

Shmanners 18: Gambling: Casinos

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Travis:

Hey, Teresa. I thought an episode on casino etiquette would be pretty good.

Teresa:

I'd say that's a pretty safe bet.

Travis:

It's Shmanners.

[theme music plays]

Travis:

Hello, internet. I am your husband host, Travis McElroy.

Teresa:

And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy.

Travis:

And you are listening to Shmanners.

Teresa:

It's extraordinary etiquette...

Travis:

For ordinary occasions. Oh, boysie, I am excited. I am... I'm all atwitter. I'm all a buzz to talk about this episode. I've been researching gambling [laughing] all morning. I am a big fan, a big fan of casinos, big fan of gambling, uh, perhaps sometimes too big a fan, [laughs] some might say.

Teresa:

Perhaps.

Travis:

Uh, the gambling, the... Oh, those bright lights. Oh, bright lights sitting on set my soul on fire.

Teresa:

No. I don't want any of our listeners to be confused, Travis. You do not have a gambling problem.

Travis:

I do not. I have, just in general, impulse control. [laughing] That's my general ADD issues. Um, it has nothing to do with gambling specifically, um—

Teresa:

But you do enjoy the atmosphere—

Travis:

Oh yes.

Teresa:

... that surrounds gambling.

Travis:

Yeah. That's the thing. It's like, I don't fake—even if it's just like, fake, you know, like, I remember my college dorm like the whole like dorm did like a, you know, fake casino night with like fake money and everything. And like that's the same to me 'cause I just like... I like the math and statistics and all of the like excitement combined.

Teresa:

It's the thrill of the game.

Travis:

Yeah. It's the closest you get to like super nerdy sport. You know what I mean? Like you combine like baseball and Dungeons & Dragons. And you get like gambling. You know what I mean?

Teresa:

Would you consider yourself quote, "lucky?"

Travis:

No, not at all.

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

Um, I would say that overall, I'm probably statistically down, uh, uh, \$500 across like all trips to a casino over all of time. I don't think I'm up collectively.

Teresa:

Now, I would like to say my father growing up was one of the most lucky people—

Travis:

Oh yeah. I know.

Teresa:

... I had ever known. Um, he never played the lottery or did anything like that. But every year, we had a church bazaar where you could buy tickets and put your tickets in like little raffle baskets. And the man won something substantial every year. He won a car at one point. He won like, a lawnmower. He almost always won a fully decorated Christmas tree, like—

Travis:

Wait. It came fully decorated?

Teresa:

Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Travis:

That seems weird.

Teresa:

Well, but I mean that's part of the value of the trees, all the ornaments.

Travis:

Yeah. I guess. But isn't the whole purpose like that you decorate it yourself? Anyways, as you were saying.

Teresa:

He tended to win so often that my mother said, "You can't... You just don't do this anymore. You can't... We don't need these things. It's not practical. Stop it. Just stop it." [laughs]

Travis:

I would say that, in general, I'm a little too risky. I like doing, you know... I'm on purpose. Like I'll do things that are like, "Oh, I wouldn't do that if I were you." Mostly, if I start to get down—

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

... um, in, in my chip counts where it's just like I'm gonna play a little bit looser to try to like make back that money very quickly. I've been to casinos before where I have seen people and talked to people who like they go in, you know, when the casino opens, or, you know, they go in at like eight o'clock in the morning. And then, they play for like 10 or 12 hours. And they just, you know... Their goal is to, over time, win money and not like, "I sat down at the table and 20 minutes later, I was up \$5,000—"

Teresa:

Well, those type of people is—

Travis:

... like they're trying incrementally. Yeah.

Teresa:

Those type of people are what you call like a professional gambler.

Travis:

Yeah.

Teresa:

That's how they make the bulk of their money.

Travis:

Yeah. Um, and so, on this episode, we're gonna talk about specifically casino gambling.

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

And in the future, we'll do an episode on like home gambling and like, horse racing and like, you know, going to the track, and that kind of thing, you know, your Belmont, your Preakness. Um, but today specifically, let's focus

on casinos. And in the first half, we're gonna talk about etiquette. And then, in the second half, I'm gonna kind of break down both like etiquette and how to of baccarat, Blackjack and craps.

Teresa:

Great. So let's get started. The first casinos that we would recognize today as like a casino instead—

Travis:

Mm-hmm.

Teresa:

... of just a tavern where gambling was happened, probably happened in 1638 in Italy, around then.

Travis:

I can't decide if that seems right or way later than I would have guessed.

Teresa:

Well, and I think that it sounds way later just because like almost everything awesome, the ancient Chinese were gambling from like forever.

Travis:

Yeah. I guess that's the thing, is there's a difference between like the games existing versus, you know what, I'm gonna build a building and have multiple tables of these set-up and have like an organized thing rather than just as you said like a bar or a tavern with a table to play cards or a pai gow or that kind of thing. You know what I mean?

Teresa:

Right. So what I'm... What I would consider a casino in 1638 is like a controlled gambling environment.

Travis:

Gotcha.

Teresa:

Right? So even if there's like a carnival atmosphere going on around a street where maybe there's gambling on the street or gambling in, in taverns or things like that, in Italy, at this time, is where we begin to see the very first structural gaming facilities.

Travis:

Got it, where the focus was gaming.

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

Got it.

Teresa:

And from there on, it spread across Europe during the 19th century, um, and, you know, continuing into the US with the Mississippi River boats.

Travis:

Oh yeah. And you could see a lot of it on Deadwood—

Teresa:

Yeah.

Travis:

... a lot of that gambling stuff on Deadwood. Um, yeah. Oh there's like a whole thing about it in, um, tombstone and like, if there's like, uh, old Wild West movie that's really good, it probably has some scenes of some gambling in it.

Teresa:

Right. And then, the way that we think about casinos today pretty much across the world is we think about Las Vegas—

Travis:

Yeah.

Teresa:

... The Strip which, which arrived out of Depression era United States the kind of the pulling up by the bootstraps trying to get some money back into the system.

Travis:

Well, and also, I think that they had a really strong kind of pre-op... a PR... a really strong PR presence, you know, with like the Rat Pack and Elvis, and these like big names that really drew attention through their movies and

through just like their lifestyle to the glitz and glamor of, you know, that's Strip.

Teresa:

Mm-hmm. Um, so then, you mentioned baccarat and Blackjack. And although those games probably originated closer to the 1400s and the 1500s, um, we begin adding things in the seven— in like 1796 where, uh, the roulette wheel is introduced in Paris. And then, poker really starts to boom and blossom in the 1820s.

Travis:

Oh yeah. That was a huge Old West thing 'cause you could do it all day. So—

Teresa:

Absolutely.

Travis:

... you drew a lot of drinking business, 'cause people just sit and play poker for hours and just drink and drink and drink.

Teresa:

So I'm gonna talk about Vegas specifically in a few minutes. But first I'd like to talk about Monte Carlo.

Travis:

Well, something's just occurred to me. I think we should make something clear here. Gambling, we touched on a little bit at the beginning of the episode. Gambling is a serious problem. And there are people who suffer from gambling addictions. There are families who have been torn apart by gambling and losses. And so, we are in no way advocating the, you know, fancy shmancy, you know, glitz of the gambling lifestyle. It can be very detrimental and destroy people's lives.

In general, this is like our general etiquette guide, not necessarily us endorsing gambling as a super fun lifestyle.

Teresa:

Correct. Correct.

Travis:

Just wanted to make that clear. Now, on with the history and etiquette.

Teresa:

Great. [laughs] So, I mentioned Monte Carlo because there are really three sort of areas of gambling that, when you think about casinos, pop straight into your head. Monte Carlo, Las Vegas, like I mentioned, and then, Atlantic City.

Travis:

Yes.

Teresa:

Um, so if we're gonna go in chronological order, Monte Carlo was established first. Um, and it was... it started becoming a gambling destination in 1856. Um, and that first casino opened there near the harbor in 1856 when it was made legal.

