

Barticle's



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1. Introduction

This is a guide to the modern Japanese version of the traditional four-player Chinese tabletop game of mahjong, this variant also being known as Riichi Mahjong or Reach Mahjong. I've previously written several guides to specific mahjong video-games (these can all be accessed from [my GameFAQs contributor page](#)) but I decided to produce a new, general, resource which will be useful to people playing on any mahjong video-game or website, reading mahjong manga, watching mahjong anime or perhaps even playing the game with real tiles!

Since I've already included lists of mahjong terms in some of my previous guides and I want to place an emphasis on explaining the terminology used in the game, I've decided to produce this in the form of a non-alphabetical glossary, with detailed definitions for each entry, terms given in Japanese text, categorised sections and hyperlinks between them. In doing so I hope to make this guide easy to use and beneficial both for learners and for players who already know the game but are seeking to learn or check Japanese/English terms, rules or procedures.

Each entry in this guide begins with the mahjong term given in one or more forms with variations that I've encountered in games, on the internet or in print media, using [Japanese characters](#). This is followed by the English (rōmaji) rendering of the same term/s in square brackets and, below that, a definition with described terms in bold. Here are your first two!

麻雀 / マージャン / まあじゃん [mājan]

Mahjong is the name of this great game that originated in China in the 1800's. Rendered into Japanese syllables the name becomes "mājan". The prefix "Jan-" is often used in words relating to the game.

雀士 [janshi] / 麻雀打ち [mājanuchi]

Mahjong is traditionally played with four **Players**, or **Janshi**, although rule variations exist that allow you to play with more or fewer people.

Through the wonders of modern technology I've added a number of links to this guide. A few link externally to websites but most are internal links so you can jump to the definition of a term by clicking on it. If you're using a current version of [Adobe Reader](#) you should be able to use the keyboard shortcut *Alt + Left Arrow* (or *Cmd + Left Arrow* on a Mac) to skip back to your previous view. If your PDF reader software lacks that functionality it might instead let you open a link in a new window which you can then close after use. Alternatively you can simply make a note of the current page number before you jump to the other section and then scroll back manually afterwards.

Your software should also let you search the entire document to find any occurrences of a given term in either English or Japanese script. For words containing extended A, E, O or U vowels you should use a single character when searching in English, for example searching on either "chūren" or "churen" in Adobe Reader will find [Chūrenpōtō](#) (but using "chuuren" won't).

I welcome all forms of feedback. You can contact me by email on barticle [at] hotmail [dot] com or using the private message (PM) system on the English [ReachMahjong.com forums](#) where my user-name is Barticle.

Thank you for reading this far! I hope you find the rest of this guide useful and interesting.

Bart

2. Equipment

Video-games and websites are popular and convenient options now for playing mahjong but if you're wanting to play properly then you'll need some apparatus.

麻雀牌 [mājanpai] / 雀牌 [janpai] / 牌 [pai / hai]

The one essential requirement for playing the game is a set of mahjong **Pai** or **Tiles**.

The various types of tile that make up a set are described in more detail below (see [Tiles](#)).



Japanese mahjong tiles

麻雀卓 [mājantaku] / 雀卓 [jantaku] / 卓 [taku]

Taku is the Japanese word for **Table**. Mahjong is played at a square table, ideally with a side length of approximately 60-70 cm (24-28 inches), with one player sat at each side.

A proper mahjong table will have a felt surface to protect the tiles during [shuffling](#) and to reduce noise. It should also have a raised lip around the edges - this prevents tiles from falling to the floor and it can be used as a guide when building the [wall](#) or tidying your hand of tiles. (Plus you can slam your [melds](#) dramatically into the corner of the table, just like in the movies!)

It may also have folding legs for easy storage and small recesses or drawers on each side to hold players' [scoring sticks](#).

マット [matto]

An alternative to having a dedicated mahjong table is to use a **Mat** placed on top of your normal table. A mahjong mat has a square felt surface and an outer frame including pockets for scoring sticks. It can be either folded or dismantled and rolled after use to make it easier to carry/store.

サイドテーブル [saido tēburu]

A mahjong table may be accompanied by two or four **Saido Tēburu (Side-Tables)** to keep beverages and other items separate from the game. Side-tables will often be triangular in shape and sometimes feature cup-holders and ashtrays.

