

Symbol	Meaning
	Difficulty 1 of 4
	Too loose
	Too tight
	Limped
	Played out of position
	Plays fit or fold (check folds flop)
	Bet sizing tell
	Maximizing value
	Making a thin value bet
	Player has predictable or straightforward play
	Bluffing with an empty or nearly empty range
	Tilty, or lashing out
	Slowplay
	Changing gears
	Floating, intention to bluff later
	Bluff, with potential to bluff more as needed
	Once and done bluff
	Bluff with the intention to follow up on next street
	Bluff with intention of bluffing all three barrels
	Semi-bluff: bluffing with a good chance of improving
	Fold

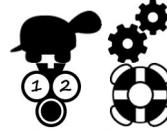
1) Loose Aggressive players are beaten by information deficits and backwards play.



(Villain's flaw)



(Difficulty rating)
Related Missions: 5, 11, 14, 16



(Hero's exploit)

While he never said a word at the table, this player was generally ticking off the table by listening to loud music through his headphones, constantly three-betting pre-flop and giving off an arrogant vibe. I had seen him opening pretty light, even UTG with hands like KJo and A5s.

\$2-\$5 Foxwoods	Image:	Action:	Hand:	Starting Stack:
UTG	LAG "Internet Kid"	\$25		Covers
...				
Cutoff	Hero	Call		\$640
...				

This player was opening many pots for a raise, and betting so often that he must frequently have a weak hand. Because of this, we are ahead of his range, even his UTG opening range. We might even have him dominated with a better Ace. Lots of frustrated opponents would be tempted to raise here to stand up to the bully. We are ahead, so we should raise. Right? No. Resist this temptation.

Although we have position and the chance to isolate, we should just call instead. We do this because we know something about his hand, but all he will know about ours is that we choose to play. Good LAGs know they have a weak range, so when people stand up to them they are safe to fold. Good LAGs can thrive because their opponents do not hide information well. Betting into the LAG when you have a hand tells him he should fold. When people passively call them, they are more in the dark. When faced with this passivity they tend to predictably bet. Their victims fold often enough that the strategy works.

When we give minimal information by calling, we start creating an information deficit. His predictable error is that he tends to barrel into

opponents, trying to get them to fold. If we hit top pair top kicker or an Ace we can profitably call down three streets. We know the error he tends to make. We want to set up situations where he is likely to make that error.

	Pot: \$57	Range:	Stack:
LAG Internet Kid (UTG)	\$50		Covers
Hero (Cutoff)	???		\$615

Since we believe Villain bets nearly 100% of his range here, his bet does not carry any information. If we just fold, that plays into his game plan. He bets so often because most flops miss most hands. When ABC players miss, they fold to his bet. On the rare occasion that his opponents hit a flop, he can just fold to aggression. He wins enough small pots to make this strategy profitable.

We are not going to fold, yet all we have is a bluff catcher. We cannot call with the hopes of catching a pair or folding to a bet on the turn. If we want this pot, we might have to fight for it. That often means bluffing when the showdown value of our Ace high is not going to be enough.

	Pot: \$57	Range:	Stack:
LAG Internet Kid (UTG)	\$50/Fold		Covers
Hero (Cutoff)	\$200		\$615

Think to ourselves, “What would a typical bad recreational player do here with a great hand like a set?” They would do exactly the wrong thing and stand up to the bully, giving him the information he needs to make a good fold. So that is what we do: raise it up. We threaten a second barrel of the bluff with a turn shove. We can also think from the LAG’s perspective. When he gets raised big like this what does he think we have? People very rarely make cold bluffs like this, and there are no big draws to be betting out with. Sets and big over pairs are the most likely holdings.

This also uses a concept known as leverage. When a bet on one street implies an even bigger bet on the next street, you get to threaten the all-in amount while only risking the smaller amount.

He open folded AhTh.

As he folded, he said, “I do not want to stack off with just top pair to your set.” Notice that he specifically says he does not want to stack off. He thought we were going to shove the turn. We got \$565 worth of fold-equity while only risking \$200. That is leverage in action.

