

Martin J. Silverthorne

**Gamble
For
Free!**



**SILVERTHORNE
PUBLICATIONS**

Gamble for Free!

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1

Introduction

Right now it may seem improbable, even impossible, but you can actually spend the rest of your life traveling to casinos as their guest. You can lead the life of a pampered high roller even if you are a low-roller in reality. I am going to show you exactly how to get the casinos to comp you (provide as a freebie, as in "complimentary") food, beverages, rooms, shows and even airfare.

Consider the following description of life as a comped guest of the casinos.

I finished off my scotch and water, adjusted my seat back to the upright and uncomfortable position and watched the Las Vegas Hilton drift by as our plane descended into Las Vegas's McCarran International Airport.

As my guest and I entered the baggage claim area, she spotted a uniformed driver standing next to where our luggage would arrive, holding a sign with my name on it.

The driver, Jerry, recognized me and came over. He retrieved our luggage and escorted us to a white stretch limo parked curbside. Two iced glasses set up on the walnut table indicated that our favorite drinks would soon be ready. A large assortment of call brand liquors was available. I poured us two stiff ones, adjusted the stereo and lay back to enjoy the ride to the casino. As usual, there was construction in progress around the airport. My guest smiled and cuddled close, saying, "This is just unbelievable."

I laughed and told her, "Just wait till you see our suite."

At the casino entrance a natty looking doorman helped us exit the limousine. We immediately went to VIP Services. As we walked over to a smiling hostess, I glanced over at the growing line of unfortunates waiting to check in. The VIP hostess had everything ready and after greeting us, quickly handed our keys to a bellman.

We went upstairs to our lavish suite. The view of the Strip was excellent, and I knew that we would enjoy the view later that night sipping our complimentary Bailey's and coffee.

Our casino host, Irv, had arranged for an assortment of cheeses and other munchies to be delivered to our room along with a bottle of my favorite champagne. We had a couple of bubblics and took in the expansive luxury offered by our suite. We had three nights ahead of us, and the cost would be zip. Almost nothing, except for some tips and gifts I planned on picking up at the casino gift shop.

While finishing off the champagne, we looked at the varied menus from the hotel's excellent restaurants. We decided to start our three-day extravaganza dining in the seafood restaurant as we both had a weakness for fresh seafood.

After a wonderful dining experience, I left a generous tip, as the wait staff had been absolutely superb.

After dinner it was off to the craps tables. My guest preferred to play slots so I gave her my VIP card. That way her slots play would give us even more goodies.

I spotted a favorite floorman standing behind a dealer crew I knew very well. I handed him a small gift and settled in for about an hour of craps. I ended up winning over \$1,300, although the chips I left the table with made it appear that I was down over \$500. Remarking on my rotten luck at the tables, I told the floorman, Charlie, I would see him again tomorrow.

We finished the evening sipping our Baileys and watching the magic of the Strip unfold many stories below us.

The next afternoon, after a leisurely breakfast in bed along with our favorite morning drinks, of a screw driver and a double bloody Mary, I spent a couple of hours playing blackjack, while my guest shopped at The Fashion Show Mall.

Later, after a gourmet Italian dinner, we walked past hundreds of people in the show line. Our host introduced us to the showroom captain who escorted us to a stage side table. After a

wonderful performance, we finished off the evening enjoying a lounge show. Of course the drinks were free.

The three days went by much too quickly. Gourmet meals, followed by walks on the Strip, shows and some gambling. I considered the trip a total success. I had won over \$3,000 while showing the casino bosses losses of over \$2,500. I ignored the check out line and dropped the room keys by VIP Services. I visited with our host just to make sure that everything was taken care of. He assured me that he would have a suite available at no charge anytime I wanted and suggested a date three weeks away saying that he would get me tickets for a well publicized boxing match. I laughed and told him I would have to get back to him.

On the limo ride back to the airport, I remarked to my guest what a wonderful time we had had, all courtesy of my casino pals. She wondered when I would do this again. I asked her if she would like to see a boxing match in three weeks. "After all," I commented, "It's not like its going to cost us anything."

I am going to show you exactly how to travel to Las Vegas, or where ever your favorite casino is, as often as you like at almost no cost to you. Most people think that comps are available only to extremely high rollers. The truth of the matter is that almost anyone can avail themselves of a number of comps, and the possibility of having long vacations at almost no cost can be achieved by anyone who wants to follow the steps I am going to show you.

I don't care if you are a nickel slots player or play \$2,000 a hand at baccarat, the casinos have plenty of goodies waiting for you.

Because Las Vegas is my favorite gambling spot, most of my examples involve Las Vegas hotels and casinos. Once you become adept at this game, you will probably find that you also prefer Las Vegas to any other casino destination. Las Vegas has more of anything you can find in any other destination, and the intense competition among the casinos makes it the perfect location to pry the maximum number of comps out of the casinos.

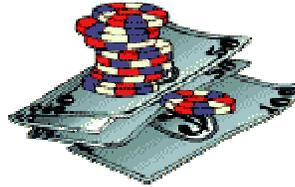
This book is about where to find the best comps. I will make specific suggestions of casinos most likely to offer what you want, even if you only play quarter slots. I will show you exactly how the casino comp system works and tell you how much money you need to start bringing in the major comps. You will learn the ins and outs of playing as a cash player or using casino credit.

You will learn the best casino games to play and how to become a rated player. You will learn how to use slot clubs to your benefit and how to ask for and receive bunches of comps.

You will also learn how to be a winner at certain casino games, but still look like a loser to the casino bosses.

Once you master these techniques, you will have all, or at least a substantial number of your casino vacations paid for by the casinos. You will receive more invitations for free casino vacations in the mail than you can possibly use.

You need not become a professional gambler in order to get your share of comps. You can visit Las Vegas (or wherever) every weekend or travel just twice a year and immensely benefit from the system I am going to show you. The choices are yours. You'll have plenty once the invitations start arriving in your mailbox.



2

Comps

Comps are anything of value that the casinos offer for free. Some comps are available to anyone who is willing to gamble in a casino.

Casinos offer free drinks to anyone who gambles. Even nickel slot players can order call brands such as Chivas Regal, Stolichnaya, Bailey's and Captain Morgan. During one period of my life, I would start the day with a black coffee at the craps table. After a couple of cups of coffee I would switch to screwdrivers. By early evening I would graduate to Johnny Walker Red and water. Finally, as midnight approached, I would get back to coffee or start drinking coffee and Bailey's.

Tobacco is also another freebie available to all gamblers. You can literally smoke and drink yourself to death, all courtesy of the casinos.

While drinks and tobacco are available to anyone willing to sit down at a slot machine or saddle up to a table game, you have to ask for other comps. This is a common element of most comps.

For some reason, many people believe that the casino bosses will observe your gambling and will walk up to you and ask if you would like to have a meal in a coffee shop. This hardly ever happens. The bosses have so many activities to worry about that your coffee shop comp is one of the last things they will think about. Just like ordering a drink, you have to let the bosses know when you would like a meal comp.

A notable exception to this rule is when you are winning big in a smaller casino. I recall one memorable outing at the old and now defunct Vegas World (replaced by the Stratosphere) when a companion and I hit them for twenty big ones. We were playing at the Crapless Craps game (a special version of craps that the old Vegas World proprietor, Bob Stupak, devised as part of his endless stream of marketing hype).

Vegas World, to say the least, was not a high roller type of joint. The average bet on the craps table that faithful evening was \$5 to \$10. My companion and I started with \$25 bets and finished off with \$500 to \$1,000 bets on a hot roll that lasted about twenty minutes. When the dice finally rolled to a stop with the inevitable seven showing, we had transferred over twenty thousand in chips from the table to our chip rails. During the role, the casino manager had joined our table. When he saw that we were getting ready to leave with over twenty grand of the casino's money, he started throwing comps our way. He offered a room. He offered

meals. He offered drinks. Finally we took him up on a couple of drinks in the lounge. If the same offer was made to me now, I would take him up on the room and get him to pay for food, beverages and airfare. If you can't use a comp yourself, they make excellent gifts for friends, acquaintances and even bosses in other casinos. Never turn down a comp, even if you don't think you can use it. Someone can. And you can use the extra comps to your benefit.

Slot or video poker players can get a meal comp by asking a slot host for it. The lowest (and therefore the easiest to get) food comp is a comp for two at the buffet. After joining a slot club and playing slots for an hour or so, I would ask a change person to send a slot host over. I would ask her what it takes to get a buffet or ask, "Have I played long enough to get a buffet for my friend and me?" If the host says yes, thank her and go for the buffet. If the host says no, ask her how much longer you will need to play to qualify for a buffet. If she says an hour, play forty-five minutes then ask for the comp. You'll likely get it.

Table game players can use essentially the same technique on a floorman. Ask for a gourmet restaurant comp after a couple of hours of playing with quarter chips (twenty five-dollar chips). In some joints, you'll get it. In others, you'll get a coffee shop comp.

Many times, it is far easier to get a food comp in an off Strip casino. At the Gold Coast you can play for an hour and then enjoy a huge T-bone in their high quality coffee shop.

The Palace Station, the Fiesta and Sam's Town are also generous with food comps.

Slots and table game players can't go wrong at the Maxim. Their policy is to comp just about everyone. Quarter slots players can play for a couple of hours and get a coffee shop comp. Twenty five dollar table game bettors can get a comp in Di Vinci's for an excellent gourmet meal for a couple of hours of play. The casino room rate is also easy to get.

The Stratosphere is especially generous to slot players.

The easiest room comp to get is the casino room rate which is discounted 30% to 70% off of the listed rate. Anyone who gives the casino any action can usually get the casino rate on a room, with the exception of some of the premium casinos which are stingier with their rooms. Joining a slot club is a good way to get the casino room rate. Many casinos will offer the casino room rate to all slot club members even without any play.

Rated players can also get casino room rates. Rated players play the table games, usually blackjack, craps, baccarat or roulette. They will be issued VIP cards, and after playing for a short time period, they can usually qualify for the casino room rate.

Free rooms require more play, although not an excessive amount of play. Slot or video poker players playing quarter machines for several hours a day can usually get their rooms

comped. Table game players, giving the casino enough action, can get the casinos to pick up their room tabs.

Free shows are available to slot and table game players. The easiest tickets to get are for weekday shows or for shows during slow periods.

Slot players should ask a slot host about seeing a show. Table game players should ask their credit host. In many cases, show passes are limited to players who are RFB (Room, Food and Beverage) comped. However, most casinos have lounge shows. It is fairly easy to get a comp for a lounge show with its typical cover charge of a minimum number of drinks. Comping a lounge show doesn't cost the casino any more than free drinks.

Some production shows still have invited guest's lines. Almost any member of a slot club or rated table game player can get a line pass. If you are a table game player, thirty minutes or so of \$25 minimum bets is usually enough to get the floorman to issue a line pass to a show. Slot players who have joined the casino's slot club and given them a few hours of play should ask their slot host for a line pass.

The neat thing about line passes is that they don't cost the casino anything. However, it is a great feeling to walk past hundreds of people in a line to the small "invited guests" line and receive a stage side seat for a show. This comp is great if you are trying to impress a companion, and it is really not that difficult to pull off once you know the trick.

RFB treatment is the ultimate goal of getting the maximum number of comps out of the casino. The "R" stands for room, the "F" for food, and the "B" for Beverages. As an RFB customer, everything except incidental costs like tips and certain room charges like telephone bills and movie rentals are covered by the casinos.

If you want the full VIP treatment, being RFB'd is the way to go. The room and food comps are not that difficult to get. In order to be B'd, you have to give the casino some righteous action as you can really hurt them when you order \$200 bottles of wine with your meals. That's why the beverage comp is only one rung below airfare in order of difficulty.

If you can avoid the temptation of going whole hog on the booze, try for a RFL comp, where "L" stands for limited. With this comp you get the room, the food, the limo rides to the airport, show line passes and all the other goodies either your slot host or VIP Services can bestow on you except unlimited booze. If you want drinks in your room, you'll either have to pay for your own when you order room service or buy your own booze and fix your own drinks. I prefer to fix my own drinks. For one thing, I can pour a lot stronger drink than the ones you'll get from the bar. I also like the convenience of having a drink when I want one without waiting for an order.

When you are a RFL guest, you can still get a couple of drinks with meals, but you won't be able to order the outrageous wine unless you pay for it yourself.

The neat thing about being an RFL guest is that it takes a lot less action to qualify and may give you a better chance of having the casino pay for your airfare. When casinos comp you, either RFB, RFL or even just food comps, they track the comps and measure the cost to them of your comps against the theoretical win they should make, based on your bets and the amount of time you play. With an RFL comp, you are going to cost the casino a lot less than RFB, and you will have an easier time of getting your airfare reimbursed because you have fewer costs charged against the casino's expected winnings.

Unless you really must have the expensive wines, RFL is the way to go to maximize dollars in your pocket. If you are a \$2,000 a hand player, you can ignore this advice and go for the gold with full RFB and every other goodie the casino can throw your way. However, if you are a quarter slot player or a table game better betting \$15 a hand, RFL will give you a shot at almost all the goodies on a lot lower budget.

Airfare comped. This is the dream of a lot of players. It may not cost as much as the room and food, but for some reason, having the casino pick up the transportation to and from your home is especially juicy. If you give the casino enough action, it will probably pick up airfare in addition to RFB.

If you want to try for airfare, you need to be a fairly large player. The minimum expected win for the casino should be at least \$2,500. This doesn't mean that you have to lose this much. You can be a winner although it is usually better to look like a loser. But, even if you win, and the casino knows it, they will pay

for your airfare if they have a reasonable shot at winning at least \$2,500.

Here are the minimum criteria you should achieve before expecting the casino to pick up your airfare:

a. You have a minimum of a \$10,000 casino credit line or have deposited at least \$10,000 in cash with the casino cashier.

b. You have given the casino at least twelve hours of playing time. If you lose at least 75% of your total line or front money, the playing time will be disregarded.

c. You should be a registered guest of the hotel.

Some casinos will reimburse airfare even if you are not a guest of the hotel if you have given them enough action.

If you feel like you have qualified to have your airfare reimbursed, take your tickets to your credit host and tell him you want to be reimbursed. He will check the summary of your play and the cost of comps already issued and let you know if you qualify for airfare reimbursement.

If you are RFB or RFL, you need to let a casino hostess know when you are checking out so that she can arrange for the limo to pick you up. Casino hostesses are the nice, and usually attractive, ladies who work for VIP Services. They will handle everything from check in, check out, show reservations to limo scheduling. If you have a beef with management, need to see how

your comps are being handled or want to hit on the casino for more goodies such as airfare, you need to see the casino host.

When I check out, I make it a point to thank the people personally for all of the attention they have given me. I play a lot during the night shift (night shifts typically run from 8:00 p.m. until 4:00 in the morning), and if it is my last night playing, I will thank my favorite bosses for all of the help they have given me. If I have received some special consideration, I will give the boss a small present.

You need to be careful with presents. If you offer a floorman a cashmere sweater, you have probably crossed over some forbidden line of etiquette. Your gift looks too much like a bribe and may raise the hackles of other bosses.



A favorite gift of mine is offering a coffee shop comp in another hotel to a floorman. Floormen (I know a lot of the floormen are really floorwomen, but in Vegas they are all called floormen) have one of the worst jobs in the casino. They make less than dealers, cocktail waitresses and bartenders, spend a ton on dry cleaning and have lousy job security as just about any boss can have them fired or short circuit their careers for any reason.

Yet floormen are the key persons you need to deal with to get comped as a table game player. They are over worked and under appreciated (or so they feel). When I have accumulated a couple of coffee shop or buffet comps that I have not gotten around to using, I will mention it to one of my favorite floormen. I will usually phrase it something like, "It's my last night here, and I just realized I've got a coffee shop comp for two at the Four Queens. Do you know anyone who would like to use it?"

Usually in less than two blinks, the floorman will take the comp off my hands. I have managed to give a really useful gift to a person who has helped me in such a way that it is more like one friend helping another rather than a bribe or a payoff.

Another gift, which is always appreciated, is United States silver dollars. I always have a few Morgan Silver dollars in the nice little packages the coin dealers put them in available as gifts. My usual cost is about eight bucks a coin, but for some reason the perceived value for the recipient is much higher. I tell them that I am a coin collector and these are some duplicate coins that I thought they might like. Silver dollars are gifts that almost no one else has ever thought of and is always remembered.

