

STANDARDIZED NATIONAL MAH JONGG TOURNAMENT RULES

1. THE CARD: All Players are required to display the NMJL card during tournament play. The CARD is considered necessary equipment; and it is a sign of courtesy to display the card during the official games.

2. COURTESY: *We sincerely value the quality and nature of our tournaments - played in a gracious and courteous manner. We have instituted a “ZERO TOLERANCE CODE” as it applies to inconsiderate, rude, or abusive players:*

A. Upon the first complaint, the offending player will be asked to refrain from discourteous activity;

B. If there is a 2nd complaint, the offending player will be disqualified, may be expelled from the tournament, and likely be dis-invited from participation in future tournaments.

C. At the end of each round, please do not sit around and talk. Please leave the room until the next round is ready to begin. At the discretion of the Director, players who stay in the room and disturb those still playing may be penalized.

D. It is discourteous to criticize your opponents' playing. Please do not push your opponents to play faster....until the final game of a round; in this situation time may be of the essence.

3. THE GAME BEGINS: Each player rotates roll of dice and breaking of wall, starting with player who rolls highest number - who is then designated as EAST. (**VARIATION:** A Player may be *pre-designated* as "EAST" [or "PLAYER- A," or "PIVOT" who then starts the game as EAST], and must roll the dice to arbitrarily break the wall.)

A. In the event of only 3 players at a tournament-game-table, on the fourth (4th)-and-last-game in the round, each player at the table will roll the dice once again to determine who is EAST for the last game. **Reminder:** *East has an advantage of having a 14th tile.*

B. The game does NOT BEGIN UNTIL EAST THROWS THE FIRST TILE. If another player throws a tile before East discards the 14th tile, the other player returns the tile to their rack and is not penalized.

C. YOUR TURN does not begin until you have TOUCHED the tile in the wall to BEGIN YOUR TURN –or- YOU TOUCH the discarded tile you are claiming for an exposure. However, PLEASE NOTE that an opponent may claim a previously discarded tile until such time as you have racked the tile from the wall; or have exposed your own claimed tile.

4. VERIFYING SCORES: "A" (EAST) will verify "C's" (WEST) scores and initial their official computer score card (or score sheet), and vice-versa. "B" (NORTH) will verify "D's" (SOUTH) scores and initial the official computer score card (or score sheet), and vice-versa. The scorekeeper will not accept any unverified scorecards or score sheets. **VARIATION:** In

games/tournaments where there is a designated EAST-SCOREKEEPER, then all game-scores will be verified by EAST.

5. CHARLESTON:

A. The First Charleston of 3 passes is compulsory* (Right-Over-Left **ROL**); the Second Charleston then proceeds if all players agree (Left-Over-Right **LOR**). **ROL LOR**

B. Any player may stop the passing after the first Charleston is completed. A player who wishes to stop the Charleston after the first pass should caution the other players in a timely manner, to not make the 2nd Left-pass. If no other player has **racked** any tiles from the 2nd Left-pass of the Charleston, then the 2nd Left-pass may be re-called by the player who wishes to stop the passing. A player can NOT deny another player who is requesting that the 2nd Left be stopped, merely because they have glanced at the passed tiles. The 2nd Left tiles **MUST** have been *racked*, for that player to deny another's request to "stop the Charleston." The Optional "across-Pass" may be completed.

C. *There is NO Charleston at a game-table of 3 PLAYERS in a Tournament.* For the 4th game, everyone rolls the dice *again* for East. This is to assure that everyone has an equal opportunity to get the benefit of the 14th tile that is accorded to East.

D. In the event of a so-called "HEAVENLY HAND" or "HOLE-IN-ONE" HAND (wherein, EAST has all 14 tiles that constitute a legitimate Mah Jongg hand), then EAST can STOP the required passing of the tiles for the Charleston at that point. In a tournament, East **NOT** receive additional points for a self-picked Mah Jongg.

E. If, on the first left pass or last right pass of the Charleston...all 4 players are waiting for the others to pass a third (blind) tile....then East (who has the advantage of the 14th tile) must complete the pass first.

6. STEALING A TILE (BLIND PASS): If you steal a tile during the Charleston, you can NOT look at it. If you look at it, you will be **PENALIZED MINUS 10 (-10)** points at the end of that game.

7. PICKING YOUR TILE:

A. Positively **NO PICKING AHEAD**. Each Player **MUST** first pick a tile before discarding a tile from their hand, or when exchanging a tile for a Joker in another player's exposure.

