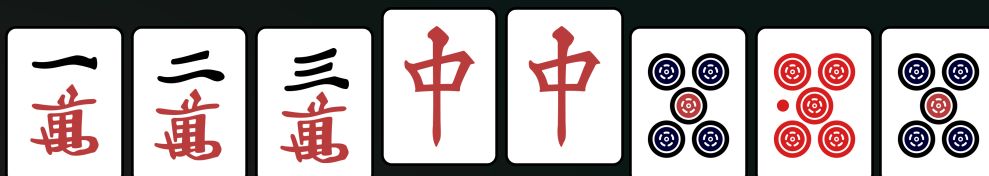


N P M A H J O N G

2026 EDITION

A Practical Guide to Riichi Mahjong

Rules, yaku, scoring and table manners, from your
first hand to your first tournament



Nicolas Pro

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BEFORE YOU START

Preface

Where this book comes from, what changed in 2026, and how to read it.

Where this book comes from

I wrote the first version of this guide in 2010 for the Club Argentino de Mahjong (CAM). I wanted one text in Spanish that covered riichi mahjong from end to end: the tiles, how a hand plays out, the yaku, scoring, and table manners.

Today I live in Osaka, where I've played for about ten years, and I'm a professional with the 日本プロ麻雀協会 (Nihon Pro Mahjong Kyoukai). This 2026 edition is the same book, revised from start to finish. It's also the first time the book appears in English.

What changed in this edition

The rules. The text follows today's standard, the one Mahjong Soul, Tenhou, and Japanese parlors share. The old CAM house rules, and whatever other rule sets change, sit in separate boxes.

The examples. I went through every hand tile by tile. Hands that were built wrong, or didn't show what the text claimed, are fixed.

The history. Mahjong isn't thousands of years old. It took shape in 19th-century China, and that part is corrected too.

The terms. I write *han* where the first edition said *fan*, the way Tenhou, Mahjong Soul, and the WRC rules do. You'll still see *fan* in older texts, such as the 2016 EMA rules.

The figures. They're redrawn, and diagrams replace the photos of the first edition.

The drills. The web edition adds interactive practice: naming tiles, finding waits, naming yaku, and counting points.

How to read it

New to the game? Read the chapters in order. Each one builds on the last. If you already play, jump to whatever you're missing. The appendices, the yaku list and the glossary, work as quick reference.

The web edition and the PDF carry the same text. On the web, the drills respond to what you do. In the PDF, they appear as problems with the answers.

Two boxes come up again and again. "Rule variants" marks where Mahjong Soul, Tenhou, the M-League, WRC and EMA tournaments, or the old CAM rules part ways. "From the table" is advice from me, one player to another.

Which rules it teaches

The main text teaches one version of riichi, the one shared by ranked games on Mahjong Soul and Tenhou and by parlors across Japan:

- four players, and games of two rounds, East and South;
- 25,000 points at the start and a 30,000 return;
- three red fives, one per suit;
- open tanyao (*kuitan*) and *atozuke* allowed;
- 4 han 30 fu doesn't round up to mangan.

If some of those words mean nothing to you yet, the book explains each one when it matters. Where other rule sets differ, I say so in the places it counts.

CHAPTER 1

What is mahjong?

The game at a glance: where it comes from, how you win a hand, and how long a game lasts.

Not the solitaire game

Search "mahjong" on your phone and the first thing you'll find is a solitaire game: a heap of tiles you clear by picking off matching pairs. That game isn't mahjong. It's a computer game from 1981, later sold as *Shanghai* and as *Taipei*, and it only borrowed the pictures on the tiles.

It's still a fine place to start. If you've played it, you've seen the tiles, and the first thing mahjong asks of you is to recognize them one by one. Next you'll learn to see them in groups: how they combine and how they relate to each other.

Where it comes from

Mahjong took shape in China in the mid-19th century, out of older Chinese card games. From the early 20th century on it spread to other countries and cultures, and it kept changing in each one. Today it's part of daily life across much of Asia, the way poker or rummy is elsewhere. Not everyone plays, but almost everyone knows it.

In Mandarin Chinese it's called 麻将 (*májiàng*) today. The older name was 麻雀 (*máquè*, "sparrow"), and that's the spelling Japanese kept: 麻雀, read *maajan*.

With that many years and that many places, the game branched out. China alone has many regional styles, such as Hong Kong mahjong, Taiwanese mahjong (with 16-tile hands), or Sichuan mahjong. There's also an official competition rulebook, published in 1998, known as MCR or *Guobiao* (国标麻将).

Japanese mahjong

Japan added rules of its own. The best known are *riichi* (立直), the declaration that your closed hand is one tile from winning, and *dora* (ドラ), bonus tiles that raise a hand's value. Riichi gave the Japanese style its name in English: *riichi mahjong*, sometimes *reach mahjong*. It's the game this book teaches.

Riichi doesn't have a single rulebook either:

The European Mahjong Association (EMA) publishes one, with editions in 2008, 2012, 2016, and 2025. Most European tournaments follow it.

The World Riichi Championship (WRC) has its own, now in its 2025 edition.

Japan has several professional organizations: the 日本プロ麻雀協会 (Nihon Pro Mahjong Kyoukai, which I belong to), the 日本プロ麻雀連盟, and the 最高位戦日本プロ麻雀協会, among others. The M-League, Japan's professional team league, plays its own rules.

Each one plays slightly different rules, but the differences are in the details. The game is the same.

This book started in 2010 for the Club Argentino de Mahjong (CAM), which played its own house rules. This edition teaches the standard that Mahjong Soul, Tenhou, and Japanese parlors share today. When another rule set changes something, you'll find it in a rule variants box.

Riichi takes a short time to learn and years to master. It tests your head and your instincts, and it mixes luck with good decisions. No book can cover all of it, so this one sticks to what you need at the table.

How you win a hand

Riichi is a four-player game. Each player tries to finish the game with more points than the other three. At the end, the players rank first to fourth, and that placement adds or takes away a bonus (*uma*).

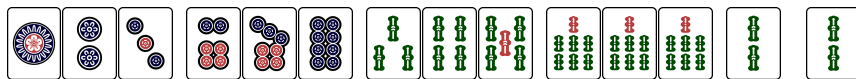
RULE VARIANTS

The three-player version, *sanma* (三麻), is popular, above all in the parlors of Kansai. Tenhou and Mahjong Soul both run ranked sanma. It uses fewer tiles and changes a few rules. This book teaches the four-player game.

You play with tiles. The full set is called *janpai* (雀牌, short for *maajan pai*, "mahjong tiles"). You don't need any Japanese names yet. For now, "tiles" is enough.

With the tiles you build a hand, much as in rummy or poker. Each turn you draw one tile and discard another. Tiles go together in pairs, triplets, quads (kan, four of a kind), and sequences, which is what rummy calls a run. So far, it all sounds familiar.

Your hand holds 13 tiles, and you win with a 14th tile that completes it. A complete hand has **four sets of three tiles** (each set is a triplet or a sequence) **and a pair** of matching tiles, called the "head." For example:



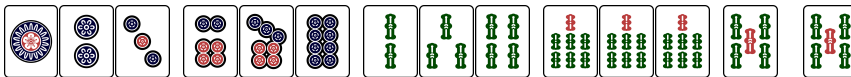
Thirteen tiles in hand and, set apart, the fourteenth that completes it.

The two suits here are circles and bamboo, which this book calls by their Japanese names, *pin* and *sou*. You'll meet all the tiles in the next chapter. You hold thirteen tiles, plus the winning one. The four sets are:

- a 1-2-3 sequence in pin;
- a 6-7-8 sequence in pin;
- a 3-4-5 sequence in sou;
- a triplet of 7 sou.

That leaves a lone 2 sou, waiting for another 2 sou to make the pair. When it arrives, the hand is complete: that's an *agari* (和了), a win. Some English rulebooks call a winning hand "a mahjong." At a riichi table nobody says that. To win, you say *ron* or *tsumo*.

If you noticed this hand also wins on a 5 sou, you're doing well. With the 5, the 2-3-4 sou becomes the sequence and the two 5s make the pair:



The same thirteen tiles, completed with the 5 sou.

There's a third winning tile, too: the 6 sou. Take one 7 out of the triplet, and the sou tiles split into 2-3-4, 5-6-7, and a pair of 7s. This hand waits on three different tiles: the 2, 5, and 6 sou. Spotting every tile that completes a hand is a skill of its own, and the [wait quiz](#) trains it.

The tile that completes your hand can come from two places. You can draw it yourself from the *wall* (山, *yama*), the stack everyone draws from, like drawing a card from the deck. That's winning by *tsumo*. Or you can take the tile another player has discarded: that's winning by *ron*. Which one it is changes the score, but the idea is the same.

That's the whole cycle: draw a tile, discard a tile, every turn, until your hand is complete.

Yaku, han, and fu

Completing the hand isn't enough. In mahjong, the hard part isn't putting together four sets and a pair. It's doing it while meeting certain conditions. Those conditions are called *yaku* (役).

Each yaku gives one or more *han* (翻), and han work as multipliers: every extra han doubles the hand's value, up to the limits. Some yaku are worth one han, some two, some three or more, the same way some poker hands beat others. On top of that come *fu* (符), or minipoints, which depend on the shape of the hand and how you won it. Han and fu together set the hand's value. You'll see how in the [scoring chapter](#).

The rule that matters from day one: **to win, your hand needs at least one yaku**. Dora add han, but they aren't yaku. A complete hand with no yaku can't be declared a win, however many dora it holds.

The example hand shows how this works. As it stands, it has no yaku. If your hand is closed and you draw the winning tile yourself, you win with *menzen tsumo* (門前清自摸和), a 1 han yaku. If you declared riichi earlier, riichi is a yaku too. But if another player discards the 2, the 5, or the 6 and you haven't declared riichi, you can't win on that tile. Yaku get [their own chapter](#).

RULE VARIANTS

Some Chinese styles let you win with a bare minimum hand, no special condition needed. Riichi doesn't: no yaku, no win.

It looks like a lot at first. You don't need to master it to start playing. A friend who can keep score is enough. Online or at an automatic table, the score is counted for you, and the site's [score calculator](#) does the same for any hand you want to check.

How long a game lasts

A standard game, the *hanchan* (半荘), has two rounds, East and South, of at least four hands each: eight hands at minimum. It can run longer when the dealer keeps the deal, or end early when someone drops below zero points. The short game, with the East round only, is called *tonpuusen* (東風戦).

Points are kept with point sticks (*tenbou*, 点棒). Each value has its own markings, like poker chips but long and thin. Every player starts with 25,000 points, and points never come out of nowhere: during the game they only move from one player to another. When the last hand ends, the player with the most points wins.

Where people play today

Most people learn online. Mahjong Soul (雀魂) and Tenhou (天鳳) are the best-known riichi platforms, and both keep score for you. Japan has parlors with automatic tables that shuffle the tiles and build the wall on their own. The M-League streams professional games every season.

Before you get to the yaku, you need to know the tiles well. They're at the center of every game, and they're the subject of the [next chapter](#).

CHAPTER 2

The tiles

The three suits, the honor tiles, the full set, and tricks to recognize every tile.

Tiles instead of cards

The tiles, or *janpai* (雀牌), are the only thing you can't play without. Dice, wind markers, even the table come second. Before the rules, get to know the tiles one by one.

Think of the tiles as cards for a moment. It's not a stretch: mahjong descends from old Chinese card games, and mahjong playing cards still exist today. Like a deck of cards, the tiles have suits and numbers.

The three suits

There are three suits: **man**, **pin**, and **sou**, or characters, circles, and bamboo. In Japanese they're written 萬子, 筒子, and 索子, read *manzu*, *pinzu*, and *souzu*. Each suit is also called a 色 (*iro*, "color"). That's where the yaku *sanshoku* (三色, "three colors") gets its name.

These are the easy tiles, because they carry a number, like the cards in any deck. But instead of running from 1 to 10 or up to a king, they run from **1 to 9**. And every tile comes in **four identical copies**: four 1 pin, four 2 pin, and so on up to 9, in every suit.

Together they make up the number tiles, *suupai* (数牌). With them you build sequences of three consecutive numbers in one suit, and pairs or triplets of matching tiles. A sequence doesn't wrap around: 8-9-1 isn't a sequence.

This book calls the suits man, pin, and sou, the most common names and the shortest. Each suit has plenty of other names, and you'll want to recognize them in other books and apps:

man: characters, cracks or craks, wan;

pin: circles, dots, coins, wheels, balls;

sou (rhymes with "go"): bamboo, bams, sticks, strings.

The three suits come from old Chinese money cards. Pin is a coin, sou is the string that held coins together for carrying, and man is the amount: ten thousand coins.

Man (characters)

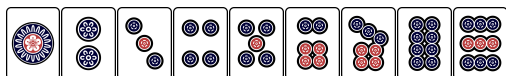


Man, 1 to 9.

Man is the showiest suit of the three. Each tile carries two Chinese characters. The top one is the number, 1 to 9. The bottom one is 萬, "ten thousand": *man* is its Japanese reading and *wàn* its Chinese one. The 1 man stands for 10,000, the 2 man for 20,000, and so on. In ancient Chinese writing, 萬 was a drawing of a scorpion, and over time it came to stand for the number.

Chinese numerals take some getting used to. Some sets print an Arabic numeral in the corner of the harder tiles, but you're better off learning them. The end of this chapter has tricks to help.

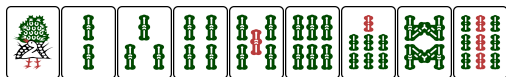
Pin (circles)



Pin, 1 to 9.

Pin is a coin: wealth and good fortune, like diamonds in a deck of cards. It's the most iconic suit in mahjong, simple and good-looking. Some people see wheels, suns, or lanterns lighting up the dark in its designs. To read a pin tile, count the circles.

Sou (bamboo)



Sou, 1 to 9.

Sou is the green suit: the strings that held the coins. From 2 to 9, each tile shows that many bamboo sticks. The 1 is different. Instead of a stick it shows a bird. In Japanese sets it's usually a peacock, and in others it can be another bird, often a sparrow. Chinese sets also change some colors and designs.

These three suits make up most of the set: 108 of its 136 tiles.

Terminals and simples

The number tiles split into two groups, and that split matters for many yaku. It's easy to remember:

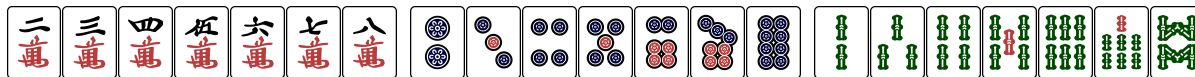
Terminals are the tiles at the edges: the 1 and 9 of each suit. In Japanese, *routouhai* (老頭牌).

Simples are everything in between: 2 through 8 of each suit. In Japanese, *chunchanpai* (中張牌).

A hand made only of simples is the yaku **tanyao**.



The terminals: the 1 and 9 of each suit.



The simples: 2 through 8 of each suit.

Honor tiles

Besides the number suits, there are tiles with characters instead of numbers: the *jihai* (字牌, literally "letter tiles"), which this book calls **honor tiles**. They come in two kinds: three dragons and four winds. Each has four copies, like every other tile.

Honor tiles have no number, so **they can't form sequences**. They only make pairs, triplets, and quads.

The three dragons

The dragons as a group are called *sangenpai* (三元牌). The name "dragons" is Western. The first English rulebooks gave it to them in the 1920s, and it doesn't translate anything in Chinese or Japanese.



The three dragons, in order: white, green, and red.

White dragon: 白, *haku*, "white." In Chinese, 白板 (*báibǎn*, "white board").

Green dragon: 發 (also 発), *hatsu*. It comes from 發財 (*fācái*, "to prosper," "to get rich").

Red dragon: 中, *chun*, "center." In Chinese, 紅中 (*hóngzhōng*).

The order never changes: white, green, red.

In Japanese sets, on Tenhou, and on Mahjong Soul, the white dragon is a blank tile with no design. Many Chinese sets and some modern ones give it a frame or its own character in black. Blank or framed, that tile is the white dragon.

A popular legend, with no historical basis, credits Confucius with inventing mahjong and says the three dragons stand for his virtues: benevolence, sincerity, and filial piety.

The four winds

The winds are *kazehai* or *fonpai* (風牌): East, South, West, and North. Each tile carries the Chinese character for its direction.



The four winds, in order: East, South, West, and North.

East: 東, *ton*.

South: 南, *nan*.

West: 西, *shaa*.

North: 北, *pei*.

The Japanese names imitate Chinese pronunciation, though closer to older and southern dialects than to modern Mandarin (*dōng*, *nán*, *xī*, *běi*). The order is always E, S, W, N.

That's also the order of the seats, counterclockwise around the table. Draw the table with North at the top, like a map, and East lands on the left and West on the right: the reverse of a compass. It's a convention of the game, so don't look for logic in it. The seating figure in [Setting up the table](#) shows it.

Winds work like dragons, with one extra detail: every hand has a round wind, and every player has a seat wind.

Value tiles

The three dragons, the round wind, and your seat wind are value tiles (*yakuhai*, 役牌): a triplet or quad of any of them is a yaku on its own. That's why the same wind isn't worth the same to every player at the table. Full guide: [yakuhai](#).

Terminals and honors

Terminals and honor tiles together are called *yaochuuhai* (幺九牌). That's 13 different tiles, and several yaku and rules depend on them.



The yaochuuhai: the six terminals and the seven honor tiles.

The full set

A mahjong set has three suits from 1 to 9, four winds, and three dragons: 34 different tiles. Each one appears four times, so the set holds **136 tiles**.



The 34 different tiles. The set has four of each.

Some sets come with extra tiles: flowers, seasons, or jokers. Riichi doesn't use them, so you can leave them in the box.

What you will see are **red fives** (赤ドラ, *akadora*): a 5 painted red in each suit. Each one replaces one of the four fives of its suit and adds one han to the hand that holds it. Like every dora, it isn't a yaku. Mahjong Soul, Tenhou, Japanese parlors, and the M-League play with three, one per suit. You'll see them in more detail next to the dora, in [Setting up the table](#), and the [dora guide](#) covers how each rule set handles them.



The three red fives: man, pin, and sou.

RULE VARIANTS

In *sanma*, three-player riichi, the 2 through 8 man come out: 108 tiles remain, and Tenhou and Mahjong Soul use only two red fives, one in pin and one in sou.

Tricks to remember them

If you already know each character at a glance, skip this section. If Chinese characters look like scribbles you'll never remember, read on.

The man numerals



The nine man tiles, large: look at the top half of each one.

1, 2, and 3 . These are easy: one horizontal line is 1, two lines are 2, three lines are 3.

4 . The character is a box. Ignore what's inside and look at the shape: a box has **four** sides.

5 . It looks busy, but trace it stroke by stroke and it's a blocky, straight-lined 5. Some people see a 15 squeezed together. Either way, **five**.

6 . A cowboy: a hat on top and two legs planted wide, ready to draw his **six**-shooter.

- 7 . Turn the tile upside down. The character becomes a 7 with a bar through it, the way much of Europe writes a **seven**.
- 8 . The cowboy from the 6, minus his hat. He lost it on a bet and had to eat it. He ate it: **eight**.
- 9 . Elegant, with a long sweeping tail, like the **nine**-tailed fox.

The dragons

You don't need their names, only the colors, in order: **white, green, red**   . In Japanese, haku, hatsu, chun.

The winds



East, South, West, and North.

East . The wind you'll see most: the East round is half of a hanchan, and all of a tonpuusen. Look for a sun behind the branches of a tree. The sun rises in the **east**. Or picture laundry on a line, flapping in the east wind. It'll stick fast.

South . You'll see this one often too. If it won't stay put, picture a tank, or a ship seen head-on, sailing **south**.

West . A box under a roof, propped up by two posts: a saloon in the Wild **West**.

North . In many sets it looks like an N, more than any of the other three do. N for **North**.

And the order, always: **E, S, W, N**. Eat Some Warm Noodles.

Pin and sou

Everything else, you read by counting the pictures on each tile. Watch for three things. The 1 sou is a bird, not a stick. The 6 and 8 sou get mixed up: the 6 has two rows of three straight sticks, and the 8 has slanted sticks, like a W over an M. And every set looks a little different, depending on the artist, where it was made, and what it was made for.

Test your eye

Name each tile until it comes without thinking. You'll do it hundreds of times in every game.

The 34 tiles and their names

MAN



1

ii-man



2

ryan-man



3

san-man



4

suu-man



5

uu-man



6

roo-man



7

chii-man



8

paa-man



9

chuu-man

PIN



1

ii-pin



2

ryan-pin



3

san-pin



4

suu-pin



5

uu-pin



6

roo-pin



7

chii-pin



8

paa-pin



9

chuu-pin

SOU



1

ii-sou



2

ryan-sou



3

san-sou



4

suu-sou



5

uu-sou



6

roo-sou



7

chii-sou



8

paa-sou



9

chuu-sou

HONORS



East wind

ton



South wind

nan



West wind

shaa



North wind

pei



White dragon

haku



Green dragon

hatsu



Red dragon

chun

RED FIVES (AKA DORA)



Red 5 man

aka uu-man



Red 5 pin

aka uu-pin



Red 5 sou

aka uu-sou

One row per suit. Under each tile, its Japanese reading: what players call it at the table.

CHAPTER 3

Setting up the table

Seats, winds, points, the wall, the dice, dora, and the deal: everything that happens before the first discard.

What's on the table

Riichi mahjong is a four-player game, one player on each side of a square table. Before the first hand you need:

A set of 136 tiles, the one you met in [the tiles](#).

Two dice.

Each player's point sticks (点棒 *tenbou*).

A marker that shows who dealt first and which round you're in. You'll see what it's for later in this chapter.

In a Japanese parlor the automatic table handles almost all of this. Learn to do it by hand anyway. That's the job the machine does for you, and at an ordinary table you'll need it.

The seats

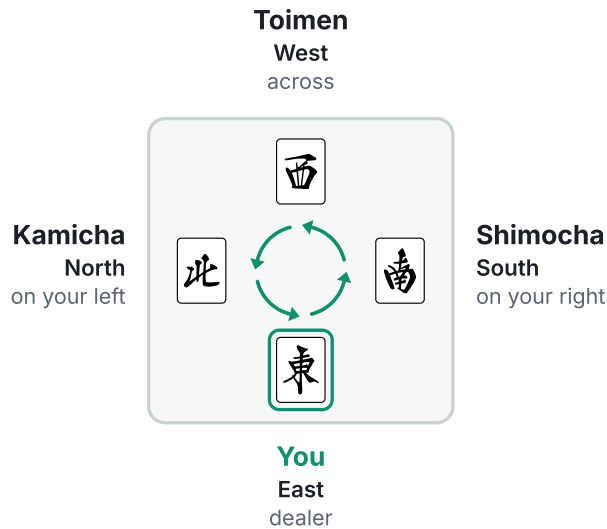
From your seat, each of the other three players has a name:

Kamicha (上家): the player on your left. They play right before you.

Toimen (对面): the player across from you.

Shimocha (下家): the player on your right. They play right after you.

Play runs **counterclockwise**, from each player to the one on their right. Almost everything in mahjong counts in that direction: the turns, the order of the winds, the dice. The exception is the wall. You draw from it clockwise, as you'll see later in this chapter.



First hand: you are East and the dealer. Turns go counter-clockwise (East, South, West, North). Your kamicha plays just before you; your shimocha just after.

Seat winds

Each player holds one of the four winds: East, South, West, or North. That's their **seat wind** (自風 *jikaze*, "own wind").

East is the **dealer** (親 *oya*, "parent"). The other three are **non-dealers** (子 *ko*, "child"). The dealer deals the tiles, discards first, collects more on a win, and pays more when someone else wins by tsumo.

The winds go **East, South, West, North**, counterclockwise. If the dealer is East, the player on their right is South, the player across is West, and the player on their left is North.

Seat winds aren't fixed. They rotate during the game, every time the deal passes to the next player. To find yours, find the dealer and count from them: East, South, West, North. Across from the dealer, you're West. On their left, you're North. After a couple of games you'll see it without counting.

Drawing for seats

The simplest way: put the four winds face down on the table, mix them, and have each player take one. That's their starting wind. Whoever draws East sits anywhere, and the others sit down from there in the order East, South, West, North.

RULE VARIANTS

With a white dragon. Some groups add a white dragon to the four winds. Whoever draws it gets the wind nobody drew.

Tournaments use a more formal draw. The WRC rules lay one out step by step, with dice, so nobody picks their own seat. The EMA 2025 rules draw the four winds face down, as above, unless the tournament schedule already sets the seats. Among friends, mixing the winds is enough, or you can hand them out by where people already sat.

Rounds, hands, and games

A game has two **rounds**: the **East round** and the **South round**. This two-round game is a **hanchan** (半荘, "half game"). The name comes from Chinese mahjong, which plays four rounds: East, South, West, and North. Riichi plays half of that.

Every player deals at least once in each round. Each deal is one **hand** (局 *kyoku*). So a round has at least four hands, and a hanchan at least eight.

The deal moves like this:

If the dealer wins the hand, **they stay dealer** and deal again. That's **renchan** (連荘). The same happens when the hand ends with no winner and the dealer was one tile from winning. You'll see it in [the end of a hand](#).

If another player wins, the deal **passes to the dealer's right**. That player is now East, the next one is South, and so on.

When the fourth dealer of the East round loses the deal, the South round starts. The game's first dealer deals again, and their seat wind is East once more. When the fourth dealer of the South round loses the deal, the game is over. You count the points and see who won.

The marker on the table is the **first-dealer marker** (起家マーク *chiicha maaku*). It has 東 (East) on one side and 南 (South) on the other. The game's first dealer puts it on their right, and it stays there all game. It flips over when the South round starts.

RULE VARIANTS

Short games. You can also play the East round alone. That's a **tonpuusen** (東風戦, "East-wind game"), common online.

The West round. On Tenhou and Mahjong Soul, if nobody has 30,000 points when the South round ends, the game goes on into the West round (西入 *shaanyuu*) until someone gets there. The M-League and WRC and EMA tournaments don't play it. The details are in [the end of the game](#).

Naming each hand

Each hand takes its name from its round and its number. The number counts changes of dealer, so a hand repeated by renchan keeps its number.

Hand	Japanese	Reading
East 1	東一局	<i>ton ikkyoku</i>
East 2	東二局	<i>ton nikyoku</i>
East 3	東三局	<i>ton sankyoku</i>
East 4	東四局	<i>ton yonkyoku</i>
South 1	南一局	<i>nan ikkyoku</i>
South 2	南二局	<i>nan nikyoku</i>
South 3	南三局	<i>nan sankyoku</i>
South 4	南四局	<i>nan yonkyoku</i>

The eight hands of a hanchan with no renchan.

