7 STEPS TO
BECOMING A PRO CARD COUNTER

The **Exact Process** We’ve Used to Beat Casinos for **$3.4 Million** (and Counting)

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http://blackjackapprenticeship.com/
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SUMMING UP
$3.4 million in 5 years? Would you believe it? That’s a lofty claim, I know. And with so much misinformation out there, if our success wasn’t verified, I wouldn’t trust me either. Let me talk you through what happened.

**WHO AM I?**

My name is Colin Jones.
I’m a professional card counter.

I started with a $2,000 bankroll and nothing to lose. For more than a decade, I’ve played blackjack at every level - from bowling alley card rooms to Las Vegas high-limit rooms.

Card counting has freed me from ever needing a “real” job. I’ve learned as much from my failures as my successes, with life lessons that have applied to well beyond the blackjack table.

I like to keep my personal results more private, but let’s just say it was enough money to buy my house (and real estate isn’t cheap in Seattle).

I now spend my time training others to beat casinos. Many of the “apprentices” who have come through the Blackjack Apprenticeship Program have had as much success as I have - and a few have had even more!
HOW IT ALL BEGAN

Over 10 years ago, I was a substitute high school teacher. I had $2,000 in savings and I was earning $100 a day.

Then I had a conversation with my buddy Ben that would change my perspective on money, and on life in general. He casually informed me he was teaching himself how to beat blackjack with card counting. He said he had a system, and he loaned me a book with some chapters highlighted.

I started reading. How could I know that this moment would allow me to turn my $2,000 savings into a career and make me more money than I ever imagined possible?

Just over a year later I was ignoring substitute teaching shifts in favor of beating my local casinos. Why babysit high-schoolers when I was making way more playing blackjack at my local casinos?

We teamed up with a few friends, and soon we had grown our bankroll to over $200,000. Before you know it, I was to co-managing a seven-figure card counting team that was featured in an award-winning documentary. Together, our team managed to generate over $3.4 million before calling it a day.

This isn’t to say we didn’t make mistakes. We learned the hardway. For example, when we failed to keep playing standards high, we once had to dig our team out of a $465,000 losing streak.

It took us months to make up. But we got there. And we learned from our mistakes. We changed our process so it would never happen to us again.
Today, this process is the one I present to you. It is the same process Ben and I worked on together. The same process that brought in over $3.4 million and paid for my house.

And this is the exact process YOU need to learn to become a successful card counter.

**IS THIS BOOK FOR YOU?**

You’re reading this because you have the same desire I had all those years ago - to take as much money from casinos as possible.

But first, you need three things:

1) **You need to know how to play blackjack**
This may seem like an obvious point, but it’s one that’s worth making. In order to be a card counter, you have to know the game you’re playing. If you’re feeling a little rusty, or just want to make sure this is the game for you, check out my comprehensive guide on “How To Play Blackjack” here.

2) **You need to know how to count cards.**
If you know how this works and are well versed in the practice, read on! If you’re not sure what this means, or if you know how but you’re shaky on the details, I suggest that you read this resource before continuing.

3) **You need the right mindset**
The right mindset is what makes good card players great. It makes the difference between walking away with massive profits and crumbling under pressure. If you know you have what it takes, then read on. If you’re not sure, or if you’d like to see what I think makes a card counter go from good to great, read this first!
If you’re checking these resources and nodding along, that’s great! Keep reading to find out what it will take for you to do what I did, and what hundreds of others who I have trained have done.

Because if you follow these steps to the letter, and have the resolve to stick with it, you can do it too.

So without any more rambling, here are the EXACT SEVEN STEPS we used to beat casinos and bring down the house.
STEP 0

STOP GAMBLING
Ok. I said “seven steps” but I can’t skip this.

There’s a big difference between “Gambling” and “Card Counting.”

Gambling is trying to defy the odds.  
Gambling is an emotional activity that will cost you money in the long run.

Card counting is playing the odds.  
Card counting is following a set of logical steps that gives you the advantage over the casino.

The average gambler who walks up to a blackjack table and plays a single $10 hand of blackjack is likely going to win or lose $10. And that’s what the gambler is thinking about.

But a card counter is going to be thinking about the Expected Value (EV) of that hand. Expected Value is the amount the game is going to make over time.

For a $10 game, it is likely about 10 cents (the casino’s advantage is about 1% against your average gambler, and 1% of $10 is $10 x .01 = $0.10). Which means the casino is expecting to make 10 cents for every $10 bet a gambler makes, no matter what “system” the gambler thinks they’re using. The gambler may win on any given day or week, but if the casino can keep them playing, they cannot escape the math that favors the casino... unless they count cards.

