

You're holding two high cards, the flop comes with three lower cards, and you're thinking: "If I pair an overcard, I might take this pot." That can be a reasonable plan—but only if your outs are real, the price is right, and you understand what happens when you miss.

With six clean outs after the flop, you'll hit at least one of them by the river about **24.1% of the time**. That's the familiar "6 outs = 24%" shortcut. It is not a promise that you'll win the hand, though. Your opponent may improve too, and sometimes the card you hit still leaves you behind.

This guide explains overcard odds, how to calculate your chance of improving on the turn and river, and how to decide whether calling is worth it. The short version: don't chase just because you have overcards. Chase when the pot odds and the quality of your outs make the call profitable.

What Are Overcards in Texas Hold'em?

An **overcard** is a card higher in rank than the cards on the board—or, in common beginner usage, a hole card higher than the highest card on the flop. For example, if you hold A♠ K♦ and the flop is 9♣ 6♥ 2♠, both of your hole cards are overcards to the board.

If an ace or king comes on the turn or river, you may make a pair. With A♠ K♦ on that flop, there are three remaining aces and three remaining kings, for six possible cards that could pair one of your hole cards. Those are your **six outs**—assuming every one is safe and would put you ahead.



That assumption matters. If your opponent has a set, a two-pair hand, or a better pair with a redraw, pairing an overcard may not be enough. And if your opponent holds A-Q, for instance, a king could help you while an ace may give you both a pair of aces, with your king kicker beating their queen kicker. But if the opponent has A-K too, neither of you improves your relative position by pairing an ace or king. Always ask what your opponent can hold and whether your kicker matters.

Six Outs by River: The Actual Probability

After the flop, 47 unseen cards remain in a standard Texas Hold'em deck: 52 total cards minus your two hole cards and the three flop cards. If you have six clean outs, the chance of missing on the turn is 41/47. If you miss, 46 cards remain for the river, and 40 of them are misses.

So the chance of missing both streets is:

$$(41/47) \times (40/46) = \text{about } 75.9\%$$

Subtract that from 100% and you get the chance of hitting at least one out by the river:

$$100\% - 75.9\% = \text{about } 24.1\%$$



So “6 outs = 24%” is a useful rounded estimate for the flop-to-river chance. The exact figure is slightly above 24%. This is a chance to hit one of the six cards—not a 24% guarantee of winning the pot.

Turn and River Odds Are Different

On the flop, you have two cards to come. Your chance to hit six outs on the **turn alone** is 6/47, or about 12.8%. Once the turn is dealt and you miss, the river chance is 6/46, or about 13.0%. If you are already facing a river bet, there is only one card to come, so use the river probability—not the two-card percentage.

Situation	Approximate chance with 6 clean outs	What it means
Flop to turn	12.8%	Chance to hit on the next card
Turn to river after missing	13.0%	Chance to hit on the last card
Flop to river	24.1%	Chance to hit at least once across two cards

Notice the denominator changes as cards are dealt. These numbers assume you have six genuinely useful cards and don't account for unusual situations where an opponent's cards or future action alter the effective value of your outs.

Should You Chase? Compare Your Odds with the Price

Whether to call is a price decision. Compare your chance of winning with the pot odds you are being offered. Suppose the pot is \$100 and your opponent bets \$25. The pot is now \$125 before your call, and you must call \$25 to compete for a final pot of \$150. Your break-even equity is $\$25 \div \150 , or about **16.7%**.

If you have six clean outs and expect to see both the turn and river for that one call, your 24.1% chance to hit is above 16.7%. In a simplified example, the call can be profitable. But poker hands are not decided by “hit a pair, win.” You must estimate your chance of winning the hand, not merely your chance of improving.

Now suppose the pot is \$100 and your opponent bets \$100. You would call \$100 to play for a final pot of \$300, giving you a break-even requirement of 33.3%. Six clean outs by the river provide only about 24.1% to hit. Without other ways to win—such as a chance your opponent is bluffing—the call is not supported by the draw odds alone.

A Quick Pot-Odds Check

1. **Count the call:** How much do you have to put in now?
2. **Count the final pot:** Include the call in the amount you could win.
3. **Calculate the price:** Call amount ÷ final pot.
4. **Compare:** Does your estimated chance of winning beat that percentage?

This quick check leaves out future bets, implied odds, and the possibility of being bluffed. Those can change a close decision. But it is much better than calling because “six outs sounds like plenty.”

