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## How To Play Pai Gow Poker

By Adel Awwad

If you like poker, you'll love learning how to play Pai Gow. Pai Gow poker is a variation of

seven-card stud, based on a Chinese game of the same name played with dominoes. Learning how to play Pai Gow poker is a bit more challenging than other poker variations, but Pai Gow is a lot of fun and can pay off big at the casinos. You can learn how to play Pai Gow in an internet casino that operates on credit or point bets instead of cash; then once you figure out how to play Pai Gow, you can move up to for-money games.

The rules for how to play Pai Gow are similar to straight poker as far as winning hands go, but game play is somewhat different. You should first know that Pai Gow is played with 53 cards—the standard 52-card deck, plus one joker. This makes five-of-a-kind a possibility in Pai Gow poker. In standard poker, the highest possible hand is a Royal Flush (five cards of the same suit in sequential order from Ten to Ace); however, a five-of-a-kind will beat a Royal Flush. Also, the next-highest hand beneath a Royal Flush is a straight flush from Ace to Five. One of the most exciting aspects of how to play Pai Gow is the possibility of getting five-of-a-kind.

Another difference in how to play Pai Gow is that all seven cards are used to determine winnings. In Pai Gow, the dealer plays against the other players. To begin the game, each player puts up a stake. Then, seven cards are dealt face-down to each player. After the deal, each player other than the dealer picks up their cards and arranges them into a five-card hand and a two-card hand.

In learning how to play Pai Gow, it is important to note that players are not allowed to discuss their cards, or touch them after the split is made. The hand ranking for the five-card hand is as discussed previously, with five-of-a-kind being the highest possible. The only possibilities for the two-card hand are Pair or High Card. When players have arranged the two hands, they must then place them face-down on the table side by side, with the highest of their two hands first (so, for example, if a player has a pair of Aces and five unmatched cards, the two-card hand would be placed to the left of the five-card hand).

When all players have arranged their hands, the dealer does the same with his. At this point all hands are revealed and the payouts begin. In learning how to play Pai Gow, you should understand how

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winnings are awarded. Each player's five-card hand is compared with the dealer's five-card hand; and the same is done for the two-card hands. If both of your hands beat the dealer's, the payout is the amount of your stake at the beginning of the game. If you win one hand and the dealer wins the other, you keep your stake and receive no further payout (this is called a "push"). The dealer wins your stake if both of his hands beat both of yours. As with most casino games, in the event of a tied hand the favor goes to the dealer. Learning how to play Pai Gow is a great way to practice poker skills for seven-card stud games with minimal financial risk. Now you know how to play Pai Gow!

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### **The History Of Pai Gow**

**By Adel Awwad**

Tracing its roots to ancient Chinese gaming, Pai Gow is literally translated as "make nine". Pai Gow is a Chinese game, believed to be thousands of years old, and played with Chinese domino tile sets. The beauty of Pai Gow has attracted the curiosity of gaming audiences in cities such as Nevada and California.

In ancient Chinese, the translation of p'ai is a term designated both for cards and dominoes. The reason for the use on both objects is that there is no main difference between dominoes and cards in China. During the early Chinese dynasties, dominoes are precisely used as cards. Dominoes are packed and treated the same way as cards.

Prior to the birth of Pai Gow, there were already two old Chinese gambling games that may have been the reason for the development of Pai Gow. They are yu-p'u and yeh-tza. Some players consider the two games as card games. There are others, however, who consider that the game of yu-p'u to be similar to a modern poker dice or something similar to it. Only the game of yeh-tza might be considered as a card game since it literally means leaves. Many authors believe that the possibility of using leaves as cards is very apparent.

The movement of time and the availability of new materials paved the way for the formation Ku P'ai, which curiously resembles a game using dominoes. It is further believed that yu-p'u, the ancient form of gambling considered as poker dice game, is the root of Chinese domino games. A domino, after all, is nothing but a pair of dice placed side by side. Chinese dominoes, which could be traced from the writings during Song Dynasty (1120 AD), have developed since then. They are used in several tile-based games, namely, Pai Gow, Tien Gow, Gwat Pai, Che Deng, Tiu U, Kap Tai Shap.

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Pai Gow today is played very similar to many existing card games. The only main difference is that domino tiles are used instead of cards. The similarities to card games such as poker could make Pai Gow something to be enjoyed as a recreational card game. There is no doubt about it; those who begin to learn Pai Gow often end up becoming more than enthusiastic about the game. After all, it only takes a very short time to realize the beauty and ease in playing this popular Chinese game.

The popularity of Pai Gow has ushered into the development of Pai Gow Poker, an American version of the popular Chinese Pai Gow. It is a game played using cards, instead of the traditional dominoes, and is growing in popularity in various casinos as a source of amusement and fun.

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