



## OFFICIAL RULES

*This variation of American Mah Jongg allows you to play without any card of winning hands, such as the National Mah Jongg League's annual card. This system uses all the gameplay rules of American Mah Jongg, but creates a new way of determining winning hands and scoring to allow players to avoid using a card. Though the rules are designed to be easily memorized, this game is not intended to be an introductory or simplified game. Card Free American Mah Jongg should provide ample variety and challenging gameplay for all players. This guide was written assuming you are already familiar with the rules and terminology of American Mah Jongg.*

### **RULES FOR PLAY**

All gameplay rules are identical to standard American Mah Jongg except for winning hands and scoring. [Click here](#) for a detailed explanation of the rules of standard American Mah Jongg.

### **WINNING HANDS**

Winning hands require both a valid **CATEGORY** and a valid **PATTERN** of **BLOCKS**. The category is the set of number tiles or wind tiles used. The pattern is the various groupings of identical tiles, known as blocks, that are used to build a 14-tile winning hand.

### **BLOCKS**

Blocks are groups of between 2 and 5 identical tiles. Block types are named as in American Mah Jongg: **Pair** (2 tiles), **Pung** (3 tiles), **Kong** (4 tiles), **Quint** (5 tiles). Jokers can be used to replace tiles in any block except for pairs. A Joker is required in a Quint as there are only 4 of each tile.



## PATTERNS

Patterns are created with combinations of blocks that add up to 14 total tiles, using two different block types or all pairs. Different block types can be used in any order in a pattern. This rule creates 10 possible patterns which can be organized into 3 different categories: Basic Patterns, Quints Patterns, and Big Pairs Patterns.

### BASIC PATTERNS (Pairs, Pungs, and Kongs)

Two Pungs & Two Kongs: 

One Pair & Three Kongs: 

One Pair & Four Pungs: 

### QUINT PATTERNS (One or Two Quints)

Three Pungs & One Quint: 

One Kong & Two Quints: 

Two Pairs & Two Quints: 

### BIG PAIRS PATTERNS (More than 2 Pairs)

Three Pairs & Two Kongs: 

Four Pairs & Two Pungs: 

Five Pairs & One Kong: 

Seven Pairs: 

## CATEGORIES & SETS

The categories are modeled after the standard sections on the National Mah Jongg League card. The category chosen determines which types of tiles are used in the various blocks in the pattern. The numbers or wind tiles selected from the category are known as the SET. For example, the set 456 can be taken from the Consecutive Run category. Each number or wind in the set must be used in its own block. Numbers or wind tiles cannot be repeated in more than one block unless playing the Any Like Numbers category.

| CATEGORY           | TILES      | SET RULES   |
|--------------------|------------|---|
| Consecutive Run    | 123456789  | Use a set of at least 3 consecutive numbers from the category, making 1 block with each number for at least 3 different blocks in your pattern. |
| Consecutive Odds   | 13579      |   |
| Consecutive Evens  | 2468       |   |
| Multiples of Three | 369        | Use all 3 numbers, 1 number per block.  |
| Like Numbers       | 123456789  | 3 blocks, 1 of each suit, all the same number.  |
| Winds              | N, S, E, W | 4 blocks, one of each wind (N, S, E, W) or 2 Blocks of opposite winds (NS or EW)  |

### Example Sets:

- **Consecutive Run:** 123, 345, 2345, 56789, 234567
- **Consecutive Odds:** 135, 357, 579, 1357, 3579, 13579
- **Consecutive Evens:** 246, 468, 2468
- **Multiples of Three:** 369
- **Like Numbers:** 111, 333, 444, 777, 888
- **Winds:** NSEW, EW

## SUITS (MAKING A BLOCK)

When creating a block, all the tiles in the block must be of the same suit.