When you check out, you need to take care of any incidentals which you have charged to your room and which are not comped. Tips, phone calls, in-room movies, massages at the spa and gift shop purchases are not typically comped. As an RFB or RFL casino guest, you will be asked to put up a cash deposit (usually a \$100) or a credit card guarantee when you check in. Before checking out, remember to take care of these incidentals.

There are two basic approaches to getting comps. One involves joining a slot club and giving the casino some action on slots or video poker machines. The other is for table game players who have their play rated. Either type of player can net more comps than they can use. The key is to understand the casino's system for awarding comps and then going for the gusto.



3

Slot Clubs

The days when the slot players were the second class citizens among casino players are a thing of the past. Slot players are considered the premium players at many casinos. A slot player can get any kind of comp available to a table game player except maybe some of the \$25,000 a day suites offered to the handful of \$10,000 a hand baccarat whales.

As a slot player, you can receive more benefits than you can use. Many casinos offer cash back based on your amount of play. Casino rebates run as high as 1% of the amount played. If you are playing on a video poker machine which returns 99.8% of the coins inserted into it and receive a 1% cash rebate in addition, your return just jumped to 100.8%.

Meal comps are yours for the asking once you join a casino's slot club and start playing slots or video poker. A couple of hours of play on a slot machine, playing with quarters, are enough for a buffet comp for two in many casinos.

Once you join a casino's slot club, you will stay free at the casino or at the worst pay a casino rate of about one-half of the listed rate. After you join several slot clubs, you will receive mailings offering free rooms all the time.



As a slot club member, you will have first shot at many entertainment comps. For example, Caesars Palace sends its preferred slot club members invitations to headliner shows.

Do you want priority treatment in the casinos? Slot club members get full VIP treatment in many casinos.

Do you like gifts? Join a few slot clubs. You will regularly receive birthday presents just for being a member. Many casinos offer sign up bonuses. You can receive free play, T-shirts, sweatshirts, meals, a roll of quarters, mugs or even a free weekend, just for being a member of a slot club.

Hate lines? The worst thing about many of the buffets is the hour-long line. I remember one time some years ago when I stayed at the Palace Station mostly because of its restaurants. I ended up not eating in a single restaurant in Palace Station because they all had lines, and I hate waiting in line. However, there is a simple solution. As a slot club member, you will nearly always have passes for the Buffet line. This means that you go to the short VIP or invited guests line rather than waiting in that huge line of grumpy people.

Have you ever called a casino trying to book a reservation and been told that all the rooms are booked? This is almost the normal state of many Las Vegas casinos, especially on weekends. Once you join the casino's slot club, they will most likely find you a room as your membership entitles you to VIP treatment.

Have you ever sat home on New Year's Eve and watched the colossal party in Las Vegas and wished you could be there. It's almost impossible to get reservations, unless, unless . . . If you guessed that members of slot clubs can get the reservations, you're right. Go to the head of the VIP line.

When you join a slot club, you are issued a member card which looks something like a credit card. Most slot clubs use this card to track your play. When you walk up to a slot machine or a video poker machine, you insert your membership card into a card reader built into the machine. As you play, your action is tracked and credited to your account.

There are a number of variations on how casinos treat their slot club customers. Some casinos like Caesars in Atlantic City issue temporary cards at first. After you have accumulated enough points playing, a permanent card is issued.

Some casinos rebate cash to their slot club members, based on the points accumulated, which is related to the amount of money played through the machine. The Desert Inn, Caesars Palace, the Las Vegas Hilton, the Riviera and Lady Luck are some of the Las Vegas casinos which reward their slot club members with cash rebates. The Stratosphere increases your cash back percentage as the total number of points increases.

A number of Atlantic City casinos offer cash rebates. A recent survey showed that the Atlantic City Hilton, Caesars, the Claridge, the Sands, the Showboat and Resorts all offered cash rebates. The negative side of the Atlantic City comps is that both the slots and video poker machines pay out at much lower rates than their Nevada cousins, and even cash rebates don't go very far in making up the shortfall.

Finding a good slot club in Laughlin, a 90-minute drive from Las Vegas, is easy. Every one of its casinos offers cash-back as well as generous comps. A recent article in *Casino Player* magazine recommended the Flamingo Hilton, the Ramada Express and Harrah's Laughlin as being at the top of the Laughlin casinos in terms of the level of comps and VIP treatment offered their slot club members.

The best strategy for joining slot clubs is to first join just one slot club. This will be your primary slot club, at least initially. Your goal is to give this casino enough play that you will receive the maximum number of comps.

If you play with another person you should consider having just one person join but have two cards issued in that person's name. Now when you play, you can have all of the points credited to one account. This will get you the most benefits in the shortest period of time.

If you already have a favorite casino and have not joined the slot club, you should try calling their toll free number and see if they will let you join over the phone or mail you an application. Once you have your membership card, the benefits will start accruing to you even if you have not used the card.

You should put some thought into picking your primary casino, as you will be playing, eating, sleeping, and spending more time there than at other casinos.

You should think about what fills your needs in picking your primary casino. If you are a small bettor, then you probably don't want to make The Mirage or Treasure Island your primary casino, as quarter slot players are not even rated in these casinos.

If you are primarily after free meals, the casinos catering to locals in Las Vegas offer the most generous meal comps. Casinos in this category are Arizona Charlie's, Jerry's Nugget, Sam's Town, Boomtown, San Remo, the Rio and the Fiesta.

If your primary goal is a free room, your best bets are with the older hotel casinos on the north end of the Strip. These casinos include the New Frontier, the Sahara, the Stardust, the Riviera and Westward Ho.

If you are a dollar video poker player and want to stay in a hotel where the casino has a decent assortment of dollar machines, you should check out the Desert Inn, Caesars Palace, Treasure Island and the Golden Nugget. Last time I checked, there were some high paying \$5 Deuces Wild video poker machines at the Frontier.

If you have no idea where to start, I suggest that you book a three-day vacation package with your favorite travel agent and visit as many casinos as possible during your stay. You should try to join the slot club in every casino you visit. Talk to the clerks at the slot booths. Look around the casinos and see what kind of games they offer. Try the coffee shop or buffet if you have the

time. You may want to make some notes if you visit more than half a dozen joints so that you don't confuse them later.

If you can, try to play slots or video poker for at least thirty minutes in each joint. This will give your visit a purpose, as well as getting some points on your new slot club card.

After you return home, you should start receiving mailings from the casinos where you joined a slot club. Some of the mailings may offer you free rooms or advise you about slot tournaments. If you have done your homework, you should be able to narrow down your choices to one or two casinos. The one, which makes you the best offer, becomes your primary casino.

When you are evaluating a casino, you should talk to the clerks working at the slot club booth. If you are out of town, you can call casino marketing. Some slot clubs are forthcoming about how the casino awards points and how the points convert into comps. Others act like it is all shrouded in mystery.

If I have just joined a slot club, I will put about \$2,000 of play through a video poker machine. It would only take 45 minutes for a dollar video poker player, playing at an average rate to plunk \$2,000 in the machine. A quarter video poker player, playing at an average rate, might take three hours to run \$2,000 through.

After giving the casino \$2,000 in action (action is the total amount played through the machine, not the player's bankroll), I will ask a slot change person to send a slot host over. I will tell

her that I have played for one hour, two hours, or whatever, and that I would like to take a food break. If the host tells me that I haven't played long enough, I ask how much longer I need to play. Once the host gives me a time, I will hold them to it.

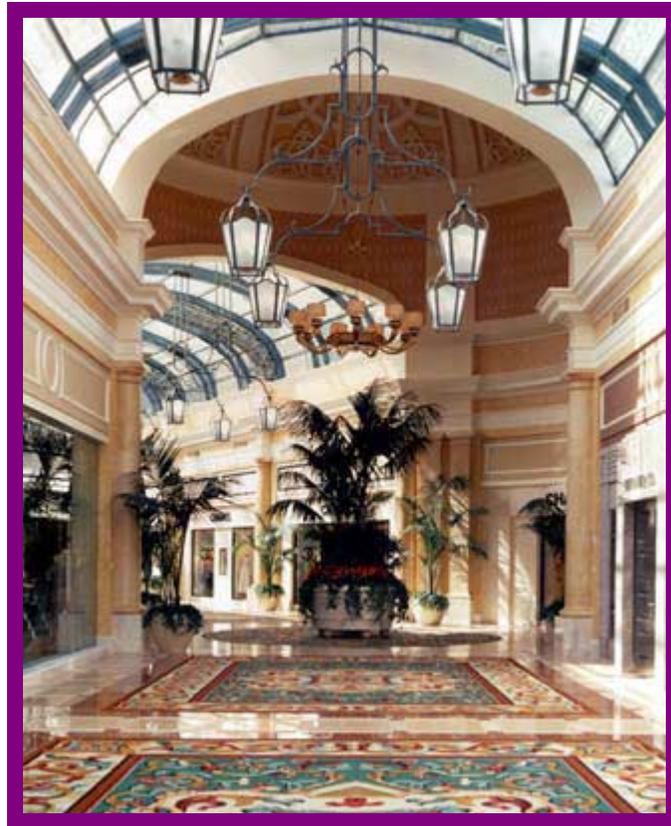
This series of moves provides several benefits. First, you will get a free meal. Secondly, you will start to get a feel for how much play is required to get a basic food comp.

It usually pays to find a host of the opposite sex. Women, especially, seem to do well with male hosts and floormen. Perhaps, it's the innate charm of the fairer sex. Men, too, will find it easier to get a comp from a female host (they call everyone who performs these duties a "host" even if they are females).

Once you are set up with your primary casino, you should consider setting up a second membership at the same casino. If you have a playing companion, the second card can be in his or her name. As with the first card, get two cards in your companion's name.

There is a method in this madness. After you join a slot club and start accumulating points on your membership, you will find that the casino will start sending you offers for free rooms in the mail. In fact, the more you play, the more goodies will come your way. But the casinos will only offer a limited number of free nights to a single member. That's where your second membership comes in. After you have "maxed out" your current benefits on your first membership, you can start adding additional benefits by playing on the second membership.

Let's say that you have just been offered three free nights at your favorite casino. While you are there, you give them some play on your first club membership (the one that got you the invitation for free lodging). However, you will now start building points on the second membership.



If you use this technique correctly, before too long you will start receiving offers for free rooms on both slot club memberships. Now you can arrange for an even longer stay. After staying three nights on the first member's card, you can stay an additional three nights on the second membership.

Some players become so adept at arranging free rooms that they will stay for weeks on the casinos' nickel.

The starting point in this whole process is to decide that, wherever you play slots or video poker, you won't put in one solitary nickel without joining the slot club first.

Once you join the club and give the casino some action, the offers will start pouring in. You will receive tacky gifts. I like to give these gifts away to friends and acquaintances who know that I visit Las Vegas a lot. It saves me a trip to the junky souvenir stores.

You will also receive offers for free rooms and other goodies. Now you can start taking the casinos up on their generosity.

Actually, the casinos are not being especially generous. Most casinos peg the payout rate for comps at no more than 40% of their expected win rate. If you are playing a video poker machine where the average player loses two percent, then the casino may offer up to 40% of two percent of your total play for your action on the machine. If you are able to play the game skillfully, you may be able to break even at the game or even to turn a profit. When you are able to do this, and add back in the value of the comps, you are getting the best of the casinos.

Casinos offer comps through their slot clubs to retain players. There may not be a whole lot of difference between the slots and video poker machines in Casino A and Casino B. The

only real difference may be the types of comps offered slot club members and periodic casino promotions. With the competition for players fierce, the casinos use their slot clubs to reward loyal players.



Because slot clubs reward players who patronize the casino more, it makes sense to play more at your primary casino and let the benefits pile up.

One thing I would never do is play on bad machines just to accumulate slot club points. If you are a video poker player and the casino only offers machines with a 97% payback, why would you want to play there if there are machines paying 100.7% right across the street?

The first thing you should do before joining a slot club is to check out the machines. Even if you are a slot player, you need to learn enough about video poker to spot the higher paying versions

of the game. While the payback rates of slot machines are unknown and can't be determined by examining the information printed on the front of the machine, video poker machines display payback schedules which tell the informed player the overall payback rate of the machine with skillful play.

I use the video poker paybacks as my guide for evaluating the machine games in a casino. I reason that a casino offering the better versions of video poker will also offer higher paying slot machines.

If the casino doesn't offer decent paying slot and video poker machines and there are alternatives nearby, then it makes sense to join the slot clubs of the higher paying casinos and to patronize them.

Fortunately in Las Vegas and Laughlin, the competition is such that almost every casino offers some machine games which are worthwhile, and it is just a matter of picking what best fits your personal playing habits. If you are a nickel slot player, it doesn't make much sense to join a club which doesn't rate the play of nickel slot players.

After looking around the casino and determining that the machines are acceptable, I will next look for the slot club booth. The personnel in the booth should be able to answer your questions about the club. This is a good time to ask such questions as, "Do you rate play for nickel players?" or "How are the points awarded and how many points does it take to earn a coffee shop comp for two?"

If the slot club clerks are friendly and answer my questions, I will join the slot club. If they are inattentive or evasive, I may join the club anyway but I will be hesitant to give the casino much play until I determine just what I am getting for my money.

You will need to fill out a questionnaire, and in most cases, present a driver's license when you join a slot club. Unless you are a felon on the lamb, I wouldn't be too concerned about giving the casino this information. They use the information to generate demographic information about their players and to develop their mailing lists. Of course, by getting on the casino's mailing list you will start receiving offers for free goodies.

After joining a slot club, you want to play at least a minimum amount (\$100 or so of action would qualify as a minimum amount of play) to activate the card. If you have the time, you can try to run \$2,000 of play through the machine and ask for a comp. But, as a minimum, if the slot club is worth joining, then it is worth giving the casino \$100 of action.

After you return home, the fun starts. You will start receiving invitations for various casino events.

Based on my own experience, I believe that most casinos reward their most loyal patrons with more and better offers. A minimum amount of slot play may result in an offer of a discounted room. After additional play, free room and food will be offered. With still more play, invitations for shows, slot tournaments, and free rooms will be offered. This is why it is so

important to pick a primary casino and give it as much of your action as possible.

The concept underlying the slot club system is really quite simple. Casinos are seeking to attract and retain players. They know that slot and video poker players, even playing at the quarter level, can be quite profitable for the casino. Therefore they seek to attract and retain these players.

As a player, your goals should be equally straightforward. You want to have fun, of course. I would not play in a joint I hated, no matter how generous the benefits. However, as a player, you should want to get as much as possible out of the casino. It doesn't make much sense to play in a casino with either inferior machines or an inferior slot club. As a player, your goal should be to get the maximum number of benefits and dollars in your pocket.

A CASE STUDY OF SLOT CLUB COMPS

To receive maximum value for slot and video poker play, try the Flamingo Hilton in Laughlin, Nevada.

With 1,912 rooms, 1,800 machines and 60 table games, it has something for everyone.

Restaurants include the Beef Baron (great steakhouse) and the Alta Villa (good Italian). It also has a large swimming pool and three tennis courts.

The Magic Club pays out cash benefits of .32 percent for slot play and .16 percent for video poker play. There are lots of high paying video poker machines, including machines offering over 100% paybacks.

The Magic Club increases the benefits dependent on the amount of action from the player. After accumulating 150,000 points, you will receive a nice jacket as well as other goodies.

If you are looking for full RFB, you should play \$2,000 a day in the slots during the week. For the weekend, it takes \$4,000 a day of action.

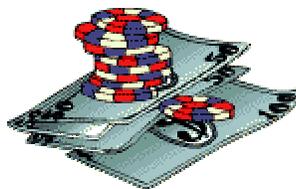
Members of The Magic Club can be invited to over 70 player events per year. According to management, over 50% of the active club members receive at least one player-event invitation per year.

Slot machines include the Wheel of Fortune, and the new triple play video poker machines. There is also a selection of the Odyssey machines and bonus versions of video poker.

This is a place where machine players can receive maximum value for their play and where loyalty will be rewarded. If you are interested in staying and playing in Laughlin, you may want to check this one out.

