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FISH



A Step-by-Step Guide to
START DOMINATING
ONLINE POKER GAMES

Beat The Fish

A Step by Step Guide to

Start Dominating Online Poker Games

By [BTF Team](#)

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INTRODUCTION

In the modern days of online poker, being a consistent winner can really be a challenge. Compared to the golden years of early and mid-2000's, much more effort is required to make money on the virtual felt these days.

There are several reasons for this. First of all, the fish to solid players ratio is much smaller than it used to be, almost to the point where there are more regs than the fish. Further, even your average fish today knows a whole lot more about poker than the fish ten years ago. The information is everywhere, on websites, in books, and videos, often very cheap to obtain and frequently completely free.

All this has led to discussions and speculations about whether online poker is dead or not. If you enjoy watching poker shows or are a frequent visitor of one of numerous poker forums, you are probably aware of the phrase (There is) no money in poker; everybody's solid. And although this phrase is often used in a semi-joking manner, there is certainly some truth to it.

Many players these days are, indeed, solid, but that doesn't mean that there is no money to be made. It just means that to make money from online poker in this day and age, you need to put in more work both on and off the tables.

This book will give you step by step guide to learn everything you need to know to locate and beat different types of fish swimming in the virtual poker pool. You will learn how to prepare before the games, how to pick the games, handle your poker bankroll, deal with the variance, and much more.

If you are reading this book, that means you are already making first necessary steps towards crushing the fish because there are many casual players out there even today who don't work on improving their game. By reading and applying tips from this book, you will be miles ahead of them in terms of preparation and knowledge.

Likewise, many players used to be decent but stopped working on their game. Poker is the game that always develops and those who don't keep the pace will quickly turn from winners to losers.

One thing you need to understand before proceeding to the next page is that this book is not a solution to all your online poker problems. It is rather a guide to steer you in the right direction. If you are committed to improving your game, then you will find very useful tips on how to do that, but you will have to put in some work.

When it comes to beating online poker, two things are the most important: hard work and passion for the game. However, if you have the passion, then it will not be hard for you to put in the hours to both play and study the game. There is always something new to learn for those looking and people who do that consistently are usually the ones who make it all the way to the top!

Note: The term poker used in this book applies to the most popular variation played today, i.e. No Limit Texas Hold'em.

I GENERAL ADVICE

1. Getting into the right mindset

Before you even consider starting to play, you need to always think about your mindset. The bulk of your results will depend at least as much on your approach as on your theoretical knowledge. Feeling depressed or tired and sitting down to play is not the right way of doing things. That's what fish do and that's why you will end up taking their money.

The game of poker can be very taxing on several levels: mental, emotional, and even physical if you play long sessions. If you sit down to play feeling down and expecting to lose, you most likely will. A few bad beats, some ugly suck outs, and you will get into a state of mind where you don't want to quit but just don't care about what happens anymore.

Before you start a session, make sure you feel good or rather just skip on play altogether. If playing poker is an important stream of income for you, then there are things you can do to get into that positive mind frame. For some, a half an hour run will do the trick, for others, it might be listening to a few of their favorite songs.

Do whatever is necessary but always try to join the games feeling strong and ready to crush. If you make it a point to do this every time before a session, I can guarantee that your results will improve. Some other things you need to avoid doing are playing hungry, drunk, or preoccupied. You need to be able to focus completely for the next few hours.

2. Picking your battleground

There are numerous online poker rooms to pick from and there are several important factors to consider when making your decision. However, one factor that trumps all the rest is how many fish are there at the tables?

If your goal in poker is to make money, then you don't want to be playing against other good players. Sure, it can be challenging to compete with talented online players, but in the long run, especially when one considers the rake, it will be very hard to make any profit at the end of the day.

Certain rooms are much better in this regard than the others. It is hardly a secret anymore that the rooms on iPoker have become heavily reg-infested because of the great rakeback deals that have been offered to dozens of thousands of players over the years.

On the other hand, there are rooms like 888 Poker and PokerStars where there are no such deals, making them less appealing to regular players looking to squeeze every last penny they can. I will not go into a debate here how important rakeback is vs. benefits of playing bad players. This book is about beating the fish, and you will find way more fish on rooms that don't incentivize regs with generous rakeback deals.

3. Managing your bankroll

Bankroll management has probably never been more important for online players. Yes, you will be able to find fish and they will give up their money to you, but sadly (for you), you are not the only one looking.

