

Source for images and text of basic play: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahjong>

Considering there are forty or more variants of mahjong, this is a guide to play in Cumberland, BC.

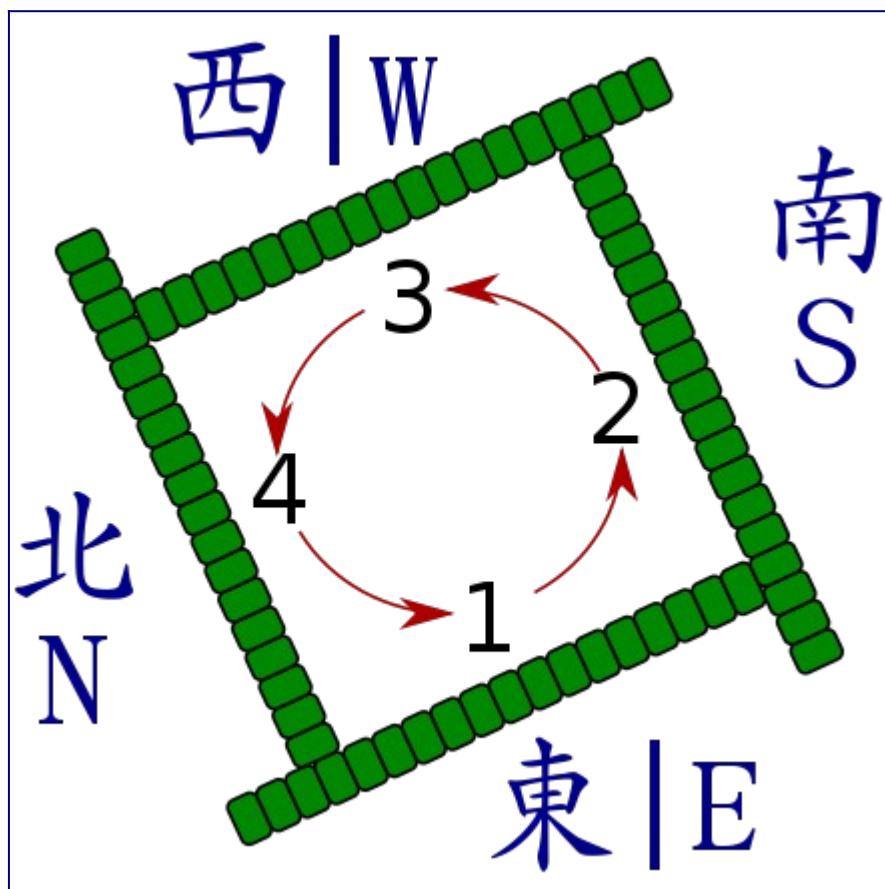
## Classical Mahjong as played in the Comox Valley area

### Dealing tiles

### Shuffling tiles

All tiles are placed face down on the table and are shuffled. By convention all players should participate in shuffling using both hands moving the pieces around the table rigorously and loudly for a lengthy period. Tiles may get flipped up during this process and players should flip them facing down as soon as possible to avoid identifying the location of the revealed tiles.

### Stacking tiles



(Img: Walls with slight diagonal offset and player positions marked with cardinal directions, including the dealer (E), along with counting order) [If the table is large enough, the walls need not be slanted.]

Each player then stacks a row of 18 tiles, two tiles high in front of them (for a total of 36 tiles). Players then push each side of their stack together to form a square wall.

Players may place their stacks in a slightly diagonal position (about 20 to 30 degrees counter-clockwise); the right end of their stack is pushed slightly further in to the centre of the table to meet almost the middle of the stack of the player on the right. This creates a smaller square wall the length of about half of each stack, with walls extended away from each corner of the square. The diagonally positioned stacks and a smaller square creates a bigger space for players' tiles and also makes an ergonomic position for drawing tiles from the stack.

## To Start the Game

Each player throws a pair of dice in turn. The one who counts the highest pips becomes East.

East again throws the pair of dice to select Wind of the round. Counting counter-clockwise so that the East is 1 (or 5, 9), so that South (player to the right) is 2 (or 6, 10), etc., a player's quarter of the wall is chosen to become Wind. Wind of the round is dealer of that round.

