

American Mahjong Basic Rules Summary

STARTING

1. Choose the **dealer (East)** (draw tiles or roll dice).
2. Shuffle tiles face down ("wash").
3. Build walls: each player makes a wall **19 tiles long** and **2 tiles high**.
4. Roll the dice to break the wall (dealer rolls and counts to choose the break).
5. Deal tiles **counter-clockwise** in sets of 4 until each player has **12 tiles**.
6. Dealer takes 2 more tiles (14 total). Other players take **1 more tile** (13 total).
7. **Charleston happens before play begins** (see →).

CHARLESTON (passing)

Pass 3 tiles each time, face down.

First Charleston (mandatory)

1) Right → 2) Across → 3) Left

Second Charleston (optional)

4) Left → 5) Across → 6) Right

Courtesy pass (optional)

Exchange 0–3 tiles with the player across.

Rules: Never pass a Joker. "Blind pass" is only allowed on the First Left and Last Right.

TILE REFERENCE

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Dots									
Bams									
Craks									
Flowers									
Winds	East		South		West		North		
Dragons	Red		Green		White		Joker		

MELDS (SETS)

Goal: Complete a valid hand from the current NMJL card (usually 14 tiles).

PAIR 2 identical tiles (no Jokers allowed)	PUNG 3 identical tiles (Jokers allowed)	KONG 4 identical tiles (Jokers allowed)	QUINT 5 identical tiles (Jokers allowed)	SEXTET 6 identical tiles (Jokers allowed)

PLAY

1. After the Charleston, the dealer discards 1 tile to start play.
2. Players take turns counter-clockwise.
3. Draw one tile, then discard one tile.
4. You may call a discard to complete a matching set:
 - o Pung (3)
 - o Kong (4)
 - o Quint (5)
 - o Sextet (6)
5. Any player may call Mahjong if the discard completes their hand.
6. Called sets are placed exposed in front of you.
7. If you call for a tile, you must expose the completed set and discard ends that player's turn.
8. Jokers may be used in exposed sets, but cannot be used in pairs.
9. The hand ends when someone declares Mahjong (matches a hand on the card) or the wall runs out.

QUICK NOTES

- Dealer (East) starts.
- Play goes counter-clockwise.
- Keep 13 tiles in hand (14 when it's your turn).
- Mahjong hands must match the National Mah Jongg League (NMJL) card.
- Jokers can be used in sets, but not in pairs.
- If you have an exposed set with a Joker, another player may exchange the Joker with the real tile.

Priority: Mahjong has first claim on a discard.