

10 Awesome Online Poker Tells to Help You Win More Cash



A detailed look into ten of the most common online poker tells to help you boost your win rate at the tables

Introduction

In this article, I'd like to discuss various **online poker tells**, their possible meaning, their general degree of reliability, and how you can use each as a false tell. Just as I would caution you not to put too much emphasis on live poker tells as part of your overall strategy, I would do the same for online poker tells.

Adopting sound poker fundamentals and playing a solid game will maximize your profits much more than **wasting too much of your time** searching for minute (or nonexistent) tells from your opponents.

With the overall horrendous level of play online, you can become a long-term winner simply by waiting for opportunities with [premium hands](#) and throwing your opponents enough rope to hang themselves with.

With that caution aside, I've encountered a number of **fairly reliable** online poker tells that I have incorporated into my game. I consider them reliable based on countless hours of play and witnessing the same correlating patterns time and time again.

Of course, you'll occasionally fall for a reverse tell or realize after the fact that **there really was no tell**, but any pattern that seems to be detectable 60-70% of the time gives you at least another piece of information to make the optimal play for the specific situation.

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What are online poker tells?

Before I dive into specific tells, readers may wonder how online poker tells even exist. After all, isn't a tell a **physical tick or mannerism** that gives away the hand strength?

While physical tells certainly play a factor in brick and mortar cardrooms, a tell is **any pattern or action** that inadvertently gives away information about a hand. In online poker, the only information that you receive from an opponent is the time he takes to bet, how much he bets, and any possible chat box activity.

Betting patterns and, to a lesser degree, **betting time** can also be significant tells if read properly for a specific opponent. Also, keep in mind that these tells apply mostly to no-limit games.

Instant check

Reliability: Medium-to-high

Hand Strength: Low or occasionally very high from a tricky opponent

Indications: The instant check online poker tell most likely means that your opponent has used the "Check/Fold" pre-action.

This occurs most often when the big blind has a trash hand and will fold to any raise. Your opponents may also use this beyond the flop in any position if they haven't connected and are playing multiple tables.

If the check isn't instant but extremely quick, it usually also indicates a weak hand from an **impatient player** ready to get to the next hand. While players often slowplay monster hands, they usually have to think about doing so for at least a second or two.

This certainly isn't a foolproof tell, but is accurate enough to help you steal your **fair share of small pots**. Be wary of ragged flops after an instant check on the big blind; this is the type of flop that hits trash hands ready to fold preflop.

How to use to your advantage: Tend to bet out in position after an instant check from your opponent. Also, try using the "Check" and not "Check/Fold" when you have a big hand to throw off your opponents who also use this online poker tell.

I still remember an online hand against a known professional who used the instant check heads-up in position to **induce a bet from me** on the river when he had trip 6s and I had pocket Aces. Try it out occasionally as a reverse tell.



When your opponent decides to make a river overbet, you should give up 90%+ of the time, unless you have a very specific info on that particular player

All-in overbet on the river

Reliability: High

Hand Strength: Usually the nuts or an unlikely big bluff

Indications: A move that has become more popular recently is the all-in overbet on the river.

This is mostly done to fool opponents into thinking that the player would never make such a huge bet if he really wanted to get paid off. Don't fall for it unless you have some **specific information** on your opponent.

A popular use for the all-in overbet is from players with a full house when it's likely their opponent also has a flush or if they've rivered an unlikely hand like a runner-runner flush. **David Sklansky** recommends this type of play in similar situations so you'll find it increasingly popular at the tables.

How to use to your advantage: Rarely call such a gross overbet without the nuts. I would estimate that 80-90% of the time you see this type of hand go to showdown, the overbettor rather than the overcaller will win.

Knowledgeable opponents know this so you can **occasionally use this move as a bluff** if you're confident that your opponent doesn't have a huge hand. However, be aware that it's a very high-risk and high-expense bluff that probably could have succeeded without such a huge bet.

Check-raising the minimum

Reliability: High

Hand Strength: About 50/50 between a big hand or a bluff

Indications: This is certainly one of those online poker tells that requires your knowledge about the specific player.



A minimum check-raise is not the most reliable online poker tell, as it can be an indication of both, a big hand and a bluff

The minimum check-raise is certainly a tell, but it's one that narrows your opponent's possible holdings to **the two extremes**. You'll very rarely see this play with a medium-strength hand.

How to use to your advantage: Use your previous knowledge and/or [notes](#) on the player to decide which hand strength is more likely. Many players try this play if they feel your bet is fishy or seems like an obvious continuation bet.

I often call with a medium-to-strong hand when facing this play and see what happens on the turn. A player who check-raises the minimum and checks again on the turn indicates a **failed bluff**.

Donk betting (leading) the flop

Reliability: Medium

Hand strength: Weak

Indications: Your opponent has a weak hand and wants to try and win a pot by preventing your [continuation bet](#).

From my experience at online cash tables, donk bet on the flop usually **indicates weakness**. When a player from the blinds decides to lead into you after just calling preflop, more often than not he will be holding a weak hand and bets in hopes of you will go away. This is especially true at lower limits.

