

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=mahjong&variant=american-classic>

THE TILE SET (152 TILES)

CATEGORY	TILES	DETAIL
Dots (Circles)	36	Ranks 1–9, 4 tiles each
Bamboo (Bams)	36	Ranks 1–9, 4 tiles each; the 1-Bam tile traditionally shows a crane
Characters (Craks)	36	Ranks 1–9, 4 tiles each
Winds	16	East/South/West/North, 4 each
Dragons	12	Red (), Green (), White (/Soap), 4 each
Flowers	4	Plum, Orchid, Chrysanthemum, Bamboo (numbered 1–4)
Seasons	4	Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter (numbered 1–4)
Jokers	8	Wild; may substitute for any tile in a meld
Total	152	

American Mahjong sets are identified by Arabic numerals on all tiles and English letters for wind direction (E/S/W/N).

MELDS AND TILE GROUPS

GROUP	TILES	NOTES
Pair	2 identical	Cannot include a joker
Pung	3 identical	May include jokers
Kong	4 identical	May include jokers
Quint	5 identical	Requires jokers
Sextet	6 identical	Requires jokers
Sequence	3+ consecutive, same suit	May include jokers

JOKERS

Jokers are wild and may substitute for any tile within a pung, kong, quint, sextet, or sequence. Restrictions:

- ♦ A joker **cannot** be used in a pair
- ♦ A joker **cannot** be passed during the Charleston
- ♦ Any player on their own turn may **exchange** a real matching tile for a joker in an exposed meld, taking the joker into their hand

SETUP

- 1 Shuffle all 152 tiles face-down. Each player builds a row of **19 tiles stacked two high** (38 tiles per wall section, 152 total forming a square wall)
- 2 Roll dice to determine **East** (dealer). East rolls again to find the **break point** in the wall
- 3 Deal clockwise from the break point: each player draws **13 tiles**; East draws **14**
- 4 Tiles are held upright on a rack, hidden from opponents

THE CHARLESTON

The Charleston is the defining pre-game ritual of American Mahjong, conducted before the first discard. It does not exist in any Asian Mahjong variant.

First Charleston:

PASS	DIRECTION	NOTES
1st	Right	Each player passes 3 unwanted tiles face-down to the right
2nd	Across	Each player passes 3 unwanted tiles face-down to the player opposite
3rd	Left	Each player passes 3 unwanted tiles face-down to the left; blind pass permitted

Blind pass: On the third pass of each Charleston, a player may take 1, 2, or 3 of the tiles just received and pass them on without looking at them.

Second Charleston (optional): If all four players agree, a second Charleston proceeds in reverse: Left → Across → Right. The same blind pass rule applies to the last pass.

Courtesy Pass (optional): After the Charleston(s), players may agree to exchange 0–3 tiles with the player across. Both must agree on the number before passing. No blind tiles.

GAMEPLAY

East discards a tile face-up to start play. Thereafter play proceeds clockwise.

On your turn:

- 1 **Draw** the top tile from the wall
- 2 **Discard** one tile from your hand face-up to the centre, or declare **Mahjong** if your hand is complete

Claiming a discard: Any player may claim the most recent discard (before the next player draws) to complete a meld or declare Mahjong. Announce the claim, take the tile, expose the completed meld on the rack, and discard. Mahjong claim takes priority over all other claims.

Discards may only be claimed to complete an exposed meld or declare Mahjong — not to draw ahead in sequence.

FLOWERS AND SEASONS

Flowers and Seasons are bonus tiles. When drawn, place the tile face-up on the rack and draw a replacement from the **dead wall** (the reserved end tiles). They score bonus points and are not part of the hand structure.

WINNING

A player wins by declaring Mahjong with a complete valid hand.

Standard hand: 4 melds + 1 pair = 14 tiles (plus any declared kongs).

Classic Special Hands:

HAND	DESCRIPTION
All Pungs	Four pungs + one pair; no sequences
All Sequences	Four sequences + one pair; no pungs
All One Suit	Entire hand (excluding honours) in a single suit
Honour Hand	Hand composed entirely of winds and dragons
Mixed Honour	One suit plus winds and/or dragons
All Green	2, 3, 4, 6, 8 Bamboo and Green Dragon only
Nine Gates	1-1-1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-9 in one suit + any tile of that suit

SCORING

The winning player collects from all three opponents. The player whose discard completes a winning hand pays double.

