

Baccarat

Baccarat, also commonly called punto banco here in the United States, has a reputation as being only for the richest gamblers. Plenty of people remember the glamorous, glittering scenes of James Bond facing off against foes at the baccarat tables over the decades, being ever so cool while doing so. It seems like it must be *the game* for the biggest of high rollers.

In all actuality, baccarat is a very simple game to play that doesn't automatically require huge bets to get in on the action. It's honestly a great game for beginning gamblers because the game doesn't even require you to make any decisions on what to do — it's all purely chance.

This guide will teach you everything you need to know about this popular game. If you're a beginner, we can teach you the basics of how to play. If you're a veteran player, you could pick up some tips on strategies and betting systems. Here is what you will learn in our baccarat guide:

- How to play baccarat
- The table layout
- Understanding the house edge in baccarat
- Betting systems you can use in baccarat
- A history of baccarat
- Variations on the game
- Online baccarat's history and advantages

Don't let baccarat's reputation as being only for the glitterati scare you off if you don't have thousands or even millions of dollars in your bankroll. Come join us in the exciting world of baccarat.

How To Play Baccarat

Every game in baccarat (or punto banco) is determined by comparing the total of the Player's hand with the total of the Banker's hand. The hand that has the higher total is the winner (with 9 being the highest score). You can have the Player win, have the Banker win, or have a tie.

The game uses a standard deck, with four, six, or even eight decks shuffled together into a shoe. The cards have the following point values:

- Aces = 1
- Kings, queens, jacks, and 10s = 0
- 2s through 9s = worth their face value

Baccarat has its own unique system for calculating the actual value of a hand. You start by adding up the values of the cards. If that total equals a single digit, then this is the official total. If it equals two digits, you use only the value of the second digit.

Hands often have totals that go over 9, so if that happens you start back over at zero and count back up toward 9. The goal is to try to get as close to 9 as possible. Here are a few examples to show how this works:

- If you have a 2 and a 6, then the total is 8.
- If you have a pair of 8s, then the value of the hand is 6. The original total had been 16, but you only look at that second digit in a two-digit baccarat total.
- If you have a queen and a 10, then the value of the hand is 0. That's because both cards are worth 0 points.

Something important to note is that the dealer is doing all of the work at the table — though there is a “player” hand in baccarat, no players actually handle any cards. Instead, the dealer will place the Player hand on one section of the table and the Banker hand on another section.

Playing Hands in Baccarat

The Player and the Banker play slightly different roles when it comes to scoring their hands.

The Player always goes first, with the dealer giving them two face-up cards initially. Depending on this initial score, the Player might draw a third card (but no more than that). Here are those rules laid out:

Player's Hand	Third Card Rules
0-5	Must draw
6-7	Must stand
8-9	“Natural” (must stand)

A “natural” is when the Player has an 8 or a 9, which is an automatic winner against any Banker hand (except for 8 or 9 themselves).

The Banker goes second, also receiving two face-up cards. Here's how their hand might go:

Banker's Hand	Third Card Rules
0-2	Must draw

3-6	May draw depending on the Player's third card
7	Must stand
8-9	"Natural" (must stand)

If they have a "natural" (a hand totaling 8 or 9), then they'll possibly win against the Player if their hand is higher than the Player's. It is possible for them to have a tie, of course.

The part about when the Banker can draw a third card is obviously where things get complicated in baccarat. Here's how that all works:

When Banker's First Two Cards Total	Banker Draws When Player's Third Card Is	Banker Stands When Player's Third Card Is
3	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 9	8
4	2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7	0 - 1 - 8 - 9
5	4 - 5 - 6 - 7	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 8 - 9
6	6 - 7	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 8 - 9
7	Banker stands	
8-9	"Natural" (Banker stands)	

Here's an example round:

1. The Player has a 10 and 7, which means they have a hand worth 7. The Player stands.
2. The Banker has a 2 and 2, which means they have a hand worth 4. The Banker draws.
3. The Banker then draws a 9, which reduces their score to 3 ($2+2+9 = 13$, drop the 1).
4. The Player wins the round, 7 to 3.

Keeping all of this scoring in mind, whoever gets the hand that's closest to 9 is the winner of the round. Play continues with a new hand and new totals.

Because the dealer is bound to the rules of the game, they don't have to make any decisions and neither do the players. This game is completely based on the luck of the draw and pure chance — there is no true skill involved in playing baccarat.

The Baccarat Table Layout

While baccarat tables are very large (often big enough to seat 14 people at a time), the bulk of the table space is taken up by each seat's betting options. You can place your chips on the areas for Banker, Player, or Tie to show how you are betting. You are allowed to select only one option.

