

Choose the mahjong rules before you shuffle.

Mahjong is a family of games. A familiar tile does not guarantee a familiar rule. Ask these five questions before a beginner round.

1 Which ruleset?

MCR, Hong Kong, Sichuan, Taiwanese, riichi, or American NMJL-style?

2 Which tiles?

136, 144, or 152; flowers, seasons, and jokers vary.

3 How do we win?

Four sets plus a pair, special hands, or an exact annual-card pattern?

4 What can be called?

Confirm chow, pung, kong, exposed-hand, and discard rules.

5 How do we score?

Minimum fan or points, payment method, and dealer continuation.

MCR / Chinese official

- + 144 tiles in the MIL guide
- + No annual hand card
- + No American-style Charleston
- + Basic form: four sets + pair
- + Tournament win needs 8+ points

A competition standard - not a synonym for every home game in China.

Chinese local / home game

- + Rules vary by city and family
- + Often 136 or 144 tiles
- + Flowers and scoring may change
- + Some variants alter suits or wins
- + House rules control the table

Name the variant. 'Chinese mahjong' alone is not enough to settle a dispute.

American NMJL-style

- + 152-tile set with jokers
- + Current annual hands card
- + Charleston tile-passing phase
- + Exact card patterns win
- + Racks and joker rules matter

Do not reproduce the annual card. Every player needs access to the current one.

THE SHARED DRAW-DISCARD RHYTHM

Draw -> evaluate -> call if legal -> discard -> repeat

Most four-player forms share this rhythm. Tile set, legal calls, winning hands and scoring still depend on the named ruleset.

FOUR WORDS TO RECOGNIZE

CHOW sequence of 3	PUNG triplet
KONG four alike	HU winning call