The last hand of the game also goes by **oorasu** (オーラス, from the English *all last*). In a hanchan it's South 4. In a tonpuusen it's East 4.

You don't need these names to play. You'll hear them at any Japanese table and on every broadcast, though.

Round wind and seat wind

Besides your seat wind, each round has a **round wind** (場風 *bakaze*): East during the East round, South during the South round.

Both matter because of the wind tiles. A triplet of your seat wind is worth 1 han, and a triplet of the round wind is worth 1 han to anyone. Han is the unit that measures what a hand is worth; you'll meet it in [scoring](#). These triplets are a **yaku**, one of the patterns that let you win. The [yaku](#) chapter has them all, and the site has a [full guide to yakuhai](#).

During the East round, the dealer's seat wind is East too. A dealer who collects three East tiles gets 2 han: one for the seat wind and one for the round wind. That's a **double wind**. In the South round the double wind isn't the dealer's. It belongs to the player in the South seat, because South is both their seat wind and the round wind.

Starting points

Every player starts with **25,000 points**. That's the standard on Tenhou, Mahjong Soul, the M-League, and in Japanese parlors. At the end you count against **30,000**, the return. You'll see how in [scoring](#).

RULE VARIANTS

WRC and EMA tournaments start at 30,000. Tenhou's three-player games start at 35,000. Some clubs use other numbers. Whichever you play, everyone starts with the same amount.

You keep score with point sticks. Each stick has a value:

10,000: for big payments. The design varies by maker; the standard Japanese stick has five red dots with two black dots on each side.

5,000: for mid-sized payments. Five red dots.

1,000: for payments and for declaring riichi. One red dot.

100: for small payments and for counting honba. Eight black dots.

Stick	Value	Count	Points
	10,000 5 red dots with 2 black dots on each side	× 1	10,000
	5,000 5 red dots	× 2	10,000
	1,000 1 red dot	× 4	4,000
	100 8 black dots	× 10	1,000
Total		17 sticks	25,000

The point sticks (点棒, tenbou). At a 25,000-point start, each player gets 17 sticks. The exact dot layout varies a little from maker to maker.

The 25,000 start breaks down into 1 stick of 10,000, 2 of 5,000, 4 of 1,000, and 10 of 100. For a 30,000 start, add five more 1,000 sticks: nine in all.

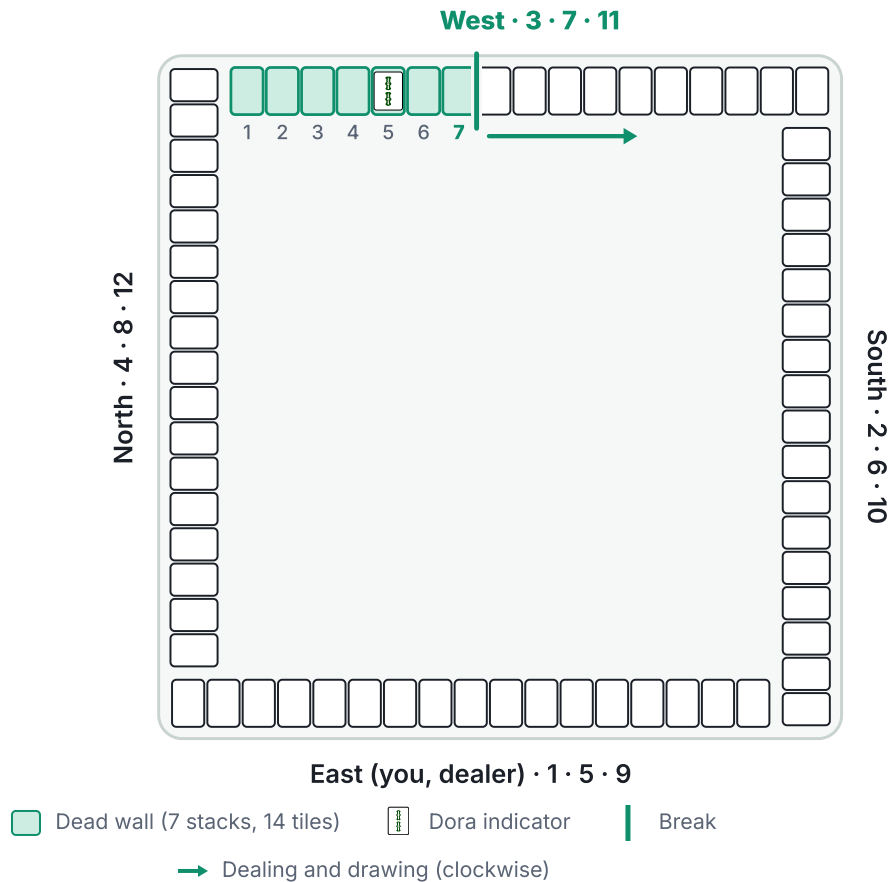
RULE VARIANTS

Some sets come with 500 sticks, and some use other colors or dot patterns. What matters is that everyone at the table knows what each stick is worth.

Building the wall

Mahjong has no deck. You draw your tiles from a **wall** (山 *yama*, "mountain").

At the start of each hand, all the tiles go face down in the middle of the table and get mixed. Then each player builds a row of **17 stacks of 2 tiles** in front of them: 34 tiles each, 136 in all. The four rows push together into a square, tiles face down.



Dice: 7. The West wall breaks, 7 stacks from its right end. The numbers beside the stacks are that count.

Building the wall is slow at first. With practice it goes fast. It doesn't have to be perfect. A straight, tight wall keeps tiles from falling, lets everyone reach to draw, and keeps the game moving.

NOTE

Automatic tables. Almost every table in a Japanese parlor is automatic (全自動卓 *zen-jidou-taku*). It shuffles one set inside while you play with the other, then raises all four walls ready-built. The dealer presses a button and the table rolls the dice. Many also show each player's score. On Tenhou and Mahjong Soul you don't see any dice: the screen shows the dora indicator and how many tiles are left.

Breaking the wall

With the wall built, you decide where it opens. That settles two things: where the dead wall and the dora sit, and where the drawing starts.

The dealer rolls both dice and counts the total counterclockwise, starting with themselves as 1. The player the count lands on owns the wall that breaks:

Dice total	Wall that breaks
5 or 9	The dealer's
2, 6, or 10	The player on the dealer's right (South)
3, 7, or 11	The player across (West)
4, 8, or 12	The player on the dealer's left (North)

Which wall breaks, by the dice total, counting from the dealer.

On that wall, count as many stacks as the dice show, **from the right end** of the wall as its owner sees it. Open a small gap there.

Say you roll a 9. The wall is the dealer's own, so the dealer counts nine stacks from the right of their wall and splits it there.



Example: 3 and 4, a total of 7

1. Count counter-clockwise from the dealer, who is 1: East 1, South 2, West 3, North 4, East 5, South 6, West 7. The West wall breaks: your toimen's.
2. West counts 7 stacks from the right end of their wall and opens the break there.
3. The 7 stacks right of the break are the dead wall. The top tile of the 3rd stack from the break (stack 5 of that wall) is turned face up: the dora indicator.
4. The dealer takes the first two stacks just left of the break, and the deal goes on clockwise.

The wall figure above shows this same roll.

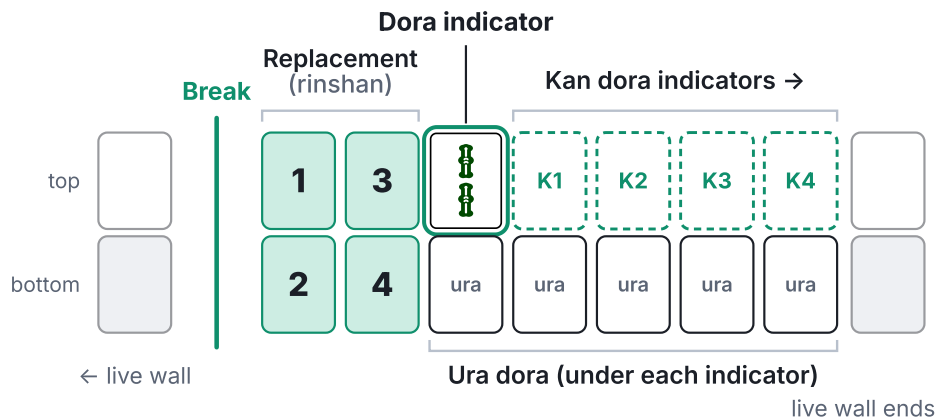
RULE VARIANTS

Two rolls. In a traditional method (二度振り *nidofuri*), the dealer rolls to pick the wall and that wall's owner rolls again. The gap goes at the **sum** of both rolls, counted from the right of that wall. Today almost everyone rolls once.

The dead wall

The **7 stacks to the right of the gap** (14 tiles) make up the **dead wall** (王牌 *wanpai*, "king's tiles"). If the dice show less than 7, there aren't enough stacks to the right of the gap, so the dead wall carries on around the corner into the next wall.

Nobody draws those 14 tiles in normal play. Everything else is the **live wall**.



The dead wall as the wall's owner sees it, with the break on the left. Replacement tiles are taken in the order 1, 2, 3, 4. Each kan flips the next indicator to the right. Ura dora, the tile under each indicator, is only checked when a player who declared riichi wins.

Counting from the gap, the dead wall works like this:

The first two stacks (four tiles) are the **replacement tiles** (嶺上牌 *rinshanpai*). The player who declares a kan draws one, as you'll see in [the turn](#).

The third stack holds the **dora indicator** (ドラ表示牌 *dora hyoujihai*): you turn its top tile face up, and it stays face up for the whole hand.

The next stacks hold the indicators that turn over with each kan, one per kan, always in the next stack, moving away from the gap.

The replacement tiles come off in this order: the top of the end stack, then the bottom of that stack, then the top of the next stack, and last its bottom. Many players set the first replacement tile down on the table, right next to its stack, as soon as the wall breaks. That way it can't fall and nobody sees it by accident.

You touch the dead wall for three things only: to draw a replacement tile after a kan, to turn over a dora indicator, and to check the ura dora when a riichi player wins. When the live wall runs out, the hand is over. You never keep drawing from the dead wall.

The dead wall always holds 14 tiles. Each time someone draws a replacement tile, the last tile of the live wall moves over to the dead wall. Put another way: every kan makes the hand end one tile sooner.

RULE VARIANTS

Split off the dead wall? Many players make a second gap to set the dead wall apart. The WRC and EMA rules ask you not to, so tiles don't get moved around. Knowing where the live wall ends is enough.

Dora

The **dora** (ドラ) is a bonus tile. Each copy in your winning hand adds **1 han**. Dora isn't a yaku: it only counts once your hand has one.

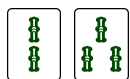
Chinese mahjong pays extra for flowers and seasons. Riichi doesn't use those tiles. Its bonus is the dora.

The dora is **the tile after the indicator**, in the same suit:

Numbers: the next number. If the indicator is the 2 sou, the dora is the 3 sou. If the indicator is a 9, the dora is the 1 of the same suit.

Dragons: white, green, red, and back to white. With the white dragon as indicator, the dora is green. With red, it's white.

Winds: East, South, West, North, and back to East. With East as indicator, the dora is South. With North, it's East.



Indicator 2 sou, dora 3 sou. Each 3 sou in your winning hand adds 1 han.

NUMBERS (THE SAME IN ALL THREE SUITS)



WINDS



DRAGONS



The dora is the tile after the indicator. Each cycle wraps back to its start: after 9 comes 1, after North comes East, and after the red dragon comes the white. A red 5 as the indicator counts as a 5.

The indicator itself isn't dora. It does take one copy of that tile out of play: with the 2 sou from the example showing, only three are left to draw. The site's [dora guide](#) goes deeper, with how dora move your score.

Kan dora and ura dora

Each kan turns over one more indicator in the dead wall. The tile it points at is the **kan dora** (槓ドラ *kandora*, also 新ドラ *shindora*, "new dora"). It counts for every player, not only the one who called the kan. When it turns over is in the section on [kan](#).

When a player who declared riichi wins, they turn over the tile **under** each indicator. Those tiles are **ura dora** indicators (裏ドラ, "underside dora"), and you read them like the normal indicator. They count only for the riichi winner.

Five indicators at once almost never happens. It takes four kans, and on Tenhou and Mahjong Soul four kans between two or more players cancel the hand, as you'll see in [abortive draws](#). One indicator is normal, sometimes two or three.

A basic strategy is to build simple hands with several dora. That's why discarding a dora hands value to another player and can be dangerous, even when it's no use to you. Dora is a bonus, not an obligation.

Red fives

Almost every modern ruleset plays with **red fives** (赤ドラ *akadora*): a 5 man, a 5 pin, and a 5 sou painted red. Each one is a dora by itself, whatever the indicator shows. If the indicator is also a 4 of that suit, the red five is worth 2 han.



The three red fives of Tenhou and Mahjong Soul: one per suit.

RULE VARIANTS

Tenhou, Mahjong Soul, and the M-League play with three red fives, one per suit. Some parlors add a second red 5 pin, and some local rules have more. Tenhou also runs tables without red fives, and the WRC and EMA rules don't use them.

Dealing the tiles

Every player starts with **13 tiles**. The dealer starts with **14**, because the first turn is theirs: they don't draw, they discard one right away. From then on, each turn you draw a tile and discard a tile, like in rummy. Your winning hand has 14 tiles: your 13 plus the one that completes it.

The deal goes like this:

The dealer takes the **four tiles** (two stacks) just to the left of the gap.

South takes the next four, then West, then North. You take tiles clockwise, following the wall.

Repeat twice more. Everyone now has 12 tiles.

The dealer takes two single tiles: the top of the first stack and the top of the third. That's the "jump" (チヨンチヨン *chonchon*).

South takes the bottom of the first stack, West the top of the second, and North the bottom of the second.

The dealer ends up with 14 tiles and everyone else with 13. The bottom tile of the third stack is the first draw of the game: South takes it on their first turn.

The live wall gets used up clockwise, toward the dead wall. So the last tiles of the live wall sit right on the far side of the dead wall, as if they carried on into it. The last tile anyone draws is the one just before the dead wall's 14.

With the hands dealt, everyone sorts their tiles and the dealer makes the first discard. The game is on, and that's **the turn**.

CHAPTER 4

The turn

Draw, discard, call, and win: what you do on every turn, from the first tile to the last.

Draw and discard

The dealer starts with 14 tiles and makes the first discard. Then the player on their right plays: they draw a tile from the wall and discard one from their hand. And so on, player to player, counterclockwise.

Drawing from the wall is ツモる *tsumoru*, or 自摸 *tsumo*. Discarding is 切る *kiru* ("to cut") or 捨てる *suteru* ("to throw away").

Between turns you always hold 13 tiles. When you draw, you hold 14 for a moment, then discard one to get back to 13. You have to draw and discard: **you can't pass**. The only time you skip the draw is when you call another player's discard, as you'll see in [calls](#).

The hand goes on like this until someone wins or the live wall runs out.

Which tile to discard

Mahjong, like poker, is a game of incomplete information. At the start you only see your own 13 or 14 tiles and the dora indicator. Every discard and every call from the others tells you a little more.

As a rule, discard the tile **that does the least for you**. A classic beginner mistake is throwing the tile you just drew because it's in your fingers, when a worse one sits in your hand.

Look at which tiles can still come, too. Say three red dragons are already in the discards and you hold the fourth. You draw a white dragon: you have no other, and none has shown up yet. Which one goes? The red. It can't make a pair or a triplet for you anymore, and the white still can.

The river

In Chinese mahjong everyone discards into the middle of the table. In Japanese mahjong each player lines up their discards in front of them, in order. That personal discard pond is the **river** (河 *kawa*).

The river does two jobs. First, it drives the **furiten** rule: you can't win by ron on a tile you've already discarded. That's in [rules and penalties](#), and the [furiten guide](#) has more examples. Second, it lets you read the other players. A player who hasn't thrown a single sou all hand is probably collecting them. If they suddenly throw one after many turns, they may be one tile from winning.

Discards go in **rows of six**, left to right. The seventh discard starts the second row, and the thirteenth the third. The third row runs as long as it needs to.



A river after fourteen discards: each group is a row. Not one sou: this player is probably collecting them.

A hand lasts at most **18 go-arounds** (巡 *jun*). With no calls, the dealer and South discard 18 times, and West and North 17. That's why three rows of six almost always do.

Each river belongs to its player. Nobody touches someone else's river, except to call a tile that was just discarded.

FROM THE TABLE

Discard neatly, one tile next to the other, in even rows. A tidy river helps everyone read the game, and at a Japanese table it's part of good manners. And watch the other rivers all the time: they're the most valuable information you have.

Live tiles and dead tiles

A **dead** tile is one whose copies are all, or nearly all, already visible on the table, in the rivers or in open melds. Nobody can build much with it.

A tile with no copy seen yet is a **shonpai** (生牌). Late in a hand, throwing a shonpai is riskier than throwing a tile that has already shown up several times: someone may be waiting on it. A tile that could hand another player the win is a **dangerous tile** (危険牌 *kikenhai*).

Sets

Remember the shape of a complete hand: **four sets and a pair**. Each set has exactly three tiles:

A **sequence** (順子 *shuntsu*): three numbers in a row in the same suit, like 1-2-3 or 4-5-6. Always three: 1-2-3-4 or 2-3-4-5-6 isn't a set.

A **triplet** (刻子 *koutsu*): three identical tiles.

The **pair** (雀頭 *jantou*, also 頭 *atama*, "head") is two identical tiles. Any pair is a 対子 *toitsu*; the one in a complete hand is the jantou.

The exception to "three tiles" is the **quad** (槓子 *kantsu*): four identical tiles, declared. It counts as one set.

Sets are also called **melds** (面子 *mentsu*). This book uses both words.

A set you build with someone else's discard is **open**, and it goes face up on the table: *minshuntsu* (明順子), *minkou* (明刻), or *minkan* (明槓). One you build only from your own tiles is **concealed**: *an-shuntsu* (暗順子), *ankou* (暗刻), or *ankan* (暗槓). Almost nobody uses these words at the table. People say "a chi", "a pon", "a kan".

Calls

If you could only draw from the wall, the game would lean heavily on luck. So you can take the tile **another player just discarded** to complete a set. That's a **call** (鳴き *naki*).

To call, you need the rest of the set in your hand. Say the call out loud, show your tiles, take the discard, and put the set face up **on your right**, on your side of the table. It stays in view until the end of the hand.

When you call, **the turn jumps to you**. You don't draw: you discard a tile to get back to 13, and play continues with the player on your right. Anyone between the discarder and you loses their turn.

	Toimen across pon, kan		
Kamicha on your left chi, pon, kan		Shimocha on your right pon, kan	
	You		
	Kamicha left	Toimen middle	Shimocha right
Chi		Not allowed	Not allowed
Pon			
Open kan			

The called tile lies sideways on the side of the player who discarded it: left if it came from kamicha, middle from toimen, right from shimocha. Chi only from kamicha; pon and open kan from anyone.

Pon

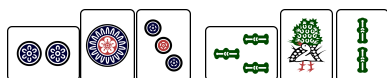
You hold two identical tiles and **any** player discards the third. Before the next player draws, say "**pon**", show your pair, take the discard, and make the triplet.

The called tile goes **sideways**, on the side of the player who threw it: on the left if it came from your left, in the middle if it came from across, on the right if it came from your right. The figure above shows all three.

Chi

You hold two tiles of a sequence (1-3, 1-2, 2-3...) and your **kamicha**, the player on your left, discards the missing one. Say "**chi**" (some books and apps write it *chi*), show your two tiles, and make the sequence.

The called tile goes sideways on the left, because it always comes from your left.



Chi on the 2 pin with the 1 and 3, and chi on the 3 sou with the 1 and 2.

Pon from anyone. Chi only from the player on your left.

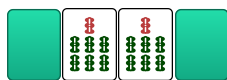
Turning the called tile is more than habit. It shows where each tile came from, and that helps everyone track furiten and read each player's discards. Always do it right.

Kan

With four identical tiles you can declare a **kan**. You show it, it counts as one set, and you draw a **replacement tile** from the dead wall so your hand can still make four sets and a pair. A new dora indicator turns over too. You saw where in [the dead wall](#).

There are three kinds of kan.

Closed kan (*ankan*). All four tiles are in your hand. On your turn, after you draw, say "kan", show all four, and turn two face down, usually the two on the ends. It's the only call that **doesn't open your hand**.



Closed kan of 7 sou: two tiles face up and two face down.

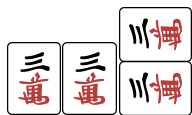
You can only declare it on your own turn, after drawing from the wall or drawing a replacement tile. Never on a turn where you've just called chi or pon.

RULE VARIANTS

The EMA rules also let you turn the two middle tiles face down instead of the two on the ends.

Open kan (大明槓 *daiminkan*). You hold three identical tiles and **any** player discards the fourth. Say "kan" and lay it out like a pon, with the called tile turned toward the player who threw it, as in the calls figure. If it came from across, turn the second tile or the third: both are in use.

Added kan (加槓 *kakan*, also 小明槓 *shouminkan*). You already have an open pon and the fourth tile is in your hand, just drawn or held from earlier. On your turn, say "kan" and set it on top of the pon's sideways tile. If another player discards the fourth tile, you can't call it to add it.



Added kan: the pon of 3 man came from the right, and the fourth tile sits on the sideways tile.

Robbing a kan: chankan

When you add a tile to your pon, another player can win on that tile if they were waiting on it. That's **chankan** (槍槓), a yaku you'll meet in the [yaku](#) chapter. Your kan doesn't go through. A player in furiten can't rob it. That includes a player who already has that tile in their river.

You can't rob a closed kan, except with *kokushi musou* under some rules. You'll see that with [chankan](#).

After a kan

After any kan you draw the replacement tile (嶺上牌 *rinshanpai*). If it completes your hand, you win by tsumo and add the yaku **rinshan kaihou** (嶺上開花, "flower on the mountain"), the one the anime *Saki* made famous. If not, you discard and play goes on.

Every kan turns over a new dora indicator. On Tenhou and Mahjong Soul:

With a **closed kan**, the indicator turns over right away.

With an **open or added kan**, it turns over after you discard. If you make another kan before discarding, it turns over just before you draw the new replacement tile.

RULE VARIANTS

In the M-League and under the WRC and EMA rules, the indicator turns over right away for every kan. In Japanese parlors each house has its own rule: ask before you start.

A few limits:

Every kan makes the hand end one tile sooner, because the dead wall always keeps 14 tiles.

You can't declare a kan on the last tile of the wall.

A hand has at most four kans. What happens with the fourth is in [abortive draws](#).

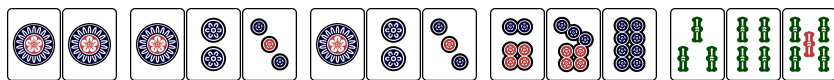
For yaku, a kan counts as a triplet: a closed kan is a concealed triplet, and an open or added kan an open one. It's worth more fu than a triplet, and several kans can make a yaku of their own. All of that is in the [yaku](#) and [scoring](#) chapters.

FROM THE TABLE

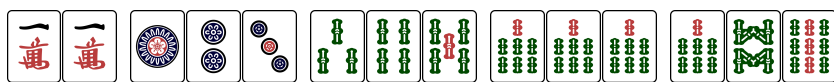
Declare a kan only when it helps you. It gives the whole table a new dora. If another player is already one tile from winning, that dora may do more for them than for you. Many strong players avoid open kans when someone has declared riichi.

Four tiles, no kan

You don't have to declare the kan. Four identical tiles can play other roles in a hand:



All four copies of the 1 pin: two make the pair and two go into the 1-2-3 sequences. Closed, this hand has iipeikou, two identical sequences.



All four copies of the 7 sou: three make a triplet and the fourth goes into the 7-8-9 sequence.

In these hands the four tiles don't count as a kan, for two reasons. A kan only exists once you declare it. And in a complete hand every tile plays one role: it's part of a sequence, a triplet, or the pair, never two at once.

While you build your hand, one tile can serve several possible shapes. When you win, you settle which is which. If the hand reads more than one way, you score the reading worth **the most points** (高点法 *koutenhou*). That's why a hand never has both pinfu and toitoi, or both chiitoitsu and ryan-peikou: they're different readings of the same tiles.

Who gets priority

Sometimes two players want the same discard. The order is:

Ron: winning on that discard beats any call.

Pon and kan.

Chi.

At a real table, pon and kan only beat chi when the calls come at about the same time. A pon called clearly after someone else's chi is too late, and the chi stands. The WRC and EMA 2025 rules both say so. Online the game asks everyone at once, so the order above is all there is.

You can't call chi, pon, or kan on the last discard of the hand, once the live wall is empty. The only thing you can do with it is win by ron.

RULE VARIANTS

Two players ron on the same tile. On Tenhou and Mahjong Soul both get paid: that's *daburon* (ダブロン), double ron. In the M-League and under WRC rules only the first player in turn order from the discarder wins: that's *atamahane* (頭ハネ). The details are in [rules and penalties](#), and triple ron is in [abortive draws](#).

Open and closed hands

Calling makes your hand faster. So why not call every time? Because it changes what kind of hand you have.

An **open hand** has called at least one discard with chi, pon, or an open kan. The tile you win on by ron doesn't count: winning by ron doesn't open your hand.

A **closed hand** (門前 *menzen*) hasn't called any discard. A closed kan keeps it closed. It's harder to build, and that's why it gets perks:

Only a closed hand can declare **riichi**.

Win by tsumo with a closed hand and you add the yaku **menzen tsumo**: 1 more han.

Several yaku only count with a closed hand, and others lose 1 han when the hand is open.

You'll see them all in the [yaku](#) chapter. And remember that an open hand needs a yaku to win too.

FROM THE TABLE

Calling speeds up your hand but almost always lowers its value. Strong players call mostly with a dragon or wind triplet that already gives a yaku, with fast hands like tanyao, or to reach tenpai late in the hand. You also call to end a hand quickly when another player looks dangerous, or when you're in first and want the game over.

Winning the hand

When you complete your hand, you declare it. In Japanese, winning is *agari* (和了り) or *houra* (和了). There are only two ways to declare it: **tsumo** and **ron**.

To win you need a complete hand and **at least one yaku**. A triplet of red dragons, for example, is already a yaku.