I have no problem with recreational gambling - though it’s not how I want to spend my hard-earned money. Becoming a card counter is something entirely different. And it starts by thinking about what you’re going to a
casino to do - make money.

Which means that for a card counter, gambling is essentially setting your money on fire.

So right here, right now, you have to stop gambling.

Gambling can be a entertaining hobby, but there’s no space for it when you’re looking to make money in a casino environment. If you think you might struggle with gambling, or if you want to know some of the signs to look out for, check out my abridged checklist from Gamblers Anonymous here.
STEP 1

MASTER BASIC STRATEGY
Basic Strategy gets you playing the game right, every hand.

E’rybody wants to count cards, no one wants to learn Basic Strategy.

If you want to count cards for a party trick to impress your friends - like solving a Rubik’s Cube or juggling kittens - then skip this step. But if you’re serious about wanting to pilfer from the casino vault, do not pass go until you’ve mastered Basic Strategy.

Basic Strategy is a list of every optimal playing decision for every possible hand in blackjack. A player who has memorized Basic Strategy backwards and forwards is already better equipped than 99.99% of gamblers in a casino. It reduces the house’s advantage by giving you the best possible response to every hand you might face. And for professional card counters like you and me, it is the foundation to becoming a profitable blackjack player.

I don’t care if you’re the world’s fastest card counter; if you can’t recite Basic Strategy at gunpoint while sleep deprived and doing cartwheels, you aren’t going to beat the dealer.

The good news is that it isn’t much tougher than it was learning multiplication tables in grade school. You memorize it by rote learning. Make it your life until you can repeat it backwards and sideways.

To help, you can download the chart for free here. I’ll even shoot you an email in a day or two with some tips to memorizing Basic Strategy even faster.
STEP 2

MASTER THE RUNNING COUNT
The Running Count gives you the information on the deck.

Once you have a solid foundation by mastering Basic Strategy, it’s time to move on to learning the Running Count.

Basic Strategy lets you reduce the casino’s advantage, but it doesn’t give you the advantage. That’s why you have to master the Running Count.

Contrary to popular belief, it’s not about memorizing exactly which cards have already been played. That kind of trick is for the movies.

In the real world, the Running Count will give you a running tally of what kind of cards have been dealt (high cards, or low cards). And more importantly, the Running Count lets you know what kind of cards remain to be dealt. This is what differentiates a gambler, who is hoping to win against the odds, from a card counter, who is using the odds to his advantage.

There are dozens of card counting systems, but I recommend Hi-Lo. I used this exclusively when managing our multi-million-winning team. So for the purposes of this guide, we’ll be using Hi-Lo.

In a way, learning Hi-Lo to read the Running Count is like learning a new language - one that all winning card counters are fluent in. It takes time, repetition, and a dedication to master it. But just like a language, if you commit yourself to it, you can get it down quickly, and have fun learning it.

To help you get to grips with Hi-Lo, check out this video explaining the whole process.
Plus you have an advantage - I’ve got your back. I’ll send you a free email lesson on how to practice the Running Count in a few days. And this lesson has helped thousands of people to master the Running Count. So buckle down and get to it!
STEP 3

MASTER THE TRUE COUNT
True Count will let you bet in a way that turns the tables on the dealer.

You’ve got the basics and you speak the language. What’s next?

A little bit of basic math called the True Count. Also called Count Per Deck, this process helps make the Running Count meaningful, and lets us card counters change our bets to maximize our advantage.

Let’s say a billionaire wants to give away part of their fortune. They have $10 million and they want to share it equally amongst the people in their home town. Sounds good, right?

But there’s a dramatic difference between the amounts each person receives, depending on the population. In a town with a population of 10 million people, each resident gets $1. Whereas in a town of one person (it’s a small town!), that one lucky person is now worth $10 million.

In the same way, the running count on its own doesn’t give you the full picture. To know how valuable a running count truly is, it needs to be converted to the True Count.

By converting the Running Count into the True Count, or “count per deck,” you will have the information you need to know when the casino has the advantage and when you have the advantage. This is the information the card counter uses to bet in a way that gives us the upper hand.

With this system, you can also use card counting to beat 2 deck, 4 deck, 6 deck, and even 8 deck games.

To convert from the Running Count to the True Count, you just have to bust
out your division skills from grade school. Simply take your Running Count and divide it by the number of decks remaining. You may be a bit rusty at it, but you’re only going to be dividing the Running Count by numbers 1-8. Or - if you’re comfortable with being an overachiever like me - then maybe half-decks.