ELEMENT	POINTS
Winning (base)	20
Self-draw win	+10
Each pung of simples (2–8)	+2
Each pung of terminals/honours	+4
Each kong (exposed)	×2 on pung value
Each kong (concealed)	×4 on pung value
Matching flower/season	+4
All Pungs hand	×2 multiplier
All One Suit hand	×4 multiplier
Fully concealed hand	×2 multiplier

Minimum to win: **25 points**.

END OF HAND

If all wall tiles are drawn without a Mahjong declaration, the hand is a **draw** (goulash) – no points are exchanged. East retains the deal on a draw; otherwise the deal passes left.

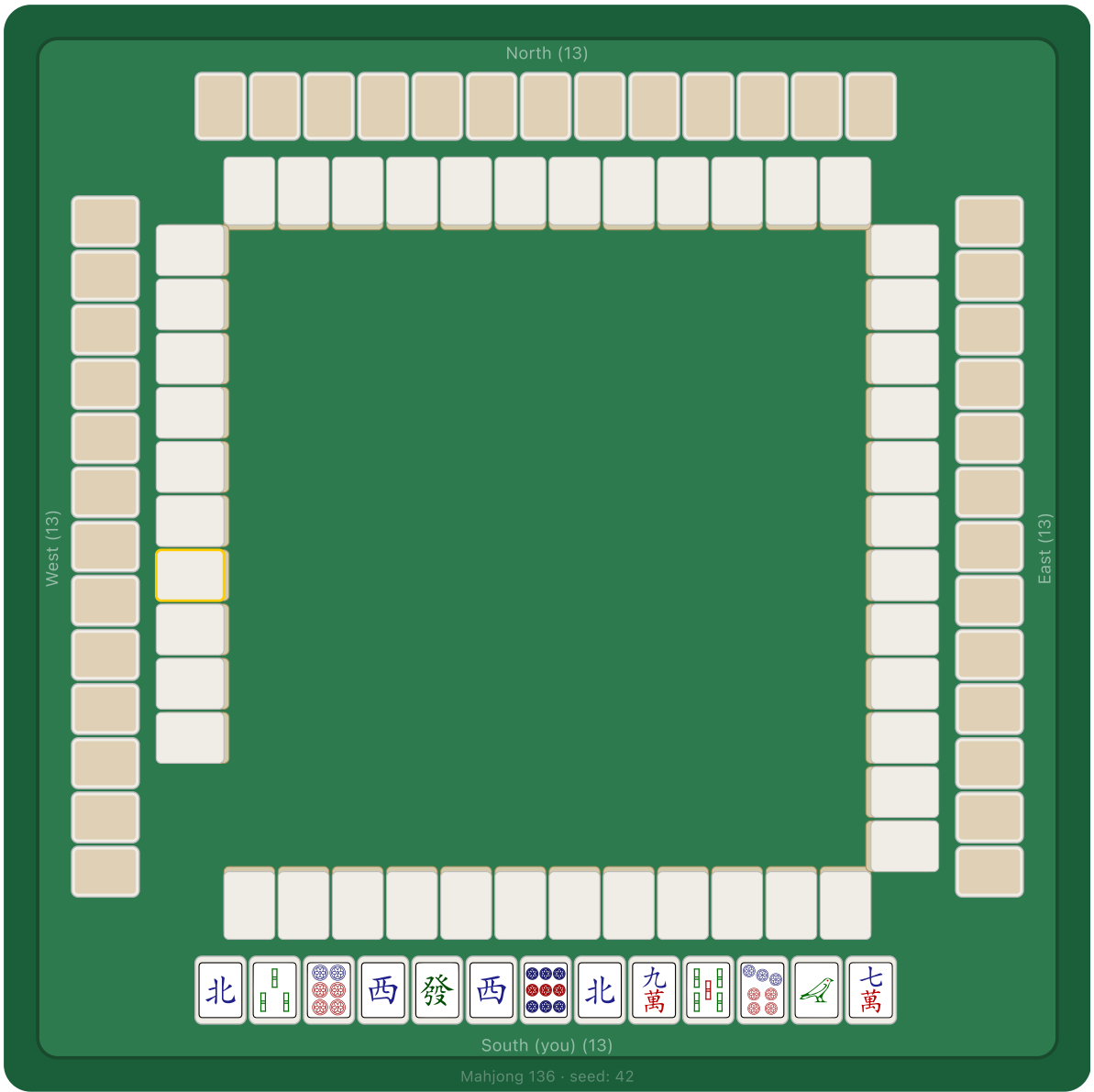
ATTRIBUTION

Sources (all public domain):