Tsumo

You win by **tsumo** (自摸和 *tsumohou*) when you draw your winning tile on your own turn, from the wall or as a kan's replacement tile. Nobody can stop it, except with a call that skips your turn.

Don't put the tile in your hand. Show it apart, say "**tsumo**", and lay your hand face up, pushing the tiles forward a little.

With a closed hand, the tsumo gives you the yaku *menzen tsumo* on its own. With an open hand you can still win by tsumo, as long as you have another yaku.

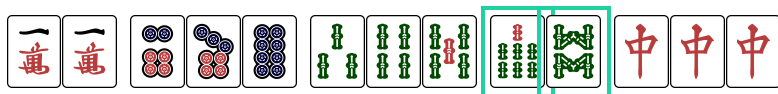
Ron

You win by **ron** (荣和 *ronhou*) when another player discards your winning tile, or adds it to their pon for an added kan (that's chankan). Right then, say "**ron**" out loud and lay down your hand.

You can't ron if you're in **furiten** or if your hand has no yaku. Check both before you say ron. A mistaken ron carries a penalty, from a dead hand up to *chonbo*. They're in [fouls and penalties](#).

An example

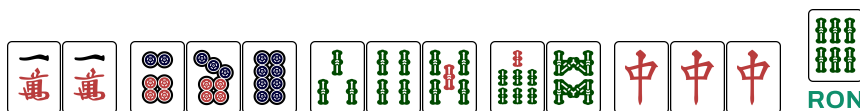
This hand is one tile from winning:



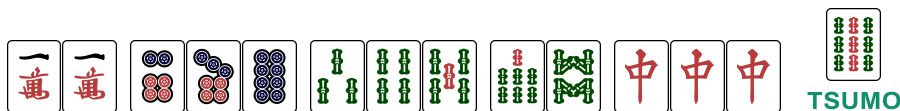
A pair of 1 man, two sequences, and a triplet of red dragons, which is already a yaku. The 7-8 sou waits on the 6 or the 9.

You have the pair, a yaku from the three red dragons, and three sets. The 7-8 sou waits on two tiles: the 6 (for 6-7-8) or the 9 (for 7-8-9).

An opponent discards the 6 sou. You say "ron" and win:



If you draw the 9 sou from the wall instead, show it and say "tsumo". Your hand is closed, so you add *menzen tsumo* to the red dragons.



Passing on a win

You can choose not to declare a win, for example if you're waiting for a tile that makes your hand worth more. But let another player's winning tile go by and you're in **temporary furiten**: no ron until your next turn. If you've already declared riichi, the furiten lasts until the end of the hand. All three kinds of furiten are in [rules and penalties](#).

Who pays

When you win by **ron**, **the player who discarded your winning tile** pays it all. That's the price of feeding you the tile: in Japanese, *houjuu* (放銃) or *furikomi* (振り込み), dealing in. They pay 300 more for each honba on the table.

When you win by **tsumo**, all three pay. If a non-dealer wins, the dealer pays the biggest share. If the dealer wins, all three pay the same. For each honba, each of them pays 100 more: 300 in all.

The dealer collects more on a win and pays more when someone else wins by tsumo. The winner also takes any riichi sticks on the table. The exact amounts are in the [scoring](#) chapter, and honba and riichi sticks in [the end of a hand](#).

CHAPTER 5

The end of a hand

Tenpai, draws, honba, and riichi sticks: how a hand ends, and when the game does.

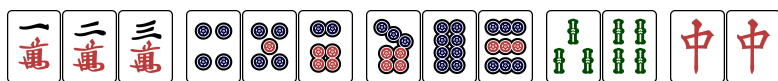
Tenpai and noten

A hand ends one of two ways: someone wins, or nobody does. When nobody wins, what matters is how close each player was.

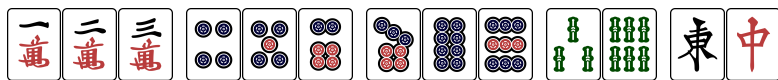
Tenpai (聴牌, "listening for tiles"): your hand is **one tile** from complete.

Noten (ノーテン, "not tenpai"): it's more than one tile away.

A complete hand is four sets and a pair. There are two exceptions: *chiitoitsu* (seven pairs) and *kokushi musou* (thirteen orphans: one of each terminal and honor, plus a pair). You'll meet them in the [yaku](#) and [yakuman](#) chapters.



Tenpai: the 3-4 sou waits on the 2 or the 5 to complete the hand.



Noten: a pair and a set are missing. No single tile completes this hand.

The site's [tenpai guide](#) counts the common waits tile by tile.

Exhaustive draw

If the live wall runs out and nobody has won, the hand ends in an **exhaustive draw**. In Japanese, any hand with no winner is a 流局 (*ryuukyoku*). The exhaustive draw in particular is also 荒牌平局 (*kouhai heikyoku*).

One player draws the last tile of the live wall and then makes the last discard of the hand. If nobody wins on that discard, the hand is over. The tenpai players show their hands. The noten players turn theirs face down.

NOTE

On Tenhou and Mahjong Soul, a hand counts as tenpai at the draw even with no yaku. The tenpai hand above, with no yaku in sight, still collects.

Noten payments

At the draw, the noten players pay the tenpai players. That's the **noten payment** (ノーテン罰符 *noten bappu*). It moves 3,000 points in all: each tenpai player collects 3,000 divided by the number of tenpai players, and each noten player pays 3,000 divided by the number of noten players.

If only one player is tenpai, they collect 3,000: 1,000 from each noten player. If it's two and two, each noten player pays 1,500 and each tenpai player collects 1,500. If all four are tenpai, or none, nobody pays.

Tenpai	Each tenpai player gets	Each noten player pays
Nobody	No payment	No payment
1	+3,000	-1,000
2	+1,500	-1,500
3	+1,000	-3,000
All four	No payment	No payment

- The noten players pay 3,000 points in all, shared among the tenpai players.
- If the dealer is tenpai, they stay dealer (renchan). If noten, the deal passes on.
- A honba is always added, even when the deal passes.

Noten payments (ノーテン罰符, noten bappu) by how many players are tenpai.

There's one special case. A player who reaches the draw having discarded only terminals and honors, with none of them called, collects a mangan on Tenhou and Mahjong Soul. That's *nagashi mangan* (流し満貫). You'll see it in the [yaku](#) chapter.

RULE VARIANTS

In Tenhou's three-player games, the noten payment is 2,000 in all.

Who deals next?

The dealer **keeps the deal** (renchan, 連荘) if they:

- win the hand, or
- are tenpai at an exhaustive draw.

In every other case, the deal **passes** to the player on the dealer's right, and the winds rotate. That happens when another player wins, or when the dealer is noten at the draw. If all four are noten, the deal passes too.

This rule is **tenpai renchan** (聴牌連荘). Tenhou, Mahjong Soul, the M-League, and the WRC and EMA rules all play it.

RULE VARIANTS

Agari renchan (和了連荘). The dealer keeps the deal only by winning. Tenpai at a draw still passes it.

There used to be a variant where, during the South round, the dealer kept the deal after a draw even when noten. You'll hardly see it today.

Honba

Every time the dealer keeps the deal, and every time a hand ends with no winner, you add one **honba** (本場). After a draw it goes up even if the deal passes.

The dealer puts a 100-point stick on their right, in plain view, for each honba. That stick is the 積み棒 (*tsumibou*). Automatic tables also show the count on their display.

Each honba adds **300 points** to the next win:

By **ron**, the discarder pays 300 more for each honba.

By **tsumo**, each paying player adds 100 for each honba: 300 in all.

The honba **go back to zero only when a non-dealer wins**. For example:

In East 1 the dealer wins. They keep the deal: next is East 1 with 1 honba (東一局一本場 *ton ikkyoku ippon-ba*).

That hand ends in a draw with the dealer noten. The deal passes: next is East 2 with 2 honba.

In East 2 a non-dealer wins. They collect the 2 honba, and East 3 starts with none.

The **scoring** chapter has a full example with honba and riichi sticks.

RULE VARIANTS

Two han from five honba. Under some house rules, from five honba on a hand needs at least 2 han of yaku to win instead of 1. That's *ryanshi*, covered in **rules and penalties**. Tenhou, Mahjong Soul, the M-League, and WRC and EMA tournaments don't use it.

Eight in a row. Some local rules play **paarenchan** (八連荘): if the dealer **wins** eight hands in a row, the eighth is worth yakuman. Repeats from draws don't count. Tenhou, Mahjong Soul, and tournaments don't use it either.

Riichi sticks

When you declare riichi, you put a 1,000-point stick in the middle of the table. That deposit is the 供託 (*kyoutaku*). Don't mix it up with the honba's tsumibou.

If someone wins by ron on the discard you declare riichi with, your riichi never takes effect and you don't pay the stick.

The stick stays on the table until someone wins. **The winner takes every riichi stick there**, their own included. If the hand ends with no winner, the sticks stay put and wait for the winner of the next hand. Any sticks left with no owner at the end of the game go to the player in first.

RULE VARIANTS

When two players ron the same tile, Tenhou gives the honba and the riichi sticks to the winner closest to the discarder in turn order (上家取り *kamicha-dori*).

Abortive draws

Sometimes a hand is called off before the wall runs out. That's an **abortive draw** (途中流局 *tochuu ryuukyoku*). An abortive draw has **no noten payments**. On Tenhou and Mahjong Soul, the dealer keeps the deal, a honba goes on, and the riichi sticks stay on the table.

There are five cases.

Nine terminals and honors

Nine kinds (九種九牌 *kyuushu kyuuhai*). On your first turn, before you discard and with no calls made by anyone (not even a closed kan), you hold 9 or more **different** terminals and honors. You can show your hand and call it off.

It's optional. You can also play on, for example to go for *kokushi musou*.



First turn: 1 and 9 man, 1 and 9 pin, 1 sou, and all four winds. Nine kinds: you can call the hand off.

Four of the same wind

Four winds (四風連打 *suufon renda*). On the first go-around of the hand, with no calls, all four players discard the same wind. For example, all four throw North.

Four riichi

Four riichi (四家立直 *suucha riichi*). All four players declare riichi, and nobody wins by ron on the fourth player's discard. The four 1,000-point sticks stay on the table for the next winner.

Four kans

Four kans (四開槓 *suukaikan*, also 四槓散了 *suukan sanra*). Four kans are declared between **two or more players**, and nobody wins on the discard after the fourth kan.

If one player made all four kans, there's no draw: that player is going for *suukantsu*, a yakuman. Nobody can declare a fifth kan.

Triple ron

Triple ron (三家和 *sanchahou*). Three players ron the same discard. On Tenhou, the hand is called off.

RULE VARIANTS

Abortive draws change a lot from one ruleset to the next:

Case	Tenhou	Mahjong Soul	M-League	WRC	EMA
Nine kinds	Called off (optional)	Called off (optional)	Play on	Play on	Play on
Four winds	Called off	Called off	Play on	Play on	Play on
Four riichi	Called off	Called off	Play on	Play on	Play on
Four kans	Called off	Called off	Play on	Play on, no fifth kan	Play on, no fifth kan
Triple ron	Called off	All three paid	First player only	First player only	All three paid

Abortive draws by ruleset.

"First player only" means the first in turn order from the discarder. Some rules also end the hand the moment the fourth kan is declared, without waiting for the discard.

What about chonbo?

A **chonbo** (チョンボ, also 錯和 or 冲和) is a serious foul, like declaring a win that isn't there. It isn't a draw, but it also ends the hand with no winner.

The player who commits it pays a penalty, which you'll see in [rules and penalties](#). After that, the standard is to **replay the same hand** (*yarinaoshi*): the dealer doesn't change, no honba goes on, and any riichi sticks from that hand go back to their owners.

Tenhou and Mahjong Soul have no chonbo: the software won't let you declare a false win.

RULE VARIANTS

The Club Argentino de Mahjong also used two other ways to go on after a chonbo. *Ronchan* (輪莊): add

a honba and the deal passes to the next player. *Renchan*: add a honba and the dealer keeps the deal.

The end of the game

A hanchan ends when South 4, the last hand, is over and the dealer doesn't keep the deal. A tonpu-usen ends the same way after East 4. Three situations change that.

Someone goes below zero. On Tenhou and Mahjong Soul the game ends as soon as a player drops below 0 points. That's *tobi* (飛び), also *dobon*. At exactly 0 you play on.

The dealer of the last hand is in first. On Tenhou and Mahjong Soul, if the dealer of the last hand wins or is tenpai at a draw, and is in first with 30,000 points or more, the game ends there. They don't have to keep dealing. That's *agari-yame* or *tenpai-yame*, covered in [rules and penalties](#).

Nobody reached 30,000. On Tenhou and Mahjong Soul, if nobody has 30,000 points when South 4 ends, the game goes on into the West round (*shaanyuu*). It ends as soon as someone has 30,000 or more at the end of a hand.

RULE VARIANTS

The M-League plays on even when someone goes below zero, and it doesn't play a West round. WRC and EMA tournaments don't have one either.

When the game ends, you count the points. The 30,000 return, the oka, and the uma turn them into each player's final result. That's in the [scoring](#) chapter. Some house rules add penalties, like *yaki-tori* for a player who didn't win a single hand; they're in [rules and penalties](#).

At a club or a parlor you almost never play a single game. You play several in a row.

A game, step by step

You've now seen everything that happens in a game. Here it is in order:

Draw for winds and take your seats.

Each player gets their points: 25,000.

Mix the tiles and build the walls.

The dealer rolls the dice, the wall breaks, and the dora indicator turns face up.

Deal the tiles: 14 for the dealer, 13 for everyone else.

The dealer makes the first discard.

The others can take that discard: to win by ron, or with a call of pon, kan, or chi.

If nobody takes it, the next player draws from the wall. If that tile completes their hand, they win by tsumo. If not, they discard.

Play goes on until someone wins or the hand ends in a draw. The dealer keeps the deal or passes it, and the honba go up or back to zero. Back to step 3.

When the four hands of the East round and the four of the South round are done, the game is over. It can end sooner if someone goes below zero, or carry on into the West round.

Count the points, apply the return, the oka, and the uma, and see who won.

One important rule is left before you say "ron" for the first time: furiten. Turn to the next chapter, [rules and penalties](#).

CHAPTER 6

Rules and penalties

Furiten, the rules a table settles before the first hand, today's standard, and what happens when someone breaks a rule.

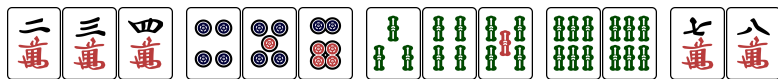
Furiten

Learn furiten (振聴, フリテン) before you call your first ron. Older English texts call it the "sacred discard." A player in furiten can't win by ron (ロン). Tsumo (自摸) still wins.

It all comes down to your discards. Three things put you in furiten: your own river, a winning discard you let go by, and a winning discard you let go by after you declare riichi (立直).

Discard furiten

Early in a hand you throw tiles that don't help you yet. The hand keeps changing, you reach tenpai (聴牌), and one of your winning tiles is already in your river. Maybe you threw it because it gave you no yaku, but it still completed the shape: four sets and a pair. From that moment you're in furiten, and you can't ron on **any** of your winning tiles.



Waiting on the 6 or 9 man. With a 9 man in your river, you can't ron the 6 either.

This hand waits on the 6 or the 9 man. The 6 gives you tanyao (断么九) and pinfu (平和). The 9 gives only pinfu. Say you discarded a 9 man early in the hand. You can't ron the 9. You can't ron the 6 either, even though you never threw one. The rule never changes: furiten on one tile of your wait blocks ron on all of them.

Tiles an opponent called from you with chi, pon, or kan count too. They came from your river, even though they're no longer in it.

This furiten lasts as long as one of your winning tiles sits in your river. You have two ways out:

Change your hand so the wait no longer includes any tile in your river. From then on, ron works again.

Stay in furiten and win by tsumo. Nobody can stop a tsumo win, furiten or not, as long as you have a yaku and your hand isn't dead (see [dead hand](#)).

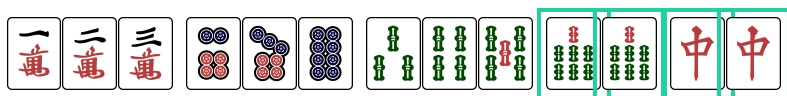
Calling ron in furiten is a serious foul, and it costs you a chonbo. Build a habit to avoid it. Every time you reach tenpai, name your winning tiles and look for each one in your river. You can also plan for furiten earlier and drop shapes that wait on tiles you've already thrown. Pay a little attention to your discards and it'll almost never happen to you.

RULE VARIANTS

Tenhou and Mahjong Soul don't show the ron button while you're in furiten. Online, this foul can't happen. Tsumo is the only way left to win.

Temporary furiten

Temporary furiten comes from your opponents' rivers, not yours. Look at this hand:



A two-way wait: 7 sou or red dragon.

It waits on the 7 sou or the red dragon. If an opponent throws a red dragon, you complete a dragon triplet. That's a yaku, so you can ron. If an opponent throws the 7 sou, you can't: the hand would have no yaku. You could win on the 7 sou by tsumo, though, because menzen tsumo is a yaku.

Now follow one full lap of the table. The player on your right throws a 7 sou. You can't ron it. The player across throws something you don't need. The player on your left throws a red dragon. **You can't ron.**

When an opponent discards one of your winning tiles and you don't win on it, you're in temporary furiten. The reason doesn't matter. You didn't want to, it wasn't worth it, you weren't looking, or, as here, you couldn't. Temporary furiten ends when your turn comes back around, or earlier if you make a call. If you had thrown that 7 sou yourself, you'd be in discard furiten until you changed your wait.

Riichi furiten

After you declare riichi you can let a winning tile go by, but you're in furiten until the end of the hand. You can only win by tsumo. A riichi hand can't change, so this furiten has no way out.

Safe tiles and common mistakes

Furiten has a big practical side. The tile the player on your left just discarded is the safest tile at the table for your next discard: nobody can ron you on it. The player who threw it is in discard furiten, and the other two let it go by without drawing since. A tile that sits in all three opponents' rivers is safe for the same reason.

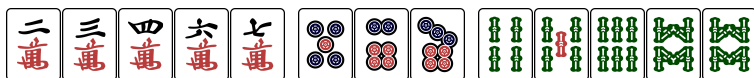
So furiten helps you sort safe tiles from dangerous ones. It also makes cheating harder, and it gets in the way of *aiming* (直撃狙い, *chokugeki neraï*): waiting on purpose for a tile one particular opponent will throw.

The two most common mistakes when you call ron are winning with no yaku and winning in furiten. The first usually comes from calling tiles without thinking. The second comes from not looking at your own discards. The site's [furiten guide](#) has more hands to check yourself against.

Assume your hand always has a yaku. Only furiten matters here.

Case 1 of 8

YOUR HAND



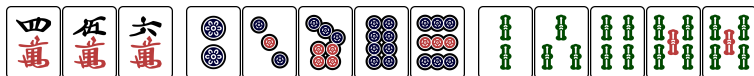
YOUR RIVER



No riichi. An opponent discards the 5 of characters. **Can you call ron on the 5 man?**

Case 2 of 8

YOUR HAND



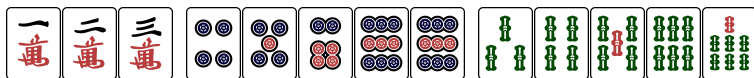
YOUR RIVER



No riichi. Nobody has discarded a tile you need since your last turn. An opponent discards the 4 of circles. **Can you call ron on the 4 pin?**

Case 3 of 8

YOUR HAND



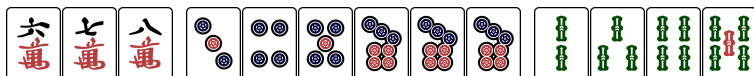
YOUR RIVER



No riichi. An opponent discards the 2 of bamboo. **Can you call ron on the 2 sou?**

Case 4 of 8

YOUR HAND



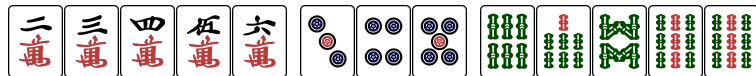
YOUR RIVER



No riichi. The player on your right discarded the 2 of bamboo and you didn't call ron. Before your turn, the player across discards the 5 of bamboo. **Can you call ron on the 5 sou?**

Case 5 of 8

YOUR HAND



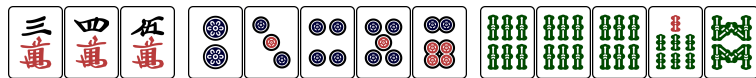
YOUR RIVER



No riichi. Two go-arounds ago you let the 7 of characters pass; you have drawn and discarded twice since. An opponent discards the 1 of characters. **Can you call ron on the 1 man?**

Case 6 of 8

YOUR HAND



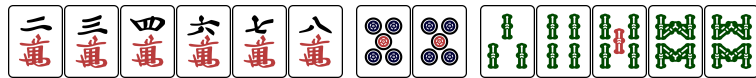
YOUR RIVER



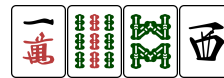
You declared riichi. Two go-arounds later an opponent discarded the 7 of circles and you didn't call ron. Now another opponent discards the 1 of circles. **Can you call ron on the 1 pin?**

Case 7 of 8

YOUR HAND



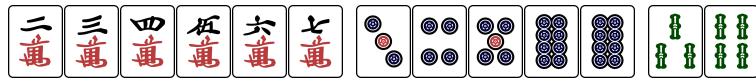
YOUR RIVER



No riichi. An opponent discards the 5 of circles. **Can you call ron on the 5 pin?**

Case 8 of 8

YOUR HAND



YOUR RIVER



You declared riichi. Later an opponent discarded the 8 of bamboo and you let it pass. Now someone discards the 2 of bamboo. **Can you call ron on the 2 sou?**

Answers

1. **You can't call ron.** Your hand waits on 5 man and 8 man. The 8 man in your river is one of your winning tiles: furiten by your own discard. It blocks ron on every tile of your wait, not just that one. You can still win by tsumo.
2. **You can call ron.** Your hand waits on 1 pin and 4 pin. None of your winning tiles is in your river, and you let none pass this go-around. The 7 of circles in your river is not a winning tile. That 1, 4 and 7 are suji changes nothing: furiten only looks at your winning tiles.
3. **You can't call ron.** Your hand waits on 2 sou, 5 sou and 8 sou. The 8 sou in your river is one of your winning tiles: furiten by your own discard. It blocks ron on every tile of your wait, not just that one. You can still win by tsumo.

4. **You can't call ron.** Your hand waits on 2 sou and 5 sou. You let the 2 sou pass this go-around: temporary furiten. No ron until your next draw. You can still win by tsumo.
5. **You can call ron.** Your hand waits on 1 man, 4 man and 7 man. None of your winning tiles is in your river, and you let none pass this go-around. Temporary furiten ended at your next draw. Had that 7 of characters been in your river, it would be another story.
6. **You can't call ron.** Your hand waits on 1 pin, 4 pin and 7 pin. You let the 7 pin pass after declaring riichi: riichi furiten. It lasts until the end of the hand; you can only win by tsumo.
7. **You can't call ron.** Your hand waits on 5 pin and 8 sou. The 8 sou in your river is one of your winning tiles: furiten by your own discard. It blocks ron on every tile of your wait, not just that one. You can still win by tsumo.
8. **You can call ron.** Your hand waits on 2 sou and 5 sou. None of your winning tiles is in your river, and you let none pass this go-around. The 8 of bamboo doesn't finish your hand, so letting it pass doesn't make you furiten.

Optional rules

Before the first hand, the table agrees on its ruleset. Many rules are small variations. Some make the game simpler, others make it harder. Players call them house rules. In Japanese each rule is announced as *ari* (有り, "on") or *nashi* (無し, "off"): *kuitan ari* means you play with kuitan.

Today nearly everyone starts from the same standard: the one in Tenhou and Mahjong Soul ranked games, which most Japanese parlors also follow. For each rule I tell you what the standard is, and [the table at the end](#) collects them all. Everything else is a local variant. Learn them anyway, because you'll run into them.

Kuitan and atozuke

Playing *ari-ari* (ありあり) means playing with kuitan and atozuke both on. That's the standard in Japan. The opposite is *nashi-nashi*.

Kuitan (喰いタン), also called **nakitan** (鳴きタン), allows tanyao with an open hand. Kuitan makes it easy to put together a cheap, fast hand that cuts off an opponent's big one, and that's why some players prefer to play without it. You'll meet it again under [tanyao](#).

Atozuke (後付け) lets you win even when your tenpai doesn't guarantee a yaku, as long as the winning tile supplies one. The temporary furiten hand above is an example. It wins by ron only on the red dragon, and with atozuke that's enough. The opposite is *kanzen sakizuke* (完全先付け): your tenpai has to guarantee a yaku whatever the winning tile is. Under that rule, the same hand couldn't ron on either of its two tiles.

RULE VARIANTS

Tenhou in its ranked lobbies, Mahjong Soul, M-League, WRC, and EMA all play with kuitan and atozuke.

Pinfu by tsumo

Pinfu still counts when you win by tsumo. The hand then scores pinfu and menzen tsumo, at 20 fu. By ron, pinfu is 30 fu. Every current ruleset counts it this way.

RULE VARIANTS

Some old parlors don't allow pinfu by tsumo (ピンヅモなし). It's rare today.

Kuikae

Kuikae (喰い替え), or swap-calling, means calling a tile and then discarding, on the same turn, a tile that would have completed the same set. Every current ruleset forbids it.

An example. You hold the 5 and 6 sou, and you chi the 4 sou from the player on your left. On that turn you can't discard another 4 sou or a 7 sou. Pon works the same way: pon a white dragon and you can't discard the fourth white dragon on that turn.

RULE VARIANTS

Online, the client won't let you do it. In live play, M-League and EMA punish kuikae with a dead hand: that player can no longer win the hand.

Points, return, oka, and uma

Each player starts with 25,000 points (配給原点, *haikyuu genten*). In Japanese that's *nimangosenten-mochi* (二万五千点持ち).

The **return** (返し, *kaeshi*) is what each player "owes" at the end, like the buy-in at a poker table. The standard return is 30,000 (三万点返し, *sanmanten-gaeshi*). When the game ends, each player's return is subtracted from their points.

The **oka** (オカ) is the prize that comes out of that gap. Every player started 5,000 points short of what they owe. Those 20,000 points (5,000 x 4) go to first place as a bonus.

The **uma** (ウマ) is a placement bonus: third and fourth pay second and first. These are the common ones:

Gottoo (ゴットー, "five-ten"): +10, +5, -5, -10.