## Drawing tiles

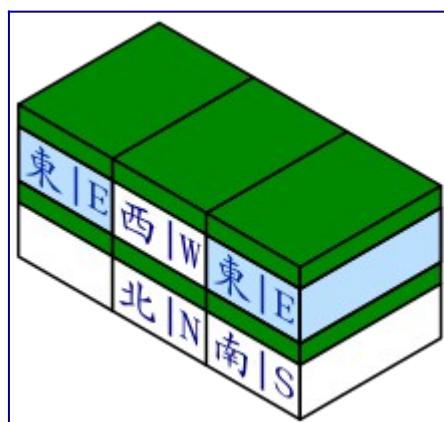
The dealer (Wind of the round) throws two dice in the square wall and sums the pips. The dealer then counts the stacks of tiles from right to left. This determines the location where the 'deck' of tiles is cut.

The dealer lifts that pair of tiles and stacks them on the right side of the cut. These will be used as replacement kong tiles.

Starting from the left of the stacks counted, the dealer draws four tiles for East, then South, etc. in counter-clockwise order, dealing from the wall **clockwise**, until each player has 12 tiles. Deal ends after each player then receives a single tile each, giving every player a total of 13 tiles in their hand. The tile to be drawn is always the topmost tile left of the cut.

Tiles may flip over when being dealt and players should agree in advance on how to deal with the problem. House rules, in this case, involve shuffling the tile back into the wall.

Each player sets aside any flowers or seasons they may have drawn. House rules are that replacement tiles are drawn at each player's turn; replacement tiles that are flower/season are replaced at that time.



While drawing the 13th piece to complete the initial hand, the East will typically also draw a 14th piece (both highlighted in blue) to initiate the round.

## Game play starts

East draws a tile from the wall in **clockwise** direction, adding it to their hand. Typically, this draw is performed during the initial deal to speed up play. If this does not complete a legal hand, the player then discards a tile (throwing it into the middle of the wall with no particular order in mind).

## Rules

Each player in turn, in counter-clockwise direction, draws a tile from the wall (clockwise); as long as the tile drawn is not one of the bonus tiles, the player proceeds to discard a tile (either the tile just drawn, or a tile in the hand) to maintain a hand of 13. The discarded tile is thrown into the centre and, if desired, the player announces out loud what the piece is. The other players have an opportunity to seize the discarded tile; if no one takes it, the turn continues to the next player. Play continues this way until one player has a legal winning hand and **calls out the win** while revealing their hand.

There are different ways that regular order of play can be interrupted:

1. A bonus tile (flower or season) is drawn
2. A meld (pong, kong, or chow) is made from a discard
3. Going mahjong (declaring a winning hand)

During play, each player's hand should always be 13 tiles (meaning in each turn a tile must be picked up and another discarded). The count of 13 tiles do not include any bonus tiles (flowers and seasons), which are set to the side, nor does it include the fourth added piece of a kong. If a player has fewer or more than 13 tiles in their hand outside of their turn, they are penalised by being unable to win the hand.

## Legal hand

A winning hand consists of 14 tiles. Since players always have 13 tiles in their hand during play, they must win by either drawing a piece from the wall that completes a 14-tile hand ("winning from the wall") or claiming a discard from another player which completes a 14-tile hand ("winning by discard"). The winning hand is made of **four melds** (a specific pattern of three pieces) and **the eyes** (a pair of identical pieces). (Kong replacement tiles are included as if a 3-tile meld.)

## Melds

**Melds** are groups of tiles within the player's hand, consisting of either a pong (three identical tiles), a kong (four identical tiles), a chow (three suited tiles all of the same suit, in numerical sequence), or eyes (two identical tiles needed in a winning hand). Melds may be formed by drawing a tile from the wall, or by seizing another player's discard. There are rules governing which player has priority for a discard, and whether the meld should be exposed (displayed to all players) or remain concealed, depending on the manner in which the meld is formed.

- A **pong** is a set of three identical tiles. For example:





A pong may be formed with any suited or honors tile. Bonus tiles (flowers or seasons) cannot be used to form a pong because they are set aside and there are not three identical bonus tiles in the set. The tiles must be identical (not of different suits). A pong may either be concealed (formed by drawing tiles) or exposed (formed by seizing another player's discard).

- A **kong** is a complete set of four identical tiles. For example:

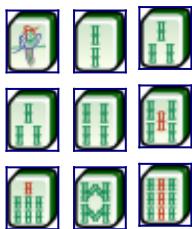


Consider a kong the same as a pong with an additional tile to make a complete set of four. There are three ways to form a kong.

