace, suited king, K-Q, K-J, Q-J, Q-10.
- c) 10-10+, A-K, A-Q.
- d) A-A, K-K, A-Ks.

4) Your opponent is about average in tightness – maybe a little loose at times. He is only moderately aggressive. He is on the button. The pot was three-bet to 8BB and, when the action gets to him, he shoves 50BB. His likely pre-flop range is best expressed as:

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- a) A-A, K-K, A-Ks.
- b) J-J+, A-K, A-Q, K-Q.
- c) 2-2+, A-10+, K-9+, suited ace, suited king, K-Q, K-J, Q-J, Q-10.
- d) 8-8+, A-K, A-Q.

5) UTG+2 and LJ called the BB. You raised to 4BB on the BTN with J-J. UTG+2 folded. The LJ, a loose-passive player – and not a very experienced or good one – called your raise. His likely pre-flop range is best expressed as:

- a) J-J+, A-K, A-Q, K-Q.
- b) 2-2+, A-10+, K-9+, suited ace, suited king, K-Q, K-J, Q-J, Q-8+, 9-8s+, 10-8s+, J-8s+, Q-7s+.
- c) 8-8+, A-K, A-Q.
- d) A-A, K-K, A-Ks.

6) You called the BB in the LJ with A-Ks, after three other players called. The LAG HJ raised 5BB and the BTN, a fairly tight and skillful player, called. You called. The BTN's likely range is best expressed as:

- a) 2-2+, A-2s+, J-10s+, Q-Js K-Q, K-J, A-J+.
- b) J-J+, A-2s+, J-10s+, Q-Js K-Q, K-J, A-J+.
- c) 2-2 to J-J, A-2s+, J-10s+, Q-Js K-Q, K-J, A-J+.
- d) A-2s+, J-10s+, Q-Js K-Q, K-J, A-J+.

Answers to Exercise 22

1) c) This is a typical raising range in early position for a relatively tight player.

2) b) The other answers are too tight for a LAG.

3) d) A nit would only raise from middle position with these extremely strong holdings.

4) a) For anyone but a maniac, a four-bet requires a very strong hand. This range expresses that narrow range.

5) b) This is the only answer that shows a broad range that a loose-passive player would likely play. The other ranges are much too narrow.

6) c) The problem with all the others is that they don't account for the fact that he called and didn't raise. By not raising, he made it unlikely that he was playing his top pairs. Though he would call with a very broad range, recognizing that the raiser was a LAG, he almost surely would have three-bet with Q-Q+, and certainly with K-K+ in order to try and isolate the LAG.

Exercise 23

Reading Opponents on the Flop

Here are a few more examples at different stages of hands. Try to figure out what you can put your opponent on.

1) Your opponent (Villain) is completely clueless – maybe never played poker before. He tends to call if it's just the BB no matter his table position or cards. He has called nearly all of the hands that haven't been raised, yet has never raised himself. Six of you called pre-flop. Villain is UTG. You are in the CO.

Let's start right there. With what I've described of Villain's play, which of the following best describes his likely pre-flop range:

- a) Q-Q+, A-K.
- b) J-10s+, A-Q, A-K, Q-Q+.
- c) Just about anything.
- d) 2-2+, 8-9s+, A-10+.

2) The flop is A♦-J♦-6♠. The same Villain bets. Everyone folds to you. You have A♠-3♠. What is Villain's likely range?

- a) A-A.
- b) A-A, J-J, 6-6, A-2+, J-6.
- c) Just about anything.
- d) 2-2+, 8-9s, A-10+.