Notice also the bet sizing. We made a strong bet, about the size of the pot. I see many people bluff at the pot for too small of amounts because they are afraid to risk more than that. The problem is the smaller raise is not very effective, so it loses money because it will get called too often. The smaller amount is actually the riskier bluff.

I was honestly surprised to see he was so strong there. I would not have tried to take him off that kind of hand had I known. Playing backwards worked well, he put me on exactly the hand I was hoping he would. LAGs have come to learn that kind of resistance is a big hand, so I used that to my advantage.

Notice also that we switched gears. We started out pre-flop slowplaying. Normally slowplaying is a bad idea, but against a LAG, this backwards play works well. When we missed the flop we needed to switch gears and play backwards a different way. We started bluffing when we had nothing even though the original plan was to just call if we connected with the flop.

This might seem like a shocking move to make, firing in a \$200 bet with nothing. This is not reckless aggression though – it is calculated. Look at how we folded out a hand that really hit this board. As far as flopping a pair goes, this was a perfect board for his ATs. Even so, he found a fold because this move looked so strong. Every other time this has been done to him, he was against a better hand. We are mimicking the play of ABC players that hit a big hand to get a fold when we want one.

This play was specific for this kind of loose aggressive player. He is smart enough to read hands and thinks that players only play back at him when they hit. Doing this to a nit would be a very bad plan.

Alternate line: Call flop, Bluff-raise turn				Pot: \$157	Range:	Stack:
10♠	6♥	2♣	7♠			
LAG Internet Kid (UTG)		\$120/Fold			Covers	
Hero (Cutoff)		Shove			\$565	

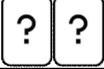
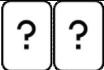
This alternate line of play would also be a reasonable plan since he would likely fold to this surprising aggression, just as he did in the actual line we took. This is a riskier play, but gets another \$120 into the pot before we bluff.

Alternate line: Call flop, Bluff turn				
	Pot: \$157	Range:	Stack:	
LAG Internet Kid (UTG)	Check/Fold		Covers	
Hero (Cutoff)	\$125		\$565	

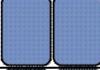
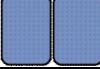
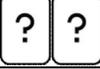
If he checks the turn, that gives us even more confidence that he has given up on his hand, making this bet a really high percentage play.



We started the above hand as a slowplay and turned it into a bluff. Here we play backwards again, only this time for value. We make it difficult for the LAG because even out of position we keep the information about our hand minimal.

\$1-\$2	Image:	Action:	Hand:	Starting Stack:
UTG	Limper	Call/Call		...
UTG+1	Unknown	Call/Call		...
...				
Cutoff	LAG	\$12		\$412
...				
Big Blind	Hero	Call		Covers

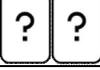
We are pretty happy to try and flop a set at this point. We look at the stack in front of the LAG, there is 40x the value of our call available to win. In addition, it is very likely two others will also call this bet. This immediately gives us 3.5x on our call in a situation where we flop a set once in eight flops. Having more people in the pot increases the chance someone will pay us off.

	Pot: \$49	Range:	Stack:
Hero (Big Blind)	Check/Call		Covers
Limper (UTG)	Check/Fold		...
Unknown (UTG+1)	Check/Fold		...
LAG (Cutoff)	\$35		\$400

There are straight draws and a flush draw on board here, but we have a premium hand that we need to protect. We should bet, right? No, not when this player has the lead in position. His problem is that he bets too much when he sees weakness. We need to feign that weakness to get as much money in this pot as possible. Against other more passive players that call too much, we could bet this hand out for value, hoping to get called by the draws or weaker made hands. We are hoping to get stacks in against the LAG. Can we do it? With \$400 to win and \$50 in the pot, a pot sized bet on every street easily gets it in. With even a 3/4 pot bet on every street, it is almost all in on the river. If one other player comes along just on the flop, then even a 3/4 pot bet will easily be all in by the river.

What about protecting against the draws? Let us give him one of the worst possible draws: 7c9c. He is still a 40%-60% dog on the flop to our set because of redraws. Because we have observed this player is willing to bet too often, we need to give him that chance. Because his range is so wide, any particular draw should not be that scary to us. If he has a made hand with a Queen, he will do the betting also.