The dealer will play all cards face-up, placing the cards for the Player and the Banker on their own spaces on the table. They will draw or stand for each place depending on the game's rules.



At land-based casinos, all players will receive a sheet of paper to keep track of the rules on when the Banker is supposed to draw a third card. This helps ensure that everyone knows what to expect and no one is blindsided.

These pieces of paper may also have areas where players can write down the results of every hand. Some players like this because they feel it helps them to track any patterns in what has been dealt so far.

The House Edge in Baccarat

Baccarat is a game with some of the lowest house edges in any casino. Pair this with the fact that baccarat requires no actual skill to play, and it's actually a terrific game for new gamblers to try out.

Player Bet

This is when you place your chips on the area of the table in front of you that says "Player." If the Player wins the hand, the wager pays out even money at 1:1.

The house edge for a Player bet is 1.24% . This means that, if you were to average out any wins and losses, you would lose only \$1.24 out of every \$100 you wager at the baccarat table. This is a far more favorable house edge than nearly any other casino game.

Banker Bet

This is when you place your chips on the area of the table in front of you that says "Banker." If the Banker wins the hand, the wager pays out even money at 1:1

The house edge for a Banker bet is actually 1.06%, just slightly lower than a Player bet. This comes from the fact that the Banker goes second and has a slightly better chance of winning due to the rules on when they should stand or draw a third card.

However, you must pay a 5% commission to the dealer if you win on a Banker bet. This means that if you bet \$10 on the Banker and win, you will owe the dealer 50 cents. While this does chip away at your winnings, it's still a statistical advantage to try for Banker bets.

Tie Bet

This is when you place your chips on the area of the table in front of you that says "Tie." If the Player and the Banker have the same hand totals, this is a tie. This wager pays out at 8:1 because it's a more risky option.

The house edge for a tie bet is 14.36% at a casino that pays at 8:1. Suddenly, you've gone from some of the lowest house edges you could ever find in a casino to one of the highest house edges. If you're at a table or casino that pays out 9:1 on a tie bet, then that house edge drops to 4.85%.

Betting Systems for Baccarat

As we've said before, the cards that are dealt in a hand of baccarat are completely down to chance, and neither you nor the dealer can make any decisions that would impact the outcome. But maybe you still want to try a betting strategy to see if you can maximize your winnings. There are three major approaches to betting in baccarat:

Flat Betting

This is going to be your most straightforward betting system for baccarat. With this betting system, you wager the same amount of money on every single round. This means you can easily track how much money is going out versus coming in, and it easily keeps you within your budget.

If you want to use flat betting, calculate the size of your bet by examining your budget and dividing that by how many rounds you want to play.

One potential drawback to this system is that if you randomly hit a winning streak, you won't really be able to get any big payouts.

Positive Progression

The idea behind positive progression is that you increase the size of your wager every time you win a round. If you've hit a winning streak, you would continue to increase your bets until you end up losing. Once you've lost a round, you would return to your initial bet and go through all of that again.

This type of betting system allows you to boost your wins and can also prevent huge losses once a winning streak comes to an end. Just be mindful of your bankroll when you increase your wagers so that you don't bite off more than you can chew.

Negative Progression

This betting system is the opposite of positive progression. Here, you increase the size of your wager every time you lose a round. Once you've won a round, you return to your initial bet.

The thought process here comes from the belief that you'll have to win a round eventually at some point, and by then your winning wager will recover a large amount of your losses. You need to be extra-careful when using a negative progression system, though, because hitting a losing streak means that you could wipe out your bankroll quickly.

History of Baccarat

Of course, historians tend to disagree on where the game first got its start, but the popular claim is that baccarat got its start in the 1400s in medieval Italy, by a man named Felix Falguiere or Falguierein.

Allegedly, Felix's game was inspired by an Etruscan legend known as "nine gods." The tale is about a virgin whose fate was determined by the throw of a nine-sided die. If she rolled an 8 or 9, she would be elevated to the status of priestess. If she rolled a 6 or 7, she could live but not take part in any future religious or community events. If she rolled a 5 or lower, she would be banished to the sea to drown.

The game expanded from Italy to France, where it was known as *Chemin de Fer*. It became a favorite amongst the French aristocracy, and it eventually caught on in England as well.

In the 1950s, the game got a bit of a popularity boost in the debut James Bond novel *Casino Royale*. The climax of the story revolves around Bond bankrupting enemy spy Le Chiffre in a

game of baccarat. Author Ian Fleming even included instructions on the game for readers so they could keep up.

