

American Mahjong Pivoting Cheat Sheet



Two Types of Pivots

Understanding why you're changing hands matters as much as when you change.

NATURAL PIVOT

(The tiles are guiding you toward a better option)

You notice another hand is developing naturally — organically emerging from the tiles you're receiving.

SIGNS OF A NATURAL PIVOT:

- ✓ You already have several useful tiles for the new hand
- ✓ Multiple tiles overlap between your old and new hands
- ✓ Your original hand is becoming less attractive with each draw
- ✓ The new option requires fewer specific draws
- ✓ You feel pulled toward this hand, not forced away from your current one

This is healthy. You're adapting to the tiles on offer.

FORCED PIVOT

(Your original hand is no longer realistic)

Your original hand is no longer realistic because the tiles have made that clear.

SIGNS OF A FORCED PIVOT:

- ✗ Too many required tiles are already visible/dead
- ✗ Opponents have exposed key tiles you needed
- ✗ You've repeatedly drawn completely useless tiles
- ✗ Your hand requires too many unlikely, specific draws
- ✗ The math just doesn't work anymore

This is necessary. Staying is just wishful thinking.

The Pivot Test

STATUS	INDICATORS	YOUR MOVE
Stay	Your hand is progressing steadily ✓ Required tiles remain available ✓ You have flexibility ✓ No clearly better option has emerged	Keep building. You're on track.
Watch / Decide	Progress has slowed significantly ⚠ Several key tiles are already visible ⚠ Another hand is becoming possible ⚠ Your current hand is getting narrow	Watch next 2–3 draws. Make a decision soon.
Change Direction	Critical tiles are dead ✗ Your hand has become unrealistic ✗ Opponent exposure makes winning dangerous ✗ A much stronger alternative is clearly available	Change direction. Don't wait.

DON'T WAIT TOO LONG RULE

A pivot is most useful before your original hand becomes completely dead.

Reality check:

- A pivot in Turn 3 – Still have tiles to work with
- A pivot in Turn 7 – Fewer remaining draws – Higher pressure
- A pivot after nearly reaching Mah Jongg – Too late



Key insight:

The goal isn't to know with certainty that your hand will work.
The goal is to recognize when another option gives you a better chance.