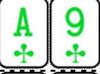
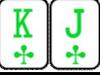
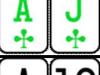
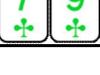
Imagine for a minute he has a weak Queen here and we lead out on the flop. He might call once but not twice. If we were to check to him though, he might bet two streets. Because of his wide range, he has air here often and a bet will just get him to fold. It is in his nature to bet into weakness. Let him.

	Pot: \$119	Range:	Stack:
Hero (Big Blind)	Check/???		Covers
LAG (Cutoff)	\$100		\$365

Most of the time, draws do not come in. What did come in was a nice barreling card. True to form, our LAG bets. With our call, he has \$265 left in a \$319 pot. Now it comes down to style and reads. What will get the money in? These are our options in order of preference:

- If he will call, shove the turn over his bet
- Minimum raise the turn over his bet and shove \$165 any river
- Call and evaluate river, but never fold the river

As the pot gets bigger, the need for deception goes down, and the need to take the pot goes up. The biggest fear is the flush card hitting on the river. Let us look at his odds with a few reasonable hands:

 Board				 Our hand	
The holding	Example	His odds	He will call turn check shove?	He will bet river on flush card?	He will bet river on non-flush card
Pair no draw	 <hr style="width: 20%; margin: 0 auto;"/> 	0%	Unlikely	?	?
Flush draw	 <hr style="width: 20%; margin: 0 auto;"/> 	16% 18%	Usually	Yes for strong, likely for middling	?
Air		0%	No	?	?
Two pair		9%	Yes	?	?
Combination draw, high		22%	Yes	Usually	?
Straight draw	 <hr style="width: 20%; margin: 0 auto;"/> 	9% 18%	Maybe	?	?
Combination draw		30%	Yes	Usually	?

There is a lot of hand reading and combinatorics that goes into putting him on a hand. There are nine combinations of top two pair. He would likely play all those combinations this way every time. There are tons of combinations that give him air, but he would not play them all like this since he would give up on many of them on the turn. The rows of this chart are in order of my guesses as to relative likelihood of him holding these types of hands combinatorically while also taking into account the betting. These are rough guesses of a typical LAG without specific reads. Maybe the hyper-aggressive LAG has air more often than a weak made hand or a flush draw. However, to be considered a LAG, he needs to sometimes have air here. Most likely, I expect him to have a pair and no draw. Rarely he is going to show up with the specific open-ended combo draw of 7c9c.

Should we check-shove? Typically, we have a much better idea in this situation of how the LAG would react to our shove because it really comes down to math for him. How he will react to our flat call is up to much more debate. It depends on the player and how he feels about us. It cannot be quantified as easily as his reaction to our shove. The only thing we can say is he is likely to bet whenever he makes his flush.

The right play here is something you need to decide at the table. The guesses above are simply my beliefs as to which of these hands he would use to call the shove. It also shows that it is hard to guess how he would react when checked to on flush and non-flush rivers. We have two competing interests. The first is getting value from his river bluffs. The second is trying to get value from draws and weaker hands that will call the turn. If we do not bet now, he would play his draws perfectly on the river against us. If he has a bigger set, it is all going in and there is nothing to be done.

Traits that will make me want to flat call:

- He will three barrel with air but fold to a raise now
- He will three barrel with a busted draw
- He will bluff if a flush card hits

Traits that will make me want to shove:

- He will call with a variety of decent made hands and draws
- I am not getting more value from the air; he would only fire a third barrel when he hits his draw
- I am not getting more value from weak made hands; he will neither bet them nor call with them anyway

We are trying not to give ourselves a negative freeroll on the river. A negative freeroll is a situation where a weaker hand would call us now, but by checking we rarely induce a bluff yet we would call off our stack if he

has us beat. The less likely he is to bluff the river, the more we need to bet now. There was a lot of value in checking the turn to get his second barrel, but now there is more value in getting stacks in unless you have good reason to slowplay further.

2) You can often bluff when any of the draws come in.



This hand was one that took advantage of a player that had the image of a recreational player that was smart enough to read hands. He had proven himself able to bet-fold in the past. This was a key observation that allowed me to run this semi-bluff.