Wantsuu (ワンツー, "ten-twenty"): +20, +10, -10, -20. Tenhou uses it, and so does this book.

Wansurii (ワンスリー, "ten-thirty"): +30, +10, -10, -30. M-League uses it. Add the 20 from the oka and first place gets +50, which is why M-League publishes its placement points as +50, +10, -10, -30.

The [scoring chapter](#) shows how all of this turns into a final result.

RULE VARIANTS

Mahjong Soul ranked games show the result with a 25,000 start, a 25,000 return, no oka, and an uma of +15, +5, -5, -15. Your rank moves by separate points that depend on the room. WRC and EMA start at 30,000 and return 30,000, with no oka and the same +15, +5, -5, -15 uma.

Game length and the West round

The standard game is the *hanchan* (半荘): the East round and the South round. The short version, East round only, is the *tonpuusen* (東風戦). Tenhou and Mahjong Soul offer both. Don't confuse game length with the *bakaze* (場風), the wind of the round being played.

Shaanyuu (西入, "entering West") works like overtime. On Tenhou and Mahjong Soul, if nobody has 30,000 points when South 4 ends, the game goes into the West round as sudden death (サドンデス). It ends as soon as someone has 30,000 or more at the end of a hand. It goes no further than West 4.

RULE VARIANTS

M-League, WRC, and EMA have no West round. Some parlors play the full West round instead of sudden death.

Busting

Busting is also settled before play. It goes by many names: *tobi* (トビ), *hakoten* (ハコテン), *buttobi* (ぶっ飛び), or *dobon* (ドボン), which strictly speaking is the parlor version, with a prize for the player who causes it. The standard is that the game ends when someone drops below 0 points. At exactly 0, play goes on.

RULE VARIANTS

M-League, WRC, and EMA have no busting: play goes on with negative points.

Noten payments

At an exhaustive draw, the noten players pay 3,000 points in all to the tenpai players (ノーション罰符, *noten bappu*). Everyone plays it this way. The [end of a hand chapter](#) covers all four cases.

Renchan and agari-yame

Renchan (連荘) is the rule that decides when the dealer deals again. The standard is tenpai renchan (聴牌連荘): the dealer keeps the deal by winning the hand or by being tenpai at an exhaustive draw. The [end of a hand chapter](#) explains it in detail.

Agari-yame (アガリ止め, 和了り止め, "stop on a win") and **tenpai-yame** (聴牌止め) end the game early. In the last hand of the game (*oorasu*, or All Last), if the dealer wins or is tenpai and sits in first place, the game ends with no renchan. The dealer locks in the win and doesn't risk points on

more hands. Tenhou and Mahjong Soul apply it automatically when the dealer is first with at least 30,000 points.

RULE VARIANTS

There used to be *agari renchan* (和了連荘) as well: the dealer keeps the deal only by winning. In some parlors the dealer chooses whether to go on or stop, and some also let a dealer stop in second place. M-League and WRC don't use agari-yame.

Dora

The table agrees on which dora to use. The standard is all of them: the dora, kan dora, ura dora, kan ura dora (*kan ura*), and three red fives (*akadora*), one per suit.

RULE VARIANTS

WRC and EMA don't use red fives. Some parlors use four, with two red 5 pin.

Ippatsu, open riichi, and ryanshi

Ippatsu (一発) is a yaku that nearly every ruleset uses.

Open riichi (オープンリーチ) is a riichi where you show your hand or your wait. If the table plays it, it has to agree whether you show the whole hand or only the wait, and whether a player who deals into an open riichi pays a yakuman. The standard is to leave it out.

Ryanhan shibari (二翻縛り), or *ryanshi* (リャンシ), raises the minimum to win from 1 han to 2. Where it's used, it usually kicks in from 5 honba.

RULE VARIANTS

The official JPML (日本プロ麻雀連盟) rules use no ippatsu, no ura dora, and no kan dora. No reference ruleset uses ryanshi: Tenhou and Mahjong Soul always ask for 1 han, and EMA dropped it in 2016.

Limits, kazoe, and yakuman

Aotenjou (青天井, "blue sky"; in English, *skyrocketing*) is play with no scoring limits. Normally big hands pay fixed limits (*mangan*, *haneman*, and so on) so the points don't run away. With aotenjou every hand goes through the same formula, and the totals get absurd. Almost nobody plays it.

Kiriage mangan (切り上げ満貫) rounds 4 han 30 fu and 3 han 60 fu up to a mangan. The standard is to leave it off: that hand pays 7,700 on a non-dealer ron and 11,600 on a dealer ron.

Kazoe yakuman (数え役満) pays a hand of 13 han or more, yaku and dora together, as a yakuman. Tenhou and Mahjong Soul use it.

Local yakuman (ローカル役満, also 特殊役満, *tokushu yakuman*) are yakuman outside the standard list, such as *renhou* (人和) or *shiisanpuutaa* (十三不塔). The standard is to leave them out. You'll find them in the [yakuman chapter](#).

Double yakuman (ダブル役満, W役満) and **stacked yakuman** (複合役満) are settled in advance too. The standard is to add up the yakuman in one hand: suuankou with daisangen pays as a double yakuman. Mahjong Soul also pays four yakuman as doubles on their own. Every case is in the [yakuman chapter](#).

RULE VARIANTS

M-League and EMA don't count kazoe: 13 han or more is a sanbaiman. In WRC, 13 han pays as a yakuman but doesn't stack with another. M-League, WRC, and EMA 2025 use kiriage mangan.

Nagashi mangan

Nagashi mangan (流し満貫) rewards a river of terminals and honors that nobody called: at the exhaustive draw you collect as if you'd won a mangan by tsumo. Tenhou and Mahjong Soul use it. M-League, WRC, and EMA don't. The exact conditions are in the [yaku chapter](#).

Double ron and atamahane

What happens when two players call ron on the same tile? There are two rules.

With **double ron** (ダブルロン, *daburon*; also 二家和, *ryanchahou*), both win and the discarder pays each of them. The riichi sticks and honba go to the winner closest in turn order to the discarder.

With **atamahane** (頭ハネ, head bump), only the winner closest in turn order to the discarder wins. The other ron doesn't count.

The standard is double ron. With three rons on the same tile, Tenhou declares an abortive draw (三家和) and Mahjong Soul pays all three.

RULE VARIANTS

M-League and WRC use atamahane. EMA lets every winner score.

Pao

Pao (包), or *sekinin barai* (責任払い, "liability payment"), punishes the player who hands over a yakuman. If you let an opponent pon or kan the last dragon triplet of a daisangen, or the last wind triplet of a daisuushii, you're liable for that hand:

If that opponent wins by tsumo, you pay the whole yakuman alone.

If they win by ron off another player's discard, you and that player pay half each.

Pao is standard today. On Tenhou and Mahjong Soul the liable player also pays the honba. Both yakuman are in their [chapter](#).

RULE VARIANTS

M-League and WRC also apply pao to suukantsu. A local rule that almost nobody uses makes the player who fed an open kan (*daiminkan*) pay the whole hand when the caller wins on the replacement tile (rinshan kaihou). Mahjong Soul rules it out explicitly.

Wareme, yakitori, and other parlor rules

These rules turn up in some parlors and home games. No reference ruleset uses them.

Wareme (割れ目): the player whose wall was broken for the dora indicator pays or collects double that hand, except for tenpai payments.

Yakitori (焼き鳥): a player who ends the game without winning a single hand pays a penalty. The name comes from grilled chicken skewers. Parlors that play it hand out yakitori markers, each with its own picture, and a player returns theirs on winning their first hand.

Yakinaoshi (焼き直し): an extension of yakitori. If everyone has won at least one hand, it takes two wins to clear it.

Yakibuta (焼き豚): another extension. If someone clears yakitori with a ron in the last hand (*oorasu*), the player who dealt in pays the same penalty.

Gambling is illegal in Japan. Reputable parlors and the pro leagues play for points.

The 2026 standard rules

This table replaces the Club Argentino de Mahjong (CAM) rules printed in the first edition. It's built on Tenhou ranked games (hanchan, red fives) and Mahjong Soul ranked games, which agree on almost everything. The differences column names only the exceptions (MS is Mahjong Soul).

Rule	Standard	Differences
Kuitan, atozuke	On, on	Same everywhere
Kuikae	Forbidden, after pon too	M-League, EMA: dead hand
Pinfu by tsumo	Yes (20 fu)	Same everywhere
Start, return	25,000, 30,000	MS: 25,000, 25,000. WRC, EMA: 30,000, 30,000
Oka	20,000 to first (+20)	MS, WRC, EMA: no oka
Uma	+20, +10, -10, -20	MS, WRC, EMA: +15, +5, -5, -15. M-League: +30, +10, -10, -30 (+50 to first with the oka)
Length	Hanchan (East and South)	Tenhou and MS also offer tonpuusen

Rule	Standard	Differences
West round	If nobody reaches 30,000; sudden death	M-League, WRC, EMA: no
Agari-yame, tenpai-yame	Automatic: dealer first with 30,000 or more in the last hand	M-League, WRC, EMA: no
Renchan	If the dealer wins or is tenpai	Same everywhere
Busting	Ends below 0 (at 0, play goes on)	M-League, WRC, EMA: none
Dora	Dora, kan dora, ura, kan ura, 3 red fives	WRC, EMA: no red fives
Kan dora	Closed kan: at once. Open or added kan: after the discard	M-League, WRC, EMA: always at once
Ippatsu	Yes	Official JPML rules: no ippatsu, ura, or kan dora
Noten payment	3,000 in all	Same everywhere
Several rons	Double ron. Triple: Tenhou, abortive draw; MS, all three collect	M-League, WRC: atamahane. EMA: every winner collects
Abortive draws	9 terminals, 4 winds, 4 riichi, 4 kans	M-League, WRC, EMA: none
Nagashi mangan	Yes (replaces tenpai payments)	M-League, WRC, EMA: no
Kiriage mangan	No: 4 han 30 fu is 7,700	M-League, WRC, EMA 2025: yes
Kazoe yakuman	Yes (13 han or more)	M-League, EMA: sanbaiman. WRC: pays as yaku-man, doesn't stack
Stacked yakuman	Added together	EMA: not added
Double yakuman for the wait, daisuushii	Tenhou: no. MS: yes	M-League, WRC, EMA: no
Pao	Daisangen, daisuushii	M-League, WRC: suukantsu too
Local yakuman, open riichi	No	WRC, EMA: renhou is a mangan
Riichi	With 1,000 points or more; allowed in furiten	WRC: also with less than 1,000
Riichi sticks left at the end	To first place	WRC: to nobody
Tie on points	The seat closest to the first dealer wins	M-League, WRC, EMA: uma and oka are split
Chonbo	Doesn't exist online	Parlors: mangan payment. M-League, WRC, EMA: -20 points at the end
Ryanshi, wareme, yaki-tori, aotenjou	No	Same everywhere

MS: Mahjong Soul. M-League, WRC, and EMA appear only where they change something.

For anything the table doesn't cover, Tenhou's ranked rules (hanchan, red fives) apply. And as always, ask about the local rules every time you sit down at a new table.

RULE VARIANTS

In 2010 the Club Argentino de Mahjong played almost the same way, with these differences: the kan dora always flipped at once, all four double yakuman cases paid double, and pao included suukantsu.

Fouls and penalties

Break a rule, through bad faith or clumsiness, and you can take a penalty. The two most common are **chonbo**, for serious fouls, and the **dead hand**, for minor ones.

Chonbo

Chonbo (チョンボ) is paid like a mangan in reverse. The offender pays the other three what they would have collected on a mangan by tsumo:

A non-dealer pays 8,000 in all: 4,000 to the dealer and 2,000 to each non-dealer.

A dealer pays 12,000 in all: 4,000 to each player.

Then the hand is dealt again. No honba is added, the deal doesn't move, and any riichi sticks declared in that hand go back to their owners. Sticks already on the table from earlier hands stay where they are. The [end of a hand chapter](#) shows how honba and sticks work in a normal hand.

These fouls cost a chonbo:

Declaring an invalid win and showing your hand: in furiten, with a dead hand, with no yaku, or on a tile that doesn't complete the hand.

Declaring riichi without being tenpai, when it comes out at the exhaustive draw.

Declaring a closed kan after riichi that changes your winning tiles (under some rules, also one that changes how the hand can be read).

Exposing five or more tiles, your own, another player's, or the wall's (a house rule: in general, any mistake that stops the hand from going on fairly).

Making a call with a dead hand.

RULE VARIANTS

In tournaments and pro leagues, chonbo isn't paid to the other players: 20 points (20,000) come off the offender's final result, after uma. M-League, WRC, and EMA do it this way. Online there's no chonbo: the client won't let you commit these fouls.

Dead hand

When a foul doesn't deserve a *chonbo*, the offender's hand is declared dead. Play goes on as normal, but that player can no longer win, call tiles, or declare *riichi*. At an exhaustive draw they count as *noten*.

These fouls usually get a dead hand:

Making a wrong call that can no longer be corrected.

Making an empty call: saying "pon" or "chi" and not completing it. Some tables take a 1,000-point deposit instead of a dead hand. The winner of the hand collects it, and it goes up if the mistake repeats (a house rule).

Exposing tiles from an opponent's hand or from the dead wall.

Holding too many tiles (多牌, *tahai*).

Holding too few tiles (少牌, *shouhai*).

Kuikae (M-League and EMA punish it this way).

Cheating and aggression

Among friends, plenty of fouls get forgiven with no penalty. In a competitive game, they don't. And one thing isn't up for debate anywhere: a player who hides tiles, swaps tiles from their hand with tiles from the wall, cheats in any other way, or attacks another player is out of the game on the spot.

CHAPTER 7

Yaku

The conditions that turn a hand into a winner, one by one, with their han value and an example.

What a yaku is

You know how the table works. What's left is the part that decides whether your hand can win and what it pays: the yaku (役), the heart of Japanese mahjong. A yaku isn't a "hand" in the poker sense. Poker fixes its combinations in advance. In mahjong you build your hand freely, then check which conditions it meets. Each condition met is a yaku, and the more you stack, the more the hand is worth. That's why "condition" translates the word better than "hand".

You need at least one yaku to win. Dora, red fives included, add han but aren't yaku: a hand with three dora and no yaku can't win. Under standard rules you can complete your yaku with the winning tile ([atozuke](#)), and almost every yaku also counts on an open hand.

A basic strategy is to combine as many easy yaku as you can. Some come quickly. Others take patience and luck.

Han, the value of each yaku

A yaku's value is counted in han (翻). Han aren't points. Each han doubles the hand's base value, up to the mangan limit. The full calculation is in [Scoring](#). For now, all you need is how many han each yaku gives: more han, more points.

Don't mix up the two words. "A hand with 2 yaku" isn't the same as "a 2 han yaku". Japanese says — 翻役, a "1 han yaku". So does this book.

Past the yaku come the yakuman, hands so hard they pay the maximum outright. They get their own chapter: [Yakuman](#).

Three kinds of yaku

Yaku split by how they behave when you call tiles:

Closed only (menzen). They count only if you haven't called chi, pon, or an open kan. A closed kan doesn't open your hand.

Kuisagari (食い下がり, "drops when you eat"). They count open or closed, but lose 1 han when open.

Same value. They're worth the same open or closed.

Then there are the situational yaku, which depend on when or how you win, not on the shape of the hand. They come first. Every yaku in this chapter opens with a line that gives its value closed and open.

How to read a winning hand

Two rules decide which yaku you count:

Each tile does one job. In any reading of the hand, a tile belongs to a pair, a triplet, or a sequence, never to two of them at once.

You count the reading that pays most. If a hand breaks down two ways, you take the one worth more points (高点法, *koutenhou*). You'll see it in action with ryanpeikou.

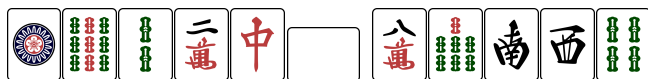
Situational yaku

These yaku depend on the moment or the way you win: riichi, ippatsu, the last tile of the wall, a kan. Several of them add to any hand, even one with no other yaku.

Riichi

Riichi 立直 *Ready declaration*

CLOSED: 1 HAN · CLOSED ONLY



The river of a player in riichi. The sideways tile, a white dragon, declared the riichi. The 1,000-point stick sits in front of the river.

Riichi is the cornerstone yaku of Japanese mahjong. People often tie it to the English word *reach*, but the name most likely comes from the Chinese reading of 立直 (*lìzhí*). It's only 1 han, and it brings a lot with it: it lets you win with no other yaku in the hand, it gives you a shot at ura dora, and it pushes everyone else onto defense.

It's the most common and most flexible yaku in the game. Finishing a game with a good score without a single riichi is hard.

How to declare

You can declare riichi when all of this holds:

Your hand is closed. A closed kan is allowed.

You're in tenpai.

At least 4 tiles are left in the live wall, so you have at least one more draw.

You have at least 1,000 points, because you're about to put them on the table.

On your turn, say "riichi" and turn your discard sideways. If nobody wins on that tile, put a 1,000-point stick in front of your discards and play goes on. If someone calls that tile, turn your next discard sideways instead, so everyone can see when your riichi started. If someone wins on your declaration tile, the riichi doesn't count and you keep your 1,000.

RULE VARIANTS

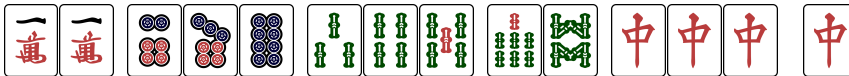
The WRC 2025 rules let you declare riichi with fewer than 1,000 points and with fewer than 4 tiles left in the wall. The EMA 2025 rules do too: they only ask for one tile left in the wall. Tenhou and Mahjong Soul don't.

From the moment you declare, your hand is locked. You draw, and if the tile doesn't win, you discard it. You can't call chi or pon either.

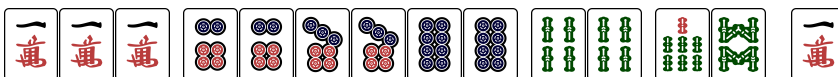
Kan after riichi

The one exception is a closed kan. If you hold three identical tiles used as a triplet and draw the fourth, you can declare a closed kan, as long as the kan changes neither your wait nor the structure of your hand. It's off if those three tiles do another job, such as two as the pair and one inside a sequence. And the kan has to use the tile you just drew: you can't keep it and declare later.

These hands can declare a kan in riichi, because the kan leaves the wait alone:

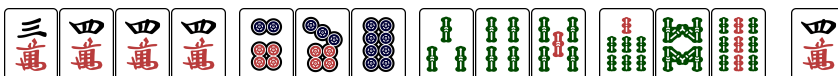


You're waiting on 6 or 9 sou. You draw the fourth red dragon: after the kan you still wait on 6 and 9.

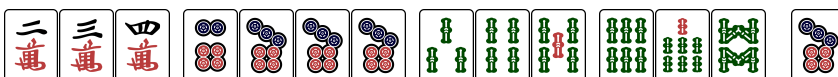


You're waiting on 6 or 9 sou. The fourth 1 man can only go to the triplet: the kan changes nothing.

These can't, because the kan changes the wait:



You're waiting on 2, 3, or 5 man. Make a kan of 4 man and only the 3 wait is left.



You're waiting on 5, 6, or 8 pin. A kan of 7 pin leaves you waiting on the 6 alone.

RULE VARIANTS

The rule above, the strictest one, is the WRC and EMA rule: neither the wait nor the structure may change. On Tenhou and Mahjong Soul the only requirement is that the wait stays the same, and the kan still has to use the tile you just drew.

Several riichi and the sticks

More than one player can be in riichi in the same hand. If all four declare and nobody wins on the fourth declaration tile, Tenhou and Mahjong Soul end the hand in an **abortive draw**.

Whoever wins the hand takes every riichi stick on the table, including sticks left over from earlier hands. What happens to them after a draw or at the end of the game is in **riichi sticks**.

RULE VARIANTS

Some clubs, like the CAM in this book's first edition, decide before play whether riichi sticks go back to their owners after an abortive draw. The standard is to leave them on the table.

If you win in riichi, flip the **ura dora** indicators: the tiles under each dora indicator. Each one points to one more dora, for you alone.

Riichi without tenpai, and furiten riichi

Declaring riichi when you aren't in tenpai is *noten riichi* (ノーテンリーチ). After a riichi you only show your hand in two cases: an exhaustive draw and the four-riichi abortive draw. At an exhaustive draw, a player in riichi has to show tenpai. A noten hand is **chonbo**, the heavy penalty covered in **rules and penalties**. On Tenhou and Mahjong Soul the software won't let you declare riichi without tenpai.

Another unorthodox play is *furiten riichi* (フリテン立直): declaring riichi while you're furiten. And if you let a winning tile go by after you declare, you're **furiten** until the end of the hand. With a wait on three or more kinds of tile, a furiten riichi can still be a good idea: you can only win by tsumo, but you have plenty of tiles to do it with.

Dama and chasing riichi

Riichi isn't always right, especially with big hands that already have a yaku. Sitting in closed tenpai without declaring is **damaten** (黙聴, ダマ) or **yamiten** (闇聴): silent tenpai.

Declaring riichi after someone else already has is **okkake riichi** (追っかけリーチ, chasing riichi). It's an aggressive play, and a dangerous one.

Full guide: **riichi**.

Ippatsu

Ippatsu 一発 *One-shot*

CLOSED: 1 HAN · CLOSED ONLY

Win within one go-around of your riichi, up to and including your next draw, and you add 1 han for ippatsu. Ron and tsumo both count. The condition: nobody calls chi, pon, or kan in that window. Closed kans count too, your own included. A kan robbed with chankan doesn't cancel ippatsu.

Ippatsu only exists on top of riichi, so a hand with riichi and ippatsu is at least 2 han.

Full guide: [ippatsu](#).

Daburu riichi

Daburu riichi ダブル立直 *Double riichi*

CLOSED: 2 HAN · CLOSED ONLY

If your starting hand is already in tenpai and you declare riichi with your first discard, the riichi is worth 2 han instead of 1. It's also written Wリーチ or 両立直. Nobody can have called chi, pon, or kan before it, not even a closed kan. It doesn't add to riichi. It replaces it.

It's rare, but it happens. Win in that same go-around and you add ippatsu: 3 han in all.

Full guide: [double riichi](#).

Open riichi, a local rule

RULE VARIANTS

Open riichi (オープン立直) doesn't exist on Tenhou, in Mahjong Soul ranked games, in M-League, or under WRC or EMA rules. You'll only find it in some clubs. Since it isn't a common yaku, it changes with the place you play. This is the most common version.

With a closed hand in tenpai, you declare open riichi instead of riichi: you show your hand, or part of it, so your opponents know what you're waiting on. It adds 1 han to riichi, 2 in all. An open double riichi is 3 han, not 4.

A popular variant: if someone deals into your open riichi, they pay a yakuman. Under that rule, players who were already in riichi before you don't pay the yakuman when they hand you the tile. Players who declared after you do. Anyone not in riichi pays it too.

How much you show varies as well. The simplest is the whole hand:



Open riichi with the whole hand face up. It waits on 2 or 5 man, or the red dragon.

Or you can show only the part that makes the wait:



Only the waiting part: the same wait on 2 or 5 man, or the red dragon.

Either way your opponents know your wait. The second way keeps them guessing about your yaku and about which tiles are still in the wall. If you play it, my advice is to show only the wait and skip the yakuman payment. Open riichi works best when you wait on three or more kinds of tile, or when other players are already in riichi.

Menzen tsumo

Menzen tsumo 門前清自摸和 *Self-draw*

CLOSED: 1 HAN · CLOSED ONLY

Win by tsumo with a closed hand and you add 1 han for menzen tsumo. The full name is *menzenchin tsumohou*. An open hand doesn't get it. A closed hand in tenpai always has a yaku on a tsumo, even with nothing else.

Two other yaku tied to drawing your winning tile do count on an open hand: haitei and rinshan kaihou.

Full guide: [menzen tsumo](#).

Haitei

Haitei 海底摸月 *Last tile from wall*

CLOSED: 1 HAN · OPEN: 1 HAN

Win by tsumo on the last tile of the live wall and you add 1 han for haitei. The full name is *haitei raoyue*, also written 海底撈月: "fishing the moon from the bottom of the sea". It's enough to win even with no other yaku. A closed hand that wins this way scores menzen tsumo and haitei, 2 han. An open hand scores only haitei, 1 han.

Houtei

Houtei 河底撈魚 *Last discard*

CLOSED: 1 HAN · OPEN: 1 HAN

Nobody can call the last discard of the hand except to win on it (you saw this in [The turn](#)). Win by ron on that discard and you add 1 han for houtei. The full name, *houtei raoyui*, means "fishing a fish from the bottom of the river". The river is also the name for the discard area. It's worth the same open or closed, and it's enough to win with no other yaku. Haitei and houtei never land in the same hand: one is a tsumo, the other a ron.

Full guide: [haitei and houtei](#).

Rinshan kaihou

Rinshan kaihou 嶺上開花 *After a kan*

CLOSED: 1 HAN · OPEN: 1 HAN

When you declare a kan, you draw a replacement tile from the dead wall. If that tile completes your hand, you add 1 han for rinshan kaihou, "a flower blooming on the mountain". It counts on an open hand and with no other yaku.

It counts as a tsumo, so a closed hand adds menzen tsumo too. It doesn't combine with ippatsu, because your own kan cancels it, or with haitei. It's hard to get: you need to be in tenpai, have a kan to declare, and draw exactly your tile as the replacement.

RULE VARIANTS

Some local rules apply pao to rinshan: if you win on the replacement tile after an open kan, the player who gave you the kan tile pays for the whole hand. Tenhou, Mahjong Soul, M-League, and WRC don't use it.

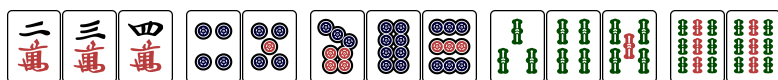
Haitei, houtei, and rinshan kaihou come down to luck. Nobody can know what the last tile, the last discard, or the replacement tile will be.

Full guide: [rinshan kaihou](#).

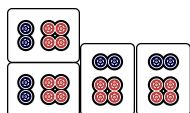
Chankan

Chankan 槍槓 *Robbing the kan*

CLOSED: 1 HAN · OPEN: 1 HAN



You're waiting on 3 or 6 pin.



An opponent adds the fourth 6 pin to their pon. You can ron that tile: chankan.

