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Chapter 1

Casino Gambling 101: The Inside Scoop

When you step into a modern megacasino, prepare to be dazzled. Blinking lights and ringing bells signal jackpots. Glittering chandeliers and rich furnishings and fabrics often mimic the sequined gowns and dapper dress of the folks at the high-roller tables. Clinking ice chills your drinks, and courteous staff appear to serve your every whim. When you see and hear these characteristics, you know you've walked into a fantasy world where every hand you play can be a winner, and every pull on the slot machine may make all your dreams come true.

Lucky gamblers make fortunes every day, but the reality is that most money ends up on the *other* side of the table. And the casino, or the *house*, is willing to pour millions of its profits into making sure you walk inside, stay inside, and — most important — gamble inside.

Always remember that, in addition to wanting your business, casinos provide a service to you, so you have every right to shop around for the establishment that best serves your needs. To assist you in your shopping, some casinos have websites where you can take a 360-degree virtual tour without ever leaving your house. We hope this chapter accomplishes a similar goal.

In this chapter we explain and prepare you for what to expect when you step foot into a casino and give you not only a glimpse of the razzle-dazzle designed to distract you but also the blueprint of the typical casino. We explain why this goes here, that goes there, and with whom you interact. Finally, we introduce you to who's watching you while you wander onward with your hand on your wallet and mind in the painted clouds on the starlit ceiling.

(Casino) Knowledge Is Power

The shrewdly packaged allure of the casino starts the minute you pull up to the glittering facade. From neon signs to valets to the smooth hum of the sliding-glass doors, the modern casino entrance is designed to attract you. Every possible consideration is given to design, color, and lighting.

The scheme doesn't end at the front steps, however. As you proceed through the casino's front door, every square inch of floor space entices you into moving forward. Like a siren call, the sounds of winning jackpots beckon you onward, as do the color schemes, floral arrangements, glittering lights, slot machines, and table games. If you aren't prepared, you may become disoriented inside a casino. The master plan behind the traffic flow is to bring you (and your wallet) into close proximity with the slot machines or table games at every opportunity. The pulsating pace of the gambling world is seductive and makes it hard for you to leave a winner.

Feeling overwhelmed — and not a little manipulated? It can be deflating to discover that the sounds, sights, and even smells are devised to lull you into a mesmerized state where you continue emptying your wallet into the casino coffers. But a casino visit doesn't have to be a Svengali-like experience.



REMEMBER

Don't let the harsh realities of the casino world turn you off. Embrace them, because knowledge is power. And by understanding the psychology of casino design and getting to know the employees who perform their duties within the casino, you put yourself in a better position not only to enjoy the casino as an entertaining leisure activity but also to maintain the level-headedness and critical thinking required to succeed at your gambling ventures.

Your mission is to educate yourself *before* you enter these temples of chance. If you build your understanding of the components of a casino and the people who make it run, you're more likely to make rational decisions when it comes to the games you choose to play — and less likely to part with the contents of your pocketbook because of some subliminal pull.

Entering the Casino: What You're Up Against

The first secret to gambling success is to understand the inner workings of the casino world before you're seduced by the flash and dazzle. Casinos are sophisticated and highly successful enterprises — and they don't get that way by giving away money. Your best bet, then, is to be aware of basic casino operations so you can manipulate the experience to your advantage.

Marketing their way to your wallet

They see you coming from miles away. They know exactly who you are, how much money you make, what you like and dislike, and whether you're married, single, or divorced. Who are these omniscient watchers who track your secrets? The IRS? CIA? Political campaign organizers?

None of the above. I'm talking about the marketing gurus at modern casinos. They're constantly studying reams of data on millions of gamblers to develop profiles of guests who most willingly spend their discretionary income on a couple hours of distraction.

Nothing is left to chance in a modern casino. Every possible element, from the design of the wallpaper to the thickness of the carpet, is there to draw you in and keep you gambling as long as possible. All the colors, sights, sounds, and sensations serve one purpose: to make you happy — even when you lose.

