

Vitaly Novikov

"Sichuan Mahjong? It's that simple!"



Contents

[Introduction](#)

[Chapter 1. Sichuan mahjong game mechanics](#)

[Lesson 1. How to play mahjong?](#)

[Lesson 2. Starting the deal](#)

[Lesson 3. Hand and its components](#)

[Lesson 4. Game mechanics](#)

[Chapter 2. Scoring](#)

[Lesson 5. General rules](#)

[Lesson 6. Scoring examples](#)

[Chapter 3. Hand building strategy](#)

[Lesson 7. General considerations](#)

[Lesson 8. Hand building](#)


[Chapter 4. Supplementary materials](#)

[Answers to problems and tests](#)

[Appendix](#)



Introduction

To big  and red  pandas

From Wikipedia

The Giant Panda, with its typical black and white coloration, lives in a few mountain ranges in central China, mainly in the Sichuan province, located in south-central China. The main attraction of the province in terms of eco-tourism is the Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding near Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan.

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Welcome to Mahjong World

Dear reader! We invite you to plunge into the wonderful world of mahjong: intellectual board games that millions of fans around the world enjoy playing. Mahjong develops logic, memory, observation, ability to react and make decisions. In the world mahjong is played by dozens of variations of rules including countless purely local ones. However, if we talk about the rules which major international competitions are played by, those are just a few: Mahjong Competition Rules (MCR), Riichi (several variations), Sichuan Bloody (SBR), Zung Jung (ZJ) and American Mahjong (NMJL).

Mahjong International League (MIL)



Mahjong International League (MIL, <http://mahjong-mil.org/>) was founded in 2015. In April 2017, through the efforts of the MIL mahjong was recognized as the sixth intellectual sport along with chess, checkers, go, bridge sports and xiangqi (Chinese chess), and the League itself was admitted to the International Mind Sports Association (IMSA, <http://www.imsaworld.com/wp/>). MIL's primary goal is to consolidate national mahjong federations all over five continents. It develops two main aspects: improving the competition format, especially in the form of so-called "duplicate" mahjong, and supporting local variations of mahjong rules, for example, Sichuan Mahjong (SBR).

Sichuan mahjong

Sichuan mahjong is the most popular mahjong style in China amongst many-many others. The rules of Sichuan mahjong are simple, there are no more than a dozen of valuable combinations. Nevertheless, Sichuan mahjong has some unique features, distinguishing it from the other styles: the deal continues to the bitter end. That is why it is sometimes called "Sichuan Bloody Rules" (SBR), and in Chinese: "血战 到底" ("xue zhan dao di"), "bloody battle to the end." After the first "Hu" declaration, the gameplay does not stop, three players continue to play until the next "Hu", and so forth. The gameplay stops only when 3 "Hu" are declared or there are no tiles in the wall.

The continuation of the gameplay after the first "Hu" declaration radically changes the approach to playing a hand. It will not be possible to take a wait-and-see position, making neutral moves, the player must immediately choose one of two ways: either 1) build the quickest hand and leave the game as early as possible, having gained or lost a small amount of points, or 2) on the contrary, continue the game, build the most expensive hand and get points for it from the players remaining in the game.

Sichuan mahjong is just beginning to spread across the globe. The SBR tournaments were held only in Russia and Canada (see "Geography of Sichuan Mahjong" in the "Appendix"), not speaking, of course, about China, the ancestor of this mahjong style.

How this book is arranged

Dear Reader! You are holding the Sichuan mahjong textbook "Sichuan Mahjong? It's that simple!" This book will help you to learn how to play Sichuan mahjong in a club or at home, as well as participate in tournaments. The author recommends finding a play set and three more players before reading the book. In the absence of players, some game practice can be obtained via playing online or using applications for smartphones (see the chapter "Where to play mahjong" in the "Appendix").

The book contains the rules of Sichuan mahjong and some theories, the educational material is divided into lessons. Typical chapter begins with the table of contents, terms definitions, followed by several lessons. At the end of Chapter multiple choice tests and problems can be found in the section "Test yourself" followed by the list of tables, figures, photos used in the chapter.

Presentation

The book follows some conventions for the material presentation.

Terms definitions will be marked as follows:

⇒ **Hand** is tiles belonging to one of the players.

As a rule, term definitions used in the lesson, will be given in the beginning of this lesson.

Tiles of the hand claimed from discard the other players will be rotated, for instance, .

Links to the headings or definitions are shown traditionally, for instance: [Types of kongs](#).

For simplicity, except in stand-alone cases, the quotation marks in terms (including "face up" and "face down" to indicate tile rotation) will be omitted. "Hu" will be used in both single and plural forms.

Links to Internet sources will be given without the initial "http(s)://", for instance: www.mahjong.ru/.

Chapter 1. Sichuan mahjong game mechanics

Contents

[Lesson 1. How to play mahjong?](#)

[Game objective](#)

[Mahjong playing set](#)

[Sichuan mahjong tiles](#)

[Lesson 2. Starting the deal](#)

[Playing space](#)

[Building a wall and distributing tiles](#)

[Forbidden suit](#)

[Lesson 3. Hand and its components](#)

[Hand structure](#)

[Sets](#)

[Declarations](#)

[Kongs](#)

[Lesson 4. Game mechanics](#)

[Playing the deal](#)

[The initial East's turn](#)

[Moves](#)

[Discard claim](#)

[When the wall ends](#)

[Declaring "Hu"](#)

[Starting new deal](#)

[Test yourself](#)

[Test](#)

[Problem](#)

[List of tables, figures, photos of Chapter 1](#)

Lesson 1. How to play mahjong?



Let's start with some definitions of terms. A complete list of definitions of terms can be found in the section of the same name at the beginning of the "Appendix" chapter.

⇒ **Mahjong** is an intellectual board game of Asian origin for four players. The goal of the game is to build a complete hand ("mahjong") having valuable combination(s).

⇒ **Deal** (hand) is everything that occurs between an initial distributing of tiles and either declaring "Hu" (winning) by three players or taking all the tiles from the wall.

⇒ **"Hu"** (Chin. 和 or 胡) is a word for declaring mahjong (winning).

⇒ **Hand** is tiles belonging to one of the players.

⇒ **Pattern** is decorated in a unified manner tile, for instance,  or .

Note: Tile “pattern” can alternatively be defined as “unique tile face”.

Game objective

Mahjong is a board game for four players. The game objective is to score more points than other players. In every deal, the player's main occupation is building a hand with valuable features. The more features, the more difficult to build the hand, the more points it is worth. On the other hand, the opponents are not asleep and also build their hands. When your opponent wins, you can lose points, and the more “fancy” the opponent's hand is, the more points will be lost. Thus, the player's primary goal is to get points for own hand and, if possible, not to lose points from the hands of opponents.

Mahjong playing set



Mahjong is played by tiles in the shape of a parallelepiped, somewhat similar to domino tiles, but slightly thicker. Typical sizes of tiles that are played at tournaments or at home are 36x26x16 mm or 1-2 mm larger. Such proportions allow you to comfortably manipulate tiles: building a wall, lining up the tiles of the player's hand, flipping several tiles at the same time, etc. In general, you can find mahjong sets with different tile heights: from 18 to 60 mm.

Depending on the rules, the playing set may have a different number of tiles: 108, 112, 120, 136, 144, 152, etc. As a rule, the main part of the set is tiles of three suits, “Bamboo”, “Dots”, “Characters”, honour tiles “Winds” and “Dragons”, and there are four copies of each pattern. In addition, the set may contain other tiles, “Flowers” and “Seasons”, as well as various accessories: cubes, counting sticks, wind indicators, etc.


