

Rules not in Mah Jongg Made Easy 2024

Last Update: 09/22/2024

Mah Jongg Made Easy (MJME 2024) is the official guide booklet written by the National Mah Jongg League (NMJL). Between each publication, the league receives inquiries from players that describe complex scenarios and some of the replies from the league include new rulings or clarifications of existing rules. The following are rules from the league that are not in the current edition.

Preliminaries

Omissions

All tiles must be turned face down and thoroughly mixed before the game starts (MJME 2020 page 18 #1).

No looking ahead. Players are not permitted to pick the fourteenth tile from the wall before the player to the left discards a tile (MJME 2020 page 18 #2).

During play, after East's wall has been depleted, the player to the left pushes out their wall. Picking from the Walls goes to the left. PLAY TO THE RIGHT, PICK FROM THE LEFT (MJME 2020 page 11).

The Charleston

CHARLESTON UNDERWAY AND MUST BE COMPLETED (Article 193)

Any player may stop the Charleston after the first three compulsory passes without giving a reason for doing so. In this case, courtesy pass is permitted. Once the second Charleston has been started then it must be completed with the last pass to the right. Courtesy pass of one, two or three tiles is agreed upon by the opposite players. Blind pass, see back of the score card, last paragraph (NMJL Bulletin (2000).

The Play

EAST'S FIRST DISCARD IS A JOKER (Article 35)

[When East's first discard is a joker, they] may only name it "joker." (NMJL Bulletin 2003).

BEGINNING OF A PLAYER'S TURN (Article 153)

One might think that a player's turn begins when the previous player discards a tile, but that is not the case. The reason for this is that turns can be interrupted when another player claims the discard to make an exposure. A player's turn begins one of two ways: 1) they pick a tile from the wall and use it to request a joker exchange, or



they place it in the sloped part of their rack, or 2) they claim a discard and place it on the flat part of their rack, or they expose tiles from the sloped part of their rack. The window of opportunity on the previous discard can close if a player picks a tile from a wall and requests a joker exchange without racking (back of the NMJL card, panel 1).

HAND LIMITATIONS AND FLEXIBILITY (Article 65)

[Like kongs] must be played with matching numbers. They must be 1's, 2's or 8's in the 2018 hand and must be 3's, 6's or 9's in the 369 hand. (NMJL FAQ 2019).

DISCARDED TILE BEFORE A PICK CAN NOT BE CALLED (Article 9)

You may not call a discarded tile that was thrown before a tile was picked (NMJL Bulletin 2022).

DISCARDS CANNOT BE CALLED TO COMPLETE A PAIR (Article 125)

A player cannot claim a tile to expose a pair unless it is the final tile needed to complete Mah Jongg (MJME 2020).

INTERRUPTED PICK GOES BACK IN ITS SPOT (Article 59)

You cannot place a tile in another/arbitrary position in the wall. You must keep the tile in the position it came from even if that tile has been seen by other players (NMJL Bulletin 2021).

SIMULTANEOUS CALL AND PICK-RACK (Article 91)

When there is a simultaneous rack and call, the tile goes to the player who called the tile (NMJL 2020).

COMMITMENT TO A JOKER EXCHANGE (Article 19)

Once you make an exchange, you have already made your play and made a commitment (NMJL Bulletin Q&A (2015).

COMMITMENT TO CLAIMING A DISCARD WITHOUT RACKING OR EXPOSING TILES (Article 21)

A player may change their mind about calling for a discarded tile as long as it is not placed completely on top of their rack. The tile is returned to the table and the player may then pick the next tile from the appropriate wall. (NMJL 2024 page 31 partially; NMJL bulletin 2024)



EXPOSURE COMPLETED WITH ANOTHER EXPOSURE MADE BY MISTAKE (Article 7)

The player in question, after properly calling and exposing the 2 Bams, may expose other tiles as well, as long as the player has not yet discarded. This really hurts no one but the caller, as it now becomes apparent which hand is being played. As long as mah jongg was not called, this player may return the second erroneous exposure to their hand and discard it normally (NMJL Bulletin 2022).

NEXT PLAYER AFTER PLAYER PICKED OUT OF TURN (Article 209)

The right of the disqualified player. This is not explicitly written in the rules about mah jongg in error. However, the league says the game “continues” (i.e., advance, progress, carry on, go on), which means “to resume after interruption.”

