SIMPLIFIED MAHJONG RULES

A streamlined and simplified version of Mahjong for 4 players

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INTRODUCTION

Mahjong is a Chinese game that is over a hundred years old. As its popularity spread to other nations, many variants arose. Some were elaborate setup protocols borne of cultural traditions. Others added complex combinations, exceptions, and meld types to facilitate gambling. However, this rule set focuses on the core essentials of the Chinese version in a streamlined format.

QUICK PLAY GUIDE

SETUP

1. Walls are 2x18 and arranged in a square
2. Dealer (East Wind) rolls to select wall
3. Player at selected wall rolls to determine opening
4. Dealer distributes 2x2 stacks until players have 12, then 1 more (hand + melds must always be 13 tiles)
5. Stack at the end is used to make Loose Tiles: i.e., 2 stacks of 3 tiles tall.

TURN STRUCTURE

1. Draw a tile
2. Optionally lay down meld(s), and if possible, end the round with a closed pair (Eyes/Woo)
   a. Open Melds use a single discard. Closed Melds are all self-drawn tiles.
   b. Chow: 3 tiles of same suit in numerical sequence
      i. Open Chow must be last discard by player to the left
      ii. Only suits (not Winds, Dragons, or Flowers)
   c. Poong: 3 of a kind. Takes precedence over a Chow.
   d. Kong: 4 of a kind
      i. Count as if were 3 tiles for melds+hand=13 requirement
      ii. Draw a Loose Tile from the end of the wall
   e. Eyes: Closed pair of identical tiles
3. Discard
4. Opponents may optionally Open Meld using that last discard and then either discard or Woo. Once a player draws from the wall, the discard can no longer be used.
5. If the round has not ended due to a Woo, play resumes with the player clockwise from the player who last discarded.

GAME STRUCTURE

1. Players take turns until someone Woos or there is a draw (only 14 tiles remain in the wall).
2. Winner of the round becomes the next Dealer and is the East Wind position
3. Game ends after the 8th round

COMPONENTS

TILES

Mahjong blocks are known as tiles. There are 144 tiles in a full set, and they fall into 4 categories:

SUITS

There are 3 suits: Bamboo, Circle, and Character. Each suit contains 4 copies of tiles number from 1 to 9, giving 36 tiles per suit, or 108 total. Take special note of the 1 of Bamboo, which depicts a parrot or sparrow sitting on a bamboo shoot.

TERMINALS VERSUS SIMPLES

The 1 and 9 tiles of all Suits (i.e., Bamboo, Circle, and Character) are called Terminals. Suit tiles between 2 and 8 are called Simples. These terms do not apply to Flower tiles, even though they may be numbered.

HONORS

There are 2 Honor type tiles

WINDS

There are 4 copies of each of the 4 Winds (North, South, East, and West) for a total of 16 Wind tiles. The four seat positions at a Mahjong table also have corresponding names, with the dealer always being the East Wind. Special bonuses can apply to hands using a player's corresponding Wind tile.

DRAGONS

There are 4 copies of each of the 3 Dragons (Red, White, and Green) for a total of 12 Dragon tiles.

FLOWERS

Optionally, a Mahjong set may have one or two sets of Flower tiles. Each set may be numbered 1 to 4 and may represent the seasons, winds, and/or professions (see table below):

Number	Season	Wind	Worker
1	Spring	East	Fisherman
2	Summer	South	Woodcutter
3	Autumn	West	Famer
4	Winter	North	Scholar

MISCELLANEOUS

DICE

A pair of six-sided dice are used at the beginning of each round.

MINGG

An optional Mingg, or Wind Disc, can be used to track rounds and player cardinal positions.

COUNTERS

Optional counters may be used to track scores. A typical set of counters would include denominations of 2 (36 each), 4 (40 each), 8 (36 each), and 12 (8 each). Traditionally these counters are long, flat, sticks with rounded ends with black and/or red dots.

