FREE CHEAT SHEET · AMERICAN MAHJONG

The 20-second rack read

Before the first pass: sort, find your pairs, and name two sections. Read it between games, not during one.

THE READ, IN ORDER

1. **Sort by suit,** then winds, dragons, Flowers and jokers.
2. **Pairs first, and pungs.** A joker never fills a pair, and a pair can be called only for Mah Jongg.
3. **Their friends:** tiles that fit the same section as your pairs.
4. **High or low?** Mostly 1 to 5, or 5 to 9.
5. **Odd or even?**
6. **Count** winds, dragons, Flowers and jokers.
7. **Name two sections, not one line.**

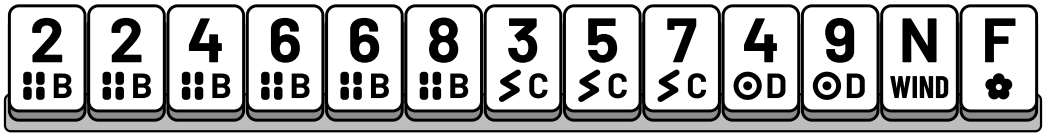
Jokers at the deal (13 tiles): none 48.0%, one 37.9%, two or more 14.1%. East's 14: none 45.3%, two or more 16.0%. Let them shift your sections, not decide them.

IF YOU SEE MOSTLY...

Your rack shows	Look first at the section for
Even numbers	evens
Odd numbers	odds
Close numbers in one suit	a consecutive run
One number in two or three suits	like numbers
3s, 6s and 9s	369
Winds and dragons	winds and dragons
Soaps and the year's digits	the year
Two or more jokers	quints (and drop singles and pairs)
No jokers, several pairs	singles and pairs

Strategy is advice, not rules, and teachers differ. The lines in each section change every year, so check your current card.

TRY IT: YOU'RE NORTH, NO JOKERS. WHICH TWO SECTIONS?



Answer: evens in Bams, with evens in two suits as the backup. Two even Bam pairs (2s and 6s) plus the 4 and 8 Bam and the Flower: 7 of 13 tiles point the same way. The 3-5-7 Craks are a weak start on odds. The 9 Dot and the North go first.



American Mahjong: Keep, Pass or Pivot

45 rack decisions, explained, for any year's card: what to keep, what to pass, when to pivot, with the reasoning and the odds. By Cal Hartley, on Kindle.

calhartley.com

Cal Hartley is a pen name; the book was written with AI help and checked against published sources. Not affiliated with or endorsed by the National Mah Jongg League.