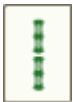


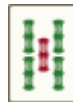
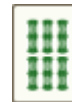





















Sichuan mahjong tiles

Sichuan Mahjong playing set includes 108 tiles, 27 tiles of 4 copies each

- suit “Bamboo”: 36 tiles, 9 patterns (from 1 till 9)
- suit “Dots”: 36 tiles, 9 patterns (from 1 till 9)
- suit “Characters”: 36 tiles, 9 patterns (from 1 till 9)

In addition, the playing set has two six-sided dice and 2-4 sets of card-indicators (see below in paragraph “Forbidden suit”), denoting each of three suits. It is good to have three cards numbering “Hu”, that is “Hu #1”, “Hu #2” and “Hu #3” cards.

Table 1. Tile patterns

Suit	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Bamboo									
Dots									
Characters									

Note: Tile "Bamboo 1" is usually depicted in a form of bird.

Each of the twenty-seven tiles patterns thus has two dimensions: belonging to the suit and the number. For instance, "Bamboo-4" or B4 in simplified notation.

Lesson 2. Starting the deal

⇒ **Wall** is mahjong tiles, built in the form of a square. Also, that part of the wall that is directly in front of the player in his play area is called the "wall" of the corresponding player.

⇒ **Wall break** is an imaginary plane between adjacent stacks (of two tiles high) of the wall. All the tiles in the deal are taken from wall break in a clockwise direction.

Note: Wall break is denoted on practice mechanically by separating two adjacent stacks of tiles from each other.

⇒ **Forbidden suit** is the suit that must be absent in the player's hand when declaring mahjong.

⇒ **Indent** is the number of stacks of tiles of the player's wall before the break.

⇒ **"Standing" tiles** are player's tiles outside of melded sets.

The process of playing any deal can be divided into the following stages

- preparing wall: mixing of the tiles, building and breaking the wall, distributing the tiles
- the choice by the players of a prohibited suit
- the initial East's turn
- the choice by the players of a prohibited suit
- deal finishing: three "Hu" declared or tiles in the wall ended
- scoring

Playing space

For a comfortable play a square table is required with dimensions corresponding to the size of the tiles. The whole playing space is divided into several zones, each zone consists of four parts corresponding to each of four players (see figure below).

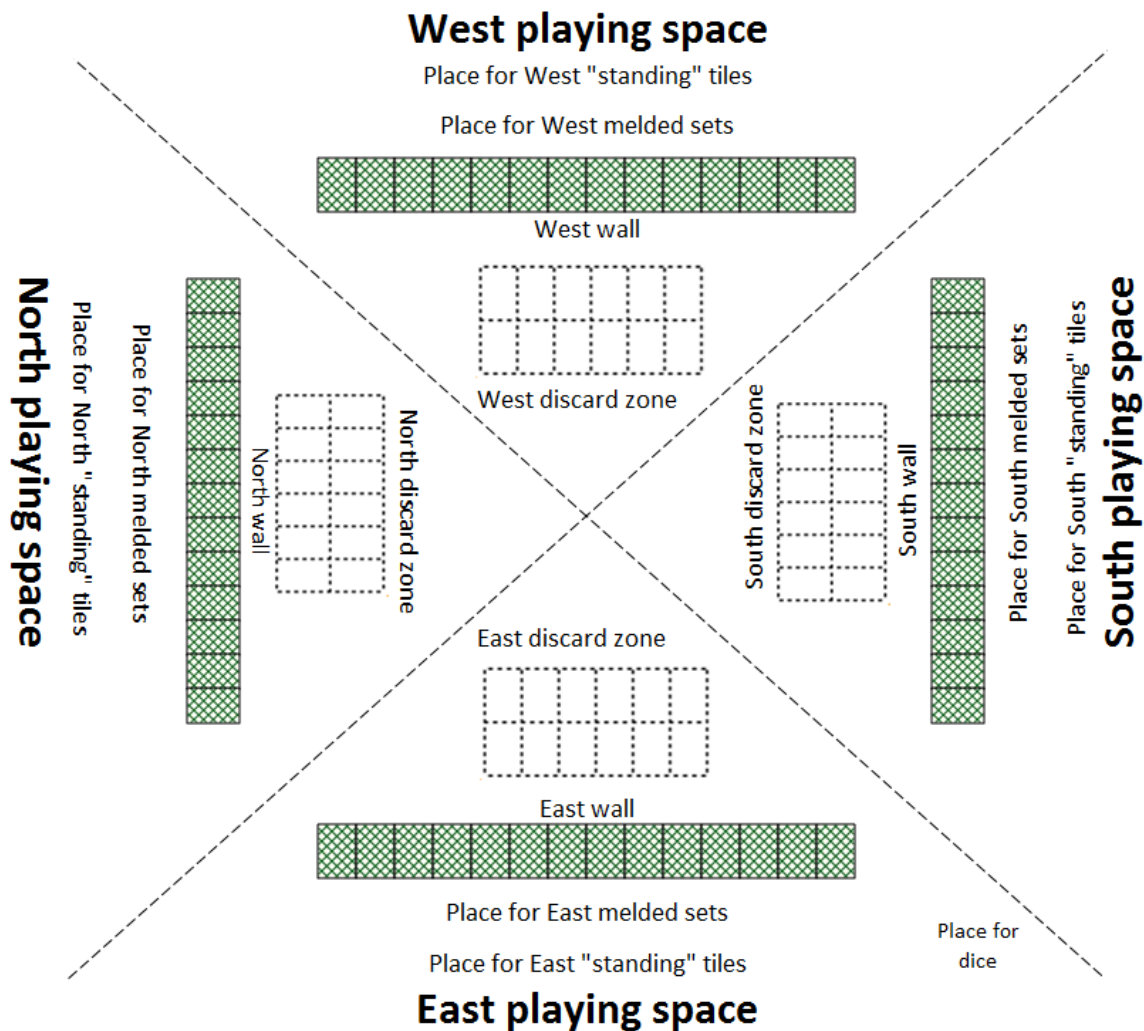


Figure 2. Sichuan mahjong playing space

Each player (who are called as Winds: East, South, West and North) conventionally uses a triangular space bounded by large diagonals and the edge of the table on the player's side. Tiles placed in a square with thirteen or fourteen tiles on sides and two tiles high are called a "**wall**". East (dealer) has two dice on the right. The area inside the square bounded by the wall is called the "discard zone", where the player discards the played tiles face up in rows of six tiles from left to right (in the figure, places for the discarded tiles are conventionally indicated by a dotted line). During the game, the tiles outside melded sets ("standing" tiles) are placed directly in front of the player and in front of the wall line. The melded sets are laid by the player in front of him / her between the "standing" tiles and the player's wall. East (the player who starts the deal) also places two six-sided dice on the right immediately after two throws and before dealing of tiles.

It should be noted that arrangement of Winds at the table **does not match** the compass, two opposite sides are reversed. Everything falls into place, if you raise your eyes and look at the sky. Winds in mahjong located on the sides of the **heavenly**, not earthly compass!

Building a wall and distributing tiles

Before the deal starts, the tiles are turned face down and shuffled thoroughly, and then lined up in a square two tiles high and fourteen tiles wide for East and West and thirteen tiles wide for South and North.

Note: The wall should be built at a sufficient distance from the edge of the table to allow room for the player's "standing" tiles and sets.

To determine the starting point from which tiles will be distributed from the wall, the dealer (East) rolls two dice in the center of the table. The resulting value of the **sum** of points indicates the player whose wall will be dismantled first. This value is counted **counterclockwise** (if looked from the center of the table) starting from East counting **players**, starting from East: "1" means East, "2" means South, "3" means West, etc. Thus, it appears that resulting values of 5 or 9 indicate East as the second player to throw dice, 2, 6 or 10 indicate South, 3, 7 or 11 indicate West, and 4, 8 or 12 indicate North. The **minimum value** of points at two dice ("indent") is counted **clockwise** (if looked from the center of the table) from the **right** end of the wall to be dismantled, defining the tiles stack, **after** which the wall break should be made.