SETUP

1. Randomly select a dealer. The dealer's seat represents the East Wind position.
2. Shuffle tiles and then each player creates a wall of tiles that is 2 tiles tall and 18 tile stacks wide.
3. Push the assembled walls into the center of the table to form a square
4. Dealer rolls one die inside the walls. Counting from his seat, clockwise, it indicates which wall will be broken open to form the gate (start and end).
5. The player in front of the chosen wall rolls both dice inside the walls. Sum the dice and count clockwise that many stacks. Remove the selected stack from the wall to be the Loose Tiles.
   a. The end of the wall is counterclockwise from the stack just removed.
   b. These 2 tiles are known as Loose Tiles and are used when Flowers and Kongs are played.
   c. Loose Tiles are placed on top of the wall at the end of the wall (i.e., last 2 stacks are 3 tiles tall).
   d. If both Loose Tiles are depleted, the 2 tiles in stack at the end of the wall become the Loose Tiles and are stacked so the wall ends with 2 stacks 3 tiles tall). That is, the bottom tile goes at the very end of the wall, and the top tile goes on the next stack counterclockwise.
6. The dealer distributes tiles, 2 stacks at a time (i.e., 4 tiles) clockwise to each player starting with the South Wind. Repeat until each player has 3 of three of these pile (i.e., 12 tiles). Then continue the distribution 1 tile at a time until all other players have 13 tiles.
7. Players stand their tiles up so only they can see their faces. Be aware rearranging and grouping tiles provides information to your opponents.

GAME PLAY

TURN STRUCTURE

Start with the dealer and taking turn clockwise.

1. Draw a tile from the beginning of the wall
2. Optionally play (lay down) one or more Closed Melds (set collections).
3. Discard a tile (unless it is player's final meld: see Eyes/Woo) faceup inside the wall. For new players, it helps to learn the pieces if players verbally declare the name of the tile being discarded.
4. Opponents may optionally Open Meld using the last discarded tile
   a. The last discard is only available until the next player draws from the wall. Thereafter it is considered "dead" and can no longer be taken to form a meld.
   b. The discard taken must be used to complete a meld. It cannot be added to a hand to be used later.
   c. Announce the name of the meld action (i.e., "Poong!" or "Chow!")
   d. The player making the Open Meld must afterwards discard (i.e., their melds plus hand remain at 13 tiles) or else Woo.
5. If the round has not ended due to a Woo, play resumes with the player clockwise from the player who last discarded. That is, an Open Meld can disrupt the normal player sequence.
6. If the wall is reduced to only 14 tiles, including Loose Tiles, the round ends in a draw and not scored.
7. The tiles of all players are scored, including melds still hidden in a player's hand.

MELDS

Melding means to play set collections of tiles from your hand. The tiles removed from your hand and are laid down, side-by-side, so the melds are visible to the other players.

OPEN VERSUS CLOSED

A Closed Meld is composed of tiles exclusively drawn from the wall by the player. While an Open Meld contains a meld using a discard by another player. Open Melds are indicated by placing all tiles faceup, while a Closed Meld has the center tile facedown. Closed Melds typically score higher than Open Melds. Open Melds can only be made from a discard just made.

PRECEDENCE

When multiple players are in contention for the last discard, the following takes precedence:

- Poong or Kong takes precedence over a Chow
- A discard used to Woo takes precedence over all other melds

CHOW

A Chow is a numerical sequence of 3 tiles of the same suit. That is, Bamboo, Circle, or Character. If the meld uses a Terminal (i.e., a 1 or a 9), it typically scores higher. Honor and Flower tiles cannot be used to form a Chow.

Chow to the LEFT

An Open Chow can only be formed from the last discard made by the player to their immediate left.

POONG

A Poong is a set collection of 3 identical tiles (Suits or Honors only). An Open Poong can only be melded from a single discard. Only a Closed Poong can be upgraded to a Closed or Open Kong.

KONG

A Kong is a set collection of 4 identical tiles (Suits or Honors only). Although it is comprised of 4 tiles, it only counts as 3 towards your tile limit of 13. Therefore, 3 of the tiles are placed side by side, with the fourth tile stacked on top of the middle tile. This fourth tile is placed faceup if melded from a discard, otherwise it is placed facedown to indicate a Closed Kong.

Since the Kong counts as 3 tiles, replace the fourth tile to your hand by drawing a Loose Tile from the end of the wall. Rebuild the end of the wall as necessary.