Also during the 1950s, the game made its way to Cuba, where it became known as *punto banco* (which means “player banker,” so it’s a very literal name). It spread to South America, and it was eventually brought to Las Vegas. Now, it’s the version we see most commonly in the U.S., United Kingdom, Australia, and Macau.

Baccarat Variations

Some of these international, historical interpretations of baccarat still exist as variations that you can play today. Here are a couple of French versions that you might encounter in your travels to different casinos.

Chemin de Fer

This version is predominantly played in France, and it’s considered the original form of the game by many. It’s also James Bond’s preferred style in the original books and movies through the 1990s.

In this iteration of baccarat, the players get to compete against one another instead of against the dealer. One player will take on the role as the Banker, and that person will make the decision as to how much money they want to stake per bet. It’s usually a large amount, as it’s their responsibility to be able to cover all of the players’ bets. The rest of the players will then each wager an amount that won’t exceed the Banker’s bet. Each player can announce *Banco*, which means they’re willing to match the banker’s stake.

The person to the right of the dealer will start as the Banker, and they’ll get to keep that position for as long as they win. Once they lose, the Banker position moves on to the next willing participant to the right. This is probably why we see James Bond playing as the Banker so often in the movies — it shows how well he does at the table.

The player who is the Banker draws the cards out of the shoe (which contains six decks), distributing them between themselves and one other player. The role of Player is determined by who is betting the most money on the Player position on the table. That person is also playing on behalf of all the other players.

Here, both of the players have their cards dealt face-down, and they are the ones who announce whether they will draw or stand, depending on the rules. The Player reveals their hand first, followed by the Banker.

Most of Chemin de Fer’s rules regarding whether to draw or stand are the same as your typical *punto banco* game, except for a special instance. When the Player has a 5, they can choose

whether to draw or stand. This adds a bit of skill and thrills to a game that is otherwise based purely on luck.

If anyone has a natural, then they show their cards and the game is decided immediately. If the Player wins, all players are paid out 1:1 from the Banker (that's why they have to be able to cover everyone's bets). If the Banker wins, then all of the players' losing bets are passed to the bank.

Though a player is acting as the Banker in Chemin de Fer, the house will still take a 5% commission from any winning Banker bets.

Chemin de Fer is played at a large table, requiring at least eight players at a time. Tables can seat up to 12 or even 14 players at a time. You'll only see a table like this in the VIP areas of European casinos.

Baccarat Banque

This version of baccarat is also called *baccarat à deux tableaux* (baccarat on two tables) because of how it's played. Here, the Banker plays against two Player hands instead of one. There's the Player position on the left side table, the Player position on the right side table, and the Banker position in the middle. Meanwhile, the shoe holds only three decks.

The players themselves are also split up by right and left tables. The cards dealt to the players on the right side are common for all of the players at the right table, and the cards dealt to the players on the left are common to those players at the left table. One Player represents each table, drawing and showing the cards for everyone as long as they keep winning. If they lose, the next person becomes that table's Player.

The person who is acting as the Banker doesn't play against other people at the table or cover their bets. They must put their wager on the Banker side winning. The other players will only be able to place their wagers on their own Player side.

The Players follow the same rules as Chemin de Fer when it comes to drawing or standing, but the Banker has a more complex undertaking. They're now trying to beat two separate hands, and they ultimately have to choose which table they want to effectively play against, since it won't often happen that both tables have the same totals. Usually, the Banker will play against the table with the higher stakes. They will also follow the same rules as Chemin de Fer on whether or not to draw a third card.

Each table in Baccarat Banque typically seats up to 10 players at a time. You will most likely not encounter this version of baccarat unless you're in France or Monaco, where you might see tables that can seat up to 16 people on each side.

Online Baccarat

Like many online games, baccarat arrived on the internet in the 1990s. Simpler games like blackjack and slot machines came first, but other games like roulette and baccarat made their ways online soon, too. Now, top internet casinos often have multiple versions of baccarat for players to try, and people can play on their computers, phones, or tablets to try their luck.

A Brief History of Online Baccarat

Though physical baccarat has a murky history, online baccarat has a much clearer one. Come the late 1990s, personal computers were becoming more common in people's homes, and dial-up internet was starting to be replaced with fiber-optic internet access. This meant that more people were able to get online and use the internet at faster and faster speeds.

Very quickly, online gaming exploded in popularity, and software companies leapt at the chance to meet the growing demand for more online games. Online casinos started getting established, using random number generator software to mimic the random draw of cards on the screen.