Travis:

Uh, when I think of Monte Carlo, the two movies like pop culture examples that quickly come to mind are, one, Dirty Rotten Scoundrels—

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

... and, two, probably most predominantly is James Bond—

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

... you know, like that's what I always think of in James Bond. There's like, you know, a Etruscan, you know, columns and fancy entry ways as he walks into a smoky, you know, dimly lit baccarat room, sit down orders and martini and leans into the light. And it's all very dramatic and sexy.

Teresa:

Yes. [laughs]

Travis:

It's very like I picture very tuxedo, you know, evening wear kind of dress code, um, as that like, I really only think of when I think of like Monte Carlo. I don't think of that when I think of like Vegas and—

Teresa:

Yeah.

Travis:

... and Atlantic City.

Teresa:

Well, so... Oh I'd, uh, I'd like to go back to my earlier statement, this beautiful casino that you're picturing with like, you know, the, the spotlights and the, the plushness of the Monte Carlo Casino. That famous Monte Carlo Casino that everyone thinks of now actually the doors opened in 1863.

Travis:

Okay.

Teresa:

So although the first casino in Monte Carlo near the harbor down there on the, on the water probably opened in 1856. The one that we all think of was closer—

Travis:

Yeah.

Teresa:

... to 1863.

Travis:

Gotcha.

Teresa:

Great. Um, and the reason that they, they started gambling in Monte Carlo was because at the end of, uh... at the fall of Napoleon, uh—

Travis:

When he tripped and fell over. [laughing] That's a stupid joke. Thank you for laughing at that. That was very dumb.

Teresa:

Monaco was annexed to France, right—

Travis:

Uh-huh.

Teresa:

... during the French Revolution. Um, and they wanted their independence. But France wasn't willing to like give it just to them. So there was a land treaty made up where Monaco basically lost half of their lands to France. Um, and so, they had to look for a way to make revenue because they had lost all of this land to France.

Travis:

Gotcha.

Teresa:

Um, that is, uh, what partly inspired their, their get foray into gambling and the construction of that famous Monte Carlo Casino.

Travis:

Great. They wanted to draw an opulence, get people to spend their money, make up some money—

Teresa:

That's it.

Travis:

... to make complete sense.

Teresa:

That's it. So on to Vegas, um, the... A strange thing about the, the founding of the Las Vegas Strip—

Travis:

Mm-hmm.

Teresa:

... is just like alcohol for a while, gambling was also illegal in the United States. Um, and so, even though gambling took place a lot in, uh, Las Vegas, they actually had to build the Strip outside of the city of Las Vegas once that whole prohibition on drinking and gambling was repealed because they still couldn't do it within the city limits.

Travis:

Interesting. So that's why everything's kind of lined up right there. They just put it all—

Teresa:

Just outside.

Travis:

... right next to the desert.

Teresa:

That's right. That's right. Um, and probably the first resort, uh, in the way of like hotel rooms and big gambling floor and beautiful ballroom, and things like that was the El Rancho Vegas that opened in 1941. Um, and then, like I said, it was just outside the city. And after that, everything started to kind of blow up around this El Rancho, right? And that's where the Strip comes from, um, because you would kind of just go straight outside the city and then, like you said, all lined up. They're all out there. And a lot of them had like the Old West themes.

Travis:

Yeah.

Teresa:

Um,—

Travis:

It's what I think. I always think of *Fallout: New Vegas*. And it makes a lot of sense when you think about that in that game. There's like a whole section before you even get to the Strip—

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

... because that's kind of how the whole city is set up of it's like, here's the city. And then, an offshoot of that is the Strip as opposed to if you think of like Times Square being in the center of everything. You know what I mean? Like the Strip the part— That's like the most busy is like sticking off of the city.

Teresa:

Right. Um, so like I said, all of them had the kind of Old West themes. Deadwood, you talked about—

Travis:

Oh yeah.

Teresa:

... that kind of stuff until 1946 when Bugsy Siegel opened up the Flamingo.

Travis:

Oh.

Teresa:

Right. And this was the start of the lounge and the topless dancers and—

Travis:

And like Rat Packy kind of feel, right?

Teresa:

Exactly. Exactly. So during the '50s and the '60s, um, when they were building casinos like the Sahara, the Sands, the New Frontier, the Riviera, um, all of this money was trickled down and attracted performers like the Rat Pack, Sinatra, and Dean Martin, and Elvis Presley. And, you know, it was this image that we think of, of this huge casino floor with slot machines—

Travis:

Mm-hmm.

Teresa:

... and tables and, like I said, lounge singers and topless dancers.

Travis:

Yeah. It's interesting because I think it's something that people romanticize a lot because they think of it as like, "Yeah. It was chintzy and a little bit seedy. But it was also like, uh, you know, romantic and exciting." And it's like, "Yeah." But if you think about it, it was probably also rampantly sexist and a racist and—

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

... you know, like crime riddled and terrible. But like I think that especially when you watch movies like the new Ocean's Eleven that was a remake of the, you know, Sinatra Ocean's Eleven—

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

... where people go back to kind of glamorizing like that, that CD underbelly of Vegas a little bit.

Teresa:

Well, and a lot of these casinos were funded if not owned by mobsters.

Travis:

Gotcha.

Teresa:

Yeah.

Travis:

I don't think that surprises anyone.

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

What? Organized crime in Las Vegas in the '60s? Hold on let me call the president.

Teresa:

[laughs] So the third reincarnation of Vegas as we know, it probably started in 1989 when they bulldozed a lot of the old casino houses and started building the mega resorts.

Travis:

Mm-hmm.

Teresa:

So, so like in the new Ocean's Eleven—

Travis:

Yeah.

Teresa:

... that beautiful big resort that they heist, uh, it—

Travis:

I think that's the verb.

Teresa:

Yeah. Heist.

Travis:

Yeah.

Teresa:

Yeah.

Travis:

That they heisted.

Teresa:

[laughs] Um, really started to take shape in around 1980.

Travis:

Gotcha. So what about Atlantic City?

Teresa:

Atlantic City, um, was started around 1978 when gambling was made legal within those city limits. And it has fluctuating between 16 to 20 casinos at any time.

Travis:

Now, there's a lot of gambling before that of like... but not organized—

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

... you know, 'cause like Boardwalk Empire and that kind of stuff. That's Atlantic City, right?

Teresa:

I believe so. Yes. The Boardwalk is, is part of that whole thing. So as far as some of the top casinos that are there, there's the Atlantic City Hilton which, um, opened in 1980. And it started out as like a luxury casino hotel. Um, but now, it's known for world-class dining and entertainment. Um, and it has a lot of the standard stuff that you'll see at casinos like Blackjack and craps and roulette. Um, but what they are starting to become a lot well... more well known for are the Asian games that it offers on the second floor.

Travis:

Mm-hmm. Yes.

Teresa:

Apparently, that's, that's very big in gambling now. Um, next is the Tropicana and then, the Borgata. Um, the poker room at the Borgata has more than 85 tables making it the biggest poker room in Atlantic City.

Travis:

Wow.

Teresa:

Yeah. Pretty cool.

Travis:

Okay. Cool. So let's talk about like some etiquette and manners regarding the casino experience.

Teresa:

Okay.

Travis:

Um, we've got some questions. But I also like have some real life a little bit of experience to go along with this. So let's start with the questions and see where it takes us. Um, and, and some of these questions will address specifically when we talk about the games in the second half. But let's see where we can start. Um, oh, this is a pretty broad question.

Uh, Alyssa asks, "When gambling, I've had the bar send me free drinks so I'll need to keep gambling. Do I need to tip on those drinks?"

Teresa:

It is recommended that anytime a drink is brought to your table, you tip a dollar, whether it's water or whether it is, you know, one of those beautiful, I don't know, Daiquiri drinks or so. [laughs]

Travis:

But somebody walked it over to you—

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

You can give him a dollar. Um, so in general, when you hear about like people getting free stuff at casinos—

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

... the way that, that works now versus like the '50s and '60s and what... however, however it used to be is now very organized with loyalty programs. Just like you have your, you know, Kroger's card or your CVS card. Most casinos, you sign up for a program when you come in. And then, you scan your card or whatever when you sit down to play. And then, they track through their computer system how much you bet, how long you sit at a table, all of that stuff.