1. *Concealed kong* – If a player holds three matching tiles (concealed pong) and upon drawing a tile completes a set of four they may declare a kong. They do so by revealing the meld and placing two pieces in the middle face up and two pieces on the ends face down. (Natural)
2. *Exposed kong* – If a player can use a discarded tile to complete three matching tiles (concealed pong) in their hand, they can take the piece and reveal an "exposed kong" or "melded kong". All pieces are placed face up.
3. *Exposed kong from exposed pong* – If a player already has a melded pong and then later in the game draws the fourth piece from the wall, they may announce (then or later in the game) a kong by placing two pieces in the middle face up and two pieces on the ends face down. (Natural) If a pong has been melded a player cannot steal the fourth piece if another player discards it – it must be drawn.

Whenever a kong is formed, that player must draw an extra tile from the end of the wall and then discard a tile. The fourth piece of a kong is not considered one of the 13 tiles a player must always have in their hand. A kong may not be formed from bonus tiles (flowers/seasons), since the set does not include four identical tiles. Kongs are worth collecting to score more points and deprive opponents of the opportunity to obtain specific tiles.

- A **chow** is a meld of three suited tiles in sequence. For example:





The meld must be in absolute numerical sequence and all in the same suit. Players cannot skip numbers or meld from the 8 or 9 to 1 or 2. Honors tiles cannot be used to make chows because they have no numerical value, and bonus tiles (flowers and seasons) also cannot be used to make a chow.

A player can steal a discard to form a chow only from the player whose turn was immediately before theirs; however, a player forming a chow from a seized piece has the lowest priority for that tile. Any other player who needs that tile to make a pong, make a kong, or to win may seize that piece instead. Like the pong, the chow is either concealed (formed by drawing tiles) or exposed (formed by seizing the prior player's discard).

- **Eyes** (also known as a pair) are two identical tiles which are an essential part of a legal winning hand. A piece cannot be stolen (melded) to form a pair of eyes unless the player simultaneously completes a legal winning hand.[\[9\]](#) For example:



## Interruption of play

The regular counter-clockwise order of turns may be interrupted for four events:

### 1. Flower or season

Whenever a player draws a flower or season, it is announced and then placed to the side (it is not considered a part of the 13-tile hand, but in the event that player wins, they may earn bonus points for them) and the last tile of the wall is drawn as a replacement tile so that the player has the 14 pieces needed before their discard. This may happen successively in a player's turn.

### 2. Melding another player's discard

When a player discards a tile, other players may steal the tile to complete a meld. Stealing tiles has both advantages (quickly forming a winning hand and scoring extra points) and disadvantages (being forced to reveal part of one's hand to other players and not being able to change the meld once declared).

When a meld (pong, kong, or chow) is declared through a discard, the player must state the type of meld to be declared and expose the meld by placing the three (or four) tiles face up. The player must then discard a tile, and play continues to the right. If the player who melds a discard is not directly after the

discarder (in order of play), one or two players will essentially miss their turn as play continues counter-clockwise from the player who declared the meld.

If multiple players call for a discarded tile, priority for the discard depends on the declared action of the player stealing the discard.

1. Highest priority goes to the player who needs the discarded tile to win the hand. A player may take the tile to win the hand from any other player.
2. Next priority goes to the player who declares a pong or kong using the discard. A player who calls for a pong or kong may take the discard from any other player. Only one player can be in this position because there are only four of any tile in a mahjong set.
3. Last priority goes to the player who declares a chow using the discard. Players may only call for a chow from the discard of the player immediately prior to them unless the tile is the final one required to win the hand.

### **3. Winning a hand**

The act of winning a hand interrupts play to assess the validity of the hand won. Upon confirmation, the player is awarded the hand's value per the specific game's rule. "Mahjong"

#### **From a discard**

If at any point in the game a player can use another player's discard to complete a legal hand, they declare a win and reveal their winning hand. This ends the hand, and scoring commences. If more than one player can use a discard to win the hand, multiple ways can handle the situation based on agreed table rules; in this version, kong outranks a chow, and a pong outranks a pair.

#### **From the wall**

Alternatively, a player may also win by drawing a tile that completes a legal hand. This is called "winning from the wall".

#### **Repeated hands**

If East wins the hand, they will remain East, and an extra hand is played in addition to the minimum 16 hands in a match, if a minimum game length is agreed upon.