- ♦ Joseph Park Babcock, *Babcock's Rules for Mah-Jongg: The Red Book of Rules* (1920, revised 1923)
- ♦ 1924 Standardization Committee, *American Official Laws of Mah-Jongg*
- ♦ NMJL, *Official American Rules* (1935, pre-card era)

HONG KONG MAHJONG

The most widely played Mahjong ruleset, originating in Guangdong (Cantonese) China. Four players compete to assemble a winning hand of melds and a pair from a shared pool of 144 tiles.



Hong Kong Mahjong – table layout

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=mahjong&variant=hong-kong>

THE TILES

Suited tiles (108): Three suits of nine values each, four copies per value.

SUIT	NAME	VALUES
Characters (Wan, 𠄎)	Also called Man or Crack	1–9
Bamboo (Sou, 𦰩)	Also called Bam	1–9
Circles (Pin, 〇)	Also called Dot	1–9

Honour tiles (28): Four copies of each.

TYPE	TILES
Winds	East, South, West, North
Dragons	White (Bai), Green (Fa), Red (Zhong)

Bonus tiles (8): Set aside when drawn, not part of a winning hand.

- ♦ Flowers: 1 (Spring), 2 (Summer), 3 (Autumn), 4 (Winter)
- ♦ Seasons: 1 (Plum), 2 (Orchid), 3 (Chrysanthemum), 4 (Bamboo)

Each bonus tile number corresponds to a seat: 1 = East, 2 = South, 3 = West, 4 = North.

SEATING AND ROUND WIND

Seats are East, South, West, and North. East is the dealer and moves first. The round wind (East, South, West, or North) rotates after all four players have been dealer. The game covers at least one East round; full games include all four rounds.

DEALING

Shuffle all 144 tiles face down and build a wall of four sides, two tiles high and 18 tiles wide per side. East rolls dice to determine the break point.

Each player draws 13 tiles clockwise from the wall, starting with East. East then draws one extra tile to begin the game (or draws first on their turn). Bonus tiles are set aside immediately and a replacement tile is drawn from the live wall.

TURN STRUCTURE

On your turn:

- 1 **Draw** one tile from the wall (or claim a discarded tile, see Claiming below).
- 2 **Bonus tile:** if the drawn tile is a flower or season, set it aside and draw a replacement.
- 3 **Declare a winning hand** if your 14 tiles form a valid hand (see Winning).
- 4 **Declare a Kong** if you hold a complete set of four identical tiles, then draw a supplement tile and discard.
- 5 **Discard** one tile face-up to the centre.

CLAIMING DISCARDS

After any discard, other players may claim it in priority order (highest to lowest):

- 1 **Win (any player):** claim the discard to complete a valid winning hand.
- 2 **Kong (any player):** claim four identical tiles to declare an open Kong. Draw a supplement tile, then discard.
- 3 **Pong (any player):** claim three identical tiles (2 in hand + discard). Discard one tile.
- 4 **Chow (left-hand player only):** claim to complete a sequence of three consecutive suited tiles. Discard one tile.

Only one player may claim each discard. If no one claims, the next player draws from the wall.

MELDS

MELD	DESCRIPTION	NOTES
Chow	Sequence of 3 consecutive tiles of the same suit	From left player only; suited tiles only
Pong	3 identical tiles	From any player
Kong	4 identical tiles	From any player; draw supplement tile

Concealed Pongs and Kongs (formed from drawn tiles, never claimed from a discard) score higher than open melds.

Robbing the Kong: when a player upgrades a Pong to a Kong by drawing the fourth tile, any other player who can win by taking that tile may declare an immediate win, robbing the Kong.

WINNING HAND

A standard winning hand consists of **4 melds + 1 pair = 14 tiles**.

Alternate winning hands: Seven Pairs (7 different pairs), and certain limit hands defined by the scoring table.

To declare a win, the hand must be worth a **minimum of 3 faan**.

Win on wall (Zimo): you draw the winning tile from the wall. All three opponents each pay the full hand value.

Win on discard (Ron): another player discards your winning tile. Only the discarder pays the full hand value.