In summary, when an infraction results in a disqualification, the game continues with the player to the right of the disqualified player (01/2024 phone call to the league).

NAMING A REPEAT DISCARD (Article 242)

When a player discards the same tile as the previous player, they can name the discard normally or say “same.”

Using Jokers

JOKER EXCHANGE WHEN PLAYING CONCEALED (Article 77)

Playing a concealed hand does not negate doing a joker exchange. You are only prevented from calling a discard when playing a concealed hand unless the tile is for mahjongg (NMJL 2020).

MAKING AN EXPOSURE THEN EXCHANGING A JOKER (Article 17)

Usually a player may add or subtract from an exposure before they discard a tile. However, you may not make a change to an exposure if you have exchanged a joker before discarding. Explanation: A player has made an exposure of 2 tiles and a joker (pung). She has another joker in her hand. After she exposes, she does a joker exchange. She then wants to add the joker she already has in her hand to her exposure to make a kong. She is not allowed to change her exposure because a new action has taken place after the exposure and before discarding (NMJL letter to a player 2019).



Penalties

PENALTY FOR USING THE WRONG DISCARD FOR AN EXPOSURE (Article 90)

The hand is dead. It is up to each individual player to pick up the correct discarded tile when making their exposure. You are responsible for your own exposure (NMJL Bulletin 2012).

After Mah Jongg Has Been Declared

TWO PLAYERS DECLARE MAH JONGG, ONE WITH A PICK FROM THE WALL AND ONE FOR THE LAST DISCARD (Article 223)

When a player picks a tile from the wall and declares mah jongg upon seeing the tile, the game ends even if another player declares mah jongg on the previous discard (call-in by a player 12/20/2023).

ARRANGING A DECLARED MAH JONGG (Article 8)

You are allowed to rearrange your exposed 14 tiles in order to display a correct mah jongg.” NMJL Bulletin Q&A (2019)

MAH JONGG IN ERROR FOR TWO PLAYERS AND ANOTHER TOSSED IN THEIR HAND (Article 56)

The first player already had their penalty by not being able to continue to play. Therefore, the second player who declared mah jongg in error would pay the remaining player double the value of the incorrect hand (NMJL Bulletin 2006; back of the card, Mah Jongg in Error #3).

NEXT PLAYER AFTER MAH JONGG IN ERROR (Article 216)

When a player declares Mah Jongg in error and exposes the hand, the hand is declared a “Dead” Hand. The disqualified player discontinues picking and discarding. The other players continue to play (MJME 2024 page 21 partially; letter from the league 12/09/2023).

PLAYING WITH A PIE AKA PY (Article 145)

PY Game: unfair especially to the winner in the first part of the game after one or more players are “PY”. This winner can be the final loser as she is not being paid by all players and will have to pay if and when the “PY” players start to make a comeback. Our suggestion to eliminate UNFAIR PY GAMES – START WITH EXTRA CHIPS and SETTLE FOR YOUR USUAL STAKES! (NMJL Bulletin 1967)



Omissions

Disqualification

If a player discards a tile that was claimed for Mah Jongg, but went out of turn, the game stops. The discarder pays 4x's the value of the hand to the winner. If claimed for an exposure the call is honored and the game continues (MJME 2020 page 21 #16).

If a player calls Mah Jongg in error and exposes part or all of the hand and all other hands are intact, the game continues but the declarer's hand is "dead," and all tiles are returned to the rack. The same penalty applies for calling a discard and making an incorrect exposure (MJME 3020 page 16 #3[a] first sentence included for context).

If an incorrect exposure is made, the hand may be declared "dead" by any of the other three players. Bettor must remain silent. If the exposure goes unnoticed, the erring player should not announce it and continues to play. Of course, Mah Jongg cannot be made (MJME page 20 #14).

Variations

BETTOR FORGOT TO BET (Article 139)

If Bettor neglects to bet, the Bettor must pay the winner, as the privilege of a winning bet is lost (NMJL Bulletin Q&A 1987).

Omissions

Bettor should not make any correction until Mah Jongg has been declared, verified, and paid by all players. (MJME 2020 page 25).

Dig Deeper: HOPTOI'S RELEASE NOTES FOR MMJME 2024 (Article 226).

