

I. Overview of the most important terms

Tenpai: “Ready hand”, state in which the hand only misses a final tile to be complete, one of the two conditions to win.

Yaku: A specific scoring combination with your tiles that is also needed to win. Further explanation of yaku in section III.

Calls: Completion of a set of three with another player’s discarded tile, is put openly on the table.

Pon: Call to complete a triplet, can be taken from any player.

Chii: Call to complete a sequence, can only be taken from the player directly to the left of the caller.

Tsumo: Declaring the win with a self-drawn tile.

Ron: Declaring the win with a tile discarded by another player (any other player).

Riichi: If tenpai with an open hand (no calls) is reached, it is possible to call **riichi** to acquire the yaku “**riichi**”.

Dora: A tile that gives bonus points for being in a player’s hand; a new dora is decided in every new hand. Multiple dora in the hand are multiple bonus points; 2 Dora > 1 Dora.

Furiten: State of a hand in which no win with “ron”, but only with “tsumo” is possible. For details consult the more detailed explanation of furiten in section III.

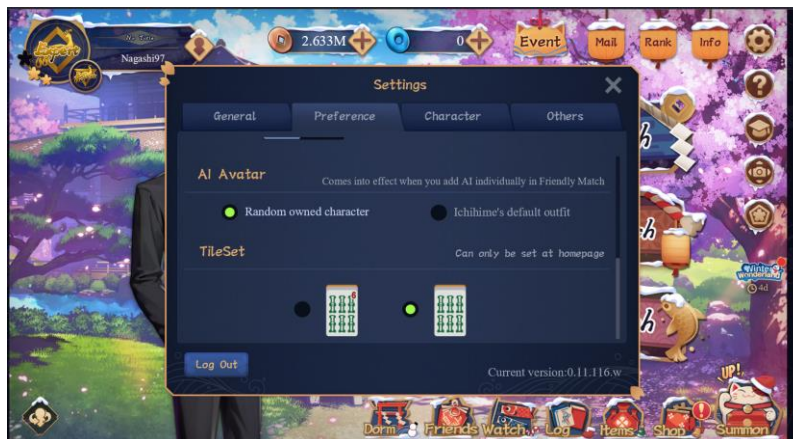
II. Online Client

A good and free option to play together if a physical meeting isn’t possible or just to practice or play alone is the website Mahjong Soul (<https://mahjongsoul.game.yo-star.com/>) that’s also available as an app.



There you can either play against friends or bots in “Friendly Match”, where you can also increase the time limit per turn, which is helpful in the beginning, or you can play against other beginners in “Ranked Match” in the “Bronze Room”, where there is a time limit per turn however, but to which you will get accustomed relatively quickly.

If you can't read the characters yet, it is also very important to go to settings (the little cog on the upper right) and set the preference under “Preference→TileSet” to display translations on the tiles to be able to read them more easily.



III. Summary of the basic rules

Basic process

All players have 13 tiles and draw a fourteenth one each turn and discard a tile again in order to complete their hand eventually. This can be achieved with 4 sets of three and a pair.



A set of three is either a sequence made up from three consequential numbers or a triplet (three of the same tile). A pair is two of the same tile. Number tiles (bamboo, characters and circles with numbers) can make sequences, triplets and pairs, while honour tiles (winds and dragons) can only make triplets and pairs.

If the 13 tiles in a hand only need one other tile to win, the hand is in “tenpai” and “waits” for the winning tiles. If you draw the winning tile yourself, you declare it with “tsumo” and flip open first the winning tile and then the rest of the hand. If another player discards the winning tile, you declare your win with “ron” and flip open your hand.

Sets of three can also be completed by taking other players' discarded tiles, with calling. For this you need to already have two of the three tiles in the set.

With “pon” you can make pairs into triplets (no matter who discards) and with “chii” you can make sequences if the player to your left discards a fitting tile.

By turning the called tile sideways you indicate which player it came from.



Examples of three open sets of three. For the upper one a “pon” was called from the player to the right, for the middle one a “chii” from the player to the left and for the lowest one a “pon” from the player on the opposite side of the table.

Yaku

Other than a hand in tenpai, you need another, separate win condition to be able to announce a win: a yaku. A yaku is a point combination that you can achieve with certain patterns in your hand and that gives your hands value. There are many different yaku, however, some of them are quite rare and don’t need to be learned or paid attention to at first. For that reason, we’ll only introduce the three most common and central ones.

Riichi

The most central yaku in the game and the one to play towards in case of doubt. If you reach tenpai with a “closed hand” (so without opening your hand with calls like “pon” and “chii”), you can call “riichi”, discard a tile sideways and bet 1,000 points. After that the hand cannot be changed anymore and you only wait for the winning tile. For that you get the yaku “riichi” which makes it possible to win with any tenpai hand, no matter what it contains, as long as you keep the hand closed.



Yakuhai

You get this yaku if your hand contains a triplet (no matter if open or closed) of any dragon or the current round wind or seat wind. It is a common occurrence that a player will get a pair of one of these tiles early in their hand and will therefore call “pon” if a third one is discarded to get this yaku.



Dragon triplet



Triplet of round or seat wind

Tanyao/All Simple

A yaku with the condition that your hand only consists of number tiles from 2-8. So no terminals (1 or 9) or honour tiles (winds or dragons).



As a rule of thumb you should never use calls like “pon” or “chii” if you don’t know what kind of yaku you will still be able to achieve afterwards.

Dora

Dora are tiles that award bonus points (but no yaku). So, the more dora you have in your hand, the more it is worth. Which tiles are dora is shown by the dora indicator that is flipped open at the beginning of the round. It is always the tile that is one higher than the dora indicator. So, if the dora indicator is a 3, it shows that the dora is a 4 of the same suit. If the indicator is a 9, the dora is the 1 of the same suit. The winds have the order E→S→W→N→E and the dragons Green→Red→White→Green.

If someone wins with riichi, that player gets access to another indicator below the first one (ura dora) and thus has a chance to get even more points.

Kan: Under certain circumstances, a triplet can be upgraded into a quad with the call “kan”. In that case, additional dora indicators will be revealed and the player draws a replacement tile. For multiple reasons, players and especially beginners should be very cautious with “kan”, because you can often help other players a lot more with your “kan”.

Furiten

State of a hand in which no win with “ron” (from another player), but only with “tsumo” (self-drawn) is possible. This state can be triggered by three different things:

1. Normal, permanent furiten: The current tenpai form of your hand waits for tiles that have already been discarded by yourself (whether these tiles would give you yaku or not). Example: The hand waits on a 1 or a 4 with a 23, but you have already discarded the 1.
2. Temporary furiten: Triggered when the current tenpai form of your hand waits for tiles that have already been discarded on this turn by another player without your having

declared a win (either by accident, because you don't want to, or because you *can't*, because that tile doesn't give you a yaku). The temporary furiten ends once you discard a tile the next time. Example: The hand waits for a 1 or a 4 with a 23 and the 1 was discarded just this turn by the player to your right. The hand is furiten until you discard something again.

3. Permanent furiten after riichi: If you, after having called riichi, don't declare a win on a tile with which it would have been possible (by forgetting or because you didn't want to), the hand stays furiten until the end of the current round.