B. A Player *must* be declared "Dead" for picking ahead, or picking out of turn (also see Item 7E below).

C. A Player's turn begins when they **touch** the next tile in the wall (and subsequently **MUST** take that tile from the wall), or when they claim a discarded tile for their exposure. Please note that until such time as that tile is put into that player's rack or subsequently discarded, a previous discard may be claimed by another player

D. A Player may change their mind when claiming a discard; but if they **touched** that discard they **MUST** take and use that tile for their exposure.

E. When an opponent accidentally touches a tile from the wrong end of the wall or out of turn, it is polite to caution them of the error, *before* that tile is placed in their rack.

8. PICKING-AND-RACKING:

A. When a tile in the wall is **TOUCHED** by the next player (thereby indicating their intention to take that tile), the player must take that tile - their turn is considered started. *That player may NOT claim the previous discard.*

B. It is **NOT** required to *Pick-and-Rack in a Tournament*. **PLEASE NOTE:** *Some players have gotten into the habit of "PickingAndRacking" in one fast and continuous movement. This is considered unsporting and ungracious; thereby not giving that player's opponents a fair and timely opportunity to claim a previously discarded tile. Please make an effort to pause for a second between picking and racking your tiles.*

9. NUMBER OF TILES ON A PLAYERS RACK: There *should* be **13 tiles** on a player's rack. A player should be discouraged from picking with one hand-and discarding with the other hand. **However**, this is not (*yet*) an illegal Tournament-move. Also, a player may pick a tile, and place it in front of their rack (between the rack and the player), and then discard a tile to end their turn. This also is not (*yet*) an illegal Tournament move. However, **PLEASE NOTE:** that player takes the chance that the previously discarded tile will be claimed before their-picked-tile is placed in their rack - and their discarded tile is named and touches the table. Two-handed-picking-and-discarding is a clumsy and ungainly method of play; and could cause unnecessary dispute.

10. WRONG END OF THE WALL: If a player picks from the wrong wall –or- from the wrong end of the wall, then that player is “dead.” *However*, if the mistake is not discovered until after more than one player has picked from the wrong wall or the wrong end of the wall, then the game continues and players continue picking from that wall. This is to insure the continuity of the game.

A player who pushes their wall out must be aware of the fact that the their wall, and any subsequent remaining tiles, **MUST** be clearly alligned - so that all players are able to clearly see the additional tiles. A player will not be penalized if the wall-pusher has not pushed the wall out at the correct angle; or that remaining tiles are hidden from clear view.

11. REMAINING TAIL OF THE WALL: A player who pushes their wall out, must be aware of the fact that their wall and any subsequent **remaining tiles** **MUST** be clearly alligned - so that all players are able to clearly see the remaining tiles.

A. A player will **NOT** be penalized if they are unaware that there are unseen tiles remaining from the end of the previous wall; that the wall-pusher has not pushed the wall out at the correct angle; or that remaining tiles are hidden from view.

B. A player may turn the last tiles in the wall at right angles to the wall to “mark” the end of the wall.

12. DISCARDED TILE / CLAIMING A DISCARDED TILE: A DISCARDED TILE may be claimed for Mah Jongg or exposure, until such time as a subsequent player either **DISCARDS OR RACKS** the next tile. A tile is considered **RACKED** when it is placed *WITHIN* the rack, on the slanted edge of the rack; not on top of or in front of the rack. A tile is considered **DISCARDED** if it is named, or touches the table, or is placed on the table. Once a discarded tile has been “covered” by another discarded tile (even a JOKER), it cannot be claimed for an exposure or Mah Jongg.