(One thing about the casino industry is that whatever is true today may have changed tomorrow. Do not take my word on the slot club or playing conditions for this or any other casino I mention in this book. You always need to verify that a particular casino offers what you need before committing any playing time there).

Fortunately, the casinos are ready, willing and able to accommodate both machine and table game players.



4

Rated Players

Becoming a rated player for table game players is the equivalent of becoming a member of a slot club for machine players.

Rated players have their play tracked or rated by floormen. If you are a rated player, you will receive a VIP card which you will present whenever you first join a table game. Presentation of your card will ensure that a floorman will rate your play. Some clubs use one card for both slot clubs and for table games. When I stay at Rio in Las Vegas, I use the Play Rio card for both machine games and table games. I like using one card for all my playing activities. In fact, I have two Play Rio cards with my name on both of them. If I am playing a table game and my companion prefers a little slots or video poker action, she will play using one card while my play is being rated at the table.

Rating players is a system based on the size of the player's bets and the amount of time the player spends at the tables. I personally like the system better than the junket system which was used in the old days.

When the casinos used junkets to reel in the large fish, they would often comp the whole trip asking only that the players bring some minimum amount of money, such as \$5,000. The problem with this system from the casino's viewpoint is that a lot of the junketeers would buy \$5,000 worth of chips but give the casino very little real action. Casinos basing their comps on the supposed drop (the amount converted from cash to chips or checks as the casinos call them) were getting ripped off badly by players who bought chips but gambled very little.

After the casinos caught on to the number of players scamming them, many resorted to forcing players on a junket to convert their cash to special chips (we called them "Mickey Mouse" chips) which could only be played at the tables. This would force a player on a junket to at least give the casino one shot at his bankroll as these special chips could not be cashed in and had no value except for table game play. The casino bosses as well as the players hated the system. I tried one weekend of this action some years ago, and I absolutely detested the idea of using those special chips.

Finally, the casinos figured out that the amount of action is what really counts. Casinos define "action" as the total dollar amount bet at a table.

Using action as the criteria for rating players is a much fairer way of evaluating how likely the casino was to win x number of dollars from Mr. Z's play. It also gave low-rollers who gambled a lot a better chance of getting rated.

Let's compare two players. Mr. A is a low roller with a bankroll of only \$1,500. He likes to play craps. When he does, his average bet is from \$5 to \$15 and he makes bets all over the table. He especially likes to make \$1 and \$2 proposition bets. When he plays craps, he averages four hours a day of play for two days, for a total of eight hours. He usually loses just about all of his bankroll.



Mr. B acts like a high roller. His credit line is for \$10,000 and his average bet is for \$25. He plays blackjack. He usually plays for about one hour a day and stays in the casino for three days. Under the old "amount bought in" rules, here's how these two players might be rated, assuming they each buy in for full amounts of their bankrolls:

Drop Based Ratings

Player	Drop	Rating	Comps Available
Player A	\$ 1,500	None	drinks, tobacco, free parking
Player B	\$10,000	RFB	Room, food, beverages and all the goodies

Using the players' total drop, Player A looks like a loser to the casino. He gets what any gambler gets: drinks and tobacco while playing and a parking validation.

Player B looks like a live one to the casinos. He has a casino credit line and signs markers for \$10,000. The casino bosses feel good about granting him full RFB privileges.

Now lets compare Mr. A and Mr. B using the current rating system.

Mr. A's craps play results in an average wager of \$30, consisting of a pass line bet of \$10, odds of \$10, two come bets of \$10 each, plus odds and about \$5 spread among the proposition bets. The odds bets aren't counted by the casino as they offer no advantage to the house. However the numerous proposition bets kick both the casino advantage and the total bets per hour up. The floorman rates an average bet of \$30, with 50 bets an hour made and an average casino advantage of 4%. This results in a theoretical win per hour of \$60 for the casino.

With eight hours play, the expected win from this player is \$480. However the bosses observe that the player loses all of his bankroll on just about every buy in. His observed loss is estimated

to be \$1,200. Since this is a casino in downtown Las Vegas, this action is considered sufficient to grant Mr. A full RFB privileges.

The casino has a problem with Mr. B's play. He is simply not giving the casino enough action to justify any comps other than the normal freebies available to all persons gambling. If he only wants to play for three hours his average bet needs to be at least \$150 in order for him to be considered for RFB.

Current Rating System

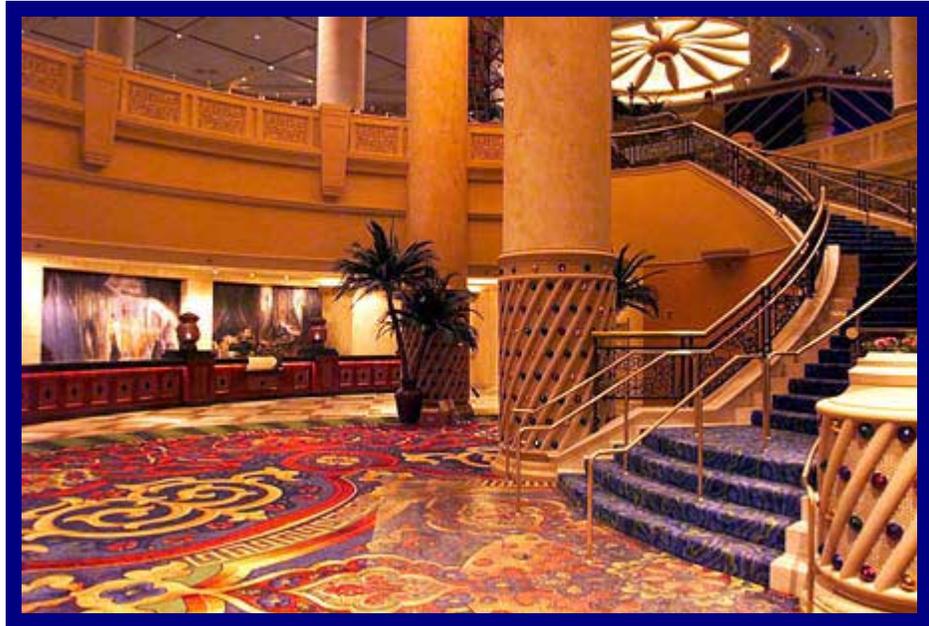
Player	Game	Average Bet	Total Bets/Hr	Casino Advantage	Win per Hour	Hours Played	Total Expected Win
A	Craps	\$30	50	4%	\$60	8	\$480
B	BJ	\$25	60	2%	\$30	3	\$ 75

Most casinos will comp an amount equal to about 40% of the total expected win. Mr. A, using the current rating system, would be entitled to about \$192 in comps. While not a big fish, he is large enough to meet the criteria of smaller casinos or some of the casinos in downtown Vegas especially when his observed loss of \$1,200 is figured in.

In other words, the casino bosses had it totally wrong under the old drop based systems. Players who really liked to gamble were getting shortchanged, while players with larger bankrolls were, in many instances, getting benefits they weren't entitled to.

The size of a player's bets is relative. If you want to be considered a larger bettor at the Mirage, you should plan on

betting \$2,000 a hand. At the El Cortez, \$25 wagers will put you in the big league.



If you walk into a casino and are not sure how they rate their players, ask to speak to a pit boss. Ask him or her what is the minimum size bet they will track. The premium joints won't be bothered with bets less than \$100. Some of the older or smaller joints will act like you are their long lost cousin if you average \$15 a hand.

Want to try for a comp in a smaller joint? Buy in for at least \$300. The size of your buy in will trigger a floorman coming over to approve the buy in. When he does, introduce yourself. You will probably be asked if you would like to be rated. While he prepares the paperwork, make a wager of at least \$25 and order a drink. The bet size shows that you are worth rating, the drink

order makes you look like a sport. You can vary your bets, tending toward an average size of \$10 to \$15, and increase the size of the wagers when the floorman is observing you. After about an hour of play, you will call the boss over and say "I am really getting kind of hungry. Have I played long enough for a coffee shop comp for two?"

If you have done your job, the floorman will like you, will tend to rate your play in the \$25 a bet range and should be willing to offer you at least a buffet comp. If you really want the coffee shop comp, tell him that his casino's coffee shop has been recommended and you really want to try. If he won't spring for the coffee shop comp then, ask him how much longer you need to play. By now, you should know the routine. Play a little longer and then ask for the comp.

While we're on the subject, let's talk about coffee shops. Coffee shops in Las Vegas are a misnomer. You can buy anything from steak and eggs to prime rib dinners or lobster in Vegas coffee shops. You can also order any kind of booze you can think of. One reason coffee shop comps are harder to get than buffet comps is that a coffee shop comp for two can cost the casino \$50 to \$100, while the buffet comp is usually \$10 to \$15. If you can't get a coffee shop comp on your terms, ask for a limited comp. Tell the floorman that you just want to order a hamburger and a glass of juice (or whatever), and ask for a limited comp.

Let's talk about how you should dress to get comps. I know how Americans dress. I remember sitting in a nice hotel in Amsterdam watching two tour buses unload. The persons on the

first bus wore top coats, leather shoes, well pressed slacks and looked quite natty. I told my companion, "They must be English."

The group from the second bus wore shorts, jeans, sneakers and were loud enough that their voices carried through a couple of panes of plate glass. She looked back at me and said, "And here come the Americans."

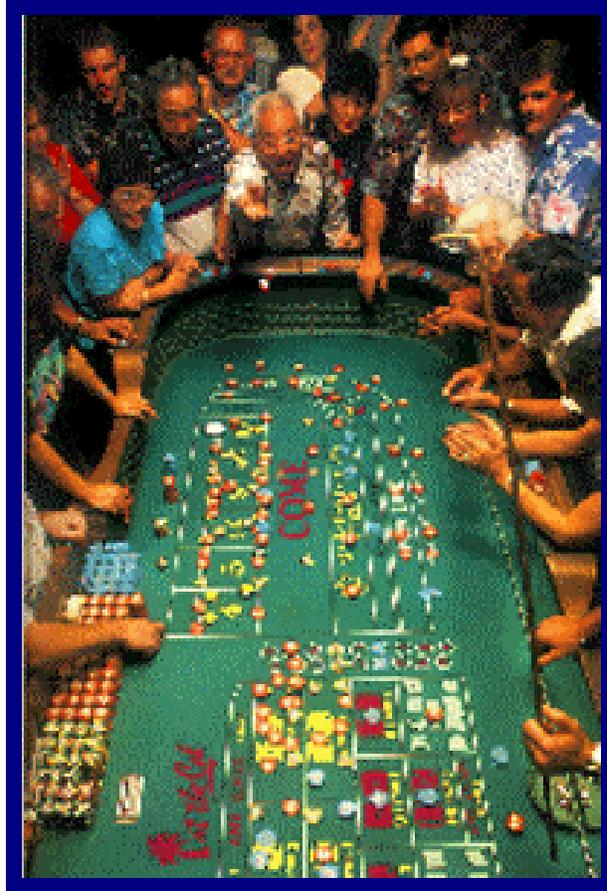
I know that the jackals in Las Vegas would rather have a player standing in his boxer shorts betting \$1,000 a hand than a member of the old aristocracy wearing one of those coats with the patches on the elbows and wagering \$5 a pop.

However, we're talking about making a general impression. Clean clothes are the minimum standard. Casual is okay; it is the norm for Las Vegas. However, bare feet, exposed midriffs, unshaven faces and hair sticking out every direction are not the way to impress the bosses. Come on you guys, let's clean up our acts a little.

Do you want to get one of those little VIP cards? One way is to buy in for a larger amount, say \$1,000, and when the floor person comes over to approve the buy in, ask about being rated. If you don't already know, this is a good time to find out the minimum bet which the casino tracks.

If you buy in for \$1,000, don't make your first bet for \$10. In the floorman's eyes, this makes you look suspicious, as you don't need to buy in for a grand to make \$10 wagers. Make your first wager for \$50 or more.

One of my favorite craps bets is laying against the 4 or 10. If I am just starting to play a craps game, I may lay \$40 against the 10, giving the dealer \$41, which includes the house vig of \$1. I'll next make a come or pass line bet of \$25, and if a point is established, I tell the dealer I want \$64 across. This approach is guaranteed to catch the eye of the floorman. Bosses in the craps pit love players who cover all the numbers with bets like "64 across." The lay bet is unusual enough that most players at the table won't have any idea what you are doing. In short, you look like a player to the floorman and may easily be rated as wagering \$100 per craps decision. With an average of thirty decisions an hour, the casino should rate your action at about \$3,000 an hour, with an average casino win rate of 3% to 4%. This level of action will put in contention for full RFB if you are playing in a casino in downtown Las Vegas or an older property on the Strip.



Of course, after the floorman leaves, you may reduce the size of your wagers.

After you lay your grand on the table and the floorman comes over, you can start making your wagers right away. Most casinos will borrow your driver's license and return it and your new VIP casino card in just a few minutes. If you are playing with a companion, ask to have two cards so that both of you can be rated. If the floorman says that you will need only one card since

you are playing together and he will rate both of you, mention that your companion likes to play roulette and you'd like for her to have an additional card. He will be happy to comply, especially since double zero roulette is a game which gives the house a five-percent plus advantage over the player.

Even though you have bought in for \$1,000, you don't have to play like a \$1,000 player. Most players buying in for this amount would average \$75 and up per round of bets. If you are playing craps and start the way I suggested, you will look like you fall into this category.

However, after the floorman leaves the table, you can reduce the size of your wagers. Even if it is not your normal betting pattern, I would occasionally wager \$64 across (a bet covering all of the place numbers on the craps layout) so that the boxman is aware that you play this way. If you only bet this way when the floorman is around, it will be rather obvious to the dealer and the boxman.

If the floorman asks them about your play, they can fill him in on your normal betting pattern. Many craps players bet somewhat erratically, raising and lowering wagers at will. You want to appear to be in this category so that raising your wagers when the floorman is observing will not seem out of the ordinary.

Another aspect of craps superstitions that you can put to your use is to occasionally skip betting when certain players throw

the dice. This tactic will reduce the amount of money you actually wager per hour, will not seem unusual to the dice table personnel and should not reduce your rating.

So now you've bought in for \$1,000, even though your loss limit is closer to \$300. What if you lose your \$300? There is no law that says you can't leave the table. Here's what you do.

Tell the dealer that you've got color coming in and place your chips on the table. The dealer will signal the floorman who will come over to the table. If you have played for over an hour, tell the floorman that you promised to meet a friend at the coffee shop and that you need to take a break. Ask if he'll still be working in an hour as you would like to play some more in his section. Ask politely if you could have a comp for two in the coffee shop. If he is reluctant, suggest a limited comp, just so that you can meet your friend who also likes to play craps.

Chances are you'll get the comp as the floorman has pegged you as a player who gives the casino decent action and who may bring a friend in to give them even more action. If you are willing to take a limited comp (limited comps usually have dollar amount limitation, such as a comp for \$25), then you'll probably get it.

Now you've accomplished several things. You have a couple of shiny new VIP cards on you. You have established a rating in this joint. You have made a favorable initial impression on the floorman as your play has convinced him that you have come to play and hopefully lose money.

Odds are you have already met your host. The nice person who brought you your VIP cards was probably your host rather than a floorman. It's now time to get acquainted with VIP Services.

After enjoying your comped meal, wander over to VIP services. Now you will meet some of the nice ladies who will help you with just about anything you need to make your stay as enjoyable as possible. Introduce yourself and tell them you've just become a member of the club. Comment on how nice the casino personnel are and how much you are enjoying your stay. Ask about any brochures or other information the hostesses have for members. Tell them you would like to thank the host for helping you get set up.

Your host will probably be by in a few minutes, or a hostess will tell you where you can find him. When you talk to the host, don't ask for anything. Tell him something complimentary about his casino and mention that the floorman was just super and comped your lunch. You should mention that you plan on playing here a lot more and ask some questions about the casino's shows or restaurants. But don't ask for anything, and don't complain.

Your purpose here is to start building a personal relationship with your host. You are letting him know that you are giving his casino enough action to be rated and comped after a short time at the craps table. More importantly, you are not griping about losing, whining about some boss, or begging for another comp. This will set nicely with the host.

The impression you want to leave with your host is that you are a serious gambler, ready to give the casino some reasonable action. However, unlike most gamblers who are constant complainers, you are letting the host know that you are a nice person, who appreciates the efforts of the people who work there and that you plan on playing there more frequently.