Example 1: East rolls $6+4=10$, which means the player is South, indent equals 4.

Example 2: East rolls $2+2=4$, which means the player is North, indent equals 2.

Example 3: East rolls $5+4=9$, which means the player is East, indent equals 4.

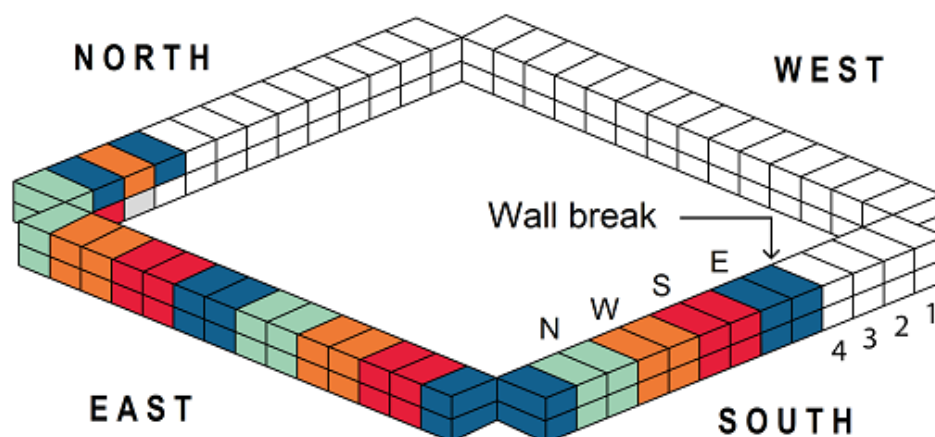


Figure 3. Tiles distribution after breaking the wall

After determining wall break tiles distribution starts: ultimately East should have 14 tiles while all other players should have 13 tiles. Players starting from East and going **counterclockwise** (E → S → W → N) receive four tiles three times (two stacks), with tiles taken from the wall in a **clockwise** direction. East takes the thirteenth and fourteenth tiles from the top of the first and third stacks, counting clockwise from the current wall break, after which South takes the bottom tile of the extreme stack, West takes the top tile of the new extreme stack, North takes the bottom tile of the extreme stack.

In the figure "Tiles distribution after breaking a wall" (see above), the tiles which are distributed among the players after the wall break are schematically shown colour-coded. For a dice roll "6+4" the South wall will be dismantled, the indent value is 4. After counting four stacks from the right end, the South wall breaks. East takes the first two stacks after the break, then South takes two stacks, then West and North. All players have four tiles in their hands. East takes two stacks from different walls (South wall ended, East wall began), then South, West and North. All players have eight tiles. East, South, West take two stacks from the East wall, North takes stacks from different walls (East wall also ended, North wall started). All players have twelve tiles. Next, East takes the top tiles from different stacks, South takes the bottom tile from the outermost stack, West takes the top tile from the new outermost stack, North takes the bottom tile from the outermost stack. The attentive reader will calculate that there are $1+2*9+2*14+2*4 = 55$ tiles left in the wall, and there are $14 + 13*3 = 53$ tiles in total in the players' hands.

The figure "After tiles distribution" (see below) shows the state of the wall and the tiles of the players after tiles distribution for a dice roll "6+4". Note that East received fourteen "standing" tiles, while all other players received thirteen. After parsing the wall, from the side of the main end of the wall, there is a stack of only one tile.

Forbidden suit

After distributing the tiles from the wall and before the first move, each player must assign a so-called "forbidden" suit. To indicate it, each player separates a tile of a forbidden suit from the hand and places it face down in the center in front of him / her; the same tile is **the first mandatory discard** of the player. Why face down? Because it is impossible to give opponents valuable information ahead of time about which suit in our hand will be forbidden. All players must make this decision independently of each other, and it will no longer be possible to change it until the end of the deal. If the player does not have tiles of a forbidden suit in his / her hand, then a special card-indicator is used instead of tile.

Not only the hand with the declared "Hu", but also the hand after taking all the tiles from the wall must not contain tiles of the player's forbidden suit, otherwise the player will be **penalized with 48 points**.

Note: 48 points penalty is incomparable with the size of the potential win, it should be avoided by all means, discarding tiles of the forbidden suit at the very beginning. There are two possible exceptions to this rule. Firstly, if **all** the player's discards are only tiles of the forbidden suit, then after taking all the tiles from the wall, the penalty is not charged. Secondly, a player can discard tiles of a different suit even having tiles of a forbidden suit in the hand, taking the risk of being penalized.

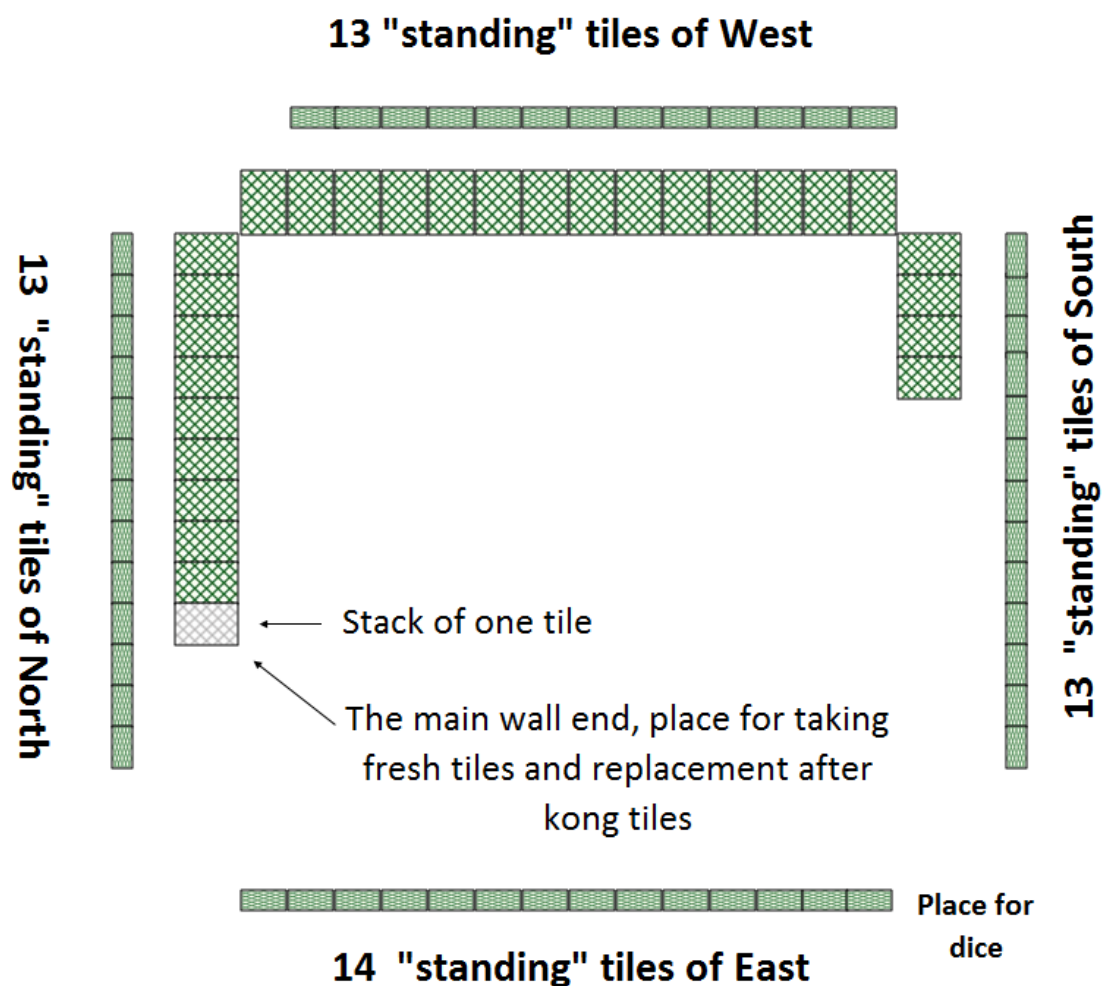





Figure 4. After tiles distribution

Lesson 3. Hand and its components

⇒ **Set** is the structural element of the hand.

