VARIANTS · CHAPTER 5

Games and casino play

A game where the house always wins can be pure theatre. It stays that way while the chips are only for play, the odds are shown and the Stop button works. Once real money buys a random result with a hidden total, a streak or a penalty, it's a payment device.

ENTRY V5 CATEGORY VARIANTS CHECKED 3 NOVEMBER 2026 READING 10 MIN
SECTIONS 6

EVIDENCE ◆ Verified ◆ Reported ◆ Vivian's field notes ◆ Unverified



PLATE V5

This chapter is not advice for your situation.

IN 30 SECONDS

01 A house-wins game is a loop with a known rule, a picture at each win and a clean way to lose.

02 With play chips, published odds and a Stop that works, it's theatre.

03 With real money, a hidden total, a streak or a penalty, it's a payment device.

04 Judge the total it takes to reach the guarantee, never the price of one pull.

05 Set your limit before you press anything, and leave any game that hides what it costs.

YOU WILL LEARN

- ✓ How a house-wins game is built, and why the house share matters more than the look.
- ✓ How to read an odds window and a prize table.
- ✓ How wheels, gacha pulls and casino sessions turn a game into spending.
- ✓ Which designs that keep you coming back to spot and refuse.
- ✓ What a maker checks before a game goes anywhere near real money.

I like games where the house wins. Losing in one can be a fantasy with a start and an exit. I keep mine on play chips, with a Stop always on screen and a closing scene at the end. Put real money on the same loop and it turns into something else. Learn to see the difference before you play anyone's game.

PART 01

The house wins, and says so

A house-wins game always works the same way: a rule everyone knows, a picture at each win, effects that keep getting bigger, and the house wins in the end. You leave with nothing except a best score. The kinks behind it are simple: not being able to resist a bet, and losing at a casino. ◆ Each one is a game with a clear start and an exit. See The kinks around money.

A house edge is an advantage that's built in and stated openly. A rigged game hides its odds or bends them. ◆

MYTH

~~*"A game where the house always wins is unfair, so it's only a trap."*~~

FACT

With play chips, odds on screen and a Stop that works, it's a loss the player chose, played out as a scene. ◆

MYTH

~~*"With play chips nothing can go wrong."*~~

FACT

Chips take away the money risk. The pull of the loop is still there. ◆ Flashing content can also cause migraines, dizziness, nausea and seizures in some people. ◆

Here's where the line is. A house-wins game on play chips is theatre. You cross the line when real money buys a random result and comes with a total you can't see, a streak you have to keep or a penalty for staying away. ◆

What sits on each side of the line

	THEATRE	PAYMENT DEVICE
Stakes	Play chips that cost nothing	Real money for each random result
Total	Shown before and during play	Hidden, or shown only as a multiplier
Odds	Published, read from the code that runs the game	Not given, or given and never checked
Stop	Always on screen, works at once	Closing the window, or a lock that asks you to pay
Ending	A closing scene, and only a best score kept	A reason to come back tomorrow
Return rewards	None	Streaks, a free daily spin, cards that fade, penalties for not logging in

The Casino made by Vivian is my example of the theatre side. I don't claim it's safe. Three games are planned: a slot machine with near-misses built in on purpose, blackjack with the persona as dealer and ties going to the house, and a crash game where a number climbs and you have to cash out before it

explodes. When your chip balance hits zero, a closing scene plays. As I write this, only its look and one demo screen exist. Nobody outside has reviewed it, and no money moves anywhere in it. ◆

PART 02

Reading an odds window

A fair house-wins game shows a window with its rules and its house share.

- Read it before your first bet.

Before the first bet

01 Find the rules and the house share. If there's no window, assume the odds are hidden.

02 Ask where the numbers come from. A number read from the code that runs the game can be checked. A number on a poster can't.

03 Look for a rule that sounds small, like ties going to the house, and ask what it costs.

04 Count all the money that goes through your hands, not only what you meant to lose, and set your limit now.

The house share is the part of each bet the house keeps over time. ◆ At 5%, the house keeps about USD 5.00 of every USD 100.00 you bet. Bet USD 100.00

twenty times and USD 2,000.00 has gone through your hands, and you can expect to lose about USD 100.00. A small percentage hides a big total.