\$2-\$5 Foxwoods	Image:	Action:	Hand:	Starting Stack:
...				
MP1	Thinking Villain	\$20		Covers
MP2	Unknown	Call		...
...				
Cutoff	Unknown	Call		...
Button	Hero	Call		\$400
...				

	Pot: \$87	Range:	Starting Stack:
Thinking Villain (MP1)	\$60		Covers
Unknown (MP2)	Fold		...
Unknown (Cutoff)	Fold		...
Hero (Button)	Call		\$380

This is a pretty draw heavy board; it really hits our Button multi-way calling range. With this many draws possible, we have some real outs, and some bluffing outs. We are more willing to float here because Villain's bet cleared out all the other players. It would be harder to play this hand if we were second to act, and two people called after us. They would very likely have the draws we might like to represent. The off-suit card being a low card removes the pair plus flush draw from Villain's range, and he does not seem to be the type to bet into a flush draw. We are thinking he has an overpair here because he is not the type to continuation bet into three people out of position.

	Pot: \$207	Range:	Starting Stack:
Thinking Villain (MP1)	\$125/Tank fold	 Over pair?	Covers
Hero (Button)	Shove		\$320

Making a straight here was plan A. That did not work. Facing this bet, the first instinct is to fold. But first, think back through the hand. JT makes a lot of sense for us to hold here. There are also a variety of suited connectors like 78s that just made two pair for him to worry about.

Look at Villain's bet sizing. It is smallish for this size of pot; it really felt like a bet-fold to me. If he had an overpair, he had 70% equity in this pot.

Villain asked me after he folded if I had an over pair. I responded, "It was exactly what it looked like, JT. I got lucky on you." People would rather know they got unlucky than that they got bluffed. I saw no need to antagonize him. Of course, he saw me get caught bluffing later and likely figured out that he had been swindled. The guy in the seat next to me explained to Villain that I was bluffing. It is not that he saw my cards. It is that he was at the next level of thinking and saw it as a great bluff card. I did have a reasonable number of outs if I got caught.

Some bluffs you do not need much equity to pull off because you are pretty sure the Villain will fold. With bluffs like this one, you are not as sure that you will get a fold. This means the back-up plan of thirteen outs is really needed. Some Villains, like the guy seated next to me, would realize there is a pretty good chance that we are putting a move on them. They would see the pot odds as tempting enough to make a crying call with KK.

The question is: if I was drawing to an open-ended straight draw and this Villain would not have paid me off, was I right to draw? Yes, absolutely.

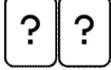
Alternate line 1a: Make a straight, turn play (Ten would be the same)			
   	Pot: \$207	Range:	Starting Stack:
Thinking Villain	\$125	  Likely over pair.	Covers
Hero	Call	 	\$320

Alternate line 1b: Make a straight, river play				
    	Pot: \$457	Range:	Starting Stack:	
Thinking Villain	???	  Likely over pair.	Covers	
Hero	Shove	 	\$195	

It is safe to say that if Villain bet out on a Seven, he would also bet out on a Five or Ten. I would flat when I make my straight. With only \$195 left into a \$457 pot, he is likely drawing dead, so I can let another card come off. I am putting it all in on any river.

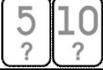
In the actual hand, the raise of the turn superficially looks stronger to this Villain and makes him pause to think. Flattening the turn hoping to bluff the river is a disaster because if Villain bets the river, I have zero fold equity. I need to bet the turn if I want to know I have the opportunity to fold him out.

Alternate line 2a: Bluff a flush –he checks			
   	Pot: \$207	Range:	Starting Stack:
Thinking Villain	Check	  Likely over pair.	Covers
Hero	\$150/Likely firing the rest on river if called	 	\$320

Alternate line 2b: Bluff a flush –he bets			
	Pot: \$207	Range:	Starting Stack:
Thinking Villain	\$125	 Likely over pair.	Covers
Hero	Shove		\$320

If checked to, I plan to two barrel the flush. It could get ugly if he has a flush or Aces with the Ace of flush. If a fourth Spade came, I would have to make a decision about bluffing again. I would be more likely to bluff if checked to. The turn bet when checked to is sized to give fold equity on both streets.

