



Table Game Etiquette

Introduction

Everyone will benefit when you know the basics of gambling protocol before you sit down to play. Few things are more uncomfortable and disruptive than a beginner at a table game who doesn't know what to do and depends too much on the dealer for guidance.

Before playing your first table game, ask if your casino offers gaming instructions. Many casinos will familiarize you with the major games during a periodic tour that includes the rules and how to play. Some casinos also offer a designated table where you can use fake chips to practice.

If these options aren't available, you can observe a game from behind before sitting down. Pay close attention to procedure, and do your best not to disrupt the game when you join it.

Buying In

Here are some other useful pointers for making yourself welcome at a table and enjoying your play:

- Always understand the rules before you sit down.
- Buy or cash in chips only between hands. If you sit down while a hand is in progress, wait for it to conclude and then buy in. Use the intervening time to prepare your money.
- When you buy in, the dealer may ask what denomination of chips you prefer. Be aware that red chips are \$5, greens are \$25 and blacks are \$100. Some high-limit tables include additional colors.

If you buy in for \$100 or less, consider using all red chips. If you buy in for \$100–\$500, you could ask for \$100 in red chips and the rest in green. It's also a good idea to ask for \$10 in "silver" or \$1 tokens. This shows you are willing to tip and helps establish quick rapport with the dealer.

If you want change for large chips, you can always get it later. You are usually not allowed to trade up in denomination except when leaving the table. If you have too many red chips and are betting over \$25, then bet only red chips until your stack is reduced. The dealers will pay you off in the largest denominations possible.

If you bet \$20 and win, dealers will often take one of your red chips and give you a green. This is a subtle way that casinos get you to bet more. While you shouldn't feel hesitant to make change for large chips, be respectful of other players by not constantly breaking one green chip at a time.

When you cash out, the dealers prefer that you trade smaller chip denominations for larger ones. Between hands, give the dealer neat stacks of chips for counting and changing in.



New players are often told several times to only touch their cards with one hand. If you find you cannot break the two-hand habit, try sitting on one hand. Some table games such as Caribbean Stud Poker do not allow you to touch your cards at all until the dealer turns on a light.

- Never touch your bet once the first card has been dealt. Wait until the hand is over.
- Don't drink alcohol excessively while playing a table game.
- If you must smoke, be courteous to non-smokers by maximizing the time between cigarettes. When you exhale, do so away from other players and the dealer. When you are done with your cigarette, put it out sufficiently and don't let smoke continue to rise from the ashtray.
- In blackjack, don't rebuke another player for the way he or she plays a hand. There is a mistaken belief that unnecessary hitting causes everyone to lose at blackjack.
- Don't over-depend on the dealer for advice. Dealers may be helpful and friendly up to a point, but they also don't want to be blamed if you follow their advice and lose, so they might become vague if you ask too many questions about strategy.
- Don't look for sympathy from the dealer if you have a bad hand. Simply play on, make your decisions and don't hold up the game.

Tipping

Tipping dealers and cocktail waitresses is considered standard practice.

A good approach is to tip dealers 2/3 according to their service and 1/3 according to how much you are winning or losing. There is no prescribed social norm, but you can consider calculating your tip to be about one half of your average bet per hour. The smaller your average bet, the greater the ratio of tip to bet should be.

Cocktail waitresses should receive \$1 per drink, and water counts. The website cocktaildoll.com offers more information on proper cocktail-waitress etiquette.

Tipping in electronic games – namely slots, video poker and video keno – is a matter of much debate with no established norm. A good rule of thumb is to tip 0.5%–1.0% on any jackpot requiring a hand pay. The smaller the jackpot, the larger the tip percentage.



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