Accepting the odds: The house rules

The casino's first commandment is "The house shall always win." A couple of games permit sharp players to break even or eke out a small edge occasionally. But casinos are in business to make money, so for most players, winning is a losing proposition.

Why? Here is a reason, stated three different ways:

- » The house charges a *vigorish* (commission) in some games, such as sports betting.
- » In many games, the casino doesn't pay out *true odds*.

In roulette, for example, there are 37-to-1 odds of guessing the right number. But if you win, the payout is only 35 to 1. This difference may seem small, but that discrepancy actually gives the house one of the biggest edges in the

casino. (Refer to Book 6, Chapter 2 for an explanation of *true odds* and Book 6, Chapter 7 for more info on roulette.)

- » The casino has a *house edge* — a mathematical advantage over the player in any game. Throughout the casino, players must overcome odds that aren't favorable to winning. (Read more about the edge in Book 6, Chapter 2.)



REMEMBER

Your goal is to find games where the casino has the lowest edge. Craps is a great example. This fun, exciting game offers great odds — if you stay away from the *bad* bets. We explore craps in Book 6, Chapter 6.

Protecting your money with a plan



TIP

For most people, developing a strategy for doling out their gambling bankroll can keep them out of serious trouble. Set a budget and stick to it. Consider contingencies (such as losing your bankroll in the first few minutes of your visit) and know how to respond when your wallet gets whacked.

Your strategy, however, is only as good as your willpower. Nothing jacks up casino profits faster than undisciplined gamblers. If you're an impulsive type, then gambling may leave your bank account looking like it just went 15 rounds with a heavyweight boxing champion. (Refer to Book 6, Chapter 3, where we discuss important money-management issues.)

Now, it's certainly true that most people can save their money by avoiding casinos altogether. So the best advice we can give to folks who don't want to lose money is simple: Don't gamble! But the conservative and prudent path in life isn't the only choice. Gambling can be a great way to spice up a vacation and break out of a boring routine. Gambling is all about taking a risk — exposing yourself to a chance of loss.



WARNING

However, don't overdo it. Government studies show that as many as 1 in every 25 adults has a problem with compulsive gambling. Think about that the next time you sit down at a blackjack table. Several people in the pit probably shouldn't be there.

Identifying the colors of the rainbow

Knowledge is power and is your only ally against the formidable forces that threaten to separate you from your hard-earned cash. One piece of knowledge you definitely need, particularly if you're going to wade into the shark-infested waters of table games, is to be able to identify the varying colors and matching denominations of standard casino chips.



REMEMBER

The casinos make this bit easy for you because the chips also have a denomination printed on them so you know the red chip, for instance, is worth \$5 and the green chip is worth \$25. The following is a comprehensive list of common casino-chip colors, as well as their corresponding values:

- » White: \$1
- » Red: \$5
- » Green: \$25
- » Black: \$100
- » Purple: \$500
- » Burgundy: \$1,000
- » Brown: \$5,000

Navigating the Casino Maze

From Monaco, the Las Vegas of Europe, to any modern-day cruise ship, most casinos of the world are laid out in a similar floor plan. Even at the smaller clubs, you recognize many of the same aesthetic and functional characteristics found at the megaresorts. This common design is no accident — casino owners have an intimate knowledge of the gambler's mind, and they design the interiors to make their guests comfortable with parting with their cash.

This section takes a stroll through a typical casino to prepare you for the sights and sounds you encounter when you walk through those neon-bathed doorways. Preparation is the key for maintaining control. You'll understand what we're saying when you find yourself subconsciously reaching for your wallet before you finish the chapter.



TIP

Remember that gambling is the ultimate impulse buy. The casino's layout encourages this impulse. Taking away the mystique is your first step toward improving your odds and coming out a winner. We suggest that, in addition to the virtual walk-through you get by reading this chapter, you do the same in every brick-and-mortar establishment you visit before you drop your first dollar on the table or pump a coin in a slot. Prepare yourself: Stand still, take a deep breath, and look around.