Overcard Outs Aren’t Always Clean

An **out** is a card that improves your hand enough to make it likely to win. A card that pairs you is not automatically a clean out. If the opponent already has two pair or a set, one pair may not catch up. A card could also complete a straight or flush for the opponent.

For example, you hold A♣ K♦ on a 9♥ 6♥ 2♠ flop. Your six apparent overcard outs are the three remaining aces and three remaining kings. If your opponent has 9♠ 9♦, you are up against a set. Pairing an ace or king still leaves you behind, and the opponent may improve to a full house. Those six cards are not six straightforward winning outs.

On a different flop, your opponent may have a single pair of nines. An ace or king could put you in front, but you still need to consider their possible holdings and redraws. If villain has A-Q and you have A-K, an ace on the turn gives both of you a pair of aces; your king kicker is ahead of their queen kicker. If the board pairs or the river brings a card that completes a draw, the result can change again.

Also remember that suits have no built-in ranking in Texas Hold’em. Spades are not stronger than hearts, and a spade does not beat a heart. Suits matter only when they help form a flush or affect a particular draw. Don’t count an overcard as a flush out unless your actual cards and the board give you a real flush draw.

Hand Rankings: Pairing an Overcard Isn’t the Whole Story

Texas Hold’em hands are ranked by the best five-card hand you can make from your two hole cards and the five community cards. From highest to lowest, the standard rankings are:

1. Royal flush
2. Straight flush
3. Four of a kind
4. Full house
5. Flush

6. Straight
7. Three of a kind
8. Two pair
9. One pair
10. High card

Pairing an overcard usually gives you one pair. That can be a winning hand, but it remains just one pair—and its strength depends on the board, the opponent's hand, and your kicker. For instance, if you hold A-K and the board gives you a pair of aces, your king kicker can beat an opponent's ace with a lower kicker, provided neither player makes a stronger five-card hand. Kickers decide many close one-pair showdowns.

How This Fits with Other Poker Odds

Odds make more sense when you keep the hand and the situation attached to the number. For example, a standard five-card poker hand has four of a kind odds of **0.0240% (1 in 4,164)**, also stated as **about 1 in 4,165**. That figure describes the chance of being dealt a five-card hand containing four of a kind. It is not the same as the chance of making four of a kind in a seven-card Hold'em hand, where you can choose the best five cards from seven.

Likewise, "24 percent poker odds" for six outs refers to the chance of hitting at least one out over two cards from the flop. It does not mean you have a 24% chance to win in every six-out situation. A draw can be dirty, a hit can leave you second best, or your opponent can improve on the same card.

Use Printable Cheat Sheets and Equity Charts Wisely

Printable cheat sheets are handy for learning hand rankings, common draw odds, and quick pot-odds comparisons. A chart can help you remember that six clean outs are roughly 13% on one card and 24% across two cards. Keep one nearby while studying or playing low-stakes games, but check that it distinguishes turn odds from flop-to-river odds.

Equity charts can show how often a hand wins, ties, or loses against a range of possible opponent hands. That is more useful than treating all six overcard outs as certain winners. For a realistic estimate, compare your hand against several plausible holdings—not just the one hand you hope your opponent has.

Charts are reference tools, not substitutes for reading the board. They may assume all cards are unseen and that a particular set of outs is clean. In a live hand, account for the action, the board texture, and whether your opponent is likely to bet again.

A Beginner-Friendly Decision Checklist

- **Count outs carefully.** Start with the apparent outs, then ask whether each one actually helps you win.
- **Use the right street.** On the flop, a call that guarantees a showdown can use your two-card chance. On the turn, only the river remains.
- **Compare with the price.** Six outs by the river are about 24.1%; a large bet may demand more equity than that.
- **Consider your kicker.** If you pair an ace or king, ask whether your kicker beats the opponent's likely kicker.
- **Don't count the same card twice.** One card can pair an overcard or complete another draw, but it cannot do both for your hand unless the resulting hand actually qualifies.

- **Think about future bets.** If you call now and still face a big bet on the turn, the original price may not buy you both cards.

Bottom Line: Six Outs Can Be Worth a Call—At the Right Price

Six clean outs give you about a **24.1% chance to improve by the river**, or roughly one hit in every four flop-to-river attempts. The turn-only chance is about 12.8%; after missing, the river chance is about 13.0%.

That makes overcard odds useful, not automatic. Chase when the pot offers a good enough price, your outs are likely to be clean, and your improved hand can actually win. Fold when the call is too *pokerhānds* expensive or when pairing an overcard still leaves you behind. And whenever you do pair up, check the kicker—because in Hold'em, the small detail often decides the pot.