Chankan, also written 槍槓, means robbing a kan to win. Say an opponent has a pon on the table, draws the fourth tile, and adds it to the pon (an added kan, *shouminkan* or *kakan*). If that tile completes your hand, you call ron on it and add 1 han for chankan. It's a ron, so the player who added the kan pays.

You can only rob an added kan. An open kan called on a discard (*daiminkan*) can't be robbed. Neither can a closed kan, except under some rules for kokushi musou.

RULE VARIANTS

Robbing a closed kan for kokushi musou: Mahjong Soul and EMA allow it. Tenhou, M-League, and WRC don't.

Any kan you declare while an opponent is in tenpai has a cost: you give them one more dora, and one more ura dora if they're in riichi. An added kan also risks chankan.

Full guide: [chankan](#).

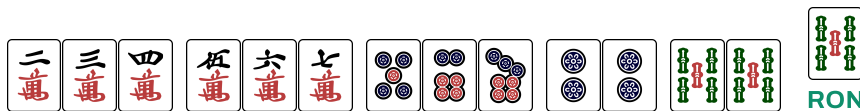
Basic yaku

Two yaku you'll use in almost every game. They're worth the same open or closed.

Tanyao

Tanyao 断么九 *All simples*

CLOSED: 1 HAN · OPEN: 1 HAN



The full name is *tanyaochuu*, "no ones or nines". In English it's "all simples": the hand holds only number tiles from 2 to 8, with no terminals or honors. That's the only restriction. It can have triplets, kans, or sequences.

Open tanyao is called *kuitan* (喰い断, "eating tanyao"), or *nakitan*. The rule that allows it is *kuitan ari*. The rule that doesn't is *kuitan nashi*. Kuitan ari is the standard today: Mahjong Soul, Tenhou in its main rooms, M-League, WRC, and EMA all play it.

RULE VARIANTS

Under *kuitan nashi*, tanyao counts only on a closed hand. On Tenhou it's a room option: the main ranked rooms have open tanyao, and the room without it has almost no players.

Tanyao is one of the first yaku to learn: it's basic, flexible, and combines with lots of others. The classic combination is *mentanpin*: riichi, tanyao, and pinfu.

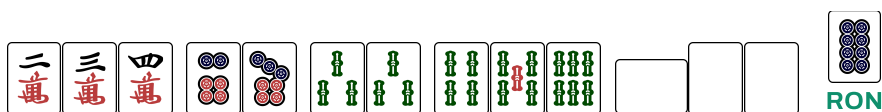
It's a fast hand for when you hold several dora, when a lot of riichi sticks and honba sit on the table, when you're the dealer and want to keep the deal, or when an opponent's hand looks dangerous and you want to end the hand early. Its weak spot: opponents read it easily and defend by discarding terminals and honors, which are no use to you.

Full guide: [tanyao](#).

Yakuhai

Yakuhai 役牌 *Value tiles*

CLOSED: 1 HAN · OPEN: 1 HAN



With the white dragon pon showing, the hand already has a yaku. It wins on 5 or 8 pin.

Yakuhai means "yaku tiles". It's also called *yakupai* or *fanpai* (翻牌). A triplet or a kan of these tiles adds 1 han on the spot:

Any of the three dragons: white, green, or red.

The round wind: East or South. If the game runs into a West round, West.

Your seat wind.

Each triplet counts separately: two dragon triplets are 2 han. A yakuhai pair isn't a yaku. It only adds fu.

It's the simplest yaku there is, and it fits any hand. An early dragon pon locks in your yaku and lets you play open.

If your seat wind matches the round wind, as the dealer's does in the East round, that triplet counts twice: 1 han as seat wind and 1 as round wind. That's "double East" (ダブル東), 2 han.

Full guide: [yakuhai](#).

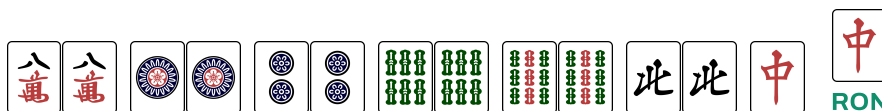
Closed-hand yaku

The following yaku count only on a closed hand (menzen): no chi, no pon, no open kan.

Chiitoitsu

Chiitoitsu 七対子 *Seven pairs*

CLOSED: 2 HAN · CLOSED ONLY



Chiitoitsu, *chiitoi* at the table, is seven pairs. It breaks the normal hand shape: instead of four sets and a pair, it has seven different pairs. The wait is always a single tile, the one that completes the last pair. It has its own fu count (always 25 fu), which you'll see in [Scoring](#).

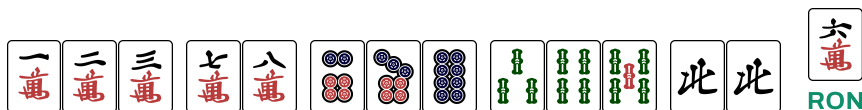
Its shape means it can't be open. Four identical tiles don't count as two pairs: all seven have to be different. It combines with tanyao, honitsu, chinitsu, honroutou, riichi, and dora.

Full guide: [chiitoitsu](#).

Pinfu

Pinfu 平和 *All sequences*

CLOSED: 1 HAN · CLOSED ONLY



You're the dealer, so the North pair isn't yakuhai. The 7-8 waits on 6 or 9 man.

Pinfu means "peace". It's the hand that scores no fu for its shape. [Scoring](#) makes that idea clear. For now, these are the conditions:

Four sequences.

A pair that isn't yakuhai: no dragon, no seat wind, no round wind.

A *ryanmen* wait, two-sided: in tenpai you hold three complete sequences and two consecutive tiles that wait on two different tiles.

A closed hand.

The example has its three sequences. You're the dealer, so North is neither your wind nor the round wind, and it works as the pair. The 7-8 man waits on 6 or 9: two kinds of tile, up to eight tiles in all if none has shown up yet.

Pinfu turns up all the time. It often comes with menzen tsumo, riichi, tanyao, iipeikou, or dora. On a ron, a pinfu hand is always 30 fu. On a tsumo it's 20 fu, because it doesn't take the 2 fu for tsumo, and it scores menzen tsumo as well.

Full guide: [pinfu](#).

Iipeikou

Iipeikou 一盃口 *Pure double sequence*

CLOSED: 1 HAN · CLOSED ONLY



It waits on 5 or 8 man. The 8 makes 6-7-8 twice: pinfu and iipeikou.

Iipeikou is two identical sequences: same numbers, same suit, such as 2-3-4 man twice. The "ii" is the Chinese numeral for "one" (*yī*). It's a simple yaku that adds value to a tanyao or pinfu hand. Since it's closed only, you lose it the moment you build an open tanyao.

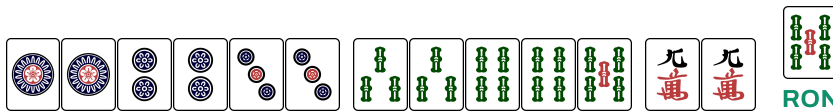
The example meets the pinfu conditions: it waits on 5 or 8 man. If the 8 comes, the hand has two identical 6-7-8 sequences and adds iipeikou. With the 5, it's pinfu alone. Careful, though: if you've declared riichi, the 5 comes, and you let it go to wait for the 8, you're furiten until the end of the hand. Pinfu with iipeikou is a flexible combination.

Full guide: [iipeikou](#).

Ryanpeikou

Ryanpeikou 二盃口 *Twice pure double sequence*

CLOSED: 3 HAN · CLOSED ONLY



With the 5 sou: ryanpeikou and pinfu, 4 han. With the 2 you'd have 2-3-4 and 3-4-5 sou: only iipeikou and pinfu.

Ryanpeikou is two iipeikou in one hand. "Ryan" is the Chinese numeral for "two". The two pairs of sequences don't need to be related. It can combine with pinfu, as in the example, and it's closed only. It's worth 3 han, and you don't add iipeikou on top.

Look at the complete hand in the example: 11, 22, and 33 pin, 33, 44, and 55 sou, and 99 man. That's seven different pairs, the same as chiitoitsu. Here both reading rules kick in: each tile does one job, and you count the reading that pays most. Ryanpeikou (3 han) always beats chiitoitsu (2 han, 25 fu), so this hand always counts as ryanpeikou.

Full guide: [ryanpeikou](#).

Yaku that lose 1 han when open

These yaku count open or closed, but lose 1 han when open (kuisagari).

Ittsu

Ittsu 一気通貫 *Pure straight*

CLOSED: 2 HAN · OPEN: 1 HAN



It wins on the 9 sou: ittsu and pinfu. A 3 or a 6 also completes the hand, but without ittsu.

The full name is *ikkitsuukan*, "straight through in one go". Chinese calls the pattern 一條龍, "one dragon". In English it's a pure straight. It's three specific sequences in one suit: 1-2-3, 4-5-6, and 7-8-9. Together they run from 1 to 9.

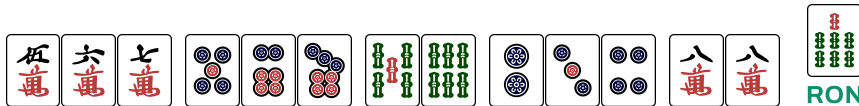
You can hold 1 through 9 of a suit without ittsu. What counts is those exact three sequences. In the example, the 6 makes the hand 1-2-3, 4-5-6, and 6-7-8. The 3 makes it 1-2-3, 3-4-5, and 6-7-8. Either one wins, but with no straight.

Full guide: [ittsu](#).

Sanshoku

Sanshoku 三色同順 *Three colored runs*

CLOSED: 2 HAN · OPEN: 1 HAN



With the 7 sou: sanshoku, pinfu, and tanyao, 4 han. With the 4, only pinfu and tanyao.

The full name is *sanshoku doujun*, "three colors, same sequence". *Shoku* (色, color) is the Japanese word for the suits. It's the same sequence in all three suits, such as 5-6-7 in man, pin, and sou.

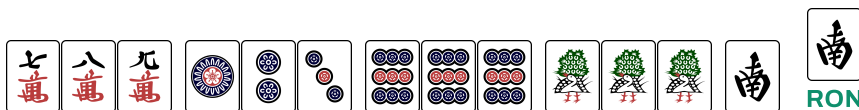
It looks like sanshoku doukou, and people mix up the names all the time: that one uses triplets. Sanshoku combines with pinfu, though getting it closed takes some luck. When it lands, it pays well.

Full guide: [sanshoku](#).

Chanta

Chanta 混全帯么九 *Mixed outside hand*

CLOSED: 2 HAN · OPEN: 1 HAN



Chanta is short for *honchantaiyaochuu*. Every meld and the pair contain a terminal or an honor. Sequences can hold a 2, 3, 7, or 8, as long as they include the 1 or the 9: 1-2-3 or 7-8-9. The honors can be any wind or dragon.

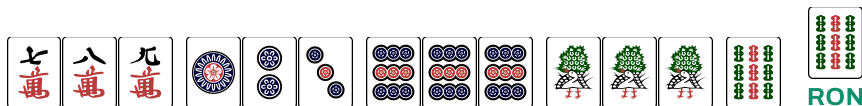
The hand needs at least one sequence and at least one honor. With no sequences it would be honroutou. With no honors it would be junchan, which is worth more. In the example the pair is South: if South is your seat wind or the round wind, that pair adds fu but not han.

Full guide: [chanta](#).

Junchan

Junchan 純全帯么九

CLOSED: 3 HAN · OPEN: 2 HAN

Pure outside hand

"Jun" means pure: junchan is chanta without honors. Every meld and the pair contain a terminal, and there are no winds or dragons. It's worth 1 han more than chanta.

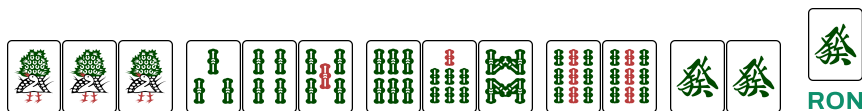
It always has at least one 1-2-3 or 7-8-9 sequence. If it were only triplets of ones and nines, it would be chinroutou, a yakuman (see [Yakuman](#)).

Full guide: [junchan](#).

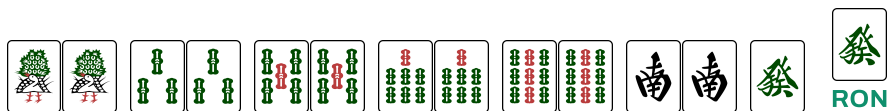
Honitsu

Honitsu 混一色 *Half flush*

CLOSED: 3 HAN · OPEN: 2 HAN



The green dragon adds yakuhai: honitsu and yakuhai, 4 han closed. With the 9 sou, honitsu alone.



Honitsu and chiitoitsu: 5 han, a mangan.

Honitsu is short for *hon'iisou*. "Hon" means mixed, for the honors, and "iisou" means one color. The hand holds tiles of one suit plus honors. In English it's the *half flush*.

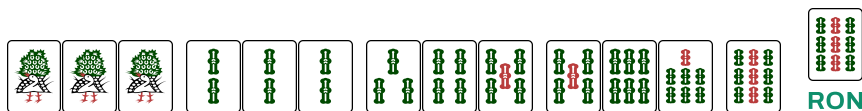
It's easy to build, and it combines with yakuhai, toitoi, chanta, or chiitoitsu. Make sure it always carries another yaku. In Japan, a hand worth only honitsu is a *baka-hon* ("baka" means fool): the classic beginner's hand. With no honors it would be chinitsu, worth twice as much.

Full guide: [honitsu](#).

Chinitsu

Chinitsu 清一色 *Full flush*

CLOSED: 6 HAN · OPEN: 5 HAN



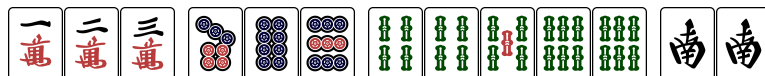
Chinitsu is short for *chin'iisou*, the *full flush*: the whole hand is one suit, with no honors. For what it pays, it's an easy hand to build. The hard part at first is reading its waits.

One warning: the shape 1-1-1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-9-9 in one suit, plus any other tile of that suit, isn't chinitsu anymore. It's chuuren poutou, a yakuman (see [Yakuman](#)).

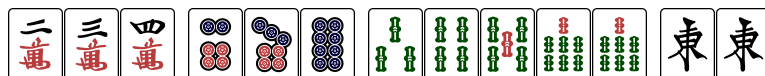
Full guide: [chinitsu](#).

Reading the waits of a one-suit hand takes practice:

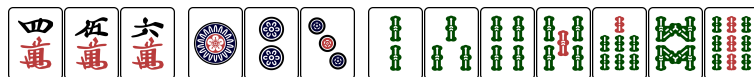
Hand 1 · Which tiles complete this hand?



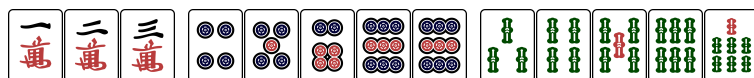
Hand 2 · Which tiles complete this hand?



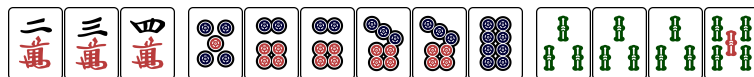
Hand 3 · Which tiles complete this hand?



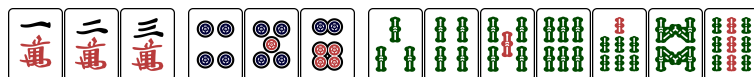
Hand 4 · Which tiles complete this hand?



Hand 5 · Which tiles complete this hand?



Hand 6 · Which tiles complete this hand?



Answers

1. 5 sou · kanchan (middle)
2. 7 sou, East wind · shanpon (two pairs)
3. 2 sou, 5 sou · nobetan (double single)

- 4. **2 sou, 5 sou, 8 sou** · sanmenchan (three-sided)
- 5. **4 sou, 5 sou** · kanchan (middle) + tanki (single) (4 sou: kanchan (middle); 5 sou: tanki (single))
- 6. **3 sou, 6 sou, 9 sou** · tanki (single) + nobetan (double single)

The [wait quiz](#) on this site has more of these.

Yaku worth the same open

These yaku are worth the same open or closed.

Toitoe

Toitoe 対々和 *All triplets*

CLOSED: 2 HAN · OPEN: 2 HAN



Ron on the 9 sou: toitoe. On a tsumo, the three triplets in the hand would all be concealed, adding sanankou.

The full name is *toitoehou*, "a win of pairs". The hand has four triplets or kans and a pair, with no sequences. There's no other condition.

You usually build it open, with pons. If the hand is fully closed, with all four triplets concealed, it isn't toitoe anymore but suuankou, a yakuman (see [Yakuman](#)). It combines with sanshoku doukou, yakuhai, honitsu, chinitsu, tanyao, sanankou, sankantsu, and honroutou.

Full guide: [toitoe](#).

Sanshoku doukou

Sanshoku doukou 三色同刻 *Three color triplets*

CLOSED: 2 HAN · OPEN: 2 HAN



Sanshoku doukou means "three colors, same triplet": three triplets of the **same number**, one in each suit. It pairs easily with tanyao or toitoe.

If none of the three triplets was formed with another player's tile, by pon or by ron, the hand adds sanankou too. In the example the sou triplet is a pon, so there's no sanankou.

Full guide: [sanshoku doukou](#).

Sanankou

Sanankou 三暗刻 *Three concealed triplets*

CLOSED: 2 HAN · OPEN: 2 HAN



All three triplets came from the wall. The sou chi doesn't matter, and the ron completes the pair, not a triplet.

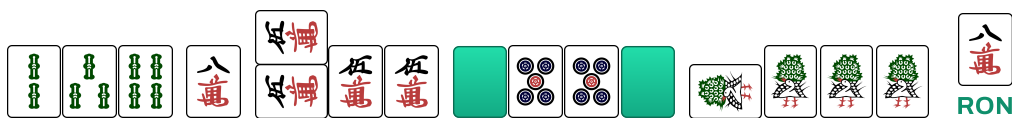
Sanankou is three triplets formed without your opponents' tiles: none from a call, none by ron. If your wait completes the last triplet, you have to win by tsumo to score it, because a triplet completed by ron doesn't count as concealed. The rest of the hand is free: it can be open and hold other sequences or called triplets.

Full guide: [sanankou](#).

Sankantsu

Sankantsu 三槓子 *Three kans*

CLOSED: 2 HAN · OPEN: 2 HAN



An added kan (5 man), a closed kan (5 pin), and an open kan (1 sou). A single wait on the 8 man.

Sankantsu is three kans of any kind: open, closed, or added. The rest of the hand is free. It goes well with toitoi and sanankou, but a kan counts as a concealed triplet for sanankou only if it's a closed kan.

It has its risks. Every kan gives one more dora to an opponent who may be close to winning. And if another player declares a fourth kan, Tenhou and Mahjong Soul abort the hand: it's the [four-kan draw](#). On the bright side, it's a good start toward the suukantsu yakuman.

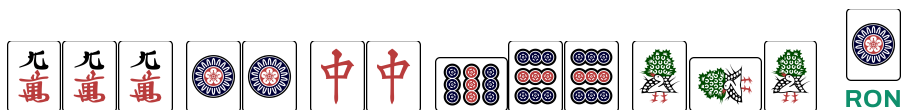
Full guide: [sankantsu](#).

Toitoi, sanshoku doukou, sanankou, and sankantsu all revolve around threes, and each one is worth 2 han. They combine well with each other and they're easy to remember. Two more to go.

Honroutou

Honroutou 混老頭 *All terminals and honors*

CLOSED: 2 HAN · OPEN: 2 HAN



Honroutou and toitoi: 4 han.



Honroutou and chiitoitsu: 4 han.

Honroutou is a hand made only of terminals and honors, the opposite of tanyao. Every sequence holds a simple tile, so there are only two ways to build it: as toitoi or as chiitoitsu. That's why players also call it *honrou toitoi* or *honrou chiitoi*.

It's worth 2 han, and it always comes with toitoi or chiitoitsu, which are 2 han each. In practice it's never worth less than 4 han. On Tenhou and Mahjong Soul the result screen shows it that way: "honroutou 2, toitoi 2".

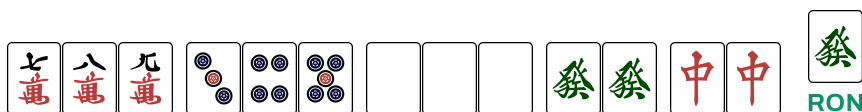
With no honors, the hand would be chinroutou. With no terminals, tsuuiisou. Both are yakuman (see [Yakuman](#)).

Full guide: [honroutou](#).

Shousangen

Shousangen 小三元 *Little three dragons*

CLOSED: 2 HAN · OPEN: 2 HAN



It wins on the green or red dragon: two dragon triplets and a pair of the third. Shousangen and two yakuhai, 4 han.

Shousangen means "little three elements", or little three dragons: two dragon triplets and a pair of the remaining dragon. The rest of the hand is free.

It's worth 2 han, plus 1 han of yakuhai for each of the two dragon triplets: 4 han at least. It's often one tile away from daisangen, the yakuman of three dragon triplets (see [Yakuman](#)).

Full guide: [shousangen](#).

That completes the standard yaku.

Nagashi mangan



A river that qualifies: only terminals and honors, and nobody called any of them.

Nagashi mangan (流し満貫) is more a prize than a yaku: it gives no han and pays as a mangan. If the hand ends in an exhaustive draw, every one of your discards is a terminal or an honor, and nobody called any of them, you collect as if you'd won a mangan by tsumo. Your hand doesn't matter. You don't even need to be in tenpai.

On Tenhou and Mahjong Soul it's still a draw, not a win. The nagashi payment replaces the tenpai payments, and the dealer keeps the deal only if in tenpai. On Tenhou your own calls don't cancel it. What matters is that nobody calls your discards.

RULE VARIANTS

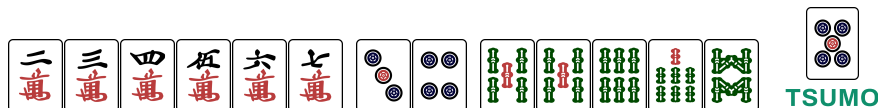
This book's first edition, under CAM rules, also required you to make no calls, and it treated nagashi as a tsumo win: the player took the riichi sticks and collected the honba. M-League, WRC, and EMA don't play nagashi mangan.

Full guide: [nagashi mangan](#).

Practice

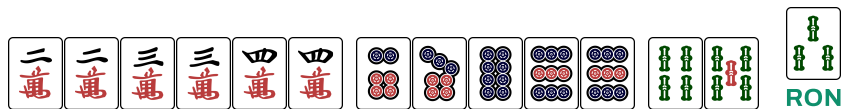
Look at each hand and name its yaku:

Hand 1 · Which yaku, and how many han?



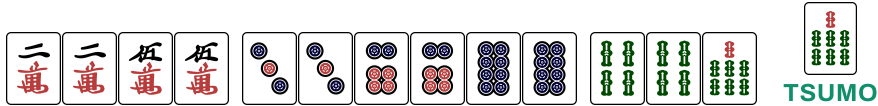
Tsumo · Closed hand · Riichi · Round wind: East · Seat wind: South

Hand 2 · Which yaku, and how many han?



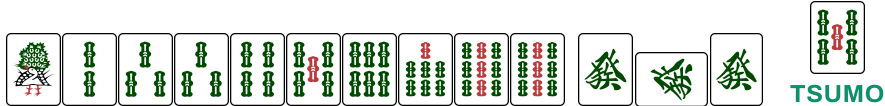
Ron · Closed hand · Riichi · Round wind: East · Seat wind: West

Hand 3 · Which yaku, and how many han?



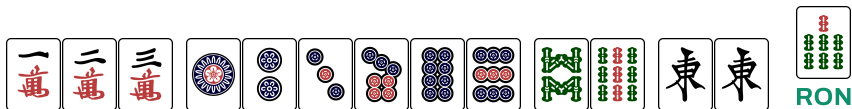
Tsumo · Closed hand · Round wind: East · Seat wind: South

Hand 4 · Which yaku, and how many han?



Tsumo · Open hand · Round wind: East · Seat wind: South

Hand 5 · Which yaku, and how many han?



Ron · Closed hand · Riichi · Round wind: East · Seat wind: South

Hand 6 · Which yaku, and how many han?



Tsumo · Closed hand · Round wind: East · Seat wind: North

Answers

1. Riichi 1 han, Menzen Tsumo 1 han, Pinfu 1 han, Tanyao 1 han. **Total: 4 han.**
2. Riichi 1 han, Pinfu 1 han, Ipeikou 1 han. **Total: 3 han.**
3. Menzen Tsumo 1 han, Chiitoitsu 2 han, Tanyao 1 han. **Total: 4 han.**
4. Yakuhai 1 han, Honitsu 2 han. **Total: 3 han.**
5. Riichi 1 han, Chanta 2 han. **Total: 3 han.**
6. Menzen Tsumo 1 han, Sanankou 2 han, Tanyao 1 han. **Total: 4 han.**

CHAPTER 8

Yakuman

The hands that pay the maximum, and the local yaku you'll still hear about at the table.

What a yakuman is

The biggest hands in mahjong are the **yakuman** (役満), short for *yaku mangan* (役満貫). A yakuman pays the highest limit on the score table, the same as a 13 han hand, whatever else the hand holds. Dora and ordinary yaku add nothing to it.

How you win	Non-dealer	Dealer
Ron	32,000	48,000
Tsumo	8,000 from each non-dealer and 16,000 from the dealer	16,000 from each player

What a yakuman pays, before honba and riichi sticks

You build them with the same logic as yaku, but they take a lot more luck, skill, and persistence. The standard yakuman, the ones Tenhou, Mahjong Soul, M-League, WRC, and EMA all recognize, number twelve: tenhou, chiihou, kokushi musou, chuuren poutou, suuankou, daisangen, shousu-ushii, daisuushii, tsuuiisou, chinroutou, ryuuiisou, and suukantsu. Some rules add kazoe yakuman on top. The local yakuman, which you won't find on the big platforms, close out the chapter.

Full guide: [yakuman](#).

Double and stacked yakuman

If a hand meets two yakuman at once (複合役満, *fukugou yakuman*; some texts say *kasane yakuman*), such as daisangen and suuankou, Tenhou, Mahjong Soul, M-League, and WRC pay both. A double yakuman pays a non-dealer 64,000 on a ron, and the dealer 96,000. Every line of the table doubles, or triples with three.