Getting in is the easy part

It may surprise you how fast you can find yourself in the middle of the sensory hurricane on the casino floor. In less restrictive states, such as Nevada and New Jersey, you can walk in off the street or get dropped off by a taxi and find yourself a few feet away from the gaming areas. You're practically holding the door for your significant other with one hand and rolling the dice with the other. After all, casinos want as little as possible to stand between you and your favorite game.

But most casinos give you a chance to catch your breath and do some mental stretching prior to plunging into the action. When you walk in, you often find yourself in a lobby or foyer. Remember that most casinos are also hotels, so you may see familiar sights, such as the concierge, bell desk, and check-in counter. People bustle about and crowd together before they find the destinations suited for them. While some gamblers are anticipating the excitement just steps away, others are exiting with delirious grins on their faces — or expressions of shock and awe.

This bottleneck is no accident; it's part of the calculated marketing strategy to lure you ever closer to the games. At the threshold of the gaming floor, the sounds, colorful lights, and crowd energy all go to work on your senses, even from a distance. Just like an infant reaching for bright colorful objects, casino visitors gravitate to the sights and sounds of the casino floor.

Interior design is to a casino floor plan what aerodynamics is to automobile manufacturers; forward movement is a result of an ever-expanding array of enticements including colors that dazzle, lights that entice, and a temperature scientifically controlled for maximum comfort. You quickly find that every destination in a casino — the guest elevators, the bathrooms, or the buffet — requires that you walk through (or dangerously near) the gaming areas.

Slot machines and video poker stations are positioned just inside the casino entrance. The boys in marketing put them here so you can test the waters and feel the rush a quarter at a time — getting your feet wet right at the casino entrance. Up ahead you see the casino proper, a virtual indoor carnival buzzing with excitement. You can almost feel the energy pulsing.

Slot machines: Place them and they will come

As you enter the casino proper, you see hopeful gamblers feeding tens, twenties, or payout tickets into slot machines, hoping to reap spitting, buzzing payoffs. You operate a slot machine by pushing the buttons or yanking down on the lever to the side. Larger casinos hold aisle after aisle of slots, like rows of corn.



REMEMBER

Casinos typically place the most profitable slot machines within easy access to the main traffic aisles, such as the foyer, restaurants, and bars, and are extremely careful to place high-hit frequency slots within earshot of the thronging masses.

If you venture farther onto the casino floor, you can see this philosophy in action. Clusters of people sit at the corner slots, sometimes two-deep as the individuals standing in line patiently await their turn to enjoy the payoffs. As you venture down the aisles of slots, you may find a few open machines, but not many. As one row ends, another aisle begins. Some of the most popular machines are Double Diamond and Wheel of Fortune. (See Book 6, Chapter 8 for more slot info.)

Table games: Penetrating the inner circle

Just as the sun is the center of the solar system, the table games rest in the middle of the casino system, attracting visitors ever inward and at the same time providing the main source of energy and vitality to the floor. Table games are grouped together into areas known in casino lingo as *pits*. The pits are separated from slot machines, restaurants, and other casino functions by a wide aisle, allowing nonplayers to watch the action and vicariously enjoy the thrill of turning over the winning card or nailing the winning roll.

Table games you can play include

- » **Baccarat:** The classic card game is often played in a separate room to create a more civilized and secluded atmosphere; see Book 6, Chapter 6.
- » **Blackjack:** Determine your own fate with smart decisions and timely double downs; see Book 6, Chapter 5.
- » **Craps:** Roll the dice and hear the crowd roar in the most boisterous game on the floor; see Book 6, Chapter 7.
- » **Poker:** It's just like your neighborhood game, except you never have to shuffle; see Book 2.
- » **Roulette:** Pick a number, place your bet, and then watch the spinning wheel go round and round; see Book 6, Chapter 8.