This exchange shouldn't take more than a few minutes. Your host is busy and this meeting should be brief and end on a favorable note. You will have plenty of time later to hit the host for more goodies.

Besides the host, it is important to get to know the bosses. I have given you an overview of the rating process. The floorman observes your play, which usually consists of checking your action about once every fifteen minutes. The floorman prepares your rating. The rating determines just what comps you are entitled to. If your action doesn't warrant a comp, you won't get one.

While the rating system is supposed to be totally objective, you are dealing with human beings here. Do you think jerks or nice people get higher ratings? I hope you answered nice people. Because it's true.

Floor personnel deal with jerks all day long. The average gambler doesn't talk very much, and when he does, it is to complain about losing money or some other aspect of casino life he finds distasteful. Some players cross over the line and become abusive with dealers, cocktail waitresses or other customers. Most bosses have zero tolerance for these people. Cursing a dealer or

consistently belittling another customer can get you tossed out of the casino or at least lower your rating to zippo.



When a customer is nice and treats a boss like a human being, who do you think is more likely to get a better rating?

When you are talking to a boss, let the boss be the expert. Women are good at this; it seems to come easily for women to let men "toot their own horns" even if they don't know beans about what they are talking about. Men (being more inclined to be a "tooter" rather than a "tootee") have a hard time letting another man be the expert. I know a lot of pit personnel are full of it. But you don't have to point it out to them.

Try asking a boss for some special insider information about the city or how the casino operates. And then listen to his answer. Even if you know better, let the boss be the expert.

People enjoy showing what they know, and if you act like you think they are smart, they'll figure you to be a good guy.

Ask the boss for a recommendation for a restaurant, show or golf course and thank him later for the recommendation. Even if the restaurant gave you the creeping crud, tell him it was an experience to remember. People like to help other people, especially when this help is acknowledged and appreciated. And guess what? Now they'll want to help you even more.

Tell other players at the table how nice the casino personnel are. Give the impression that you have played in a number of other premium joints and that this one is by far the best.

Once you have established a reasonable amount of rapport with your boss, ask him to look you up and tell you how far you can go with comps. If you have managed to become more like a friend to the boss, many times he will start coaching you on how to get more comps.

Always say good bye to your boss. When you are ready to leave, chat with the boss while the dealer is coloring up your chips (exchanging smaller valued chips for larger ones).

If you have lost, let the boss know that you had a losing session, but not in a whiney way. Mention that you would have done better if you hadn't increased your wagers to (x amount, whatever is at least a couple times larger than your average high bet) and lost them. Tell him you'll be back and thank him for his help.

This will leave the best possible impression with the boss. He will figure that you are a total class act. You lose like nearly everyone else, don't whine about it, listen to the boss's advice, give the casino good action, and have the decency to appreciate all of the hard work the dealer and other casino employees do just to make your stay an enjoyable one.

This combination will get you the best rating possible. If it doesn't, then you need to work with a different boss.

A word or two on tipping. Tips are called tokes in the casinos. Dealers, cocktail waitresses and other casino personnel depend on tips to survive. Many of the bosses worked their way up and have zero sympathy for players who stiff employees.

One of the most important people in a casino to have on your side is the dealer. That's why its important to not only talk to the dealer and treat him or her like a human being, but to tip the dealer early enough that you are established as a tipping player or a "George."

The same holds true for cocktail waitresses. If you are playing at a table game, you should tip at least a buck a drink. If you order a drink for your companion at the same time, you can still tip just a buck for both drinks, but if you'll plunk down two dollars, you'll have better service and your attentiveness will probably be noticed by pit personnel.

Look at it this way. When you are trying to get comps from the casino you are entering a silent partnership with the dealer, the cocktail waitress, the floorman and the pit boss. For a

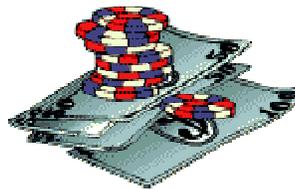
partnership to work, both sides have to contribute. Your contribution to the bosses is making them look and feel good about themselves, with an occasional gift thrown in. With dealers and waitresses, you need to give enough tokens that they feel appreciated also. In return, the casino personnel will do everything they can to make sure you get comps.

In order to maximize your comps as a table player, it makes sense to make one casino your primary casino. Some players bring \$10,000 to town, spread their play over ten different casinos and don't get a single comp.

If you have ten grand as your gambling bankroll and are willing to give one casino most of your action, you can be RFB'd in all but the premium joints.

Getting comped many times is more of a function of how you are perceived than what you actually do. Once you look at yourself through the casino's eyes, you'll see why they like to reward their loyal players and are skeptical about players they seldom see.

Getting acquainted with pit personnel, dealers and a host is just part of the process. You also want to get the most out of your bankroll.



5

Your Bankroll

You can establish yourself as a rated player by playing at a table game and by buying in for enough that you get noticed and rated. This works well when you walk into a casino and want to gamble. It is also a perfectly satisfactory way to get established as a rated customer. After your first trip, you will be on the host's mailing list and might receive an offer for a special event with a discounted room or other privileges.

Congratulations! You are now in the system. But what if you are sitting at home and would like to get established before you arrive at a casino? If you are willing to either establish casino credit or to deposit your playing money with the casino cashier (the "cage"), you can get this process starting by calling the casino and asking to speak to a host.

When you talk to the host, tell him that you played in his casino at such and such time. He'll likely ask if you got rated. You can tell him that the casino was crowded or it was late at night and you never bothered to get rated. But emphasize that you are interested in playing there and want to visit in the near future.

Ask him how much front money or credit you need to bring or establish in order to be considered for RFB? He'll probably give you a number on the high side. If you are interested in establishing casino credit, let him know and he will either send you an application or transfer you to the credit department. If you are willing to bring your own money and deposit it with the casino you can tell him this.

Your purpose is to solicit some information on the casino's requirements for credit lines or front money in terms of the comps you can get. The more knowledgeable you sound about this process, the better your call will be received.

Let's talk about getting casino credit. Sounds pretty glamorous doesn't it? Those fat guys with cigars sticking out of their mouths who sign markers for \$500 or \$1,000 probably have casino credit or have deposited money with the casino. The dealers know them. The floormen greet them as Mr. B. or Mr. T. (always an initial in Las Vegas). It's easy to think that these guys must have something going for them when they swagger over to the table with five fingers raised signaling that they want five hundred.

I have watched these guys over the years, and I am totally unimpressed with their play. Most of these players are louder than the typical players. Their bets are larger, and they tend to lose at a faster rate than other players. In short, they are losers, who get catered to because the casino is either supplying them credit for play, or they have deposited their money with the cage and the casino knows exactly how much they can win.

The casinos love these guys. They drop money faster than almost anyone else, and even if their demeanor leaves something to be desired, they lose money at a prodigious rate, which is just what the casinos like.



The dealers and pit personnel may not like them personally, but business is business, and the dudes who sign markers do drop the loot.

I'll let you in on a dirty secret. Casino credit is not really credit. Casinos are not in the business of loaning money to gamblers, at least not now. If you have a bad gambling habit and a weak bank account, your local friendly loan shark is more likely to accommodate you than your not so friendly casino.

When you establish a casino credit line, the casino is agreeing to advance you no more than the average balance in your checking account for the last six months.

Your creditworthiness has little to do with setting up a casino credit line. These guys don't care whether you are employed, just filed Chapter 7 bankruptcy or are dodging your other creditors. Casino credit is based on how much bread you keep in your checking account.

Do you feel a little better about those flashy guys signing the markers? They are signing magnetically coded checks, which can be run through their checking accounts. Normally markers are not handled this way as the casino prefers to be paid by check, but if necessary, the casino markers can and will be deposited by the casino and will clear the customer's checking account.

So what are the guys using casino credit doing? They are basically writing checks at the craps or blackjack table. I've often thought that it would be fun to buy groceries this way. You could swagger up to the checker and demand a marker. Everyone would defer to you, and a special person would be dispatched to bring you your marker, complete with a pen for signing. You would sign the marker with a flourish and then head to the parking lot with the hapless sacker expected to catch you and get the groceries to your car.

Sort of takes the pizazz out of it, doesn't it?

If you are interested in establishing credit, you might want to talk to your banker before hand. If your bank frowns on giving out information about your checking account to casino credit departments, you might want to let them know what you are doing before they receive a call from the casino.



Having casino credit is a handy way to gamble. The casino knows the amount of your credit line and views it as the amount you can potentially lose. If you set up a credit line of \$10,000 and are willing to bet an average of \$50 to \$100 a wager, you can qualify for RFB or at least RFL treatment in many casinos. If you are willing to patronize an older property or a casino catering more to medium and low rollers, then a credit line of \$5,000 will start to open some doors for you.

Other than the convenience of not having to carry cash around, your sole purpose in setting up a casino credit line should be to generate comps. It is not really a source of credit.

After establishing casino credit, you can walk up to any table, and present your casino VIP card and ask for a marker. If the pit does not recognize you, they may ask for some identification. This is strictly for your own protection. It is

considered bad form to ask for a marker for less than \$500. Also, you will not impress the bosses if you sign a marker for \$500 and start making \$5 or \$10 bets. You should make minimum bets of \$25, at least while a boss is observing your play.

After signing a marker and playing for a while, it is customary to ask for the marker back if you win enough to pay it off. Assume that you sign a marker for \$500, play for an hour and end up with \$900 in chips. If you are ready to leave, ask the floorman for your marker back. Most credit players like to tear up their markers and hand the pieces to the floorman.

At any rate, you are expected to pay the casino for any outstanding markers before you check out. If you want to continue playing in this casino as a credit customer you should pay them off before checking out. If you pay them off after the first trip, most casinos will let you take thirty days to pay off any outstanding markers after you have established yourself as a prompt payor on your first trip.

If you do not pay the casino, you can expect a series of dunning letters and maybe a phone call. Ultimately, if you do not make arrangements to pay off the balance, the casino will deposit your markers.

If you ever fail to pay off your credit or bounce a check on the casino, they will turn this information over to a special outfit known as Central Credit. Central Credit supplies this information to just about every casino. After that, every casino will know who

you stiffed, when you stiffed them and for how much. Your casino credit days will be ended.

The advantages of casino credit are that it is easier to get comped as a credit player, and you don't have to carry cash with you in order to gamble. However, there is another way to accomplish the same thing.

You can deposit the same amount of money with the casino cashier. As we have seen, when you use casino credit, you are really playing with your own money anyway, as the casino is not in the business of making long-term loans. When you deposit front money with the cage, you are accomplishing the same thing, just more directly.

If you want to play with front money, you should call the casino and tell them you are coming. It is helpful to talk to a casino host to discuss your front money deposit and the casino's policy on comps.

When you arrive at the casino, you will go to the casino cashier and make your deposit. You'll sign a signature verification card and receive your casino VIP card. Before you head for the tables, it is a good idea to meet your host so that he can see that you are real.

If you have at least \$5,000, and \$10,000 is better in most cases, you can either establish casino credit or deposit front money. Either way, the casino will be pleased to have you as a customer. If you have done your homework, you will have matched your playing level with the comp policy of the casino.

Remember, green chip bettors don't impress anyone at joints like Caesars Palace, The Desert Inn or The Mirage, but may have the red carpet rolled out at casinos like the Westward Ho, the Maxim or Lady Luck.

If you don't have the scratch to go for at least \$5,000 in credit or deposit, then you should remain a cash player.

I have been a cash player most of my life. I know that it's not always wise to carry a large amount of cash. However, I'll share a couple of tricks with you. I never carry most of my money in my wallet. I might have \$500 to \$1,000 at most in the old billfold. The rest is hidden in a secure money belt. I admit that it is a bit of hassle to remove money from the hidden belt as it involves a trip to the rest room to retrieve some cash. On the other hand, I have never had a problem as a cash player getting every comp that I need.

The amount of money that you as a cash players have tends to be over estimated by the casino bosses if you handle your buy ins correctly. If you walk up to a craps table, buy in for a hundred bucks and start making \$5 bets, you look like a two bit player, sometimes called "fleas" by the casino boys. If you buy in for \$500 to \$1,000, you look like a little whale, especially if you start betting \$50 to \$100 a pop.

Yet you could play either way with a \$1,500 to \$2,500 bankroll. With the little buy in and small wagers you look like a

flea. The larger buy in and larger bet gets you into the respectable category, at least to the steely-eyed bosses.

The key thing to remember is that you don't have to lose your entire buy in to quit playing. This is especially important if you buy in for \$1,000 out of a \$1,500 or even a \$2,500 bankroll. Use the size of the buy in to impress the bosses, but don't play over your head. If your normal cutoff is \$300 in losses, you can quit after losing this amount, even with a \$1,000 buy in.



Credit players and players depositing front money show the casino bosses how much the casino can win. This is an advantage in getting comped. The big disadvantage with credit is that your

banker will learn that you are a gambler, and you may end up losing all of your credit line and then some.

With front money, you can't borrow more in the heat of battle, and no one but you and the casino need to know how much you have deposited.

Credit players and players with front money are automatically rated.

Cash players may have to ask to be rated. Once you have a VIP card and present it when you buy in, you will be rated, even playing with cash. Cash players who buy in for larger amounts tend to look like they have more money to lose than they might have.

A CASE STUDY ON GETTING COMPED

If you are a low to mid-range player and want to get full RFB, you might want to try the Lady Luck in downtown Las Vegas.

If you want a fully stocked stretch limo waiting for you at the airport, a maitre'd who picks up your dinner check and a nice suite to stay in, this may be the place for you.

With two elegant towers, 162 luxurious suites, a nice pool and all the standard casino games, you may find this casino to your liking. Starting with the buffet, which features a delicious prime rib dinner, you can dine in the Burgundy Room or the Marco Polo room for exceptional Italian cuisine.

If you like sporting events, the Lady Luck will even set you up in a private box at the Las Vegas Motor Speedway.

The Lady Luck is very straightforward on what it takes to qualify for comps. If you are willing to make minimum wagers of \$10 for three hours a day, you can qualify for the casino room rate. Deposit \$1,000 in the cage, and you can get a deluxe suite, gourmet meals for two and a limo at your disposal. To get this, you have to bet \$50 a hand for two days.

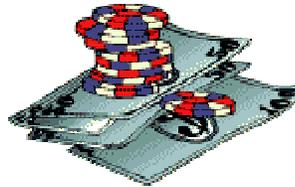
They deal double deck blackjack, have nice rooms and very friendly and helpful employees. If you want the full VIP treatment for action that most joints would ignore, check out the Lady Luck.

The next time you are in Las Vegas, call one of their VIP hosts. They'll arrange to have you picked up in a Limo for a full tour of the property. It won't take more than an hour, and you can decide if you want to try this place.

Our friends who have tried it tell me that if you are a young player with a limited bankroll you will feel especially at home.

(This information was believed to be accurate as of the date of publication. However, as with any information about specific casinos, check it out before committing any playing time there.)

If you are short on cash and want to look more like a whale, play with cash. If you have the bread, you may want to deposit it and play with front money. Once you identify a casino that you want to patronize, you can decide exactly how you want to handle your bankroll to get the most comps out of the casino.



6

Getting Comps

Whether you chose to become a rated player at the casino table games, join a slot club or both, once you get into the system, you can start getting your share of comps. There are a number of tried and proven ways to multiply the number of comps you get. Here are some pointers:

1. Chose a primary casino and then play there.

A basic premise of the whole comp system is to reward loyal players. Casinos offer comps to lure new players to their casino and to make sure that their current customers remain their customers. If you think you have it tough trying to use the comp system to your advantage, just think what the casinos are up against with new competition springing up every day.

If you are a whale, you can ignore my advice. Just plan on either bringing or setting up a credit line of \$100,000 or larger, and wherever you decide to land will be glad to comp you. If you are in the million dollar plus range, the casino will not only comp you,

but anyone else you chose to bring with you. They'll even charter a 737 and fly in as many of your friends as you want to bring along.

If you are not quite in this range, then it will pay to find a primary casino and reward it with your patronage. A player with as little as \$1,000 can get RFB treatment in some of the downtown casinos in Las Vegas. A player with a \$2,500 bankroll will have an even greater choice of hotel casinos. Move up to the \$5,000 to \$10,000 range, and a whole other batch of casinos becomes available.

