

A one-outer is one remaining card in the deck that can improve a player's hand enough to win. It is a common **poker bad beat term**: you may be far ahead, only for your opponent to catch the single card they need. The phrase sounds simple, but it depends on what cards are known, whether the card really makes a winner, and whether the hand is on the flop or turn.

In Texas Hold'em, a one-outer can turn a likely win into a loss. It can also be misused: players sometimes call any unlikely card a "one-outer," even when several cards would help, or when the supposed out does not actually win. Here's how to count it, estimate the **odds of hitting one out**, and understand why a rare result can feel much more common than it is.

One-outer meaning: one card that can change the result

An **out** is an unseen card that improves your hand. A one-outer means there is just one such card left among the cards you have not seen. Usually, the phrase describes a player who is behind and needs that one card to overtake an opponent.

For example, suppose your opponent has a full house and you have three of a kind. If only one remaining card would give you a better hand, you have one out. If that card arrives, you win; if it does not, you lose—assuming there are no other complications, such as a split pot or a redraw.

The key word is *remaining*. If you can see your own two hole cards and the flop, there are 47 unseen cards, not 52. Your opponent's hidden cards are part of those 47. You generally cannot know exactly which cards are available in a real hand, so one-outer calculations assume the card is genuinely live based on the information you have.

How one-outers fit into Texas Hold'em hand rankings

To decide whether a card is an out, compare the best five-card poker hands each player can make. Texas Hold'em players use any combination of their two hole cards and the five community cards. Suits do not have different strengths: a spade is not stronger than a heart. The hand rankings determine the winner.

Rank Hand Example
1 Royal flush A-K-Q-J-10, all one suit
2 Straight flush Five consecutive cards, all one suit
3 Four of a kind Four cards of the same rank
4 Full house Three of a kind plus a pair
5 Flush Five cards of one suit, not consecutive
6 Straight Five consecutive cards, mixed suits allowed
7 Three of a kind Three cards of the same rank
8 Two pair Two different pairs
9 One pair Two cards of the same rank
10 High card No pair or stronger hand

Even when both players have the same hand category, the kicker matters. If two players have a pair of kings, the player with the better remaining side card—the kicker—can win. So an apparent "out" that makes you a pair may not help if your opponent still has the higher pair or wins on the kicker.

Also, don't mix up a straight draw with a flush draw. A straight needs five consecutive ranks; a flush needs five cards of the same suit. They are different draws, and the number of cards that complete them depends on the board and your hole cards.



The odds of hitting one out

The chance depends on whether you have one card to come or two. On the flop, both the turn and river are still to be dealt. On the turn, only the river remains.

Situation Calculation Chance to hit one out Approximate odds against On the turn, one card to come $1 \div 46$
2.17% 45 to 1 On the flop, two cards to come $1 - (46 \div 47 \times 45 \div 46)$ 4.26% About 22.5 to 1

On the flop, you do not simply have a 2-in-47 chance by imagining two cards are drawn from a fixed 47-card pool; the exact probability is easiest to calculate as the chance of missing twice subtracted from 100%. The chance to miss on the turn is 46/47. If you miss, the chance to miss again on the river is 45/46. That leaves a 4.26% chance to hit at least once across both streets.

These are card-hit probabilities, not guarantees of winning. The card must be live, must improve your hand, and must still be good after any possible redraw. If your one out completes a straight but also completes your opponent's flush, it may not be a winning out at all.

A quick example: the last card that saves you

Imagine the board is **K♠ K♥ 8♦ 8♠ 2♠**. You hold **8♠ 8♥**, giving you four eights, while your opponent holds **K♦ K♣** for four kings. Under standard hand rankings, four kings beat four eights. The remaining **8♦** is already on the board, so it cannot be your out; in fact, the exact cards and board matter greatly here. This is why it's safer to work through the full five-card hands than to rely on a quick label.

Here's a simpler one-outer setup: on the turn, your opponent has a higher four of a kind, and you can win only if the final card gives you a straight flush. If exactly one unseen card completes that winning hand, you have one out on the river: 1 in 46, or about 2.17%. Before calling it a one-outer, verify that the card is not already visible and does not leave your opponent with a stronger hand.

Sanity check: villain's hand versus yours

If villain has a set and you have a flush draw, ask whether a flush card actually beats the set on this board—and whether the board could pair to give villain a full house. If villain has a higher pair and you have a lower pair, a

card that makes you two pair may still lose if villain also improves. Count *winning* cards, not merely cards that make your hand look better.

