

If you've ever found yourself sitting in front of a brightly lit casino slot machine, wondering if there's a smarter choice with better chances, you're not alone. The longstanding debate of **slots vs video poker** often comes down to odds, skill, and player strategy. In this post, we dive deep into comparing the odds of video poker and slots, examining concepts like RTP (Return to Player), house edge, and the role of strategy—while breaking it down into simple, everyday terms.

Understanding RTP: Return to Player

When comparing *video poker RTP* and slot machine RTP, the starting point is understanding what RTP means. RTP is a percentage representing how much a machine or game pays back to players over an extended period, usually per 100 spins or hands.

For example, an RTP of 95% means that for every 100 spins or hands played with a theoretical bet of \$1 each, the machine will pay back \$95 on average over a long enough run. The remaining \$5 per \$100 wagered is the house edge, which is the casino's built-in advantage.

RTP: A Long-Term Measure

It's vital to stress that RTP is a statistical average based on millions of spins or hands — it does NOT mean if you insert \$100, you'll get \$95 back immediately. Think of it more like this:

- Out of 100 hands spun or dealt, the game returns X amount based on the RTP.
- In the short term, variance can cause big swings both winning and losing.
- Over hundreds or thousands of spins/hands, the RTP figure tends to emerge.

House Edge vs Payout Percentage

RTP and house edge are two sides of the same coin:

Term	Definition	Example
RTP (Return to Player)	The percentage of total money wagered that a game theoretically returns to players over time.	95% RTP means on average you get back \$95 for every \$100 wagered
House Edge	The casino's advantage — the percentage of wagers kept by the house on average.	A 5% house edge corresponds to 95% RTP

In simple terms: **Higher RTP = Lower house edge = Better odds for player.**

Slots vs Video Poker: What Are the RTP Differences?

Typically, slot machines have an RTP ranging from about 90% up to about 97%, depending on the game and casino. Video poker games tend to have somewhat higher RTPs—many versions hover between 97% and over 99% when played with an optimal strategy.

Here's a small RTP comparison example for popular games:

Game	Typical RTP
Slot machines (average)	90% - 97%
Jacks or Better Video Poker (with perfect strategy)	99.54%
Deuces Wild Video Poker (perfect strategy)	Approximately 100.76% (positive expectation)

These numbers illustrate why many players prefer video poker from an odds perspective — the RTP percentage is often higher, especially when employing the right strategy.

Probability Basics for Casino Games

Understanding why video poker can have better odds leads us into the world of probability. Each game uses a random number generator (RNG) to determine outcomes, but the underlying mechanics differ.



Slots

- Slots use several reels with symbols, each with weighted probabilities.
- Outcomes depend on symbol combinations, which are pre-programmed with chances weighted by software.
- Players cannot affect outcomes — spinning is pure chance.

Video Poker

- Video poker is like a single-player poker hand where you get five cards.
- Each card distribution is random but follows a standard deck composition.
- Players have choices on which cards to hold or discard, influencing the final hand.

In video poker, probability is calculated via combinatorics—the possible hands given your hold/discard decisions. This decision-making introduces skill elements to reduce the house edge.

Volatility and Variance: What to Expect

Variance and volatility describe the expected swings in your bankroll during play. Both slots and video poker can vary widely in these regards.



- **Slots** often have high volatility, meaning you might lose a lot over short sessions but have a chance of hitting big jackpots. Many modern slots pay small winnings often but can also have “dry spells.” On average, slots deliver outcomes purely by randomness without player input to change variance.
- **Video poker** volatility depends on the variant. Jacks or Better tends to have medium variance, with smaller but more frequent payouts. Deuces Wild or Double Bonus can have higher variance due to larger payouts for specific hands.

Video poker’s major advantage is the player’s ability to influence variance and expected RTP through strategy—holding or discarding cards shifts probabilities for different payoffs.

Impact of Strategy in Video Poker

This is where video poker truly stands apart from slots. Because you decide which cards to hold or discard after the initial deal, your skill level directly influences your expected payout.

Optimal Strategy vs No Strategy

Consider “Jacks or Better” video poker:

- Playing with perfect strategy: RTP ~ 99.54%
- Playing without optimal strategy: RTP could drop below 97%

With slots, you cannot influence RTP or house edge regardless of how you play—the spin button is all there is. In video poker, learning and applying optimal strategy significantly improves your chances by reducing the house’s advantage.

Examples of Strategy in Action

- Keep a high pair over a lower pair.
- Hold four cards to a flush rather than a single high card.
- Discard lesser cards in hopes of drawing to a straight or better hand.

Strategy charts and training software help players learn the ideal plays for each hand scenario, fine-tuning how to maximize payouts. This makes video poker akin to a “skill-based” casino game, unlike slots.

Bankroll Note: Managing Your Play

Whether [what is slot volatility](#) you play slots or video poker, managing your bankroll wisely is critical. Since the house edge is real, losing streaks will happen. Here's a few rules of thumb for bankroll considerations:

- **Video poker:** Because of its lower house edge, a smaller bankroll can last longer—but you should still expect swings, especially in high variance variants.
- **Slots:** High volatility means be prepared for bigger ups and downs. Larger bankrolls and disciplined session limits help avoid early bustouts.
- Always set session limits and wager levels proportionate to your bankroll size.

Summary: Is Video Poker Better Odds Than Slots?

Let's sum up the question with key points:

1. **Video poker generally offers better odds than slots** because its RTP tends to be higher—often exceeding 99% with correct strategy—while most slots RTP caps near 97%.
2. **Strategy dramatically impacts video poker RTP**, with skillful play reducing the house edge. Slots do not offer player-influenced decisions that affect odds or payout.
3. Volatility varies by game but slots generally have higher variance, meaning bigger swings but also more chance of big wins. Video poker variance depends on the variant but often offers steadier payouts.
4. Probability in video poker is influenced by player choice (which cards to hold/discard), whereas slots outcomes are pure random chance weighted by pay tables.

If you enjoy interactive play with a strategic element and are keen on maximizing your odds, video poker is usually the smarter choice. However, slots offer entertainment and excitement with the occasional chance of a big jackpot but come with higher risk and lower long-term returns.

In any case, understanding RTP, house edge, and managing your bankroll is the foundation to making informed gaming decisions.

Remember: No casino game is "due" for a win or loss based on previous outcomes. Each hand or spin is independent with odds fixed by the game's programming.