⇒ **Chow** is a set consisting of tiles of the same suit with three consecutive numbers, for

instance,   .

⇒ **Pung** is a set consisting of three identical tiles, for instance,   . "Pung" is also the word for declaring Pung.

⇒ **Pair** are two identical tiles, for instance,  .

⇒ **Kong** is a special set consisting of **four** identical tiles, for instance,



or



. “Kong” is also the word for declaring Kong.



⇒ **Melded set** is a set which contains tile claimed from a discard.

⇒ **Concealed set** is a set, all tiles of which were taken from the wall.

⇒ **Move** is a set of actions of the player’s turn.

⇒ **Declaration** is a player's word with the intention to declare mahjong or set.

Hand structure

Do a little exercise: extend your right or left arm in front of you and bend your fingers slightly. How many fingers and how many phalanges (phalanx is the part of the finger between the folds) do you observe? Answer: five fingers and fourteen phalanges in a 3-3-3-3-2 distribution.

And now a coincidence that is hard to believe. The simplest completed hand (that is, a hand with a declared “Hu”) contains exactly **fourteen** tiles and has a structure of 3-3-3-3-2, where “3” is a set of three tiles, pung or chow, and “2” is a set of two tiles, that is, a couple. Surprisingly, such a coincidence of the structure of the hand in mahjong and the structure of the human hand is not described in the mahjong books!

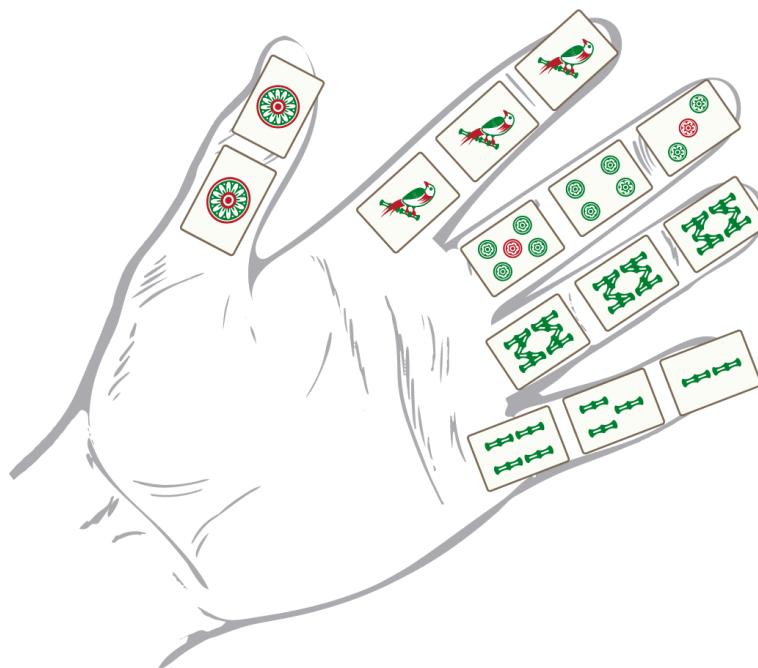














Figure 1. Hand structure

The figure shows a completed hand in the structure Pung — Chow — Pung — Chow — Pair.

Note: The interpretation of the "3-3-3-3-2" structure in the form of a hand is not the only one of its kind. For example, in China it is believed that "3-3-3-3-2" symbolizes a person: "2" is the head, and four "3" are arms and legs.

Exercise: Lay the tiles of the mahjong set face down and mix thoroughly. Detach fourteen arbitrary tiles, flip them and sort by suits and numbers. How many ready-made sets are there? Repeat the exercise several times.

In general, fourteen tiles are not five sets in a 3-3-3-3-2 structure, but much more than five groups of tiles, since in addition to pre-made sets, there will also be pairs, incomplete chows and single tiles. The process of building a completed hand by the player lies in a consistent, tile by tile, replacing "unsuitable" tiles with suitable ones.

Example. In the starting hand  one can distinguish ready-made sets: pung , chow , pairs  and , as well as incomplete chow . That is, the hand has a structure of 3-3-2-2-1-1. In order for this starting hand to turn into a complete hand, two tiles must be replaced:  and  for a tile  to form a chow, and either , or  to form a pung from the second pair. As a result, the completed hand may look like: .

Two types of completed hand structure are allowed in Sichuan mahjong:

- "Regular", 3-3-3-3-2, which is four sets (chow, pungs or kongs) and one pair.
- "Irregular", which is seven pairs of identical tiles.

Note: A kong with four tiles counts as having three tiles in the set **only in** the definition of the hand structure, this is an exception.

Exercise: Build on the open tiles a completed hand, consisting (except for a pair): only of chows, only of pungs, only of kongs, of various types of sets. For a "seven pairs" build a hand having four identical tiles once, twice and three times.

Sets

The tiles within the set (which is the structural element of the hand) are joined in one of two ways. Either they are fully identical (of the same "pattern") tiles: pair, pung, or kong. Or there are strictly three tiles of the same suit with three consecutive numbers: chow.

There are the following types of sets in hands with a regular structure

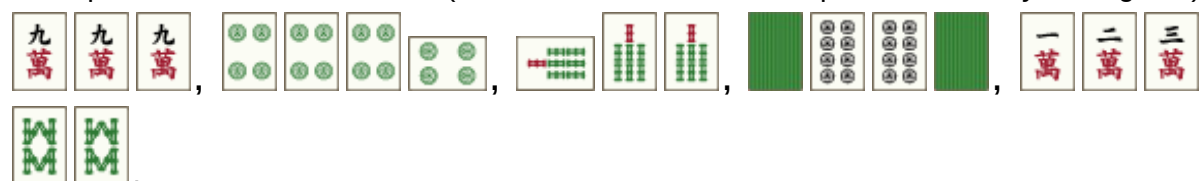
- kong — four identical tiles, can be concealed, melded, promoted and postponed
- pung — three identical tiles
- chow — three tiles of the same suit with three consecutive numbers
- pair — two identical tiles

Table 2. Hand components and types of sets

Concealed part of hand		Open part of hand
“Standing” tiles	Concealed sets	Melded sets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pung • chow • pair 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • concealed kong 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • melded kong • promoted kong • postponed kong • pung

Note: In Sichuan mahjong, unlike the other styles of mahjong, the “concealedness” of sets or winning hands does not make any difference in scoring, except for kongs.

Exercise: Try to determine intuitively which of the following sets correspond to the types of sets specified in the table above (tile taken from discard is depicted rotated by 90 degrees):



Declarations

⇒ **Self-Drawn** is to win by taking a fresh tile from the wall.

⇒ **Win by discard** is to win on a tile discarded by another player.

Typical player's move consists of two simple actions: taking a fresh tile from the wall and discarding the unwanted tile from the hand. The only exception of taking a fresh tile from the wall is the possibility to claim **just discarded** by another player tile to build a new set or even a completed hand. After the action word which is called “declaration” the claimed tile is given to the player. In case of several declarations were made on the same tile, all “Hu” declaration players receive the discarded tile (or its “copy”).

