

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) About Oresteen's Poker Rules

I thought that "The Wheel" (A 2 3 4 5) is the best low hand and that straights & flushes don't count in Lowball? Your rules state that the 6-4 (Ace to Six - (A 2 3 4 6 unsuited) is the best low and that straights & flushes do count in Lowball. Why?

Good question. The Wheel (A - 5) is used in most casinos and cards rooms as the best low with straights & flushes ignored. This is known as "**California Lowball**". There are two very good reasons *not* to use the Wheel in *home* games where Dealer's Choice is played. First, in Dealer's Choice home games, the game *changes* with every deal. It becomes very confusing for novice & beginning poker players to understand that straights & flushes count in one hand but not in the next. In a casino however, only *one* game is played at a table so the ranking rules **NEVER** change *at that table*. A Dealer's Choice game allows the particular *game* to change with every deal but the hand ranking rules should *never* change. A consistent set of ranking rules is needed that covers **ALL** allowable games. Using the 6-4 as the best low provides ranking uniformity and order in Dealer's Choice games. Your guests will appreciate it. Secondly, it is mathematically sound to have the 6-4 as the best low. Lowball was intended to make the no-pair hands winners and high hand losers. Breaking down the possible 5 card hand distributions, there are 2,598,960 possible poker hands with no wild cards and ranking the ace high or low:

Straight Flush	40
Four of A Kind	624
Full House	3,744
Flush	5,108
Straight	10,200
Three of a Kind	54,912
Two Pair	123,552
One Pair	1,098,240
No Pair	1,302,540
Total	2,598,960

As you can see, the no pair hands make up about 50% of the possible poker hands. If you are trying to find the lowest hand of ALL the possible poker hands, it is clear that straights & flushes have all ready been accounted for in the 50% that contains the *high* hands. So from a strict probability standpoint, straights & flushes have to count as high hands, not as low hands. Thus, they can't be ignored in Lowball. 6-4 Lowball is very similar to **Duce to Seven** (aka **Kansas City Lowball**) Lowball. In Duce to Seven, aces are always high, suits and flushes do count. Since we have defined the ace to be either high or low, Ace to Six (6-4) Lowball is the best low and is consistent in ranking with all the other games that are permitted.

What is a BUG? Why is it called a "Bug"?

The Bug is a semi-wild card that hurts you as often as it helps you. One of the joker cards is added to the deck as the Bug. It's called a Bug because the Joker card from a Bee type poker deck (US Playing Card Co.) has a jester standing on the back of a large bee, thus the term "Bug". Bee decks were (and still are) popular with poker players. The Bug pairs with an ace, fills a flush, or fills a straight. By itself the Bug is an ace. Highest hand becomes 5 aces. Natural aces *do not* rank higher or lower than a Bug. It's a way to limit the use of wild cards yet loosen things up a bit. The Bug can help a lot in games with 5 or less players.

Why do you use a "Dealer Button"? Why not just let each person deal and let it go at that?

In draw games (and common card games like Hold 'Em) the player who bets last (normally the player dealing) has a *huge* advantage. By using a moving Dealer Button every one gets a fair chance at betting last. It's what the casinos do when using a professional dealer so that all players get a fair chance at being the last bettor.

Why don't you allow wild cards, Pass-The-Trash, No-Peek, Roll Your Own, etc. type games? I've played them before and they seemed like fun.

For the same reason that casinos don't allow them. The games are not mathematically fair and are very hard to control. There are a lot of regional variations in these wild games, which may cause friction between your guests if you allow wild Dealer's Choice games.

As a host, you have the responsibility to maintain a fair and controlled environment for your guests. Wild games makes that hard to do. I have allowed all of the poker games played in the World Series of Poker tournament; none of the wild games mentioned are ever played in that annual event. Take it from the pros and stick to the main casino games. In the long run you will develop better poker skills by avoiding the wild “trash” games and sticking to the standard games. This will help you a lot when you decide to play in a casino or card room where the competition is a lot tougher.

I’ve allowed some “wild” variations in the 17 permitted games. Some die-hard poker traditionalists would not allow Pineapple, Wild Pineapple, and the use of the Bug. Most of these games would not be allowed at a casino either but they do loosen up a home game enough to satisfy most guests yet do not significantly alter the Laws of Poker.

Why is Omaha 9 played instead of Omaha 8?

Since the best low is a 64 instead of the wheel (54, ace to five), and flushes & straights do count, there would be far less possible low hands if Omaha 8 were played. To make up for the ‘missing hands’, 9 lows are allowed to play for low.

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