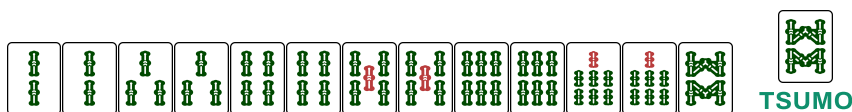
RULE VARIANTS

Mahjong Soul pays four hands as a double yakuman on their own: kokushi musou on the 13-sided wait, suuankou on a pair wait, chuuren poutou on the nine-sided wait, and daisuushii. Tenhou, M-League, WRC, and EMA pay those hands as a single yakuman. EMA rules don't stack yakuman either: two in the same hand still pay one.

Kazoe yakuman

Kazoe yakuman 数え役満 *Counted yakuman*

CLOSED: 13 HAN · OPEN: 13 HAN



With riichi and tsumo: riichi 1, menzen tsumo 1, pinfu 1, tanyao 1, ryanpeikou 3, and chinitsu 6. That's 13 han.

Kazoe yakuman means "counted yakuman". Any hand that reaches 13 han or more, counting yaku and dora, pays as a yakuman. Usually that's several yaku with a good pile of dora, or a loaded one-suit hand like the example.

A kazoe yakuman never adds to a real yakuman and never becomes a double: however many han it has, it pays one.

RULE VARIANTS

Tenhou and Mahjong Soul count kazoe yakuman. In M-League a hand with no yakuman tops out at sanbaiman, and under EMA, 13 han or more is sanbaiman too. Under WRC 2025, 13 han pays the same as a yakuman, but it doesn't count as one and doesn't stack.

Closed-hand yakuman

These yakuman count only on a closed hand.

Tenhou

Tenhou 天和 *Heavenly hand*

CLOSED: YAKUMAN · CLOSED ONLY

Tenhou, "blessing of heaven", is a yakuman for the dealer alone. If the dealer's 14 starting tiles already make a complete hand, the dealer declares tenhou, shows the hand, and collects a yakuman. It sounds the same as Tenhou, the online mahjong server, which is written with different kanji (天鳳).

Any complete hand works. It doesn't need another yaku. A closed kan before the first discard cancels it. If the starting hand is also another yakuman, such as suuankou, Tenhou and Mahjong Soul pay both.

Chiihou

Chiihou 地和 *Earthly hand*

CLOSED: YAKUMAN · CLOSED ONLY

Chiihou, "blessing of earth", is the non-dealer's version. If you complete your hand by tsumo on your first draw, and nobody has called chi, pon, or kan before it (a closed kan included), you collect a yakuman. Any complete hand works. As with tenhou, if the hand holds another yakuman, that one counts too.

The ron version, renhou, is a local rule. You'll find it at the end of the chapter.

Full guide: [tenhou and chiihou](#).

Kokushi musou

Kokushi musou 国士無双 *Thirteen orphans*

CLOSED: YAKUMAN · CLOSED ONLY



The 13-sided wait: any terminal or honor completes the hand. Here it wins on the red dragon.

国士無双 is a classical Chinese phrase from the *Shiji*, about the general Han Xin: "the peerless man of the whole country". In English the hand is **thirteen orphans**. It's another exception to the normal hand shape: one of each terminal and honor (13 different tiles), with one of them doubled as the pair.

There are two ways to reach tenpai:

Hold all thirteen kinds and wait for the pair. Any of the thirteen tiles completes the hand: that's the 13-sided wait (十三面待ち, *juusanmen machi*), the one in the example.

Hold the pair already and wait for the missing kind: a single tile.

RULE VARIANTS

Mahjong Soul pays the 13-sided wait as a double yakuman. Tenhou, M-League, WRC, and EMA pay it as a single. Robbing another player's closed kan to win with kokushi (chankan) is allowed on Mahjong Soul and under EMA, not on Tenhou, in M-League, or under WRC.

A player going for kokushi gives it away in the discards: lots of middle tiles, from several suits. Once they start discarding terminals or honors, suspect tenpai. It's one of the game's signature yakuman and one of the most reachable. But it forces you to throw a lot of middle tiles, often the most dangerous ones, and if you abandon the plan the hand is close to unsalvageable. Unless you start with plenty of terminals and honors, you'll most likely fail.

Full guide: [thirteen orphans](#).

Chuuren poutou

Chuuren poutou 九蓮宝燈 *Nine gates*

CLOSED: YAKUMAN · CLOSED ONLY



The nine-sided wait: any man tile from 1 to 9 completes the hand.

The name evokes "the nine precious lotus lanterns". In English it's *nine gates*. The structure is 1-1-1, 2-3-4-5-6-7-8, 9-9-9 in one suit, plus any other tile of that suit. There are two ways to reach tenpai:

The nine-gates wait. You hold exactly 1-1-1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-9-9 and wait on any tile from 1 to 9 of that suit. This is *junsei chuuren poutou* (純正九蓮宝燈, pure nine gates), and it gives the yakuman its name: the hand completes nine different ways. Take the time to check them one by one. It's also the form where the waits are easiest to see.

The single wait. You already hold the extra tile and you're missing one from the structure. You wait on one tile, and that version is much harder to see and to build.

RULE VARIANTS

Mahjong Soul pays junsei chuuren as a double yakuman. Tenhou, M-League, WRC, and EMA pay it as a single. Some rare local rules accept it only in man. Tenhou, Mahjong Soul, WRC, and EMA accept it in any suit.

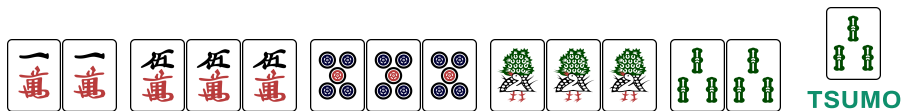
The hand has to be closed and can't hold a kan. While you build it, the others think you're going for chinitsu. Furiten applies as usual: if one of your nine waits is in your river, you can't win by ron.

Full guide: [chuuren poutou](#).

Suuankou

Suuankou 四暗刻 *Four concealed triplets*

CLOSED: YAKUMAN · CLOSED ONLY



A double wait: 1 man or 3 sou. On a tsumo it's suuankou. On a ron it would be toitoi and sanankou only.

Suuankou is sanankou taken to four: four concealed triplets. By definition, it only works on a closed hand. There are two ways to reach tenpai:

Four triplets, waiting on the pair. You can win by ron or tsumo. This is *suuankou tanki* (四暗刻 単騎).

Three triplets and two pairs, waiting to complete the last triplet, as in the example. Here **you have to win by tsumo**. A triplet completed by ron doesn't count as concealed: it's an open triplet (*minkou*). On a ron, the hand is worth sanankou and toitoi.

RULE VARIANTS

Mahjong Soul pays suuankou tanki as a double yakuman. Tenhou, M-League, WRC, and EMA pay it as a single.

It's a valuable yakuman and a hard one to spot, because the discards follow no special pattern.

Full guide: [suuankou](#).

Yakuman that allow calls

These yakuman are worth the same open or closed.

Daisangen

Daisangen 大三元 *Big three dragons*

CLOSED: YAKUMAN · OPEN: YAKUMAN



Two dragon pons showing. The red dragon makes daisangen. The 2 pin would make shousangen.

Daisangen, "big three elements" or big three dragons, takes shousangen one step further: **three dragon triplets**. It can be open or closed.

It carries a liability rule, **pao** (責任払い, *sekinin barai*). If a player already shows two dragon triplets, called or as closed kans, and you give them the third by pon or kan, you become liable. You pay the whole yakuman if they win by tsumo, or half of it if they win by ron off someone else's discard. The details are in [rules and penalties](#).

It stacks with other yakuman: daisangen with suuankou is a double yakuman, and on a pair wait it can go higher.

RULE VARIANTS

Daisangen with suuankou tanki is a triple yakuman only on Mahjong Soul. On Tenhou and in M-League it's a double, and under EMA it's a single.

Along with suuankou and kokushi, it's one of the yakuman you'll see most. It's also easier to stop: once someone has called two dragons, the whole table notices.

Full guide: [daisangen](#).

Shousuushii

Shousuushii 小四喜 *Little four winds*

CLOSED: YAKUMAN · OPEN: YAKUMAN



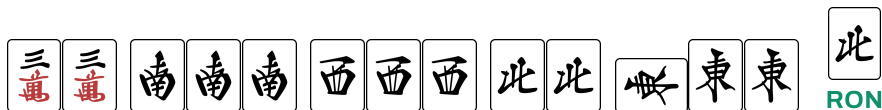
It wins on North or East: three wind triplets and a pair of the fourth wind.

Shousuushii means "little four joys". It's also called little four winds: triplets of three different winds and a pair of the remaining wind, on an open or closed hand. Don't confuse it with daisuushii.

Daisuushii

Daisuushii 大四喜 *Big four winds*

CLOSED: YAKUMAN · OPEN: YAKUMAN



With the North, four wind triplets. With the 3 man, the hand would be shousuushii.

Daisuushii means "big four joys", or big four winds: four wind triplets, one of each, and any pair. It counts open or closed.

It has pao, the same as daisangen: if a player already shows three wind triplets and you give them the fourth by pon or kan, you're liable for the payment.

RULE VARIANTS

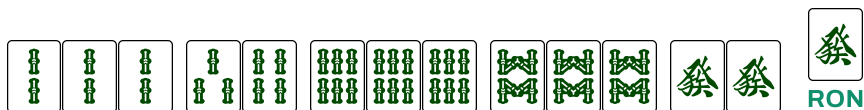
Mahjong Soul pays daisuushii as a double yakuman, to rank it above shousuushii. Tenhou, M-League, WRC, and EMA pay it as a single.

Full guide: [shousuushii](#) and [daisuushii](#).

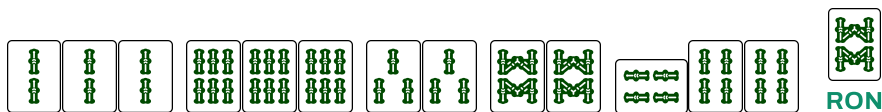
Ryuuiisou

Ryuuiisou 緑一色 *All green*

CLOSED: YAKUMAN · OPEN: YAKUMAN



It waits on the 2 or 5 sou, or the green dragon. The 5 doesn't make ryuuiisou: the 5 isn't green.



It counts without the green dragon too.

Ryuuiisou, "all green", is a hand made only of the green tiles in the usual Japanese design: the 2, 3, 4, 6, and 8 sou and the green dragon. The other sou tiles have red details that break the green.

It counts open or closed. You can't build it as *chiitoitsu*: there are only six kinds of green tile. It stacks with other yakuman: with *suuankou* on a pair wait it reaches a triple yakuman on Mahjong Soul, and a double on Tenhou.

RULE VARIANTS

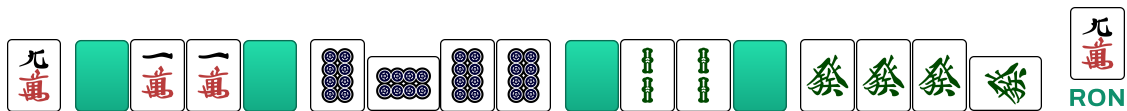
Some local rules accept *ryuuiisou* only if it includes the green dragon. Tenhou, Mahjong Soul, and WRC don't require it.

Full guide: [ryuuiisou](#).

Suukantsu

Suukantsu 四槓子 *Four kans*

CLOSED: YAKUMAN · OPEN: YAKUMAN



Four kans and one tile left in hand: the wait is the pair.

Suukantsu is the yakuman for completing four kans, whether open, closed, or added. It's *sankantsu* taken to four. After the fourth kan you have one tile left in your hand, so you always win on a pair wait.

If one player makes all four kans, the hand isn't aborted. The four-kan abortive draw only happens when the kans are split between two or more players. It's one of the rarest yakuman.

RULE VARIANTS

In M-League and under WRC, pao applies to whoever gives the fourth open kan to a player with three kans. Not on Tenhou or Mahjong Soul. A rare local rule awards the yakuman as soon as the fourth kan is declared, with no need to complete the hand.

Full guide: [suukantsu](#).

Local yaku and yakuman

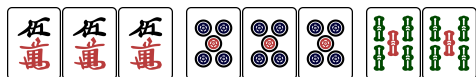
Besides the standard yaku there are local yaku (口一カル役). People used to call them "unofficial", but Japanese mahjong has no single official rulebook: every league, platform, and club has its own. None of the yaku in this section is played on Tenhou, in Mahjong Soul ranked games, or in M-League. Many have fallen out of use, but you'll still hear about them. If a club plays them, check their value before you sit down.

The table sums up which rules each platform uses in 2026, including the ones from this chapter and the last.

Rule	Tenhou	Mahjong Soul	M-League	WRC 2025	EMA 2025
Open riichi	no	no	no	no	no
Nagashi mangan	yes, as a draw	yes, as a draw	no	no	no
Renhou	no	no	no	mangan	mangan
The other yaku in this section	no	no	no	no	no
Kazoe yakuman	yes	yes	no (san-baiman)	pays as a yakuman, doesn't stack	no (san-baiman)
Double yakuman for the wait, and double daisuushii	no	yes	no	no	no
Yakuman stack	yes	yes	yes	yes	no
Kokushi can rob a closed kan	no	yes	no	no	yes
Pao on daisangen and daisuushii	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Pao on suukantsu	no	no	yes	yes	no
Pao on rinshan after an open kan	no	no	no	no	no
Abortive draws	yes	yes	no	no	no

Local and optional rules in 2026

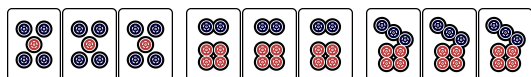
Sanshoku shoudoukou



The pattern: two triplets and a pair of the same number. The rest of the hand is left out.

Sanshoku shoudoukou (三色小同刻) is the little version of *sanshoku doukou*: triplets of the same number in two suits and a pair of that number in the third. Its value depends on the local rule, usually 1 or 2 han.

Sanrenkou



Three consecutive triplets in one suit. The rest of the hand is left out.

Sanrenkou (三連刻, also 三連碰, *sanrenpon*) is three triplets of consecutive numbers in one suit. "San" is the Chinese numeral for "three". Where it's played, it's usually 2 han, though the value varies and some tables make it *kuisagari*. Four consecutive triplets are *suurenkou*, another local *yakuman*.

Ishoku sanjun



Two *chi* calls and a closed 1-2-3 *pin* sequence. Under standard rules this hand has no *yaku* and can't win.

Ishoku sanjun (一色三順, "one color, three sequences") is three **identical** sequences in one suit, such as 1-2-3 *pin* three times. It's *kuisagari*: 2 han closed and 1 open, though like almost every local *yaku*, its value can change.

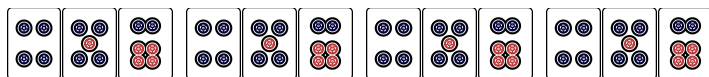
Suurenkou



Four consecutive *pin* triplets, two of them called by *pon*, and the pair.

Suurenkou (四連刻, "four consecutive triplets") is a local *yakuman*: four triplets of consecutive numbers in one suit, open or closed. It's *sanrenkou* taken to four. Where nobody plays it, the example hand is *toitai*. Closed, it would be *suuankou* as well.

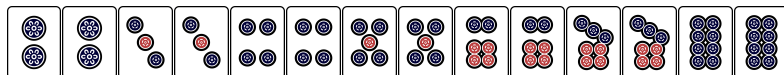
Iishoku suujun



Four identical sequences. The pair is left out.

Iishoku suujun (一色四順, "one color, four sequences") is a local yakuman: four identical sequences in one suit, open or closed. Where nobody plays it, the closed hand is worth at least ryanpeikou.

Daisharin



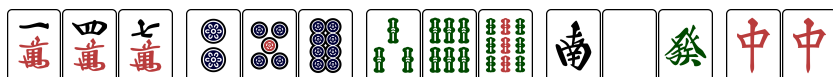
Two tiles of each number from 2 to 8 in pin, on a closed hand.

Daisharin (大車輪) means "the great wheel". In English it's *big wheels*. It's a local yakuman that's almost extinct today: two tiles of each number from 2 to 8 in pin, on a closed hand.

It's pin only because the name refers to the wheels drawn on those tiles. Players at the table tell another story, about symmetry: man has chuuren poutou, sou has ryuuuisou, and pin has daisharin. Some local rules have versions in man (*daisuurin*, 大数隣) and in sou (*daichikurin*, 大竹林).

Where nobody plays it, the hand is worth chinitsu, ryanpeikou, tanyao, and, on a two-sided wait, pinfu: 11 han, a sanbaiman. With riichi and tsumo it reaches 13. It's the same shape, in another suit, as the [kazoe yakuman](#) example.

Shiisanpuutaa



No tile connects to another, and there's a single pair.

Shiisanpuutaa (十三不塔, also *shiisan budou* and other names) means "thirteen broken". You score it when, on your first draw and with no calls before it, no tile in your hand connects to another to form a meld, apart from a single pair. It's a local rule and its value varies: often mangan, sometimes yakuman.

Renhou

Renhou (人和), "blessing of man", completes the set with tenhou and chiihou. A non-dealer wins by **ron** before their first draw, and nobody has called chi, pon, or kan before it (a closed kan included). Its value depends on the rules: it doesn't exist on Tenhou, Mahjong Soul, or M-League. WRC and EMA pay it as a mangan, with no other yaku or dora added. Some local rules pay it as a baiman or a yakuman.

Full guide: [renhou](#).

Paarenchan

Paarenchan (八連莊) means "eight renchan". Under this rule, a dealer who wins eight hands in a row collects a yakuman. Tenpai draws usually don't count. The conditions come in many variants. Hardly anyone plays it today: it isn't on Tenhou, Mahjong Soul, M-League, WRC, or EMA. People still talk about it a lot.

CHAPTER 9

Scoring

Han, fu, and base points: what a hand is worth, who pays what, and how a game's final result is worked out.

How scoring works

Mahjong counts points its own way. Every winning hand carries two numbers:

Han (翻) come from yaku and dora. Older texts, including the first edition of this book, call them *fan*. It's the same unit.

Fu (符) are minipoints. They come from the shape of the hand: its melds, its pair, its wait, and the way it won.

The two together give the **base points** (基本点), and the base points decide what each player pays. Each extra han **doubles** the hand's value, so one han makes a big difference to the payment.

Dora and red fives add han, but they aren't yaku. A hand needs at least one yaku to win. Riichi with two red fives is a 3 han hand: 1 for riichi and 2 for the dora.

Most hands are worth between 1,000 and 8,000 points. The plainest hands collect the minimum, 1,000. Mangan (8,000, or 12,000 for the dealer) is a common target.

Points don't come from nowhere. They move from one player to another. If all four started on 25,000, the four scores always add up to 100,000, at the end of the game too.

Dealer and non-dealer

Each hand has one **dealer** (親 *oya*), the player in the East seat, and three **non-dealers** (子 *ko*). A dealer win pays half again as much as a non-dealer win with the same hand. The price: when someone else wins by tsumo, the dealer pays a double share.

In base points, the payments work like this:

Non-dealer ron: the discarder pays base x 4.

Dealer ron: the discarder pays base x 6.

Non-dealer tsumo: the dealer pays base x 2, and each of the other two non-dealers pays base x 1.

Dealer tsumo: each of the other three pays base x 2.

Before rounding, ron and tsumo collect the same total: 4 times the base points for a non-dealer and 6 times for the dealer. What changes is who pays.

Limit hands

Base points have a ceiling. Once a hand reaches a certain value, the formula stops mattering and the hand pays a fixed amount: a **limit**. From 5 han up, a hand is always a limit hand. Below 5 han, a hand with plenty of fu can still reach mangan; you'll see where in the tables.

The limits, from smallest to largest:

Mangan (満貫), 5 han. The realistic limit, the one you'll aim for often. Its base points are 2,000. A non-dealer collects 8,000 on a ron (2,000 x 4). On a tsumo they collect 4,000 from the dealer and 2,000 from each non-dealer: 8,000 again. The dealer collects 12,000 on a ron (2,000 x 6), or 4,000 from each player on a tsumo (2,000 x 2, and 4,000 x 3 = 12,000 in all).

Haneman (跳満), 6 or 7 han. One and a half mangan: 3,000 base points. A non-dealer collects 12,000 on a ron, or 3,000 from each non-dealer and 6,000 from the dealer on a tsumo. The dealer collects 18,000 on a ron, or 6,000 from each player on a tsumo.

Baiman (倍満), 8 to 10 han. Two mangan: 4,000 base points. A non-dealer collects 16,000 on a ron, or 4,000 and 8,000 on a tsumo. The dealer collects 24,000 on a ron, or 8,000 from each player on a tsumo.

Sanbaiman (三倍満), 11 or 12 han. Three mangan: 6,000 base points. A non-dealer collects 24,000 on a ron, or 6,000 and 12,000 on a tsumo. The dealer collects 36,000 on a ron, or 12,000 from each player on a tsumo.

Yakuman (役満). Any of the special hands in the [yakuman chapter](#), or a regular hand that adds up to 13 han or more: a **kazoe yakuman** (数え役満). Four mangan: 8,000 base points. A non-dealer collects 32,000 on a ron, or 8,000 and 16,000 on a tsumo. The dealer collects 48,000 on a ron, or 16,000 from each player on a tsumo. A hand with two yakuman pays double, and one with three pays triple.

Here are the limit payments to keep handy. The ron comes first, with the tsumo in parentheses. In a non-dealer tsumo, the first number is what each non-dealer pays and the second is the dealer's share. In a dealer tsumo, it's what each of the other three pays.

Mangan: non-dealer 8,000 (2,000/4,000); dealer 12,000 (4,000 all).

Haneman: non-dealer 12,000 (3,000/6,000); dealer 18,000 (6,000 all).

Baiman: non-dealer 16,000 (4,000/8,000); dealer 24,000 (8,000 all).

Sanbaiman: non-dealer 24,000 (6,000/12,000); dealer 36,000 (12,000 all).

Yakuman: non-dealer 32,000 (8,000/16,000); dealer 48,000 (16,000 all).

RULE VARIANTS

Kazoe yakuman. Tenhou and Mahjong Soul count 13 han or more as a yakuman. In M-League and under the EMA rules, 13 han or more is a sanbaiman: 24,000, or 36,000 for the dealer.

Multiple yakuman. Tenhou, Mahjong Soul, M-League, and WRC add yakuman together: two yakuman collect 64,000 for a non-dealer. Under EMA rules you're paid for one. The [yakuman chapter](#) walks through the cases.

Calling the score

When you win by **ron**, you announce the total you're owed: "Ron. 8,000." If there are honba on the table, include them: with two honba, "8,600."

When you win by **tsumo** as a non-dealer, you say what each non-dealer pays first and what the dealer pays second, never the other way around: "Tsumo. 2,000, 4,000."

When the dealer wins by tsumo, they say what each player pays, followed by *ooru* (オール, from the English "all"): "Tsumo. 4,000 all." With one honba, "4,100 all."

Counting fu

The limits are easy to remember. But most hands have fewer than 5 han, and there the value depends on fu. Count them with these steps, in order:

Is it chiitoitsu (七対子)? The hand is a flat 25 fu. Add nothing and don't round.

Is it pinfu (平和) **won by tsumo**? The hand is a flat 20 fu.

Every winning hand starts with **20 fu** of base, the *fuutei* (副底).

If you win by **ron** with a **closed** hand, add **10 fu** of *menzen kafu* (門前加符).

If you win by **tsumo**, open or closed, add **2 fu** for the tsumo (ツモ符 *tsumo-fu*). The one exception is the pinfu from step 2.

Add the fu for each **meld** (below).

Add the fu for the **pair**.

Add the fu for the **wait**.

Round up to the next 10: 22 becomes 30, 32 becomes 40, 102 becomes 110.

An **open hand** that wins by ron with only 20 fu counts as **30 fu**. This is called *kui pinfu* (食い平和), "open pinfu."

Meld fu

Each meld (面子 *mentsu*) adds fu by its type, by whether it's open or closed, and by whether it's simples (2 to 8) or terminals and honors.

Open triplet, *minkou* (明刻): 2 fu for simples, 4 for terminals or honors.

Closed triplet, *ankou* (暗刻): 4 fu for simples, 8 for terminals or honors.

Open quad, *minkan* (明槓): 8 fu for simples, 16 for terminals or honors.

Closed quad, *ankan* (暗槓): 16 fu for simples, 32 for terminals or honors.

Sequence, *shuntsu* (順子): 0 fu, open or closed.

Every step doubles: closed is worth twice open, terminals and honors twice simples, and a quad four times a triplet.

A quad made by adding a tile to a pon (加槓 *kakan*) counts as an open quad.

One case trips people up. If you win by **ron** and the winning tile completes a **triplet** (a shanpon wait), that triplet counts as **open**, a *minkou*, both for fu and for the sanankou (三暗刻) yaku. The hand itself stays closed, so it keeps the 10 fu of menzen kafu. If the same tile comes by tsumo, the triplet counts as closed.

Pair fu

The pair (雀頭 *jantou*) adds **2 fu** if it's dragons, your seat wind, or the round wind. If it's both your seat wind and the round wind (say, a pair of East for the dealer in the East round), it adds **4 fu**. Any other pair adds 0.

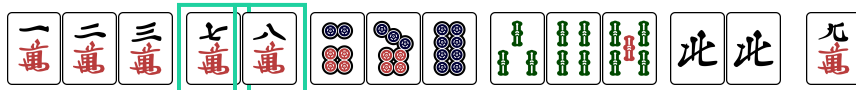
RULE VARIANTS

A double-wind pair is 4 fu on Tenhou, the rule this book uses. In M-League and under the WRC and EMA 2025 rules it's 2 fu.

Wait fu

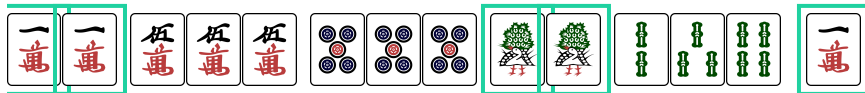
The wait is the shape the hand had in tenpai, just before the winning tile. Two-sided waits add no fu. Waits on a single tile add 2.

Ryanmen (両面), **0 fu**. The two-sided wait. Two tiles in a row, here the 7 and 8 man, wait on either neighbor: the 6 or the 9. It's the most common wait.



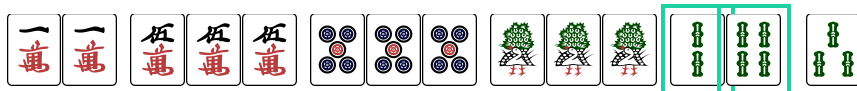
Ryanmen: the 7-8 man waits on the 6 or 9 man.

