

How to Spot, Stop, and Top a Cheater

Up to this point we have been telling you that a Monopoly game is only a game. We're sorry. We lied. To some people it must be a life-and-death experience. Why else would people who are otherwise kind, honest, and moral decide to become criminals?

We've all felt the temptation to cheat at one time or another, but naturally we've suppressed it. But don't be so sure that your neighbor, your wife, or your mother-in-law will have the willpower that you have. The more you beat them, the more frustrated they will get. The more frustrated they get, the more likely it will become that some "accidents" might happen which were not happening before. We can't explain why, but we can explain how. That's what this chapter is for.

So here they are, the most frequently used, effective ways of cheating in a Monopoly game. Forewarned is forearmed.

1. Watch out for the player who seems to spend a large part of the game collecting his Go salary. One good explanation for why a player may seem to be collecting a lot of Go money is that he is collecting it more than once each time around the board. If a player suddenly remembers that he passed Go two turns earlier, make a mental note of it and see if he remembers "late" again later on in the game. It could be that he is remembering twice each time he passes Go! The way to prevent this is to make sure that the Banker pays players their \$200 the moment that they pass or land on Go. In college

tournaments the Banker actually keeps a checklist to prevent double or forgotten payments.

2. This one is extremely difficult to prove, so watch out for the player who looks like he is about to try it. When a player buys \$1100 worth of houses and throws a pile of hundreds into the Bank to pay for them, how do you know how much money he's paid? If that pile of hundreds landed on another pile of hundreds, there's almost no way to tell. The high cost of houses is a great enticement for players to try and shortchange the Bank a little (a lot?). There is usually only one sure way to stop this type of cheating. Make it a "house rule" that whenever any houses are bought, the money must be counted in the center of the board to prevent mistakes.

3. During the game, keep an eye on the Banker and how efficiently he operates. Watch for any signs that he is mixing his own money with the Bank's. Often a cheat will suddenly pull money out of the Bank, and explain, "Oh, the Bank owed me \$300—I lent it some hundreds a few turns ago when it ran out." If you suspect any embezzling, maybe it's time you asked if you could try your hand at banking for a while.

4. There are quite a few cheating methods which can be categorized generally as "wrong change maneuvers." By using these, one of your opponents could be getting more than the proverbial five pennies for his nickel. (Groucho Marx always did argue for a good 7-cent nickel.) There are two outstanding methods in this category.

a. When one player owes another player a large debt, the creditor will often ask that the debtor convert his small change to large bills. The debtor will count his money and toss it into the Bank (similar to the building cheat) and explain that the Bank now owes his creditor the required sum. This is the small change

cheat. You can stop him by insisting that no player other than the Banker ever be allowed to put or take money from the Bank. Keeping the Bank neat can also help, since it is harder for a cheat to toss his money in and immediately make it indistinguishable from the rest of the Bank's funds.

b. Sometimes, when a player passes Go, instead of collecting two one-hundred-dollar bills, he takes a five-hundred-dollar bill, muttering something to the effect of, "I'll take five hundred and pay the Bank three hundred." Make sure that when a player says that he'll pay \$300, he actually does. Once again, the best way to prevent accidental \$500 collections is to require that all transactions go through the Banker.

5. Do you know what the world's most widely held currency is? If you guessed "Monopoly money," you were correct. There is more Monopoly money in general circulation today than there is U.S. currency. (However, the present U.S. inflation is giving the game a "run for the money.") Here's how a cheat uses this fact to his own advantage.

Before he comes to the game, he takes a couple of one-hundred-dollar bills from his Monopoly set at home and puts them in his shirt pocket (\$700 is usually a nice amount). During the game, he puts some of his cash-on-hand *into* his shirt pocket, being careful to make sure that another player notices him put it there. The other player can't be sure how much he put in, but he does notice several bills (a \$100 bill on top of five \$10 bills). Some time later in the game, our cheat takes a large wad of money out of his pocket. If anyone questions where this money came from, he explains that he'd saved it from earlier in the game and calls on his "witness" to document his story.

This type of cheat is pretty smart. The best way to stop such "inflation" is to require that all money be kept on the table at all times. Technically, it is perfectly legal to hide your money in your pocket or under the

board, but it is considered good sportsmanship to keep your money on the table at all times and to accurately answer anyone who asks you how much cash you have. Make it a "house rule" that no money may leave the table, explaining that this will help alleviate any confusion as to who has how much money. Watch out for players who are constantly dropping their money. They may be picking up some spare cash.

