

A Practical Guide

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO PLAYING BACCARAT



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CONTENTS

Downloadable Baccarat Guide for UK Players	3
A Brief History of Baccarat	4
How It All Works	5
The Different Types of Baccarat	8
Basic Baccarat Strategies	11
A History of Controversies	15
The Biggest Winners	16
Dos and Dont's	18

DOWNLOADABLE BACCARAT GUIDE FOR UK PLAYERS



Over the past few decades baccarat (pronounced bak-kuh-rah) has become one of the most popular card games in the world. This is especially true in gambling hotbeds like Macau, where more than 80% of casinos' revenue comes from baccarat.

But thankfully there's no need to venture to Asia, Monte Carlo, or even outside your home to play baccarat online for real money.

With the advent of online gambling, playing baccarat on your laptop or mobile is now as easy as clicking 'install'.

While baccarat might look intimidating, it's actually extremely simple to learn and play. At the same time, it has enough strategy and variations to keep even the most seasoned players coming back for more. Below we'll teach you everything you need to know about how to play baccarat.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF BACCARAT

Baccarat has been around for so long, experts aren't entirely sure where it came from. Many different cultures and ancient games claim to have had their hand in its creation.

Some say the game evolved from Chinese games like Pai Gow due to the similar scoring system.

1400

Others say it's the invention of an Italian man in the 1400s, based loosely off a folk tale about a virgin who had to determine her fate with a 9-sided die. An 8 or 9 meant she would become a priestess, a 6 or 7 allowed her to live with no special privileges, anything less sentenced her to drowning at sea.



1500

In the following century, the game spread to the French aristocracy where it took on a variation called chemin de fer, still a version played today. The game then made its way across the channel where the English made their own variation of the game, called punto banco.

1950

Punto banco slowly spread to and across the Americas, gradually gaining popularity. It landed in Vegas in the 1950s, but until very recently it remained a game associated with only VIP gamblers. Thanks to the online casino explosion around the turn of the century, baccarat is finally open to those of all betting limits.



HOW IT ALL WORKS

Baccarat and its terminology can seem intimidating at first, but there actually isn't too much you need to know to begin playing knowledgeably.

CARD VALUES



Most games are played with eight decks, which affects the odds slightly but not the gameplay itself. Each card in the deck is given a point value:

CARD	POINT VALUE
	<i>Face value</i>
	<i>0 points</i>
	<i>1 point</i>

If the total value of your two-card hand is more than 9, drop the first digit from that number: The remaining number is the value of your hand. For instance, if you were dealt a 7 and 4, your hand's value would be 1 ($7 + 4 = 11$).

If your hand is below a certain value, Players and Bankers can receive a third card based on the situation (see chart in the next section).

THE OBJECT OF THE GAME



In baccarat, you are playing one-on-one against the dealer, pitting your two or three card hand against theirs. The objective is to have a hand with a value closer to nine than the dealer.

Given the scoring system above, the maximum amount of points you can have in your hand is 9. This makes the game's two best hands 10 + 9 (called a natural) and 10 + 8. The worst total shares the game's name, called 'baccarat' for a hand valued at 0.

In most regular baccarat games, there are three bets you can make:

- ◆ That the Banker (the dealer's hand) will win
- ◆ That the Player (your hand) will win
- ◆ or on a Tie (that your hands will equal the same value)

We'll go into more detail on this later, but the Banker bet features the best odds, followed by the Player bet, and then the Tie bet in a distant third.

GAMEPLAY



- ◆ All players at the table place their bet on the Banker, Player, or Tie.
- ◆ Banker deals two cards face down to each player and to themselves.
- ◆ If either the Player or Banker has a value of 8 or 9 in their hand, they automatically win. Placed bets are cashed out between the two.
- ◆ Players and Bankers stand with totals of 6 or 7 (meaning they neither win automatically nor get dealt a third card).
- ◆ If a player has a total of 0-5, they receive a third and final card.
- ◆ If the Player stands (on 6 or 7) and the Banker has a total of 0-5, the Banker receives a third card.
- ◆ If the Player draws an additional third card, the Banker acts based on the following chart (S= Stand, D= Draw).