Teresa:

Because all of that stuff is tracked.

Travis:

And that's how you kind of accumulate your rewards.

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

So now, it's a much more structured, uh, system than it used to be. So if you are looking to get some of those free rewards, as soon as you get to a casino, the first thing you should do is look into their loyalty program and sign up for it. Like usually, it costs little or nothing. And that's how you kind of get your rewards.

Um, speaking of, Drew asked, "When offered a free room at a casino, what is expected of you? Would it be rude to gamble at another casino nearby?"

Teresa:

Well, I mean it sounds like you've already earned that free room.

Travis:

Exactly. I mean that's the thing, is like, to get offered something like a free room, you've either spent enough time at a table or at a game in a casino or lost enough money that they feel like they want you to come away with a positive experience from the casino—

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

... that you've already spent a lot of time at. You're not going to just like walk into a casino and get offered a free room for looking like a cool dude—

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

... you know. So I would say it's not necessarily rude. But at the same time, I'm also willing to bet that if you've got a free room in a casino, you're statistically very likely to just gamble in that casino 'cause all you have to do is go downstairs.

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

So I don't think it's rude, um, to like go and visit other casinos while you're there 'cause it's... You know what? They know who you're coming home to.

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

You're staying in the casino. I guess my question has always been who goes to Vegas or goes anywhere without a room to stay at [laughs] that you get there? And they're like, "We'd like you to stay in one of our rooms tonight."

You're like, "Oh, thank God. [laughing] I had not planned ahead. I didn't know where I was gonna stay tonight."

Teresa:

I think that if they offer you a free room, they'd probably do it before you got there, right? Yeah.

Travis:

Well, it's usually like you get it the next time. I mean, that's how these loyalty programs are now set up.

Teresa:

Okay.

Travis:

Like basically, you earn your points. And then, you can cash them in the next time you come—

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

... to get the room. Um, but yeah. I think through a loyalty program, you've earned it. Don't worry about it.

Um, Brittany asked, "I want to learn a casino game I'm not very familiar with. But I don't want to irritate the more experienced people at the table. What is a good way to learn?"

Teresa:

Well, there are a couple ways actually. A lot of casinos offer free classes.

Travis:

Yeah.

Teresa:

If you get there early enough, the dealers are there, and they're not doing very much. Um, and so, they want to teach you how to gamble 'cause they want your money. So they're a—

Travis:

Even more convenient—

Teresa:

Yeah.

Travis:

... a lot of them have like, you know, on the hotel channel in your room if you're staying in the casino, little tutorials that you can watch as you're like watching about the information about the restaurant and the pool and stuff.

Teresa:

Right. And in the same vein, if you find that you want to learn a game, um, there are some dealers that are more than happy to teach you as long as the rest of their table is empty. So you would never wanna go up to a game in progress and expect a dealer to teach you. Um, but if you go up to a table, and you, you really jive with that dealer, they're usually more than happy to tell you how to play the game.

Travis:

Also, in this day and age, you have YouTube. You've got Google. You've got a lot of resources at your disposal before making the trip there—

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

... um, that you could at least... A lot of the games, I don't think you will get a good feel for unless you actually do it. And that's how you kind of develop your own gameplay style and strategy. But you'll at least get a good set of the basics just by Googling like, how does roulette work, that kind of thing. Um—

Teresa:

Right. So, uh, whatever casino you're staying in, talk to the desk staff and see if they offer any classes. That's probably the best way to learn in a no pressure environment. [laughs]

Travis:

Um, Kyle asked, "What's the polite way to ask for the little towel to cover up my chips when I need to use the restroom while at a table?"

I feel... I, uh... This is one I can speak to a little bit on personal experience. Um, I feel like this is gonna vary from casino to casino. I mean you get a lot of different house rules. Um, a lot of people would say, "You know, I

wouldn't be surprised for a casino to have a rule that like if you get up from the table, you just have to take your chips with you."

Teresa:

That is what I've read on the internet, um, because especially if you're at a high volume table or if you're at, um, a large bet table, um, then, if you, you lose your seat, then, you lose your seat. There are probably people waiting.

Travis:

But I imagine there's also... I played at a casino in West Virginia where they would put a marker down in front of your chips if you needed to like go use the restroom or like make a phone call or something. But I also imagine that, you know, house rules depending on how long you're gone, you probably forfeit your seat if you're gone for an extended period of time.

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

I got you forfeit your chips 'cause that would probably be an issue.

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

Um, but you most likely forfeit your seat. But I think in, in most of these circumstances, remember that the dealer and the banker even if you're playing against them in the game they're a customer service representative for the casino.

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

So it's completely within your, you know... Don't feel bad saying like, "Hey, if I need to run to the restroom, do you... Is it okay, to leave my chips here? Do I need to take them with me? Is there some kind of marker I can put down so I don't lose my seat?" And they'll answer that question for you.

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

Um, to kind of jump back to the question Brittany had, Carrie asked, "Is it appropriate to watch table games to get a feel for how to play before I sit down, not cheating, just clueless?"

Teresa:

There are a lot of table games that really do encourage people to watch. Um, and as long as you're being quiet and respectful, if that's what the atmosphere is about, like, if you are watching a poker game, you wouldn't wanna talk while people are betting. Um, but if you're watching a craps game, that's more of a kind of like jubilant, uh, you know, explosive atmosphere where you're welcome to cheer if somebody you like makes a good pot.

Travis:

Um, and I also think that, uh, you make a great point, Carrie, because one of the things to keep in mind your first time visiting a casino just about every aspect of the casino is designed and thought through with not only the enjoyment of the guests and players in mind but also security. So if you stand around and especially move from table to table watching, you're probably going to draw some attention—

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

... um, because there are people there paid to pay attention to you. That's all it is, not like you're gonna be arrested for walking around and looking at different tables. But you should be prepared that you might draw a couple glances from a pit boss or a security person if it seems like you're scouting for, you know, like card counting hot table, whatever you wanna call it.

Um, so just keep that in mind. But I think that standing at a table and watching play is perfectly fine. And I think also a great way to learn and a great way to see other people's strategy especially if you ask questions or if you're standing there once again, if it's super busy or they're like right in the middle of the action. don't bother them. [laughing] But like it's okay to watch.

Um, Derek asked, "What do you do if you have used all the money you came to gamble with but your friend is on a roll and wants to stay? Is it rude to suggest they quit while they are ahead so you aren't tempted to spend

more?" Um, we also got a question, uh, from Regan which was, "If you are underage or not planning on playing a card game but whoever you're playing is, can you sit at the table too, or like, is that weird?"

Teresa:

Um, well, I think you should address the first question.

Travis:

Great.

Teresa:

And I'll address the second question.

Travis:

Um, I would say that if you went with a friend and your luck was bad, your quote unquote, "luck" was bad and they are on a hot streak, I think that if the situation was reversed, you would want your friend to stand by you and encourage you or go find something else to do rather than say like, "Hey, man, I'm not having fun anymore. I don't care if you are. Let us go."

Um, that said, I think that you're not out of line to... if it's going on for a long time say, like "I'm gonna head back to the room, or I'm gonna go walk up and down this trip for a while. And I'm gonna go see a movie," whatever you wanna do.

Teresa:

Right. I think it's appropriate to tell them one time what you want to do.

Travis:

Yeah.

Teresa:

I'm gonna go sit at the bar. I'm gonna go walk around the Strip.

Travis:

Yeah.

Teresa:

Um, but to constantly badger. And I'm like, "Hey, just quit while you're ahead. Get out. Let's go. I'm done." That's not fun for any activity.

Travis:

And I think a good, a good kind of self-rule something to do like so, one, let's just acknowledge a couple good gambling rules of thumb. Set an amount of money for yourself as you allude to in the question that you are comfortable that if you walk out of that casino minus that amount of money in your life, you will not suffer any ill will. Like you've saved up, you know, \$200, that's your 200, you know, that you're gonna take to the casino. Great.