BONUS TILES (FLOWERS AND SEASONS)

Bonus tiles are set aside when drawn and are not part of the winning hand structure. They provide bonus faan:

CONDITION	FAAN
Own-seat flower or season (matching seat number)	1
All four flowers	5
All four seasons	5
All eight bonus tiles	Automatic win (limit hand)

FAAN SCORING

Each winning hand is valued by adding up the faan from completed patterns. Common patterns:

PATTERN	FAAN
Self-draw win (Zimo)	1
Fully concealed hand	1
All Pongs	3
Half Flush (one suit + honours)	3
Full Flush (one suit only)	6
Mixed Terminals and Honours	1
All Terminals and Honours	5
Seven Pairs	3
Winning on a supplement tile (after Kong)	1
Winning on last tile of the wall	1
Robbing a Kong	1

Minimum to win: **3 faan**. A hand below 3 faan cannot be declared.

LIMIT HANDS

Certain exceptional hands pay the maximum regardless of calculated faan. Examples: Thirteen Orphans, Four Concealed Pongs, All Kongs. When a limit hand is declared, each opponent pays the maximum limit amount.

PAYMENT

Payment is in points (chips or tallies). The East player (dealer) pays and receives double.

- ♦ Win on discard: discarder pays full hand value; others pay nothing.
- ♦ Win on wall: all three opponents each pay full hand value.
- ♦ Dealer wins or loses: dealer pays or receives double the usual amount.

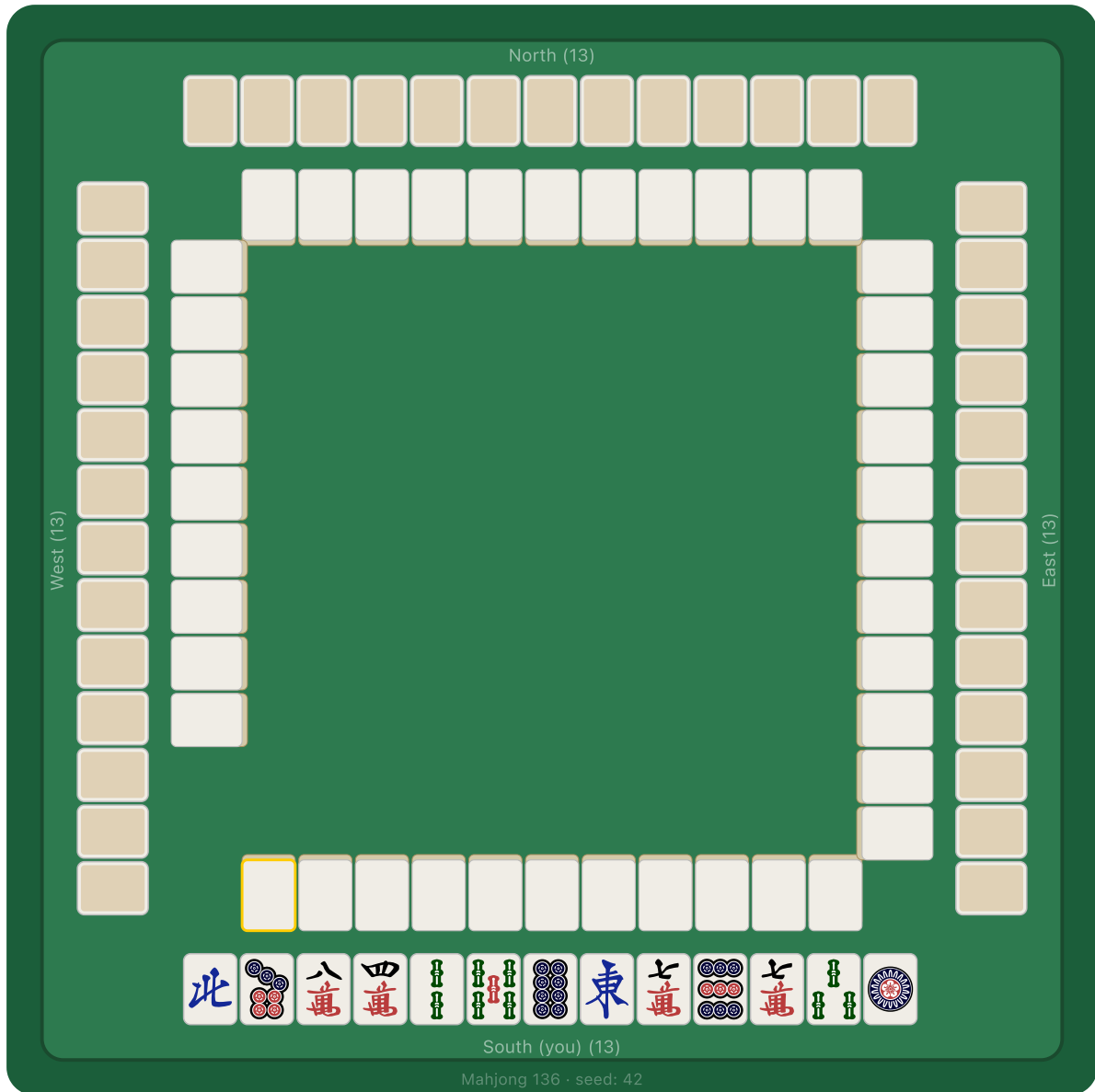
The dealer role passes to the left (South becomes dealer) when the dealer does not win the hand. The dealer retains their seat if they win.