## SUITS (MAKING A HAND)

MAKING A HAND: All blocks of number tiles with the same suit must be next to each other in the pattern when tiles are arranged in sequential order. Hands with suits that alternate in the pattern, commonly known as "woven" or "braided" or "knitted" hands, are not valid winning hands. For example:

*This is a winning hand because the Crak tiles are all next to each other and the dot tiles are all next to each other:*



*This is NOT a winning hand because the Crak tiles are not next to each other in the sequence:*



## PUTTING THE SET AND PATTERN TOGETHER

To create a winning hand, combine your SET with a valid PATTERN. Below is an example of a hand using the set **3579** from the **Consecutive Odds** category paired different patterns:

**SET: 3579 + PATTERN: 2 Pungs 2 Kongs**



**SET: 3579 + PATTERN: 1 Pair 3 Kong**



**SET: 3579 + PATTERN: 1 Pair 4 Pungs**

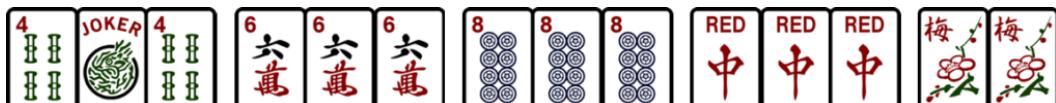
*In this hand, there are only 4 numbers in the set, but the 1-Pair 4-Pungs pattern requires 5 blocks. To complete this hand, you will need to use **Special Tiles (See Below)**.*



## SPECIAL TILES

If there are more blocks in your pattern than there are number or wind tiles in your set, then you must complete the pattern using blocks of Flowers, Dragons, or a NEWS singles block.

In this hand, the set is 468 from consecutive evens, and the pattern is 1 Pair 4 Pungs which has 5 blocks. To fill in the remaining 2 blocks not filled in by the set, a block of Red Dragons and a block of Flowers is used:



## FLOWERS

Flowers can only be used to create Pair blocks. This also means Flowers can only be called for Mah Jongg. Only one block of Flowers is allowed per hand.

*This is a winning hand because there is only one Flower block and it is a Pair.*



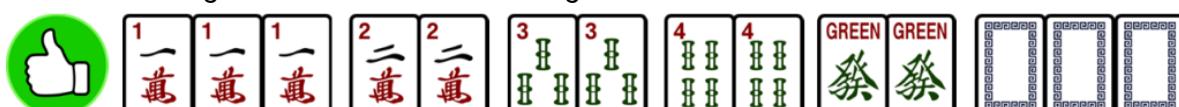
*This is not a winning hand for two reasons: there are two blocks of Flowers and one of the blocks is a Pung.*



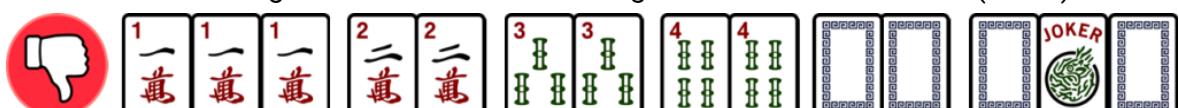
## DRAGONS

You can only use one block of each Dragon in a winning hand. You can have multiple Dragon blocks, but they cannot be of the same type of Dragon.

This is a winning hand because the two Dragon blocks are two different colors:

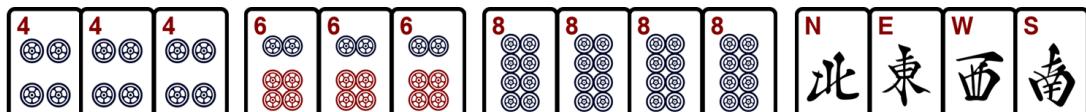


This is NOT a winning hand because the two Dragon blocks are both White (SOAP):



## NEWS BLOCK

A block of four single wind tiles, one of each (North, East, West, South) is allowed to be used in any pattern that contains Kongs. Jokers cannot be used to replace one of the single tiles, and you cannot call a tile in the NEWS block unless it completes your hand for Mah Jongg.



You can even use a NEWS block when using Wind tiles as your set:



## SCORING

A winning hand earns 25 points plus any bonuses that apply:

| BONUS           | DESCRIPTION   | POINTS                                     |
|-----------------|---|--|
| PAIRS BONUS     | More than 2 pairs in a winning hand (Big Pairs Pattern)   | +5 for 3, 4, or 5 pairs<br>+10 for 7 pairs |
| QUINTS BONUS    | At least 1 Quint in winning hand (Quints Pattern)   | +5 for each Quint used                     |
| SET BONUS       | Only number tiles in winning hand, or only Wind tiles in winning hand. (No Dragons of Flowers). | +5   |
| SUIT BONUS      | All number tiles are in same suit, Matching Dragon* if used<br>No Flowers or Winds used.        | +5   |
| CONCEALED BONUS | No exposures made by winning player except calling winning tile.                                | +10  |

*\*For the suit bonus, the Red Dragon matches with the Crak suit, the Green Dragon matches with the Bam suit, and the White Dragon (Soap) matches with the Dot suit.*

### SCORE DOUBLING:

If the winner draws the winning tile from the wall (known as "self drawn") then the points calculated above (Base + Bonuses) are doubled. If the winning hand has no Jokers in it when

Mah Jongg is declared, the points are doubled. Both of these doubling rules can be applied to the same hand. So a self-drawn hand with no Jokers is doubled twice.