6. Always be suspicious of the player who moves pieces without counting squares and also seems to have the amazing luck to miss your color group every time. Many people can move pieces without counting the squares, but it's a good idea to check their moves very carefully. Dice are very easy to misread, either accidentally or intentionally. When their mistakes are pointed out, it is also very common for these cheats to suddenly remember starting from a square quite different from the one which you remember. If you feel that this type of cheat has become a problem in your game, insist that after each roll of the dice, the roll be announced properly so that there is no confusion. The method which is most useful is to announce the number shown on the dice and the square from which the turn began. For example, if you are on Illinois Avenue and roll a seven, you would say, "Seven from Illinois." If this is done before the token is moved or the dice are picked up, many "accidents" can be prevented.

7. The next trick is a dice trick. Often when a player rolls doubles, he picks up the dice, gives just a little shake, and rolls doubles again. Most of the times this happens, it is unintentional, but every so often . . . The best thing to do is to insist that all players shake the dice well before each roll.

8. Watch out for the "It's leaning!" cheat. He's the guy who rolls a five, lands on your well-developed color group, and then suddenly notices that one of the dice is leaning against the pile of Chance cards. True, it's only leaning slightly (maybe imperceptibly), but he will demand another throw of the dice so that they will lie flat. A variation on this type of cheater is the player who rolls one dice on top of one of the piles of cards. Since there is no standard agreement as to whether this is a "good" or a "bad" roll, he quickly calculates whether or not he likes the number showing on the dice. If he does, he takes it; if he doesn't, he declares that a dice on top of a pile of cards is obviously "bad." The way to stop this cheat is to agree at the beginning of the game (or the first time the situation occurs) what will and what will not count as fair rolls of the dice. A fairly standard agreement is that any time both dice land on the board and do not lean unreasonably the number counts.

9. The next few cheaters work with Chance and Community Chest cards. First is the one who simply misreads them. A player has to have a very good reason not to want the card he drew to take the high risk of getting caught at misreading. Usually he will save his misreading for the "Advance to Boardwalk" or "Advance to Illinois Avenue" card. In general, it's a good idea to ask each player to show all the other players the card he picks before replacing it at the bottom of the deck.

10. Another common card cheater is the one who slightly bends the corner of the deadlier cards as he reads them. In this manner, he knows when the dangerous cards are the next to come up. If he is unfortunate enough to land on the Chance square when one of these cards is on top, he suddenly becomes very clumsy and knocks the entire pile of cards across the room. What an

interesting coincidence! Keep your eye out for "marked" cards.

11. This type of cheating is employed at the start of the game. The cheater pretends to shuffle the Chance and Community Chest cards without drawing much attention to himself. He subtly puts the "Advance to Boardwalk" card on top of the deck. After play begins, if he is the first person to land on a Chance square, he gleefully draws the card and advances to Boardwalk, which he promptly buys. If another player lands on a Chance square first, he exclaims, "Did anyone cut these cards?" and quickly cuts them himself, preventing the opponent from drawing the "Advance to Boardwalk" card right away. If some other player says he saw the cheat shuffle the cards himself, he explains that he shuffled the Community Chest, but not the Chance cards. To stop this one, just make sure that the Chance and Community Chest cards are shuffled and cut in full view before every game.

12. The last type of card cheater is the "holdout cheater." He fails to return the card which he drew back to the deck. This can happen accidentally, too, so if he gets caught there isn't too much suspicion. The "holdout cheater" will drop the "bad" card on the floor or gently slide it under his properties. If it is an important enough card, this can make a very big difference in the outcome of the game. Some holdout cheaters even go so far as to remove cards before the game begins and then "find" them when they see it is to their advantage to have the card in circulation. To beat the "holdout cheater," skim through the Chance cards *before* they are shuffled at the beginning of the game and make sure that all 16 Chance cards are there. Then, once the game has begun, watch very carefully where those cards go when they are drawn.

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13. Since title deed cards have a lot of numbers on them, mistakes occur fairly frequently when they are used. With some people, however, such mistakes are not always accidental. When asked how much rent is owed, this type of cheat quickly answers the rent which would be charged if there were one more house on his property. This is most likely to occur:

- a. when the houses are sloppily arranged on the color group, or
- b. shortly after he has sold several houses back to the Bank. The excuse here is, "Oh, I forgot I sold those back to the Bank a few turns ago!"