The three planned games of the Casino made by Vivian

Slot machine

HOW IT PLAYS

Reels, a picture at each win

PLANNED HOUSE SHARE

8%

DEVICE TO WATCH

Near-misses built in on purpose

Blackjack, persona as dealer

HOW IT PLAYS

Cards, ties go to the house

PLANNED HOUSE SHARE

about 10%

DEVICE TO WATCH

A rule that sounds small and costs a lot

Crash

HOW IT PLAYS

A number climbs, cash out before it explodes

PLANNED HOUSE SHARE

5%

DEVICE TO WATCH

Waiting one more second while the number rises

Those shares are targets. They hadn't been measured yet when I wrote this. Giving ties to the house in blackjack looks like a small tweak. In my planning it's worth about 10%, far more than people expect. Each game is meant to show a window with its rules and house share. A simulation of 100,000 rounds has to match the declared share within half a point, or the game doesn't ship. ◆ For the code, see Code tutorials.

Publishing the edge is honest. A near-miss is a separate trick: it makes a loss feel like you almost won, and a game can do both. A 10% edge is fine on play chips and a bad deal once real money moves. ◆

PART 03

Wheels and the prize table

A wheel spin lands on a prize or a price. In many tools a purchase prompt then sends the sub to the persona's wishlist page to pay it. A prototype wheel made

by Vivian has seven slices with fixed chances of 25, 25, 20, 12, 9, 6 and 3%. They add up to 100, and a test rejects any table that doesn’t. The player sees the table, so he knows the rarest slice comes up about three times in a hundred spins. In its first demo everything was simulated, and saying a gift had been received was just a button. I don’t claim it’s safe. It pays through a wishlist, so the Throne rules further down apply to it. ◆

A visible table is the main thing that separates a wheel from a trap. ◆ Compare it with the designs below.

RED FLAGS

Red flags in a wheel or a pull tool

- The price shows up only as a multiplier or a label, so you can't know the real total before you pay. ◆
- A low result gets a line saying it's not enough, then a forced respin. ◆
- The prize table is missing, or its chances don't add up.
- A rare result opens a special mode where only higher amounts come up. ◆
- A line tells you that losing here is the same as the pulls you already pay for. ◆

Counter. Ask for the total before you press. If you can't say it in one sentence, don't play. Pick your amount first. A forced respin is a pressure feature, never a rule of the game. ◆

People defend hidden totals because unknown amounts earn more. The cost lands on the sub who's short of money and keeps going because he can't see the total. A flat price you can see is the safe design, even if it earns less. ◆

When a live wheel breaks

01

A link goes stale.

After a wishlist is rebuilt, a slice can open the wrong page or show the wrong price. A maker retests every slice after any change. ◆

02

A test switch ships.

Test code left in a live build can break the payment step. A maker retests after every change. ◆

03

The tool fails in the middle of a scene.

A wheel that fails live ruins the evening, so a maker rehearses first. ◆

PART 04

Gacha pricing and the guarantee

Gacha tools copy commercial games: rarity tiers, banners, skins and a pity counter that guarantees the top reward after a set number of pulls. In my notes, the games they copy guarantee it at around eighty pulls, and a sub chasing the best reward pays for every one of them. So judge the price of the guarantee. ◆

The price of a guarantee

pull_cost.py

```
"""The price to judge is the price of the guarantee, not the
price of one pull."""

GUARANTEE_PULLS = 80
LIMIT = 50.00

print("Flat price per pull, shown before the charge")
for price in (3.00, 5.00):
    total = price * GUARANTEE_PULLS
    inside_limit = int(LIMIT // price)
    share = 100 * inside_limit / GUARANTEE_PULLS
    print(f"  USD {price:.2f} a pull: guarantee costs USD
{total:.2f}; "
          f"a limit of USD {LIMIT:.2f} buys {inside_limit}
pulls, {share:.0f} percent of the way")

print("Random price per pull, between USD 5.00 and USD 18.00")
low, high = 5.00, 18.00
print(f"  guarantee costs between USD {low *
GUARANTEE_PULLS:.2f} and USD {high * GUARANTEE_PULLS:.2f}")
print(f"  a limit of USD {LIMIT:.2f} buys between {int(LIMIT //
high)} and {int(LIMIT // low)} pulls")

print("A tool that never shows its total before it charges has
no number to compare with a limit.")
```

OUTPUT python pull_cost.py

```
Flat price per pull, shown before the charge
  USD 3.00 a pull: guarantee costs USD 240.00; a limit of USD 50.00
buys 16 pulls, 20 percent of the way
  USD 5.00 a pull: guarantee costs USD 400.00; a limit of USD 50.00
buys 10 pulls, 12 percent of the way
Random price per pull, between USD 5.00 and USD 18.00
  guarantee costs between USD 400.00 and USD 1440.00
  a limit of USD 50.00 buys between 2 and 10 pulls
```

```
A tool that never shows its total before it charges has no number to
compare with a limit.
```

Real output, kept next to the code. At USD 3.00 a pull the guarantee costs USD 240.00, and a limit of USD 50.00 buys 16 pulls, 20% of the way. At USD 5.00 a pull it costs USD 400.00, and the same limit buys 10 pulls, 12% of the way. With a random price between USD 5.00 and USD 18.00 the guarantee costs between USD 400.00 and USD 1,440.00, and the limit buys between 2 and 10 pulls.