REMEMBER

If you're a high roller, the most exclusive gaming tables with the highest betting limits are often in adjoining rooms, separated by glass from the other tables. They feature fancy amenities, such as private cocktail servers or a bar.

But most table games are designed for moderate bettors. The loud, boisterous call of a lively crowd gathered around the craps table can seem like a siren song to players tempted to leave the boredom and repetition of the slots, and that's no

accident. The intimate nature of the poker table beckons would-be strategists, while the smoky haze surrounding a blackjack game cries out to the novice with its lack of intimidation.

The bar: Quiet escape — or not?

Most casinos have a bar that's central to the main action. A large casino may offer numerous bars interspersed throughout the floor, each with a unique theme. Some feature live music, and some are simply service bars where you can take a quick pit stop away from the flow of traffic. But if you're picturing a quiet setting of soft music, hushed whispers, and clinking glasses, you're going to be disappointed. There's no escaping the games: Casino bars are in the midst of the lively pits.



REMEMBER

Casinos profit from the fact that alcohol lubricates the ATM card. But no casino wants drunk patrons, so the line they walk is a delicate one, and the policy on pushing alcohol consumption may vary from place to place. In addition, every state has different laws governing alcohol consumption inside its casinos, so there is no single unifying rule about how alcohol is handled inside betting areas. Some tribal casinos don't serve it at all, so if sipping on a stiff one as you play is important, make sure you do your homework before you leave home. The bottom line: The drinking environment varies widely, so the smartest play is to find a scene that suits your tastes, and always strive to stay in complete control.



TIP

If you don't feel like leaving your table to head to the bar, most casinos have servers who take drink orders. You can pay and tip them with chips from the casino or cash. However, if you want to eat, most casinos don't allow eating at the table. You need to visit one of the many restaurants to chow down.

Cashing out: Heading to the cashier's cage

The cashier's *cage* is where you redeem your *markers* — the chips the casino uses to represent cash — for hard cash and where you redeem your slot payout ticket. (You must buy your chips at the tables, and you must cash out at the cashier's cage.)

Every casino has cashier's cages — the larger the casino, the more cages you find. If the slot machines and gaming tables are the arteries that circulate a casino's input and output, the cashier's cage is the heart that pumps the casino's lifeblood: money. Highly trained and supremely trusted casino employees handle more cash each shift than most people see in a lifetime.

Cashier's cages are easy to find. Casinos typically locate them along the sides of the rooms to allow the more valuable floor space for games. Here, much like at a bank, one or more tellers deal with the public through a window.

CASINO CASHIERS: BEHIND BARS NO MORE

In the old days, the cashier's cage earned its moniker because it was, as the name implies, behind bars. Today's technology and construction make the modern cashier's cage much more inviting, providing maximum security without looking like Fort Knox. You can usually find casino cashiers in the core of the casino layout, as far from any exit as possible, which means the casino's money is more secure. This location also offers a beneficial side effect that casinos are happy to take advantage of. Their centrality means the cashier's cage is often in the lion's den of the most enticing betting areas, tempting many recent winners to *recycle* their bills by turning them right back into chips at a nearby table.



If you're worried about leaving with your big winnings, you can request a check or get a safety deposit box in most casinos.

REMEMBER



TIP

In addition to the cashier's cage, casinos usually offer a credit office. Depending on how big a player you are and the type of games you want to attack, you may want to ask for a line of credit. You can also get change, receive incoming money via a wire service, and even receive bank wire transfers (with proper ID, of course!). If you're interested in a line of credit, check out Book 6, Chapter 3, where we provide all the pros and cons.

Meeting the Casino's Cast of Characters

A vast and sometimes complicated hierarchy of employees with a variety of titles, responsibilities, and even different styles of dress populates a casino. These workers simultaneously cater to the needs of the guests and the casino owners. No matter who they are, the casino employees all have one goal in common: to provide you with ample opportunities to try your luck against the unevenly stacked house odds.