The declaration is used for

- during player's own move: to declare a set (kong) or “Hu”
- after discard of another player: to declare a set (pung or kong) or “Hu”
- during another player's move: to declare “Hu” (only when Robbing the Kong)

All the sets that are declared must be exposed (melded), that is, all tiles involved in sets should be detached from the player's "standing" tiles and placed in front of the player. The opposite is also true, only the declared sets can be melded.

If a set is formed by a tile discarded by another player, then that tile is placed face up in the set and rotated 90 degrees. The position of the rotated tile indicates the player from which the tile was taken:

- To the left of the other tiles in the set: if taken from the player to the left.
- To the right of other tiles in the set: if taken from the player on the right.
- In the middle of the other tiles of the set: if taken from the player opposite.

The sequence of actions when taking the discarded tile for a set:

1. Make a declaration.
2. Lay out tiles for a set from your hand, face up;
3. Take a tile from the discard of another player and place it face up to the tiles of the declared set indicating which player the tile was taken from.
4. (For melded kong) take a replacement tile from the wall.

In case of declaring "Hu" with discarded tile:

1. Make a "Hu" declaration.
2. Turn all "standing" tiles of your hand face down.
3. Take a tile from the discard of another player and place it face up aside the hand indicating which player the tile was taken from.

If the player declares a set or "Hu" on own turn, then the procedure is somewhat simpler, since there is no need to rotate the winning tile:

1. When declaring a promoted or postponed kong, the player places the tile face up to the melded pung to make a kong and takes the replacement tile from the wall.
2. When declaring a concealed kong, the player lays out four tiles of the kong, turning only the two outermost tiles face down and takes the replacement tile from the wall.
3. When declaring self-drawn "Hu", the player after the declaration simply turns all the tiles of the hand face down.


Let's take a look at how different melded sets will look like:



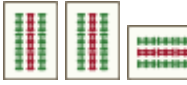

- **Pung** can be declared only from the player's discard, rotated tile clearly indicates the


player the tile was taken from:  (left),  (opposite) or  (right).

- **Concealed kong**, tiles are not rotated, the two outermost tiles are turned face down:



- **Melded kong**, rotated tile clearly indicates the player the tile was taken from: 

 (left),  or  (opposite), 

 (right).
- **Promoted kong or postponed kong** is laid out in the same way as melded kong: added to the melded pung tile is placed inside the set without rotation.

Kongs

Kong is a special set of four tiles, however, in the mahjong structure, the kong set counts as three tiles, and therefore, after declaring any type of kong, the player must take an additional (so-called "replacement") tile from the wall. The player seems to be making another move. After taking tile from the wall, some tile must be discarded, unless the player makes a new declaration ("Hu" or new kong). Simply four identical tiles in a hand are not kong, and the player is not obliged to declare them kong if it is not in his / her interest, for instance, if three tiles make up a pung and the fourth tile is used in a chow.

Types of kongs

⇒ **Concealed Kong** is four identical tiles as a set in the concealed part of the player's hand. A player may declare a Concealed Kong only **on own turn**: take a fresh tile from the wall, declare "Kong", detach four identical tiles from "standing" tiles. Tiles of the kong are shown to other players, and then are placed turning only the two outermost tiles face down. After taking a replacement tile from the wall, the player either discards a tile or makes a new declaration.

Example: .

⇒ **Melded Kong** is four identical tiles as a set in the open part of the player's hand. A player may declare a Melded Kong only **on another player's discard**: declare "Kong", detach three identical tiles from "standing" tiles, take the discarded tile placing it rotated by 90 degrees to indicate the player who discarded the tile. After taking a replacement tile from the wall, the player either discards a tile or makes a new declaration.

Example:  or .

⇒ **Promoted Kong** is four identical tiles as a set in the open part of the player's hand. A player may declare a Promoted Kong only **on own turn**: take **a fresh tile** from the wall, declare "Kong", place that tile to three tiles of Melded Pung. Rotated by 90 degrees tile indicates the player who discarded previously the tile to declare Melded Pung. After taking a replacement tile from the wall, the player either discards a tile or makes a new declaration.

Example:  or .

Table 3. Types of declarations

Decla- ration	Move	Set	From player	Mecha- nics	Action
"Pung"	After discard	Melded Pung	From any oppo- nent	2+1	After the "Pung" declaration, the player detaches two identical tiles from "standing" tiles, places them face up in front of him / her, then takes discarded tile and places it rotated by 90 degrees face up to two recently placed tiles. The position of the rotated tile indicates the player from which the tile was taken: to the left of two tiles for the player on the left, to the right of two tiles for the player on the right, and between two tiles for the player opposite. After that, the player is obliged to discard a tile from the "standing" tiles.
"Kong"	On own move	Concealed Kong	Player himself/ herself	4	After the "Kong" declaration, the player detaches four identical tiles from "standing" tiles, showing them to other players, places them in front of him / her to the concealed part of the hand, turning only the two outermost tiles face down leaving two tiles in the middle face up, takes a replacement tile from the wall. After that, the player is obliged to discard a tile from the "standing" tiles, unless he / she makes a new declaration ("Hu" or new kong).
	On own move	Promoted Kong	Player himself/ herself	(2+1) +1	After the "Kong" declaration, the player places freshly taken tile from the wall face up to three tiles of "Melded Pung" in front of him / her, and takes a replacement tile from the wall. After that, the player is obliged to discard a tile from the "standing" tiles, unless he / she makes a new declaration ("Hu" or new kong). <u>Note:</u> The tile which is used to form Promoted Kong can be used to declare "Hu" by another player (so-called "Robbing the Kong").
	On own move	Postponed Kong	Player himself/ herself	(2+1) +1	After the "Kong" declaration, the player detaches a tile from the "standing" tiles of the hand , places it face up to three tiles of "Melded Pung" in front of him / her, and takes a replacement tile from the wall. After that, the player is obliged to discard a tile from the "standing" tiles, unless he / she makes a new declaration ("Hu" or new kong). <u>Note:</u> The tile which is used to form Postponed Kong can be used to declare "Hu" by another player (so-called "Robbing the Kong").
					After "Kong" declaration the player detaches three identical tiles from "standing" tiles,

	After discard	Melded Kong	From any opponent	3+1	places them in front of him / her face up, takes discarded tile and places it rotated by 90 degrees face up to recently placed three tiles, takes a replacement tile from the wall. The position of the rotated tile indicates the player from which the tile was taken: to the left of three tiles for the player on the left, to the right of three tiles for the player on the right, and in the middle of three tiles for the player opposite. After taking a replacement tile, the player is obliged to discard a tile from the "standing" tiles, unless he / she makes a new declaration ("Hu" or new kong).
"Hu"	On own move	Whole hand	Player himself/herself	14*	After the "Hu" declaration, the player stops playing until the end of the deal and turns his / her "standing" tiles (including the winning tile) face down. If there are two or three players in the deal without "Hu", the deal continues ("battle to the end").
	After discard	Whole hand	From any opponent	13*+1	After the "Hu" declaration, the player stops playing until the end of the deal and turns his / her "standing" tiles face down. The winning tile is placed aside face up rotated by 90 degrees. The position of the rotated tile indicates the player from which "Hu" was declared: to the left of the hand for the player on the left, to the right of the hand for the player on the right, and between the tiles of the hand for the player opposite. If there are two or three players in the deal without "Hu", the deal continues ("battle to the end"). <u>Note:</u> "Hu" declaration made on the added by another player tile to Melded Pung while declaring Promoted Kong or Postponed Kong (so-called "Robbing the Kong") is also considered a win from the discard.

Note: In column "Mechanics " tiles of the player are shown in bold, tiles of the opponents are shown in normal font, "*" — only tiles without the fourth tiles of kongs are taken into account.

