

# Mah-Jongg

\*Stuart Baggaley's Modified and Simplified Version of the Chinese Game (2012-handouts)

This is Nancy Howard's interpretation with added illustrations (updated April 2023)

Note: Stuart was the "Johnny Appleseed of Mah-jongg" in and around Washtenaw County.

He taught this version for many years and we are grateful for his efforts.

The set consists of 144 tiles, which are:

| Name of Tile                             | Amount in Set |
|--|---------------|
| <b>"Suits"</b> (numbered 1-9, 4 of each) |               |
| <b>Cakes</b> (AKA dots or circles)       | 36            |
| <b>Sticks</b> (a AKA bamboos or bams)    | 36            |
| The "1" Stick tile has a bird on it      |               |
| <b>Wans</b> (AKA characters or cracks)   | 36            |



|                 |  |     |
|-----------------|--|-----|
| <b>Dragons:</b> | Fa (green)   | 4   |
|                 | Bai (white)  | 4   |
|                 | Center (red)                                       | 4   |
| <b>Winds:</b>   | East   | 4   |
|                 | North  | 4   |
|                 | West   | 4   |
| <b>Flowers:</b> | South  | 4   |
|                 | AKA Bonus<br>Some set have<br>Jokers or<br>Seasons | 8   |
|                 | Total # of Tiles                                   | 144 |



Also - a pair of dice & paper for scoring.

Four players. Can play with 3, but still need 4 walls built: Can play with 5, rotating out "East".

## Twittering – Shuffling the Tiles

All tiles are placed face down and moved around by the players. This is called "the twittering of sparrows." Each player then builds a wall of 18 tiles (long side touching) in length, 2 tiles high.

To determine which player starts as East, each player rolls the dice and the highest number will be East for this round. East rolls the dice and counts (starting with themselves) COUNTER CLOCKWISE the number thrown. The wall will be broken by this player, who rolls the dice again and adds the total to the number rolled by East. The sum of the rolls is counted off, right to left, of the wall in front of the 2<sup>nd</sup> roller. The wall is split apart and the portion to (the player's) right of the

break is the tail. The top end tile of that side is placed on top of its adjacent tile to identify this as the TAIL. The wall to the left of the break is the HEAD. Tiles are now dealt (by the person sitting behind this part of the wall) as follows: 2 stacks (4 tiles) to East, continuing COUNTER CLOCKWISE until each player has 12 tiles. East is then given 2 tiles and the other players get 1 more tile. East will have 14 tiles, the other players will have 13. The HEAD of the wall is then angled so that the head is in the center of the table. As the wall is diminished, tiles are moved, maintaining order, to keep the drawing-end of the wall in the center to facilitate play.

Flowers (or bonus tiles) are revealed and replacement tiles are distributed from the TAIL, starting with East (if they have any) then in order COUNTER CLOCKWISE. If additional Flowers are drawn, replacement tiles are distributed. The player sitting behind the TAIL of the wall should take charge of distribution and keeping the next tile on top of the wall.

Play now begins with East, who discards 1 tile. Each player should clearly announce their discarded tile. Players are encouraged to form a line of their discards in front of them as a courtesy to other players.

**Claiming a discarded tile** must be done before the next player draws a tile.

MAH-JONGG: Any player may claim a discarded tile if it completes Mah-jongg.

KONG: If another player has 3 of the same tile in their hand, they may claim the tile. They must display the Kong and take a replacement tile.

PUNG: (spelled peng) If another player has 2 of the same tile in their hand, they may claim the tile.

CHOW: If the player to the right of the discarded tile can complete a run of 3 (same suit), they can claim the tile. Chows may only be called from the player to their left.

If more than one player can claim the tile, priority follows the order above – Mah-jongg, Kong, Pung, Chow. Only one player can claim a tile EXCEPT when 2 players complete Mah-jongg with the claimed tile.

The Pung, Kong or Chow must be placed face up to the player's right (or on the front of their rack, if using); the player discards a tile and play resumes counter clockwise from that point.

If no one claims the discarded tile, the next person draws a tile from the head of the wall, top tile first, bottom tile next.

The player decides whether to keep the tile or discard it. If they keep it, they must discard another tile from their hand, announcing it clearly and placing it face up in front of them. (Stuart advises students to line up discards to make it easier for all to see what's been discarded previously). If not claimed, discards are "dead" and cannot be claimed retroactively.

### **Replacement Tiles**

If a player draws a flower from the wall, they place it face up to their right (or on rack) and are given a replacement tile.

