Mahjong Cheat Sheet

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The tiles

Three suits, 1 to 9, four of each tile:



Dots, bams (the bird is the 1) and craks (read the top symbol).

Honors, four of each. They never form runs:



Extras: Chinese sets add 4 flowers and 4 seasons; American sets add 8 flowers and 8 jokers; Japanese play uses none.

A turn

1. **Draw** the next tile from the wall, or call the last discard.
2. **Decide** which tile helps you least.
3. **Discard** it face up and say its name.
4. **Pass to the right:** East, South, West, North.

13 tiles between turns, 14 during your turn. East starts with 14 and discards first.

Sets and calls

- **Pung:** 3 identical tiles. Call from any player.
- **Kong:** 4 identical tiles. Call from any player. Chinese and Japanese: draw a replacement.
- **Chow:** 3 in a row in one suit. Only from the player on your left. Not used in American.
- **Winning tile:** from any player.

Priority: win beats pung or kong; pung or kong beats chow. Lay called sets face up, then discard.

Winning

- **Chinese and Japanese:** 14 tiles as four sets and a pair.



- **American:** 14 tiles that exactly match a hand on this year's card.
- **Call "Mahjong!"** and show your tiles. A self-drawn win usually pays more.

The Charleston (American)

1. **First, required:** pass 3 tiles right, 3 across, 3 left. Blind pass allowed on the left pass.
2. **Second, optional:** left, across, right. Any player can stop it. Blind pass allowed on the right pass.
3. **Courtesy:** 0 to 3 tiles with the player across. Both pass the smaller number.
4. **Never** pass a joker.

Jokers (American)

- **Groups of 3 or more** identical tiles only.
- **Never** in a pair or as a single tile.
- **On your turn,** swap a real tile for a joker in any exposure.
- **A discarded joker** can't be called.

Styles at a glance

	American	Chinese	Japanese
Tiles	152	144	136
Win	Card hand	4 sets + pair	4 sets + pair, yaku
Chows	No	Yes	Yes
Extras	Charleston	Flowers	Riichi, dora

House rules for our table

For American mahjong you also need this year's official card from the National Mah Jongg League.
Free to print for personal and group use. Tile art: riichi-mahjong-tiles by FluffyStuff (CC0) and Meldhouse.

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