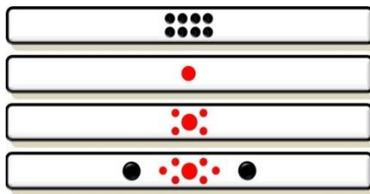
全自動卓 [zenjidō taku] / 全自動麻雀卓 [zenjidō mājantaku]

Zenjidō Taku (Automatic Tables) are a common sight in [mahjong parlours](#) in Japan. These shuffle the tiles mechanically, build the wall for you and sometimes even keep score as well!

An automatic table uses two sets of tiles (with different coloured backs) so you can play with one set while the other is organised inside the machine ready for the next hand of play.

点棒 [tenbō]

Although it's possible to use casino-style chips or even a pencil and paper to keep track of the scores during play, it's traditional to use **Scoring Sticks** called **Tenbō** (literally "points sticks"). These are short flat sticks, around 65mm (2½ inches) in length.



There are four denominations of scoring sticks which are indicated by different patterns of coloured dots. Two parallel rows of four black dots denote 100 points, a single red dot is 1,000 points, a [quincunx](#) of five red dots is 5,000 points and seven red dots between two black ones indicates 10,000 points. You may see variations of these.

Modern scoring sticks are usually made from white plastic but sometimes you will see multi-coloured packs where each colour denotes a different denomination (in addition to the dots).

箱 [hako]

If the mahjong table or mat lacks suitable storage a player can use a **Hako (Box)** to store their scoring sticks. A mahjong set usually comes with the tiles stowed in four shallow plastic trays which can be used for this purpose if necessary.

This gives rise to the term [Hakoten](#) (literally "box points") to refer to a player who has been busted - they can see the bottom of their box because it's empty!

賽子 / サイコロ / さいころ [saikoro] / 骰子 [shaitsu]

The **Saikoro** are the pair of **Dice** that are used in deciding the initial seating positions and also determining where the wall is broken at the start of each hand of play (see [Format and Winds](#)).

These are conventional cubical dice but typically smaller than western ones and the single dot of the 1 side is often enlarged and painted red as this is an auspicious number (and colour) in China where the game originated. Sets contain up to four dice but only two are used in play.

起家マーク [chiicha māku]

The **Chiicha Māku** is a flat marker that serves two purposes during play.

Firstly it indicates the [Chiicha](#) (i.e. the player who was the first [dealer](#) in the game). The marker sits on the table to their right side for the entire duration of a game.

Secondly it functions as a **Round-Wind Indicator** (see [round-wind](#)), showing 東 (east) on one side and 南 (south) on the reverse. (In Chinese and other forms of mahjong each match is usually played over four rounds and therefore a round-wind indicator must be capable of displaying all four winds but with the modern Japanese rules a two-sided marker is sufficient.)



Scoring sticks, dice and two different round-wind indicators

焼き鳥マーク [yakitori māku]

If you're playing with the optional [Yakitori](#) rule then you will usually use a set of four **Yakitori Markers** each marked with an image of a skewered bird on one side and blank on the reverse.

チップ [chippu]

Another optional accessory is a set of casino-style **Chips**. These can be used to count lucky bonuses during a match (see [Chips](#)) or to track the [Honba count](#) instead of having to use the current dealer's 100-points scoring sticks (and exchange them when the dealer changes).

Tiles

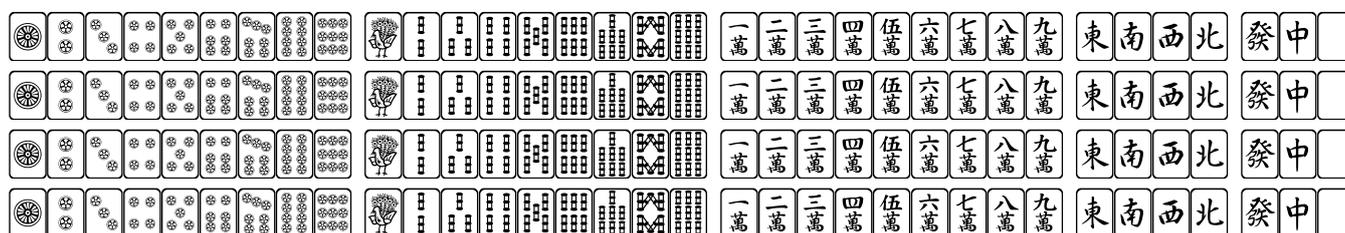
Mahjong tiles can be made from various materials but it's common for vintage tiles to be made from animal bone dovetailed into backs of bamboo and for modern ones to be made from plastics with the back portion coloured, sometimes to mimic the look of bamboo. The front of each tile is engraved and painted with traditional marks to identify it.