EYES / WOO

The final meld(s) that plays down the remainder of a hand is called a Woo. You do not discard when you Woo, so the tile count will be 14 (do not count Flowers, and Kongs count as 3 instead of 4 tiles). The Woo includes one, and only one, special meld called Eyes. Eyes can only be played when you Woo. And it must be comprised of a closed pair of identical tiles (excluding Flower tiles). Since Eyes must be self-drawn, it is advisable to have the pair in hand before making your last Chow, Poong, or Kong.

FLOWERS

Lay down bonus Flower tiles at the start of your turn or when drawn. Since Flowers do not count towards your hand limit of 13, replace them with a Loose Tile from the end of the wall. Rebuilding the end of the wall as necessary.

END GAME

A typical game consists of 8 rounds, giving each player a chance to be dealer

SCORING

IN GENERAL

- Closed Melds are worth more points that Open Melds
- Terminals (1 and 9) in a meld are worth more points than those without a Terminal
- Honors are worth more points than Suits of the same meld type
- The player that ended the round (Woo) receives bonus points
- Scoring is capped at 300 points per round

BASE SCORE

All players score their hands, both melded and unplayed melds, according to the table below.

Meld Type	State	Simples (2 to 8)	Terminals (1 or 9)	Player's Wind	Other Winds	Dragons
Chow	Open	0	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Chow	Closed	0	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Poong	Open	2	4	4 †	4	4 †
Poong	Closed	4	8	8 †	8	8 †
Kong	Open	8	16	16 †	16	16 †
Kong	Closed	16	32	32 †	32	32 †
Eyes	Closed	0	0	2	0	2

- A bonus of 10 points is then added to the player's base score for the Woo.
- Flowers are worth 4 points each.

DOUBLING

A player's base score is doubled for each occurrence of any of the following melds, either played or unplayed. These are marked with † in the table above.

- Poong or Kong of the player's own Wind
- Poong or Kong of any Dragon tile
- Each flower corresponding to their Wind doubles their total score:

Number	Season	Wind	Worker
1	Spring	East	Fisherman
2	Summer	South	Woodcutter
3	Autumn	West	Famer
4	Winter	North	Scholar

WOO BONUSES

Only players that Woo are eligible for these bonuses

- Player Woos without any Chows: 10 points
- Player Woos using Loose Tile after a Kong: 10 points
- Player Woos using last tile before a draw (exactly 14 tiles remain in wall): 10 points
- Player Woos using a tile drawn from the wall: 2 points
- Player Woos using a tile drawn from the wall gets 10 points if that tile was used in
    - Eyes
    - Middle tile in a Closed Chow
    - Terminal tile in a Closed Chow
- Dealer Woos on first drawn tile of the round: Score is set to cap (300).
- Player Woos on first discarded tile of the round: 150 points
- Player Woos with only one Suit type (no Honor tiles): Double base score 3 times. For example, if the player has only the Bamboo suit and has a base score of 18 it becomes 144 (i.e., 18*2*2*2).
- Player Woos with only one Suit type and Honor tiles: Double the base score.
- Player Woos with all Honor tiles: Score is set to cap (300).

WINNING

The player with the highest score wins the game.

GLOSSARY

Chow:	Meld of 3 consecutively numbered tiles of the same Suit
Closed:	A meld formed without using any discard tiles
Honors:	Wind or Dragon tiles. There are 4 of each.
Kong:	Meld of 4 identical tiles (Suits or Honors)
Loose Tiles:	Tiles set atop the end of the wall and used to replenish a hand after playing a Flower or Kong.
Meld:	A set collection of tiles of the same suit or type, that have been played from a hand. Valid melds are Chow, Poong, Kung, or Eyes.
Open:	A meld formed using a discard tile.
Poong:	Meld of 3 identical tiles (Suits or Honors)
Simples:	Suit tiles with a number between 2 and 8 (contrasted with Terminals).
Suits:	Bamboo, Circle, or Character tiles which are numbered 1 to 9. There are 4 copies of every Suit tile.
Terminals:	Suit tiles numbered with 1 or 9 (contrasted with Simples).
Woo:	To lay down the remainder of your hand (also known as "going out"). This must include one and only one closed pair. This will make a tableau of 14 tiles (do not count Flowers, and Kongs count as 3 instead of 4 tiles).