After that 200, you're done. Walk away. Don't do it anymore. So if you know that, and like suddenly, a \$100 is gone in 20 minutes, maybe switch to like a slot machine or switch to something that's gonna eat up a lot more time compared to the amount of money you have to invest in it because, you know, like, oh my God, everyone I'm with is up, and I'm already down 75% of my entire, you know, budget for the weekend.

So maybe find some cheaper or games that take a little bit longer which we'll talk about in the second half. But like if you blow all of your money in 10 minutes, you're, you're gone that money, and you need to like set that rule for yourself.

Teresa:

Okay. So the second question you asked, if you are underage, most casinos won't even let you in, uh—

Travis:

Well, under 21.

Teresa:

Under 21. Right. If you are under 21, um, the general rule for a lot of these casinos that I've seen is you need to keep moving through the casino because they know that there are restaurants and, and acts. And there's the hotel that's usually accompanied the casino. So underage people are allowed in, in those areas. But if you stop moving to sit at a table or sit at a slot, you may be asked to leave.

Travis:

Yeah. And but to answer the other side of the question, it depends on how busy the table is. Like I've been to casinos where, you know, it's like, what, three o'clock in the afternoon on a Wednesday or whatever. And there were two people at an eight-person Blackjack table. Sure. Sit down. Just don't put any money in front of you. And that's fine.

But if you're taking up a seat while there's like a line of people waiting to like sit down and play the game, you might get yelled at. Like that's a rude thing to do, you know.

Teresa:

Oh, saying paying for people who are of gambling age.

Travis:

Oh yeah. If you're—

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

If you're over the legal age and like your friend is playing a game that you don't wanna play, but you wanna like sit and watch them play instead of like stand over their shoulder and encourage them, as long as the table is half empty and no one's using the seat, I don't think you're gonna get yelled at for it.

Teresa:

I can agree with that. But if you are underage, you are most likely not allowed to stop walking— [laughs]

Travis:

Definitely.

Teresa:

... in a casino without getting asked to leave.

Travis:

So if you're traveling with kids, you probably wanna like specifically find out in advance like, "Hey, if my six-year-old's with me, is that a problem?" And find that out ahead of time.

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

Also, 21 is the legal gambling age of Nevada. It is state to state. And sometimes, there are two different age limits. Sometimes, it's in a casino.

It's one thing. If there's like gambling going on in a place that's not a casino, it's a different age, that kind of thing.

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

So just do a little research before you go if you are under 21 but over 18 to find out if where you're going will allow you to gamble. Um, so this is, uh, we'll get to talking about dealers a lot more in the second half but, um, Kovi asked, "Is it rude to leave when dealers are switched?" And so, that happens like just like in any job, people go on break or they, you know, they work a certain amount of time and to make sure that everyone stays sharp and observant, they're cycled out.

And then, someone will step in, cover for them, so they can go on break and kind of recharge. And then, come back. Um, I have been at many a Blackjack table where I have seen, you know, whether it's superstitious or just you're subconsciously reading body language or whatever, um, or it's just like, "Oh, that was the time for it to break." Um, you go from like winning every hand. They switch the dealer. And I can't catch a break or, more likely, you had a really good rapport with a super fun, positive dealer. They bring in a replacement who's really bland and boring. And you're just not having fun anymore.

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

Is it okay to be like, "Yup," and leave the table?

Teresa:

As long as it's not in the middle of gameplay, yeah.

Travis:

I mean I think the same thing applies. We had a question. Um, what do you do... Um, Chelsea asked, "How do you handle someone who's drunk and basically keeps playing badly in Blackjack when they shouldn't be?" And I think to both of those things, the answer is, "It's your money."

Teresa:

Yeah. Leave the table.

Travis:

Yeah. Like no one's gonna be like, "I can't believe they left." Like it's your money. If you don't wanna sit at that table, get up and move to a different table.

Teresa:

And hopefully, in the case of, of a, um, gambling companion who is drunk, uh, the dealer has also clued into that. And they have called it pit boss to probably remove them because the casino although the casino is [laughs] probably going to win most of your money, at this point, in, in casino, um, relations, it's more about having... getting people to have fun and a good time while they're there so that you want to come back and give more money to the casino. [laughs] So people aren't having a good time. They're very interested in removing whatever is keeping them from having a good time.

Travis:

I mean it's an excellent point kind of overall which is I, I am a person who, like in life, can be very intimidated when I am faced with like a circumstance in which I don't know the procedure—

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

... where it's like, "Oh, I don't know the steps. I don't know what to do. I'm afraid of looking stupid. I'm afraid of like getting it wrong and ruining it for everybody."

Teresa:

I think that's a very common anxiety.

Travis:

I think so too. And I think casinos can seem like a real hive of that because like every individual thing has its own procedure that you don't know and... But the nice thing is, is it's not a test. There may be other your, you know, other gamblers there who are judging you. But like that's their deal. They're jerks. But the, the, the dealers, the bankers, the casino itself is there to facilitate you having your time.

I've never, in any gambling experience, asked the dealer a question or asked a worker at a casino a question and been made to feel stupid. Um, la—

that's just not what they're there for. So I think that, um, anything where you're... Like because you're gonna see stuff where it's just like, "Oh, why did the dealer have to call someone over? Why wasn't I allowed to do that?" Oh, oh, and if you get flustered, you're not gonna have a good time. But they want you to have a good time. So don't get flustered.

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

Uh, so we're gonna go to break real quick. And when we come back, we'll talk about a little bit of rules and strategy to Blackjack, craps, and baccarat. But first, here's a word from another Maximum Fun Show.

--

Barbara:

Hey, I'm Barbara Gray.

Brandie:

I'm Brandie Posey.

Tess:

And I'm Tess Barker.

Barbara:

Together, we make up the max fun podcast from Lady to Lady.

Brandie:

Each week we welcome a kickass lady guest.

Tess:

We talk about our lives our dreams and the terrible decisions we've made that still haunt us.

Barbara:

Mm-hmm. We've had on great comedians like Aisha Tyler and Margaret Cho, plus screenwriters, doctors, authors, you know, anyone who's willing to be as open as we are.

Brandie:

It's all a lot of fun that's us, Lady to Lady.

Tess:

Can you keep a secret? Me neither.

Brandie:

Mm-hmm.

--

Travis:

Okay. We're back. Um, I was inspired to wanna talk specifically about these, um, because we got some questions, um, specifically about Blackjack of people asking like one specifically asked like, "What do I do about people who wanna tell me how to play the game when I just want to have fun?"

And so, I wanted to break down. I think that there is a huge misconception about Blackjack. And that is that everyone can grasp the basics very quickly, the, the concept of like as close to 21 without going over, without realizing that it is one of the most strategically difficult games that you can play at a casino, most casino games like when you talk about roulette, for example, roulette is the strategy is all about in how you bet.

But once they drop the ball into the spinning wheel, you don't have to make any decisions like—

Teresa:

Right. It seems more game of luck than skill at that point.

Travis:

Exactly. That's why the betting is the strategy.

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

You know what I mean? Um, craps, craps the betting is the strategy. The gameplay is easy. You throw a dice. But in Blackjack, you're constantly... Every decision affects not only you, but this is the thing to keep in mind, everyone else at the table because it's everybody playing off of the same deck.

Now, I've read that statistically and logically and mathematically, people who get upset about like you took my 10 or that was gonna be my Ace, that kind of thing, it's like it doesn't really track over time. But that's not gonna stop people from feeling that way during the game. So there is light at the end of the tunnel when I get to baccarat. Trust me.

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

But... So real quick, let us run through some of the basics and basic strategy of Blackjack. I'm gonna start with Blackjack because it's the dentist one. And then, I'll work my way to the easiest one. So in Blackjack, number one, uh, the first decision you have to make is picking a table. Um, tables have minimum and maximum bets. And they vary.

Um, and so, if you are a starting player, you wanna find the table with the lowest minimum bet. Um, usually, the lowest you're gonna find is \$5. If it's like say a Friday night, probably, the lowest you're gonna find is \$10, um, maybe even 20 if it's a super popular casino with a super popular Blackjack floor.

