Range

In Part 7 we talked about "range" as if it were already a familiar word. Here we sort out what it actually means — and why it is one of the most important ways of thinking you can build up, however new you are.

What is a range?

A range is all the hands a player could reasonably hold in a given situation — not a single guess. Instead of asking "what do they have?" you ask "which hands would they reasonably play this way?". The answer is rarely one hand, but a whole collection: perhaps every pair of 8s or better, plus AK and AQ.

The mindset: don't guess one hand, think in groups

The beginner's mistake is to lock on to one specific guess ("they probably have a pair of jacks") and then play the whole hand on the basis of that guess. The problem: if you guess wrong, your entire line of reasoning collapses. If you think in whole ranges instead, a single wrong guess matters less — you make a decision that is reasonable against the whole collection of plausible hands, not just against your best guess.

Quick shortcut: build the range from the action, not the cards

You do not need to work out an exact range. Build it step by step from what has actually happened in the hand:

Step	What you do
1. Start wide	Begin with the approximate range for the position (the Part 7 table)
2. Adjust for the action	Raise preflop → narrow towards stronger hands. Just a call → wider, weaker range
3. Narrow street by street	Continued betting on flop/turn/river → remove the weakest hands that would reasonably have given up
4. Factor in the board	Scary board → think of more draws/strong hands in their range, not fewer

Example

Your opponent raises from UTG (a narrow range according to Part 7 — typically pair of 10s+, AK, AQ). The flop comes A♣7♦2♠ and they bet straight away. The range narrows further: this board favours their UTG range (many aces and high pairs are already in it), so a continued bet usually means a large part of the range really did hit the board. You do not need to know exactly which hand — only that the range as a whole is strong here.

Range

■ Your own range counts too

The same thinking applies in the other direction: an experienced opponent is not reading your individual hand, but which range you reasonably have given how you have played the hand. If you only raise with really strong hands preflop, your range becomes easy to read — and just as easy to play against.

Remember: next time you size up an opponent, don't ask "what do they have" — ask "which hands would they have played exactly this way". That is the whole difference between guessing and thinking in ranges.