Those solid players mentioned in the introduction are on the lookout as well and very often they will be at your tables. You might try to avoid them but you will still have to battle with them quite frequently. Because of this, it is crucial to handle your bankroll properly.

The fish don't have a bankroll. They just deposit some money when they feel like playing and usually lose it all within a few hours or few days. Serious players always allocate a certain amount of money to act as their poker bankroll. This is imperative because it keeps you in check and prevents you from playing way over your head. Once you start doing that, even if you play a decent game, you become the fish, simply because you are playing with scared money.

Although different authors and players give different advice on bankroll management, I'd say that you should have at least 50-60 buy-ins for cash games, and probably 80-100 buy-ins for multi-table tournaments. This should be just enough to help you survive the variance, which can really be brutal at times.



This is, of course, given you are a winner in the games you play. No amount of money will help you if you can't beat the games you play in over a significant sample. To become and stay a winner, you should pay attention to the following tips.

4. Understanding and using poker software

Whether you like it or not, poker software has become an integral part of online games. You can try to avoid it (like the fish do) and convince yourself you don't need it, but by doing that, you will put yourself at a big disadvantage right off the bat.

Poker tracking software like **Poker Tracker** or **Hold'em Manager** can be a very powerful tool if used right. It will give you some valuable insight into your opponents' tendencies like how often they

defend their big blind, how frequently they c-bet, if they like to try and steal whenever an opportunity presents itself, etc.

This type of software can be very useful in identifying the fish because they will usually have very conspicuous numbers in terms of how often they see the flop and how passive or aggressive they are overall. A lot of things may have changed about online poker, but one constant remains: the fish like to see flops and love to call you down with weak hands. Using poker tracking software you will have this information available to you before even sitting down at a table.

5. Taking notes

Tracking software is just one part of the equation. Often, an experienced player will pick up on certain tendencies even before the statistical sample becomes big enough to be relevant. Because of this, taking notes as much as you can is paramount.

If you see a player at your table who keeps doing strange things, like calling three streets with the third pair, make sure to take a note. Always think about online poker as one big game that never really ends - there are just breaks. While this particular player might leave before you get to take advantage of his tendencies this time around, you might catch them some other time and you will be at an advantage over other players at your table since you will know who to target. Other players will need some time to figure it out and by the time they do, you might already be up a few buy-ins.

[Note-taking](#) can be a bit tedious, especially if you are playing several tables at once, but it will be well worth it. The ultimate way to beat the fish is doing something they'd never think about doing, like making detailed notes about specific players and their moves.

They are there to have fun; you are there to make money AND have fun doing it. There is a big difference.

6. Table selection

With time, you will have a lot of information about different players who frequent your online poker room of choice. You need to put that information to good use when selecting your table(s). Look for those tables where the fish is seated and try to get in.

Sometimes you might have to wait, but you are probably better off waiting around for few minutes then taking any seat available and playing against players that you don't really have an edge against. It will end up being a futile battle in which only the room wins by taking the rake from your pots. Sure, in any individual session you can run super hot and crush even the best regs, but in the long run, it will be a losing proposition.

Patience is an important trait of a winning poker player, so always try to practice it. Don't let yourself be tempted into playing an edgeless game just for the sake of playing.

II AT THE TABLES

The first part of this book dealt with some general advice you should follow to crush the fish in your games, somewhat touching on the gameplay itself. This chapter focuses primarily on the in-game strategy, from hand selection to dealing with bad beats.

1. Defining your starting hand range

Strategies and ideas about Texas Hold'em may change but the position and solid starting hand ranges never go out of style. It would require way too much space to try and describe different hand ranges for all different game formats here. However, depending on your variation of choice, you will need to find a solid chart or two defining what hands to play from what position. You can find some advice on this topic on our site BeatTheFish.com and many other places online.

Trying to figure out what to play just from your head will usually not work out to your advantage. People have put a lot of thought and calculations into making these charts, so you should use them as much as possible. Don't let yourself think that you are above it all and that you don't need any of those things. Once again, that's how the fish play and that's why you see them raise 7-3 off from under the gun. Any two can win, right?

