

STUDY SESSION 5

Trouble Hands

Definition and Characteristics

- A “Trouble Hand” is the kind of hand that can put you in bad spots post flop. Also referred to as a “Trap Hand”.
- Among the most misplayed hands in poker.
- Are very problematic for new players.
- Can often be “holes” in the games of more experienced players.
- Do have their place in under certain circumstances.

Naked Aces

- A6-A9 (Suited and Unsuited).
- Why they are Trouble Hands: Can't make a straight with both cards, frequently dominated, and rarely make the nuts.
- Playing them from early position is almost always a mistake.
- Playing them in multi-way pots (ie overlimping) is almost always a mistake.
- Open raising with them from the cutoff and button is generally okay.
- Calling a raise or three-bet with them is almost always a mistake.
- Avoiding playing them altogether would not be a huge mistake and is better than misplaying them.
- If you have 10 BB or less, they can be open shoved if your kicker is greater than the number of players you have to get through (ie shoving A9 under the gun at a nine-handed table is okay as you need to get through eight players, but shoving A8 is not. Refer to Phil Gordon's series for further reading).

Certain Kings

- K9 (Suited and Unsuited), K10 (Suited and Unsuited), KJo, KQo
- Why they are Trouble Hands: Almost always behind pre-flop, dominated by all aces, and do not play well multi-way.
- Playing them from early position is almost always a mistake (KJs and KQs okay if the table is playing extremely tight or very passive).
- Often make non-nut hands and can lose big pots if you are not careful.
- Calling raises with them is usually a mistake (calling with KJs and KQs in late position in a deep game is acceptable).
- Calling three bets is almost always a mistake.
- Open raising with K10s, KJ, and KQ from the cutoff and button is usually okay.
- With 10 BB, shoving KJ and KQ from middle position on is okay. Shoving K10 from late position is okay.
- With 5 BB, shoving from any position is okay.
- Avoiding playing them K9 and K10 altogether would not be a huge mistake and is better than misplaying them.

Most Queens

- Q8-QJ.
- Why they are Trouble Hands: Often make non-nut hands, frequently dominated, and often overplayed.
- Raising them from early position is almost always a mistake.
- Raising Q10 and QJ from cutoff and button usually okay.
- Calling raises with them is usually a mistake (calling with Q10s and QJs in late position in a deep game is acceptable).
- Calling three bets is almost always a mistake.
- With 10 BB, shoving QJs late position is okay.
- With 5 BB, shoving Suited Queens 8 and above from all positions is okay.
- Avoiding playing them Q8 and Q9 altogether would not be a huge mistake and is better than misplaying them.

Suited Garbage

- Suited Kings 2-8, Suited Queens 2-7, Suited Jacks 2-7, All non Broadway 3 gappers or more.
- Why they are Trouble Hands: Rarely hit and when they do are usually not the nuts.
- Raising with them from any position is usually a mistake.
- Calling raises with them is almost always a mistake.
- Calling three bets with them is almost always a mistake.
- Shoving Suited Kings and Queens when extremely short stacked (5 BB or less) is okay.
- Three bet bluffing with these hands can be okay in certain circumstances.
- Not playing most of these hands at altogether would not be a huge mistake and is better than misplaying them.

Hands that can Become Trouble

- Connectors, One Gappers, and Baby aces
- Why they can become Trouble Hands: You don't let go of them when you should, you play them for the wrong reasons (ie pairs instead of straights), and you play them when you shouldn't (ie not deep enough).
- Raising with them is usually okay, even from early position, if done as part of a blended strategy (ie you are generally tight and can represent bigger hands when you raise early than most).
- Calling raises in position is okay when deep.
- Should usually always be played suited.
- Your goal with these hands is two pair, straights, and flushes.
- Its perfectly fine to fold these hands if you hit a pair on many dangerous boards.
- These hands should generally not be played once the stacks get shallow (20-30 BB average and below).