BASIC BACCARAT STRATEGY CHART

You can use this handy chart to show you when to stand and when to draw:

BANKER'S SCORE	PLAYER'S THIRD CARD									
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
7	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
6	S	S	S	S	S	S	D	D	S	S
5	S	S	S	S	D	D	D	D	S	S
4	S	S	D	D	D	D	D	D	S	S
3	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	S	D
2	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
1	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
0	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D

♦ Hand values between the Banker and each Player are compared. This is when you often see the dramatic revealing of the cards by slowly bending the edges. The greater hand wins. If there is a tie, the Tie bet wins and all other bets lose.

♦ Bets are then paid out according to the following:

BET	PAYS
<i>Player</i>	<i>Even money</i>
<i>Banker</i>	<i>19 to 20</i>
<i>Tie</i>	<i>10 to 1</i>

Note that when you win on the Banker bet, the house takes a 5% cut on your win. This is how the casino compensates for the bet's low house edge.

THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF BACCARAT

Depending on where you live, you'll mainly see one of three types of baccarat offered in land casinos: punto banco, chemin de fer, or baccarat banque. At online casinos, you'll typically see those plus many other variations that online casinos have put their own twist on.

PUNTO BANCO

The most common baccarat game you'll see online and at land casinos in the Americas, Macau, Australia, the UK, Scandinavia, and several others. The game is so common that it's often just labelled plainly as 'baccarat' while other places call it 'North American baccarat'.

Unlike in other versions, punto banco has the dealer playing the role of banker at all times. Each player goes head to head with the banker, who must follow a strict set of drawing rules (called 'tableau') for specific game situations. In two specific instances, a third card can also be dealt (see above).



CHEMIN DE FER

This historic version of baccarat is still popular in France and bears the French name for 'Railroad'.

In it, players play against one another (instead of the bank) with each player taking turns being the dealer. The banker for the turn deals in the other players (called punters), then decides the maximum they would like to wager against each player. The punter willing to bet the most now represents the other players and goes head to head dealer.

From there things mostly play out normally, with one big difference being that the rules do not require you to hit or stand on certain numbers. If the punter wins, each player wins back their wager and a matching amount from the bank. A loss to the banker is a forfeit of all wagers while a tie sees the bets stay where they are for the next hand.

BACCARAT BANQUE

Very similar to chemin de fer and also mostly played in France. The biggest difference is that the position of the dealer doesn't change after the punters defeat the banker.

Instead, it changes only after the entire shoe is dealt (usually about three decks). The deal is then put up for auction, with the player willing to wager the most on the next hand earning the right to be banker



MINI-BACCARAT

A variation on punto banco generally played on a smaller table (usually with no more than seven players) and with lower limits. In land casinos, players typically don't get to handle the cards either.

Although getting to bend the cards in normal baccarat is half the fun, these changes make the games go much faster (around 200 hands per hour as opposed to 40-70 at more traditional tables).

EZ BACCARAT

Created this millennium, EZ is another punto banco variation with small differences in the banker bets. In EZ, wins on the banker bet pay even money and also result in a push when the banker wins with three cards totaling 7.

There are also two added bets called Dragon 7 and Panda 8. Dragon 7 hits when a banker wins with a three-card total of 7. Similarly, Panda 8 is when the banker's three cards total 8.



PROGRESSIVE BACCARAT

Before a hand is dealt, players have the option to put forth an additional side bet. A small percentage of each normal wager also goes into this pot.

You can win a bet like you normally would in baccarat but also win if your hand matches the dealer's in a specified way (usually if you both have an Ace and 8 from the same suit).