Note: Terms "Kong" and "Pung" may denote both Set or Declaration.

⇒ **Postponed Kong** is four identical tiles as a set in the open part of the player's hand. A player may declare a Postponed Kong only **on own turn**: declare "Kong", detach a tile **from the "standing" tiles** of the hand, place that tile to three tiles of Melded Pung. Rotated by 90 degrees tile indicates the player who discarded previously the tile to declare Melded Pung. After taking a replacement tile from the wall, the player either discards a tile or makes a new declaration.

Example:  or .

Additional rules

⇒ **Win after Kong** is declaring "Hu" on a replacement tile **after** making a kong.

⇒ **Robbing the Kong** is declaring "Hu" on a tile, which the other player adds to the melded pung when declaring the kong.

⇒ **Shoot after Kong** is declaring "Hu" on a tile discarded by another player **right after** making a kong.

There are two important restrictions when declaring kongs. Firstly, one cannot declare a kong if there are no replacement tiles left in the wall. Secondly, one cannot declare kong if a player has declared a pung on the same turn.

The details of declaration procedures are summarized in the table "Types of declarations" (see above).

Lesson 4. Game mechanics

Playing the deal

The process of playing any deal consists of three phases: preparatory, gameplay and scoring.

In the preparatory phase, tiles are shuffled, players build a wall, East rolls two dice. According to the dice values, the wall and the place for the break are determined. Tiles are then distributed to the players, resulting East gets fourteen tiles, and the rest of the players get thirteen. Now each player must choose a forbidden suit, that is, a suit whose tiles should not appear in the player's completed hand or the player's hand after taking all the tiles from the wall. After all players have placed a tile (or card-indicator) of their forbidden suit, East should move.

The initial East's turn

On his / her initial turn, East has only three options:

1. Declare "Hu" — East may already have a completed hand, as well as an intention to declare "Hu". In this case, after "Hu" declaration, all tiles of East's hand are turned face down, the indicator card (here it is important to note that in order to declare "Hu" East must strictly **not have** tiles of a forbidden suit in his / her starting hand, which

means that an indicator card has been used) is turned face up. Next to the East hand, a card is laid out indicating the declaration of "Hu" #1 if there are such cards in the game set. The turn is passed in a circle counterclockwise to the player sitting on the South.

2. Declare a concealed kong — East can declare concealed kong and keep the turn. After laying out four tiles and taking a replacement tile, East is in exactly the same triple choice situation (declaring "Hu", declaring concealed kong and discarding tile) with the only difference that there are eleven "standing tiles" in hand, not fourteen.
3. Discard a tile.

Moves

The deal is a sequence of players' moves done in turn, and it ends with one of two finals: either three players declare "Hu", or the wall ends. A player's turn **begins** by either picking a fresh new tile from the wall, or taking discarded tile after claim. The player's turn **ends** either with the "Hu" declaration, or the obligatory discarding of tile. The turn is passed between players in two different ways.

If there is no claim on the discarded tile, then the turn is proceeded counterclockwise in the direction "East → South → West → North → East..." skipping all Hu-players (they temporarily left playing the deal until the end). The next player's turn begins by picking a fresh new tile from the wall.

If there is **one** claim on the discarded tile, then this tile is transferred to the player who made the declaration, so that this player's turn starts from taking the discarded tile **instead of** picking a fresh tile from the wall. When there are multiple claims, then the discarded tile is transferred according to the declaration priority rule: "Hu" declaration supersedes declaration of "Pung" / "Kong. In case of multiple "Hu" declarations each Hu-player receives a "copy" of winning tile.

Important note regarding the first discard procedure. The fact is that even for players who already play other types of mahjong, the obligatory overturning of the first tile in the center of the table, due to its unusualness, can present an inconvenience and problem. The best practical advice is to grab the first tile off the wall with **one** hand and flip the tile in the center of the table with the **other**. With this approach, there will be no situation of two demolished tiles and other deviations in the game.

Discard claim

The player is given **3 seconds** to claim the discarded tile (that is, to make a declaration). At the end of this period, the right to use the discarded tile is voided, and the move is passed to the next player counterclockwise, skipping all the players who declared "Hu".

With multiple "Hu" declarations on the discarded tile, all such declarations are satisfied, it is considered that the discarded tile belongs to **all** players who declared "Hu". When the hand is scored at the end of the deal, the "shared" winning tile is used by the players one by one.

if a player skips a discard that could be claimed for “Hu”, then this player is not allowed declare “Hu” until taking a tile from the wall, but except situation when winning hand has a **greater** value.

If “Hu” was declared by two players on the discarded tile, then the next move is made by the player who is sitting in the circle **after** the second player who declared “Hu”, if counted counterclockwise from the discarder.



When the wall ends

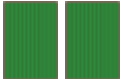
Let's take a closer look at declarations when there are no tiles left in the wall. The player who took the last tile from the wall can declare only “Hu”. If not, then the player is obliged to discard a tile. On that discard only “Hu” and “Pung” declarations are allowed. Let's note here that if a “Pung” is declared, then the **new** tile must be discarded becoming the new last discard (which, in turn, can again be taken to pung, and so forth).

Declaring “Hu”

The player who declares “Hu”, stops playing until the end of the deal and turns his / her "standing" tiles face down. In this case

- for “Hu” on discard the winning tile is placed face up rotated by 90 degrees indicating

the player from which “Hu” was declared, for instance, , or , or

- for self-drawn “Hu” the winning tile is placed aside face down, for instance, 



After the “Hu” declaration if there are two or three players in the deal without "Hu", the deal continues ("battle to the end").

Starting new deal

The deal ends when

- three players declared “Hu”
- tiles in the wall are over and the active player has ended their turn
- the time allotted for the session in the tournament has expired

Dealership transfer

- if nobody is “Hu”, the dealer stays the same
- if the first “Hu” was declared by a single player, this player is the next dealer
- if the first “Hu” were declared by multiple players on the same discard, the discarder becomes the next dealer

A new deal does not start if the maximum number of deals in the tournament session has already been played.

Test yourself



Dear reader! You are offered a test to review the material in Chapter 1 and a problem. The answers can be found at the end of the book in the [Answers to problems and tests](#).

Test

Choose just one correct answer for each question.

1. Indicate in which row the tiles are laid out in ascending numbers

- a.

七萬

九萬

六萬

八萬

- b.

九萬

七萬

六萬

八萬

- c.

六萬

八萬

九萬

七萬

- d.

六萬

七萬

八萬

九萬

2. Directions of taking fresh tiles from the wall and passing of turn between players
 - a. fresh tiles from the wall are taken clockwise, turn in passed clockwise
 - b. fresh tiles from the wall are taken counterclockwise, turn in passed clockwise
 - c. fresh tiles from the wall are taken clockwise, turn in passed counterclockwise
 - d. fresh tiles from the wall are taken counterclockwise, turn in passed counterclockwise
3. Which action is **impossible** on the initial East turn
 - a. declaring of "Hu"
 - b. declaring of kong
 - c. declaring of pung
 - d. discarding tile
4. How many types of kongs are there
 - a. one
 - b. two
 - c. three
 - d. four
5. What type of kong **cannot** be declared on a player's turn
 - a. melded
 - b. concealed
 - c. promoted
 - d. postponed
6. What is the maximum number of players who can make their declarations simultaneously on a discarded tile
 - a. one

- b. two
 - c. three
 - d. four
7. What is the maximum number of kongs in a completed hand
- a. one
 - b. two
 - c. three
 - d. four
8. How many different tiles patterns are possible in a completed hand having four pungs / kongs
- a. four
 - b. five
 - c. six
 - d. seven
9. What is the maximum number of different tiles patterns in a completed hand **without** pungs or kongs
- a. eleven
 - b. twelve
 - c. thirteen
 - d. fourteen
10. What number of declared “Hu” is **impossible** in the finished deal provided tiles in the wall are over
- a. no one
 - b. two
 - c. three
 - d. four
11. Which player can declare “Hu” even before the discard of the first tile
- a. East
 - b. South
 - c. West
 - d. North

Problem

What is the maximum number of tiles left in a wall when the deal was completed correctly?