To stop this cheat can sometimes be slightly embarrassing. After all, it seems impolite to say, "Let me see the title deed" every time you land on an opponent's color group. The best method to prevent this type of error is to familiarize yourself with the approximate rents and to check to see how many houses are actually built on the property on which you have landed. When your opponent announces the rent, make sure it sounds reasonable. The rent shouldn't be very high if he hasn't reached the critical level. If the rent requested seems unfair, ask your creditor to double-check, stating clearly the number of houses he should be checking the rent for. If it is really an accident, the creditor will discover his mistake. If he's a cheat, this is usually enough to change his mind. But don't think he won't try it again!

One last word about proper rent collection. Remember that the last property in each color group has rents slightly higher than the other properties in the same color group. By accident, a player will often use the more expensive title deed card when computing what rent you owe. Make sure that you do not pay the rent for the more expensive property unless you land on that property. On the more expensive color groups it can make quite a difference.

14. Some players won't realize that this next maneuver is cheating. It is illegal to remain in Jail more

than three turns. The cheat will try and stay for five or six turns. Why? Because if there are a lot of color groups well-developed with houses and hotels, what safer place to be than in Jail? A person in Jail can build, collect rents, and trade, just like a person out of Jail. The only thing he can't do is pay rents to his opponents. Most players who stay in Jail too long do so by accident. It is a good idea to take three one-dollar bills, marked "1st," "2nd," and "3rd," and place them by the Jail square. Then, after each roll of the dice of a player in Jail, the next dollar bill is turned over to show how long the player has been in Jail. Remember, three strikes and you're out!

15. Watch out for the Monopoly rule creator. He claims to know every last rule and manages to have the right rule for every occasion. He is at his best when your Monopoly set is missing its copy of the rules. By now you have a thorough knowledge of all the important rules. Don't let this cheat make up a few rules to benefit himself. Otherwise, you'll see him buy a house for \$50 to put on his Mediterranean Avenue, and then slide it around the corner to his Boardwalk!

16. This is an especially dangerous type of cheat. He's the "selective memory" cheater. When you make a deal with him, he will remember all sorts of conditions later which you never put into the deal. His trick is to include all sorts of possible terms while negotiating and to later pretend that he *thought* you agreed to something which was in fact discussed but dropped from consideration. He will use all sorts of psychological tricks and call all of the other players as witnesses. The only sure way to outfox this guy is to write down all arrangements which have any lasting effect. This may seem like a bother, but it's not half as bad as the screaming which is bound to arise when everyone trusts their memories. If, for some reason, you can't write your deals down, at least repeat

exactly what was agreed on at the conclusion of the negotiations for every trade. Be certain that the other players in the game—the ones who weren't involved in negotiations—hear and understand the arrangements.

17. The last type of cheater is the worst—the liar. Suppose you want to sell him a Red property. You ask him if he has the other two Red properties and he replies, "No, I only have one." So, you sell him your property. Two minutes later, he discovers, "Look at this! I *did* have the other Red property. It was hiding at the bottom of all my money!" It may really have been an accident, but that's no comfort to you. It is illegal to lie to your opponents about which properties you do or do not have. You can mislead your opponents by keeping some properties mortgaged, but you can never lie and tell your opponent that you do not own something which in fact you really do own. The only defense against "accidental discovery" is to know what your opponent does or does not own. Pay attention when properties are bought. Otherwise you become easy prey for the pathological liar.

This concludes the section on some of the more popular forms of cheating. There is one more thing that should be discussed, however. Now that you know how to spot and stop 17 possible ways of cheating, don't rush out and accuse everyone in sight of being a cheater. A lot of honest mistakes happen accidentally in a Monopoly game. Be sure that a player is really cheating *before* you make any accusations, and even then, approach the subject cautiously. Very few people react kindly to being accused of cheating, and the guiltier they are, the louder they'll deny it. In the interest of harmony, find a subtle way to let the cheat know that you are aware of his activities. That should be sufficient to make him stop, at least for the rest of that game.

There is an exception. Sometimes a game of golf with

your boss shows that he has a tendency to add poorly. Likewise, a Monopoly game with the boss can sometimes show that he doesn't count change so well. Don't worry. Worse things could happen.

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