one of the most popular styles

Hong Kong Mahjong at a Glance

Mahjong Tilework
Updated October 3, 2026

Agree these before the first hand

1. **Flowers** — In for 144 tiles, out for 136.
2. **The minimum** — What a hand must be worth. Often 3 faan.
3. **Who pays** — The discarder alone, or all three.
4. **The faan list** — Which patterns score what, and the limit.
5. **Special hands** — Which ones your table recognizes.



Chow
Three in a row, one suit



Pung
Three alike



Kong
Four alike, one set



Pair
Two alike, to finish

The tiles

- 136 tiles: three suits numbered 1 to 9, four winds and three dragons, four of each.
- A full set adds four flowers and four seasons for 144. They are optional, and many groups leave them out.
- No jokers.
- Draw a flower or season and it does not stay in your hand: show it, set it aside, take a replacement from the dead wall, and again if that is another one. The one numbered for your seat scores a faan.

Setting up

- Shuffle face down. Each player builds a wall two tiles high: 18 stacks with the bonus tiles in, 17 without. Push the four walls into a square.
- Dice decide where the wall is broken. The published rules describe different ways of counting it, so use your table's.
- The stacks to the right of the break are the dead wall, the supply replacement tiles come from. Fourteen is a common number to hold back.

The deal

- From the break, going counterclockwise, take four tiles at a time until everyone holds 12.
- The dealer then takes two more and the others one each: 14 tiles for the dealer, 13 for everyone else.
- That 14th tile is dealt, not drawn, so the dealer's first turn is a discard and nothing else.
- Before that discard, anyone holding a flower or season shows it and takes a replacement.

A turn

- Draw the next tile from the wall, then discard one face up in the middle.
- 13 tiles between turns, 14 during your own.
- Play moves counterclockwise, to the player on your right.

Claiming a discard

- Only the tile just discarded, and only to complete a set or to win.
- Call it, take the tile, lay the set face up, discard. Play carries on from you, so players in between lose a turn.
- **Order:** a win beats a pung or kong, which beats a chow.
- A chow can be claimed only from the player on your left.
- A pair can be claimed only for the tile that wins the hand.

Kongs

- A kong is four alike and still counts as one set, so take a replacement tile from the dead wall, then discard.
- You may add a fourth tile to a pung you have exposed, but only a tile you drew yourself.
- If that added tile finishes another player's hand, they may take it and win. That is robbing the kong.

Winning

- Four sets and a pair, 14 tiles. The sets can be chows, pungs or kongs in any mixture.
- A few special hands win with another shape, thirteen orphans among them. Tables differ on which count.
- A complete hand also has to be worth the table's minimum, or it cannot be declared.
- If the wall runs out first, nobody wins the hand.

Scoring and paying

- Hands score faan for their patterns: your own flower, a set of the round's wind, one suit throughout, robbing a kong, and so on.
- Each faan roughly doubles the payment, up to a limit the table sets, often 10 faan, sometimes 13.
- Only the winner is paid. Either the discarder pays it all, or all three pay with the discarder paying double.
- Win on a tile you drew yourself and all three pay.

Dealer and rounds

- The dealer keeps the deal after winning, and usually after a drawn hand. Otherwise it passes to the right.
- A game is four rounds named East, South, West and North, which takes at least 16 hands.

Our summary of the rules, in our own words, checked against published sources listed at mahjongtilework.com/chinese-mahjong/. Hong Kong scoring is a local agreement, so no faan values are printed here: ask your table for its list.