FREE GUIDE FROM AI CRUISE GRANNY™ & CRUISE GRANNY™

Jacks or Better: The Perfect-Play Guide

Video poker is one of the few casino games where your choices change the odds. Learn this one chart and you're playing about as well as a computer, sugar.

THE SHORT ANSWER

Look at every way you could play the hand, then keep the one that sits highest on the chart below. On a 9/6 machine, this chart pays back 99.53% over the long run. Perfect computer play gets 99.54%, so the chart costs you less than 2 cents for every $100 you bet.

Step 1: Read the pay table first

Find the full house and flush lines on the glass. On the 1-credit column, a 9/6 machine pays 9 for a full house and 6 for a flush. On a 5-credit bet that's 45 and 30.

Pay table	Pays back with perfect play and max credits
9/6 "full pay"	99.54%
8/5	97.30%
7/5	96.15%
6/5	95.00%

Step 2: How to use the chart

1. Look at your five cards and spot every hand on the chart you could keep.
2. Keep the one that sits **highest** on the chart.
3. Draw for the rest. Bet max credits so the royal pays its full jackpot.

Practice free

Scan for the AI Cruise Granny video poker trainer. It deals the hands and tells you the perfect play.

The full web guide

Scan for this chart online, plus more examples and answers.

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The Jacks or Better strategy chart

Keep the play that sits highest on the list.

Already a winner · Drawing hand · High cards · Fall-back

1	Royal flush, straight flush or four of a kind	
2	4 to a royal flush	
3	Three of a kind, straight, flush or full house	
4	4 to a straight flush	
5	Two pair	
6	High pair (jacks or better)	
7	3 to a royal flush	
8	4 to a flush	
9	Low pair (2s through 10s)	
10	4 to an outside straight	
11	Strong 3 to a straight flush: as many high cards as gaps, or more **PRO TIP**	
12	2 suited high cards (two choices? keep the pair without the ace)	
13	3 to a straight flush	
14	4 to an inside straight with 3 or 4 high cards **PRO TIP**	
15	2 unsuited high cards (3 or more? keep the 2 lowest)	
16	Suited 10 with a J, Q or K	
17	One high card	
18	Weak 3 to a straight flush: two gaps, no high cards **PRO TIP**	
19	No match? Draw five new cards	*Throw all five*

PRO TIP lines are refinements that take the chart from good to near-perfect. New players can skip them at first.

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Worked examples (perfect play, checked by computer)

DEALT



Keep: the highlighted cards. 3 to a royal (rule 7) beats the open-ended straight draw (rule 10).

DEALT



Keep: the highlighted cards. Yes, really. Break up a paid straight: 4 to a royal (rule 2) ranks above it (rule 3).

DEALT



Keep: the highlighted cards. A high pair (rule 6) beats 4 to a flush (rule 8). The pair is already paying you.

DEALT



Keep: the highlighted cards. A low pair (rule 9) beats 4 to an outside straight (rule 10).

DEALT



Keep: the highlighted cards. Three unsuited high cards: keep the two lowest (rule 15). Fewer hands are blocked that way.

DEALT



Keep: the highlighted cards. Keep both pairs and draw one (rule 5). Never keep the king with them.

DEALT



Keep: the highlighted cards. Two suited high cards (rule 12) give you a shot at a royal, a flush and a high pair.

DEALT



Keep: the highlighted cards. Four of a kind (rule 1). The kicker doesn't matter in Jacks or Better.

The mistakes that cost the most

- Holding a "kicker" (a high card) with a pair. Keep just the pair.
- Breaking up a high pair to chase a flush or a straight.
- Keeping three or four unsuited high cards. Keep the two lowest instead.
- Holding a single ace with a better draw available, like a suited K-Q or J-Q.
- Playing fewer than 5 credits. On most machines the royal only pays its big 4,000 jackpot on a 5-credit bet, and this chart assumes you bet max.

Words on the chart

High card

A jack, queen, king or ace. In this game, a pair of them pays you back your bet.

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Outside straight

Four cards in a row that can be finished at either end, like 7-8-9-10 (a 6 or a jack finishes it).

Inside straight

Four cards with one hole in the middle, like 9-J-Q-K (only a 10 fills it). J-Q-K-A counts as inside too, because only a 10 works.

Gaps

The missing ranks inside a straight flush draw. 8-9-J of diamonds has one gap (the 10).

Strong vs weak 3 to a straight flush

Count the high cards and the gaps. High cards equal to or more than gaps = strong (except ace-low draws like A-3-4). Two gaps and no high cards = weak.

> Video poker should stay fun. Set your budget before you sit down. If gambling isn't fun anymore, free and confidential help is there 24/7: call or text 1-800-MY-RESET (1-800-697-3738) or visit 1800myreset.org.

Payback figures and every chart line were calculated by our exact-odds engine across all 2,598,960 possible starting hands. For entertainment and education.

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