



Poker in pubs

Advice on allowing poker in alcohol licensed premises



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Can I allow poker in my pub?

Poker can be played in a pub, but you must take account of the conditions that apply to any gaming in pubs, including limits on stakes and prizes.

Licensing authorities can take action against licence holders who do not comply with these conditions.



Can I run a poker tournament?



The Gambling Commission recommends you take legal advice before you run a 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.

Can I host a poker league?

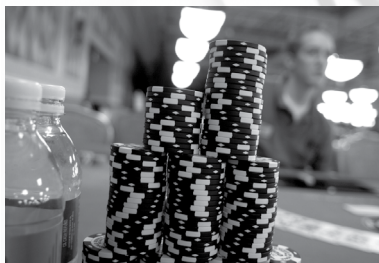


Yes, provided it is not linked gaming. The Gambling Act 2005 says that a game of poker played on one set of premises cannot be linked to a game played on another set of premises.

Games of poker are linked if:

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

Poker tournaments where the winners of games or top players in a series of games from various 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 on the back of this leaflet.

You should always keep to the stakes and prizes limits discussed on the previous page, in particular the limit of £100 per day in combined stakes for the premises.



Stakes and prizes



There is a maximum value to both the amount that can be staked and the prize that can be offered when playing poker in a pub.

The maximum stake per player is £5 per game, and the combined stakes for your premises must not exceed £100 per day.

The maximum prize is £100 per game. This maximum includes money, payments in-kind, vouchers, goods, donated items, goody-bags, buy-ins at other poker tournaments and other items which have a value.

Additionally, you cannot charge a participation fee, including for example by having entrants pay a compulsory charge for a meal.

It is irrelevant whether the charge 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.



Pubs running poker as private gaming

Poker run as private gaming can potentially take place where a group of friends or a members' club hire a room in a pub 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.

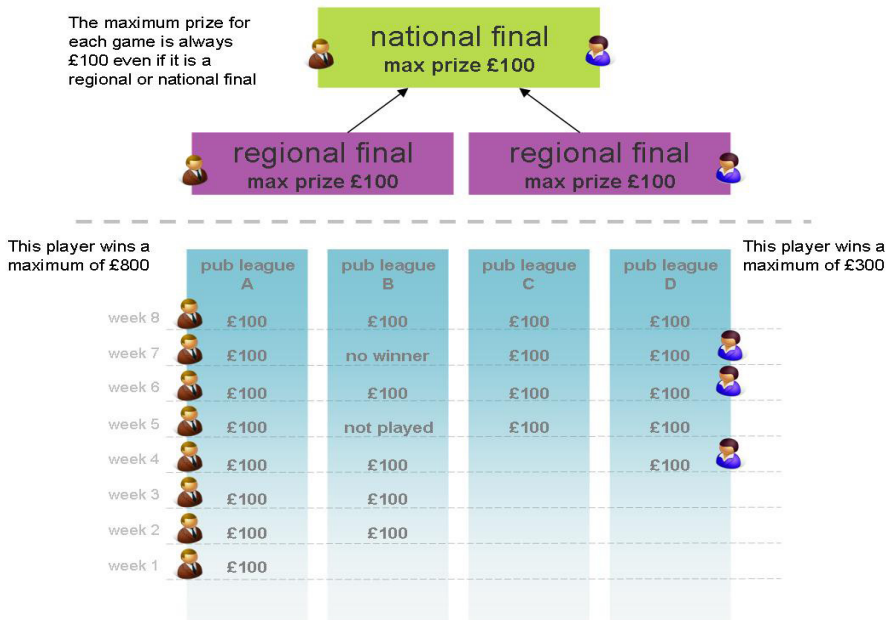
Those participating must not be selected by a process which means that, in fact, they are members of the public rather than members of the club. People joining a club to attend and take part in a 'private' event are likely to still be members of the public, particularly if 'club membership' is acquired 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



For example, if the player in pub league A reaches a tournament final by playing eight games in the league, the total prize can be no larger than £800 at the pub league level. The player can then win a maximum of £100 at the regional final and another £100 at the national final.

If the player in pub 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 £300 at the pub league level. Again, the player can then win a maximum of £100 at the regional final and another £100 at the national final.

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