2. Taking advantage of bad players' tendencies

Armed with the stats and notes, you have a lot of information about the way some of your opponents play. Take full advantage of this knowledge. Again, this book would go on for far too long if I wanted to describe every possible scenario where this knowledge can be applied, but here are a few examples.



a) You are playing against the fish who never folds to c-bets. Knowing this to be the case, you should just stop c-betting altogether when you don't have it and fire big continuation bets when you do

connect. The fish will not pay attention either way and you will make a lot of money off of them before they start adjusting, if they ever do it.

b) There is the fish at your table who loves to 3-bet with all sorts of hands and continues to be aggressive on the flop. You should probably stop calling them with your mediocre hands and instead wait for monsters. When you do find huge hands like Aces, Kings, or Queens, don't be quick to 4-bet. Instead, just call and let them commit more chips on the flop. This kind of player can put you to some tough decisions, but knowing their play style, you simply have to be prepared to [put your money in with big hands](#). If they happen to suck out on you, so be it.

c) If there is a player with abnormally WTSD stat (went to showdown), this probably means they love to call with all sorts of hands and rarely give up if they connect in any way. Against these players, you should keep barreling with your strong hands and forget about pot control. These are the type of players that you want to be up against as much as possible as they simply hand their money over to anyone who is willing to take it.

3. Dealing with reg-fish

Not all fish are created equal. While there are some rather obvious examples of the fish you will encounter at the tables; there are also players that can be referred to as "reg-fish." These players are not your classic examples of people just throwing their money away but because their learning curve stopped somewhere along the way, their game has some very evident and exploitable leaks.

One such example is players who play way too tight for their own good. They've learned that the TAG (tight-aggressive) approach is the right one and are adamantly sticking to their guns. While tight is undoubtedly right, it can easily turn into a leak if taken too far. These players give up their blinds way too easily and don't use their position nearly enough to steal the pots which are there for the taking.

On the other end of the spectrum are those players who take the aggression too far. You will usually have a big number of hands on these players and you will recognize them as regulars, but their frequent 3-bets and 4-bets will leave them wide open to potential exploits.

The point is, just because someone plays every day and has raked in dozens of thousands of hands in your database it doesn't necessarily mean they are good. Recognize these players and take advantage of their leaks just like you take advantage of the regular variety fish.

4. Handling bad beats and suck outs

The bitter-sweet thing about playing the fish is that they will give you action with almost any two cards if they feel like playing. In the long run, this is a very profitable position to be in, but over the short term, when you find yourself on the wrong side of the variance, this can be very frustrating.

Having your pocket Aces cracked by random two pair or someone getting there with their three-card flush on the flop against your top set can be a tough pill to swallow. One thing you have to keep telling yourself at times like these is that you mustn't allow for the hunter to become the prey.

You will be tempted to convince yourself that if they can do it - so can you. This can lead to you widening your range and chasing your losses by trying to hit a "hidden straight" with 2 - 5 off and similar nonsense. As soon as you notice this happening, it is time to quit. Successful players can

control their emotions but until you can, just walk away. There will always be another table waiting for you when you cool off.

5. Stop - loss limits

This advice goes hand in hand with the previous one. Just like you can get tilted by an individual beat, you can also be moved off your A game when you realize you've dropped several buy-ins in one night. The result will, once again, be the same: widening your hand range, starting to play crazy and without proper control.

Setting a stop - loss limit after several buy-ins (five, seven, ten, depending on the player) can be a really good idea if you have a hard time dealing with losses and feel like you have to end every session in the black. The fact is that's just not going to happen. Losing sessions are a part of poker (yes, even big losing sessions).

Self-established stop-loss limits are sometimes hard to follow as you will be tempted to try just a few more buy-ins, which totally defeats the purpose. Because of this, people have come up with software like Tilt Breaker, which will automatically prevent you from playing for a certain period of time after you've reached your session or daily limit.

III AWAY FROM THE TABLES

Developing your poker knowledge happens as much, if not more, at the tables as it does away from the tables. The time you set aside for studying and analyzing your hands will usually be the determining factor in whether you become a shark or remain in the pond. Following are some tips to observe when working on your game during the "down time."

1. Analyze your hands properly

Most players who take the game seriously are aware that they need to analyze their hands away from the tables. However, many do it in a completely wrong way, focusing on bad beats, cooler hands and situations where the unavoidable happened.

Instead of focusing on those massive pots where you got it in with your top set against an open-ended flush draw and pondering if you've done something wrong, focus on smaller and medium-sized pots. Those big ones you lost despite getting your money in good are just unlucky - they are almost never a problem.

One area where you should probably check your game for leaks are your river calls. I've seen many otherwise good players who leak way too much money on the river. The problem with river bets is that they are by nature the biggest (since the pot is big) and making loose river calls quickly adds up. If you notice that you pay way too much on the river with mediocre hands, you need to make a conscious effort in future sessions to avoid this. Plaster a big post-it note somewhere on your screen if you must, with big red letters saying "**stop paying them off on the river.**"



Other typically problematic area are continuation bets. Some players do them too much, others too few, but only the very best find that golden median where they do it just right. Always analyze your continuation bet frequencies and try to figure out where you could improve.