But, in order to get noticed and adequately comped with a bankroll from \$1,000 to \$10,000, you have got to be willing to reward a casino with your playing time.

A friend of mine visits Las Vegas about ten times a year. He usually takes \$5,000 to \$10,000 and manages to lose between half and three quarters of it per trip. I won't comment on his approach to gambling. Quite frankly, it stinks. Anyway, the subject is comps.

Believe it or not, he doesn't get any. He stays at a different casino every trip. I think he believes the constant changes might improve his luck. This is not necessarily bad, if he would play at the casino where he stays. He invariably changes casinos every hour or two and ends up playing in ten to twelve different establishments over the course of two or three days.

Because of the size of his buy-ins, he is constantly asked if he wants to be rated. He always declines. He confesses that he doesn't want the casinos to know how much he is losing. I think that he is trying to kid himself about his losses.



I have explained the comp system to him. As long as he is losing, he might as well have the casinos kick in \$750 to \$1,000 per trip. This money is there for the asking if he would only pick a primary casino and give it a reasonable amount of play.

I can't convince him to change his ways. But, maybe I can influence you.

There are many other benefits to playing more in a primary casino. The first benefit is the application of the old saw, "If you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours."

The casino will accelerate the rewards offered you the more you play. Some casinos formalize this process and actually accelerate the comps to slot club members as their total number of points increases. Many casinos offer more and more free rooms and entertainment the more you patronize them.

The key to maximizing your benefits from this whole process is to find a casino which matches your needs and then start playing there. If you have picked correctly, your loyalty will be well rewarded.

2. Join a slot club and/or get a VIP card.

The start of getting comps is to be into the casino comp system. If you bet \$25,000 a hand, the host will find you. If you bet \$5 to \$25 a pop, you have to get the casino's attention. And the easiest way to do this is with a little piece of plastic which looks just like a credit card.

Once you have a card, getting comped will become part of your routine. The first thing you will do as a machine player is to insert your club card in the card reader.

When you sit down at a blackjack or roulette table you will present your VIP card when you buy in.

Your card will go down with your cash at the craps table when you lay five hundred in front of the dealer and tell him, "Chips please."

Once you have the cards and use them, all of your play will count towards something.

NICKEL PLAY COUNTS AT THESE LAS VEGAS CASINOS

Like to play the nickel slots? Some joints won't count your play. Here's a list of casinos in Las Vegas which offer some benefits to slot club members who play nickel slots and video poker:

- Bally's
- Barbary Coast
- Boomtown
- California ★
- Fiesta ★
- Flamingo Hilton
- Fremont ★
- Gold Coast
- Hard Rock
- Imperial Palace
- Jerry's Nugget
- Lady Luck ★
- Nevada Palace
- Rio
- Riviera
- Sam's Town ★
- San Remo
- Santa Fe
- Showboat
- Tom's Sunset
- Tropicana
- Westward Ho ★

★ For the best deals, check out these places

3. Get to know the casino personnel.

When my companion and I walked into the casino at the Desert Inn, we knew we were home. Every cocktail waitress knew us. The dealers in the craps pit recognized us. As we walked up to a craps table, a couple of bosses we knew came over. Before five minutes had passed, our favorite cocktails arrived - without us even ordering them! The table was crowded, and a dealer automatically cleared a spot for us at the end of the table, as he knew I was fond of making don't come bets and could easily reach the limited betting area for these bets from the position he had created.

When we finally took a break, we walked over to our favorite coffee shop in Las Vegas. A waitress we had known for years smiled as she walked up to our table. We asked about her son who had just graduated from high school. She chatted happily as she sat our coffees down, which she had brought over without even consulting us.

After dinner we stopped by VIP Services for our show passes. As usual, Lynda had everything in perfect order. She had even arranged for special drinks to be delivered to our table.

After a perfect evening, we watched the lights on the Frontier marque across the street put on their endless show from the vantagepoint of our room. We had a lot of memories associated with the Desert Inn. We had watched the downtown Fourth of July fireworks from our room one-year. Another year,

we had a rude awaking at 3:00 in the morning as the fire alarm started screaming and the hall was filled with guests in various stages of dress and undress. Fortunately it was a false alarm. I called downstairs, and the friendly night clerk told me that they were having a problem with the alarm system, but there was no fire.

There are many newer casinos than the Desert Inn (actually it's gone now). It was one of the oldest on the Strip. There were many larger casinos. It had one of smallest casino playing areas in Las Vegas. There are many of the "themed" casinos which offer many more attractions than the old DI.

There were no pirates in the DI. No sharks swam in the lobby. There was no Statute of Liberty out front. No knights ran around the floor smiling at customers. Cleopatra had no barges floating in the simple old DI.

You might wonder why I stayed here? But I think you know the answer. I am known here. Because they knew me, I felt appreciated. I have played in just about every casino in Las Vegas and a good number of other casinos around the country. But for pure service, I prefer the old DI.

Any casino can become your Desert Inn once you invest a little time and get to know the people who work there. Most casino employees are not a whole lot different than other people you already know. Just give them a chance to know you, and you'll be surprised at the good things they'll throw your way.

4. Get to know your casino host.

The casino host or the slot host will be your key to getting the most comps in most casinos.

If you are a member of the casino's slot club, you will get nearly all of your comps by asking the casino slot host. Many times comps for food, rooms, shows and merchandise are built right into the slot club payoffs. If you have just joined a slot club, try giving them some play for an hour or two and then asking the slot host for a buffet comp.

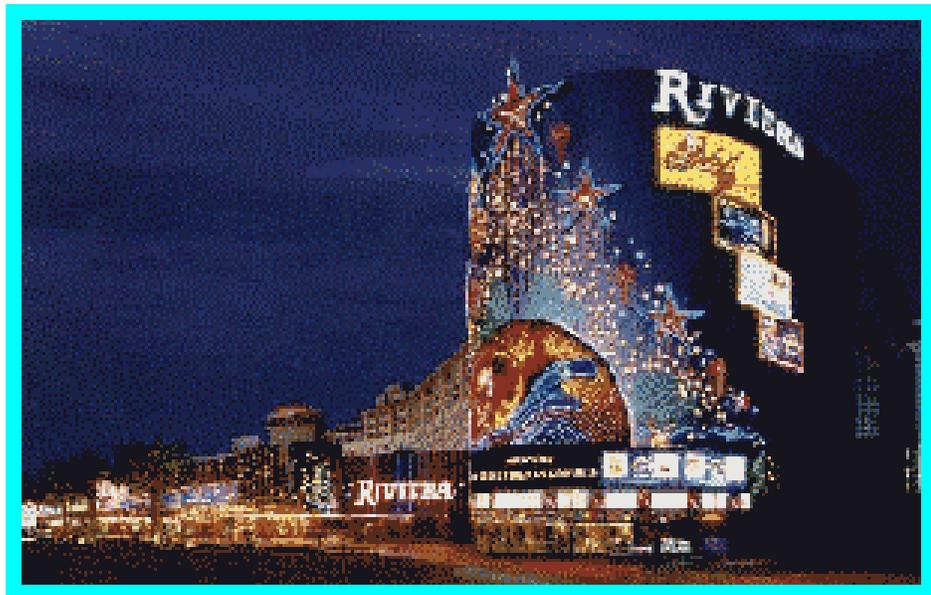
My experience with comps from playing slots or video poker is that the slot hosts are much more likely to be generous with comps than the personnel at the slot club booths. If you want brochures on the slot clubs or general information on the slot club, talk to the clerks at the booth. If you want a particular comp, ask the slot host.

Casino hosts, catering to the table game players, are at the top of the casino pecking order for granting comps. Their top priority is to cultivate new customers and to keep the current customers happy.

The casino hostesses are the persons working for VIP Services who help you check in, arrange your limo service, make dinner and show reservations and so forth.

The hostesses will handle most of your scheduling and reservation needs. The casino hosts are the people you need to talk to to arrange RFB and airfare reimbursement.

You can meet a casino host a number of ways. One way is to call a casino before coming and ask to speak to a host. This is a good way to ask about the casino's comp policy and to tell the host that you are interested in playing there.



If you are playing with front money, you should meet your host after depositing your money with the cage but before you begin play.

If you are a cash player and make a large enough buy-in, you may have a chance to meet a host when the casino sets you up with a VIP card.

After you have played in a casino, you can make reservations through the casino host. Making reservation through a host who knows you is a good way to get a room even if the front desk claims that no rooms are available. Casinos always reserve a block of rooms for their best customers and a casino host can get you a room when a reservation clerk can't.

I recommend taking a little time to develop a relationship with a host. Part of developing a relationship is consistency. If you make one casino your primary casino and visit several times a year, it will be easier to become known to a host than if he only sees you every other year.

If you are using a casino credit line, the host will introduce himself to you. With front money or cash, you will want to make a point of meeting the host.

Treat your host with respect and nurture the relationship. He can shower you with all kinds of freebies, including gifts, food, a free room and VIP treatment. And he is paid to do this. For your part, you have to convince your host that your action is sufficient to justify the comps you want. And being a nice person won't hurt either.

5. Be a nice person.

Or have I said that? You can get enormous leverage out of maintaining friendly relationships with the people who work in casinos.

Start with the dealers and cocktails waitresses. These people have a couple of the hardest jobs in the casino and are at

the bottom of the casino hierarchy. A smile and a reasonable tipping policy will do wonders to get these folks on your side. I believe that creating a positive atmosphere starts with how you act towards the casino personnel. A positive atmosphere is conducive to winning as well as to getting your fair share of comps.

You might look at it this way. If you are a grump, the dealer will probably reciprocate. This is contagious, and soon the whole table will act the same way. The pit personnel not only will not be impressed with your play, they probably will be put off by the whole scene at your table. Not only will your rating likely suffer, you won't have nearly as much fun.

You can't always control how dealers and other customers act. If I join a table where no one is talking and the dealer barely grunts when spoken to, I will make my departure very quickly. Usually a few cheerful words followed by a toke for the dealer will turn the atmosphere around. However, if this fails, you can't be faulted for not trying, and life is too short to play under miserable conditions. It is always better to change tables than to continue to play with an out of sorts dealer and crabby complaining customers. Under these conditions, you should just leave.

6. Play with front money.

I like the freedom of playing with cash. When you carry your own green, you are beholden to no one. The casinos tend to overrate cash players, especially when they buy in for larger amounts.

If you only have a bankroll of \$1,000 to \$1,500, it is almost always better to play with cash so long as you buy in for \$500 to \$1,000. However, if you have the stash, it is usually better to let the casino know how much they can win from you.

If you want to use casino credit, more power to you. However, as we have seen, the casinos generally do not extend much more credit than the average high balance of your checking account. If you can write a check for the amount of credit extended to you, you really don't need the credit.

A potential problem with casino credit is that for many gamblers the money does not seem real when it is coming from a credit line. Players using casino credit tend to lose very frequently because they have lost the connection between the fact that markers and their own checking account are intimately connected. After all, a marker is really nothing but a magnetically encoded check, and the payment to the casino is just as real as laying the green stuff on the table.

I think that casino credit is a lot like credit card credit. Many persons get in over their heads using credit cards. Likewise a gambler can get in over his head with casino credit. Many casinos will extend additional credit to gamblers who have lost their entire credit lines and are requesting more credit. Having a \$10,000 credit line is no guarantee that you won't lose more.

Too many players have started out with \$10,000 of casino credit in one casino. Over time, they established credit in second and third casinos. Then they started increasing the limit of each credit line. Before their gambling careers blew up, they had lost \$50,000 to \$100,000.

A good compromise between laying fistfuls of cash on the table and playing against your checking account is to bring cash, but deposit it in the cage.

With front money deposited, you will get a casino VIP card. You will still get to sign markers at the table. To the other customers, you will look exactly the same as any other high roller signing markers. The big difference is that you will be less likely to get into trouble when you are playing off your own cash.

When I bring cash to a casino, I remember how hard I worked to raise that cash. I have gradually built up my gambling bankroll. This bankroll is a precious thing, not to be treated lightly. It is, therefore, extremely important that I not lose this bankroll. When I leave, I want to be able to return with everything I brought plus more.

Casinos respect front money players. You are willing to put your own cash up. If you lose, the casino will not have any hassles collecting the money due them.

When you play with front money, you should put as much of your money as possible into play. It is best to use the entire amount on a single trip.

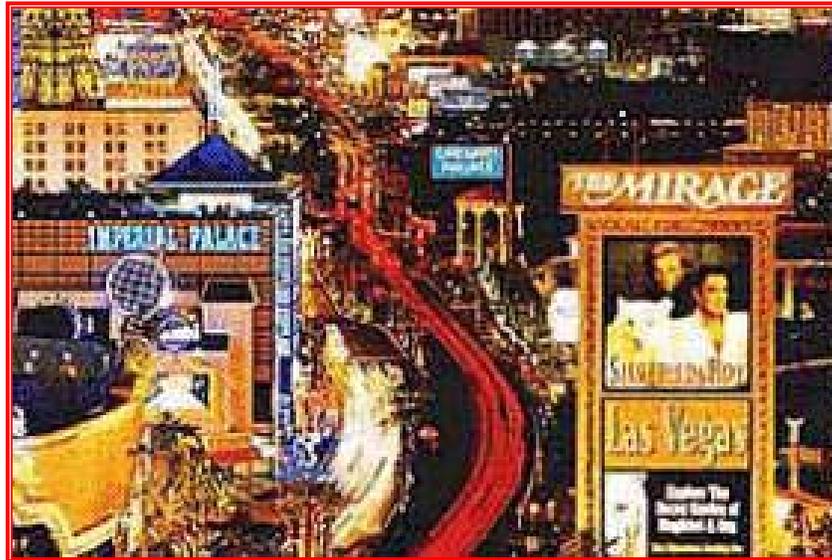
This doesn't mean that you have to lose all of your bankroll. But casinos like to see action, and if you draw on all of your front money, they are more likely to rate you higher than if you only put a fraction into play.

Say you sign a marker for \$1,000 at the blackjack table. You play for an hour and a half and have about \$600 left in chips on the table. There are another five hundred in chips in your pocket, but the floorman doesn't know this. You thank the floorman and take a break. He notes a \$400 "observed loss" on your rating card.

Instead of quitting immediately, you move to the craps table and start playing with \$600 in chips. After pocketing a couple hundred more, you leave the table with about \$450 in chips. The floorman did not observe the amount of your win or loss, but rated you for thirty minutes of \$100 per round play.

If you only take a short break and start playing again, I would buy in with a new marker. The chips remaining from your earlier play will remain in your pocket until there is a shift change. The reason you delay cashing in the chips is that you do not want the floorman apprised of the amount you are cashing in. Many casinos alert floor personnel when chips exceeding a certain

amount are cashed in. In some of smallest casinos, the pit is alerted whenever anyone cashes in for an amount greater than \$500, so watch out.



If you are unsure what amount triggers a call to the pit, cash in for an amount greater than \$500 after a floorman has observed a win. In this case, cash in every chip observed by the pit. You will find out if \$500 triggers a contact to the pit. If it does, the amount of chips you are cashing in will agree with the pit's count, which will increase your credibility.

If cashing in \$500 does not trigger a call to the pit, you can ask the cashier casually how much money you need to cash in to have her call the pit. She most likely will tell you.

Continue to play against your front money until all of it has been drawn against. If you have handled your act well, the casino will tend to overrate your play.

7. Be a George.

You can't tip your way to a comp — at least directly. However "Georges" who toke the dealers and cocktail waitresses will go a lot further with comps than stiffs who seldom tip.

You don't have to be extravagant with your tips. A dollar per round of drinks is fine for the cocktail waitress.

Dealers should be toked even when you are losing. You don't have to tip much if you are losing, just a \$5 bet for the dealer once in while. If you are on a winning streak, make a few more bets for the dealer. If you are winning a large amount, an occasional ten-dollar toke would not be out of line.

8. Visit the casino at off times.

I nearly always schedule my casino trips for the middle of the week. I will typically arrive on a Monday afternoon and stay until Thursday afternoon. The benefits of visiting during the week are many. If there are any drawbacks to avoiding the weekend crowds, I haven't found them.

I don't like waiting and I hate lines. By timing my visits to the middle of the week, I can usually walk into any coffee shop, make reservations for a gourmet restaurant just about any time I chose and get show tickets to the shows I want to see.

