

When two players show a straight in Texas Hold'em, compare the **highest card in each player's best five-card straight**. The player with the higher top card wins. If both straights have the same top card, they tie and split the pot—unless one player can make a better five-card hand, such as a flush.

For example, a straight from 5 through 9 loses to a straight from 6 through 10. The 10-high straight wins because its **straight high card** is higher. Suits do not break the tie: a spade straight is not stronger than an otherwise identical heart straight.

This rule is simple, but home games and low-stakes tables produce plenty of confusion. Players may count the wrong five cards, treat an ace as if it can connect both ends of a straight, or assume a kicker decides the result. Here are the poker straight rules, examples, odds, and a few practical ways to check the hand.

How to Compare Two Straights

1. **Identify each player's best five-card hand.** In Hold'em, you can use both hole cards, one hole card, or none of them.
2. **Check whether each best hand is a straight.** A straight is five consecutive ranks, such as 6-7-8-9-10.
3. **Compare the highest card in each straight.** The higher top card wins.
4. **If the top cards match, the straights tie.** The players split the pot, unless another hand category—such as a flush—changes which five-card hand is best.

There are no kickers in a straight comparison. If Villain has 8-9 in the hole and you have A-2, but the board gives both of you the same 5-6-7-8-9 straight, the ace does not help you. You both have a nine-high straight, so the hand is tied if neither player can make a stronger hand.



Examples: Which Straight Wins?

Example 1: The higher top card wins

The board is 5♣-6♦-7♥-8♠-K♣. Player A holds 4♦-9♦. Player B holds 9♣-10♣.

Player A can make 5-6-7-8-9, a nine-high straight. Player B can make 6-7-8-9-10, a ten-high straight. Player B wins: the 10 is higher than the 9.

Example 2: The board supplies the straight

The board is 5♠-6♣-7♦-8♥-9♣. Player A holds A♣-K♦. Player B holds 2♣-2♦.

The board itself contains a nine-high straight. Neither player can make a higher straight using their hole cards, so both play the board and split the pot. The ace in Player A's hand is not a kicker to a straight and does not improve the board straight.

Example 3: A higher straight on the board does not always settle it

The board is 5♥-6♥-7♥-8♥-9♥. That board is both a nine-high straight and a flush. In fact, it is a straight flush. Players who cannot make a higher straight flush use the board's best five cards and tie. A player holding a higher heart might be able to make a higher flush or straight flush, depending on the exact board and rules in play. Always compare the best five-card hands—not just the straight each player first noticed.

Poker Straight Rules: The Ace and the Five-Card Limit

An ace can be high or low in a straight, but it cannot “wrap around.” The two legal ace-containing sequences are:

- **Wheel:** A-2-3-4-5. This is a five-high straight, the lowest possible straight.
- **Broadway:** 10-J-Q-K-A. This is an ace-high straight, the highest possible straight.

A-K-Q-J-10 is a straight, but Q-K-A-2-3 is not. The pokerhands.com ace cannot sit between a king and a two. A common table argument starts when someone sees an ace and tries to connect both ends of the rank sequence. The rule is firm: an ace is either above a king or below a two for that straight, never both at once.



Also remember that a Hold'em hand is always evaluated as the best five-card hand. If the board is 4-5-6-7-8, a player with 9-10 can make a nine-high straight, while a player with 2-3 can use the board's eight-high straight. The first player wins. You do not compare all seven cards or award extra credit for holding more cards that seem connected.

When Does a Straight Split the Pot?

A **split pot straight** happens when two or more players' best hands are the same straight. Usually, this occurs because the five-card board already contains the best straight available to everyone. If nobody can improve on it, the players still in the hand divide the pot equally.

For example, if the board is 8-9-10-J-Q with no possible flush, every player has a queen-high straight using the board. Hole cards that do not create a better hand are irrelevant. The pot is split between the players who reach showdown.

There can be an odd chip when the pot cannot be divided evenly. How the odd chip is awarded depends on the poker room or home-game rules. It does not mean one player had a stronger straight; the straights are still tied.

