

American Mahjong

Defensive Play Cheat Sheet



Winning isn't always about pushing for mahjong. Learn when to protect your hand, read the table, and switch from offense to defense.

When Should I Play Defense?

! SWITCH TO DEFENSE WHEN:

- ☐ An opponent's exposure strongly suggests a hand
- ☐ Several tiles you need are already visible
- ☐ Your hand has become difficult to complete
- ☐ Wall is getting short and you're far from mahjong
- ☐ An opponent appears closer to mahjong than you
- ☐ Your next useful tile is unlikely to arrive
- ☐ You have safer alternatives in your rack

Choosing Safer Discards

? LOOK FOR SAFER DISCARDS

- 1) A tile already discarded by the dangerous player
- 2) Tiles with 3+ copies visible
- 3) Tiles outside their apparent hand pattern
- 4) Tiles that don't match their exposed suits/numbers
- 5) Clearly dead tiles

Push or Protect?

IF...	CONSIDER...
You're one or two tiles from mahjong	PUSH
Required tiles are still available	PUSH
Your hand is strong and flexible	PUSH CAREFULLY
Your key tiles are mostly dead	PROTECT
Your hand is weak and few good options	DEFEND
The wall is short and you're nowhere close	DEFEND

The Endgame Defense Rule

! WHEN THE WALL GETS SHORT

If you're not close to mahjong, stop chasing unlikely draws and start protecting your hand.

Then perhaps:

- ☐ Reassess the dangerous player
- ☐ Count viable copies of risky tiles
- ☐ Choose the safest discard available
- ☐ Watch the opponent's exposures and discards
- ☐ Don't break a safe structure just to chase one unlikely tile

Who Is the Dangerous Player?

? WATCH FOR:

- Multiple exposures pointing toward one card section
- A player suddenly becoming very active
- Repeated calls
- Joker-heavy exposures
- A player who suddenly stops discarding certain tiles
- A player who appears one tile from Mahjong



**DEFENSE IS A DECISION,
NOT A FAILURE.**

If your hand is unlikely to win, your goal changes: stop giving opponents what they need.



MAHJONG
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