HOUSE EDGE EXPLAINED

Standard baccarat carries one of the lowest house edges of any casino game. Simply, the house edge is a game's built-in profit system and the way that casinos make their money. It is written as a percentage which tells you how much, on average, the casino can expect to keep per every wager made.

For instance, if the house edge is 5%, for every £1 you bet the casino expects to make a 0.5p profit. Conversely, you can expect to make back 0.95p on each wager of that amount. This reveals that while you may go up big in the short-term, the longer you play the more likely it is for expected value and probability to come into play and see your money fade.

The exact percentage fluctuates slightly based on how many decks of cards are being used and of course which bet you wager on, but typically it looks like the following:

Decks	Banker Bet House Edge	Player Bet House Edge	Tie Bet House Edge
8	1.06%	1.24%	14.36%
6	1.06%	1.24%	14.44%
1	1.01%	1.29%	15.75%

As we see, 8 and 6 deck games are the most common. Odds-wise they don't have a big difference from one another, other than giving you even more incentive to avoid the tie bet in 6-deck games. If you're lucky enough to find a one deck game, the house edge barely over 1% should inspire you put your money on the baker bet even more.

BASIC BACCARAT STRATEGIES

Despite some heavy similarities to blackjack, there is no benefit to be gained from counting cards in most forms of baccarat.

At some tables or online casinos you may see a computer display showing the results of previous hands. However, like in roulette, this is just for show and offers no statistical edge to the player.



BACCARAT/PUNTO BANCO STRATEGIES

If you're looking to get the best advantage in punto banco every hand, the best move is to just bet on the banker every time. Maybe not the most exciting way to play, but the numbers don't lie as that's where the lowest house edge is. .

This applies for virtually all rule variations and number of decks in the shoe. If you must bet on something besides the banker, make sure it's on the player and not the tie, the latter of which carries a house edge many times over what the player and banker bets are.



CHEMIN DE FER STRATEGY

In chemin de fer, the best strategy lies in being the dealer when possible and abiding by the following:

- ♦ Player should hit on 0-4, stand on 6-7
- ♦ Bankers should hit on 0-5 and stand on 7 when the player stands
- ♦ Bankers should do the following when the player hits:

BANKER	PLAYER									
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
7	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
6	S	S	S	S	S	S	H	H	S	S
5	S	S	S	S	?	H	H	H	S	S
4	S	S	H	H	H	H	H	H	S	S
3	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	S	?
2	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H
1	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H
0	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H



OTHER BACCARAT TECHNIQUES

CARD COUNTING



Despite its similarity to blackjack, there is no advantage to be had from card counting in baccarat. Champion blackjack players and card counters have invested countless hours inventing systems and computer programs to aid in counting cards in baccarat with very minimal success.

One study's results revealed that when a computer played mathematically perfect and bet \$1000 only when the Player had the edge, they stood to win just \$1.71 for every 100 hands. Note that betting only when it's advantageous for you to do is basically impossible to do at a real casino, as it might mean you could go a very long time without participating in a hand.

Card counting is possible in certain varieties of baccarat, such as the Dragon 8 and Panda 9 bets in EZ Baccarat.

EDGE SORTING



Edge sorting on the other hand can give players a real advantage. Note that in most casinos it is considered **illegal** and is not something that can be done online.

Edge sorting is a technique where you learn to identify whether cards are low or high value based on minor imperfections on the back of the card. For instance, a card style with diamonds on the back might have the design end at different points of the diamond on one edge versus the other.

To actually pull off, the technique requires a little bit of smooth talking. Be it by saying that you are superstitious or something else, the dealer needs to be persuaded to

rotate cards of a certain value a specific way before putting them back into the shoe. Typically this is done so that high value cards are all facing one way and low cards another. Due to the imperfections in cards (where the design always ends on one side of the card versus the other), this makes the approximate value of a card easy to identify even when face down.

