

# A VERY Simple Guide to Mah Jong

For 4 players playing as individuals.

## Equipment

2 dice and 136 tiles

**Bamboos: NB: #1 bamboo usually looks like a bird**

(Tile icons courtesy of <http://www.martinpersson.org>)



**Characters: most sets have Arabic numerals on them**



**Dots: also known as circles, disks, spots, wheels...**



**Dragons: Green, Red, and White dragon tiles**



**Winds: East, South, West, and North wind tiles**



There are also 4 Flowers and 4 Seasons which can increase your score, but which do not help you to go out.

## The Objective

For every hand, your basic goal is to go out as **the first player to get a hand composed of four sets of three and a pair**. Each set can be a pung, chow, or kong.

A **pung** is a set of **three identical tiles**. These are pungs.



A **chow** is a set of **three tiles of the same suit and consecutive numbers**. These are chows.



Dragons and winds can't be used in a chow. A chow cannot loop from 9 back to 1.

These are **NOT CHOWS**.



A **kong** is a set of **four identical tiles**. These are kongs. Special rules apply to kongs to enable you to replace the extra tile used which would otherwise stop you creating a complete hand. See below.



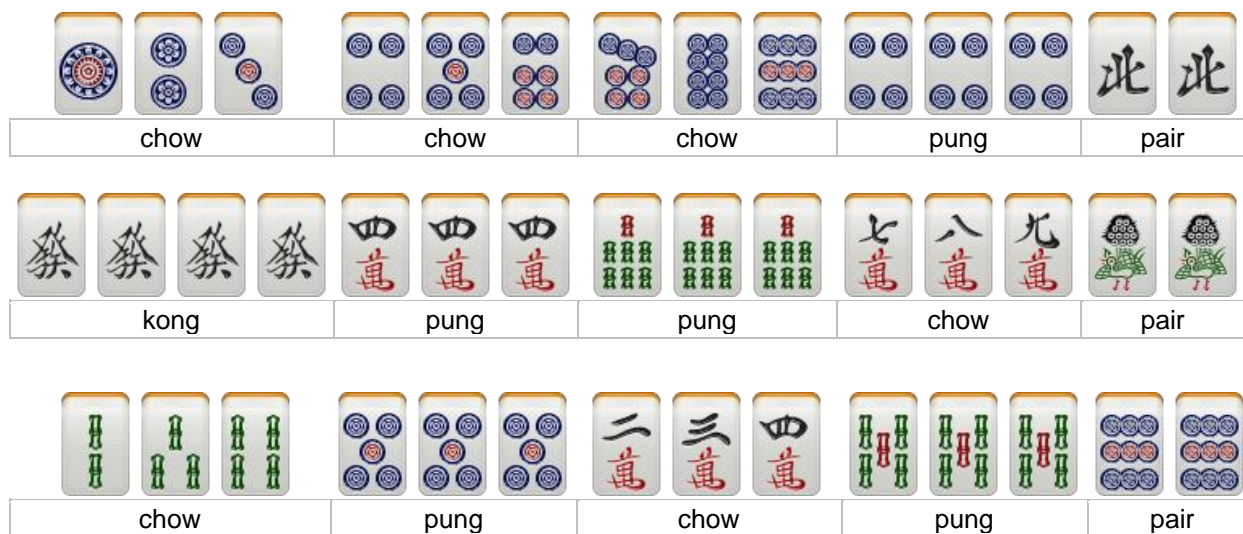
A **pair** is two **identical** tiles of any suit, wind or dragon. These are pairs:



**Each set can either be concealed or exposed (melded).**

- Concealed sets are made of tiles from your initial hand and tiles you draw from the wall.
- Melded sets are formed by claiming a discard from other players.
- Concealed sets are not shown to other players unless you win the hand. Melded sets are immediately shown when they are formed.
- Special rule apply to a concealed kong. See below.

**The complete hand will have exactly 14 tiles.** If the hand includes kongs, it will have more than 14 tiles but each kong only counts as one set. The following are all valid winning hands:



## How to play

### Decide who is going to be the first dealer

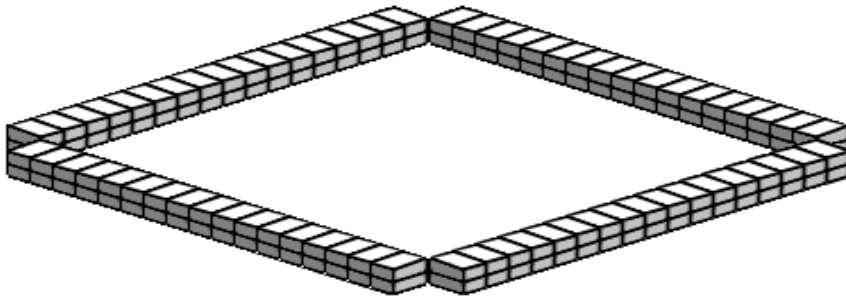
We use the simple rolling of the two dice to see who has the highest score.

East is dealer; the person on their right is South; the person opposite is West and the person to the East's left is North.