Shanpon (双碰), **0 fu**. The wait on two pairs. You have three complete melds and two pairs. You win with either tile that turns one of the pairs into a triplet: here the 1 man or the 1 sou.



Shanpon: the pairs of 1 man and 1 sou each wait to become a triplet.

Kanchan (嵌張), 2 fu. The middle wait. The center tile of a sequence is missing: here the 3 sou, between the 2 and the 4.



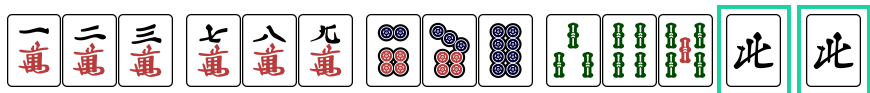
Kanchan: the 2-4 sou waits on the 3.

Penchan (辺張), 2 fu. The edge wait. A 1-2 that only a 3 can finish, or an 8-9 that only a 7 can finish.



Penchan: the 1-2 sou waits on the 3.

Tanki (単騎), 2 fu. The pair wait. You have four melds and one loose tile, and you wait for its match: here North.



Tanki: the North waits for its match.

Special cases

One hand can read more than one way. Sometimes the winning tile completes the hand as a ryanmen or as a kanchan or penchan, depending on how you group the tiles. You score the reading that pays most (高点法 *koutenhou*). If the ryanmen reading gives the hand pinfu, it counts as a ryanmen. If not, it counts as the kanchan or penchan, for the 2 fu.

Pinfu by ron is always 30 fu: 20 of fuutei and 10 of menzen kafu.

Pinfu by tsumo is always 20 fu: it doesn't add the 2 tsumo fu, but it does get the han for menzen tsumo (門前清自摸和).

Rinshan kaihou (嶺上開花) is a tsumo win and adds the 2 tsumo fu like any other. If the hand is closed, it's also worth menzen tsumo.

Put all this together and **no hand can be 1 han 20 fu**. Exactly 20 fu only happens with pinfu by tsumo, which already has 2 han.

RULE VARIANTS

Some old local rules don't add the 2 tsumo fu on a rinshan kaihou win, and some don't allow pinfu by tsumo. Tenhou, M-League, and the EMA rules add the 2 fu to rinshan and accept pinfu by tsumo.

Base points

You know how to count han (in the [yaku chapter](#)) and fu. Put them together and you get the base points formula:

$$\text{base points} = \text{fu} \times 2^{(2 + \text{han})}$$

Then multiply the base points by what each player owes (x 4, x 6, x 2, or x 1, depending on who wins and how, as above). Each payment **rounds up** to the next 100, on its own.

That's why, with the same han and fu, a tsumo sometimes collects a little more than a ron. Each of the three payments rounds separately. The difference is 0, 100, or 200 points, and the tsumo never collects less. For example, a non-dealer with 1 han 40 fu collects 1,300 on a ron, and $400 + 400 + 700 = 1,500$ on a tsumo.

How a hand's value is worked out

1. Basic points = $\text{fu} \times 2^{\text{han} + 2}$.
2. If the basic points reach 2,000, or the hand has 5 han or more, it pays the limit (table below).
3. Ron: the discarder pays basic points $\times 4$ when a non-dealer wins, $\times 6$ when the dealer wins.
4. Non-dealer tsumo: the dealer pays $\times 2$ and each non-dealer $\times 1$. Dealer tsumo: everyone pays $\times 2$.
5. Each payment is rounded up to the next 100.
6. Each honba adds 300 to a ron, or 100 from each player paying a tsumo. Riichi sticks (1,000 each) go to the winner.

Limits

Limit	Han	Basic points
Mangan 満貫	5, or basic $\geq 2,000$	2,000
Haneman 跳満	6–7	3,000
Baiman 倍満	8–10	4,000
Sanbaiman 三倍満	11–12	6,000
Yakuman 役満	13+	8,000

Example: 3 han 40 fu

Basic points: $40 \times 2^5 = 1,280$.

Non-dealer ron: $1,280 \times 4 = 5,120 \rightarrow 5,200$. Tsumo: the dealer pays $2,560 \rightarrow 2,600$, each non-dealer $1,280 \rightarrow 1,300$.

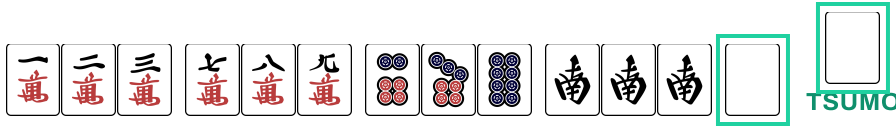
Dealer ron: $1,280 \times 6 = 7,680 \rightarrow 7,700$. Tsumo: everyone pays $2,560 \rightarrow 2,600$.

The hand value formula, with a worked example.

The site's [score calculator](#) does the same with honba and riichi sticks added, and its fu helper counts a hand's fu line by line.

Worked examples

A tsumo on a pair wait



Round: East. **Your seat:** South. **You win by:** tsumo.

You're the player to the dealer's right. The hand is closed. You have a closed triplet of South, your seat wind, and you're waiting for the white dragon to make your pair.

The yaku are menzen tsumo (1 han) and yakuhai (役牌) for South (1 han): 2 han in all.

The fu:

20 of fuutei.

0 for the three sequences.

8 for the closed honor triplet.

2 for the dragon pair.

2 for the tanki wait.

2 for the tsumo.

That's 34 fu, which rounds up to 40. The base points are $40 \times 2^{(2+2)} = 640$.

The dealer pays $640 \times 2 = 1,280$, rounded up to 1,300. Each of the other two pays 640, rounded up to 700. You collect 2,700 in all. You call it as "Tsumo. 700, 1,300."

The same hand by ron

Now you win the same hand by ron, on a discard from the player to your right. With no tsumo there's no menzen tsumo, so you're left with 1 han of yakuhai.

The fu: 20 of fuutei, 10 of menzen kafu, 8 for the closed honor triplet, 2 for the dragon pair, and 2 for the tanki wait. That's 42 fu, which rounds up to 50.

The base points are $50 \times 2^{(2+1)} = 400$. The discarder pays $400 \times 4 = 1,600$. The other two pay nothing.

In the **South round**, South would also be the round wind and the triplet would be worth 2 han of yakuhai. The hand would become 2 han 50 fu: 3,200. Do the math to check it. One more han doubled the value.

The score tables

Working out every hand from scratch is slow. That's what the table of common values is for. It's worth memorizing, and with practice it sticks on its own.

Find your hand's han and fu: each cell gives the ron payment and the tsumo payment. In a non-dealer tsumo, the first number is what each non-dealer pays and the second is the dealer's share. Combinations no hand can have show no payment. The site's [scoring guide](#) has the same tables with more worked hands.

Non-dealer wins

Fu	1 han	2 han	3 han	4 han
20	— —	— 400/700	— 700/1,300	— 1,300/2,600
25	— —	1,600 —	3,200 800/1,600	6,400 1,600/3,200
30	1,000 300/500	2,000 500/1,000	3,900 1,000/2,000	7,700[†] 2,000/3,900
40	1,300 400/700	2,600 700/1,300	5,200 1,300/2,600	Mangan
50	1,600 400/800	3,200 800/1,600	6,400 1,600/3,200	Mangan
60	2,000 500/1,000	3,900 1,000/2,000	7,700[†] 2,000/3,900	Mangan
70	2,300 600/1,200	4,500 1,200/2,300	Mangan	Mangan
80	2,600 700/1,300	5,200 1,300/2,600	Mangan	Mangan
90	2,900 800/1,500	5,800 1,500/2,900	Mangan	Mangan
100	3,200 800/1,600	6,400 1,600/3,200	Mangan	Mangan
110	3,600 —	7,100 1,800/3,600	Mangan	Mangan

Limit hands

Limit	Han	Ron	Tsumo
Mangan 満貫	5	8,000	2,000/4,000
Haneman 跳満	6–7	12,000	3,000/6,000
Baiman 倍満	8–10	16,000	4,000/8,000
Sanbaiman 三倍満	11–12	24,000	6,000/12,000
Yakuman 役満	13+	32,000	8,000/16,000

Each cell: ron on top, what the discarder pays. Tsumo below, what each non-dealer / the dealer pays. —: no real hand lands on this combination. †: pays a mangan (8,000) under the kiriage mangan rule. Before honba and riichi sticks.

Dealer wins

Fu	1 han	2 han	3 han	4 han
20	— —	— 700 all	— 1,300 all	— 2,600 all
25	— —	2,400 —	4,800 1,600 all	9,600 3,200 all
30	1,500 500 all	2,900 1,000 all	5,800 2,000 all	11,600[†] 3,900 all
40	2,000 700 all	3,900 1,300 all	7,700 2,600 all	Mangan
50	2,400 800 all	4,800 1,600 all	9,600 3,200 all	Mangan
60	2,900 1,000 all	5,800 2,000 all	11,600[†] 3,900 all	Mangan
70	3,400 1,200 all	6,800 2,300 all	Mangan	Mangan
80	3,900 1,300 all	7,700 2,600 all	Mangan	Mangan
90	4,400 1,500 all	8,700 2,900 all	Mangan	Mangan
100	4,800 1,600 all	9,600 3,200 all	Mangan	Mangan
110	5,300 —	10,600 3,600 all	Mangan	Mangan

Limit hands

Limit	Han	Ron	Tsumo
Mangan 満貫	5	12,000	4,000 all
Haneman 跳満	6–7	18,000	6,000 all
Baiman 倍満	8–10	24,000	8,000 all
Sanbaiman 三倍満	11–12	36,000	12,000 all
Yakuman 役満	13+	48,000	16,000 all

Each cell: ron on top, what the discarder pays. Tsumo below, what each of the other three pays (all). —: no real hand lands on this combination. †: pays a mangan (12,000) under the kiriage mangan rule. Before honba and riichi sticks.

When a hand reaches mangan

A hand is a mangan as soon as its base points reach 2,000:

4 han 40 fu is already a mangan: $40 \times 2^{(2+4)} = 2,560$.

3 han 70 fu is already a mangan: $70 \times 2^{(2+3)} = 2,240$.

5 han is always a mangan, whatever the fu: even at 20 fu, $20 \times 2^{(2+5)} = 2,560$.

4 han 30 fu and **3 han 60 fu** fall just short: 1,920 base points. They pay 7,700 to a non-dealer and 11,600 to the dealer.

RULE VARIANTS

Under **kiriage mangan** (切り上げ満貫), 4 han 30 fu and 3 han 60 fu pay as a mangan: 8,000, or 12,000 for the dealer. M-League, the WRC rules, the EMA 2025 rules, and many Japanese parlors use it. Ranked games on Tenhou and Mahjong Soul don't.

At the top end, 110 fu is the most that matters. A hand of 120 fu or more with fewer than 5 han always has sankantsu (三槓子) plus sanankou or toitoi: that's 4 han already, and at 4 han 40 fu the hand is a mangan. So:

A 1 han hand never reaches mangan: $110 \times 2^{(2+1)} = 880$.

A 2 han hand never reaches mangan: $110 \times 2^{(2+2)} = 1,760$.

Chiitoitsu

Chiitoitsu has its own shape, so it's always 25 fu and always at least 2 han.

2 han: non-dealer 1,600; dealer 2,400. Ron only.

3 han: non-dealer 3,200 (800/1,600); dealer 4,800 (1,600 all).

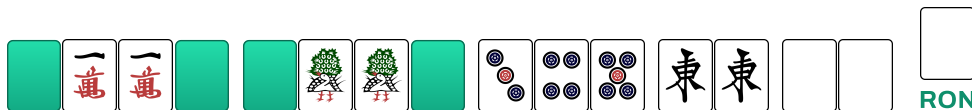
4 han: non-dealer 6,400 (1,600/3,200); dealer 9,600 (3,200 all).

The first number is the ron, with the tsumo in parentheses. A chiitoitsu won by tsumo always has at least 3 han, because the hand is closed and adds menzen tsumo. That's why there's no 2 han tsumo.

Notice that 2 han 25 fu pays the same as 1 han 50 fu. Below the limits, taking away one han and doubling the fu leaves the value unchanged. The same goes for 1 han 60 fu and 2 han 30 fu, or 3 han 40 fu and 2 han 80 fu.

1 han 110 fu

A 1 han hand can reach 110 fu. That's the most fu a 1 han hand can have. Here's one:



Round: East. Your seat: East. You win by: ron.

You're the dealer. You have two closed quads, of 1 man and 1 sou, and a shanpon wait on East or the white dragon. The white dragon comes in by ron. Its triplet gives you the only han: yakuhai.

The fu:

20 of fuutei.

10 of menzen kafu.

32 for the closed quad of 1 man, a terminal.

32 for the closed quad of 1 sou.

4 for the white dragon triplet. The ron completed it on a shanpon wait, so it counts as an open triplet.

4 for the pair of East, which is both your seat wind and the round wind.

That's 102 fu, which rounds up to 110. As the dealer, you collect $880 \times 6 = 5,280$, rounded up to 5,300.

This hand only exists as a ron. On a tsumo, the white triplet would stay closed: it would add sanankou and menzen tsumo, and the hand would no longer be 1 han. If East came in by ron instead, the East triplet would be worth 2 han of yakuhai, and again the hand wouldn't be 1 han. And if your rules pay 2 fu for a double-wind pair, the same hand counts 100 fu, and that becomes the most a 1 han hand can reach.

Honba and riichi sticks

Two things add to the payment for a hand. You met them in the chapter on [the end of a hand](#).

Each **honba** (本場) adds 300 points. On a ron, the discarder pays all of it. On a tsumo, each paying player adds 100.

The winner takes every **riichi stick** (1,000 each) on the table, their own included.

Say a non-dealer wins a 3 han 30 fu hand with two honba and one riichi stick on the table. On a ron, the discarder pays $3,900 + 600 = 4,500$, and with the stick you collect 5,500. On a tsumo, each non-dealer pays $1,000 + 200 = 1,200$ and the dealer pays $2,000 + 200 = 2,200$. With the stick you collect 5,600.

Final game scores

When the game ends, each player's points turn into a simpler result, in thousands of points. This is where the return, the oka, and the uma come in, which you saw in [rules and penalties](#). Here I use the standard rule: everyone starts on 25,000, the return is 30,000 (三万点返し *sanmanten-gaeshi*), the uma is +20/+10/-10/-20 (ワンツー *wantsuu*), and the oka of 20 goes to first place.

If the last hand ends in an exhaustive draw, riichi sticks can be left on the table. The player in first place takes them, so the total stays at 100,000.

Here's the result of a real game, with each player's final points and result:

Player A: 60,600 points, **+70.6**.

Player B: 20,400 points, **+0.4**.

Player C: 19,600 points, **-20.4**.

Player D: -600 points, **-50.6**.

This game ended early. Player D dropped below 0, and under the *tobi* (飛び) rule, also called *dobon* (ドボン), the game stopped there. At exactly 0, play goes on.

The final points add up to 100,000 and the results add up to 0. Do the math right and they always will. The steps:

Subtract the return, 30,000, from each player: 30,600, -9,600, -10,400, and -30,600.

Convert to thousands, with one decimal: +30.6, -9.6, -10.4, and -30.6.

Add the uma by placement: +20 for first, +10 for second, -10 for third, and -20 for last. That gives +50.6, +0.4, -20.4, and -50.6.

Give the oka to first place. Each player started on 25,000 but had 30,000 taken off: 5,000 too many, times four players, is 20,000, or 20. First place ends on +70.6.

Player	Points	Place	(Points – return) / 1,000	Uma	Oka	Result
South	42,300	1	+12.3	+20.0	+20.0	+52.3
East (first dealer)	28,700	2	-1.3	+10.0	—	+8.7
North	19,500	3	-10.5	-10.0	—	-20.5
West	9,500	4	-20.5	-20.0	—	-40.5

Example with Tenhou rules: 25,000 start, 30,000 return, +20/+10/-10/-20 uma and 20 oka to first place. Result = (points – return) / 1,000 + uma, and the oka to first place.

RULE VARIANTS

Rounding to the thousand. Many clubs and parlors round final points to the nearest thousand before subtracting the return. With 四捨五入 rounding (500 or more goes up, 400 or less goes down), this game becomes 61,000, 20,000, 20,000, and -1,000. Negative numbers round by their absolute value: -600 becomes -1,000. Other parlors use 五捨六入, where 500 goes down. Tenhou stopped rounding in 2022, and Mahjong Soul and M-League don't round either.

With rounding, the steps give 31, -10, -10, and -31, and with the uma +51, 0, -20, and -51. First place doesn't take the +51 as it stands: rounding can leave a total that isn't exactly 0. First place's result is the other three added up with the sign flipped: $0 - 20 - 51 = -71$, so **+71**. That number already includes the oka: $31 + 20$ of uma + 20 of oka = 71.

Other uma. M-League also starts on 25,000 and counts against 30,000, but uses an uma of +30/+10/-10/-30. With the oka of 20, first place gets +50 in all, and the league publishes it that way: +50/+10/-10/-30. This game would come out +80.6, +0.4, -20.4, and -60.6. The EMA rules start on 30,000, use +15/+5/-5/-15, and have no oka. Mahjong Soul's ranked games show the result against 25,000, with no oka and +15/+5/-5/-15; rank points are worked out separately and depend on the room.

CHAPTER 10

Table manners

What the table expects of you, from the first greeting to the last point stick.

Why they matter

Good manners keep the game moving and head off arguments. In a Japanese parlor or at a tournament everyone takes them for granted, and nobody will explain them to you. Almost all of them have a practical reason: nobody sees what they shouldn't, nobody touches what isn't theirs, and the hand runs without pauses.

At the start

Greet the table when you sit down with *yoroshiku onegaishimasu* (よろしくお願ひします), and thank everyone at the end with *arigatou gozaimashita* (ありがとうございました). In Japan these are the first and last words at any table.

Build your wall neatly, so no tiles fall over.

Push your wall toward the center, where the others can reach it, with its right end angled slightly forward.

If you're the dealer (親, *oya*), pick up the dice and keep them beside you once the wall is broken.

The dealer rolls the dice. The player whose wall is broken splits it and flips the dora indicator. On automatic tables the machine builds the walls, and you flip the indicator by hand only if it comes up face down.

When you flip the dora indicator, also lower the top tile of the stack at the end of the dead wall, the first replacement tile (嶺上牌, *rinshanpai*). It goes face down beside the wall, so it can't fall.

If you're the dealer, wait until everyone has their tiles before you make your first discard.

During the hand

Don't touch the tiles another player is about to draw, not even to pass them along, unless they ask you to. As the walls get shorter, you can push them closer to the center.

Don't cut, join, or split the walls when there's no need.

Draw and discard with the same hand.

Don't draw before the player on your left has discarded (先ヅモ, *sakizumo*). M-League punishes it with a dead hand.

Discard your chosen tile first, then sort the new one into your hand. It saves time.

Discard in order, in rows of six, and leave every tile in plain view.

A tile you've discarded **never comes back into your hand**.

Call out loud and clear: chi, pon, kan, ron, tsumo, riichi. Say "riichi" before you turn the tile sideways.

Show the tiles you're calling with at the moment of the call, or right after. **Never after you discard.**

After you declare riichi, don't lay your hand down or turn it face down (伏せ牌, *fusehai*). Many parlors require this.

Don't comment on how your hand is going, with lines like "I'm almost tenpai."

Don't talk with the others about what another player might be holding.

Don't take too long on each turn. Sometimes the right move is to let the tile go and move on.

Don't slam or throw the tiles or the point sticks (点棒, *tenbou*). It comes across as aggressive.

Unless you have a side table of your own, don't eat at the table.

Long phone calls can **wait for later**.

Winning and paying

Don't put your winning tile from a tsumo into your hand. Keep it apart: the others need to know which tile you won on, because the fu depend on it.

If you won with riichi, you flip the ura dora indicators yourself, where everyone can see them. They're the tiles under each indicator, kan indicators included.

When you win, call out the score you're owed, or your yaku if you don't know the score. It speeds up the payment.

When you pay, combine sticks so **both** players use as few as possible.

Show your hand **only** when you win, when you're tenpai at an exhaustive draw, or when you declare an abortive draw such as *kyuushu kyuu hai* (九種九牌, nine different terminals and honors). It's a matter of modesty.

Your attitude at the table

Don't walk out of a game in progress because you're losing. Discipline.

Respect the other players. Don't put their win down to "luck," and skip the snide remarks and noises.

Don't win a hand that ends the game if you'd still finish last (アガラス, *agarasu*). It gets you nothing and takes the game away from someone else. The exception is a tournament scored on total points across several games, where those points help you.

Don't wreck your own chances to wreck another player's, out of spite or because "being an agent of chaos is fun." It isn't acceptable.

Anything **anti-competitive** or **self-destructive** has no place at the table.

Online

Manners count on Tenhou and Mahjong Soul too:

Don't run out the clock on purpose.

Don't disconnect to dodge a loss.

Go easy on the stamps and emotes.

CHAPTER 11

Final advice

What to do after the last page: play, ask questions, and choose how you want to play.

Play a lot

With what you've read so far, you have everything you need to play a full game and follow its rules. But mahjong is a deep game, and learning it properly takes years. The only way down that road is to play.

Play wherever you can: at the nearest club, at home with your family, or online on Tenhou or Mahjong Soul, against players from all over the world. If you want someone to look at your games, I review game logs and coach players one on one. The [services page](#) has the details. The [free stats tools](#) on [npmahjong.com](#) are built on real game data and answer questions like how often your wait wins and when to push against a riichi. Every time you sit down at a new table, ask about its local rules: the [rules and penalties chapter](#) tells you which ones tend to change.

Ask, and read it again

Stay curious. Ask about anything you don't fully understand, to other players or to me, through [npmahjong.com](#). Read this book, then read it again: the second time you'll catch things that slipped past you the first. And keep looking for new books and material.

Find your own way to play

There are many ways to play. You can play *occult* (オカルト, *okaruto*), trusting streaks and gut feeling, or *digital* (デジタル, *dejitaru*), trusting probabilities and data. You can play it safe and defend, or attack every hand. You can aim to be a strong online player or a recognized pro. Your style doesn't matter as long as you're having fun, you stay interested, and you want to learn a little more every day.

In the end, mahjong means sharing a table with three other people who are having a good time and understand each other through the thing they have in common: this game. Carry your place as a mahjong player with pride and with responsibility. Mahjong is young as games go, and few are as addictive.

Welcome to mahjong.

APPENDIX A

Yaku list

Every yaku and yakuman in one table and one quick-reference list, with an example hand.

Yaku table

This is the quick reference. The full explanations are in the [Yaku](#) and [Yakuman](#) chapters, and every standard yaku has its own guide on the site's [yaku page](#).

Yaku	Kanji	Name	Closed	Open
1 HAN				
Riichi	立直	Ready Declaration	1	—
Ippatsu	一発	One-Shot · within one go-around of riichi	1	—
Menzen Tsumo	門前清自摸和	Self-Draw · self-draw with a closed hand	1	—
Pinfu	平和	All Sequences	1	—
Iipeikou	一盃口	Pure Double Sequence	1	—
Tanyao	断么九	All Simples	1	1
Yakuhai	役牌	Value Tiles · per triplet of dragons, round wind or seat wind	1	1
Haitei Raoyue	海底摸月	Last Tile from Wall	1	1
Houtei Raoyui	河底撈魚	Last Discard	1	1
Rinshan Kaihou	嶺上開花	After a Kan	1	1
Chankan	槍槓	Robbing the Kan	1	1
2 HAN				
Daburu Riichi	ダブル立直	Double Riichi · riichi on your first discard; replaces riichi	2	—
Chiitoitsu	七対子	Seven Pairs · always 25 fu	2	—
Sanshoku Doujun	三色同順	Three Colored Runs	2	1
Ittsu	一气通貫	Pure Straight	2	1
Chanta	混全帯么九	Mixed Outside Hand	2	1
Toitoihou	対々和	All Triplets	2	2
Sanankou	三暗刻	Three Concealed Triplets	2	2
Sanshoku Doukou	三色同刻	Three Color Triplets	2	2
Sankantsu	三槓子	Three Kans	2	2
Honroutou	混老頭	All Terminals and Honors	2	2
Shousangen	小三元	Little Three Dragons · plus the two dragon yakuhai	2	2
3 HAN				
Honitsu	混一色	Half Flush	3	2
Junchan	純全帯么九	Pure Outside Hand	3	2
Ryanpeikou	二盃口	Twice Pure Double Sequence	3	—
6 HAN				
Chinitsu	清一色	Full Flush	6	5
MANGAN AT AN EXHAUSTIVE DRAW				
Nagashi Mangan	流し満貫	Mangan at Draw · paid as a mangan tsumo at an exhaustive draw	Mangan	Mangan
YAKUMAN				
Kokushi Musou	国士無双	Thirteen Orphans	Yakuman	—

Yaku	Kanji	Name	Closed	Open
Suuankou	四暗刻	Four Concealed Triplets	Yakuman	—
Daisangen	大三元	Big Three Dragons	Yakuman	Yakuman
Shousuushii	小四喜	Little Four Winds	Yakuman	Yakuman
Daisuushii	大四喜	Big Four Winds · double yakuman on Mahjong Soul	Yakuman	Yakuman
Tsuuiisou	字一色	All Honors	Yakuman	Yakuman
Chinroutou	清老頭	All Terminals	Yakuman	Yakuman
Ryuuiisou	緑一色	All Green	Yakuman	Yakuman
Chuuren Poutou	九蓮宝燈	Nine Gates	Yakuman	—
Suukantsu	四槓子	Four Kans	Yakuman	Yakuman
Tenhou	天和	Heavenly Hand · dealer wins on the deal	Yakuman	—
Chiihou	地和	Earthly Hand · non-dealer tsumo on the first draw	Yakuman	—

Values in han. —: the yaku counts only with a closed hand. Yakuman stack (double yakuman). Renhou is left out: Tenhou, Mahjong Soul and M-League don't play it.

Before you count

You need at least one yaku to win. Dora, kan dora, ura dora, and red fives add han, but they aren't yaku.

On an open hand, closed-only yaku don't count and kuisagari yaku lose 1 han.

If a hand reads more than one way, you count the reading that pays most.

Situational yaku

Riichi (立直): 1 han, closed only. You declare tenpai, put out 1,000, and stop changing your hand. At least 4 tiles are left in the wall.

Ippatsu (一発): 1 han, only with riichi. You win within the go-around after your riichi, up to and including your next draw, with no chi, pon, or kan from anyone.

Daburu riichi (ダブル立直): 2 han in all, replaces riichi. Riichi on your first discard, with no calls before it.