If you want to really reduce the size of the crowds, travel in the middle of the week during off-season. Las Vegas is slower during the middle of summer when it is hot and in the late fall and

early winter when it's colder. The slowest time in Vegas is usually between Thanksgiving and Christmas. But watch out for conventions. The Comdex is usually in town in November. Then it's impossible to get a room (unless you are a rated player or belong to a slot club).

If you like to visit Atlantic City, try visiting during the middle of the week in the dead of winter. You'll not only avoid the larger crowds, but you'll find that the minimum wagers on many tables have been reduced.

Visiting during an off time is also an excellent way to get noticed for purposes of getting rated and getting your comp career off to a roaring start.

What gambling can get you in Las Vegas —

Shadow Creek — You can play on this exquisite golf course stocked with exotic animals and plants by paying \$1,000 a round or by being comped. For a Mirage comp, you would need to play \$175 a hand at blackjack for four hours.

The Mirage — The Villas — If you are a whale or a former president (former President Bush has stayed here), you may want to stay in one of these eight villas. Each has two or three bedrooms, hand-loomed carpets, personal valets, a whirlpool and a steam shower. You also get a private garden with a putting green and your own swimming pool. Plan on a credit line of \$100,000 plus. Cost if you rent one? About \$3,500 a night.

Desert Inn — Want to try a penthouse? With either the 8,300 square foot Casa Grande or the 9,300 square foot Casa Flora you get 24 karat gold leaf bathroom fixtures and a slew of amenities such as a private rooftop pool, a workout room and oodles of goodies. Use your \$1 million credit limit to get comped or plan on paying about \$15,000 a night.

Flamingo Hilton — Try the Presidential Suite and the Antigua Suite. Each has two bedrooms, Jacuzzis and wetbars. Use your \$25,000 line of credit and plan on gambling for four hours at \$1,000 a hand.

Outside of Las Vegas you can get —

Taj Mahal, Atlantic City — Try one of seven themed penthouses patterned after such historical characters as Cleopatra, Napoleon, Alexander the Great and King Tut. You get one or two bedrooms, Jacuzzis and round the clock service. Tiger Woods stayed here the day he won the Masters tournament in 1997. Use your \$1 million credit line to be considered for a comp.

Boomtown, Biloxi, Mississippi — There's no hotel here. The best comp is the \$10.95 buffet which includes crab legs, boiled shrimp, roast beef and even filet mignon on "steak night." Gamble three to four hours at \$5 to \$10 a hand to get the comp. Wager a little higher or play a little longer, and Boomtown will include tickets to its virtual-reality Fun Center.

With fewer players to contend with, a host or a floorman is easier to meet and to visit with. Also, during slow times, casinos tend to be more generous with comps. After all, they are more likely to have a slew of vacant rooms just waiting to be given away to qualified players on a Wednesday night in December.

9. Ask for comps!

If you play \$10,000 a hand at baccarat, you do not have to ask for comps. The casino will shower you with them. If you are like the rest of us wagering anywhere from \$5 to several hundred a hand, you need to ask for comps.



Slot players have the more systematic system as the card readers on the machines are tied into a centralized computer system, and comps are based on points. If you are a slots or video poker player, getting a comp is pretty straightforward with this system.

Table game players have to deal more with people. And unless you are a whale, a boss will almost never offer you a comp unless you have just won big in a smaller casino, which watches every loss. Facing a player who might walk out with their money in hand, some casinos will start throwing comps at the player. But most of the time, even rated players can play and play and never be offered a comp unless they ask for it.

My advice? Always ask for the comp. I have given you several examples of how to do it.

10. Look like a loser.

Everybody loves a winner. Right? Not in gambling halls they don't. In the eyes of the bosses, gambling is a sucker's game. You are more likely to get comped if you look like all the other suckers, that is, if you look like a loser.

Winners attract a lot more attention than losers do. If you are playing blackjack and winning big, your play will be scrutinized to see if you are card counting. If you are believed to be a card counter, the casino can and probably will take all sorts of counter measures including, if you are playing in Nevada, asking you to leave.

Craps and roulette players won't attract as much casino heat but will attract con artists, hustlers, cross roaders and prostitutes who miraculously appear when the black chips start to pile up in front of a player.

Bosses also have to explain big winners on their shifts to their bosses. No one has to say anything about a loser. In any case, winners attract more attention, and it becomes more difficult to disguise their play.

I have found that many bosses tend to feel a bit sorry for losers, especially if they are nice people. This is reflected in their ratings which can be higher for losers.

Losing also helps validate a boss's rating. If you have just lost \$500 in an hour, it is easier to rate you at \$100 a hand for blackjack or baccarat or \$100 per round for craps.

I like to carry some chips into a game and then make a comment to the floorman about how this is all that's left of my previous disaster at the tables. These chips will disappear after I have signed a marker so that I will be credited with losing these chips during the current playing session.

If you really lose, you won't have any trouble looking like a loser. Now when you are really a winner but want to look like a loser, act like you act when you are losing. A couple of clues. Winners tend to get louder and friendlier. Losers get quieter. Winners like to let everyone know how they are doing. Losers, except for the extraordinarily obnoxious variety, tend to act somewhat embarrassed.

Losers may drink more. Bosses believe (with some truth to their beliefs) that drunks lose more than sober players. It makes sense to add a drink to your repertoire if you want to look like a

loser. If you really don't drink much, then you want to at least look like a drinker. Bring a ginger ale to the table with you. After finishing off this drink, order something alcoholic and then drink it slowly. If you are having trouble finishing off the drink, take a break, get rid of the drink and come back with another ginger ale or whatever your nonalcoholic favorite is.

Players tend to be drinkers. And most players are losers. You can see where this equation leads in the eyes of the bosses. A drink in front of you will enhance your loser image.

11. Hide chips.

You don't have to lose every game to look like a loser. Sometimes you will get on a major winning streak when it will be impossible to disguise your winnings. That's okay. The biggest suckers win once in a while. Your goal is to hide enough chips so that the floorman monitoring your play is convinced that you are a consistent loser.

You can start by bringing some chips to the table when you buy in. These chips will be "lost" during the game so that any loss you show will be augmented by the starting chips you lost.

If you are a craps player, you can regularly remove chips by holding a whole stack of chips in your hand. Craps players regularly do this as they stare intensely at the table wishing the dice to do their bidding. Now you need an excuse to regularly reach in your pocket. Before you reach in your pocket, transfer the chips you are holding to the opposite hand, but keep one or

two chips in palm of the hand which will reach in your pocket. Bring out whatever you are reaching for, but leave the palmed chips in your pocket.

This technique works best when you are retrieving something from your pocket. Try carrying cough drops or a pack of Tic Tacs. If you are a smoker, hide chips when you reach for a smoke.

If your chips are kept on the table, as they normally will be at blackjack, roulette or baccarat, try palming chips by cupping your hand over a stack of chips as if you are resting your hand on your hoard of chips. Press down on the chip stack hard enough that a couple of chips stick to your palm. When you lift your hand up, no one will be the wiser, as if this is done correctly, the chips stuck to your palm will be invisible. Now reach for your pocket.

It is usually better to remove green chips (\$25 chips) if you are primarily betting greens. Bosses watch black chips more than greens, and if you start hiding blacks, a boss may notice.

Use any distractions as an excuse to hide more chips. If there is a dispute at the other end of the table, and a boss is talking to the dealer and a customer, it is time to remove some chips.

If a cocktail waitress shows and you have to turn around to tip her, you should be able to palm a couple of chips during this move.

To further thwart the efforts of pit personnel in tracking your bankroll, you may want to go for the disorganized look. Most players keep their chips in neat piles, separated by denomination of chips. If you have your blacks, greens and reds mixed in a random appearing heap in front of you, it will be more difficult to track your chips.

Breaks are a good time to remove some chips. When you leave the table, tell the dealer you need to take a break and leave some of your chips on the table. You will take most of your chips with you. When you return, some of them will be missing.

If you get caught hiding chips, act very nonchalant about it. After all, you are not stealing. The chips are yours to do what you want with. If you see a boss giving you a sharp look after you have removed some chips or if he asks you where your chips are going, I would give a flippant answer like, "I just removed my dinner money," or "I decided to try to save a couple of hundred after the wipe out I had last night."

Many players like to remove their original buy-in from play, so that the chips remaining on the table are from winnings. If a boss notices your missing chips, you might comment that you just locked up your buy-in and you are hoping that you finally get a winning session.

I'll give you some additional chip hiding pointers. If you play with a partner, you may want to pass chips to your partner. This works especially well when a man passes chips to a woman who drops a couple of chips into the purse on her lap.

As a chip hider you want to be alert. Try to choose a position at the table where you can observe pit personnel. You might feel a bit awkward if a boss is standing directly behind you while you are dropping chips in your pocket.

If you are hesitant about trying the palming technique, practice at home with some poker chips. After a little practice, you should be able to palm two to three chips at a time without being detected.

If you are not a smoker, you can pretend to be one to help you hide chips. You don't have to take up smoking at the table. Just take a "smoke break" every forty-five minutes and remove some chips while you are on break.

Once again, I don't want you to think that you are doing anything illegal. If you are uncomfortable with the palming routine, try limiting your removal to your frequent breaks. If you are like most players, you will become a master at hiding chips in a short time period.

Don't go to extremes in hiding chips. If a whole stack of green chips disappears at once, this is a little too obvious. Keep the hiding down to a few chips at a time and do it when the boss and dealer are distracted. Removal of a few chips here and there are all that it takes to create the impression that you are a loser.

12. You don't have to lose to get comped.

Your objective in getting comps is to win at gambling and to get paid to do it. If you end up losing too much money, then you have really paid for the comps.

It is critical that you learn how to play a beatable game and then learn the best techniques for doing this. If you can pull this off, you can have the best of both worlds. You will win money from the casinos and get paid to do it.

If you ever have a large win, don't even try to disguise the amount of your winnings. Hiding chips during a large win is almost impossible because too many eyes are observing the action. If you are a large winner, the best thing you can do is to act like a player. You should increase the size of your wagers some, as most players like to increase the size of their wagers during a winning streak.

If you are a craps player, you need to make some proposition bets. An occasional "Yo-leven" or "Two way hard six" will make you look like a real sport. Craps players tend to get noisy during hot rolls. Go ahead and holler or give high fives to your fellow players. This is what makes the game fun and winners are expected to whoop it up.

Remember my story about winning at Vegas World? Casinos like to comp winners too. If you hit a casino for \$10,000 or \$25,000, they sure don't want you walking down the street and losing their money to some other joint. They want you to stay in

their joint so that they can have the honor of restoring all of your winnings to its rightful owner.



In fact, big losers and big winners are more likely to get comps. Steady losers, who bet enough and show enough losses to the bosses will get grouped in the moderate to big loser group which is fine for comps. Big winners will nearly always get offered comps.

Your goal is to look like a dependable loser to the bosses. When you have an occasional win, if you look enough like a degenerate gambler, the bosses won't begrudge your win. They'll figure that you've got the bug so badly that it's just a matter of time

before they win it back so long as they can keep the other guys mitts off of it.

The key thing to remember is to never deliberately lose money to get a comp. No matter how good a player you are, you will have losing sessions. When you hit your loss limit, you must quit. Increasing your rating slightly by overstaying your limit and losing large sums is just not worth the cost.

13. Flying for free.

If you want to get the casino to pay for your airfare, you've got to give them a lot of action. A credit player or a player playing with front money should have \$10,000 available. Some casinos will work with you with only \$5,000 up, but it is doubtful.

Reimbursement of airfare is a "hard comp." When a casino reimburses you for airfare, it comes right out of their pocket. A free room costs them very little. Maybe the room was going to be vacant anyway, so the comp cost them a little maid service. Everyone knows food is marked up. A \$25 coffee shop comp may cost the casino \$10.

However, when the casino pays you for airfare, every dollar is real. That is why it is so hard to get airfare comped.

If you want to get free airfare, I have suggested that you limit your liquor intake. If you go for a RFL comp, which offers limited booze instead of the full RFB, you'll have a better chance of getting your airfare paid.

Some scammers try all kinds of tricks with airfare, like trying to get two different casinos to reimburse them for the same ticket. I believe what goes around comes around. Sure you are in a contest with the casino at their games. But I don't believe that this justifies trying to cheat them. If you have given your primary casino enough action to justify them paying for your airfare, I would not hesitate to raise the issue with your host. If you have played the comp game fairly, the casino will not deny you reimbursement of your airfare.

There is another way that you can fly for free. If you get "bumped" by an airline when you have a confirmed reservation, the airline will either fly you for free or issue you airline "script" which can be used to purchase tickets.

I am not a fan of using the system of getting bumped, but some of my friends are quite good at it. There are several tricks you need to master if you want to get bumped regularly.

It is usually a good idea to show up an hour and a half early for a flight. Ask the ticket agent if the flight is overbooked and volunteer to be bumped if it is. Some airlines will refer you to the check-in agent. In this case, check in about 45 minutes before flight time and offer to be bumped if the flight is overbooked. If it is, the agent will probably hold your ticket until boarding time.

If you get bumped, the airline will issue "airline scrip" or "transportation vouchers." Some airlines will give you a free ticket. If you are bumped for several hours, ask for script for food.

If you are bumped overnight, you will get food and a night's lodging.

My sources advise me that flights during holidays or flight scheduled around the time of special events offer the best opportunities of getting bumped. If you are flying into Las Vegas, Friday afternoon and evening is a good time to get bumped. Flying back, Sunday afternoon and evening is prime "bump time."

You have more chances of getting bumped on a flight with connections than with a direct flight.

Flights scheduled during special events are more likely to be overbooked. If you fly to Las Vegas around the times of the Comdex (a large computer convention in Las Vegas), the Super Bowl, the Final Four or the NBA Playoffs, you will increase your chances of being bumped.

If you don't care when you arrive and have a flexible schedule, try becoming a "bump artist." When you are bumped, your luggage will continue on the flight, while you stay behind. Remember to keep a large carry-on bag with you with a change of clothes and your paraphernalia for spending the night.

14. Maximizing your comps.

Anyone who follows the steps I have described can get comps. Your first step is to pick your primary casino and give it most of your business. Before you pick your casino you want to make sure that the casino has a reasonable comp policy and that it has beatable games. You should also like the casino as you will

be receiving a lot of invitations there once you get into their comp system.

After picking your primary casino, you need to join its slot club and get a VIP card. I usually do both. Some casinos, like Rio in Las Vegas, combine rating slot, video poker and table players on one card. Others track machine and table action separately. However, it usually pays to join the slot club, even if you are mostly a table game player.

In many ways, slot club players have an advantage over the table game players. Their rating is automatic, they don't have to get the attention of some boss. By joining the slot club, they start receiving mailing from the casino. I have received offers of free rooms from casinos where I had never played a slot machine, but had joined their slot club.

If you are just establishing your rating and want to get a room on a crowded weekend, your slot club membership can be invaluable. After the reservation clerk tells you there are no rooms available, tell her you are a member of the slot club or ask to speak to a slot host. Chances are, the casino will find a room for you.

Getting to know the casino personal is critical. The more the casino personnel know and like you, the more comps are likely to flow your way. This is even true for slot players with their automated rating system. A slot host can easily "bump up" your comp from a buffet for two to a coffee shop comp for two, even if your rating is not quite there.

With table players, interacting with the pit personnel is critical. A boss can make or break you in terms of your rating. If your average wager is \$25, your goal is to be rated as at least a \$50 to \$75 player. It is not enough to increase your wagers when the boss is looking, you need to be a nice person.

Playing with front money gives the casino a real shot at beating you. When you deposit the money in the cage, the casino knows that they have a shot at winning all of your front money. If you are willing to risk \$10,000, this will open the door to full RFB at most establishments.

When you play with front money, be sure to put it all in play. If you deposit \$10,000, draw markers for the full ten grand. This doesn't mean you should lose the money. If you look like a loser and the casino sees that you have put all of your front money into play, your rating will increase.

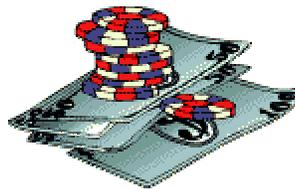
Remember to look like a loser. You can save your bragging for when you get home. Appear to lose, but lose gracefully. Dealers and bosses hear players gripe about losing every day. Look like a loser but don't complain.