If a player completes a Kong, they are given a replacement tile. An open Kong occurs when a player claims the 4<sup>th</sup> tile from another player or when they have an exposed Pung and draw the 4<sup>th</sup> tile from the wall. These Kongs are displayed face up on the player's right or on the rack. A closed Kong

is when the player completes a Kong either from the deal or when they draw the tile(s) from the wall. The player announces the closed Kong, places the 4 tiles face down (right or rack) and is given a replacement tile.

### Mah-jongg and Special Combinations

A round or hand ends when a player (or players) achieve Mah-jongg. Most Mah-jonggs consist of 4 sets of 3 and a pair.

The sets can be Kongs, Pungs and/or Chows. There is no discard when Mah-jongg is called.

An **Orphan** contains no two tiles alike and at least 2 between tiles of the same suit. Except for the final tile, the player must either be dealt or draw the tiles from the wall.

**7 Pairs** is exactly that and like the Orphan, except for the final tile, the player must either be dealt or draw the tiles from the wall.

**4 Kongs** – exactly that, plus a pair.

## SCORING

| Mah-Jongg Scoring<br>Stuart Baggaley Rules, NH updates April 2023 |          |
|---|----------|
| Categories  | Score    |
| Chow (sequence of three in the same suit)                         | 2        |
| Pair of Dragons   | 2        |
| Pair of Own Wind  | 2        |
| Peng (three of a kind)  | 4        |
| Flowers   | 4        |
| Kong - <b>Open</b>  | 16       |
| Mixed Dragon (1-9 mixed suits)                                    | 16       |
| Four Chows  | 16       |
| Four Pengs  | 32       |
| Kong - <b>Closed</b>  | 32       |
| Pure Dragon (1-9 same suit)                                       | 32       |
| Bouquet (set of four flowers)                                     | 32       |
| Orphan (disconnected tiles)                                       | 40       |
| Seven Pairs   | 60       |
| Four Kongs  | 300      |
| Lesser Heavenly Blessing (very rare)                              | 500      |
| Heavenly Blessing (very, very rare)                               | 1000     |
| <b>Mah-Jongg</b>  | 20       |
| <b>Self-Drawn Mah-Jongg</b>                                       | 40       |
| Mah-Jongg from Flower replacement                                 | extra 10 |
| Mah-Jongg from Kong replacement                                   | extra 20 |

| Special Combinations  |
|---|
| <b>Mixed Dragon</b> = 123, 456 & 789 groupings, with each group being one suit.<br>Examples: 123 wan, 456 cakes, 789 sticks;<br>123 cakes, 456 wan, 789 cakes.  |
| <b>Multiple Dragons</b> . It is possible to have more than one Dragon by having an additional grouping of 123 or 456 or 789 of one suit.  |
| <b>Orphan Examples</b> (14 tiles)<br>N,S,E,W, Red, 1-4-7 wan, 2-5-9 cakes, 3-6-9 sticks<br>N,S,W,E, Bai, Fa, 2-5-8 wan, 1-4 cake, 2-5-8 sticks<br>Suits - must be at least 2 between numbers.<br>All except final tile (Mah-jongg) must be drawn. |
| <b>Heavenly Blessing</b> is when East is dealt a Mah-Jongg; extra points for flower or kong replacements.   |
| <b>Lesser Heavenly Blessing</b> is when a player other than East Mah-Jonggs on the 1st round; extra points for flower or kong replacements.   |
| <b>Simple Scoring (Used at Turner)</b> – Add 20 points for a Mah-Jongg called from a discard; add 40 points when the tile is self-drawn.  |

These are the rules and scoring used at Turner Senior Resource Center.

## **Mah-Jongg Etiquette**

Etiquette in Mah-Jongg is employed for the following reasons:

1. Make all players feel comfortable
2. Help newer players learn the game
3. Promote fairness in play

These are not rules of play, but Stuart taught and emphasized using the following:

The first roll of the dice is to determine who is East first. It is not counted as the first roll as the game starts.

Players should leave distributed tiles undisturbed until the deal is complete. This helps the dealer know that everyone has the correct number of tiles.

While players can announce they have flowers as they look at their tiles, no replacements should be awarded until all players have seen their tiles. East gets replacements first, then the others in counter-clockwise order.

The timing of play may be different when players have challenges in dexterity, hearing, etc.

When discarding a tile, the player should announce the tile clearly. Discarded tiles should be set out in a line in front of the player.

After a tile is discarded, the next player should pause sufficiently to allow others to call up the tile.

All players should pay attention to the discards and claim tiles in a timely manner. If the next player has already taken a tile from the wall, it is too late to claim the discarded tile.

Players should tally their own scores after each hand and provide them to the scorekeeper in turn. It is a good idea to leave your "hand" in place until the scorekeeper acknowledges the correct score.