Menzen tsumo (門前清自摸和): 1 han, closed only. You win by tsumo.

Haitei (海底摸月): 1 han. Tsumo on the last tile of the live wall.

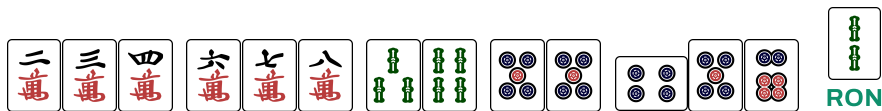
Houtei (河底撈魚): 1 han. Ron on the last discard of the hand.

Rinshan kaihou (嶺上開花): 1 han. Tsumo on the replacement tile after a kan.

Chankan (槍槓): 1 han. Ron on the tile an opponent adds to their pon (an added kan).

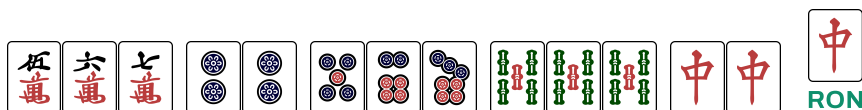
Basic yaku

Tanyao (断么九): 1 han, open too. Only tiles 2 through 8.



Open tanyao (kuitan).

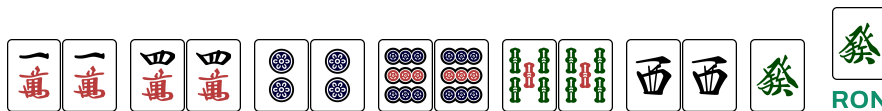
Yakuhai (役牌): 1 han for each triplet or kan of dragons, of your seat wind, or of the round wind. If your seat wind matches the round wind, that triplet is worth 2 han. A pair doesn't count.



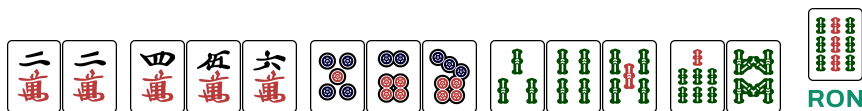
A red dragon triplet: 1 han.

Closed hand only

Chiitoitsu (七対子): 2 han, always 25 fu. Seven different pairs.

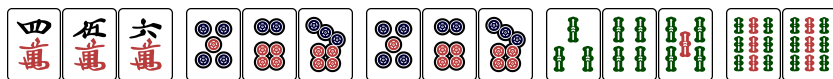


Pinfu (平和): 1 han. Four sequences, a pair that isn't yakuhai, and a two-sided wait.



With the 6 sou it would be tanyao as well.

Iipeikou (一盃口): 1 han. Two identical sequences.



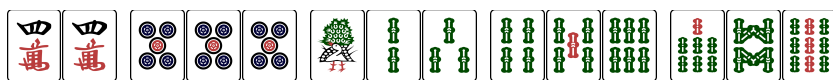
Ryanpeikou (二盃口): 3 han, with no iipeikou on top. Two iipeikou in one hand. It always counts this way, never as chiitoitsu.



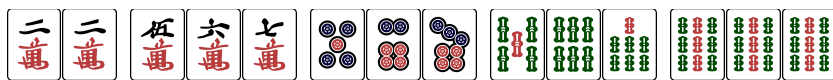
Lose 1 han when open

Ittsu (一気通貫): 2 han closed, 1 open. 1-2-3, 4-5-6, and 7-8-9 in one suit.

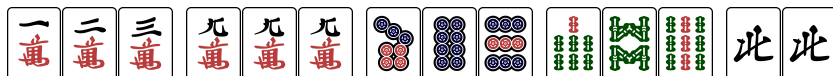




Sanshoku (三色同順): 2 han closed, 1 open. The same sequence in all three suits.



Chanta (混全帶么九): 2 han closed, 1 open. Every meld and the pair hold a terminal or an honor. At least one sequence and at least one honor.



Junchan (純全帶么九): 3 han closed, 2 open. Every meld and the pair hold a terminal. No honors, and at least one sequence.



Honitsu (混一色): 3 han closed, 2 open. One suit plus honors.



Open honitsu: 2 han.

Chinitsu (清一色): 6 han closed, 5 open. One suit, no honors.



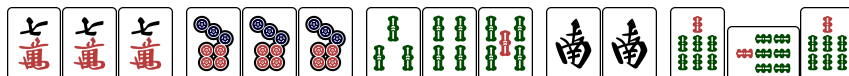
Open chinitsu: 5 han.

Same value open or closed

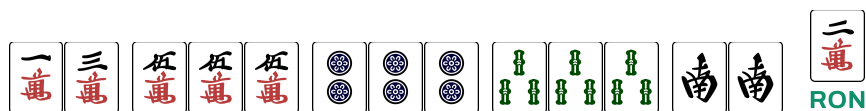
Toittoi (対々和): 2 han. Four triplets or kans and a pair.



Sanshoku doukou (三色同刻): 2 han. The same triplet in all three suits.



Sanankou (三暗刻): 2 han. Three concealed triplets. A triplet completed by ron doesn't count as concealed.



Sankantsu (三槓子): 2 han. Three kans of any kind.



Honroutou (混老頭): 2 han. Only terminals and honors. It always comes with toitoi or chiitoitsu, so it adds up to 4 han at least.



Honroutou and chiitoitsu: 4 han.

Shousangen (小三元): 2 han, plus 1 for each dragon triplet: 4 han at least. Two dragon triplets and a pair of the third dragon.



Special payment

Nagashi mangan (流し満貫): no han, paid as a mangan by tsumo. When the wall runs out, every one of your discards is a terminal or an honor and nobody called any of them. On Tenhou and Mahjong Soul it's still a draw, not a win.

Yakuman

A yakuman pays 32,000 on a ron for a non-dealer and 48,000 for the dealer. Mahjong Soul pays four of them double: kokushi on the 13-sided wait, suuankou on a pair wait, chuuren on the nine-sided wait, and daisuushii. Tenhou, M-League, WRC, and EMA pay them as a single.

Kazoe yakuman (数え役満): 13 han or more, dora included. It counts on Tenhou and Mahjong Soul. In M-League and under EMA it's a sanbaiman, and under WRC it pays as a yakuman but doesn't stack with another.

Tenhou (天和): the dealer's starting hand is already complete.

Chiihou (地和): a non-dealer completes their hand by tsumo on their first draw, with no calls before it.

Kokushi musou (国士無双), closed only: one of each terminal and honor, plus a second copy of one of them.

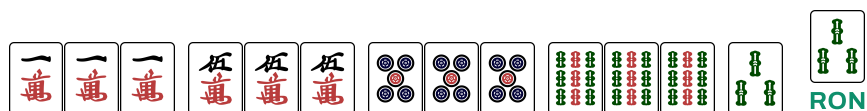


A single wait: the missing green dragon.

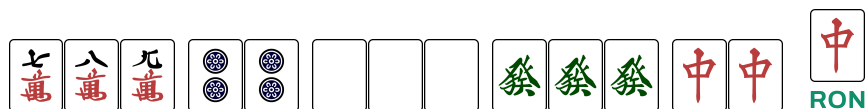
Chuuren poutou (九蓮宝燈), closed only and with no kan: 1-1-1, 2 through 8, and 9-9-9 in one suit, plus any other tile of that suit.



Suuankou (四暗刻), closed only: four concealed triplets. On a ron, only with a pair wait.



Daisangen (大三元): three dragon triplets.



Shousuushii (小四喜): three wind triplets and a pair of the fourth wind.



Daisuushii (大四喜): four wind triplets.



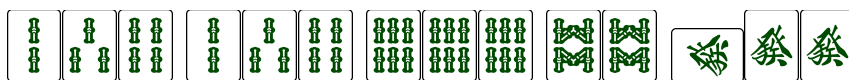
Tsuuiisou (字一色): only honors, in triplets or as seven pairs.



Chinroutou (清老頭): only terminals.



Ryuuishou (緑一色): only the 2, 3, 4, 6, and 8 sou and the green dragon. The green dragon isn't required.



Suukantsu (四槓子): four kans by the same player.

Local yaku

Tenhou, Mahjong Soul, and M-League don't play these. Check their value before you play. The table of rules by platform is in [Yakuman](#).

Open riichi: riichi with your wait on show, 2 han.

Renhou (人和): a non-dealer wins by ron before their first draw, with no calls before it. A man-gan under WRC and EMA.

Sanshoku shoudoukou (三色小同刻): two triplets and a pair of the same number across the three suits.

Sanrenkou (三連刻): three consecutive triplets in one suit.

Iishoku sanjun (一色三順): three identical sequences.

Suurenkou (四連刻), yakuman: four consecutive triplets in one suit.

Iishoku suujun (一色四順), yakuman: four identical sequences.

Daisharin (大車輪), yakuman: two of each number from 2 to 8 in pin, on a closed hand.

Shiisanpuutaa (十三不塔): a starting hand with no connected tiles apart from one pair.

Paarenchan (八連莊), yakuman: the dealer wins eight hands in a row.

APPENDIX B

Glossary

The Japanese terms of the table, A to Z, with their spelling and their meaning.

The site's [mahjong glossary](#) has more terms, with kana readings and examples.

A

Agari (和了り, 上がり, アガリ) — Winning a hand, as in *tsumo agari* or *ron agari*.

Aida yonken (間四間) — Two discards of the same suit with four numbers between them, like the 2 and the 7. They flag the 3 and the 6 as dangerous, since those tiles would finish a 4-5 wait. It's a river read, not a rule.

Akapai (赤牌) — Red tiles that count as dora. They're almost always fives: the standard game has one red five in each suit. Also *akadora* (赤ドラ).

An (暗) — "Dark." Refers to concealed tiles or melds, built without calling.

Anpai (安牌) — A safe tile to discard. The safest kind is *genbutsu*.

Anshun, **ankan**, and **ankou** (暗順, 暗槓, 暗刻) — A concealed sequence, quad, and triplet, in that order. You declare an ankan, or closed quad, like any other kan.

Aotenjou (青天井) — "Blue sky": no ceiling. A rule with no limits, where every hand is scored with the same formula. For example, 5 han 30 fu is worth 15,400 on a non-dealer ron (23,100 for the dealer) instead of stopping at an 8,000 mangan.

Atama (頭) — "Head." The pair every complete hand needs. Also *jantou*.

Atamahane (頭跳ね, 頭ハネ) — "Head bump." When several players can ron the same discard, only the one closest in turn order after the discarder wins. It's the official rule in M-League and WRC. Tenhou and Mahjong Soul play *daburon* instead.

Atozuke (後付け) — The rule that lets a hand win when its yaku depends on the winning tile: the hand wins if that tile gives it a yaku. It's the standard rule. The opposite is *sakizuke*.

Awaseuchi (合わせ打ち) — Deliberately discarding the same tile another player just discarded.

B

Ba (場) — A wind round: *tonba* (東場, the East round) or *nanba* (南場, the South round). Also "the table," as in 1,000 points on the table.

Bakahon (バカホン) — A honitsu with no other yaku.

Bakaze (場風) — The round wind.

Barai or **harai** (払い) — A payment.

Bazoro (場ヅ口) — The two base han always added when you work out the points. They're the "2 +" in the formula $fu \times 2^{(2 + han)}$.

Betaori (ベタ降り) — Full defense. You stop building your hand and discard only safe tiles so you don't deal in.

Buttobi (ぶっ飛び) — Dropping below zero and losing the game. See *tobi*.

C

Chakan or **kakan** (加槓) — A quad made by adding the fourth tile to a pon you already have on show.

Chi (チー) — The call that makes a sequence, a *minshun*, from the discard of the player on your left. Also written *chii*.

Chonbo (チヨンボ, 錯和) — A serious foul that cancels the hand. In parlors the offender pays the other players as if for a mangan. In tournaments and leagues (M-League, WRC, EMA) it costs 20 points (20,000) off the final result.

Chunchanpai (中張牌) — The simples, 2 to 8. Also *tanyaohai* (断么牌).

D

Daburon (ダブロン) — Two players ron the same discard and both get paid. The opposite of *atamahane*.

Daiminkan (大明槓) — An open quad made by calling the fourth tile from another player's discard while you hold a concealed triplet.

Damaten (黙聴) — Silent tenpai: tenpai with a closed hand, without declaring riichi. Also *yamiten*.

Digital (デジタル) — A school of thought that says the game can be measured and explained with statistics and math, not luck or superstition. The opposite of *occult*.

Dora (ドラ) — A bonus tile. Each dora in your winning hand adds 1 han, but dora aren't a yaku: with dora and no yaku, you can't win.

Dora hyoujihai (ドラ表示牌) — The dora indicator. The tile after it in order is that hand's dora.

F

Fu (符) — Minipoints. When you score a hand, they measure its shape: melds, pair, wait, and how it won.

Furikomi (振り込み) — Discarding an opponent's winning tile, and paying for their hand.

Furiten (振聴) — Being in tenpai with a winning tile in your own river, or having let a winning tile go by: until your next turn, or until the hand ends if you're in riichi. It stops you winning by ron, not by tsumo.

Furu (振る) — To deal in. To feed someone's hand.

Fuutei (副底) — The 20 base fu every winning hand starts with.

G

Genbutsu (現物) — A tile a player has already discarded. Against that player it's 100% safe: they can't ron on it.

H

Haipai (配牌) — "Starting hand." The deal of tiles to every player at the start of a hand.

Haiteihai (海底牌) — The last tile that can be drawn from the wall. It means "bottom of the sea."

Hakoten (ハコテン) — Running out of points. On Tenhou and Mahjong Soul the game ends when a player drops below 0. See *tobi*.

Han (翻) — The unit that measures a hand's value. Each yaku and each dora adds han. Older texts say *fan*.

Hanchan (半荘) — A game of two rounds, East and South. The most common length in Japanese mahjong.

Harabote (腹ボテ) — A shanpon or tanki wait tucked inside a sequence. For example, 4-5-5-6 waiting on the 5. Also *nakabukure* (中膨れ).

Honba (本場) — A counter that goes up with every dealer repeat and every draw. Each honba adds 300 points to the next winner's payment. It's marked with 100-point sticks.

Houjuu (放銃) — Dealing in. The same as *furikomi*.

Houra (和了) — Winning a hand, as in *tsumohou* and *ronhou*. It also shows up in the names of some yaku, like *toitoihou* (対々和).

Houteihai (河底牌) — The last discard of a hand before an exhaustive draw. It means "bottom of the river." Winning on that tile is the yaku *houtei raoyui* (河底撈魚).

I

Iichan (一莊) — A game of four rounds: East, South, West, and North. More common in the Chinese variants.

Ikasama (イカサマ) — Cheating by sleight of hand.

Inchiki (インチキ) — Cheating in general. Online, that includes using bugs, hacks, or exploits.

Iro (色) — Suit. It means "color." In yaku names it shows up as *-shoku* or *-sou*: *sanshoku* (三色), *chinitzu* (清一色).

J

Jantou (雀頭) — The pair in a mahjong hand. Also *atama*.

Jigokumachi (地獄待ち) — "Hell wait." Waiting on a single tile when three copies are already on show.

Jihai (字牌) — The honor tiles: winds and dragons. The name means "character tiles," so don't confuse it with *manzu*, the characters suit.

Jikaze (自風) — Your seat wind.

Jun (巡) — One go-around of turns within a hand. For example, *hachi junme* (8巡目) is the eighth turn.

K

Kabe (壁) — "Wall." Counting the tiles on show, your own hand included, to rule out shapes an opponent can't hold. With all four 8s of a suit visible (*no chance*), nobody can hold a 7-8 or an 8-9 in that suit, so its 9 is safe from ryanmen waits. With three visible (*one chance*), it's only less likely.

Kamicha (上家) — The player on your left.

Kanchan (嵌張) — The middle wait, worth 2 fu: the center tile of a sequence is missing. For example, 7-9 waiting on the 8.

Kandora (槓ドラ) — An extra dora indicator turned over with each kan.

Kantsu (槓子) — A quad: a meld of four identical tiles. You have to declare it for it to count as a kan. Four identical tiles you haven't declared aren't one.

Karaten (カラ聴) — Empty tenpai: the hand waits on tiles that are all gone, because every copy is on show or in your own hand.

Kawa (河) — The river: each player's discards, in order, in front of them.

Kazehai (風牌) — The wind tiles.

Kazoe yakuman (数え役満) — A regular hand that adds up to 13 han or more and pays as a yakuman. That's the rule on Tenhou and Mahjong Soul. In M-League and under the EMA rules it pays as a sanbaiman.

Keishiki tenpai (形式聴牌) — Tenpai with no yaku. The hand can't win by ron, but it counts as tenpai in an exhaustive draw.

Kikenhai (危険牌) — Dangerous tiles: the ones likely to finish an opponent's hand.

Kiriage mangan (切り上げ満貫) — The rule that pays 4 han 30 fu and 3 han 60 fu as a mangan. M-League, the WRC rules, the EMA 2025 rules, and many parlors use it. Tenhou and Mahjong Soul don't.

Kiru (切る) — "To cut." To discard a tile.

Ko (子) — Any non-dealer. It means "child." The dealer is the *oya*.

Koutsu (刻子) — A triplet: a meld of three identical tiles. A rummy player would call it a set.

Kuikae (喰い替え) — Calling a tile and, on the same turn, discarding another tile that would have made the same meld. For example, calling chi on a 1 to make 1-2-3 and discarding the 4, or calling pon on an 8 and discarding the fourth 8. Tenhou, Mahjong Soul, M-League, WRC, and EMA all ban it.

Kuisagari (喰い下がり) — A property of some yaku: they're worth 1 han less when the hand is open.

Kuitan (喰いタン, 食いタン) — The rule that allows tanyao with an open hand. It's the standard rule.

Kyoku (局) — One hand, from the deal to a win or a draw. Hands are numbered East 1 to 4 and South 1 to 4. When the dealer repeats, the number stays and a honba is added: East 1, 1 honba.

Kyoutaku (供託) — The riichi sticks left on the table. The next winner takes them.

M

Machi (待ち) — The wait of a hand in tenpai. For example, ryanmen or kanchan.

Mangan (満貫) — The first scoring limit: 8,000 for a non-dealer, 12,000 for the dealer. After it come haneman (跳満), baiman (倍満), sanbaiman (三倍満), and yakuman (役満). See [limit hands](#).

Manzu (萬子) — The characters suit: a number in kanji on top and the character 萬, meaning 10,000, below.

Mawashiuchi (回し打ち) — Building your hand while steering clear of dangerous discards.

Mentsu (面子) — The melds: sequence (*shuntsu*), triplet (*koutsu*), and quad (*kantsu*). The pair isn't a mentsu.

Menzen (門前) — A fully closed hand, with no called melds.

Min (明) — "Bright, on show." Refers to tiles revealed by a call.

Minshun, **minkou**, and **minkan** (明順, 明刻, 明槓) — A sequence, triplet, and quad made with a call, in that order.

N

Naki (鳴き) — Calling a tile: pon, chi, or kan.

Nan (南) — South.

Nobetani (延べ単) — A double tanki wait. For example, 4-5-6-7 waiting on the 4 or the 7.

No chance (ノーチャンス) — All four copies of a tile are on show, so no ryanmen wait can use it. See *kabe*.

Noten (ノーテン, 不聴) — Not being in tenpai when a hand ends in an exhaustive draw.

Noten bappu (ノーテン罰符) — The payment at the end of an exhaustive draw. Players who aren't tenpai, or who choose not to show their hand, pay the players who show tenpai. It's 3,000 points in all.

Nukidora (抜きドラ) — A tile you set aside from your hand that counts as a dora. For example, North in sanma (Tenhou, Mahjong Soul), or flowers under some Japanese local rules.

O

Occult (オカルト) — The school of thought opposed to *digital*. It holds that results come down to streaks, *flow*, mahjong demons, and levels of luck.

Oka (オカ) — The prize for first place: the gap between the return and the starting points, times four players. With a 25,000 start and a 30,000 return, it's 20,000.

Okkake riichi (追っかけリーチ) — "Chasing riichi." Declaring riichi after another player has, instead of defending. Also *oikake*.

Okurikan (送り槓) — Making a closed kan from four tiles you already held, and keeping the tile you just drew. For example, with 3-3-3-3-4-5 you draw the 6 and declare a kan of 3s: you're left with 4-5-6. After riichi it's not allowed, because you can only kan with the tile you just drew.

One chance (ワンチャンス) — Three copies of a tile are on show. A wait that runs through it is less likely, but not impossible. See *kabe*.

Oorasu (オーラス) — "All last." The last hand of the game: South 4 in a hanchan.

Otakaze (オタ風, 客風牌) — The winds that give no han: neither your seat wind nor the round wind. For example, if you're South in the East round, your otakaze are West and North.

Oya (親) — The dealer. It means "parent." The other three players are *ko*, "children."

P

Pao (包) — Payment liability. If you feed the tile that completes another player's daisangen or daisu-ushii, you pay for that hand: all of a tsumo, or half of a ron. In M-League and WRC it also covers suukantsu. Also *sekinin barai* (責任払い).

Pei (北) — North.

Penchan (辺張) — The edge wait. For example, 8-9 waiting on the 7, or 1-2 waiting on the 3.

Pinzu (筒子) — The circles suit.

Pon (ポン) — The call that makes a triplet, a *minkou*, from any player's discard.

R

Renchan (連荘) — The dealer keeps the seat, because they won or were tenpai in an exhaustive draw.

Riichi (立直, リーチ) — Declaring that your closed hand is in tenpai. You put a 1,000-point stick on the table and can no longer change your hand. It's also a 1 han yaku.

Riipai (理牌) — Sorting the tiles in your hand. Also *riihai*.

Rinshanpai (嶺上牌) — The replacement tile you draw from the dead wall when you declare a kan.

Ron (ロン, 榮和) — Winning on an opponent's discard.

Routouhai (老頭牌) — The terminals: the 1s and 9s of each suit.

Ryankan (両嵌) — Two kanchan shapes in a row. For example, 3-5-7, which the 4 or the 6 completes.

Ryanmen (両面) — The two-sided wait to complete a sequence. For example, 5-6 waiting on the 4 or the 7.

Ryuukyoku (流局) — An exhaustive draw: the wall runs out and nobody has won. It also covers abortive draws, *tochuu ryuukyoku*.

S

Saikoro (骰子, サイコロ) — The dice.

Sakizuke (先付け) — The opposite of *atozuke*: your yaku has to be locked into your hand, not depend on the winning tile. Some rules require it.

Sangenpai (三元牌) — The dragons: *haku* (white), *hatsu* (green), and *chun* (red). The name means "the three principles." Outside Japan they go by their colors.

Sanma (三麻) — Three-player mahjong (三人麻雀).

Sashikomi (差し込み) — Deliberately discarding an opponent's winning tile.

Shaa (西) — West.

Shabo (シャボ) — Short for shanpon.

Shanpon (双碰) — The wait on two pairs, each waiting to become a triplet.

Shanten (向聴) — How many tiles your hand is from tenpai: *iishanten*, *ryanshanten*, and *sanshanten* are one, two, and three.

Shibori (絞り) — "Squeezing." Holding back tiles an opponent would like to call.

Shimocha (下家) — The player on your right.

Shonpai (生牌) — A "live" tile that nobody has discarded yet.

Shuntsu (順子) — A sequence: a meld of three consecutive tiles in the same suit. A rummy player would call it a run.

Shuupai or **suupai** (数牌) — The number tiles.

Souzu (索子) — The bamboo suit.

Suji (筋) — "Line." Tiles three apart that share ryanmen waits: 1-4-7, 2-5-8, and 3-6-9. It's the basis of many river-reading techniques.

Suteru (捨てる) — To discard a tile.

T

Taatsu (搭子) — A partial shape: two tiles that need one more to make a sequence. For example, 4-6 is completed by the 5. In the broad sense, a pair too.

Tanki (単騎) — The wait on a single tile to complete the pair.

Tanpin (タンピン) — Tanyao with pinfu. Add riichi and it's *mentanpin* (メンタンピン).

Tedashi (手出し) — Discarding a tile from your hand, not the one you just drew. The opposite of *tsumogiri*.

Tenbou (点棒) — The point sticks.

Tenpai (聴牌) — A hand that needs only one tile to win.

Tobi (飛び, トビ) — Dropping below 0 points. On Tenhou and Mahjong Soul the game ends right there. Also *dobon* (ドボン).

Tochuu ryuukyoku (途中流局) — An abortive draw: the hand is called off before the wall runs out. For example, when a player shows nine different terminals and honors in their starting hand.

Toimen (対面) — The player across from you.

Toitsu (対子) — A pair of identical tiles.

Ton (東) — East.

Tonpuusen (東風戦) — A game of the East round only.

Tsumo (自摸) — Drawing a tile from the wall. You announce it when you win that way, but the word covers any drawn tile as well as a win by tsumo.

Tsumogiri (ツモ切り) — Discarding the same tile you just drew.

U

Ukipai (浮き牌) — Loose or isolated tiles in a hand.

Uma (ウマ) — The placement bonus at the end of the game. For example, +20, +10, -10, and -20 from first to last.

Ura dora (裏ドラ) — When you win with riichi, you turn over the tile under each dora indicator, the kan ones included. Each one works as another indicator.

W

Wanpai (王牌) — The dead wall. Literally, "the king's tiles." It's the part of the wall nobody draws from, apart from kan replacements, and it holds the dora indicators. It always has 14 tiles, so some tiles never come into play.

Wareme (割れ目) — A rule where the player whose wall is broken pays and collects double for that hand, except for noten bappu payments.

Y

Yakitori (焼き鳥) — A player who hasn't won a single hand all game, or the rule that penalizes it.

Yaku (役) — A pattern in the hand that gives han. A hand needs at least one yaku to win. Dora aren't yaku.

Yakunashi (役なし) — A complete hand with no yaku. It can't win. With a closed hand you can still get a yaku by declaring riichi or winning by tsumo.

Yama (山) — The wall. It means "mountain." That's why the kan replacement tile sits "on the peak" (嶺上 *rinshan*), the last tile of the wall is the "bottom of the sea" (海底 *haitei*), and the last discard is the "bottom of the river" (河底 *houtei*).

Yamiten (闇テン) — Hidden tenpai: tenpai with a closed hand, without declaring riichi. Also *damaten*.

Yaochuuhai (么九牌) — The terminals (*routouhai*) plus the honors (*jihai*).

Z

Zentsuppa (全ツツパ) — Attacking at all costs, whatever the risk of dealing in. Also *zentsu* (全ツ).

CLOSING

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Nicolas Pro, Osaka, 2026

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