If you run into a fantastic winning streak, don't worry about disguising the fact that you are a winner. The bosses will know that you are winning. If you try to hide enough chips to turn a big win into a loss, they'll know. When you have a big win, act like a winner. Go ahead and tip a little more. If you are playing craps, shouting is not out of line. I have had some of my best comps

come out of big wins as casinos hate to see winners walk out the door with their money.

There are two sides to the equation for getting comps. One side is learning how to milk the casinos for every dime your action entitles you to. I have given you some pointers on how to get a quarter's worth of comps for a dime's worth of action.

The other side of the equation is learning how to win, or at worst break even, at the casino games. If you at least break even, then the comps you receive constitute a profit for your play. If you are able to win money at the casino games, then your profit will be even greater. We will next take a look at the gaming side of beating the casinos.



7

Games to Play

You are probably rubbing your hands together, thinking about all the comps you are going to get. Now you have to consider which games best lend themselves to getting comped and winning.

Let's eliminate of couple of games up front. How about Keno? For starters, you are bucking a house edge of 25% to 30%. Your chance of winning? Just about zilch. How about your chances of getting rated at this game? Who's going to rate you, the Keno runner? What about the comps? Well, forget about RFB. In fact you can forget about just about any comps except for a free drink once in a while and free smokes. Keno is a loser's game (unless you are a casino owner, in which case you love Keno). If you want to play Keno, limit your play to two-dollar tickets while you enjoy lunch in the coffee shop.

How about Big Six? Worse than Keno. The house will clip about 50% off the top.

Then what about sports betting or poker? Beatable games, if you are an expert. But lousy games for getting anything other than drinks and smokes. If you are a professional poker player, you can make enough money to forget about comps. If you are a casual player wanting to play beatable games and get comped, then there are better choices.

My games of choice for getting comps are slots on a limited basis, and video poker on a less limited basis.

Of the table games, I like blackjack or craps as my first choice and roulette or baccarat as my second choices.

We'll talk about slots first. The best slots are in Nevada. The worst slot machines are on the east coast. There is no question that it is easier to generate a win on the slot machines in downtown Vegas than on the Boardwalk in Atlantic City.

Nickel slots pay out the lowest; dollar and five dollar slots have the highest payback rates. Quarter slots are in the middle.

I have found that easiest way to rate the slot machines in any casino is to look at their video poker machines. Casinos which offer the higher paying versions of video poker usually offer higher paying slots also. If a casino doesn't offer any high pay versions of video poker, watch out! Their slot machines are not going to be very loose either.

In general, specialty versions of slots such as Keno or Blackjack are losing games. If you want to play Blackjack, it is nearly always better to play the table game version of the game.

Beatable Blackjack Machines

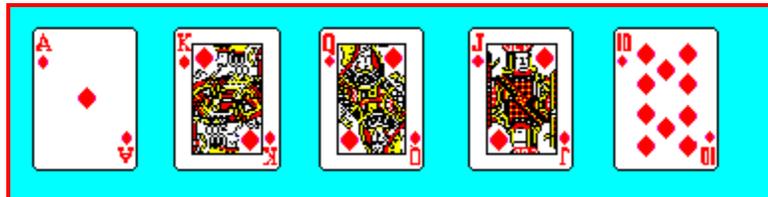
As of April, 1998, The Tropicana in Las Vegas has some beatable blackjack machines. All are located on the second floor near the hallway leading to the convention center. The machines accept quarters and are found in a multi-game machine called *Multi-Pay Plus*.

The game pays 3 to 2 for player blackjacks and offers early surrender against a dealer upcard of a 10 or Ace. With basic strategy play, your advantage is about .35%. Using one of the Silverthorne Blackjack systems can generate wins of up to \$25 an hour.

The slots you want to play are those accepting multiple coins so that you can vary the number of coins inserted. To minimize your losses, use a hit and run system, such as the one suggested in *The Low-Roller, Winning Systems for Low Budget Gamblers*, published by Silverthorne Publications.

Before you start playing slots in any casino, make sure that your play will be rated. Some casinos do not rate play on nickel machines, other casinos don't even rate quarter play. If you're not sure what your casino does, ask a clerk at the slot club booth or a slot host.

My personal preference is to play video poker. The advantage video poker has over slots is that there are versions of the game offered where a knowledgeable player can play with an expectation of beating the game.



Unlike slots, the payoff schedules for video poker are printed on the front of the machine. Once you know what to look for, you can tell whether a particular version of video poker offers a positive payoff to the skilled player. Let's start with the most common version of video poker, Jacks or Better. This version gets its name from the fact that the lowest paying hand is a pair of at least Jacks or higher cards. If you draw a pair of Jacks, Queens, Kings or Aces, you "push" or get your money returned in this version of video poker.

The critical payoffs are the payoffs for a Full House and a Flush. Full Pay 9-6 Jacks or Better offers a payoff of 9 for 1 for a Full House, 6 for 1 for a Flush and pays 4,000 coins for a Royal Flush when five coins are played (800 coins per coin inserted with maximum play). This version of the game is not positive, but darned close. With expert play, the payback for 9-6 Jacks or Better is 99.5%. This is better than the theoretical payback for any table game except for blackjack.

A second version of 9-6 Jacks or Better offers a higher payoff for a Royal Flush of 4,700 coins. This kicks the return for this version of Jacks or Better up to 99.9%.

Many versions of Jacks or Better have reduced payoffs on the Full House and Flush. A common version called 8-5 Jacks or Better reduces the payoff to 8 for 1 for a Full House and 5 for 1 for a Flush. The only versions of this game you should play are the ones offering progressive jackpots for royal flushes. The break even Royal Flush jackpot is for 8,800 coins, which is \$2,200 on a quarter machine. Most progressions reset at 4,000 coins. If you play with a Royal Flush payoff of 4,000 coins, your expected return is reduced to 97.3%.

Preferred Versions of Jacks or Better		
	9-6	8-5 Progressive
Royal Flush (max coins)	800/940	2,200 and up
Straight Flush	50	50
Four of a Kind	25	25
Full House	9	8
Flush	6	5
Straight	4	4
Three of a Kind	3	3
Two Pair	2	2
Jacks or Better	1	1
Payback % (based on Royal Flush)	800—99.5% 940—99.9%	800—97.3% 2,200— 100.0%

Since Jacks or Better is the most common version video poker, it is the game I look for when I am evaluating a casino. If I can't find one of the preferred versions of Jacks or Better in a casino, I will not play slots in the casino either. This is the easiest way I know to determine, without investing any money, whether I will play the slots in a particular casino. You may want to use the same test.

If you evaluate slot machines using my preferred Jacks or Better test, you will not play slots in most casinos on the East Coast. You will also eliminate many riverboat casinos and most Indian operated casinos. If you want to win while you gamble, you should consider using this test. Even if you decide to play on inferior slot machines, at least you'll know what you are up against.

Low-Roller Tips

If you are a nickel slot player, try the Riviera in Las Vegas. There is a good selection of nickel slots and video poker, and your play counts toward comps. The bar offers a good 99¢ shrimp cocktail and \$1 domestic draft beer. There's a free pull on a slot machine with prizes that range from a keychain to \$10,000.

Slot club members of Club Sahara at the Sahara in Las Vegas are getting a funbook (one per member; here's where your dual membership comes in handy).

The funbook has money coupons to be used for play, worth about \$14.50, and a bunch of other coupons worth using. You get two bucks off the Indy Car Experience, a great ride, a free bottle of wine in the steakhouse, margaritas at Paco's, 2 for 1 breakfast and lunch buffets, discounts at the gift shop and the current show. There's even something for kids. The Sahara will match the first 100 arcade game amusement tickets earned playing the games.

Besides Jacks or Better, another game worth playing is 10-7 Double Bonus video poker. This game is difficult to learn to play correctly and should be considered only by advanced video poker players. The payback, with skilled play, is over 100%

Many players prefer playing Deuces Wild. There are beatable versions of the game all over the state of Nevada. You will find very few of the beatable versions of Deuces Wild which

accept larger coins than quarters. When Original Deuces Wild appeared in dollar machines, professional teams tended to monopolize the machines twenty four hours a day until the casinos got tired of losing up to \$100 an hour per machine and had them pulled. Now it is rare to find any of the beatable versions of Deuces Wild accepting a larger coin than a quarter.

Bonus deuces are found at Sam's Town in Las Vegas. Loose Deuces and Original Deuces Wild can be found at a variety of casinos.

If you are playing on the Las Vegas Strip, try the New Frontier for quarter versions of Original Deuces Wild and the Double Bonus games. If you are looking for the Preferred Versions of Jacks or Better, you can find them at Caesars Palace and the Flamingo. For downtown play, quarter players should try the Four Queens or Fitzgeralds. Locals or tourists willing to play with the locals, should try Sam's Town or the Fiesta.

Double Bonus Video Poker

10-7 Double Bonus

Royal Flush (max coins)	800
Straight Flush	50
Four Aces	160
Four Ks, Qs, Js	80
Four 5s-10s	50
Four 2s-4s	80
Full House	10
Flush	7
Straight	5
Three of a Kind	3
Two Pair	1
Jacks or Better	1
Payback %	100.2%

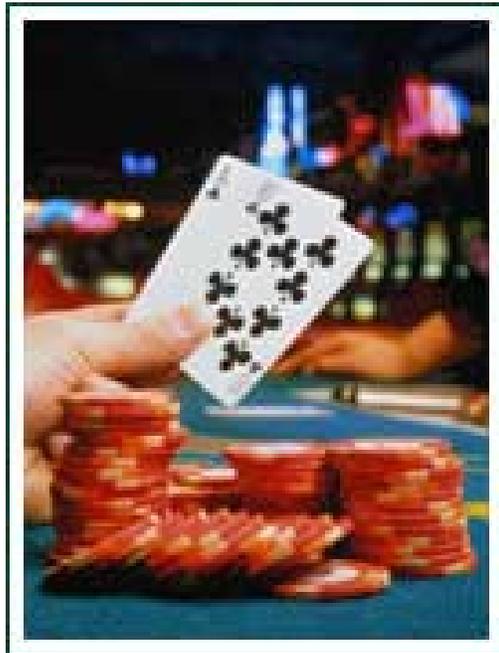
Deuces Wild			
	Original	Loose	Bonus
Royal Flush (max coins)	800	800	800
Four Deuces	200	500	400
Wild Royal Flush	25	25	20
Five of a Kind	15	15	10
Straight Flush	9	10	10
Four of a Kind	5	4	4
Full House	3	3	4
Flush	2	2	3
Straight	2	2	2
Three of a Kind	1	1	1
Payback %	100.7%	101.0%	100.9%

High rollers will find a good selection of \$2, \$5, \$10 and \$25 machines at the Mirage and Treasure Island. These are good 9-6 machines. When you figure in the return from the slot club, these casinos are worth checking out.

I've heard good things about Orleans in Las Vegas, although I haven't checked it out myself. My sources say that

Orleans has several machines with returns over 100%+ with expert play. It should be considered as an alternative to the Fiesta.

If you are playing table games in addition to slots and video poker, I would try to find the best combination of beatable video poker machines and the right conditions at the table game of my choice.



Let's start with the game of blackjack. If you are a card counter, you want to look for low-minimum single deck games with a reasonable amount of penetration before the dealer shuffles. A game which fits this description perfectly is the blackjack game at Binion's Horseshoe Club in Downtown Las Vegas. A good second choice is the Reserve in Las Vegas. But verify this information before playing. The Reserve is a new place and may not continue its liberal gambling policies. The Horseshoe has been

a great place for gamblers since it opened in 1946, and its policies are not likely to change.

If you are not a card counter, you might as well play in one of the casinos dealing multi-deck blackjack. If you use one of the recommended Silverthorne blackjack strategies, you won't need to count cards.

You will need to learn basic strategy before you play blackjack. See the books listed at the end of this publication for some good references.

There is no question where the best craps is found. It is found in Downtown Las Vegas. If you are looking for an assortment of games with \$1 and \$2 minimum bets, this is the place you'll find it.

If you are willing to wager \$5 minimum bets, you'll find craps games you will like all over the country. For instance, I have enjoyed playing craps at Harrah's in Vicksburg, Mississippi. However, their video poker machines are not as favorable as the ones you'll find in Las Vegas.

The things I look for at craps are the minimum wagers, the odds allowed and the atmosphere of the casino. Most players don't like to play craps unless there are other players at the table, and a joint with no other players will not get my action, even if the other conditions are met.

You will need to make sure that the table matches your bankroll requirements. There is nothing wrong with being a \$1 or \$2 bettor. Just make sure you don't get stuck at \$5 or \$10 minimum tables.

Another thing I check is the odds policy. Nearly every casino allows double odds; this would be my minimum criterion for odds wagers. If the game allows five times odds or more, so much the better.

In Las Vegas, the Frontier is currently paying ten times odds. Try Binion's Horseshoe for 100 times odds with \$5 pass line bets.



Attention roulette players. Only play roulette on single zero wheels. Dropping that extra zero lowers the casino edge from 5.26% to 2.7%. In Las Vegas, try the Monte Carlo and the Reserve for single zero roulette. Outside Las Vegas, you need to

check casino by casino. You can find single zero wheels in Atlantic City.

More Tips

Slot Clubs with Highest Cash Rebates — In Las Vegas, the Desert Inn pays a full 1% rebate to both slot and video poker players. Caesars Palace, the Las Vegas Hilton, the Riviera and Lady Luck give at least 1% to their slot players.

Which Casinos Are Best for Dollar Video Poker Play — Try the Fiesta. It has great opportunities for skilled players, and they even offer lessons for unskilled players. If you like 9-6 Jacks and want to play dollar machines, try the Desert Inn, Caesars Palace, Treasure Island and the Golden Nugget.

Which Casinos are Best for Quarter Video Poker Play — Lots of choices here. Check out the Frontier, Caesars and the Flamingo on the Strip. Downtown try Four Queens. Locals like Sam's Town, Orleans and the Fiesta.

Where is the Best Craps and Blackjack Offered — In Las Vegas try Binion's Horseshoe downtown. You can also get a great souvenir photo of you standing next to a million dollars cash from 4:00 p.m to midnight.

Where is the best deal for quarter slots players — In Las Vegas, try Fitzgeralds. For great cash rebates see above listing of casinos. Laughlin also has great deals for quarter players. Recommended are the Flamingo Hilton, the Ramada Express and Harrah's Laughlin.

Best Bets for Atlantic City Slot & Video Poker Players

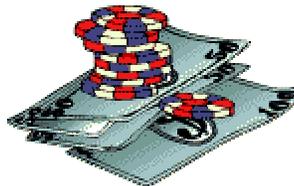
Every casino in AC offers slot club benefits. Here are the best:

Claridge CompCard — This card offers the most to active quarter players. If you want a shot at a free room, meals and entertainment, this is your best bet. They have a good selection of 9-6 Jacks or Better video poker machines.

Sands Hollywood Marquee Card — Sands has the most user-friendly club in AC. They pay cash rebates of .5 percent for slot players and .29 for video poker. Card readers on the machines alert you when you have earned a comp. On the negative side, the selection of video poker is lousy. Not a beatable game in the house.

Showboat Cash Card — Card readers display the exact amount of cash rebates earned. Our sources say it averages about 1.2 percent for slots and .6 percent for video poker. It is also easy to get coupons for free meals and complimentary room offers. The Showboat has a great party atmosphere. Video poker machines are OK.

Harrah's Total Gold — Harrah's has combined both table game and machine action into one card. It still has some bugs, but the neat thing is that you can transfer your points from one Harrah's property to another. Harrah's Atlantic City runs great new member promotions. Join the club and watch for the free benefits!



8

Regulations and Taxes

One of the nice things about being a cash player is that no one has to know your business. If you win, so be it. If you lose, well that's tough, but no one has to be the wiser.

If you think that's the way things work in modern times, dream on. Casinos have been recruited like just about everyone else to act as unpaid agents for the United States Treasury Department.

There is a little regulation known as Regulation 6-A issued by the Treasury Department which requires that any cash transaction of \$10,000 or more must be reported to the IRS. The original intent of this regulation was to thwart money laundering by requiring people who deal in large amounts of cash to present identification. You may be aware that if you deposit more than \$10,000 cash in a single transaction, your bank will report it to the Feds.