Teresa:

And we had a question about minimum bets, right, where, uh, Kovi asked, "Any etiquette if table game minimum bets are too high for you?" Yes, the etiquette is find a different table.

Travis:

Find a different table or find a different casino 'cause like you mentioned, the Strip in Vegas. Find a casino off the Strip that's maybe a little less popular. And their minimum bets are probably gonna be lower than like the hottest popularest nightclub on the Strip.

Teresa:

Right. A minimum bet, you can't change. If you go to that table, that's your minimum bet.

Travis:

Exactly. Um, and also, if you are a newer player, you might wanna keep an eye out for a less populated table. Um, gameplay is probably gonna be a little bit more relaxed. Um, and, you know, if you see somebody betting the table maximum at a minimum, you don't wanna sit next to them, like 'cause they're probably taking it way more seriously than you are going to. Um, sit

as, as... Uh, now... Okay. This is a personal rule of thumb if you don't know what you're doing.

Sit as far left when facing the dealer as you can because each player will go and turn from right to left. And at least then, you can minimize the players feeling like you've taken their cards if you're the last one to go.

Teresa:

Hmm.

Travis:

Now, you can in that scenario be accused of taking a card that would have busted the dealer. But at least, everybody's not like, "Yeah. But if I had that 10, you would have had that eight. And you would have had that seven. And it..." Yeah. It's a good thing to avoid.

Um, so number two, everyone including the dealer gets two cards. Players, uh, get both of their cards face up. Dealer gets one card face down. If you are dealt a Blackjack which is an Ace and either a 10 or a face card, you automatically win. And if a dealer gets a Blackjack, you automatically lose. Everyone does. If you both get it, it is called a push. And a push is anytime the dealer and the player tie, the player gets their bet back.

Teresa:

Oh, so then, nobody wins. But nobody loses.

Travis:

Yes. And on a Blackjack, some tables will pay out three to one. So if you bet \$10, you win 15. Plus, your original bet. Some are six to five. Most of the time, when you sit down at a table written across the table will be specific rules for that specific like table. Um, it'll actually be written on the felt tabletop.

Um, you are trying to get to 21 or as close to 21 as you can without going over. If you go over, it is called busting or breaking. Um, an Ace can count as a one or an 11 depending on your overall total in relation to busting. So if you have an Ace and a seven, it's an 18 or an eight. And if you say then hit for some reason and you got a seven, well, that would be a 25. And you'd bust or a 15, and you're still in the game. So it counts as a 15. Like you're not gonna bust on an 11.

Teresa:

Oh okay.

Travis:

Um, after cards are dealt, each player goes in turn around the table, um, and gets to act. So when it is your turn to act, it goes from the dealers left to right. So like where the dealer is looking left to right. Each player gets four main actions. Now, here is a very, very, very important thing for first-time people at a casino.

There are eyes in the skies, cameras everywhere. And so, when you are playing table games and specifically Blackjack here, there are hand motions you have to do to accompany your actions. So that way, if there's ever any dispute, they can look back at the cameras and tell what your intention was depending on your hand motion. So you can't just sit there and say, "Stay." You have to do the hand motion along with it.

Teresa:

Have you ever encountered a situation personally where the dealer either like ignored you if you didn't do the hand motions or did they, they—

Travis:

They will tell you.

Teresa:

... they tell you to do it.

Travis:

They'll say like, "Wave your hand." And you'll do it. And they're like, "Okay." And like, they're very peppy and pleasant about it.

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

But here's, here's the actions and the hand motions. So if you stay or stand, whatever you wanna call it, you wave your hand flat left to right over the table. Don't reach out real far. And you don't... Uh, most places I read described it as waving your hand without moving your arm. Right?

Teresa:

Okay.

Travis:

And that's like stop, stop, stop. Um, and that means you get no more cards dealt. Your turn is over. You can hit. Um, and if you hit, you tap the table, you know, like tap, tap, tap.

Teresa:

Well, similar to what you would do in poker, right—

Travis:

Yeah.

Teresa:

... when you would knock on the table.

Travis:

Yes. So you tap the table. And that means one more card is dealt to you. Um, you can repeat that until you bust or you wanna stay. So you can just keep getting cards until you bust or stay. Um, you can double down.

Now, this is where we get away from the like simple stay or hit, right? Now, when you double down, you place an equal stack of chips beside your chips. Never ever touch your chips once play... the bet that you've put out, once play is started. You can't take it back. You can't change it—

Teresa:

'Cause to an eye in the sky, that might look like cheating.

Travis:

Exactly. But you can put a stack next to it to indicate you wanna double down. And then, you say, "I'm going to double down." Now, what double down means is that you get one more card and only one more card. And then, you're forced to stay.

Now, this gives you the option to double your bet. And I'll talk more about that in a bit. But it basically makes sense. Like, say, you have an 11, the most likely card you're going to get is a 10 or a face card that is worth 10, so you double down, right, because then, you get a 10. You get 21. You win. Um—

Teresa:

So basically, for a double down, you are betting that you will win in the next card.

Travis:

Exactly. But statistically, you are likely to win with one more card. Um, it is highly advised against to double down on anything over an 11, because, say, you have 12, you could bust. Um, and in fact, if you double down on anything above a 12, you're likely to arouse suspicion or gain some attention from the security team because it might be an indication that you are counting cards and that you feel as though it is a safe deck to do that on.

Teresa:

Okay. So it's so statistically unlikely that you would win if you double down on a 12—

Travis:

Right.

Teresa:

... that everybody looks at you like, "How does he know he's gonna win?"

Travis:

Exactly.

Teresa:

Must be cheating.

Travis:

Right. So either that, or they just assume you're an idiot or you're drunk. And you have no idea what you're doing.

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

One way or another, you're probably going to, to attract some attention. Um, the fourth action you can take is called splitting. Um, once again, you put your stack, your next bet this... beside. And I should be clear on both of these that you can double your bet on either one of these. You can't bet more or less than you bet before. So if your original bet was 10, you're not... Like you can't double down and put out five or split and put out 20. You can bet in... You bet the same amount you bet the first time.

Teresa:

Okay.

Travis:

Um, and also, um, and this once again seemed to be a little bit of house rules. But you do the stack. You say, "Split." And then, you can also indicate by holding out both of your index fingers parallel to each other and pulling them apart, like, I'm splitting. But don't touch your cards. In a face up, where they're dealt that you face up, never touch your cards. The dealer will split them for you.

Um, and basically, what a split does, you can only do it if your cards are of equal value. So you have two eights. You have two fours. Um, you can do it if you have two 10s or a face card and a 10, whatever the equivalent of 10 is. But I should be clear that it's highly advised against splitting face cards. Um, but you could only do it if you have identical values on the card.

Teresa:

So what's the advantage to splitting?

Travis:

Basically, you get to play two hands. Um, the most advantageous example you can find is if you get two eights, you've got a 16 which is a hard hand to win with. But if you split the two eights, you now have an opportunity to build better hands off of both of them rather than making the decision if you wanna hit or stay on a 16.

Teresa:

Hmm.

Travis:

Um, but basically, it just gives you two options because then you get to play each hand individually with each one with an individual bet. So you could win on one hand and lose on the other and balance out.

Teresa:

Okay.

Travis:

Um, as I said, it's a little bit... Both doubling down and especially, splitting is a little bit of more of an advanced move. Um, so it's not the first thing you wanna do the first time you sit down at your first Blackjack table. Um, important to note, as splitting goes, say, you had two eights and you split

them and the dealer dealt you another eight and another eight on each of those, you could split those again.

Teresa:

Oh, wow.

Travis:

Yeah. So as long as you're dealt identical cards. Um, and I read, at one point, you can split up to four times. I imagine that, that is once again a lot of like house rules.

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

Um, but it's all up to you because every time you do, you have to bet more.

Teresa:

Right. So you need to make sure you have enough money to cover your split.