This technique is even more valuable when an automatic shuffler is used, as they do not change the orientation of the cards the way manual shuffling by a dealer can. Eventually, an observant player will have a shoe full of cards oriented in such a way that it gives him a distinct advantage.

While this might sound like keen card play, casinos and courts have viewed it differently. In several instances of players using the technique to win big money, lawsuits have ensued with the courts eventually ruling that edge sorting and duping the dealer is in fact a form of cheating.

BACCARAT BETTING SYSTEMS

While many people swear by this or that betting system, there is not one for baccarat or any game that gives the player a real long-term advantage.

Because of the inherent house edge in baccarat and all casino games, players using any betting system will have no statistical advantage over those that are flat bettors or do not use any system.



A HISTORY OF CONTROVERSIES

Although baccarat (and gambling as a whole) can seem like a straightforward thing, big money on the line can create big time controversy.



THE ROYAL BACCARAT SCANDAL

Brits might not only know of baccarat from James Bond, but also from the infamous Royal Baccarat Scandal.

Also called the Tranby Croft Affair, it was a late 19th century controversy in which a highly-ranked Scots Guards lieutenant allegedly cheated at baccarat at a house party in which social elites like future King of Wales Edward VII also attended.

A guest at the party spied the lieutenant (Sir William Gordon-Cumming) illegally adding money to his wagers. Cumming was confronted and agreed to stop playing cards again in exchange that his offense would not be made public. That bargain was not held up, Cumming took the hosts to court for slander but lost in a highly-public and dramatic court affair. Cumming lost the case and soon was dismissed from the Army, never returning to public society again.

POISON IVEY

One big baccarat winner-then-loser whose overall wealth probably didn't change that much was famous **poker player Phil Ivey's**. The 10-time WSOP bracelet winner has twice won between **\$9-12 million** dollars playing baccarat, once even at Crockfords Casino in London.

Both times Ivey was denied his winnings and lost his appeal in court as he was determined to be using edge sorting, seen by casinos and the UK High Court as cheating.



TAKING TRUMP



An even more grim baccarat story was that of Japanese real estate mogul Akio Kashiwagi. A fan of betting big, Kashiwagi almost bankrupted an Australian casino when he won \$20 million.

He then lost \$6 million at a Vegas casino, then took Donald Trump for \$6 million at his Taj Mahal Casino in Atlantic City while playing baccarat.

As a publicity stunt, Trump invited the mysterious gambler back to the Taj. The stipulations were for Kashiwagi to bring **\$12 million** and play baccarat until he doubled his money or lost it all. At his own private table, play went on for nearly a week. On day six and with Kashiwagi down **\$10 million** (instead of the agreed upon \$12m), Trump called the game. Saying that Trump didn't hold up his end of the bargain, Kashiwagi's check to the casino bounced or was cancelled. Tragically, his estate was forced to pay his million dollar debts to Trump and several other casinos after he was mysteriously murdered in Japan shortly after the Taj showdown.

THE BIGGEST WINNERS

Baccarat's glorified coin flip nature means it can change big bettors' fortunes (for better or worse).



IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE



WORLD RECORD AT THE WORLD SERIES

Like with poker, there is a World Series of Baccarat. Held in Macau, the tournament typically has an overall purse exceeding £10.1 million.

The tournament's biggest winner, and baccarat's biggest winner ever, came in 2015. Famed Hong Kong card shark Lin Haishan set the Guinness World Record for largest cash prize at a baccarat tournament, taking away £8.5 million from the Macao Sheraton.

UNLUCKY LORD LUCAN

Another of Britain's most famous baccarat players (but definitely not one to admire) is Lord Lucan, a London peer that loved high stakes gambling and was even considered to play the original James Bond.

Lucan was also a banker, but left his job in 1960 after winning over ten-times his salary in a single night playing chemin de fer. A little over a decade later, Lucan would murder his nanny and then disappear, never to be seen again but presumed dead.