An extra hand is also played if there is no winner by the time all the tiles in the wall have been drawn. When there is no winner it is known as a "goulash hand" or "stale".

#### **Rhythm of play**

Players may agree on table rules if the pace of the game is brisk or leisurely. For brisk games, players may agree that a couple seconds after a discard are allowed for a "window of opportunity" before the next player picks up from the wall. Usually it is agreed once the next player has waited the duration of the "window of opportunity" and draws a tile from the wall, the previous discard is lost and cannot be claimed.

## Scoring

Scoring is simple, and does not refer to faan points. All players score their hands, and the points are recorded. Most common recording is done by one player with a pen and sheet of paper.

### Concealed vs. revealed meld and hand

A concealed meld is one that contains no tiles stolen from another player's discard. In most mahjong variations having a concealed hand can be valuable in scoring.

Meld summary								
Meld Type	Quantity	Eligible tiles			When completed by ...			Seizing a discard
		Suited	Honors	Bonus	Drawing			
Pong	3 (identical set)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Concealed			Exposed
Kong	4 (identical set)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Concealed (add to concealed pong) Exposed from exposed (add to exposed pong)			Exposed (add to concealed pong)
Chow	3 (consecutive within suit)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Concealed			Exposed (only from preceding player)
Eyes	2 (identical set)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	For the win, if hand has sufficient value			Only permitted to complete a winning hand

**Counting Points** – Note: 1s and 9s of a suit are considered Honors for points

Scoring summary					
	Quantity	Points for meld			Drawn/Natural
		Suited	Honors	Bonus	
Pong	3 (identical set)	2	4	0	Doubled
Kong	4 (identical set)	8	16	0	Doubled
Chow	3 (consecutive within suit)	0	0	0	
Eyes	2 (identical set)	0	2	0	
Season or Flower	Each			4	

\*\*\* Winner of the round **adds 20 points**. \*\*\*

## **Counting Doubles**

After totaling points, count the doubling. (See chart below for quick doubling.)

For each of these, add one double:

- East and won round
- Dragon
- Own Wind
- Wind of the Round
- Single suit, with honors/winds (“clean”)
- Single suit without honors or winds, count 3 doubles (“pure”)
- Own Flower or Season
- All Seasons or all Flowers, count 2 doubles

## **Game Over**

The game is over as determined by the players. They may, at the beginning, agree to 16 rounds (not counting stale hands), or they may play open-ended and come to an agreement at some point of, “Let’s play two more hands and call it a night.”

## **Tournament Play**

Where multiple tables are run, there will be adjustments to the play, such as:

- The winner of a hand moves to the next table
- Where a hand stales, N moves to the next table
- Recording of points in each hand of each player may be on a large whiteboard.

### Doubling Chart

	Points	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26
Doubling Rules	1	8	12	16	20	24	28	32	36	40	44	48	52
	2	16	24	32	40	48	56	64	72	80	88	96	104
	3	32	48	64	80	96	112	128	144	160	176	192	208
	4	64	96	128	160	192	224	256	288	320	352	384	416
	5	128	192	256	320	384	448	512	576	640	704	768	832
	6	256	384	512	64	768	896	1024	1152	1280	1408	1536	1664
	Points	28	30	32	34	36	38	40	42	44	46	48	50
Doubling Rules	1	56	60	64	68	72	76	80	84	88	92	96	100
	2	112	120	128	136	144	152	160	168	176	184	192	200
	3	224	240	256	272	288	304	320	336	352	368	384	400
	4	448	480	512	544	576	608	640	672	704	736	768	800
	5	896	960	1024	1088	1152	1216	1280	14344	1408	1472	1536	1600
	6	1792	1920	2048	2176	2304	24362	2560	2688	2816	2944	3072	36200
	Points	52	54	56	58	60	62	64	66	68	70	72	74
Doubling Rules	1	104	108	112	116	120	124	128	132	136	140	144	148
	2	208	216	224	232	240	248	256	264	272	280	288	296
	3	416	432	448	464	480	496	512	528	544	560	576	592
	4	832	864	896	928	960	9952	1024	1056	1088	1120	1152	1184
	5	1664	1728	1792	1856	1920	1984	2048	2112	2176	2240	2304	2368
	6	3328	3456	3584	3712	3840	3968	4096	4224	4352	4480	4608	4736

### Visual Reference

Numbers														
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9				
Dots														
Suits	Bamboo													
	Characters													
Winds														
Honors/Bonus	East													
	South													