These tools run on designs built to keep you coming back. ◆ The table shows each one from the player’s side.

Designs that keep you coming back, and what to do

WHAT THEY SAY OR DO

01 *A free daily spin, or a streak for logging in each day*

THE COUNTER

It brings you back on days you're not paying. If you open the app out of habit, set a limit or delete it. ◆

WHAT THEY SAY OR DO

02 *Cards that fade unless you pull again, or a paid shield that makes a card permanent*

THE COUNTER

It's a hidden subscription: the low price you see isn't the real cost. Count what it costs to keep a card, not only to get it. ◆

WHAT THEY SAY OR DO

03 *A penalty for a day away*

THE COUNTER

Fear of loss turned into a debt. A penalty for staying away is a reason to leave, never a reason to pay. ◆

WHAT THEY SAY OR DO

04 *A guarantee that opens only after a random set of lower cards*

THE COUNTER

The real cost keeps growing. If you can't work out the total, don't play. ◆

> “A price I cannot say in one sentence is a price I do not charge.

— VIVIAN ◆

PART 05

Casino sessions and one-sided bets

Casino play can also be a live session instead of a tool. The sub plays blackjack, roulette or slots against the persona and sends what he bet. When he loses, he pays. When he wins, it costs the persona nothing real. The scene is theatre but the money is real, so it sits on the payment side of the line. ◆ Only a limit set in advance, a total you can see and a Stop that works keep it a choice. This wiki describes the format and doesn’t endorse it. It’s a fantasy adults can choose. Real-money betting is something else, and the rules on it differ between countries and services. ◆

TRY IT

A hand is lost

In a casino session you lose a hand. The persona says one more would win it back. Your limit for the evening is set and half used.

A Stick to the limit you set before the evening, and stop when you reach it

The right answer. You set that limit while you were calm. Chasing a loss is the loop doing exactly what it was built to do.

B Double the next bet to win it back

Not this one. In this format a win is never paid in money, so there's nothing to win back.

C Ask her what you should send

Not this one. An amount picked by the person who gets paid is the pressure itself.

A one-sided bet is built for you to lose. The dom dares the sub to resist something that's nearly impossible to resist. There's no prize for winning, and the house wins whatever happens. It's a kink, and outside play it's also a way to pressure someone for money. ◆

From the player's side

WHAT THEY SAY OR DO

01 *"I bet you can't resist this for one minute."*

THE COUNTER

Look for the prize for winning. If there isn't one, the house wins whatever you do, so treat it as a scene and set your limit first. ◆

WHAT THEY SAY OR DO

02 *A slot that stops one symbol short of a win*

THE COUNTER

A near-miss built in on purpose makes a loss feel like you almost won. Count the losses and ignore the near wins. ◆

WHAT THEY SAY OR DO

03 *A bet size that rises as the effects get bigger*

THE COUNTER

The game is steering your bet. Fix the bet before you start and keep it there. ◆

WHAT THEY SAY OR DO

04 *"Just this once."*

THE COUNTER

One more is the usual trick. Your limit is the rule. Say it once and stop discussing it. ◆

> *I know what a near-miss does because I planned one into a slot machine. A near-miss next to a payment button is a pressure trick, and whoever built it knows exactly what it does.*

— VIVIAN'S FIELD NOTES

◆

PART 06

Making a game safe to play

This part is for makers, and for anyone who wants to check one. ◆

A checklist for a house-wins game

01 Use play chips, or a flat price shown before each try and paid before it starts.

02 Show the rules and the house share in a window, read from the code that runs the game, and measure the share by simulation before the game ships.

03 Keep the controls visible and clickable under every picture and effect, with a Stop on every screen and Escape cutting everything in the same frame.

