

Basic Rules of Roulette

Roulette is a game played with a large wheel that contains either 37 (in European roulette) or 38 (for American roulette) pockets. These stops are numbered from 0 to 36, while the American roulette wheel also contains a 00 pocket. All the pockets are all colored; the zeroes are green, while the other spots are evenly divided between 18 red and 18 black pockets.

The croupier (or dealer) spins a ball on the outer rim of the wheel, after which it will eventually fall into one of the numbered spaces. The object for the player is to guess what number the ball will land in.

Before each spin, players have the opportunity to place bets around the roulette table. Players can bet on individual numbers or virtually any combination of numbers – most of the available bets are outlined below.

In a live casino each player will have to exchange cash or casino chips for special roulette chips, with each player being given a unique color that can be used to distinguish who made each bet. Of course, in online casinos, this isn't necessary.

Players may continue to place bets until the croupier puts the ball into the roulette wheel. Even after the ball is in play, players generally have the ability to place wagers for a few more seconds until the croupier calls off all bets.

Once the ball falls into a pocket and rests there, the croupier will call out the winning number as well as the color of the pocket it landed in. Markers are typically used to protect winning bets, after which all losing bets are swept off the table. Then the croupier will pay all winning bets and, once all of the payouts are completed, players may place bets for the next spin.

Playing Roulette

The way you choose to play roulette will depend on a number of factors, not least your bankroll and your betting strategy. Put simply, if you don't have much to play with, it isn't wise to wager a large proportion of your bankroll at a time: if you think it's impossible for a roulette wheel to land on red five times in a row, you've never played roulette. In other words, don't count on certain bets coming in 'sooner rather than later'. This might sound obvious, but remember that the outcome of any particular spin of the wheel is not affected by anything that's gone before.

If you're playing roulette in a casino, you're technically supposed to have placed your bet before the ball is dropped, although in land-based casinos bets may still be accepted after this. When you hear the

magic words “No more bets”, you know it’s time to sit back, cross your fingers and wait to see where that bouncing ball chooses to settle. Good etiquette dictates that you should place your chips and then move out the way in case other players are seeking to bet. Also, if you’re sat at a casino poker table, you’d better be playing. Seats aren’t for spectators.

Placing Roulette Bets

If you’re playing roulette in a casino, there are all kinds of betting areas where you can place your chips. The only thing limiting you is your number of chips and the available space; if there are a lot of players involved, it may be a struggle to physically find the space to place your chips. You’re spared all that when you’re playing at an online casino of course, be it virtual roulette or a live dealer game.

Calculating Your Odds

There are basically two types of bets you can place in roulette: inside and outside. Outside bets have a greater chance of success because your odds are close to 50/50, whereas inside bets have greater odds but greater risk too. If you ever hear stories of individuals selling all their possessions, travelling to Vegas and betting everything on a spin of the roulette wheel, you can bet they’re putting it all on black or red. They could alternatively bet on Evens/Odds or 1 to 18/19 to 36 (also known as High or Low), which would give the same odds as red or black, but is perceived as being less romantic. ‘All on black’ just sounds more emphatic.

Other bets you could place are 1st Dozen, 2nd Dozen or 3rd Dozen, which offer odds of 2 to 1, the same as you’ll be offered for 1st Column, 2nd Column, 3rd Column. Six Line is any six numbers from two rows, Corner is any four numbers in a block and Street is any three numbers horizontal. Basket is 0, 1, 2 or 0, 2, 3 and Split is any two numbers vertical or horizontal, odds for which will come in at 17 to 1. That just leaves Straight Up, where you wager on a single number but are rewarded with the most handsome odds of all – 35 to 1.

The House Edge

One thing that has been missing from all this talk of odds is the house edge. The casino has to take its cut, because nothing in life comes for free, and that cut comes when the ball lands on zero. When that happens, the casino makes its cut. When you’re playing American roulette, there are two zeroes to contend with (that’s why it’s also sometimes called double zero roulette) and thus the house edge is increased. The zero and double zero sit opposite one another on the American roulette wheel and are usually marked in green.

When you’re playing European roulette on the other hand, sometimes also referred to as French roulette, you don’t automatically lose when the ball lands on zero: instead the ball is classified as being “in prison” and your wager remains fixed in place for another spin. If this one fails to win, the chips go to the casino. The casino might profit when the ball lands on zero or double zero, but players are still allowed to bet on this position.

Choosing Your Strategy

If you're averse to risk, or to high degrees of risk at least, it stands to reason you'll want to avoid inside bets as these have the lowest chance of success. Although you don't need to memorise the odds and bet names to be successful at roulette, it's good to have a rough idea of what your approximate return will be. The probability will vary slightly between American and European versions of the game, but in the case of the latter, the best odds you'll get are just shy of 49% for betting on Red/Black, Even/Odd, Low/High. The lowest probability, for a Straight (single number) stands at 2.7% for European roulette.

Although European and American roulette are by far the most popular versions of the game, there are also numerous other varieties you'll encounter at online casinos. Some of these have a theme applied to them, a bit like slot machines, so you might encounter games called Dolphin Roulette or Ra Roulette. Then there are the live dealer games, where the betting is conducted online but the game is broadcast from a land-based casino with a real dealer spinning the wheel. Whatever type of roulette you play and however you choose to play it – live, virtual, on mobile, tablet or desktop – it's a game that can be extremely rewarding. Get your strategy right and those rewards can be substantial. Don't simply place scattershot bets and hope for the best: master your strategy and then make every spin count.