# What to Check Before Playing: A Quick Guide to Online Casino Game Types

Choosing which game to play at an online casino can feel overwhelming when you are faced with dozens of slot titles, table games, and live dealer options. Each type of game works differently, and the small print on payouts, odds, and house edge varies widely. Before you spin a reel or place a bet, it helps to know what you are actually getting into. This short guide walks through the main game categories and the key things to check so you can make an informed choice.

## Understanding the Core Numbers: Return to Player and House Edge

Every regulated online casino game is built around two numbers: the return to player percentage and the house edge. The return to player, often shortened to RTP, tells you how much of every stake the game pays back to players over time. If a slot has a 96% RTP, it means the game is designed to return 96 pence for every pound wagered in the long run, while the casino keeps the remaining 4% as profit. That 4% is the house edge. The higher the RTP, the better the game is for the player, but no game pays back 100% or more over time, because the casino has to make a margin. Understanding RTP is the first step to comparing games fairly.

## Online Slots: The Most Common Game Type

Online slots are digital versions of the classic fruit machine. They run on a random number generator, or RNG, which ensures each spin is independent and unpredictable. Slots come in many themes, reel configurations, and bonus features such as free spins, wild symbols, and multipliers. When you check a slot, look for its RTP figure, which is usually published in the game rules or the paytable. Slots with a higher RTP give you better long-term value, but they also tend to have lower variance, meaning your bankroll will last longer even if big wins are rarer. Some slots offer progressive jackpots that increase the more they are played, and those jackpots can change the effective RTP if you hit the top prize. Always read the paytable to see how the jackpot is funded and whether it comes from the same pool as regular payouts.

## Table Games: Blackjack, Roulette, and Live Dealer Options

Table games like blackjack and roulette follow fixed rules and have well-known house edges. In European roulette, the single zero gives the house a 2.7% edge, so the RTP is 97.3% on most bets. American roulette with a double zero drops that to 94.7%. Blackjack has a lower house edge, around 0.5% when you play basic strategy, but that figure depends on the specific rule variations used by the casino. Live dealer games stream a real human dealer via video, which

gives you the feel of a land-based casino but with the same RTP as the digital version. The key difference with table games is that your decisions affect the outcome. Unlike slots, where you just spin and watch, blackjack requires you to hit, stand, double down, or split, and each choice changes the expected return. If you play poorly, you reduce the effective RTP. If you play well, you get closer to the theoretical figure.

## Variance and Volatility: Why Short-Term Results Differ

RTP is a long-term average. In the short term, results can swing wildly because of variance. A slot with high variance can pay out a large win early and then go cold for a long stretch, while a low-variance game gives smaller, more frequent payouts. Variance matters if you have a limited budget or a short session. High-variance games are exciting but risky, because you might lose your whole stake before the next big hit arrives. Low-variance games let you play longer and see more of the game's features, but the top prizes are smaller. When you read a game's information, look for any mention of volatility or hit frequency. Some game providers publish the probability of hitting each prize tier, which gives you a clearer picture of what to expect.

## Live Dealer Games: Blending Trust and Speed

Live dealer games are a hybrid: you see a real person dealing cards or spinning a wheel, but the action still happens on screen. These games appeal to players who want transparency, because you can watch the physical deck being shuffled or the wheel being spun. The RTP for live dealer blackjack is the same as the digital version, provided the casino uses standard rules. The main difference is the speed of play. Live games take longer because every action is manual, so you get fewer hands per hour. That can work in your favour if you want to stretch your bankroll, but it also means you have more time to make decisions. Some players find live dealer games more engaging, while others prefer the pace of automated table games. It comes down to personal taste, but the underlying math is the same.

## How to Compare Games at a UK Online Casino

When you look at a game listing on a site like honeycotts.com, the first thing to check is the RTP. Most reputable UK-licensed casinos display it clearly, often in the game information panel or the help section. If you cannot find it, that is a red flag: the operator may not want you to compare. Next, check the variance. A game with a high RTP and low variance is usually the safest choice for a casual player. If you enjoy chasing big wins, a high-variance slot with a similar RTP might suit you better, but accept that your session could end quickly. Finally, read the terms around bonuses and promotions. Some sign-up offers have wagering requirements

that lock you into a specific game type. A bonus that demands you play slots might not be ideal if you prefer blackjack. Always match the game type to the terms of the offer.

## Practical Checks Before You Play

Here is a quick checklist to run through before you commit real money to any game. These points help you avoid the most common mistakes new players make.

- **Find the published RTP.** If the casino does not display it, search the game rules or the provider's website. No RTP usually means a poor deal.
- **Check the house rules.** Blackjack variations like "dealer stands on soft 17" or "no surrender" change the house edge. Make sure you know the exact rules before you sit down.
- **Understand variance.** Look at the paytable to see how often the game pays anything at all. A game that pays only the jackpot 0.01% of the time is not the same as one that pays smaller prizes every few spins.
- **Match the game to your budget.** High-variance games need a larger bankroll to survive the cold streaks. Low-variance games are kinder to a small deposit.
- **Review the bonus terms.** A welcome offer that requires you to play a specific game type may push you toward a game with a lower RTP than you would normally choose.

## Choosing Between Slot Types: Classic, Progressive, and Branded

Slots themselves have subcategories. Classic slots have three reels and a single payline, with simple symbols like fruits and bells. They usually offer the highest RTP among slots because the game mechanics are straightforward and the bonus features are minimal. Progressive slots have five reels, multiple paylines, and often include wilds, scatters, and free games. The RTP on progressive slots can be slightly lower due to the extra complexity, but the potential for bigger wins increases. Branded slots tied to movies, TV shows, or musicians often have a lower RTP because the licence fees reduce the payout pool. If you see a slot based on a popular film, expect its RTP to be a few percentage points below a generic slot from the same provider. This is not a hard rule, but it is a common pattern worth knowing.

## Why RTP Is Not Everything

RTP is the most important single number, but it does not tell the whole story. Two games can have the same RTP yet feel completely different because of variance, bonus features, and maximum bet limits. A slot with a 96% RTP and a top prize of 500x your stake will behave very differently from a slot with the same RTP but a top prize of 10,000x. The first one pays out more frequently but in smaller amounts. The second one may go months between big wins.

Your choice depends on whether you want to play for a long session or chase a life-changing jackpot. Also consider the minimum and maximum bet. A game that lets you bet 10p per spin will let you play much longer than one that requires a minimum of 1 pound, even if both have the same RTP.

## Final Thoughts Before You Start

Online casino games are designed for entertainment, and the best way to enjoy them is to understand their mechanics before you play. RTP gives you a reliable way to compare games, but it is only useful when you also consider variance, rules, and your own budget. Sites that focus on UK players, such as honeycotts.com, provide clear comparisons that help you see the differences between game types side by side. Take a few minutes to read the details before you deposit. That small habit can save you money and make your sessions far more enjoyable. The goal is not to beat the house edge over the long term, because that is not possible. The goal is to pick a game that fits your style and gives you the best chance of a fun, sustainable session.