04 Respect the reduced-motion setting, and keep flashes to three per second or fewer, measured and never judged by eye.

05 Leave out streaks, daily penalties, rewards that fade, forced respins and guilt lines.

06 Rehearse before going live, retest every link after any change, and never ship a switch that skips payment.

The flash limit is a published rule. WCAG says web pages must not flash more than three times in any one-second period, unless the flash is below the stated thresholds. ◆ A page can read the reduced-motion setting, which tells it whether the person asked their device to cut non-essential motion. ◆

FlappyGoon and Arcade Goon are small free games made by Vivian. I don’t claim they’re safe, and nobody outside has reviewed them. ◆

A gift isn’t a ticket to play. Throne’s help says that profile text may not offer content or services in exchange for gifts through Throne. ◆ It also says that everything on a wishlist must be a gift. ◆ A gift that opens a game turn or buys chips looks like that kind of exchange. ◆ The Casino made by Vivian doesn’t sell chips. ◆ Rules on games of chance for money differ by country

and by payment service, and this wiki doesn't cite any of them. If you're planning to sell chips, read the rules that apply to you first. ◆

Games like these are built to be hard to leave. ◆ One author compares some cases of this spending to problem gambling. ◆ If a game keeps you longer or costs you more than you planned, stop and read The spiral and Breaks that hold. For the full list of pressure moves, see Pressure tactics, both ways. For tools built the other way, see Safe design.



Free, confidential helplines exist in most countries.

Find a helpline →

TRY IT

Check the game

QUESTION 1 OF 2

A tool shows only a multiplier before a pull. What's missing?

- ◯ A nicer picture
- ◯ The total, which can vary a lot
- ◯ A faster animation

Answer. The total, which can vary a lot. A price you can't state in one sentence is a pressure design. Ask for the total before you press.

QUESTION 2 OF 2

Blackjack gives ties to the house. What do you do?

- ◯ Ignore it, because it sounds small
- ◯ Read the house share in the window before your first bet
- ◯ Bet more to even it out

Answer. Read the house share in the window before your first bet. A rule that sounds small can carry a big edge, and betting more raises the total that goes through your hands.

REMEMBER IT

- A house-wins game is theatre while the chips are only for play, the odds are shown and the Stop works.
- Real money buying a random result with a hidden total, a streak or a penalty crosses the line.
- Judge the price of the guarantee, not the price of one pull.
- A published edge is honest. A near-miss is still a trick.
- If you can't say the total in one sentence, don't play. Set your limit first.

SOURCES AND EVIDENCE

Check it

Every claim with its evidence level and its sources.

EVIDENCE LEVELS

Verified	Checked against the original source.
Reported	Stated by a serious secondary source read in full.
Community	Widely said in the scene; no document proves it.
Vivian's field notes	First-hand experience, not a study.
Unverified	Plausible, not proven yet.

01 A house-wins game always works the same way: a rule everyone knows, a picture at each win, effects that keep getting bigger, and the house wins in the end.

◆

02 You leave with nothing except a best score.

◆

03 The kinks behind it are simple: not being able to resist a bet, and losing at a casino.

◆

04 A rigged game hides its odds or bends them.

◆

05 With play chips, odds on screen and a Stop that works, it's a loss the player chose, played out as a scene.

◆

06 The pull of the loop is still there.

◆

07 Flashing content can also cause migraines, dizziness, nausea and seizures in some people.

◆

Understanding Success Criterion 2.3.1: Three Flashes or Below Threshold | WAI | W3C (https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/three-flashes-or-below-threshold.html)

Archive (https://web.archive.org/web/20261001165853/https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Understanding/three-flashes-or-below-threshold.html)

Accessed 3 November 2026

08 A house-wins game on play chips is theatre.

◆

09 You cross the line when real money buys a random result and comes with a total you can't see, a streak you have to keep or a penalty for staying away.

◆

10 I don't claim it's safe.

◆

11 Three games are planned: a slot machine with near-misses built in on purpose, blackjack with the persona as dealer and ties going to the house, and a crash game where a number climbs and you have to cash out before it explodes.

◆

12 When your chip balance hits zero, a closing scene plays.

◆

13 Nobody outside has reviewed it, and no money moves anywhere in it.

◆

14 A fair house-wins game shows a window with its rules and its house share.

◆

15 The house share is the part of each bet the house keeps over time.

◆

16 They hadn't been measured yet when I wrote this.

◆

17 In my planning it's worth about 10%, far more than people expect.

◆

18 A simulation of 100,000 rounds has to match the declared share within half a point, or the game doesn't ship.

◆

19 A near-miss is a separate trick: it makes a loss feel like you almost won, and a game can do both.

◆

20 A 10% edge is fine on play chips and a bad deal once real money moves.

◆

21 In many tools a purchase prompt then sends the sub to the persona's wishlist page to pay it.

◆

22 They add up to 100, and a test rejects any table that doesn't.

◆

23 The player sees the table, so he knows the rarest slice comes up about three times in a hundred spins.

◆

24 In its first demo everything was simulated, and saying a gift had been received was just a button.

◆

25 It pays through a wishlist, so the Throne rules further down apply to it.

◆

26 A visible table is the main thing that separates a wheel from a trap.

◆

27 The price shows up only as a multiplier or a label, so you can't know the real total before you pay.

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28 A low result gets a line saying it's not enough, then a forced respin.