Casino employees are usually pleasant, professional, and well-trained individuals (after all, if you're treated with courtesy and respect, you're more likely to stay — and spend — longer). In this section, we introduce you to the pleasant cast of characters you may encounter, and we explain their unique roles. With this knowledge, you're better equipped to take advantage of their services — to *your* advantage.

In the pits: Serving the table players

As you explore the responsibilities of the various casino personnel, it helps to split the casino into two parts:

- » The area where slot machines appear in endless rows (see the section “Slot employees: The reel dealers”).
- » The area where you play table games, such as blackjack, craps, or roulette.

The casino arranges the tables in clusters, similar to wagon trains encircled to protect against an attack. These groups of tables are known as *pits*. Each pit is designed to be an autonomous, fully functioning business, equipped with a variety of table games and a small community of casino personnel that is always willing to usher your dollar bills into the casino coffers.

Pit bosses

Pit bosses are smartly attired, experienced professionals who are responsible for all the gaming operations in their assigned pits. As the name implies, pit bosses are just that: bosses. They supervise floorpersons (see the next section), dealers (see the section “Dealers”), and the players within their pit. Theirs is a very detail-oriented job, requiring not only intimate knowledge of all aspects of the games but also the ability to keep track of thousands of dollars flowing through their spheres of influence. Even though the average gambler probably doesn’t have much contact with a pit boss, in the event of a serious dispute, the pit boss is the one who steps in to settle matters.

Among other tasks, pit bosses monitor *credit markers*, or the amount of credit extended to you (we explore credit markers in greater detail in Book 6, Chapter 3), and they dispense *comps*, such as free meals or shows (see “Casino hosts” later in this chapter for the lowdown on comps), doled out according to an elaborate formula based on the number of hours you play and the amount of money you wager.

Winning or losing vast sums of money often ignites supercharged emotions. Another responsibility of the pit boss is to make sure those emotions don’t explode into conflict. The pit boss is there to congratulate as well as to calm, to soothe as well as to strong-arm. The pit boss’s job is part security staff, part supervisor, part gambling expert, and part public relations manager.

Floorpersons

Reporting to each pit boss (see the previous section) are several other *suits* known as *floorpersons*. The main difference from pit bosses is that floorpersons are in charge of only a couple of tables in the pit and report directly to the pit boss. They

dress and act like the pit boss, and you typically can't distinguish between the two without asking. Both of them make sure that proper casino procedure is followed. These procedures include refilling dealer chip racks, monitoring markers, and handing out comps, all while remaining cool and calm.

Dealers

For most people, gambling is a social sport. Because the machine games are a more solitary venture, many players prefer the camaraderie of table gaming. *Dealers* are at the center of this emotional wheel of fun. Excellent customer-service skills are a requirement; after all, dealers stand on the front line when it comes to irate, belligerent, or inebriated gamblers. Even during high-pressure situations, dealers must promote a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere.

Dealers have their fingers on the pulse of the casino — figuratively and literally. Their hands, after all, deal the blackjacks and the full houses and take the money you lose or pay off your winners. Theirs is a high-pressure job with a demanding audience. Overseeing several players at a table, dealers must be confident in their gambling knowledge. They must know who wins, who loses, and how much to pay out on each hand. Many players mistakenly believe that dealers simply shuffle and deal cards, but dealers must also handle dice, chips, and money — accurately and quickly.



REMEMBER

Dealers have a wide range of personalities. Some are polite and ebullient, others efficient and brusque. Although finding a compatible dealer doesn't change the cards or the size of your winnings, it can make your gaming experience more enjoyable and, sometimes, that's as much as you can ask for. You can spot a good dealer by his or her smile, humor, demeanor, and often the size of the crowd at the table. When you find one you like, sit down, but remember the dealer has no control over the outcome. Most dealers prefer that you win because they make their money primarily from tips.

