

STUDY SESSION 6

Bluffing

Definition and Characteristics

- A bluff is an attempt to take down a pot with a hand that unlikely to win at showdown.
- Most players don't bluff enough.
- Most players think other players are bluffing more often than they are.
- Many players pick the wrong opponents and situations to bluff.
- Requires a strong understanding of your table image as well as the ability to put your opponents on a realistic range of hands.
- Requires that you tell a compelling "story".

Bluffing Pre-Flop

- Works best from late position or the Big Blind.
- Consists of three or four betting over earlier raises.
- A three bet bluff works best against a loose raiser that has been active and your image is fairly tight.
- A four bet bluff works best if both the initial raiser and three bettor are loose and active and your image is tight.
- These plays also require that your opponents are good enough to fold the bottom and middle of their range out of position.
- If either player is a calling station a bluff is a bad idea.
- Works best when stacks are deeper (100+ Big Blinds).

Bluffing Post Flop (on the Flop)

- Requires positional advantage on your opponent(s).
- Flop must appear to miss your opponent's range(s) and appear to hit yours.
- Can be either a raise over a continuation bet or a bet when checked over.
- Should not be done if your opponent only continuation bets with strong hands and never folds once the continuation bet is made.
- If your bet or raise is going to risk 30% or more of your stack, your move is all in.
- If the pot is multi-way, your bluff is less likely to work.

Bluffing Post Flop (on the Turn)

- The most crucial street on a multi barrel bluff attempt.
- Stacks will often require an all in move at this point.
- Can be following a float or a raise / bet on the Flop.
- Works best if there is sufficient fold equity.
- Does not work against call stations who have shown they are not likely to fold their hand.

Bluffing on the River

- The most dangerous and high leveraged street to bluff.
- Many multi-barrel bluff attempts may need to be aborted due to the River card falling within the top end of your opponent's range.
- Making a three barrel bluff attempt requires sufficient stacks sizes to begin the hand (100+ Big Blinds).
- Will often require moving all in.
- Is the least likely bluff to succeed.
- A delayed bluff at the River is more likely to get called than a multi barrel attempt.

The all in bluff

- Against a single opponent, 20-25 Big Blinds is the perfect stack size to move in over an opening bet attempt.
- Against two opponents, 30-35 Big Blinds is the perfect stack size.
- You can set up an all in bet on previous streets by making the next bet as close to pot sized as possible.
- You must be fairly certain your attempt will work as you are risking your tournament life.
- Should tend to be semi bluff in nature or if done pre-Flop to have a chance of winning at showdown (ie not hands with reverse implied odds) if called.

Semi-Bluff vs Naked Bluff

- Naked bluffs have no chance of winning at showdown and are the riskiest bluff attempts.
- Semi-bluffs have a chance of improving by the River (straight and flush draws, overcards to the board).
- Semi-bluffs, especially the strongest (combo straight and flush draws with overcards are the strongest of all draws) should be played very aggressively. They often win without showdown and when called are generally no worse than 25% equity and usually much higher.

Final Thoughts

- Make sure your bluff bets and your value bets match the situation.
- Don't try bluffs against bad players who only think about their hand.
- Don't try bluffs against calling stations.
- If the likelihood of your bluff attempt working is small, don't bluff.
- If your image is loose, your bluff attempts will not be as successful.
- If your image is tight, your bluff attempts will work more often.