Travis:

Yeah. And then, it's also worth it to you because if you wanna play, you know, for a long time, maybe putting down four individual bets in one hand, isn't your idea of a good time. So that's your four basic actions. You can stay. You can hit. You can double down, or you can split.

Um, general rule of thumb is to act on the assumption that the dealer... uh, the face down card the dealer has or the whole card is a 10 or a 10 equivalent. So if they're showing a seven, you assume they have a 17. If they're showing a two, you assume they have a 12. Just to give you kind of a jumping off point of how to act.

Um, once all players have resolved their turns, the dealer re— reveals their whole card. If the dealer total is 16 or less, they must hit until their total is at least 17 or they bust. If their total is 17 or higher, they must stand. Um, and then, another house rule that varies from casino to casino is, in some circumstances, the dealer has to hit on a soft 17. And some, they can stay on a soft 17. Some, they have the option to do it. And the soft 17 just means they have an Ace and a six. So it could be a seven. It could be a 17.

Teresa:

Oh, okay. Well, but even so, they have rules about what they have to do. So it's not really their expertise that they're using.

Travis:

Yeah.

Teresa:

They're using like almost a computer would like a program.

Travis:

Yeah. They're just the dealer. They're not strategizing against you. They are not your enemy. I wrote this note down right here. Dealer isn't your enemy. To answer your question about tip and all the questions about tip, you should tip your dealer.

Now, there's no real set structure to it, it. Um, but in general, a good rule of thumb is like if you're at a \$5 minimum bet table, a dollar every so often isn't hurt. If you've just hit like a big win and you like doubled down and split in like 100 on a \$5 minimum bet or whatever, however, you're able to organize it, tip them a buck or two. Like it was a good win for everybody. Yah Right. Tip them a buck. You can also bet their tip. So, say, you put \$5 down, right? In front of your \$5 chip, you put down a \$1 chip. And that's their tip. And if you win their tip doubles or, you know, they win too. And then, they get that money.

Teresa:

Oh okay.

Travis:

Um—

Teresa:

So it's kind of putting the dealer on your team a little bit.

Travis:

Exactly, because they are on your team. And it's just a good way to kind of build the relationship like we're both in this together. Um, it also just makes it a little bit more interesting. And the dealer has a chance to win even more if they deal well to you. That's kind of the idea of it. So I'm going to so quickly, and I promise we'll get to the other two games, they're way easier. This is basic, basic, basic, basic, most basic strategy. Okay?

Teresa:

Is it basic though?

Travis:

The most basic.

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

If you are totaling 10 or lower, no matter what the dealer shows, you should hit because you've only got 10. You're never gonna bust. Um, and you should hit because your, your risk of losing for staying on like an eight is so high [laughs] that like it... no one's ever gonna judge you for hitting... if you have a 10 or lower.

Teresa:

Okay.

Travis:

If you are totaling 11, the general rule of thumb is double down because no card is going to come that is gonna bust you. Now, the two exceptions to that are at the dealer showing at 10. And you assume they have a 10 underneath. They've got a 20. So it's not necessarily likely that you're gonna beat them. So the double down is a little bit more risky because you're doubling your chance of losing double the money.

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

Right? Um, and simultaneously, maybe you don't wanna double down if they're like showing a six. Anyways, but that's just rule of thumb. No one's ever gonna judge you for doubling down on an 11. That's kind of what I'm running through here. No one's gonna judge you for doing this action.

Teresa:

So it's generally accepted that this, this is the way to play.

Travis:

Exactly. If you are totaling 12 to 16 and the dealer shows a seven to 10, you hit because you assume they've got a 10 underneath. They've got a 17. And you've got a 12. And you stay you're gonna lose.

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

Um, if you are totaling 12 to 16 and the dealer shows a two to a six, you stay. Even though your total seems the low, if you assume they have a 12 to 16, they are statistically likely to draw a 10 and bust. And if they bust, you win. But if you bust and then they bust, you've still lost.

Teresa:

Hmm.

Travis:

Right. So don't hit if you've got a 12 to 16 and they show a two to a six. If you are totaling 17 to 20, stand. Um, even if they're showing a 10 and you're like, "But they might have a 10." Yeah. But you're gonna bust. You just are. You stand. Um, and so, like if you do those things, you're not gonna catch shit. You're not gonna catch flak from people at the table, probably. But you probably will because in all of these things, I, I hope I've Illustrated to you that Blackjack is actually a very complicated game.

Teresa:

Right. It does seem that way.

Travis:

Yeah.

Teresa:

It seems like there's a lot more strategy than I ever thought. I guess I just thought that it's the luck of the draw. And you kind of just have to use your maths so that you don't overdo it.

Travis:

Yeah. The important thing to keep in mind and kind of the, the takeaway as far as the other players of the table should be is, um, you've got what's called the shoe. That's what the dealer is dealing out of. Um, and it can be three, four, five, six to whatever combinations of decks. So you're not just playing with 52 cards. You're playing with a huge amount of cards. And everyone is playing off of the same deck of cards.

So if you... Say, you're sitting and you've got a \$5 bet out and you bet recklessly on like a 16, right, and you bust, and you're like, "Whatever, ha,

ha, ha, " and you get a 10, the guy to your left has out a 500 bet. And he's like a professional gambler. And he's got an 11. And he was gonna double down. And you got the 10, that he would want to get 21. He's going to be upset at you because you took that 10 as far as he's concerned. Whether that's true or not mathematically, that's always going to be how it appears to that gentleman.

Teresa:

Hmm.

Travis:

So it's just something to keep in mind. Um, general rules, don't touch your cards. Don't touch your chips once the play starts. Um, tip the dealer if you're doing well.

One last thing, insurance is offered. And insurance is when the dealer is showing an Ace. And basically, you're offered the chance to bet half your original bet. And if the dealer has a, a Blackjack, you win your insurance bet basically canceling out your original bet, which seems like a safe bet. But the odds are so stas— statistically stacked in favor of the casino.

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

It's a terrible bet. And you should never do it.

Teresa:

[laughs] Okay.

Travis:

So that's the very complicated game that is Blackjack.

Teresa:

Whew.

Travis:

So here's the light at the end of the tunnel. If you're sitting there going, "Yeah. But I wanna play a card game, and I just want to have fun," you want to play baccarat.

Teresa:

All right.

Travis:

It is, it is designed for you, my friend. It may seem complicated and difficult because James Bond plays it and there's a lot of French words with it and all that stuff. But trust me, it could not be simpler. Here's how it works. You sit down at the table. You have three betting options. You can either bet on the player, bet on the banker, or bet on a tie. With me so far?

Teresa:

I'm, I'm there.

Travis:

Great. How your hand value works is you add up the cards. And then, whatever the right hand digit is, that's your total. So let's say you have—

Teresa:

So you just dropped the tens.

Travis:

Exactly.

Teresa:

Okay.

Travis:

So if you had a 10 and a three, your total is 13, your hand total is three.

Teresa:

'Cause you dropped the 10.

Travis:

Exactly. Um, the best score in the game is nine. You want a nine. It's like you're 21, right? Um, the hand that is closest to nine wins. So you're playing against the dealer. You're both dealt cards. And then, you're trying to be the dealer. You're dealt hands down, right? That's the whole thing. Um—

Teresa:

And so, you can look at these. But there's a special rule, right, just, just one hand.

Travis:

Yes. You can only touch your cards with one hand. If they're dealt face down, you can touch with one hand. If they're dealt face up, don't touch your cards. That's like rule of thumb. Play that way. Um, so if you're playing at a place that deals your cards face up, anyways. I made that clear.

Um, occasionally, you will need a third card. Now, there's a whole complicated set of third card rules. But basically going down, if you're the player, is that if you have, uh, if your hand total is zero to five, you get a third card. If it's six to seven, you stand. And if it's in the eight or nine, it's called the natural. And you win unless the dealer also has an eight or nine. And you either tie, or like they have a nine and you have an eight or whatever.

Teresa:

But you don't have to decide any of that.