But don’t worry about the training! Again, I’ve got your back. There are some training drills you can do from home. I’ve designed them to get you converting the Running Count to the True Count in no time.

To get a complete walkthrough on the Running Count and True Count, check out my authoritative “How to Count Cards” overview here!²
STEP 4
MASTER YOUR BETSPREAD
A good bet spread minimizes your losses and maximizes your profits.

By now you’ve got Basic Strategy, Running Count, and True Count memorized. So you know your best moves, the value of the deck, and how likely you are to win. What’s next? Knowing how to get the most out of your bets!

Betting is actually the easiest step to put into practice. It’s like buying a stock low and selling it high.

Unfortunately, there isn’t a cut-and-dried bet spread that works for every situation. Generally speaking, you bet low when the dealer has the advantage and bet high when you have the advantage.

While training, I recommend a simple 1-8 bet spread:
- Start out by betting one “unit” (i.e. a chip) at the beginning of a shoe.
- If the True Count goes negative, continue to bet one unit per hand.
- If the True Count goes positive, add one more unit for each positive True Count up until you’re betting 8 chips at a True Count of 7 (and higher).
- That’s it!

But determining the exact spread you should use before entering the casino is a bit more complicated.

You’ve got to take into consideration:
- the rules of the game you’re playing
- the number of decks
- how many cards they cut out of play
- the size of your bankroll
- your attitude towards risk.
But for now just know that if you perfect Steps 1-3 (and you don’t have a problem with Step 0), you will have no trouble incorporating a winning bet spread.

For the specifics on the risks and rewards of different bet spreads, I recommend reading my thorough overview about Bankroll Management here⁹. I can also recommend a few programs and web tools that can help when you’re ready for this step. You can find out more about them here¹⁰.
STEP 5
LEARN THE TOP 20 DEVIATIONS
Playing Deviations are times when the true count dictates a decision that differs from Basic Strategy.

Basic Strategy is the default correct playing decision for every possible hand combination in Blackjack. But as the Running and True Counts change, there are times that the “correct” play also changes.

If you were driving down a freeway with a 60 MPH speed limit, the default “strategy” would be to drive 60 MPH (or somewhere close to 60 MPH). It gets you where you want to go at the fastest allowable speed. In this case, driving at 10 MPH would be ridiculous, and likely to get you some interesting looks and gestures.

But if you came across backed-up traffic, you would slow down. This new information means that driving at 60 MPH is no longer a viable default. Instead, you start driving at 10 MPH - or as slow as traffic dictates.

Playing Deviations are the decisions you make to deviate from Basic Strategy when the True Count dictates a different decision. As the composition of the cards changes (which you, my card-counting friend, will know because of the Running Count and the True Count), the “correct” play changes.

Before you start worrying that things just moved into Rainman territory, the reality is that it’s only about 20 situations you need to know.

Just as Basic Strategy is the default correct playing decision for every possible hand combination in blackjack, Playing Deviations are the correct decision based on your True Count. Many of them follow patterns that can help you memorize them. And when you do, it will help you maximize your
advantage over the casino.

Our Blackjack Apprentices get given full access to professional learning tools that make memorising the Playing Deviations a breeze. If you haven’t checked them out already, take a look at the features here.
STEP 6
PUT IT ALL TOGETHER
Combine your skills and practice.

Basic Strategy, Running Count, True Count, Bet Spread, and Playing Deviations. That’s it!

It really isn’t only for MIT whizzes and math prodigies. Intelligence plays a part, sure. But it’s more about using that intelligence to build automatic processes. You can’t just spend an hour practicing on your phone, then head into a casino and expect to win like a professional. You need real-world experience.

Why? Because if you want to become a casino-crushing machine, you’ve got to do all of these steps perfectly, at the same time, while dealing with all the distractions the casino throws at you.

It’s kind of like patting your head, rubbing your belly, and reciting the alphabet backwards while people are talking to you and randomly blowing an airhorn. Awkward and intimidating the first few times, but doable.

Just think about what you’re doing when you drive a car. Steering, accelerating, braking. Obeying driving laws, being aware of other drivers, navigating to your destination. Simultaneously, without much thought. And often while carrying on a conversation or listening to music.

But you weren’t able to do that the first week, or even month, of driving. You learned, studied the rules of the road, and began putting the steps into practice systematically. Eventually, driving becomes second nature.

It’s the same with card counting. It takes time to get to that point where
you’re comfortable doing it all at once. But if you can do each individual task, with practice, you can put it all together and do it automatically.