At first, Antigua and Barbuda was the top home for online gambling sites. In 1994, this country passed the Free Trade & Processing Act, which allowed for businesses that were looking to open online casinos to get their licenses. In essence, this is what created the online casino industry.

Also in the 1990s, software company Microgaming was founded and soon became a pioneer in internet gaming. Even today, the company is still viewed as one of the leading software providers for the internet gambling industry. When they got their start, no countries had yet established any specific laws restricting online gambling, so they expanded quickly to a global scale.

The Legalities of Online Baccarat

Of course, gambling has always had its naysayers and people who try to make it illegal, and online gambling is no different. In 2006, the United States passed a law called the Unlawful Internet Gambling Enforcement Act. The UIGEA now made it illegal for a business to deposit or withdraw funds for an online gambling site.

However, this still didn't make online gambling illegal. Instead, it simply limited the ability for American-based websites to process payments for players in the U.S. who wanted to partake in online gambling. But because the language was vague and confusing at first, there was a moment where just about all online gambling websites temporarily stopped doing business with customers based in the U.S.

So just remember that online gambling itself isn't illegal here in the United States, as there are still no federal laws that ban it. The only limitations we have deal with gambling on the state level.

First, there's the Federal Wire Act of 1961, which prohibits people from gambling across state lines. This means that you can place a bet at a casino in the same state where you physically are, but you can't place a bet with a casino or bookie in another state.

Secondly, not all states in the U.S. have made online gambling legal within their borders. As of 2021, you can wager money online at casinos in only five states:

- Delaware
- Michigan
- [New Jersey](#)
- Pennsylvania
- West Virginia

If you live in one of these states or are even just in them for a visit, you can use their state-sponsored online casinos. To make sure that players aren't violating the Federal Wire Act, they'll often use geolocation software or require proof of residence within their state.

Online Baccarat Bonuses

You can't often find online casino bonuses for baccarat, sadly. This is most likely because the game has such a low house edge and high return to player (RTP) percentage. Not a lot of online casinos like handing out bonuses for games with such great odds in favor of the player — they'd most likely lose too much money if they did.

But you never know if and when a casino might include baccarat in its list of games that are eligible for online casino bonuses. So it behooves you to check an online casino's terms and conditions page. Scroll to the section that discusses bonuses. Their bonus terms will list any games that are restricted from such offers.

If you can't find your answer on the terms and conditions page, you could also try to contact the casino's customer service. If the casino offers live chat help, you should find out quickly whether or not you can get or use any bonuses for playing baccarat with them online.

If you've lucked out and found an online casino that features baccarat bonuses, you might see ones like:

- **Welcome bonus:** While you'll usually see these for online slots, some online casinos offer table game bonuses in their welcome offers. You'll get extra credits deposited into your account when you first sign up. These don't necessarily require a deposit.
- **Deposit bonus:** You're more likely to see this kind of deal than a welcome bonus with baccarat. Once you deposit the casino's minimum amount (or more), you'll receive a bonus that matches your deposit amount.
- **Reload bonus:** These are additional credits added to your account when you deposit more money into your online funds.

Can Players Cheat at Online Baccarat?

Online casinos use software called random number generators to select which digital cards are dealt out in a virtual game. This means that all of the games are completely randomized and fair to play, meaning that it's pretty much impossible for a player to be able to cheat at online baccarat.

Even the online casinos that offer live dealer baccarat do the work to make sure that their games are fair. They'll regularly shuffle their cards or replace the shoe in order to keep certain cards from popping up repeatedly.

Plus, online casinos will always offer their players information about a game's payouts, making sure that you're fully informed when you're choosing any given game.

Live Dealer Baccarat

Maybe you want to try some baccarat at home, but you don't live close to a casino. To get the convenience of playing online while still having the social aspect of playing in a casino setting, you can try baccarat games that use live dealers. These are semi-interactive games in which a real person inside of a casino will deal out the cards to remote players, and you still get to see the whole table.

This offers baccarat enthusiasts the chance to feel like they're getting a more "genuine" casino experience, even if they're taking the subway home from work or sitting in bed in their pajamas.

Baccarat Can Be For Everyone

The game of baccarat can be a truly fun one because every outcome is purely one of chance, and that's appealing to a lot of people. We don't rely on our intellect when playing this game because everything is up to the luck of the draw.

If you're new to gambling, baccarat is a great first choice to get into gambling as some solid entertainment. Even veteran gamblers come back to the baccarat tables again and again to truly test how lucky they really are.

So find a casino that lets you play some lower stakes, like \$25 bets, or even find a [New Jersey online casino](#) that lets you play with as little as \$1 per bet. You'll be enjoying the thrill of baccarat in no time.