How to use to your advantage: Go ahead and raise these weak looking donk bets. High percentage of time you will end up picking the pot just as if you had c-bet, but with extra money added. Of course, stay wary of observant players who could turn this habit against you.

Ranting in the chat box over a bad beat

Reliability: High

Indications: TILT!

Ranting, swearing, and insulting opponents who beat them in a hand shows an obvious lack of emotional control. If these players stay in the game, **they're sitting ducks** for losing another big hand due to their ego and/or desire to get even. This is a very reliable online poker tell.

How to use to your advantage: Your [implied odds](#) are huge against a tilting player. If you can hit a set against their overpair or spike some other unlikely hand, you're probably going to get paid off. Tend to play your strong hands fast and don't bother to slowplay.

Tilting players usually get involved in another big pot out of frustration so target them with hands that you want to play a big pot with. If you're the player who put the last [bad beat](#) on them - even better! Many weak online players with weak personalities will make their #1 priority to **get revenge on players** they feel have wronged them.

Let them do it when you've got the nuts!



When you see a player going off in the chat box, that's one of the most reliable online poker tells, indicating they are on an uber-tilt.

Posting blinds early from late position

Reliability: Low

Indications: According to many manuals, this is supposed to be an online poker tell that indicates an impatient player.

I really don't put any faith in this tell, especially at the \$2/4 or lower stakes. With blinds that low, why not get in a few extra hands when you already have a positional advantage? If you feel like **playing right away** for a couple of extra bucks, does this automatically make you a loose player?

I don't think so!

How to use to your advantage: If everyone folds to you in late position after posting the blinds prematurely, try throwing in a raise for a quick steal. You'll look like you have a strong hand as you are putting extra money into the pot that you could have played for "free". You also cultivate the table's mistaken perception that you're a loose player.



Posting blinds early from a late position is not the most reliable of online poker tells. Sometimes a player may just be itching to get in action, which doesn't necessarily mean he is bad

Posting blinds from early position with an odd buy-in

Reliability: High

Indications: This usually indicates a player on "scared" money who has just lost on another table.

A buy-in of something like \$134.05 probably means the player has **bought in for everything** left in his account. Posting the blinds a hand or two before they would have come around naturally shows extreme eagerness to get right back into the action.

How to use to your advantage: This type of player will tend to play **loose and fast**, hoping to catch a flop and double up quickly. Tend to put pressure on this player when you have positional advantage or feel that you have a card advantage.

Limp-calling a lot of hands

Reliability: High

Indications: A bad player who doesn't quite understand the game

You don't win in poker by playing passively, period. You may have a good session here and there when the deck hits you in the face, but **passive approach** will cause you a lot of headache. If you notice a player who limp-calls a lot of hands when someone behind him raises, you can automatically assume [he is pretty bad](#).



If a player constantly limps and then keeps calling raises from players behind him, this is probably the player you should target

How to use to your advantage: Try to isolate this player by making somewhat larger raises so to isolate him and play him heads up in pots. This kind of a player will rarely cause you any troubles, as they will usually play aggressively when they have the goods and will end up just calling you down with weak holdings.

Taking an excessive amount of time to bet

Reliability: Medium-to-high

Hand Strength: Usually quite strong or occasionally a creative bluff

Indications: One of the classic online poker tells is the extreme delay in making a bet or especially a raise.

While online players often react slowly due to the popularity of playing multiple tables, if a player breaks from his usual betting time by delaying and then **making a big raise** it usually indicates strength.

This is an old-fashioned case of "**weak means strong**". The bettor appears to deliberate because he isn't sure about his action but in reality, he is simply acting and waiting to pounce.

How to use to your advantage: Tend to shy away from delayed big bets. At the same time, you may use this method to pull off the occasional bluff against the opponents who also know this tell.

Check-raising the river

Reliability: High

Hand strength: Usually nuts or virtual nuts. On occasion it will be an elaborate bluff

Indications: This is an online poker tell you can use in both live and online poker games with a high degree of certainty. Check-raise on the river is rarely a bluff.

You know that bad gut feeling you get when you get **check-raised on the river** holding a decent, but not nuted hand? It's there for a reason, as more often than not, the raiser will show up with a nuts or very close to it. Unless you are playing in high stakes games against a bunch of tough pros, this is your signal to get out of the dodge.

How to use to your advantage: Just stay disciplined and don't try to hero call here too often. You will just be throwing good money after bad.

Conclusions about online poker tells

While there are countless numbers of strategic elements you should incorporate into your game before bothering with tells, some of the scenarios outlined above can help you **stay clear of obvious big hands** or take away pots from seemingly weak ones.



Online poker tells are just a small segment of your overall strategy,
but knowing a few reliable ones can never hurt

While online poker players don't have the luxury of watching out for trembling hands or nervous ticks, **the key to online poker tells** is watching out for deviations in betting time and reading betting patterns.