Slot employees: The reel dealers

The average American casino makes nearly two-thirds of its profits from its various slot machines. Much is at stake along the rows and rows of cling-clanging slot machines and electronic games. Therefore, casinos are diligent when it comes to maintaining and stocking them for long-term play. Just like the pit bosses and dealers who watch over the table games (see the previous section), the staff members assigned to the slot machines — the slot attendants and the slot supervisors — keep a careful eye on their vast realm.

Slot attendants

The person you're most likely to deal with if you have a problem or question about your machine is a *slot attendant*. Slot machine attendants are on constant vigil, ever watchful for the next jackpot or flashing light requesting service. The attendants, who are usually in uniform, are the perfect people to ask if you're not sure how to play a particular machine; they know every bell, cherry, and bar like the back of their hand.



REMEMBER

If you need assistance with a game, summon a slot attendant, who's usually at your beck and call. However, if a machine needs repair, the slot attendant calls a slot technician.

Slot supervisors

The slot supervisor rules the realm of the slot machines, managing employees and overseeing the maintenance and upkeep of the machines. The slot supervisor generally has several slot attendants as direct reports. Casual gamblers generally won't interact with slot supervisors.

Management: Running the tables

In addition to the employees who ensure the smooth-running operations on the floor, a host of other casino personnel contribute to the success of the house. As a beginning casino player, you may not come into contact with any of these people. However, if you do, management employees, such as the casino host, may become familiar (and friendly) faces.

Casino hosts

Modern casino hosts best resemble a successful hotel concierge: They're both at your service. Whether dealing with new guests, loyal customers, or high rollers, the casino host focuses on service, service, and more service.

A typical casino host is an affable and professional employee whose mission is to serve your every need. Hosts are hands-on people who greet VIP guests at the door and pamper them throughout their stay. Depending on the size and popularity of the casino and the thickness of your wallet, a casino host may

- » Comp your rooms
- » Arrange for greens fees at the golf course
- » Get tickets to sold-out shows
- » Give away free meals



REMEMBER

If it's your first time in a casino, don't expect to have the keys to the penthouse at Caesar's Palace handed to you. But even low rollers can make a relationship with the casino host profitable. Keep the following in mind:

- » **Join the club:** The casino host expects you to be a casino loyalty club member before you're offered many comps. And don't forget to use your club card whenever you play.
- » **Express yourself:** Don't wait for the host to find you in the penny slots area; go introduce yourself to the host.
- » **Be loyal:** Find your favorite gambling locale and stick to it. Even small-scale visits can make you a valuable customer if they're repeated regularly.
- » **Just ask:** The players who get comps are the ones who ask the casino host. Don't be rude or demanding, just ask politely and see what benefits you qualify for.



REMEMBER

Player development is all about forming relationships. Casino hosts are eager to wine and dine you if they believe they can create player loyalty through these lavish perks. Although player-development departments often employ telemarketers or other representatives to reach out to players through databases, casino hosts achieve their goals on a one-on-one basis by working their cellphones and roaming the casino floors, seeking ways to make their clients' gaming experiences more enjoyable.

Other managers

As in other walks of life, every casino employee has to report to somebody, and those somebodies are the *shift managers*. The shift managers then report to the casino manager. As the name implies, shift managers are responsible for their areas of casino expertise (such as slots or table games) during a particular shift (day, swing, and graveyard). Most land-based casinos are 24/7 operations, so shift managers must be prepared to work weekends, holidays, and late-night shifts.

When player disputes arise, money needs to be accounted for or items need to be authorized; the shift manager takes on these duties as well. Shift managers are responsible for employee schedules, customer service, comps, credit, and a host of other duties that make for a mind-boggling job.

The only position above the shift manager is the casino manager. You rarely see this head honcho on the floor, but he's the ultimate decision-maker for most gaming operations. As a beginning casino player, you aren't too concerned about who the casino manager is. The only time you may ever interact with the manager is if you win enough money to buy the casino.

