



Online gambling, which predominantly consists of poker and sports betting, has long been a grey area in legal terms. As a result of some cloudy language and uncertainty from bettors, some are scared away from depositing money into an offshore account or using a local bookie to make bets, deciding only to play around with sports betting when on vacation in Las Vegas.

Online poker has seen some tough times ever since the Texas Hold 'Em craze that spawned in the early 2000s. A lot of people became "professional" poker players, playing several tables at a time for several hours a day, making their living off of playing cards. Any legislation that mentions online gambling has been vague. Technically, because nearly all online gambling websites are based outside of the United States, the U.S. Department of Justice does not possess the ability to punish these sites that accept U.S. players.

Instead, the government has tried to creatively block residents of the U.S. from getting their wagers down offshore by making it harder to deposit funds. The SAFE Port Act in 2006 featured a largely unread provision called the Unlawful Internet Gambling Enforcement Act. The intention of this act was to make transactions between U.S. banks and online gambling websites illegal.

The buzzword for online poker is "skill". Poker players argue that most legislation acknowledges games of chance as being illegal, but that poker is a game of skill. Some poker sites have been shut down and others have had numerous hoops to jump through, but to this day, there is still nothing concrete about betting online.

When it comes to sports betting, making online bets is neither legal nor illegal. In a way, it just sort of "is". It exists. You cannot get arrested for making an online wager. Sportsbooks disguise deposits as merchandise purchases or some other payment for goods and services. Some bettors choose to use prepaid credit cards to make their deposits to avoid potential backlash

from their financial institution or a rejected deposit. Other deposit methods like Paypal, Moneybookers, or Western Union are also popular.

Sites like 5Dimes, Bodog/Bovada, Sportsbook, and others have moved from .com domain names to .eu, .lv, or .ag. The U.S. Federal Government can seize .com addresses, so in order to avoid that, sportsbooks have simply changed the suffix. These sites all run out of foreign countries and are governed by the country in which they operate. Therefore, as a result, they are taking action that is legal according to their governing body.

Take this information as you wish. One of my readers asked about the legality of sports betting and it's exactly that. Betting with an offshore is neither legal nor illegal, so the choice is yours. Bookies are engaging in an illegal activity. Unless you have an insane amount of trust in your bookie, his records, and your chances of getting paid, offshores would certainly give a better more peace of mind.

He also wanted me to follow up with what sportsbooks are worthy of your money. Obviously, like most things, it's a matter of personal preference. A lot of sportsbooks are going to have similar lines and the same wagering options. Certain books have limited methods of deposit or charge for payouts, so it's important to get what is tailored to your needs. Another element that people look for in a sportsbook is their new user bonus. Here are some things to keep in mind when deciding on a sportsbook.

**SBR Rating** – There's a phenomenal resource available to bettors called [The Sportsbook Review](#). In a largely unregulated industry, the SBR is one of the most reputable watchdog websites for sportsbooks. They have individual ratings for every sportsbook and have descriptions for each book. Everything you need to know, from deposit methods, to wagering limits, to complaints recently filed, can be found at SBR.

**Bonuses** – It's a highly competitive market. Sportsbooks want all action, whether it's from a \$5 gambler or a \$1,000 semi-pro to a \$10,000 a game professional. They offer varying bonus amounts, sometimes depending on how much you deposit. Keep in mind that with any bonus, a "rollover" is needed before requesting a cashout. Usually, rollovers are at least 3x or more. So, if you deposit \$300 with a 50% bonus for signing up, you will have \$450 in your account. But, in order to cash out, you will have to make at least \$1,350 in wagers. Make sure you check the rollover amounts. SBR will have them listed.

**Deposit Methods** – Some sportsbooks will not take straight debit/credit card deposits. You may have to go through a third party website or incur some sort of fee. Every website will have their deposit methods listed in their Help or Deposit section.

**Withdrawal** – The one downside to betting offshore is that, unlike in Vegas, you are basically operating a bank account. You have to wait for payouts to be processed in order to get your money. Most offshores will allow one free withdrawal per month up to a certain amount. Make sure you find what works best for you. If you're going to bet small amounts, choose a book that gives you one free withdrawal a month for up to \$500. If you're going to bet big, find one that allows bigger payouts or the lowest fees.

**Line Options** – The first sportsbook to release college football lines is BetOnline.com. Their lines tend to be soft and beatable and the market will set them accordingly. Usually Bookmaker or 5Dimes will come next. Bovada releases lines very late. Determine what is best for you. If you want to jump on early lines, try BetOnline or Bookmaker. If you would rather play later in the week, maybe Bovada isn't a bad option.

Some books have more props than others, like Bovada. Other books have better values on future wagers, like 5Dimes and BetOnline. Some books, like Bookmaker, have higher limits.

**Public Opinion** – Public opinion on sportsbooks is a big deal. A lot of people like BetOnline and 5Dimes for their ease of access and painless withdrawals. However, 5Dimes has reportedly had problems with their software. 5Dimes has an interesting reduced juice sign up option in lieu of a bonus that most players find appealing. Bovada does release lines late, but is the best book on the market if you want to bet underdogs or unders closer to kickoff because they are a very public book.

I'm not going to personally promote a sportsbook here, but I strongly encourage anybody who wants to get involved in sports betting to go to SportsbookReview.com and choose a book with a B+ rating or higher. You know your money will be safe. Note that some of the highly rated books, like Pinnacle, do not accept U.S. players due to some of the legislation that has passed.

It would be wise to have an account at more than one book, if you can afford to do that. Having options is important. The oddsmakers are good. A point or a half-point difference can turn a winning bet into a loser or vice versa. Having more than one book gives you the opportunity to shop around a little bit for lines.

As always, good luck and pick winners.