List of tables, figures, photos of Chapter 1

[Table 1. Tile patterns](#)

[Table 2. Hand components and types of sets](#)

[Table 3. Types of declarations](#)

[Figure 2. Sichuan mahjong playing space](#)

[Figure 3. Tiles distribution after breaking the wall](#)

[Figure 4. After tiles distribution](#)

Chapter 2. Scoring

Contents

[Lesson 5. General rules](#)

[Value combinations and fans \(doubles\)](#)

[Payments](#)

[Kongs](#)

[Waits](#)

[False "Hu"](#)

[Penalties](#)

[Lesson 6. Scoring examples](#)

[The simplest valuable combinations](#)

[Special conditions for winning tile](#)

[Hand value theoretical maximum](#)

[Compatibility of valuable combinations](#)

[Test yourself](#)

[Test](#)

[Problem](#)

[List of tables, figures, photos of Chapter 2](#)

Lesson 5. General rules

⇒ **Wait** is the state of the player's hand when one tile is missing before the completed hand. The term "wait" is also used to refer to all tiles that complete the hand.

⇒ **Fan** is doubling the hand points.

⇒ **Value combination** is what gives fans (doubles) on the hand.

The deal can be finished only in two ways: either three players declare "Hu", or the wall ends while there are more than one non-Hu players. The player can gain points from: kongs, "Hu" declaration, or even for "ready" hand. The player can lose points from: other player's kongs, "Hu" declaration, "ready" hand, or due to forbidden suit penalty. After the player declares "Hu", he is temporarily out of the deal and no longer participates in gaining or losing points until the deal is finished.

In the "3-Hu" final

- only the hands of Hu-players are shown and checked, points are awarded for kongs (if any) and Hu
- the non-Hu player's hand is not shown and not checked, points are awarded for kongs (if any)

In the "wall ends" final

- the hands are shown and checked

- Hu-players are awarded points for kongs (if any) and Hu
- non-Hu “ready” players are awarded points for kongs (if any) and waiting hands
- non-Hu “non-ready” players only lose points on each occasion, points for kong are **not** awarded

Value combinations and fans (doubles)

In Sichuan mahjong, a scoring system based on doubles (fans) is used. The table lists all the value combinations that are used for scoring of a hand with Hu or a waiting hand.

Table 4. Value combinations and fans (doubles)

No	Combination	Fan (doubles)	Description
1	Kong	1 for each	4 identical tiles in kong.
2	Root	1 for each	4 identical tiles in two or more sets.
3	All Pungs	1	Hand with four pungs or kongs and a pair.
4	Golden Wait	1	Four melds (pungs or kongs) in hand, the winning tile completes the pair, add 1 fan for "All Pungs".
5	Full Flush	2	All tiles in the hand are one suit only.
6	Seven Pairs	2	Seven pairs in hand.
7	Win after Kong	1	Declaring Hu on a replacement tile after making a kong.
8	Shoot after Kong	1	Declaring Hu on a tile discarded after making a kong.
9	Robbing the Kong	1	Declaring Hu by robbing a kong.
10	Under the Sea	1	Declaring Hu on the last tile in the wall or on the discard after the last tile.

For each valuable combination, 1 or 2 fans are added, the number of fans is added up. The hand value is doubled from the starting value of 1 point as many times as the total of the fans turned out, however, to a certain limit. Typical value of that limit is 3 (as in MIL's version of rules) or 4 (as played in Russia and on the MahjongSoft site). Hence, maximal hand value is $2 \times 2 \times 2 = 8$ points for the limit of 3 fans, and $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 = 16$ points for the limit of 4 fans.

Table 5. Hand value depending on the fans total (4 fans limit)

Fans total	0	1	2	3	4 or more
Hand value (points)	1	2	4	8	16

Payments

To calculate the hand value when Hu, fans are summed up for all valuable combinations applicable to this hand. For a waiting hand, the **maximum** value of a possible hand is calculated for the variety of the winning tiles.

Table 6. Winning hand and waiting hand payments

Hu Payment Event	Points	Who is Paying	Who is Getting the Payment
Hu is declared on a discard	Hand Value	The discarder	Each player declaring Hu on this discard
Hu is declared on a self-drawn tile	Hand Value + 1	Each non-Hu player	The player declaring Hu on this self-drawn tile
The wall ends with two or more non-Hu players	Hand Value of the best hand the ready player is ready for	Each non-Hu "non-ready" player	Each non-Hu ready player

Payments in the "wall ends" final:

- each non-Hu player can have only three states: "ready", "non-ready", and having forbidden suit in hand (counted as "non-ready");
- hand with the forbidden suit gets a penalty of 48 points, other players **do not receive** points for that;
- each non-Hu "non-ready" player pays each non-Hu "ready" player the **theoretical maximum value** of the hand (see the definition of the theoretical maximum below).

Kongs

Kongs are an important source of points. The number of points declared by the player kongs may even exceed the points for the declared "Hu".

Scoring and payments for kongs

- the player declaring Concealed Kong receives 2 points from **each** non-Hu player
- the player declaring Melded Kong receives 2 points from the discarder
- the player declaring Promoted Kong receives 1 point from each non-Hu player (but only in case of a freshly taken from the wall tile, otherwise, in case of a tile added to

Melded Pung from the hand such a kong is named Postponed Kong and does not bring points at all)

- no kong payment if Promoted Kong was robbed
- no kong payment if another player declares Hu on the tile discarded after the kong is made
- no kong payment if the player who declared the kong is non-Hu “non-ready” when the wall ends

Above-stated rules are systematized in a table.







Table 7. Kong payments

Kong Payment Event	Points	Who is Paying	Who is Getting the Payment
Concealed Kong is declared	2	Each non-Hu player	The player declaring the kong
Melded Kong is declared on a discard	2	The discarder	The player declaring the kong
Promoted kong on a freshly taken from the wall tile	1	Each non-Hu player	The player declaring the kong
Postponed kong on a tile from the hand	0	Nobody	Nobody


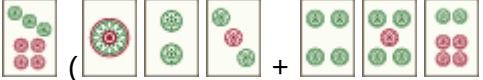

Waits

Here are examples of waits, that is, tiles that complete the hand. The table only shows hand fragments with winning tiles.



Table 8. Examples of waits

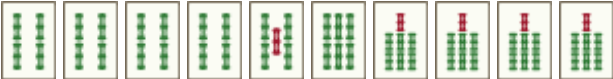


Hand	Waiting tiles	Tile patterns
		1
		1
		1

		2

- Enters chow  when waiting for  + ).

There is one major exception to the definition of wait: one cannot wait on a tile, all four copies of which are *in the "standing" tiles* of the player's hand. This is called "exhaustive" wait.

Example 1: Three sets are declared, there are  in hand. Is the hand waiting or not? No! The hand seems to be waiting on , but since all four copies of this tiles are in the hand, there is no wait.

Example 2: One set is declared, there are  in hand. The hand seems to be waiting on  and , however, since all four copies of each of these tiles are in the hand, there is no wait.

False "Hu"

All the declared "Hu" are considered valid until the scoring is complete. If at the end of the deal during the check it turns out that the player has declared a false "Hu" (there is no structure allowed by the Rules in the hand or there is a forbidden suit), then this player loses all points for the declared kongs and must also pay a penalty.

