



Poker in clubs

Advice on allowing poker in clubs



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Can we allow poker in our club?

Poker can be played in a members' club or commercial club, but you must take account of the *Code of practice for equal chance gaming in clubs and premises with an alcohol licence*. LAs may request evidence of compliance with the code when conducting an inspection and action can be taken against clubs that do not comply with these provisions.

What are the limits for stakes and prizes?

There may be a maximum value to both the amount that can be staked and the prize that can be offered when playing poker in a club, depending on whether it is a members' club or commercial club, and the type of permit held by the club, if any. The maximum prizes include money, payments-in-kind, vouchers, goods, donated items, goody bags, buy-ins at other poker tournaments and other items which have a value.

Can I run a poker tournament?

The Gambling Commission recommends you take legal advice before you run a poker tournament or league.

A document called *Advice on gaming in clubs and alcohol-licensed premises: Gambling Act 2005* is available on our website and has some examples of ways a tournament might be structured which you may find helpful.





Members' clubs (with club gaming permits)

Members' clubs with club gaming permits are allowed to offer their members poker with unlimited stakes and prizes.

A maximum participation fee of £3 per person per day can be charged.

Commercial clubs are not entitled to club gaming permits, so they cannot offer poker with unlimited stakes and prizes. There are important tests to determine whether a club is a genuine members' club. Any club which offers poker as the primary or only activity of the club, or on a commercial basis, does not qualify as a members' club under the Gambling Act 2005 and, therefore, cannot have a club gaming permit.

Money must not be deducted from any stakes or winnings, and no fee can be charged to take part in the poker, other than the participation fees as mentioned in this guide.

For further information, see the separate quick guide **Members' club or commercial club?** available on our website



Members' clubs and commercial clubs (with or without club machine permits)

The maximum stake per player is £10 per game, and the combined stakes for your premises must not exceed £250 per day and £1,000 per week. The maximum prize is £250 per game.

A maximum participation fee of £1 per person per day can be charged by a members' club, with or without a club machine permit. A commercial club with a club machine permit can charge £3 per person per day, but only £1 if it does not have one.

Clubs wanting to augment the participation fee by requesting that players make a 'donation' towards the cost of hosting a poker event, should be aware that it is irrelevant whether the donation is said to be voluntary or compulsory, particularly if customers are prevented from playing if they do not make the 'voluntary' donation, or there is strong peer pressure to make the donation.

www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk



Can I host a poker league?

Yes, provided it is not linked gaming. The Gambling Act 2005 says that a single game of poker cannot be played across a number of different premises.

Games of poker are linked if:

- players in more than one club or pub are competing in the same game of poker across premises, and the winner of that game of poker gets a prize
- the amount of the prize is determined by the number of people playing in different games of poker in different clubs or pubs.

Poker tournaments where the winners of games, or top players in a series of games, from various club and pub venues go through to play in a tournament final, would not be linked gaming even if the final was held at another venue, for example a licensed casino. The amount each entrant can win depends on the number of games they have played in the tournament. See the example at the end of this guide. You should always keep to the stakes and prizes limits already discussed, in particular the limit of £250 per day and £1,000 per week in combined stakes for the premises.



Clubs organising poker as private gaming

Poker run as private gaming can take place on commercial premises where a members' club hires a room in, for example, a pub or hotel for a private function where equal chance gaming only is played.

However, organisers need to be very careful that the particular area of the pub, hotel or other venue in which the gaming takes place is not, for the purposes of the private function, accessible by members of the public.

Those participating must not be selected by a process which means that, in fact, they are members of the public rather than members of the club. People joining a club to attend and take part in a 'private' event are likely to still be members of the public, particularly if 'club membership' is acquired only a short time before the event. The courts will not allow 'membership' status to be abused in order to circumvent the law. The law in this area is complex and organisers should seek their own legal advice.

It is a condition of private gaming that no charge is made for participation. A deduction from or levy on amounts staked or won by participants in gaming is a charge for participation in the gaming.

How final prize limits are worked out

The maximum prize for each game is always £250, even if it is a regional or national final. They are regarded as separate and distinct games and cannot be linked to the league games.



This player wins a maximum of £2000

	league A	league B	league C	league D
week 8	£250	£250	£250	£250
week 7	£250	no winner	£250	£250
week 6	£250	£250	£250	£250
week 5	£250	not played	£250	£250
week 4	£250	£250		£250
week 3	£250	£250		
week 2	£250	£250		
week 1	£250			

This player wins a maximum of £750

For example, if the player in poker league A reaches a tournament final by playing eight games in the league, the total prize can be no larger than £2000 at the club league level. The player can then win a maximum of £250 at the regional final and another £250 at the national final, if played in a club. If the player in league D only plays in three games in the league out of five games available, his or her total prize can be no larger than £750 at the club league level. Again, the player can then win a maximum of £250 at the regional final and another £250 at the national final.

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