THE BIGGEST WINNER

Perhaps the biggest baccarat winner of the recent past wasn't any player, but a casino itself. At the end of the last decade, the Wynn Macau perplexed industry experts and statisticians alike with the casino's baccarat win percentage being abnormally high.

While the casino's normal house win percentage is 2.85% on baccarat, for about two quarters that rate inexplicably soared to an average 3.6% rate on its VIP tables, which translated to about an additional \$80.25 million in a single quarter.

There were a number of theories for the statistical phenomenon but none have been universally agreed upon. It may have been some combination of an increase in inexperienced but no less wealthy players, inaccuracies in the formula that tracks the amount wagered at baccarat tables, or even techniques used by the casino to break up streaks such as asking winning players to switch tables, changing dealers, or modifying the betting limits.

DOS AND DONT'S



Despite baccarat's simple nature, other internet guides and so-called experts like to overcomplicate things.

But at least for punto banco, if you stick to the following pointers you will minimize the house's edge, maximize your chances, and have a lot of fun in the process:



DO

SET A BETTING LIMIT

This goes not only for how much you are willing to lose playing baccarat (or any gambling game) as a whole, but also calculating a smart amount per bet to wager.

The most successful players in the long-term typically wager no more than 5% of their total bankroll per hand.



DON'T

GET CAUGHT UP IN BETTING SYSTEMS

Despite what many on the internet claim, there is no foolproof betting system for baccarat.

Casinos are a business, and any game where they aren't guaranteed to profit in the long run or that can be 'hacked' by a special betting formula isn't going to be offered for long.

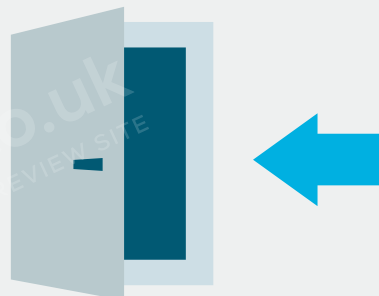


DO

KNOW WHEN TO WALK AWAY

The longer you play baccarat, the more the house edge is going to come into effect.

Thus if you get up big early, be willing to walk away knowing that it's likely your stack is only going to dwindle as you play more and more.



DON'T

FORGET TO CHECK THE PAYOUTS

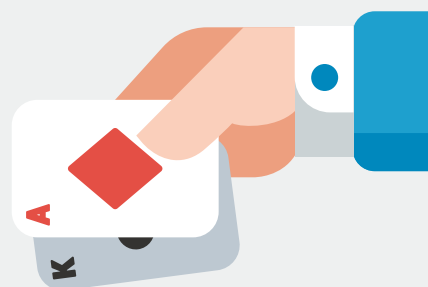
The odds and house edges we list here are typical of baccarat at most casinos, but not universal. Ultimately, casinos can tweak the game however they please (and almost always in their favour) so before sitting down make sure the odds and payouts for each bet are close to the standard amounts listed on this page.



DO

PRACTICE FIRST

Before wagering real money on baccarat, play a free version online first. This will allow you to get used to the rules and flow of the game without risking any of your bankroll in the process of learning. If you must play for the first time at a casino, choose the table with the lowest minimum bet possible.



DON'T

PLAY NOVEL VARIATIONS

Casinos are always trying to come up with new twists on old classics that they hope will gain mass popularity. However, these games rarely (if ever) have odds as good as the original game.

DO

ALMOST ALWAYS BET ON THE BANKER

While it might feel a lot more hands off compared to paying close account to trends or trusting your intuition, you give yourself the best chance of winning at baccarat simply by betting on the banker (just a 1.06% house edge) every time.



DON'T

BET ON THE TIE

While the house edge of 1.24% for the player bet is worse than the banker bet, it's still good by casino standards.

However, the tie bet and its 14.4% edge should be avoided at all costs, no matter how 'overdue' you think it is to hit.



**NOW YOU'RE READY
TO PLAY BACCARAT**



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