1. A discarded tile should be claimed verbally *according to 2016 (revised) NMJL rules*; however, at this time, there is no published penalty for not verbally claiming the discarded tile.
2. A player **who PREMATURELY EXPOSES THEIR TILES BEFORE legitimately BEGINNING THEIR TURN BY CLAIMING AND LITERALLY TOUCHING AND RACKING THAT CLAIMED TILE FOR AN EXPOSURE** – *may lose that tile to another player who is adjacent to the discarder, and entitled to claim that discarded tile first. PLEASE NOTE: CAUTION: By exposing your tiles before legitimately starting your turn, you may be declared “dead.”* Also PLEASE NOTE: This Tournament “rule” is currently *not* a NMJL rule.
3. If a player claims a discarded tile for an exposure, and then exchanges a symbol tile from within their hand for a Joker in an opponent’s exposure, and declares Mah Jongg with that **NEW 14th** tile within their hand – then that Mah Jongg is a SELF-PICKED Mah Jongg.
4. If a player claims a discarded tile for an exposure, and then exchanges a tile from within their OWN HAND for a Joker from within their OWN HAND and declares Mah Jongg – then that Mah Jongg is NOT a SELF-PICKED Mah Jongg. **PLEASE NOTE:** The player *who moves around their own 14 tiles* (which already constitutes a full 14 tiles for Mah Jongg) does NOT get a “Self-Picked Mah Jongg” bonus.
5. *When a player begins to discard a tile, and discovers there is a Joker that can be exchanged for that tile....the player has clearly indicated their intent to discard - if that tile is named (even a fractional portion of the name); or if that tile has touched the table prior to the player verbally requesting to exchange for the Joker. FOR INSTANCE: “Seven Bam;” “Seven Ba;” “Seven;” “Sev;” “Se.” Once uttered, the tile can no longer be exchanged for a Joker in an opponent’s exposure.*
6. If 2 players simultaneously claim a discarded tile for an exposure, the player closest in succession to the discarder has first option to take that tile.
7. If 2 players simultaneously claim a discarded tile for Mah Jongg, the player closest in succession to the discarder has first option to take that tile.
8. If 2 players claim a discard NOT-simultaneously, and neither player has touched the claimed tile, then the player closest in succession to the discarder has first option to take that tile. **PLEASE SEE RULE 12 B above.**

13. SCORING: SCORING for each hand is same as on the current National Mah Jongg League (NMJL) Standard Hands and Rules card.

1. **PICK OWN MAH JONGG:** Add Ten points (**+10 POINTS**) to score when player picks own Mah Jongg
2. **NO-JOKER BONUS HAND:** Add Twenty Points (**+20 points**) to score when player declares Mah Jongg and there are no Jokers in the hand. Exception: There is no bonus given on any of the hands listed under the Singles - Pairs Group.
3. **WALL GAME:** Add ten points (**+10 points**) to each player's score for a "Wall" game.
4. **INCOMPLETE GAME:** If a game is not completed within designated time, each player receives "**ZERO.**" NO POINTS GIVEN. If a player's hand goes "dead", or is declared "dead", player does not get ten points even if it is a "Wall" game. Dead player gets minus ten (-10).
5. **PENALTY:** Minus -10 points (**-10 POINTS**) to a player who throws winning tile to player who has *no exposures on rack or who has one (1) exposure on rack.*
6. **PENALTY:** Minus -20 points (**-20 POINTS**) to player who throws winning tile to player who *has two (2) exposures on rack.*
7. **PENALTY:** Minus -25 points (**-25 POINTS**) to player who throws winning tile to player who has *three (3) exposures on rack*
8. **PENALTY:** *Minus -25 Points (-25) for player who MISNAMES discarded tile that gives Mah Jongg to their opponent*
9. **PENALTY:** Minus -10 Points (**-10**) for "**dead**" player in Wall Game. **PENALTY:** Minus -25 Points (**-25**) for player who MISNAMES discarded tile that gives Mah Jongg to their opponent.
10. **PENALTY:** Minus -10 Points (**-10**) for "**dead**" player **EXCEPTION: ZERO (0)** if you erroneously declare another player's hand "dead."
11. **PENALTY:** ZERO (0) for "dead" player who **erroneously declared** another player's hand "dead."
12. A "**HEAVENLY HAND**" does **NOT** receive bonus points for a self-picked Mah Jongg. (In a game of skill, strategy and challenge, tournaments do not award bonuses for "luck.")

14. DEAD HAND: If a player's hand goes "**Dead,**" or is declared "**Dead,**" player gets **MINUS TEN (-10)** - even if it is a "Wall Game." You can be declared "**Dead**" for: *(not a complete list)*

A. a. picking ahead;

B. discarding before picking;

C. exchanging for a joker before picking;

D. "**Dead**" **MINUS -10 POINTS (-10);**

E.. You **MAY NOT** declare *yourself* "Dead.

F. "**EXCEPTION: ZERO (0)** for Player who erroneously declares another player's hand "dead." This player will cease playing, and receive ZERO (0) at the end of the game.

15. MIS-NAMED TILE:

A. If the mis-named discarded tile is claimed for an EXPOSURE, and the discarder **has the correct tile in their hand**, then the correct tile **MUST** be discarded in place of the incorrect tile. If necessary, contact the Director to ascertain that the correct tile is/is not in the discarder's hand. PLEASE NOTE: This Tournament "rule" is currently *not* a NMJL rule.

B. the discarder does not have the correct tile in their hand, the game proceeds, following the correct naming of the tile. No penalty to the discarder.