Travis:

And then, there's a whole complicated set of rules for the dealer gets a third card. You don't need to know any of it. All you have to decide in baccarat is do you bet that the banker is gonna win. Do you bet that the player is gonna win? Do you bet it's a tie? How much do you bet? And then, it's autopilot.

Teresa:

So there's no hit or stand.

Travis:

No.

Teresa:

If you get this card, the dealer will give you another card—

Travis:

Yeah.

Teresa:

... type deal.

Travis:

Yup.

Teresa:

Great.

Travis:

You sit down, and it goes. Um, the only thing to keep in mind is the tie option heavily, heavily, heavily favors the house to the tune of 14% which is huge considering that the banker bet, the house only has a 1.06% advantage. And for the player bet, um, the house only has a 1.24% advantage. And because the banker, uh, bet doesn't favor the house as well, they'll keep 5% of your winnings.

Teresa:

Oh.

Travis:

Yeah. So—

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

... you have a better chance of winning on the banker bet. But you don't win as much money. But only to the tune you lose like 5%.

Teresa:

Okay. Wow.

Travis:

Um, so don't bet on the tie unless you're feeling loosey-goosey.

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

But if you just wanna sit down and put down some money on a card game, that is incredibly similar to Blackjack, but not have to worry about any strategy, you wanna play baccarat. Plus, you get to feel like James Bond.

Teresa:

[laughs] Great.

Travis:

Um, so—

Teresa:

Give me some lobster.

Travis:

... finally, let's talk about craps. And craps is one of my favorite casino games. And it can be incredibly intimidating especially when you look down at the table and it seems like there's just a thousand different options for betting. But it's actually a, a very simple game with some very complicated terminology.

Teresa:

Well, my only frame of reference for craps is either like movies and TV and that, um, Guys and Dolls.

Travis:

Guys and Dolls. Yeah.

Teresa:

Yeah.

Travis:

It's Guys and Dolls, Luck Be A Lady. Exactly. Um, here's what you need to know. You walk up to the table. First thing you wanna do is you wanna look at the marker. There's a plastic disc, um, about the size of if like you hold your thumb and four fingers together in a circle. Um, and it will either be flipped up to black or white. If it's black, then, the point hasn't been set which I will explain in a second. And you can join in the betting. If it's white, the point has been set and you probably wanna wait until the next time the point is cleared.

Teresa:

So if it's white, that means the game is going and it's full, you can't join.

Travis:

Yeah. But it moves very quickly.

Teresa:

Okay.

Travis:

So you just stand there for a minute until it's flipped back over to black. And then, you can join in.

Teresa:

Huh.

Travis:

Um, anyone who's seen gambling in movies, you get the shooter, right, who gets the dice blowing the dice Luck Be A Lady, right?

Teresa:

Yeah. Mama needs a new pair of shoes.

Travis:

You actually handed five dice as a shooter. And you pick two.

Teresa:

Oh, okay.

Travis:

And those are the two you use, once again, to kind of balance out that you don't worry about like are these dice loaded? Are they trick dice, right? So don't be confused if someone hands you five dice. Don't pick up all five of them and throw them.

Teresa:

[laughs] It's not Yahtzee.

Travis:

You feel... Yeah. [laughs] Um, the shooter must bet if they wanna shoot. So like if you don't have money out, you don't get to shoot. It'll skip over you—

Teresa:

Well, that makes sense.

Travis:

... to the next person. Yeah. Um, so here's the most basics. And it's really easy. So the preliminary role, the first, the come out roll is what it's called, right, if you roll a seven or an 11, you automatically win.

Teresa:

Sweet.

Travis:

If you roll a two, three or 12, you automatically lose.

Teresa:

Hmm.

Travis:

And then, the dice move to the next person. If you roll a fa— a four, five, six, eight, nine or 10, that is now the point. And once the point is set, like say you roll a five, the point is now five, you're trying to roll a five again before you roll a seven. If you roll a seven, you crap out. If you roll a five, the point's cleared. And now, you get to roll again. And you either hit a seven or eleven or win. You hit a two or three or 12 or lose, or you set a new point, right? So—

Teresa:

Okay.

Travis:

... a good, good set.

Teresa:

So if you're looking for a five but you throw an eight—

Travis:

Nothing happens.

Teresa:

... nothing happens.

Travis:

Nothing happens to you, the shooter.

Teresa:

Okay.

Travis:

Um, so basically, it's just a cycle of rolling until you either crap out, set a point, clear a point, or crap out again. So like—

Teresa:

Or win.

Travis:

... it... Yeah. Exactly. Um, so the first line... The first bet, the easiest bet is called the pass line bet. So you'll see a, a line that's literally labeled pass line, or pass, right? And that's just a bet that says they will either roll a seven or an 11, or they'll set the point. And you lose the pass line bet if they crap out with a two, three, or 12.

Once the point is set, now, that pass line bet becomes a bet that they'll hit the point again. And you win if they hit the point again without crapping out. Now, the, the pass line bet is kind of your basic bet. Um, the come line bet is very similar to the past bet. But think of it more like you're betting the point will come again before they crap out. So you can only make a come line bet after the point is set.

Teresa:

So can everybody at the table make one of those bets?

Travis:

Oh, yes. They can.

Teresa:

Okay. So you're betting—

Travis:

This is the beauty. Yeah. It's—

Teresa:

You're—

Travis:

... the beauty of craps. Everyone's playing all at once.

Teresa:

And you're betting on the shooter.

Travis:

Exactly.

Teresa:

Okay.

Travis:

The field bet, you're betting that a two, three, four, nine, 10, 11 or 12 will come on the next roll.

Teresa:

Okay. Well, that's a lot of numbers. That seems—

Travis:

It is a lot.

Teresa:

... pretty sound.

Travis:

Yeah. It's a great bet to do. I mean it's, it's what a lot of like non—shooters will bet on because it's any of those. So you're not specifically saying a three. It's a two, three, four, nine, 10, 11 or 12. And, in fact, if it's a two or a 12, you get double your money back, sometimes even more depending on the house rules.

Teresa:

Oh cool.

Travis:

Um, now, the only way you lose that is if you, you know, hit a five or, um—

Teresa:

A seven.

Travis:

... a seven.

Teresa:

Yeah.

Travis:

Seven. Um, but, yeah. So the field bet is a good way to go. Now, there's also on there the hard ways betting. Now, hard ways is that you're betting that, so, for example, a four and a four will come up. A two and a two will come up. Uh, you know, a five and a five. You're betting that a 10 will be made because you get doubles. And eight will be made because you get

double. So two will be made because you get doubles. Um, and then, there's a whole different set of payouts depending on the statistics of that coming up.

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

Um, but you lose if a seven is rolled or if a different combination of that number is rolled. So, for example, if you put it down on a four and four to make eight and they roll a three and a five to make eight, you lose your hard ways bet.

Teresa:

So that's a, a lot more of an odds bet.

Travis:

Yeah. That's, that's kind of a bigger payout. But it's like you kind of have to know a little bit more about the statistics of it. The beauty of craps is you can put your money down on the pass line, not do anything else, and still get to participate in the whole thing.

Teresa:

Still get to cheer and win holler.

Travis:

Exactly. That's why it's a great casino game because you... it... You can play on the same bet for however many roles the person keeps going until they crap out, and you lose your pass line bet. So as opposed to Blackjack where you put your money down each hand—

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

... they keep rolling until they crap out. And that's the only way you're gonna lose your money.

Teresa:

And you can keep making money as long as they keep winning.

Travis:

Exactly. So it's a way more like time consuming and overall profitable game than, than, um, then Blackjack. Um, the last one I wanna talk about and this is the best bet in an entire casino you can make. It's called the pass line odds bet. So once the point is set, you can place a second bet behind your pass line bet. Um, and in many cases, it can be multiples of your original bet. So if your original bet was 10, you put down a \$100. And basically, you're betting that the point will come again that you, you know, that they'll hit the point before crapping out.

