

# MAHJ-X™ RULES SUMMARY

MAHJ-X is an exciting evolution of American Mah Jongg. The game is based on National Mah Jongg League rules, with the overall goal being to reduce the element of luck and increase strategic opportunities. This allows skill to take a more prevalent role, relieving player frustration and improving enjoyment. Many of these new rules offer increased opportunities to switch between hands, or complete hands that would traditionally be considered unattainable.

National Mah Jongg League rules apply, except where amended below.

## **Rule 1: Everyone gets a joker at the beginning**

1. Before tiles are turned over and mixed, each player takes a joker
2. The other 4 jokers remain on the table and are mixed and distributed as usual

*Rationale: when each player starts with a joker, it removes some of the luck factor and opens up more possibilities for each player. This is important considering the extended role of the joker, based on other rules.*

## **Rule 2: East is dealer and all players start with 13 tiles**

1. At the beginning of the round
  1. Each player rolls dice
  2. The player with the highest number is the first East
2. At the beginning of each game
  1. Tiles are mixed, face down, in the middle of the table
  2. Each player builds a "wall" of tiles in front of their rack
    1. East: 17 tiles across and 2 tiers tall (as 4 jokers have been removed)
    2. Other players: 19 tiles across and 2 tiers tall
  3. East is the dealer, and:
    1. Rolls a pair of dice and breaks their wall at the position indicated by the sum of the pair of dice (counting starts from the right end of East's wall)
    2. Places the segment of wall that was determined by the roll of the dice toward the right of their rack; this wall will be used as the last segment to be played
    3. Distributes four tiles to each player in counterclockwise rotation, until all players have a total of 13 tiles (including the initial joker)

4. Players place their tiles on the sloped part of their rack
3. At the end of the game, the role of "East" rotates counterclockwise

*Rationale: starting with 13 tiles removes the majority of East's advantage*

### **Rule 3: Two Mandatory Charlestons, passes are blind/optional**

1. First Charleston - Mandatory 3 passes:
  1. Right - Pass 3 tiles to the player on your right. Blind Pass allowed
  2. Across - 0, 1, 2 or 3 tiles swapped with player seated opposite (negotiated as in the Optional Pass)
  3. Left - Pass 3 tiles to the player on your left. Blind Pass allowed
2. Second Charleston - Mandatory 3 passes:
  1. Left - Pass 3 tiles to the player on your left. Blind Pass allowed
  2. Across - 0, 1, 2 or 3 tiles swapped with player seated opposite (negotiated as in the Optional Pass)
  3. Right - Pass 3 tiles to the player on your right. Blind Pass allowed
3. Optional Pass - 0, 1, 2 or 3 tiles swapped with player seated opposite (negotiated between the 2 players)
4. East begins the game by picking a tile from the wall

Player must not look at "blind" tiles passed (PENALTY = 10-point deduction)

*Rationale: if a player needs to improve their hand, they can pass as many tiles as they need, up to 3 tiles. If a player has many tiles towards Mah Jongg, they can choose to pass fewer tiles. A mandatory second Charleston results in more opportunity for all players to strengthen their hand, whatever position they find themselves in following the first Charleston. This is the best of both worlds, where each player has the opportunity to maximize the benefits of the Charleston to progress their hand, without having to give up any tiles they would prefer not to.*

### **Rule 4: Reverse joker swaps**

1. During their turn, a player may swap a Joker in their hand for a natural symbol tile in an exposure
2. This move must be announced and the exchange made hand-to-hand (PENALTY = forfeit swap during that turn)

3. There is no limit to the number of reverse Joker swaps during any one turn
4. Tiles cannot be exchanged in any exposure that caused a hand to be dead
5. When an exposure contains only Jokers it becomes "wild." It no longer has a designation and, while in this state, can represent any tile and no Jokers can be swapped.

*Rationale: Reverse Joker swaps allow players needing a tile for a single or pair to obtain that tile by sacrificing a Joker. This also allows the player to continue building their hand when it would otherwise have been considered dead. Jokers can also be used to prevent an opponent from achieving a jokerless hand and to help the player achieve a jokerless hand.*

## **Rule 5: Amending previous exposures**

1. Any exposure can be amended during a player's turn. Tiles can be added to or subtracted
2. Exposures can only be amended to a pung, kong or quint, not to pairs or singles (even for Mah Jongg)
3. Exposure amendments must be completed prior to claiming Mah Jongg
4. Discards may not be called for the purpose of amending an exposure; they may only be called for the purpose of making a new exposure or declaring Mah Jongg
5. Exposure amendments must be announced (PENALTY = forfeit amendment that turn)
6. Exposures must be valid once the player's turn ends, otherwise the player's hand can be called dead

*Rationale: a strategic move that can be used to switch between hands or to confuse opponents regarding a player's intended hand (e.g., a player calls a discard and exposes a pung and later amends to a kong). Additionally, this rule enables players to call a discard when they do not possess all the tiles required for a particular grouping, with the intent to amend the exposure later in the game (e.g., player only has enough tiles in their hand to call for a kong. Player exposes a kong and then, during a later turn adds a joker to make the quint they require.)*

## **Rule 6: Discarding a Joker gets player another pick**

1. A player discarding a joker may then pick a tile from the wall
2. This process must be announced (PENALTY = forfeit pick from wall)
3. The player discards a tile as usual, or declares Mah Jongg

*Rationale: offers strategic possibilities. Do I discard my joker to get another pick, or do I hold onto it to potentially swap for a tile in another player's exposure? Or, should I use it to prevent another player's hand from being jokerless, or keep it as a safe discard at the end of the game? A joker can also be discarded towards the end of the game to reduce the number of picks other players have.*

## **Rule 7: Reverse consecutive run**

1. For hands that include consecutive numbers, runs can be constructed with numbers in descending order (still following the tile pattern listed on the card)
2. This applies to all hands in the Consecutive Run section, as well as any hand marked with "any consecutive numbers", "any run", etc
3. Examples (using NMJL 2023 card)
  1. Consecutive Run, Line 4: could be single 7-bam, pair of 6-bams, pung of 5-bams, kong of 4-cracks and kong of 3-dots: 7 66 555 4444 3333
  2. Winds - Dragons, Line 2a: could be 3 norths, 3 souths, pair of 4-bams, pair of 3-bams, kong of 2-bams: NNN SSS 44 33 2222

*Rationale: gives players additional hand opportunities (though it requires more brain power). Also, allows switching between hands, based on tiles received or tiles no longer available.*

## **Rule 8: Use of a scorecard**

1. Scores follow [Standardized National Mah Jongg Tournament Rules](#)
2. Scores (including points for wins, bonuses, penalties for throwing winning tile and penalties for infractions) are kept on a sheet with one column per player (similar to a minigolf card)
3. At the end of the session, each column is tallied to determine the winner
4. The first East of the round acts as the scorekeeper for that round
5. Points can be converted to money if players wish
6. For a list of penalties and bonuses, click [here](#)

*Rationale: allows the same scoring to apply to both home games and tournaments. Plus, there's just one payout for the session, rather than exchanging money after each game.*