

HANDOUTS FOR

players

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Contents

Session 1 Rules Not Found in Mah Jongg Made Easy	3
Session 2 Popular House Rules	4
Introduction	4
Common House Rules.....	4
Pie.....	4
Wall Game Kitty	4
Hot Wall	4
Cold Wall.....	4
Atomic.....	5
Super Jokers	5
Mush	5
Stacks	6
Session 3 Let's Play Hong Kong Mahjong	7
Session 4-1 Beginner Winning Strategies	8
Session 4-2 Intermediate Winning Strategies	9
Session 4-3 Advanced Winning Strategies.....	10



General Sessions, Instructor Track

Session 1 Rules Not Found in Mah Jongg Made Easy
Debbie Barnett (mahjongteacher1@gmail.com)

[no handout for this session]



General Sessions, Instructor Track

Session 2 Popular House Rules

Michele Frizzell (michele@mahjongcentral.com)

Introduction

In our wonderful community of American mah jongg players, there are purists and there are radicals. Purists play strictly by the rules whereas radicals add house rules that make the game more interesting and exciting to them.

Common House Rules

Mah jongg is the 4-player Chinese tile game that took America by storm in the 1920s when Joseph Babcock, an American businessman, imported the game with simplified rules for Americans. In 1935, the National Mah Jongg League was formed. They created their own annual scorecard with specific hands. The initial rules were based on Joseph Babcock's simplified rules, but they have changed over the years. The rules stabilized in the mid-1970s. Some groups still play using rules from the past (aka house rules) and some new house rules have been added.

Pie

Most groups play for money. A "pie" is the pre-determined limit to the amount that a player can lose. For example, if the pie is \$5, players bring \$5 in quarters, nickels and dimes to the game. They pay winners the value of their hand, including penalties, from this pie. When their pie is gone, they continue to play but don't pay again until they win money back.

Wall Game Kitty

When a game ends in a draw, each player contributes a quarter into a dish. If any player loses their pie, their payment to the winner comes out of the kitty. If money remains in the kitty after the last hand, the money is held to the next game or it's divided equally and given back to the players.

Hot Wall

The "hot wall" is the wall that remains in front of the dealer after the tiles have been dealt. If a player wins from a tile discarded while the hot wall is live, the discarding player must pay the value of the hand for all players.

Cold Wall

The "cold wall" is the wall that remains in front of the dealer after the tiles have been dealt. Players cannot win by discard when picking from this wall.

Atomic

There is an American mah jongg house rule called Atomic which includes hands that are not on the card. I like to call the hands a Cantonese Sampler because the hands are from Cantonese style! Allowable hands (NO FLOWERS) include one or more of the following:

- 7 unique pair
- 7 pair (kongs allowed as 2 separate pair)
- 3 kongs and a pair
- 4 pungs and pair
- 4 chows (3 in a sequence) or pungs and a pair (any combination)

Common Rules

- You are qualified to play Atomic if there are no Flowers or Jokers are in your dealt hand.
- You must declare Atomic before the Charleston; place a marker on your rack (i.e., penny, figurine, domino, stickered tile).
- No Flowers can be passed to you; this may place a burden on your opponents.
- After the Charleston, if you pick a Flower or joker from the wall, you are off-Atomic and must pick a hand the American mah jongg card.

Hand value

- Players agree to the value which ranges from 50 to 100 points.

Super Jokers

Johni Levene is a vintage mah jongg set dealer, restoration expert and founder of the Mah Jongg That's it Facebook group. About a year ago, she discovered an amusing little man on a couple of extra Flower tiles in a vintage mah jongg set and thought they would be fun to play with. When she showed the vintage mah jongg set to a prospective buyer, she presented the bonus tiles as possible super jokers and the idea caught on like wild fire to Johni's amazement.

The super jokers can be used as regular jokers, but you can add variations.

Common Rules

- Add one or more blank to be used in a pair or single tile (i.e., 2022, NEWS).
- Add 2 blank tiles that can be used in exchange for any discarded tile on the table.
- Add 4 blank tiles that can be exchanged for a previously discarded tile and put it the player's hand.

Mush

A "mush" is an optional exchange of tiles after the Charleston. Players who participate place up to 3 tiles in front of their rack and take back from the other players as many tiles as they put in.

Stacks

Some players say this variation makes the game faster. Players also enjoy not having pass defensively because the outgoing passes are not given to an opponent. Also, since players are using stacks of random tiles for their incoming passes, they may get a joker.

1. Players create space between their wall and their rack then they each take 13 random tiles from their wall and East takes one more.
2. Then, players build 2 stacks of tiles (3x3) in front of their rack for the first and second Charleston. Three more tiles are placed to the right for the optional across.
3. The Charleston is done individually so players take their passes from their own stacks, and they place their outgoing passes upside down in the center of the table.
4. When the stacks have been depleted, all the tiles on the table are mixed then East discards. Some groups build walls, others do not.

American mah jongg is a complex game that takes time to master. Now that you've had a lesson, review the fundamentals, practice with skill builders, and learn strategies to improve as a player.

Session 3 Let's Play Hong Kong Mahjong

Zach Lovall (mahjongteacher1@gmail.com)

The handout was the player reference that includes how to play on the back and scoring inside.

Session 4-1 Beginner Winning Strategies

Stacy Budkofsky (stacymahjongg@gmail.com)

[no handout for this session]

Session 4-2 Intermediate Winning Strategies
Michele Frizzell (michele@mahjongcentral.com)

[no handout for this session]

Session 4-3 Advanced Winning Strategies
Debbie Barnett (mahjongteacher1@gmail.com)

[no handout for this session]