Train at it like you would anything else you want to master and you will get there!

This is where professional coaching can help out. You get the fast track to know what you need to know, and how to do it better, without the stress of trying to figure it out all on your own.

If you’re interested in going pro, check out the resources on Blackjack Apprenticeship. There are loads of free resources, as well as professional tutorials, training drills, and more to help you put it all together faster.
STEP 7
GROW YOUR BANKROLL
Your bankroll protects you from risk and enables better profits.

A successful card counter needs two things: a brain and a bankroll.

By now you’ve covered Steps 1-6. These are the “Brains” part. By learning those skills, you have all the mental tools you need to beat the game. But the reality is that you need money to make money at card counting.

Here’s why.

As a card counter, the reality is that you will experience both wins and losses. There is no 100% guarantee on any hand. Anyone who tells you otherwise is either inexperienced or lying to you - or lying to themselves.

The truth is that card counting doesn’t remove the chance of losses completely. It just shifts the advantage from the casino to the card counter.

Any gambler can get lucky on a given day at the casino. But given enough time, the gambler is guaranteed to lose it all. It’s how the casinos make their money. In the same way, the more hours a card counter plays, the more their wins will outweigh their losses.

To spend more time playing, you need a bankroll. The larger the bankroll, the more you can make. It’s like working your way up from a small investment portfolio to a large one.

The exciting thing is that the more money you have, the more you can expect to make. And you are way better off with a puny bankroll and a perfect game than a massive bankroll but a flawed game.
I started out with $2,000 of savings (though I don’t think I ever ended up using more than the first $500). I wasn’t making a ton of money in the beginning, but I didn’t care. I was doing something exciting. I was beating the greedy casino industry at their own game!

And the more I played, the more my profits grew. Within a year I had grown my bankroll to over $50,000. At this point, I was taking multiple six-figures a year from casinos. And all before I transitioned into co-managing a blackjack team.

Now, not everyone’s card counting career starts out the same way. And if you’re investing $10,000 or more into card counting, let me quickly offer some advice.

Do not mistake money for mastery.

I’ve known people with six-figure bankrolls who were unwilling to commit. They thought their funds meant that they didn’t need to learn their craft, that they could cover their losses and learn as they played - only to call me a year later and say that they had lost it all.

There is no bankroll large enough to overcome an imperfect game. Be humble. Respect the math. Put your money aside and stay out of the casinos while you work towards being a perfect card counter. Then, when you have learned how to play blackjack correctly, you’ll truly be able to put your money to good use.

I’ve had the privilege of watching card counting “apprentices” grow their humble bankrolls into six-figure bankrolls within a year or two. The one
thing they all had in common? They mastered their skills and put in the time at the tables.

If you want some insight into how I went from $2,000 to $50,000, check out my list of seven ways to build your card counting bankroll here\textsuperscript{[53].}
SUMMING UP
If you have made it this far, then you have everything you need to start making real money from blackjack.

Congratulations!

Having read this far, you know that card counting offers great opportunities. You’re also aware that it isn’t all rainbows and unicorns.

I’ve made tons of mistakes along the way. I’ve had losing streaks that I wouldn’t wish on my worst enemy. And more than a few crazy backoffs from casinos. It is not the simplest career path to explain to relatives and friends who just don’t get it. It has tested my resolve.

But joining the elite group of people beating casinos at their own game has been an incredible journey. It has freed me from ever needing a job, proved to me the value of hard work and self-discipline, and taught me lessons that have applied to nearly every area of my life.

Hopefully this guide has given you a glimpse into what it takes to turn your mind and your money into a casino-crushing card counter. If you want to join the elite group of card counters beating casinos at their own game - either as a hobby that makes you money or as a serious source of income - these are the steps you will need to take.

The great news is that you don’t need to take it all on by yourself! Over the next few weeks, I’ll be sending you a series of lessons by email that will walk you through our best tips and tricks. So you can spend less time worrying about mastering card counting, and start bringing down the house sooner!
I hope you choose to use this information wisely. And I promise you, on behalf of myself and the Blackjack Apprenticeship staff, we will always be 100% brutally honest with you. We don’t teach circus tricks, illegal cheats, or sell false promises. We’ve done the hard work, just like you.

In the meantime, please feel free to browse through the free training tools and blog archives on BlackjackApprenticeship.com.

Changing the World, One Card at a Time,

– Colin Jones

Citation:
8.  The ‘Shoe’ is a device that the dealer uses when dealing a multi-deck blackjack game.