



Poker Preflop System

The 4 Buckets Framework



OVERVIEW

Most players lose money before the flop not because they don't understand poker, but because they treat every hand the same.

This framework solves that.

Instead of guessing, you classify every hand into one of four buckets. Each bucket has a clear purpose, a clear way to play, and a clear way to avoid mistakes.



THE 4 BUCKETS

1) Premium / Value Hands

Examples: AA, KK, QQ, AK, AQ (most situations)

Purpose:

- Build big pots
- Extract maximum value
- Stack weaker hands

How they make money:

They are ahead of most hands before the flop and stay strong after the flop.

Rules:

- Always open
- 3-bet aggressively
- Avoid slow playing in most situations

Common Mistake:

Playing too passively and missing value.



2) Strong Broadways (Value + Playability)

Examples: KQ, KJ, QJ, JTs, ATs, AJs

Purpose:

- Win medium-sized pots
- Apply pressure in position
- Extract value from worse hands

How they make money:

They hit top pair with good kickers and can continue on many boards.

Rules:

- Open frequently, especially in late position
- Call raises in position
- Occasionally 3-bet depending on opponent

Common Mistake:

Overcommitting when dominated by stronger hands.



3) Speculative Hands (Implied Odds Hands)

Examples:

- Suited connectors (65s-T9s)
- Small pocket pairs (22-66)
- Suited aces (A2s-A5s)

Purpose:

- Hit strong disguised hands
- Win large pots when they connect

How they make money:

They rely on implied odds - winning big when they hit and losing small when they miss.



Requirements to play:

- Position
- Deep stacks (20x+ the raise)
- Opponents who will pay you off

Rules:

- Call in position
- Fold when conditions are not met
- Do not overplay weak pairs

Common Mistake:

Continuing when they miss or forcing action.



4) Trash / Marginal Hands

Examples:

- Offsuit connectors (98o, 87o)
- Weak offsuit aces (A6o, A7o)
- Random junk (J4o, T3o)

Purpose:

None.

How they perform:

They create dominated hands and difficult decisions.

Rules:

- Fold

Common Mistake:

Playing them out of boredom or curiosity.



The Decision System

Before playing any hand, run this checklist:

1. Which bucket is this hand in?
2. What is my position?
3. How deep are the stacks?
4. What action happened before me?

Then apply the rule set for that bucket.

Why This Works

Each hand type has a different job:

- Premium hands generate value
- Broadways apply pressure and extract value
- Speculative hands rely on implied odds
- Trash hands lose money

When you mix these roles, you lose.

When you follow them, decisions become simple and consistent.



Who This Is For

This framework is for:

- Cash game players struggling with consistency
- Players stuck breaking even or losing over large samples
- Players who feel unsure preflop and rely on instinct
- Players who experience repeated frustration from "bad spots"

Who Benefits Most

This system benefits players who:

- Want a structured, repeatable approach
- Are willing to fold more hands preflop
- Want to reduce variance and confusion
- Prefer clear rules over constant guessing



What This Fixes

- Overplaying weak hands
- Underplaying strong hands
- Calling raises without a plan
- Playing too many hands out of position

Final Principle

Not every hand is meant to be played.

Your edge comes from:

- Playing the right hands
- In the right spots
- For the right reasons

This framework removes emotion and replaces it with structure.

Follow the buckets, and your decisions become automatic.