C. The MIS-NAMED discarded tile may be claimed for MAH JONGG. The discarder is penalized the appropriate amount of points, **PENALTY: Minus -25 Points**

D. If a player claims a mis-named tile for an exposure, and the discarder does not have the correct tile in their hand - and the claimer **prematurely exposes** their tiles before touching and exposing the claimed tile -and discovers they have exposed the incorrect tiles....then the exposure **must USE that discarded tile in an exposure. If the exposer can not use that tile, then the exposer's hand is dead. CAUTION: Check the table. Make sure the tile you are claiming is the tile you need. Do NOT expose your tiles before ascertaining that you are claiming the correct tile.**

16. EXPOSING IN ERROR:

A. If a tile is claimed for an exposure, and it is touched by the player who claims the tile, it **MUST BE USED** in an exposure. PLEASE NOTE: This Tournament "rule" is currently *not* a NMJL rule.

B. If a mis-named tile is claimed for an exposure, the discarder must provide the correct tile if it is in their hand. If the discarder does not have the correct tile in their hand, the game proceeds. PLEASE NOTE: This Tournament "rule" is currently *not* a NMJL rule.

C. If the claimer has **PREMATURELY EXPOSED THEIR TILES**, before ascertaining that the discarded tile was mis-named, then the exposer **must use the tile** that was discarded in an exposure. If unable to use the tile, then claimer's hand is "dead." (*STRATEGY NOTE: Player who prematurely exposed may use the discarded claimed tile in any way, in order to not be declared dead. For example, you may use 2 jokers with the claimed discard, and change your hand accordingly*).

D. Incorrect exposures may be corrected during the player's original turn, (e.g., a pung to a kong, or a quint, or back again; moving tiles on and off the exposure ledge of the rack, until such time as the exposer has discarded a tile to end their turn. If a player claims a tile and makes an exposure, and then that player mistakenly makes an additional but separate exposure, and then discards to end their turn - then that player's hand must be declared "dead." If that player has not discarded a tile to end their turn, then the player may remove the additional incorrect exposure, and continue to play.

E. If a player claims a mis-named tile for an exposure, and the discarder does not have the correct tile in their hand - and the claimer prematurely exposes their tiles before touching and

exposing the claimed tile -and discovers they have exposed the incorrect tiles....then the exposure **must USE that discarded tile in an exposure. If the exposer can not use that tile, then the exposer's hand is dead. CAUTION:** *Check the table. Make sure the tile you are claiming is the tile you need. Do NOT expose your tiles before ascertaining that you are claiming the correct tile.*

17. MAH JONGG IN ERROR:

A. There is no penalty for verbally *claiming* Mah Jongg in error.

B. If a player claims Mah Jongg in error, and displays or exposes any of the tiles in the hand, then player is “dead,” and receives **ZERO** points. **HOWEVER.** Please Note: if a player has claimed a discard and has begun to make an exposure with the claimed tile - and also has declared Mah Jongg....**BUT DOES NOT expose any other tiles other than the exposure with the claimed tile** if they realize they do not have Mah Jongg, then that player can continue to play. CAUTION: Only the exposure containing the claimed tile may be exposed during player’s turn (and no other subsequent tiles from the rack of the claimer)

C. If a player who has been playing an exposed hand calls Mah Jongg or exposes in error, any exposures made BEFORE the error stay on top of rack, and any player may redeem and JOKER or Jokers when it is their turn. Player with erring hand is dead and stops picking and discarding.

D. If Mah Jongg is called in error, and three other players expose their hands, all get "ZERO" (0) points. If one person does not expose hand, that player gets ten (10) points... everyone else gets "ZERO" (0) points. If Mah Jongg is called in error and two or more hands are intact, game continues.

E. If a concealed hand is incorrectly exposed for Mah Jongg, tiles must be returned to rack. Joker or Jokers cannot be redeemed and player stops picking and discarding.

18. EXPOSING A CLAIMED DISCARD FOR AN EXPOSURE OR MAH JONGG: Player claiming a tile for an exposure or Mah Jongg must place the tile **ON TOP** of their rack, not in their rack. A player’s hand should be declared “dead,” for putting the claimed tile **in** the rack. Known as “**continuation of line of sight,**” this is to assure that the claimed tile is indeed the tile that was discarded; and allows verification of the actual tile by the other players. (Please check with the NMJL for their current guidelines in this matter for social games)

19. JOKERS:

A. Prior to exchanging a tile for an exposed Joker on another player’s rack, a player must pick a tile from the wall to start their turn; or have picked up a claimed tile and built their exposure.