With Regulation 6-A in place, any time your total cash transactions exceed \$10,000 within a twenty four hour period, you

must provide the casino with identification revealing your name, permanent address and social security number. The casino is required to get this information, and if you refuse to give it, you will be barred from playing in the casino.

There is nothing wrong with having cash transactions reported to the IRS. You are not presumed guilty of any crime or wrongdoing of any kind. However, lots of people would rather not have their gambling activities reported to the IRS, even though everything they are doing is legal and above board.

I'll tell you how the reporting system generally works.

If you buy in for \$10,000 or more or deposit \$10,000 or more with the cage, you have created a reportable transaction. If you are using front money, you can deposit \$9,999 without triggering the reporting requirement. But watch how you use this front money. If, during a twenty-four period, you sign a marker for \$8,000, cash in your chips for \$7,500 and then sign another marker for \$5,000, you have exceeded the \$10,000 a day limit.

In most casinos, a buy-in of \$2,500 or more will start the meter ticking on tracking the amount of cash you play. My advice? Don't buy in any game for an amount of \$2,500 or more unless you want to risk having your transactions reported. It is generally safe to limit your buy-in to \$2,000 and to assume that the casino will not report your transactions even if the total sum of your buy-ins exceeds \$10,000 in a twenty four-hour period. The

reason? Casinos won't bother tracking your buy-ins if they are less than \$2,500 each.

If the casino does start an accounting of your cash transactions, a floorman will usually advise you about Regulation 6-A when you have exceeded \$5,000 in a twenty four hour period. Your options if this happens?

You could change casinos so that no more of your play is tracked in the same casino for the next day or so. However, this is counterproductive to getting the maximum number of comps.

You could change pits. The larger casinos only track cash transactions by pit. If you switch from craps to blackjack, there is little likelihood that your buy-ins will follow.

Obviously, if you plunk \$10,000 or more down as a single wager, you run the risk of having the transaction reported. If you wager \$2,500 or more per wager, you will also get into the system quickly.

Cashing in chips with the cashier can also be risky. If you cash in over \$10,000 in twenty four hours, you may be reported. Two partners can minimize the possibility of creating a reportable transaction by splitting their winnings. Casinos which deal with a lot of high rollers, such as The Mirage, Caesars, the Horseshoe and the Las Vegas Hilton will usually let you cash in up to \$3,000 or \$4,000 without notifying the pit. This information is also useful to you if you have been hiding chips.

Cashiers in smaller casinos, or casinos dealing with smaller bettors, will often call the pit when any person cashes out more than \$1,000. Get out of Las Vegas or Atlantic City and the cashier may check on any person cashing in over \$500 in chips. Cashing is as little as \$700 or \$800 has sent the cashier into a tizzy at some Indian casinos where I have played. In several cases, the cashier did not have enough cash to buy my chips back and had to have cash sent up from the back room.

There is nothing wrong with the cashier calling the pit where you tell them you won the chips. You just need to be aware that if your transactions in the pit triggered the twenty-four hour tracking the amount you cash in for may put you over the limit. If you are a chip hider, you also need to be aware of the casino's policy on verifying wins with the pit before cashing your chips.

There is never any valid reason to convert cash to chips at the cashier's window. This is a dead giveaway that you are up to something funny, like money laundering. Don't try it. Always convert cash for chips at the table where you are playing.

Whatever you do, don't ever try to get a casino boss to assist you in evading Regulation 6-A. The casino can be fined up to \$50,000 if any employee tries to help you evade the regulation.

Here's a summary of my suggestions to avoid the reporting requirements of Regulation 6-A:

1. Keep your front money deposited below \$10,000. The casino will understand exactly what you are doing if you deposit \$9,999

or \$9,000. So long as you don't rub their noses in it, they are not looking to report anything to the Feds.

2. Keep your buy-ins at the table under \$2,500. I recommend \$2,000 as your maximum buy-in.

3. Never wager more than \$2,500 in one bet. You particularly need to watch the game of blackjack. If you are wagering \$500 a hand and playing two hands, split both hands and then get a chance to double down, you could find yourself exceeding \$2,500 in one series of wagers. If this happens, don't panic, just be aware that exceeding \$2,500 in a series of wagers may get the meter running.

4. Limit the amount of chips you cash in at one time. Obviously cashing in over \$10,000 will trigger the disclosure requirements. If you need to cash in \$12,000, cash it in over two days, or have someone else cash in part of it.

5. Be aware that most casino cashiers are required to verify chips being converted to cash which exceed certain amounts. If you hide chips, be aware of the "trigger points" of the casino where you are playing and stay below it. If you have a win which will require verification with the pit where you played, make sure that the amount of chips you are cashing in agrees with the amount you left the table with.

6. Be careful when you are using a pattern of signing markers, then converting chips to cash, then signing more markers that you don't exceed \$10,000 in twenty four hours.

Now lets take a look at another exciting area — taxes. Here's the way the IRS views your gambling winnings. Anytime you win anything, you are supposed to report it. If you plunk two quarters in a slot machine which spits out ten quarters, you just won \$2.00 of taxable income.

On certain size wins, the casino is required by law to report your winnings to the IRS on a W-2G form. This is like the W-2 form you get issued by your employer except that the addition of the "G" means that it is for gambling winnings.

The amounts reported by the casinos vary from game to game.

On table games, you are generally home free.

If you play slots, video poker or any other type of video slots game like blackjack or keno, any wins of \$1,200 or more earn you a W-2G form with your winnings reported.

Keno or bingo winnings have to hit \$1,500 to trigger the issuance of a W-2G form.

Anytime your winnings hit one of these magic numbers, be prepared to present identification. If you don't have a drivers license or other valid identification, instead of a check for your

winnings you will get a receipt and that's all you get until you come up with some ID.

Here's another reason for the popularity of quarter video poker. With a standard jackpot of 800 to 940 coins for Royal Flushes, the dollar amounts with five quarters played are \$1,000 and \$1,175, neither of which requires issuance of a W-2G form.

If you are a professional gambler, you can to deduct all of your gambling losses directly against your gambling winnings. If you are not a pro, then you will be able to itemize losses, but only to the extent of your winnings.

If you have \$10,000 in winnings for a year, and your losses total \$15,000, you can only deduct \$10,000 of your losses.

You if expect to deduct gambling losses, plan on keeping careful records. You will need to keep all receipts from any trips to a casino to prove you were there on the dates you claim. You will need to keep a diary of your gambling activities. As a minimum, you will need to record dates, places, games and amounts won and lost. For example, you might show that on June 12, 1998, you played craps at the Golden Nugget in Las Vegas for 2.5 hours and lost \$228. If you played with any friends or have anyone else who can validate your experience, you should record this also.

You should have a summary of wins and losses for each day and each trip. If you keep your records this detailed, you should be able to document any losses you need to offset wins.

Highest Odds at Craps

The odds bet in craps is unique in that there is no casino edge to the bet. Many players like to play craps where they can take maximum odds in connection with a pass line or a come bet. Here's a list of Las Vegas's highest craps odds in 1998:

100X Odds: Casino Royale-50¢, Horseshoe-\$5, Sam's Town-\$2.

20X Odds: Main Street Station-\$2

10X Odds: Boulder Station-\$2, Horseshoe-50¢, Plaza-\$1, Reserve-\$3, Sunset Station-\$2, Texas Station-\$2.

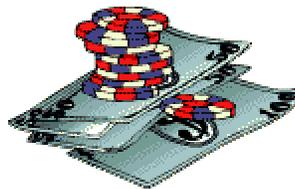
The Loosest Slots in the United States

Casino Player magazine compiles gaming reports made available by different gaming jurisdictions. According to their latest survey for 1998, the loosest slots are in Nevada. Here's the ranking.

North Las Vegas has the loosest slots in the country with an average payback of 96.5%. This list would include the Fiesta, Texas Station, Jerry's Nugget and the Santa Fe.

The Boulder Strip is next. The major casinos here are Boulder Station, Sunset Station, Sam's Town and Showboat. Average payback is 95.9%.

Clark County Other is third. Clark County excludes the Strip, Downtown, Laughlin, North Las Vegas and the Boulder Strip. Included are such casinos as Arizona Charlie's, the Orleans and the Continental. It was not clear from the way the information was presented whether Palace Station and Gold Coast were included or were thrown in with the Strip.



9

Go for the Gold!

There are a growing number of people who are traveling for free with "Uncle Casino" picking up the tab. There is nothing wrong with this. Casinos have been forced into offering more and more complimentary items in order to keep their existing customers and to attract new ones.

A few years ago, a casino in Las Vegas decided that its policy of offering a free drink to anybody who sat at their bar and bought a \$10 roll of quarters to play video poker was costing them too much. After all, a real mooch could buy the quarters, slug down the drink and walk off without leaving a cent with the casino. So they stopped giving away a drink when patrons bought a roll of quarters. After they changed their policy, the customers stopped coming. The bartenders were standing around all day with no one to serve.

The casino across the street added a message to their marquee, "Free drink when you play video poker at our bar." After a couple of weeks of no customers at the bar, the casino

bosses reinstated the policy of free drinks for the video poker players.



When the first wave of card counters began hitting the blackjack tables, the bosses panicked. They felt that they were sitting ducks and anyone who read the original book on card counting would start winning buckets of money from the casino. So they starting changing rules. As the rules became less favorable, players started staying away. So the bosses reinstated the old rules.

I believe that the casinos will continue to offer more and more comps. Once the floodgates have been opened, there is no turning back. I think the same can be said for you once you start getting more and more comps from casinos. You'll get hooked on them.

Before you try for your first comp, you'll want to plan a little. There are two broad avenues you can take to get your share of comps.

Slot and video poker players have the easier road. The steps are very simple. Join a slot club. Play slots or video poker. Start collecting comps. Except, I left out one important thing. Learn how to win at gambling.

The only way comps will provide any real benefit is if you use the comps to augment a winning approach to gambling. If you consistently lose \$1,500 in order to get \$300 worth of freebies, it doesn't take a mathematician to figure out that this is a losing approach.

The safest way to get the maximum number of comps and to still win is to learn to play and win at video poker. There are a number of versions of video poker where you can play at an advantage to the casinos. If you don't know how to beat video poker, check on the references at the end of this publication.

You don't have to be a dollar player to get lots of freebies from playing video poker. Quarter video poker players who play with partners and who are willing to play about four hours a day, can have their rooms and food comped. In some casinos, this level of play will get you RFB.

If you are a table game player, you need to learn how to beat at least one table game. My favorites are craps and blackjack.

If you don't have a system, check out the references listed at the end of this publication.

The minimum bankroll I would use to have reasonable staying power to survive the ups and downs of casino gambling would be \$2,500 to \$3,000. This would be my target bankroll whether I planned on playing quarter video poker or playing a table game with a \$200 to \$300 buy-in per session.

Playing with a partner offers a real advantage. If you play machines, two partners with identical cards can pile up the points twice as fast as one person. At table games, two partners playing tend to smooth out the ups and downs of bankroll fluctuations.

Once you have your bankroll put together and have learned how to beat the game or games of your choice, you are ready to start stalking for prey. If you have a favorite casino and don't know about its comp policy, it is time to start asking questions. Chances are they have been giving things away that you didn't know about.

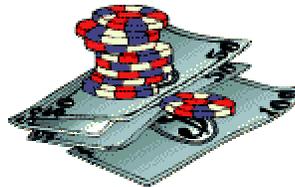
You may have a local casino you like. You can at least get free meals there.

My personal preference is for the casinos in Nevada. The competition simply can't compete with all of the attractions of a Las Vegas or a Lake Tahoe or a Reno or a Laughlin. Nevada also offers the best games with the best rules and extremely generous comps. By some measures, the comps in Atlantic City are as generous as Las Vegas, but the games in Atlantic City aren't as competitive. And let's face it. Most people would rather spend

three days in Las Vegas or Reno than three days in Atlantic City or Robinsonville, Mississippi. You will need to decide which cities you prefer to visit, because once you start working the comp system, you will have plenty of opportunities to travel. If you are not familiar with Las Vegas, you may want to start with a two or three day trip. If you want to get comped and only have \$1,000, call Lady Luck and they'll be happy to discuss a comp package with you. If you have \$10,000 or more, you can pick just about any casino. My favorites include the Desert Inn, Rio or the Golden Nugget.

Plan on keeping some records. If you have a large enough win, you'll get your own W-2G form for reporting your winnings.

Have fun. Win money. And let the casinos pay for everything!



Suggested Reading

All of the books which follow are recommended if you want to learn more about how to play other casino games, or how to get more comps from the casinos. I have listed the better books so that you can learn more about what others have said about card counting, using betting progressions, disguising their skills and general recommendations for winning play.

Ian Andersen, *Burning the Tables in Las Vegas*, 1999, Huntington Press.

Ian Andersen, *Turning the Tables on Las Vegas*, 1976, Vintage Books.

Frank Barstow, *Beat the Casino*, 1979, Carlyle Associates.

Julian Braun, *How to Play Winning Blackjack*, 1980, Data House.

Richard A. Canfield, *Blackjack Your Way to Riches*, 1977, Lyle Stuart.

Bryce Carlson, *Blackjack for Blood*, 1994, Compustar Press.

Donald Dahl, *Progression Blackjack*, 1998, Citadel Press

Andrew Devereau, *Target Roulette*, 1993, Silverthorne Publications, Inc.

Roger L. Ford, *Advantage Blackjack*, 1999, Silverthorne Publications, Inc.

Roger L. Ford, *Advantage Craps*, 2000, Silverthorne Publications Inc.

Roger L. Ford, *Advantage Slots*, 2000, Silverthorne Publications Inc.

Roger L. Ford, *Beat the Internet Casinos*, 2000, Silverthorne Publications, Inc.

Sam Goldsmith, *Super Craps*, 1996, Silverthorne Publications, Inc.

Peter A. Griffin, *The Theory of Blackjack*, 1996, Huntington Press.

John Grochowski, *The Casino Answer Book*, 1998, Bonus Books, Inc.

Lance Humble and Carl Cooper, *The World's Greatest Blackjack Book*, 1980, Doubleday.

Jerry L. Patterson, *Blackjack: A Winner's Handbook*, 1990, Perigee Books.

Mario Puzo, *Inside Las Vegas*, 1976, Grosset & Dunlap.

Fred Renzey, *Blackjack Bluebook*, Chicago Spectrum Press, 1998

T. J. Reynolds, *Complete Book of Blackjack*, 1998, Kensington Publishing Corp.

Max Rubin, *Comp City*, 1994, Huntington Press

Don Schlesinger, *Blackjack Attack*, 1997, RGE Publishing.

Frank Scoblete, *Best Blackjack*, 1996, Bonus Books, Inc.

Martin J. Silverthorne, *Power Slots*, 1999, Silverthorne Publications, Inc.

Martin J. Silverthorne, *The Silverthorne Blackjack Strategy*, 1996, Silverthorne Publications, Inc.

Silverthorne Publications, *How to Survive and Prosper as a Professional Gambler*, 1994, Silverthorne Publications, Inc.

Silverthorne Publications, *Winning with Expert Video Poker*, 1995, Silverthorne Publications, Inc.

Arnold Snyder, *Blackbelt in Blackjack*, 1997, RFT Publishing.

Lawrence Steele, *Super Slots*, 1994, Silverthorne Publications, Inc.

Henry J. Tamburin, *Blackjack: Take the Money and Run*, 1994, Research Services Unlimited.

Walter Thomason, *Twenty-first Century Blackjack*, 1999, Bonus Books, Inc.

Edward O. Thorp, *Beat the Dealer*, 1966, Random House.

Ken Uston, *Million Dollar Blackjack*, 1981, Random House.

Ken Uston and Roger Rappaport, *The Big Player*, 1977, Rinehart and Winston.

Olaf Vancura and Ken Fuchs, *Knock Out Blackjack*, 1998, Huntington Press.

Barney Vinson, *Las Vegas Behind the Tables!*, 1986, Gollehon Press, Inc.

Stanford Wong, *Blackjack Secrets*, 1994, Pi Yee Press.

Stanford Wong, *Professional Blackjack*, 1994, Pi Yee Press.

Bill Zender, *Card Counting for the Casino Executive*, 1990

