What odds are and how to work them out

Before you can work out odds at the table you need to be able to count your **outs** — everything else builds on that. This part covers what an out is, how to count them in common situations, and an important warning before you trust the numbers too much.

What is an "out"?

An out is a card still in the deck that, if it comes, turns your hand into something you believe wins the pot. If you hold four spades and are waiting for a fifth to make a flush, every remaining spade is an out.

Common situations and how many outs they give

Situation	Outs	Explanation
Pocket pair → set	2	The two remaining cards of your rank in the deck
Gutshot (inside straight draw)	4	E.g. 5-6-8-9, missing only a 7
Open-ended straight draw	8	E.g. 6-7-8-9, a 5 or a 10 makes the straight
Flush draw	9	Four cards of the same suit, waiting for a fifth
Set → full house or quads	7	Your trips can become a full house (6) or quads (1)
Overcards	6	Two hole cards higher than anything on the board
Combo draw (e.g. flush + straight)	15	Add them up, but subtract cards counted twice

Rule of thumb: only count cards that actually improve your hand — not cards that are already part of what you have.

The basic formula

Once you know your number of outs you can work out your chance of hitting on the next card:

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(Outs ÷ Unseen cards) × 100 = Your chance in %

Shortcut: outs × 4 (flop→river) or outs × 2 (next card)
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The number of unseen cards is usually 47 on the flop (52 cards − your 2 hole cards − 3 board cards) and 46 on the turn. We go through both the shortcut and the exact calculation in detail, with ready-made tables, in Part 2.

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■ More outs does not always mean you win

Counting outs only tells you how often you **hit your hand** — not how often you actually win the pot. Two common traps to be aware of:

• **Your opponent may already hold a better hand of the same kind.** You hit your flush, but your opponent already has a higher flush or even a full house — you "make" your hand and still lose the pot.

• **Your outs may give your opponent an even better hand.** The card that completes your straight can also give your opponent a flush or a full house, if the board has the right cards for it.

Always apply common sense: given how your opponent has played the hand, how likely is it that they are already sitting on something strong? If it is likely, knock a couple of outs off in your head before you decide.

Next step: In Part 2 we look at how to turn outs into a percentage quickly at the table, with both a quick rule and exact tables.