The Basics of Casino Blackjack

1. Basics of the Game

- Put your money on the table, the dealer will convert it to chips.
- Put a bet for the hand in the marked area, depending on the table limit.
- You are dealt two cards, as is the dealer. One dealer card is exposed.
- The hand value is the sum of the cards. Aces are 1 or 11, face cards and tens are 10, other cards are face value.
- Hands with a total of more than 21 are bust, and the bet is lost.
- The dealer continues to draw cards until their total is 17 or greater. In some casinos, they will draw to soft 17 as well.
- A dealer Blackjack ties to other Blackjacks, and wins other bets.
- Tied hands are a push, no decision on the bet.
- A higher total than the dealer (or if the dealer busts) wins the bet.
- The dealers can be tipped directly, or the tip placed above your bet. If you win, the dealer will get at least twice the amount tipped.

2. Decisions and Terminology

- **Blackjack**: an Ace and a 10-value card on the first two cards - generally pays 3 to 2.
- **Double down**: double your bet on the first two cards, and receive only one additional card. What hands can be doubled depends on the casino, and the number of decks of cards in play.
- **Hit**: take another card
- **Insurance**: if the dealer up-card is an Ace, they will ask for insurance bets before any other action. To take insurance, place 1/2
of the amount bet in the marked space. If the dealer has Blackjack, your bet and insurance are returned. If not, the insurance bet is lost. If you have Blackjack, they will ask you if you want even money, rather than risking a tie.

- **Soft Hand**: a hand in which an Ace is counted as 11.

- **Split**: if dealt a pair of cards of the same value, you have the option of splitting them to make two hands. In 1- or 2-deck games, you are generally not allowed to re-split. In most casinos, you can only get one card to an Ace. In addition, if a total of 21 results from split Aces or 10’s, only even money is paid.

- **Stand**: take no more cards (total less than 22)

- **Surrender (late)**: on some shoes games (4-, 6- or 8-decks), you have the option of giving up 1/2 of your bet, and not playing the hand. This is done after the dealer checks for Blackjack.
3. Modified Basic Strategy

- **Insurance**: Unless you are counting *accurately*, *never* take insurance.

- **Late Surrender**: If *late surrender* is offered, surrender a total of 16 against an Ace or 10, 15 against an Ace, 10, or 9.

- **Split**:
  - Aces: always
  - 9’s: against a dealer’s 2-9, except 7.
  - 8’s: always
  - 7’s: against a dealer’s 2-7.
  - 6’s: against a dealer’s 2-6.
  - 3’s: against a dealer’s 4-7.
  - 2’s: against a dealer’s 3-7.

- **Double Down**:
  - A8: against a dealer’s 6.
  - A7: against a dealer’s 3-6.
  - A6: against a dealer’s 2-6.
  - A5, A4, A3, A2: against a dealer’s 4-6.
  - 11: always
  - 10: against a dealer’s 2-9.
  - 9: against a dealer’s 2-6.
  - 8: against a dealer’s 5,6.

- **Hit**:
  - A7: against a dealer’s 9-A.
  - A6: against a dealer’s 8-A.
  - *any* 13-16: against a dealer’s 7-A.
  - 12: *except* against a dealer’s 5,6.
  - 2-9: always (subject to doubling/splitting).