

Poker is one of the fastest growing table games at present. It has always been a popular game. Since tournaments such as *World Series Poker* brought the game to public attention, almost everyone has tried it at least once. The thing about poker is that you don't have to be a great player in order to win – it is less about the cards you are drawn and all about the manner in which you play them. Here then are six main reasons why people play poker.

To Beat the Other Players

The main reason, according to extensive surveys, books and analyses by psychologists, is that people love the challenge. It's about demonstrating your "alpha" credentials, it's about the ego boost. This is just as common for female players as it is for male players. No money could be involved, or millions may be at stake. Either way, the chance of proving yourself the better player to those you perceive to be your equals or superior, is one of the greatest motivations to players. Humans may be social creatures, but that does not mean that we do not seek to dominate within our social groups. **For the Thrill of the Win**

For another group, winning is less about dominating your opponents and more about the pleasure of the achievement. Poker is a competitive sport and the point of competitive sport is the thrill of the win, even when there is no financial gain. Of course, most players would rather win financially but the pleasure of the achievement, of conquering something, of receiving a proverbial gold medal can be reward in itself. It's the same reason people get excited at receiving "Employee of the Month" awards, even if the reward is simply a mention in the company newsletter. **For the Social Element**

As with any other game or pastime, some play purely for the pleasure and social aspect. These players are unfazed by either winning or losing. Poker is a fun game after all. Once you get through the adrenaline, the thrill and the tension, it bonds social groups. Team sports where players are pitched against each other can sometimes lead to friction, but it can be a great bonding process between friends. That social element of humanity comes into play again. For these players, poker is no different from communal video games or a night in with wine and a movie. **For The Financial Gain**

Whether in economically difficult times or not, people play poker because playing against friends is a tax free (in many countries, but not all) way of making a little bit of money. Sure, you can only expect to win small amounts – but just winning a few pounds, dollars or euros is enough to treat the family to a night of leisure. These people play to supplement their income in a small way, but do not make (or expect to make) lots of money from the game. **For The**

Personal Growth

Unlike many other forms of gambling (slot machines, bingo, roulette wheel), poker is a skill. Learning any skill can be physically or mentally gruelling. Skills require practice. Only through developing skills can we become masters of our art. Many people see learning to play poker and constantly improving their skills as a form of personal growth – like art, music, writing and photography. The sense of personal achievement in knowing you are better today than you were last week can be great motivation. **To Become a Professional Player**

There is good reason why the most famous professional gamblers are pro poker players – it's because of the glamour of the game, the excitement of playing or spectating and because of the large amounts of money that are often involved. These people who play against their friends and increasingly in tournaments do so in order to improve their skills so that they might make it

as a professional poker player. Only a small number of players make enough money to live on.