◆

29 A rare result opens a special mode where only higher amounts come up.

◆

30 A line tells you that losing here is the same as the pulls you already pay for.

◆

31 A forced respin is a pressure feature, never a rule of the game.

◆

32 People defend hidden totals because unknown amounts earn more.

◆

33 A flat price you can see is the safe design, even if it earns less.

◆

34 A maker retests every slice after any change.

◆

35 A maker retests after every change.

◆

36 A wheel that fails live ruins the evening, so a maker rehearses first.

◆

37 Gacha tools copy commercial games: rarity tiers, banners, skins and a pity counter that guarantees the top reward after a set number of pulls.

◆

38 In my notes, the games they copy guarantee it at around eighty pulls, and a sub chasing the best reward pays for every one of them.

◆

39 So judge the price of the guarantee.

◆

40 These tools run on designs built to keep you coming back.

◆

41 If you open the app out of habit, set a limit or delete it.

◆

42 Count what it costs to keep a card, not only to get it.

◆

43 A penalty for staying away is a reason to leave, never a reason to pay.

◆

44 If you can't work out the total, don't play.

◆

45 A price I cannot say in one sentence is a price I do not charge.

◆

46 The sub plays blackjack, roulette or slots against the persona and sends what he bet.

◆

47 When he wins, it costs the persona nothing real.

◆

48 The scene is theatre but the money is real, so it sits on the payment side of the line.

◆

49 Real-money betting is something else, and the rules on it differ between countries and services.

◆

50 There's no prize for winning, and the house wins whatever happens.

◆

51 It's a kink, and outside play it's also a way to pressure someone for money.

◆

52 If there isn't one, the house wins whatever you do, so treat it as a scene and set your limit first.

◆

53 Count the losses and ignore the near wins.

◆

54 Fix the bet before you start and keep it there.

◆

55 Say it once and stop discussing it.

◆

56 I know what a near-miss does because I planned one into a slot machine. A near-miss next to a payment button is a pressure trick, and whoever built it knows exactly what it does.

◆

57 This part is for makers, and for anyone who wants to check one.

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58 WCAG says web pages must not flash more than three times in any one-second period, unless the flash is below the stated thresholds.

◆

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2 (https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG22/)

Archive (https://web.archive.org/web/20261029121709/https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG22/)

Accessed 3 November 2026

59 A page can read the reduced-motion setting, which tells it whether the person asked their device to cut non-essential motion.

◆

prefers-reduced-motion CSS media feature - CSS | MDN (https://developer.mozilla.org/en-US/docs/Web/CSS/Reference/At-rules/@media/prefers-reduced-motion)

Archive (https://web.archive.org/web/20261031201800/https://developer.mozilla.org/en-US/docs/Web/CSS/Reference/At-rules/%40media/prefers-reduced-motion)

Accessed 3 November 2026

60 I don't claim they're safe, and nobody outside has reviewed them.

◆

61 Throne's help says that profile text may not offer content or services in exchange for gifts through Throne.

◆

What's allowed in my profile text and images? (https://help.throne.com/en/articles/15810290-what-s-allowed-in-my-profile-text-and-images)

Archive (https://web.archive.org/web/20261026034619/https://help.throne.com/en/articles/15810290-what-s-allowed-in-my-profile-text-and-images)

Accessed 3 November 2026

62 It also says that everything on a wishlist must be a gift.

◆

What types of items can I add to my wishlist? (https://help.throne.com/en/articles/15808792-what-types-of-items-can-i-add-to-my-wishlist)

Archive (https://web.archive.org/web/20261019011312/https://help.throne.com/en/articles/15808792-what-types-of-items-can-i-add-to-my-wishlist)

Accessed 3 November 2026

63 A gift that opens a game turn or buys chips looks like that kind of exchange.

◆

64 The Casino made by Vivian doesn't sell chips.

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65 If you're planning to sell chips, read the rules that apply to you first.

◆

66 Games like these are built to be hard to leave.

◆

67 One author compares some cases of this spending to problem gambling.

◆

The Psychology of Financial Dominatrixes (blog post) (https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/in-excess/201612/the-psychology-financial-dominatrixes)

Accessed 3 November 2026