The declaration of a false "Hu" is *not* taken into account when determining a new dealer, that is, it is considered that there was no "Hu" declared. This means, in particular, that if two players declared the first mahjongs, but one of the mahjongs turned out to be a false one, the player with the correct mahjong becomes the dealer in the new deal.

Penalties

Penalties regulate the violations and deviations in the game.

A player who has declared false "Hu", that is, hand does not have a structure allowed by the Rules, or has a forbidden suit, must pay 8 points to each player who was still in the game at the time of the declaration. In addition, all kong payments declared by the offending player must be returned.

Examples: If false "Hu" was declared first in the deal, then after it was declared there were three players left in the game, so the total penalty is 24 points, 8 points paid for three players. If the false "Hu" was declared on discard by two players simultaneously, and after the first "Hu" in the deal, then after the false "Hu" was declared, only one player remained in the game, a penalty of 8 points (paid by two offending players each to the last player in the deal).

Note: This severe penalty of 8 points per player is compensation to other players for not being able to score points for declared kongs and “Hu” from the left gameplay player.

When a set of forbidden suit tiles is declared, the player always receives a penalty of 48 points, even in the 3-Hu final. The presence of a forbidden suit in a hand with a declared “Hu”, in addition to a penalty of 48 points, leads to a penalty for false “Hu”. In the case of the “wall ends” final, the hand with the forbidden suit is considered as a hand without wait.

Lesson 6. Scoring examples

In this lesson, we will demonstrate various examples of completed hands.

The simplest valuable combinations

Below are examples of completed hands containing the indicated valuable combination (let's assume that the forbidden suit is "Characters"):

- A simple hand without a valuable combination, 0 fans.



- "Kong", 1 fan



- "Root", 1 fan



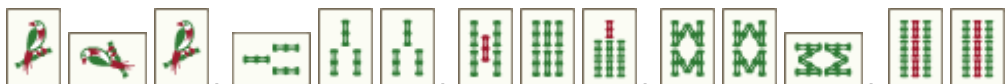
- "All Pungs", 1 fan



- "Golden Wait" + "All Pungs", 2 fans



- "Full Flush", 2 fans



- "Seven Pairs", 2 fans



Special conditions for winning tile

The examples below show four valuable combinations associated with the special conditions for obtaining winning tiles:

- "Win after Kong", 1 fan, after declaring a kong on B8 replacement tile D7 completes the hand.



- "Robbing the Kong", 1 fan, after declaring of promoted kong on D8 by another player this tile completes the hand



- "Shoot after Kong", 1 fan, after declaring of a kong by another player discarded tile B5 completes the hand



- "Under the Sea", 1 fan, when no tiles left in the wall the winning tile B4 is either taking from the wall (the last tile), or is discarded by another player (the last discard)



Note: It should be noted that when counting hands in the "wall ends" final, the above-stated special valuable combinations **do not apply**, since no special conditions for obtaining a winning tile are assumed.

Hand value theoretical maximum

In the "wall ends" final each waiting hand must be calculated at its maximum value. What does this mean in practice? And why can the value of the same hand differ? The point is that the maximum value of the hand is chosen from the values obtained separately for all the different waiting tiles of the hand. It is important that no special conditions for the winning tile are assumed.





Let's take a closer look which valuable combinations cannot increase the value of the hand:

- If the hand is waiting for exactly one tile ("Golden Wait"), then there is no choice of the hand value.
- Four valuable combinations with a special condition for getting the winning tiles ("Win after Kong", "Robbing the Kong", "Shoot after Kong" and "Under the Sea") do not work, see the previous paragraph.
- The combination "Kong" is not suitable, since it requires a declaration.
- The combination "Full Flush" is also not suitable, since all the waiting tiles already belong to the same suit.

The analysis leaves only three valuable combinations that can be obtained with the proper selection of winning tile:

- — the hand is waiting for and , in case of a valuable combination "Root" is added totaling 1 fan.

- — the hand is waiting for , , and , in case of a valuable combination "All Pungs" is added totaling 1 fan.

-  — the hand is waiting for  and  for the regular hand structure without doubles (0 fans), but also is waiting for  the irregular hand structure "Seven Pairs", valuable combinations "Seven Pairs" and "Root" are added totaling 3 fans.

Compatibility of valuable combinations

It is quite obvious that a completed hand can have several valuable combinations.

Below is a complete table of compatibility of valuable combinations in the hand with "Hu". Two valuable combinations are "compatible", if one can find a hand in which both valuable combinations are present. The combination can be "auto-compatible", that is, be present in the hand several times, for instance, a "Kong" is possible in the hand four times.

Table 9. Compatibility of valuable combinations

Valuable combination	K	R	AP	GW	FF	SP	WaK	SaK	RK	US
Kong	4	+	+	+	+		+	+	+	+
Root	+	3			+	+	+	+	+	+
All Pungs	+		1	+	+		+	+		+
Golden Wait	+		+	1	+		+	+		+
Full Flush	+	+	+	+	1	+	+	+	+	+
Seven Pairs		+			+	1		+		+
Win after Kong	+	+	+	+	+		1			+
Shoot after Kong	+	+	+	+	+	+		1		+
Robbing the Kong	+	+			+				1	
Under the Sea	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		1

Legend: "+" — compatible, "1" / "3" / "4" — are possible in hand 1 / 3 / 4 times.

Here are examples of hands with 3 fans:

- "Kong" + "Kong" + "All Pungs"

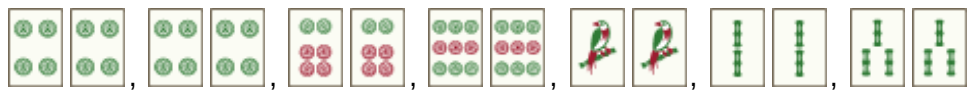
- "Kong" + "All Pungs" + "Golden Wait"

- "Full Flush" + "Kong"

- "Full Flush" + "Root"

- "Full Flush" + "All Pungs"

- "Seven Pairs" + "Root"




Test yourself



Dear reader! You are offered a test to review the material in Chapter 2 and a problem. The answers can be found at the end of the book in the [Answers to problems and tests](#).

Test

Choose only one correct answer for each question.

- 
1. What is the maximum number of points a player can get for one payment
- 8
 - 27
 - 24
 - 9
2. What is the minimum number of points a player can lose for one payment
- 24
 - 9
 - 8
 - 48
3. In which case a player must return points for declared kongs
- three other players declared "Hu"
 - the player declared "Hu"
 - the non-Hu player is not waiting when tiles in the wall are over
 - the non-Hu player is waiting when tiles in the wall are over

4. What a valuable combination can be combined in a hand with "Hu" with a valuable combination "All Pungs"
 - a. "Root"
 - b. "Full Flush"
 - c. "Seven Pairs"
 - d. "Robbing the Kong"
5. What a valuable combination **cannot** come from choosing winning tile when determining the theoretical maximum hand value
 - a. "Root"
 - b. "All Pungs"
 - c. "Full Flush"
 - d. "Seven Pairs"
6. What declaration is **impossible** to do when all the tiles in the wall are over
 - a. declaration of self-drawn Hu"
 - b. declaration of "Hu" from the discard
 - c. declaration of pung
 - d. declaration of kong

Problem

Construct a hand with as many fans as possible. How many points would this hand be worth if there were no scoring limits?

List of tables, figures, photos of Chapter 2

[Table 4. Value combinations and fans \(doubles\)](#)

[Table 5. Hand value depending on the fans total \(4 fans limit\)](#)

[Table 6. Winning hand and waiting hand payments](#)

[Table 7. Kong payments](#)

[Table 8. Examples of waits](#)

[Table 9. Compatibility of valuable combinations](#)