Maintaining a Safe and Secure Environment

In today's massive casinos, five-star hotels merge with gargantuan, themed buildings, encompassing entire city blocks and housing restaurants, bars, theaters, nightclubs, gaming tables, slot machines, ATMs, snack bars, gift shops, and even the occasional theme park. A casino's security division, therefore, must function much like the police department of an entire town.

This section explains who the security personnel are, lets you in on who's watching you, and details how you can be proactive to protect yourself when betting your hard-earned money.

Security personnel: The human touch

In the old days, casinos simply had hired muscle watch after the owners' millions. These days, casino security folks are considered important members of a casino's floor team. Because it's a dynamic and demanding job, casino security has become a true career; casinos offer competitive salaries and benefits so they can hire people who are mentally *and* physically fit.



REMEMBER

Security staffs have a two-pronged task:

- » Protect the casino's property
- » Safeguard the casino's guests

Unfortunately, a security employee's job is made less agreeable by the fact that one task doesn't always go hand in hand with the other. For instance, some guests are also out to separate a casino from its money, either through cheating or through faking an injury in crowded conditions.

The responsibilities of security employees range from viewing the rows of surveillance cameras in high-tech rooms to patrolling the casino floors, constantly on vigil for fights, thieves, drunks, and other disturbances. Surprisingly, security also keeps a close eye on the help — casino employees have initiated many cheating scams over the years.

You can easily spot the security staff; they're always available to help you resolve a conflict or point you in the right direction. Even though every casino is different,

security staff typically wear a uniform that is quasi-military, with a shirt that says *SECURITY* or at least a nametag or badge that identifies them as such. Other identifying features include a walkie-talkie, a badge, and possibly a gun.

Bigger hotels can have several dozen security officers working at the busiest times of day and a supervisor in each major area of the casino who manages the team. Security supervisors must wear many hats, including the hat of a diplomat. Their staff is on the front lines, both protecting and ejecting guests, and when the occasional temper flares or a misunderstanding arises, the security supervisor must wade in to render an on-the-spot verdict.

Surveillance: The eye in the sky

On-site security personnel at a casino can only see so much when trying to protect the casino and its guests. To assist them in their daily rounds, security personnel rely on electronic surveillance — *the eye in the sky*.

One-way glass conceals thousands of digital cameras in any casino. Some are hidden where you least expect them. Others are prominent, large, and noticeable to serve as warnings. Technology is such today that sophisticated cameras can see not only a player's face but also the cards in his or her hands and even the serial numbers on dollar bills. On-site security personnel can view banks of television screens to identify cheats and save casinos millions of dollars each year.



REMEMBER

Although most surveillance is for the detection and prevention of cheating and swindling, the eye in the sky also protects honest gamblers from slick crooks prowling the casino for easy prey. The newer casinos have cameras outside the building, such as in the parking garages, to cast the safety net farther for you.

Taking safety into your own hands

The modern casino should be a carefree environment where you forget your troubles, spend money, and — with hope — win some money back. Although winning isn't always possible, at the very least you expect a safe environment in which to gamble. Unfortunately, where innocent, naive, and trusting people congregate in great numbers — surrounded by huge amounts of disposable income — the predators of society gather as well. Thieves are on the prowl for ways to separate you or even the casinos from hard-earned cash.



TIP

Although casinos implement the most stringent security measures and the latest in state-of-the-art surveillance technology, you, as a prudent casino guest, should assume responsibility for your own safety. The following tips can help you avoid becoming a victim of a casino predator:

- » Tuck your wallet in a safe, hard-to-access spot, such as your front pocket.
- » If you carry a purse, take a small one that you can wear close to your body, preferably under a jacket or wrap.
- » Guard your chips or slot payout tickets; these work the same as money, so treat them accordingly.
- » If you go to the casino solo, be cautious about the overly friendly people you meet. Maintain tight control of your personal information, get your drinks straight from the cocktail servers, and keep your big wins to yourself so you don't become a target.