Why a one-outer feels impossible

A one-outer on the turn hits about 2.17% of the time. That is rare, but it is not impossible. If the same situation happened 100 times with one card to come, you would expect to hit roughly twice on average—not exactly twice, and not on a predictable schedule. You could miss all 100, or hit more than once.

There is also a difference between the odds of one specific outcome and the odds of seeing an unlikely outcome somewhere across many hands. At a busy online table, or over years of playing, you witness a large number of showdowns. Rare events eventually show up. The memorable one-outer tends to stick in your mind; the many routine hands where the favorite holds up do not.

That's why "I was robbed" is an understandable reaction, but it is not a useful conclusion about the cards. A bad beat describes the result, not whether the decision was good or bad. If you got your chips in with the best hand, the opponent's one-card escape does not make your call or raise a mistake. Review the decision with the information available at the time.

Hand odds, probabilities, and four of a kind

It helps to separate **draw odds** from the odds of being dealt a particular final hand. Draw odds ask how likely a card or cards are to arrive given your current hand and the known cards. Hand probabilities describe how often a hand category appears in a specified number of cards.

For a familiar price example, the probability of being dealt four of a kind in a random five-card poker hand is **0.0240% (1 in 4,164)**, also stated as **about 1 in 4,165**. Those figures are rounded ways of expressing the same very rare event. This is a five-card hand probability, not the chance of making four of a kind in Texas [pokerhands-bcb.com](#) Hold'em by the river, where players use up to seven cards. Always check what hand size a chart or calculator is describing.

Do not confuse that 0.0240% figure with the odds of hitting a one-outer. They answer different questions. One is a baseline probability for a five-card deal; the other is a conditional draw calculation based on your known cards and the number of cards to come.

Draw odds by flop, turn, and river

Here are common situations to keep straight. The exact numbers assume a standard 52-card deck and that all listed outs are live. "By the river" means you see both remaining community cards.

Draw or number of outs	On the flop: hit by river	On the turn: hit river	1 out	About 4.26%	About 2.17%
4 outs	About 16.47%	About 8.70%	8 outs	About 31.45%	About 17.39%
9 outs (typical flush draw)	About 34.97%	About 19.57%	15 outs	About 54.12%	About 32.61%

A typical flush draw with nine outs is not a one-outer, and it is not a straight draw. A typical open-ended straight draw has eight cards that complete the straight, though some may be dirty outs if they also help an opponent. These are common patterns, not automatic guarantees: blockers, paired boards, and opponents' possible hands can change the number of clean outs.

Using printable cheat sheets and equity charts

Printable cheat sheets are useful for quick reference at home games or during study. A compact sheet can show hand rankings, common flop-to-river draw odds, and the turn odds for common numbers of outs. Keep it focused: a chart should help you make a decision, not replace checking the board and your opponent's range.

Equity charts show how often a hand wins or ties against another hand or range over the remaining cards. Equity is broader than the odds of hitting a particular out. For instance, you could have several cards that improve your hand but still be behind on some runouts; conversely, you might win by pairing a card that is not an obvious draw completion. Use charts as a learning aid, and make sure they match the game format and number of cards being considered.

How to count outs without fooling yourself

1. **Identify the opponent's likely hand.** Use the action and board, not just the hand you hope they have.
2. **List cards that could make you win.** Evaluate the resulting best five-card hands for both players.
3. **Remove visible and blocked cards.** Your hole cards and community cards cannot appear again.
4. **Check for dirty outs and redraws.** A card may improve you but improve your opponent more, or leave them able to overtake you.
5. **Count cards to come.** Use one-card odds on the turn and two-card odds on the flop.
6. **Separate the result from the decision.** A rare card hitting does not prove the play was wrong.

The takeaway

A one-outer means there is one remaining card that can turn a losing hand into a winner. On the turn, the chance to hit it is about 2.17%; from the flop through the river, it is about 4.26%, assuming the out is live. Those numbers explain why the result feels brutal—and why it can still happen.

When you hear "one-outer," check the hand rankings, count the actual winning cards, and remember the kicker whenever players share the same hand type. A clean out is a card that wins, not merely one that makes your hand prettier. Printable cheat sheets and equity charts can help build that habit, but the most important skill is calmly working through the cards rather than letting one painful river define the whole session.