#### **"PAYING" THE WINNER:**

Players start the game with a certain amount of points or chips or money, then losing players in a hand pay the winning player based on the value of the winning hand. Each losing player pays the winner an amount equal to the value of their winning hand. If the winner calls a discarded tile for the last tile needed for Mah Jongg, the player who discarded that tile pays double the points to the winner.

#### **EXAMPLE WINNING HAND SCORING:**



- **Category:** Consecutive Run
- **Set:** 789 plus a Dragon
- **Pattern:** 2 Pungs 2 Kongs
- **Mah Jongg Hand:** 25 points
- **Bonuses:** none
- **Doubling:** No Jokers, double once
- **Final Score:** 50 points
- **Payouts:** Player who discarded last tile drawn by winner for Mah Jongg pays 100 points to the winner. The other two players pay 50 points to the winner.

#### **SPECIAL DRAGON HANDS**

Dragon Hands have a set point value and bonuses are not applied, however the rules for opponents paying double do apply to Dragon Hands. Jokers may be used to complete the Dragon's Love and Dragon Wings hands, however the Dragon's Breath is made up of 7 pairs so Jokers are not allowed.

**Dragon's Love (50 points):** Two different Dragon Kongs and Two Flower Pungs



**Dragon's Wings (50 points):** One Kong of Each Dragon and one Pair of 1 Bamboo



**Dragon's Breath (100 points):** One Pair of each Dragon and one Pair of each Wind



## **House Rules**

Experienced players of Card Free American Mah Jongg may want to increase the difficulty of the game by including advanced house rules. Players may agree before starting the first game to add any of these optional rules. Implementing any or all of these house rules increases the difficulty in forming a winning hand, which both increases the overall challenge of the game, and allows time for more interesting and challenging winning hands to be built. The optional house rules include:

1. Always skip the second round of the Charleston
2. Remove 4 Flowers and 4 Joker tiles from the game permanently. When building walls, build 18 stacks per player instead of 19.
3. A hand must score at least 1 bonus, use no Jokers, be self-picked, or be a special Dragon hand in order to be a valid winning hand. If using this rule, the base value of a winning hand may be reduced to 20, making the minimum winning hand only 25 points.

## **Skill Level Adjustments**

Once you become experienced in Card Free American Mah Jongg, you will have an advantage over new players. One way to level the playing field for players of different skill levels in the same game is to assign additional hand restrictions for only advanced players. This allows players of different skill levels to play in the same game together with closer to equal chances of winning. There is not a scientific way to calculate exactly what a player's skill adjustment should be. Players must choose for themselves what skill level adjustment they should take based on their experience. The skill level adjustment restrictions give the more advanced player additional restrictions for forming winning hands. As a player increases in skill level, they will add the given restriction and any restrictions from the lower levels. For example, if you are a Level 3 player, you have the restrictions for Levels 1, 2, and 3.

**Level 0:** No additional restrictions

**Level 1:** You can only use the 2 Pungs 2 Kongs pattern with Wind tiles

**Level 2:** If using the Consecutive Run set category, your hand cannot contain any Flowers, Dragons, or Winds.

**Level 3:** If using one or more Dragon blocks, the hand must be concealed.

**Level 4:** If using number tiles, the hand must earn the SUIT bonus (only containing 1 suit and if using a Dragon block it must match that suit).

**Level 5:** Your hand must use no Jokers, be self-picked, or be a special Dragon hand in order to be a valid winning hand.

---

**QUESTIONS? FEEDBACK? WANT TO PLAY ONLINE OR IN PERSON?**

## CARD FREE AMERICAN MAH JONGG - OFFICIAL RULES

Contact me by email at **CardFreeMahj@gmail.com**

The text of this work, written by John Burton, is marked with [CC0 1.0](#)

Tile images credit: [碧海风](#), [CC BY-SA 4.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons