



Poker: The Real Deal

Phil Gordon, Jonathan Grotenstein, Jon Favreau (Foreword by)

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Like a secret society, poker has its own language and customs -- its own governing logic and rules of etiquette that the uninitiated may find intimidating. It's a game of skill, and playing well depends on more than just a good hand or the ability to hide emotion. The first step toward developing a style of play worthy of the greats is learning to think like a poker player. In a game where there are no absolutes, mastering the basics is only the beginning -- being able to pull off the strategy and theatrics is the difference between legendary wins and epic failure.

Poker: The Real Deal Details

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From Reader Review Poker: The Real Deal for online ebook

Lana says

I'm going to go ahead and count this one as read. There's only one useful section- a fancy chart of combinations that poker experts have determined to be a great guide to playing your hands. The rest of it is a lot of fluffy history about the game, and there's several pages detailing poker movies everyone should see, things no one needs to read. Not really a good book. I'm pretty sure we got it as a Christmas present and it came with poker chips and a deck of cards, which is why it was even laying around in the first place. Here's that chart of card combinations: <http://www.texas-holdem-poker-hands.c...>

Helen says

This was my introductory poker book. I find it to be great as a beginners book. It's an easy read. It introduces you to different factors of poker that you may not be aware of as a beginner. They have end-of-the-chapter situational questions to test your knowledge and what you've taken from each chapter. It doesn't really go too in-depth, but it does cover the basics and offers the history behind the game. I think it's meant to be more mainstream. But I enjoyed it as a backdrop to the more complex game that it can be.

Colby says

I'm your average graduate from a home game to casino low-limit, tight, played-chess-with-a-high-win-percentage-and-better-than-average-human-psychological-observation-skill poker player. This book was an entertaining and informative read, but too lofty for real low-limit play strategy. That said, I did pick up on some ideas I'll use my next trip to the card room

Randal says

Phil Gordon is writing to a clear audience in this one ... wannabe poker pros. They may find it useful; I didn't, nor did it make me want to go out and play a bunch. It was probably more honest than most (start with 1,000 hours of playing low-stakes or don't even think about it). Exciting it ain't: a few tips, a little name dropping, some poker lore/history. The "defining moments" ... discussions of "what would you do in this case" hands ... are good. I don't want back the three hours it took me to blow through this, but that's the best I can say about it.

R.K. Byers says

i liked this book. it was funny, had good anecdotes, and was full of name-dropping. i still have no idea how to play poker, but that's beside the point.

Steve says

You know when poker became very hyped....yeah i did :)

Michael says

Great introduction to poker, easy to read and clear, comes with a nice glossary at the end.

Clare Fitzgerald says

So it is customary among my people that January is traditionally a time to hole up in somebody's living room for entire days and play board games and drink adult beverages, and this January is no different, except that I suggested we play poker instead of one of our usual board games. And then, because I am me, I was like "But I have to read a book about it first!" Fortunately, there are like a billion poker books out there; unfortunately, it can be hard to find a starting point among one billion books. After some noodling around on the Internet I settled upon Phil Gordon and Jonathan Grotenstein's *Poker: The Real Deal: Insider Tips from the Co-host of Celebrity Poker Showdown*. Partly this was because the Internet said it was a readable, overview-y type of book, and partly it was because it was one of the books I could actually check out of the Boston Public Library system (apparently some other poker books are listed as reference works and not available for checkout).

It's a fairly short book, only about two hundred pages, and it covers a lot of ground at a fairly shallow level, walking the reader all the way from "Start with a 52-card deck of playing cards" up through a pleasant fantasy of winning the World Series of Poker Main Event heads-up against Phil Hellmuth Jr. As someone who already knows what a deck of cards is and entertains no ambitions whatsoever about becoming a professional, I found the middle sections of the book the most helpful. I'd picked up bits and pieces of some of the topics he discusses (and a lot of the vocabulary) through work, but it was nice to have it set out in a nice orderly fashion so I could see how it all fits together.

As far as providing strategy goes, I think it hits a good balance for being baby's first poker book: There's enough there to let you learn a few things, which are accompanied by little what-would-you-do questions, followed up by a page or so of text breaking down what the right answer is and why. It's a good way to keep track of how well you're learning. I also thought it was pretty useful that the book contains a number of short reviews of other, more specifically focused poker books, so the reader can decide what looks fun to read next or what they maybe need to read next the most based on which of the chapter-end questions they got the most wrong.

Personally, I was unsurprised by what I discovered, which is that grasping most of the general concepts is easy enough but actually doing math in my head is embarrassingly hard. I have not done any math more complex than balancing my checkbook in nearly ten years, and since I am a publishing minion, my checkbook does not deal in particularly unwieldy numbers. One of the reasons I wanted to learn more about poker was that I figured it would give the math part of my brain some much-needed exercise; now, I think exercise isn't really going to be enough--that part of my brain possibly requires necromancy instead. Holy

English majors, Batman.

Still, there's a simplified formula for calculating pot odds and a chart about starting hand strength, and I found those worth going back and reading over more than once before even thinking about trying to seek out more complicated stuff.

The weakest parts of the book were the bits about technology and online poker, which have changed drastically in the past several years. The book was written in 2004, which I didn't realize until I was brought up short by running into a sentence advising that the reader practice poker by downloading "small applets you can play on your Palm Pilot." Now that's a sentence that has aged badly. Less comically, pretty much the entire chapter about online poker is now functionally useless, at least if you live in the U.S.

The goofy celebrity name-dropping anecdotes were less than enormously useful from a "how to suck less" standpoint, but they were pretty funny. Gordon writes in a pretty clear, conversational style, with a bit of humor (including judgmental nicknames; my FAVORITE) and a sprinkling of pop culture references. He's pretty easy to follow if you can keep up with the increases in poker-specific vocabulary employed as the book goes on; if you're having trouble with that, there is a glossary in the back.

Probably the most important question, ultimately, is: Does the book help? I can't entirely say, but I think so. Obviously, just reading it straight through once isn't nearly going to be enough to develop any measure of skill; in addition, I haven't gone to a cardroom in the three days since I finished reading it. I had a home game on Saturday, consisting entirely of people around my own level of cluelessness, and I felt like it helped me recognize what we were all doing wrong and why it was wrong more than it helped me actually do stuff right. Which probably isn't that bad, considering. I think I'm going to review all the what-would-you-do questions before I return it to the library, though, and possibly reread the section about pot odds with a pencil and paper to do all the math out longhand.

Originally posted at [Grab your hoodies and sunglasses, nerds.](#)

Charles says

It was good. Definitely an enjoyable read. Unfortunately, this book has not aged very well. The game itself and the poker world in 2014 is very, very different compared to the one that Phil inhabited back in 2004 when this book was first written.

Still, it's a well-written book and there's some good advice in here for the beginner. It's still worth a read if you're new to the game or a fan of Phil Gordon.

Christoph Weber says

<http://www.weberseite.at/buecher/phil...>

Mike Hoffman says

It was one of the first, and thereby, one of the most simple poker books out there in the new generation. It was a good book, but could have been so much better. The forward by Jon Favreau. . . . you just wanted THAT to be longer!

Dancomfort says

A nice, personal guide to the game!

Rich Tijerina says

It was okay. a good starter book into the subject. Very easy to read

Richard says

If you are an introductory Poker Player that wants to learn the game, there is no better book than this one! I love Phil Gordon - especially from his work on Celebrity Poker Showdown - and his method at breaking down the game and understanding the nuances of situation, board texture, tournaments, are all wonderfully explained here in his book.