ATTRIBUTION

Hong Kong / Cantonese Mahjong. Traditional game originating in China. Rules in the public domain. Primary source: Wikipedia (*Mahjong*), Hong Kong ruleset section.

RIICHI MAHJONG

The Japanese national form of Mahjong. Played with 136 tiles (no flower or season bonus tiles). Introduces the Riichi declaration, the Furiten rule, yaku requirements, and a precise han-plus-fu scoring system with named limit hands.



Riichi Mahjong – table layout

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=mahjong&variant=riichi>

KEY DIFFERENCES FROM HONG KONG

RULE	HONG KONG	RIICHI
Tiles	144 (with flowers/seasons)	136 (no bonus tiles)
Win requirement	3 faan minimum	At least one yaku
Hand locking	None	Riichi declaration locks the hand
Furiten	No	Yes (cannot win on a discard if your winning tile is in your discard pile)
Scoring	Faan table	Han + fu, with named limits
Dora	None	Yes (revealed indicator tiles grant bonus han)

YAKU

A yaku is a scoring pattern. A hand must contain at least one yaku to win. Common yaku include:

YAKU	HAN (OPEN / CLOSED)	DESCRIPTION
Riichi	— / 1	Closed tenpai hand with Riichi declaration
Tanyao	1 / 1	All simples (tiles 2-8 only, no terminals or honours)
Pinfu	— / 1	All sequences, non-pair wait, non-yakuhai pair
Iipeiko	— / 1	Two identical sequences
Yakuhai	1 / 1	A Pong of seat wind, round wind, or dragon
Chiitoi	— / 2	Seven pairs
Honitsu	2 / 3	Half flush (one suit + honours)
Chinitsu	5 / 6	Full flush (one suit only)

RIICHI

A player with a closed (no open melds) tenpai hand (one tile from winning) may declare Riichi by placing a 1,000-point stake in the centre. After declaring:

- ♦ The hand is locked; no tile swaps are permitted.
- ♦ Any tile drawn from the wall may be used to win.
- ♦ Uradora (hidden bonus tiles) are revealed if the player wins.
- ♦ The 1,000-point stake goes to the winner of the hand.

DORA

Dora tiles are bonus tiles that add one han each. The dora indicator is revealed at the start of the hand; the dora is the next tile in sequence (e.g., indicator = 3 Bamboo means dora = 4 Bamboo; indicator = 9 means dora = 1 of the same suit; indicator = North wind means dora = East).

Uradora (secret dora): revealed only when a Riichi player wins. One uradora indicator is revealed per Kong declared during the hand.

Akadora (red fives): in some games, one or more of each 5-tile are red; each red five held contributes 1 han.

FURITEN

A player is in Furiten if any of their winning tiles appears in their own discard pile. A player in Furiten:

- ♦ Cannot win on another player's discard.
- ♦ Can still win by self-draw (Tsumo).

Furiten clears when the player draws a winning tile and discards it (temporary furiten) or when they declare Riichi with a hand not in furiten.

SCORING

Hand value is determined by han (from yaku and dora) and fu (from hand structure: meld types, wait type, pairs). The han-fu table produces a point value. Named limits apply at high han counts:

LIMIT	HAN THRESHOLD	VALUE
Mangan	5 han (or 4 han at 30+ fu, 3 han at 70+ fu)	8,000 (dealer 12,000)
Haneman	6-7 han	12,000 (dealer 18,000)
Baiman	8-10 han	16,000 (dealer 24,000)
Sanbaiman	11-12 han	24,000 (dealer 36,000)
Yakuman	13+ han, or special hands	32,000 (dealer 48,000)

Ron (win on discard): discarder pays the full amount. **Tsumo** (self-draw): all three opponents pay equal shares (dealer pays double the others' share).