Hand Rankings: Where a Straight Fits

In standard Texas Hold'em, a straight beats three of a kind and loses to a flush. The complete hand ranking, from strongest to weakest, is:

1. Royal flush
2. Straight flush
3. Four of a kind
4. Full house
5. Flush
6. Straight
7. Three of a kind
8. Two pair
9. One pair
10. High card

A royal flush is the ace-high straight flush, 10-J-Q-K-A, all in one suit. It is not a separate type of straight for comparing ordinary straights: a straight flush outranks a regular straight because it is a stronger hand category.

For a sense of how rare strong hands are, five-card poker references often list four of a kind odds as **0.0240% (1 in 4,164)**, also stated as about **1 in 4,165**. That figure is for a five-card hand, not the frequency of making four of a kind from seven available cards in Texas Hold'em. Check what hand size a chart uses before applying its probabilities to a Hold'em situation.

Straight Draw Odds: Flop, Turn, and River

A straight draw means you currently need one or more cards to complete a straight. Do not confuse a straight draw with a flush draw: a flush draw needs cards of the same suit, while a straight draw needs consecutive ranks. A hand can have both draws at once, but they are different ways to improve.

The following common estimates assume you can see your cards and the flop, and that the stated number of outs is clean—meaning those cards make your hand without also giving an opponent a winning hand.

Draw Outs Chance to hit on turn Chance to hit by river from flop
Open-ended straight draw 8 8/47 = about 17.0% About 31.5%
Gutshot straight draw 4 4/47 = about 8.5% About 16.5%

An open-ended draw has eight cards that can complete the straight. For example, with 6-7 on a 4-5-K flop, any 3 or 8 makes a straight. A gutshot has a missing rank in the middle: with 6-8 on a 4-5-K flop, a 7 completes the straight, giving four outs.

The “by river” figures include two chances to hit. For an eight-out draw, the calculation is $1 - (39/47 \times 38/46)$, which is about 31.5%. For a four-out draw, it is $1 - (43/47 \times 42/46)$, or about 16.5%. These are estimates, not guarantees: the turn can change the number of clean outs, and an opponent may already have a hand that beats your completed straight.

For instance, if you hold 6-7 on a 4-5-K flop, an 8 completes a straight—but if the turn and river also create a possible flush, a straight card of that suit may not be a clean out. Count the actual cards that improve your best hand, and consider what the opponent could hold.

Use Printable Cheat Sheets and Equity Charts

Beginners often make faster, more accurate decisions with a small reference nearby. **Printable cheat sheets** can show the hand rankings, the ace-low and ace-high straight sequences, and common draw odds. Keep one simple enough to scan during a home game. A ranking chart is particularly useful when players disagree about whether a straight beats a flush or whether a kicker matters.

Equity charts can help with a different question: how often does your hand win or tie against an opponent’s range? A straight draw’s chance to arrive is not the same as your equity. If your draw completes about 31.5% of the time, you still may not win every time it hits, and you may win some pots without completing it. Equity depends on both players’ cards, the board, and the remaining cards.

When using charts, check that they match the situation you are studying: preflop or postflop, number of players, and whether ties are included. A chart for one opponent is not a reliable substitute for a multiway pot calculation.

A Quick Showdown Checklist

- Write down each player’s best five-card hand.
- For two regular straights, compare the top rank: the higher **straight high card** wins.
- If both top ranks match, check whether the board plays and whether another hand category changes the result.
- Do not use suits to break a tie, and do not add a kicker to a straight.
- Remember the ace can be high or low, but cannot wrap around.

I'll be honest with you: so when both players say they have a straight, ignore the claim and compare the actual best five cards. A nine-high straight beats an eight-high straight; two nine-high straights tie. If Villain has a higher top card and you have a lower one, Villain wins—unless your best five-card hand is actually a different, stronger hand category. Exactly.. That is the cleanest way to settle the hand without turning the showdown into a debate.