If he bets into the flush, it is a shove, much like actually happened with the straightening card. If he calls, I still have straight outs and two of the flush cards I bluff with actually make my straight.

Turn card:	My action:	Count:
	Call/Value bet turn and river with a straight	8
	Bluff, representing flush	9
	Bluff shove over a turn bet or two barrel if checked to, representing top pair becoming open trips	3
	Bluff a straight with a pair and straight draw (as played)	2
	Call 13 outs + bluff outs on river?	2
	Two barrel (fold if he bets turn)	4-6 (he likely has AA, KK)
	Check (fold if he bets)	4-6 (he might have JJ, QQ)
	Check (fold if he bets) Consider bluffing, representing open trips.	3
	Check (fold if he bets)	8

Bluffs	Value bet	Value call	Conditional bluffs	Give up
14 (31%)	8 (18%)	2 (4%)	4-6 (11%)	15-17 (36%)

Assuming he has an over pair, I have 35% equity on the flop (18% if I only see the turn for free), so I was reasonable to call. Add in all the bluffing outs, and I think this is a good position for me versus this Villain who is willing to fold quite often. Remember, all the bluffs still have straight outs on the river. Sometimes, I pick up extra equity to go with the fold equity.

Sample Poker Mission

Identify Tommy Angelo's "Bread & Butter" situations.



Stop ignoring opponent's tendencies

Element #116 of Tommy Angelo's Elements of Poker states that a Bread & Butter situation is one where you are last to act of two or three people and you put in the last raise pre-flop.

This mission is an exercise in observation. For this mission, draw two columns labeled Two and Three (see illustration below.) The Two column is for hands with two players to the flop; the Three column is for hands with three players to the flop.

You will then create a row for each orbit. Every time you see this B&B situation arise for *any* player in the game make a vertical line. If the B&B player wins, make the vertical line into a plus sign. If the hand gets to showdown, circle it. Every hand where there is a raise and no callers, write an "R" in the middle of the row for that orbit. Every time the Button hits you, draw a horizontal line across the chart under this series. Some people like to put a dot next to the hands they were the B&B for.

A typical chart might look like this after three orbits:

2		3
+⊕		
①	R	⊕
+	R	+

So, first orbit two B&B players won heads-up, the second one with showdown. Second orbit a B&B player lost at showdown while heads-up. Three-handed a B&B won at showdown and another one lost without showdown. There was a hand raised with no flop. Third orbit a B&B won

without showdown both two and three-handed. There was an uncalled pre-flop raise also.

This exercise will sharpen your focus on the game and give you a sense of how aggressive your specific game is. This example chart is more tight-aggressive than most \$1-\$2 games. People do not take advantage of position as much as they should.

When B&B do not win, watch to see why. Are they continuation betting and barreling enough? If the hand gets to showdown does it seem reasonable that more aggression would have won the hand because of the weak holdings of the out of position players? Under what situations did the out of position players win? Were those hands based on hand strength rather than aggression? Long term patterns like this are really hard to see unless you are taking notes.

After about a hundred of these situations, you can fill out the next chart. Remember the four numbers in each column should add to 100%.

R	Raised pre-flop, no flop ___% of ALL hands			
		Two players		Three players
+	B&B wins		B&B wins	
	No showdown	___%	No showdown	___%
⊕	B&B wins		B&B wins	
	Showdown	___%	Showdown	___%
 	Non B&B wins		Non B&B wins	
	No showdown	___%	No showdown	___%
①	Non B&B wins		Non B&B wins	
	Showdown	___%	Showdown	___%

If it were completely random, the B&B should win 50% of the time in the two player case and 33% in the three player case. If you watch for a decent sample size, it will not be random. The B&B player should win much more.

This should make it apparent that these are good situations to get into and that often your cards do not matter. This will really serve as inspiration for why you want to play in position with the initiative. It should also make it much clearer why calling a raise out of position aimlessly is a losing proposition.

Optional:

It is harder, but you could also do this exercise noting the dollar amount won or lost by the B&B player. The number of hands won should be easier to track and is a reasonable proxy to make the point though.