ABORTIVE DRAWS

A hand may end in an abortive draw (no winner) under these conditions: nine unique terminals and honours dealt to one player on the first draw (by declaration), four Kongs declared without the same player winning, all four players discard the same wind on the first go-round, or exhaustion of the wall without a winner.

ATTRIBUTION

Riichi Mahjong. Traditional game with Japanese rules codified in the 20th century. Source: Wikipedia (*Japanese Mahjong*). Public domain rules.

The dominant Mahjong form in Taiwan. Played with 144 tiles. Each player holds 16 tiles and forms five melds plus one pair, rather than the four melds plus one pair of Hong Kong Mahjong.



<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=mahjong&variant=taiwanese>

KEY DIFFERENCES FROM HONG KONG

RULE	HONG KONG	TAIWANESE 16-TILE
Tiles in hand	13 (14 to win)	16 (17 to win)
Hand structure	4 melds + 1 pair	5 melds + 1 pair
Multiple winners	No	Yes (multiple players can claim a single discard to win)
All 8 bonus tiles	5+5 faan	Automatic win
Dealing	13 tiles each + dealer draws first	16 tiles each

DEALING

Each player draws 16 tiles at the start. Bonus tiles are set aside immediately and replacements drawn. East begins with 17 tiles effectively (or draws first to reach 17).

HAND STRUCTURE

A winning hand consists of **5 melds + 1 pair = 17 tiles** (16 in hand + the winning tile).

MULTIPLE WINNERS

When a tile is discarded, multiple players may declare a win on that tile simultaneously. All winning declarations are honoured; the discarder pays each winner. Turn order does not restrict who can win.

BONUS TILES

All 8 bonus tiles in hand is an automatic win. Seat-matching bonus tiles and partial sets score faan per Hong Kong rules.

SCORING

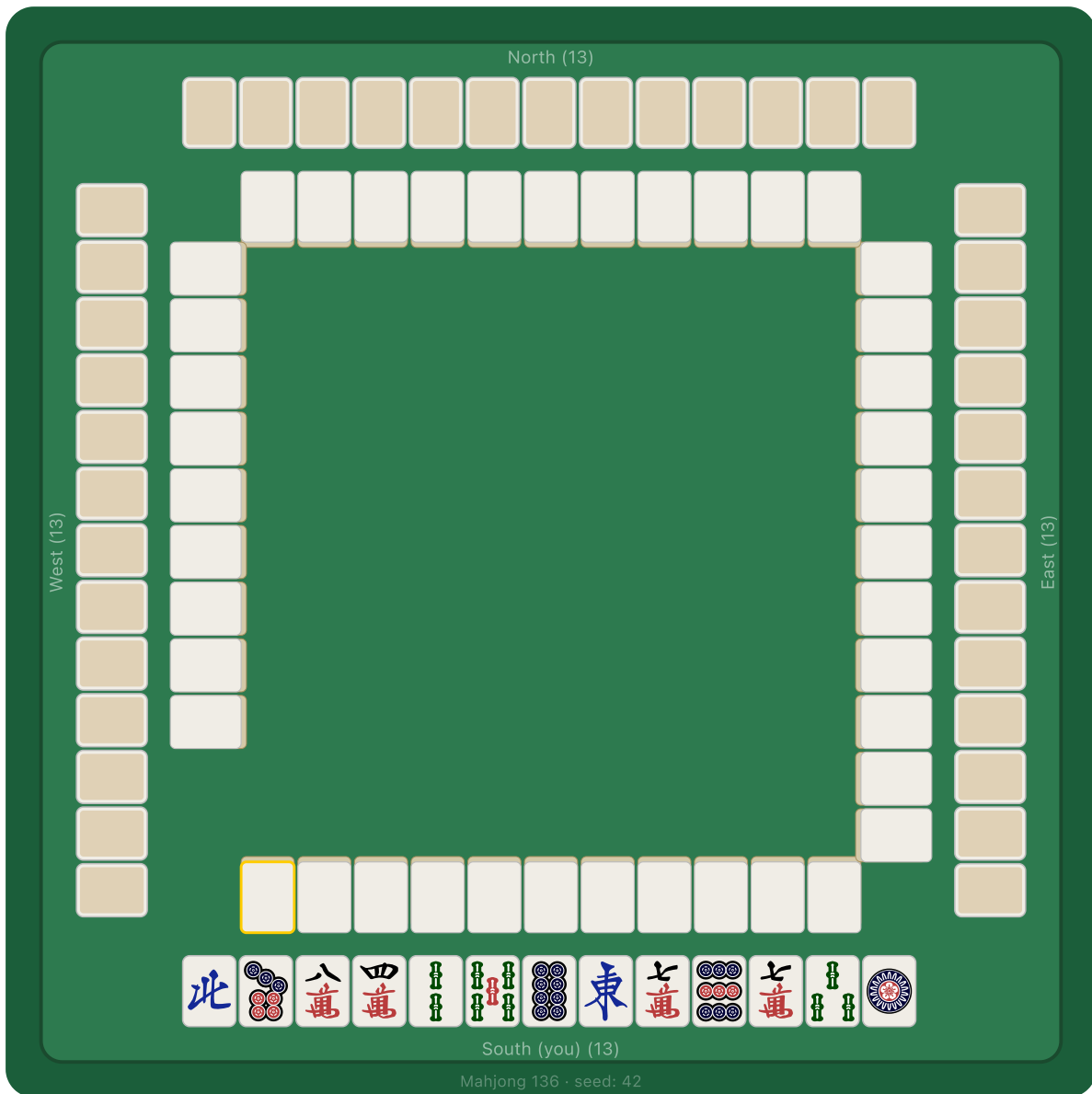
Faan-based scoring, similar to Hong Kong Mahjong but calibrated for five-meld hands. Full scoring tables are specific to the regional variant; the content builder should source from a Taiwanese-specific rulebook. The fundamental faan system (minimum threshold, limit hands) applies.