### Building the Wall

Sit at a table. Shuffle the tiles with them face down and then each player builds a wall 17 tiles long and two tiles high (18 long if using flowers and seasons). Carefully slide your wall towards

the centre of the table to join up with the other walls to make an enclosed space, like this:



### Breaking the Wall

- The player who is East starts by rolling the 2 dice and adding up the sum of the dice. Using the total of the dice, count round **anticlockwise** with East as 1. This decides whose wall will be broken.
- The person sitting by the chosen wall throws the 2 dice again and adds their total to that from East's roll. That person counts from **their right to their left along the wall (clockwise)** to the combined total to find the where the break is to be made. The **last stack** of the count is lifted out of the wall and placed on top of the part of the wall just counted.
- East takes the first 2 stacks of tiles (4 pieces) from the live wall in a **clockwise direction away from the break**. South takes the next 2 stacks, followed by West and North.
- The deal continues in an **ANTICLOCKWISE** direction but using the wall up in a **CLOCKWISE** direction.
- The players repeat this procedure twice more so that each player has **12 tiles**.
- East now takes the top tiles from **the first and third stacks of tiles** of the remaining live wall giving East a total of **14 tiles**.
- The other 3 players take one tile each in turn bringing their total to **13 tiles** each.
- East begins by discarding a tile.
- Play continues as noted below.

### Playing the Game

At the beginning of your turn, you can:

1. Claim the most recent discarded tile to make a melded pung, melded chow, or melded Kong. Or,
2. if you can't, or choose not to, you can draw a tile from the wall.
3. If you simply want to draw a tile, you must:
4. Draw a tile from the wall. Remember; **take tiles from the wall going clockwise**. If the next stack in the wall is two tiles high, take the top tile. Otherwise, take the bottom tile.

To end your turn, you discard a tile, announcing what the tile is and placing it face up on the table.

### Melded Pung

If you want to use the most recently discarded tile in a pung, you must already have two concealed tiles in your hand that match the discard. You must:

1. Declare "pung".
2. Lay down the two matching tiles from your concealed hand face-up in front of your hand.

3. Take the discard and add it to the two from your hand. This set is called a **melded pung**.
4. **Discard a tile.** If nobody claims the discard, play resumes with the player to your right.  
Note: some players might lose their turns.



Two concealed identical tiles + discarded matching tile = melded pung

## Melded Chow

If you want to use the most recently discarded tile in a chow, you must already have two concealed tiles in your hand that would make a chow with the discarded tile, and **the discard must come from the player to your left**. You must:

1. Declare “chow”.
2. Lay down the two tiles of the chow from your hand face-up in front of your hand.
3. Take the discard and add it to the two tiles to complete the chow. This set is called a **melded chow**.
4. **Discard a tile.** If nobody claims the discard, play resumes with the player to the right.

## Melded Kong

If you want to use the most recently discarded tile in a kong, **you must already have a concealed pung** in your hand that matches the discard. You must:

1. Declare “kong”.
2. Take the discard. (Do not place the discard in your hand).
3. Lay down the four tiles of the kong face-up in front of your hand. This set is called a **melded kong**.
4. Draw a replacement tile from the top of the dead wall. (Replacement tiles are explained later.)
5. **Discard a tile.** If nobody claims the discard, play resumes with the player to your right.  
Note: some players might miss their turns.

## Small Melded Kong

If you draw a tile that matches a melded pung you already have, you may add the new tile to it making a kong. You don't have to do this – it may be better for your hand to have the tile available for a chow. However, if you do decide to do this, you must draw a tile from the dead wall otherwise you will not have enough tiles to go. You must:

1. Declare “kong”.
2. Add the matching tile to your melded pung. This set is called a **small melded kong**.
3. Draw a replacement tile.
4. **Discard a tile.** If nobody claims the discard, play resumes with the player to your right.

## Concealed Kong

If you draw a tile that matches a concealed pung you have in your hand, you may declare a concealed kong. Again, you don't have to use the tile for a kong, but if you do, you must declare it and draw a replacement tile from the dead wall. You must:

1. Declare “kong”
2. Lay down the four tiles of the kong face-down in front of your hand. This set is called a **concealed kong**. Turn the two end tiles of this set face down, leaving the two tiles in the centre face up, to show it is a concealed kong.
3. **Draw a replacement tile** from the top of the dead wall
4. **Discard a tile.** If nobody claims the discard, play resumes with the player to your right.

NB: if you wish to use a concealed kong as one of your sets but you do not declare it, then you will not have enough tiles to complete the four sets of three and the pair you need to win. The kong counts as a three.

### Order of Claims

If more than one player claims the same discard the order of precedence is:

1. Mah Jong (completing your hand) trumps all other calls. If there are two calls of Mah Jong, the tile goes to the player who comes first going anticlockwise from the discarder.
2. A pung or kong will supersede a chow.

### Mah Jong

When you have a hand that requires only one more tile to make four sets and a pair, then your hand is **ready**.

- If you draw the last tile you need, then you can declare "Mah Jong" to **win self-drawn**.
- If another player discards the last tile you need, then you can declare "Mah Jong" to **win by a discard**.
- When a player adds a piece to a pung to form a small melded kong, if you require that tile, you can declare "Mah Jong" by **robbing a kong**.

If you declare Mah Jong, **reveal your entire hand** so that everybody else can see it and verify that your hand is valid. After you win a hand, typically you would calculate your score and make your opponents pay.

For the next hand, if the winner was not the dealer, the player who was South becomes the new East and dealer. The other players change their winds accordingly.

Shuffle the tiles, rebuild the wall, and start again!

If the winner is East, they continue to be the dealer until they lose.

### Draw

The **dead wall** is the last seven stacks (14 tiles total) of the wall. Dead wall tiles are never played *except* when players declare kongs and draw a replacement tile (also called supplement or loose tile).

To distinguish the dead wall from the remainder of the "live" wall, the dead wall maybe separated from the rest of the wall so that there is a clear distinction between the two. This will act as visual aide to get a sense of how many tiles are left in play.

The last fourteen tiles will always be considered dead so if tiles are taken as replacement for kongs and flowers the last tiles in "live" wall in turn takes its place.

When the dead wall is reached the hand is a draw and nobody wins. Shuffle the tiles and start a new hand. All players keep their current winds.