B. Exposed JOKERS from a “dead” hand may be exchanged, provided the exposure was a correct exposure that was made prior to the exposed player being declared “dead;” in other words, that Joker-exposure was not the reason for the exposed-player being declared “dead.”

C. A player may NOT exchange for an opponent's Joker in order to complete their exposure with the recently claimed discarded tile.

D. *When a player begins to discard a tile, and discovers there is a Joker that can be exchanged for that tile....the player has indicated their intent to discard if that tile is named (even a fractional portion of the name); or if that tile has touched the table prior to the player verbally requesting to exchange for the Joker. FOR INSTANCE: "Seven Bam; Seven Ba; Seven; Sev; Se." Once uttered, the tile can no longer be exchanged for a Joker in an opponent's exposure.*

20. MIS-CLAIMING A TILE: A player may claim a tile and then decide not to take that tile, provided they have NOT touched OR exposed the tile, or have NOT exposed any tiles from their hand. They may change their mind with no penalty.

21. DISPLAYING YOUR MAH JONGG HAND: When declaring Mah Jongg, the hand should be displayed as it appears on the Mah Jongg Card. If you do not display the hand in proper order, and another player asks you to do so..... you must do so. If you refuse, your hand may be declared dead and the game will continue.

PLEASE NOTE: You do NOT need to place your exposures in order during actual play of the game.

22. SIMULTANEOUS SITUATIONS: Sometimes a tile may be claimed at the same time as another player racks or discards their next tile. This comes under the "Mah Jongg Rule of Simultaneous Occurrence," also known as "Interception," "Precedence of Claims," and "Concurrency." In this event, the claimant will receive the benefit of the doubt. Please contact the Director for the official ruling in this matter.

23. TIME LIMIT: Approximately one (1) hour is allotted for each round. At the discretion of the Tournament Director, some tournaments may allow 50-55 minutes. After four (4) games (a round), one player collects score cards and brings all four (4) of them to Director's table. All four score cards or sheets must be handed in together.

24. TABLE ROTATION: Rotating to a new table after every four (4) games is a standard process for tournament play. **PLAYER MOVEMENT:**

- If you are sitting in an "A" (EAST) Seat – Go UP 1 table after each round
- If you are sitting in a "B" (NORTH) Seat – Go DOWN 1 table after each round
- If you are sitting in a "C" (WEST) Seat – Go UP 2 tables after each round
- If you are sitting in a "D" (SOUTH) seat – Go DOWN 2 tables after each round

25. SUBMITTING SCORE CARDS AND SHEETS:

MAKE SURE THAT ALL SCORES ARE VERIFIED AND SIGNED. DO NOT LEAVE THE ROOM BEFORE YOU SUBMIT THE SCORE CARDS OR SCORE SHEETS TO THE SCOREKEEPER. THE COLLECTOR FOR EACH SESSION IS RESPONSIBLE FOR SUBMITTING ALL 4 CARDS TOGETHER! VARIATION: Table-score-keeper (sometimes EAST) will submit all scores to the Director.

- 1st session player "A" (EAST) will collect ALL 4 CARDS or sheets and turn them in to official scorekeeper.
- 2nd session player "B" (NORTH) will collect ALL 4 CARDS or sheets and turn them in to official scorekeeper.
- 3rd session player "C" (WEST) will collect ALL 4 CARDS or sheets and turn them in to official scorekeeper.
- 4th session player "D" (SOUTH) will collect ALL 4 CARDS or sheets and turn them in to official scorekeeper.

26. CHANGES TO SCORES will not be made once the score cards or score sheets have been accepted for scoring by the computer (or the Director). In the event of dispute, all four (4) players should be present for verification with the Director.

27 . TOURNAMENTS by their very nature are notably more structured than social games; standards and rulings are closely adhered to, in order to avoid errors. If a question arises during play, **DIRECTOR'S RULING** will be final. All decisions made by the Director shall be based on these rules and the Director's personal judgment. Arguing with the Director may be grounds for immediate disqualification. Any question about scoring or rules should be addressed by the Director and not by the players. Do not attempt to make rulings that are within the purview of the Director. Remember, if you resolve a question of rules or scoring at your table, there can be no recourse to the Director. Only the Director is authorized to arbitrate any dispute as to rules or scoring.

****PLEASE NOTE: The OFFICIAL STANDARDIZED NATIONAL MAH JONGG RULES FOR TOURNAMENTS herein - reflect a studied, logical, and fair approach and fair approach to achieving an equitable and level playing field in Mah Jongg Tournaments. In some instances, the player will notice that the rules compiled by the National Mah Jongg League NMJL for social and home games, may somewhat differ. ****