ATTRIBUTION

Taiwanese 16-Tile Mahjong. Traditional game. Source: Wikipedia (*Mahjong*), Taiwanese variant section. Note: full scoring tables for this variant require a dedicated Taiwanese-specific source for complete accuracy.

ZUNG JUNG

Designed by Alan Kwan, a statistician. Used as the official ruleset for the World Series of Mahjong. Zung Jung replaces multiplicative faan scoring with a flat additive point system across 44 named patterns, eliminating most ambiguity in hand valuation.



Zung Jung Mahjong – table layout

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=mahjong&variant=zung-jung>

KEY DIFFERENCES FROM HONG KONG

RULE	HONG KONG	ZUNG JUNG
Tiles	144 (with flowers/seasons)	136 (no bonus tiles)
Scoring	Multiplicative faan	Additive points (44 patterns, fixed values)
Basic points	None / implicit	None
Income formula	Varies	Total income = 3× pattern points
Point limit	Limit hands	320 points
Minimum to win	3 faan	Optional 5-point minimum (competition)

SCORING SYSTEM

Each winning hand is valued by identifying which of the 44 named patterns apply. Each pattern has a fixed point value. Values are additive, not multiplicative.

The winner's income from each opponent is the total pattern value. Total income for the winner is 3× pattern points (one payment from each of three opponents).

The 320-point limit applies per opponent; a winning hand cannot earn more than 320 points from any single opponent.

Common patterns (illustrative, not exhaustive):

PATTERN	POINTS	DESCRIPTION
All Simples	2	No terminals or honours
All Sequences	5	All four melds are sequences
All Pongs	6	All four melds are Pongs or Kongs
Half Flush	6	One suit plus honours
Full Flush	24	One suit only
Seven Pairs	4	Seven different pairs
All Terminals	64	Terminals and honours only, all Pongs

Full pattern table: source from zj-mahjong.info (official, version 3.3, licensed CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 HK). The content builder should extract all 44 patterns with their point values.

SAME-ROUND IMMUNITY

Zung Jung includes a same-round immunity rule preventing unfair double-payment in specific edge cases. Consult the official rulebook at zj-mahjong.info for the precise definition.

ATTRIBUTION

Zung Jung Mahjong, designed by Alan Kwan. Official rules at zj-mahjong.info, version 3.3. Licensed Creative Commons BY-NC-SA 3.0 Hong Kong. Used with attribution for non-commercial game reference.