

American Mahjong Charleston Cheat Sheet



The Charleston is your first opportunity to improve your hand — and learn what your opponents may be holding. Use this quick guide to decide what to pass, what to keep, and when to protect a promising hand.

At a Glance

- 1 FIRST CHARLESTON** Pass 3 → Pass 3 → Pass 3 | Right → Across → Left
- 2 SECOND CHARLESTON (optional)** Pass 3 → Pass 3 → Pass 3 | Left → Across → Right
- 3 COURTESY PASS (after first Charleston)**

Exchange 0–3 tiles with player across | Receiving player decides how many to exchange.

What to Pass vs Keep

↓ PASS FIRST

- Isolated tiles with no connections
- Extra singletons that don't fit multiple hands
- Tiles from suits you're unlikely to need
- Pairs that don't help your likely hands
- Tiles that conflict with your strongest combinations

✓ KEEP

- Pairs (foundation for any hand)
- Connected/consecutive tiles (chow potential)
- Tiles that fit 2+ possible hands
- Strong combinations already forming
- Tiles that match your developing strategy

The 3-Tile Test

? BEFORE YOU PASS, ASK YOURSELF:

1. Does this tile help my likely hand?
2. Can I use it in more than one hand?
3. Which tile will be easier to replace later?
4. Am I handing my opponent something useful?
5. Does this tile give me useful flexibility?

! DON'T FALL IN LOVE WITH YOUR HAND

- Flexibility beats perfection
- Don't commit too early
- Let the tiles guide your strategy
- Keep options open
- A promising hand can still change

After the Charleston – Reassess

STOP AND ASK YOURSELF:

- ☐ What changed in my hand?
- ☐ Which suit looks strongest?
- ☐ What pairs/combinations do I have now?
- ☐ Which hands are becoming realistic?
- ☐ What should I stop chasing?



TIP

Use the Charleston to watch what others are passing. Their tiles can give you clues about what they're building — or what they're abandoning.