Other things to pay attention to are the 3-bet pots. Sometimes you will notice you call way too many 3-bets with mediocre hands hoping to hit a miracle and stack your opponents. Once you have a significant sample you will, no doubt, notice that things are not quite working out for you in that department.

2. Find someone to work with

While having a professional coach may be a good idea, it is also costly and usually not necessary if you stick to good table selection. Instead, find someone who also plays and try working with them. Compare your hands, check your stats, and see what you can come up with.

We are often biased about our own game, so a fresh pair of eyes can indicate some leaks that we've never noticed on our own or are just too stubborn to recognize. Since they will get the same thing from you, it is a type of cooperation that works well for all parties involved.

You could even create or join one of the numerous Skype study groups where people exchange their opinions and thoughts on different poker-related things. A good study group can really be useful and help you take your game to the next level. It is also a good way to deal with frustration and bad variance. Just don't overdo it - we all have to deal with bad beats.

3. Take advantage of an online poker forum

Although many players are a part of one poker community or another most of them, for whatever reason, don't really take advantage of the forum as much as they could. The strategy section is a great place to share your hands, ask your questions, and meet people who, like you, are looking for someone to work on their game with.

A good player takes advantage of every opportunity that presents itself - that's one of the most important things that sets sharks away from the fish. Don't be overly concerned about coming across inexperienced or "clueless." While there are always resident trolls to put you down, there are also numerous good players always willing to share their knowledge and advice.

Since it costs nothing to use poker forums, you'd be amiss not to fully utilize all the opportunities they provide. Post your hands regularly and comment on posts of others. Even if your opinion is wrong, someone will point that out and you will again learn something new.

4. Make good use of available learning materials

As I've already mentioned, the Internet is flooded with all sorts of poker learning materials nowadays: that's the number one reason the game became tougher. Luckily, there are still those who don't care or are too proud and self-confident to use them. They are the ones we usually term the fish.

When you have a wealth of resources available to you, why not use it? There are so many people who have already been where you are now willing to share their experience, either for free or for a price of few hamburgers. This can help you find and plug your leaks much faster than if you were just doing it on your own.

Pick your favorite medium. Some people prefer to learn by reading, others are more visual types and like videos. How you decide to learn doesn't really matter, as long as you can pick some new knowledge and apply it in your games.

With these learning materials, you will find out how to interpret stats, how to size your bets, and much, much more. As I said at the very beginning, it would be impossible to put it all in this relatively short book on a topic as broad as poker. Rest assured; [the knowledge is out there](#) for the taking as long as you are willing to reach out and seize it.

IV QUICK TIPS AND TRICKS

Although I told you that there is no quick recipe for success in online poker, there are still some useful tips and tricks you can apply when at the tables that should prove very profitable. These are some insights that I've gathered playing on different sites against various types of opponents and I believe they will be very useful additions to your game.

1. Limping big pairs

Although limping big pairs is not often a recommended strategy, there are certain situations where you can get away with it and actually make it very profitable.

If you find yourself at a table where there are one or two opponents who simply can't get enough of action and will almost always raise when no one before them does, take advantage of this when you finally pick up a big pair. In this particular setting, you can play anything between pocket Jacks and pocket Aces in much the same way.

Being the first or second player to act, just limp in and let the fish do what they've been doing the entire night. Once the action gets back to you, especially if there was another caller in between, make a really substantial raise. This type of a player will rarely fold to a reraise because they love the action too much.

When you make a big raise, you will be pretty much committing yourself to the pot and should be prepared to put the rest of your chips in the middle on the flop almost 100% of the time. Even if there is an over-card out there, this is a special type of situation where your opponent could have almost any two cards, so that Ace on the flop doesn't have to be bad for your pocket Kings or Queens.

Since the pot is huge and fish hate folding in huge pots, you might get called by a second or third pair and all you need to do then is fade their outs. If you don't, try not to worry about it. The next opportunity is just around the corner.

2. Set-mining

You may be 7.5:1 to hit your set on the flop, but when playing against particularly fishy opponents your implied odds go way up. If you are looking to flop a set against a player whom you've identified as an absolute calling station or an overly aggressive maniac, you should probably call any pocket pair in position if the preflop raise is not enormous.