And so, as long as the point is matched before a seven comes, you not only win. It pays out true odds. So like I, I'm trying to remember. It's something like there's six different combinations for a seven to come. And so, if you put down a four, there's four combinations, one in three, two and... No. I guess it would be three. One and three, two and two, three and one. And so, it's a two-to-one odds. And so, you win back double your bet. And it... There's like zero house edge on the past line odds bet.

Teresa:

Because you're only betting on the shooter hitting the thing they wanna hit anyway.

Travis:

Exactly. So like the house has no statistical advantage over you when you make the pass line odds bet. And that's like where the money comes from in craps. But all you need to know about craps, as daunting as it can seem and as confusing as it can seem, all you need to know is that you put some money down on the pass line. That's it.

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

And, and now, you're playing. Some don't. Don't try to... In, in all of these games, in almost every table game, don't try to hand money directly to the dealer. You put the money down the table. You move your hands away. The dealer picks it up. This is just a security thing that you're not handling anything directly to the dealer. So don't be weirded out if they won't take something from you. You got to put it on the table. Then, they change it out. Um, don't pick up the dice with both hands one in each. That is a big no, no. You'll have to put the hand... the dice down. They'll take the dice back. Show them to a pit boss. Then, return them to you all—

Teresa:

Oh, cause it probably looks like you might be able to switch the dice around.

Travis:

Exactly. You only wanna pick them up one hand at a time. Um, don't take the dice away from the table. So the table has an edge to it, you know, like a raised edge for you to throw against. Don't move your hand past the plane of the edge of the table. Um, just so like you're not like slipping them anywhere or you're not dropping your hand below the edge of the table, anything like that. Keep your hand over the table.

Teresa:

So in the movies, when you see someone shake their hand and draw a way back like they're, like they're winding up for a pitch, probably not a good idea, right?

Travis:

Yeah. You'd probably get like a—

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

... from the dealer. Um, and finally, the pass line bet once the point is established, you can't take back your pass line bet.

Teresa:

Okay. Well, that makes sense—

Travis:

Yeah, because you can't be like, "Well, now. I'm worried he's throwing it." Like no. You gotta let it ride, as they say.

Teresa:

That's where this comes from.

Travis:

Yeah.

Teresa:

I always wanted—

Travis:

Well, gambling in general. Like in the roulette wheel, like you could win. And then, say, "Let it ride." Basically, you're not taking your bet back.

Teresa:

Oh, okay.

Travis:

Yeah.

Teresa:

Okay.

Travis:

Yeah. So like that's... It's so funny to me when people talk about like, well, I just wanna play Blackjack where it's like, yeah, that's a way less approachable game than you think. And actually, baccarat and craps are incredibly approachable simple games. [laughs]

Teresa:

Well, it seems like those, baccarat and, and craps, seem to be more like a game of luck.

Travis:

Yeah. I mean they're a game of betting. That's, that's it. It's a game of betting, how you bet, where you bet, which bet you put it on statistics, all that stuff.

Teresa:

But there doesn't seem to be any kind of... There... I mean as far as betting, there's a strategy.

Travis:

Yeah.

Teresa:

But as playing, it basically just happens.

Travis:

Yeah. You're betting on statistics at that point, as opposed to Blackjack where you have to strategize, and you have to like play it. And it's like, okay. great. Arguing that Blackjack is a great game just for fun is the same

as saying, "You can just sit down at a poker table and win millions of dollars."

Teresa:

Oh, right. Yeah.

Travis:

Yeah. And it's like, "No. It's really hard actually." And, and as much as I wish I could say like, "Hey, it's your fun. Don't let someone else judge you for how you play it." Unfortunately, like it's... It... They will because Blackjack is an intensely strategic game, and everyone's gonna tell you how to do it if you seem like you don't know what you're doing, as opposed to baccarat where you just sit down and maybe figure out some like international espionage stuff—

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

... uh, you know, a shaken not stirred Martini and just go to town.

Teresa:

And some lobster and then books.

Travis:

And some Lobster.

Teresa:

And the books he eats a lot of lobsters.

Travis:

A lot of lobster and coffee.

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

Dude must have been regular as all get-out. Um, so yeah. So that's... Those are the three games. And eventually, when we do like our home, um, gambling etiquette, we'll talk all about poker, and that kind of thing. But hopefully, that gave everybody a good start. And, you know, at the end of the day, there are so many iPhone apps and smartphone apps where you

can like play fake any game you choose. Like you can get a lot of practice in before ever setting foot in a casino.

Teresa:

Right. I was very, uh, intrigued to learn about the shoe—

Travis:

Mm-hmm.

Teresa:

... being for the dealer. I always thought that, "Well, why doesn't everybody count cards? There's only 52 in a deck." But that's not how it works at all.

Travis:

Yeah. And they also never deal to the end of the shoe. They put in like a cut-off card. And when they hit that card, they reshuffle. So that way, you like can never be like, "Oh, that's the last card. And I know that they're... I've already seen all 16 Kings and like—"

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

So it... There's so many different things put in place to stop people from cheating at a casino. And every time someone comes up with a new way to cheat, they come up with a new way to stop them.

Teresa:

Well, and card counting isn't exactly illegal, is it?

Travis:

Well, it's also not exactly counting.

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

It's a little bit of a misnomer. Real quick, don't card count. Um, it's a jerk move. And it also you may not be arrested. But you'll definitely be banned from a casino if you get caught. And most casinos are owned by like one person owns like 10 of them—

Teresa:

[laughs] Yeah.

Travis:

... or they're all in contact with each other. And you end up getting banned from all the casinos in Vegas or something like that. Um, but yeah. Don't, don't do it. Go have fun. Just don't gamble too much and have fun. And if all else fails, one last thing, do slots. They're super fun.

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

There's lights. There's sounds. You can play Sex in the City slots. It's great. Just do that.

Teresa:

I feel like I've done slots a couple of times. And nowadays, they're all video slots.

Travis:

Yeah. It's fun.

Teresa:

Well, I guess they're... I always kinda—

Travis:

I don't trust it.

Teresa:

I kinda just wanted to go... Where were we? We were in some—

Travis:

We were in Vegas.

Teresa:

We were in Vegas. Yeah. And I—

Travis:

We were in the Vegas Airport.

Teresa:

I wanted to do the thing where like you pull the lever and the things spin. And like the lights and the sounds, and the mechanics all click and... But they don't really do that anymore.

Travis:

Yeah. You got to search a lot harder to find those. So we're going long. So let's wrap this up.

Teresa:

All right.

Travis:

That's it. Um, and we're gonna have at least two more episodes about gambling. So if there's more questions you came up with, you should email us, shmannerstcast@gmail.com. You can tweet at us at ShmannersCast, or you can join the Shmanners Facebook group. You can find it on Facebook. Um, just search under the groups tab, S-H-M-A-N-N-E-R-S.

Teresa:

And I'd like to, uh, put that call back out for anyone in the Shmanners group, feel free to offer your opinions on a lot of these posts. I've seen some really great stuff got brought up.

Travis:

Yeah.

Teresa:

It's really awesome. I love it.

Travis:

I love when it acts like a forum.

Teresa:

Yeah.

Travis:

I mean it's the best way to do it. Um, go check out all the other amazing shows on maximumfun.org. I wanna highly recommend Still Buffering. They've added their middle sister, Taylor. And let me just say, I am always a big proponent when a middle sibling is added—

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

... into a show. I'm a big fan. Um, I also wanna thank everybody who supported me through the last two years, these trying times. I'm proud to announce that I have been verified on Twitter. The long national nightmare is over. Um, I am now a verified Twitter user with all the power and responsibility that, that includes. And I wanna thank everyone who's, who's helped me reach this epic point in my life.

Teresa:

It's been a rough road. We're popping the champagne tonight.

Travis:

It's very exciting. I wanna thank everybody. Um, I also wanna thank everybody who's gone on to iTunes and rated and reviewed and subscribed, and everybody who's suggested the show to a friend. Um, we're still continuing to grow. And that's all thanks to all of you. So thank you so very much. Join us again next week for another episode.

Teresa:

No RSVP required.

Travis:

You've been listening to Shmanners.

Teresa:

Manners Shmanners. Get it.

[theme music plays]

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