Against these players, you will make a lot of money every time you hit and you will end up stacking them time and time again. One important thing to keep in mind when playing aggressive fishy opponents is to give up when you don't hit your set.

You may be tempted to call them down light with the pocket pair of Nines despite two overcards on the board because you know they will barrel with anything. Sometimes you will be right but because these players never stop firing, don't throw your money away. Wait until your set materializes and then take them for all they have.

3. Take the fish heads up

One of the most emphasized character traits of the online fish is that they are very proud and often think very highly of their game. On the other end of that spectrum are players who don't really care about playing well and are just there to gamble. Either way, if you can get them to play you heads up, you will be printing money.

Sometimes the fish will make an open invitation to anyone at the table to play them heads up and you should be ready to take it if you have enough information to know they are dreadful. Even if they want to play higher stakes, if it is not way above your head, you should oblige them. If your regular stakes are \$0.25/\$0.50 and the fish wants to play \$0.50/\$1, so be it.

At other times, the action will be too boring for them at a table full of tight players just waiting around for big hands. If you see them complaining in the chat, suggest you take it heads up. You will have the fish all to yourself in a game format where the skill element is much more important than in traditional ring games.



4. Put your fishy opponents on tilt

Playing against fish is already great, but playing against the fish on tilt is awesome. Once they start tilting, whatever modicum of restraint and control they had goes out the window and the money starts flying.

Not all types of fish are easily tilted but you will quickly recognize those that are. They will complain in the chatbox about their "big" hands losing all the time to these "bad players." If you flop a set and stack them, they will keep telling you how horrible you played the hand and how they will take all your money.

These are already signs of severe tilt developing. You can push it further by needling them in the chat and provoking them to focus more on talking and less on playing. This will never work against good players, many of whom don't even have the chat feature on, but it can do wonders when playing against the fish.

5. Using overbets

Good players know that it makes zero sense to pay \$3 for a \$1 pot to try and hit your open-ended straight draw. The fish don't. Once you've recognized a player who chases his draws against all odds, it is time to capitalize on that fact.

It may seem counterintuitive to make bets of 1.5 or 2 times the pot, but the only reason you don't usually do it is that you will never get called by a worse hand. If you can get away with it, there is no reason not to do it.

One especially funny situation is when you already have a monster hand that can't be cracked even if the draw comes in. Your initial instinct will be to slowplay it, but against this type of an opponent you shouldn't do it. Instead, make a big bet and convince him even more that you are trying to push him around. Stacking the fish this way can be very gratifying.

CONCLUSION

While there is so much more, I could talk about and many sections could be much more detailed, I believe that this book achieves its primary purpose. Its idea is to serve as your handbook of "first aid" kit of sorts. The advice, recommendation, and suggestions contained within should help you develop the right approach to the game and help you start on the path of beating online fish for some serious money.

I would love to be able to offer you a magic solution to the complicated poker equation, but that's just impossible. In the end, it gets down to how much you are willing to apply yourself and deal with the variance which is a harsh, but unavoidable part of the game.

This book does not contain the basic rules or odds, as it is intended for those who have already made their first steps into the world of online poker. Of course, you can find numerous articles covering this topic on our site BeatTheFish.com. I've tried to focus more on actual things you need to do to develop as a player. Knowing basic odds and math behind the game goes without saying.

Certain steps on this path will be harder than the others, like learning to use a full potential of a poker tracking software. There are a lot of numbers whose meaning you will need to learn, but rest assured it will be well worth it. It will give you a tremendous edge over the fish. Likewise, note taking can be somewhat tedious or distracting, but it will help you make plays you otherwise couldn't make.

I truly hope these pages will help you become a better player. The story you may have heard about poker being dead is just a fairytale. The game has become harder so people are less inclined to put in the required hours to actually become better than an average Joe. Don't be disheartened by that. Good things come to those who seek them and it is no different with poker. If you keep learning and improving, always trying to stay one step ahead from a common variety fish, you will succeed.

In the end, I will emphasize once again the importance of the bankroll management. While you may feel pumped and ready to take over the poker world by storm, make sure you start at the level you are comfortable with. If your losses at the tables start influencing your everyday life, you are doing it wrong.

Above all, have fun and enjoy your learning curve. If you can do that, your chances of success will increase immensely. Just like with any hobby or profession, if you enjoy what you are doing, nothing is hard or impossible. If that's the way you think about poker and truly try to apply the steps from this book, I can hardly see you not succeeding.

Good luck out there and see you at the tables!