Tiles from Japan are typically around 26mm long, 19mm wide and 16mm thick which makes them smaller in size compared to those used in other countries but thicker in shape and consequently easier to stand on the table without the need for racks (which are popular in some other mahjong variants).



Comparison of a modern Japanese set, a vintage Japanese set and a modern Chinese export set

Although a full Chinese or Japanese mahjong set usually contains 144 tiles, only 136 are used during play under the standard Japanese rules. Within this 136 there are thirty-four different tile designs and four copies of each of these ($34 \times 4 = 136$). This thirty-four is broken down into twenty-seven [suit tiles](#) (three suits of nine tiles each), four [wind tiles](#) and three [dragon tiles](#).



The full set of 136 tiles used in play - four copies each of thirty-four different types

The eight extra tiles in a Japanese set are typically four [seasons](#) and four [red fives](#).

数牌 [sūpai / shūpai]

The **Sūpai** (literally "number tiles") are those in the three **Suits**. These are similar to the suits in a deck of western playing cards, but in mahjong there are only three suits and each suit contains only nine different tiles, these being numbered from 1 to 9.

筒子 [pinzu] / ピン [pin]

The first suit is **Pinzu**, often abbreviated to **Pin** or even just "p" (e.g. the tile marked with a 3 would be called the 3-pin or 3p); in English the tiles of this suit are referred to as **Dots** (or coins, circles or balls). Each tile is marked with - typically blue and red - circles to indicate its number, just like dice or dominoes, which makes it quite easy for beginners to recognise them.

The markings on the Pinzu suit are thought to represent coins.

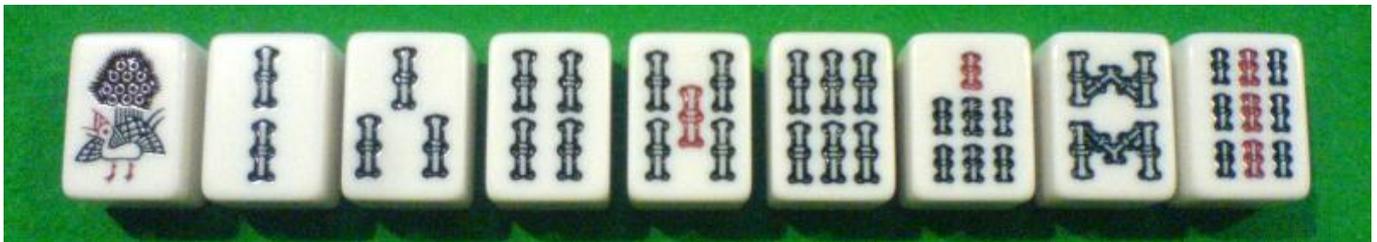


The nine tiles of the Pinzu suit

索子 [sōzu] / ソウ [sō]

The second suit is **Sōzu** (also written "Souzu"), shortened to **Sō** (or Sou) or "s"; in English they are known as **Bamboos** or less formally as **Bams**. These are marked with short sticks which resemble stalks of bamboo and, as with the previous suit, the number of markings denotes the number. The 2, 3, 4, 6 and 8 tiles have purely green markings but the 1, 5, 7 and 9 tiles also have some red marks. The one tricky part for learners is that the 1-sō tiles are marked with a bird instead of the usual sticks - this is usually either a peacock or a diving bird.

The origin of the design for the Sōzu suit is said to be strings, each threaded with a hundred coins (think of traditional Chinese coins with a square hole in the centre). The 索 [kanji](#) in the name of this suit denotes a cord or rope.



The nine tiles of the Sōzu suit

萬子 / 万子 [manzu] / マン [man] / ワン [wan]

The third suit is **Manzu**, also known as **Man** (sometimes **Wan**) or "m" for short, or **Characters** or **Craks** in English. The front of each tile is marked with a red Man character in the lower half (this will be 萬 on a modern set or 万 on an older one) and a black number in the top half, using the normal Japanese kanji characters (see [Numbers](#)). Some mahjong sets made for export will have Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3...) in the corner which makes it easier for beginners to recognise them but at the cost of spoiling the aesthetics.

The Man character means "ten thousand", so the Dots tiles show individual coins, the so-called Bamboo tiles show hundreds of coins and the Craks tiles represent hundreds of hundreds.



The nine tiles of the Manzu suit (in sequence from 1 to 9)

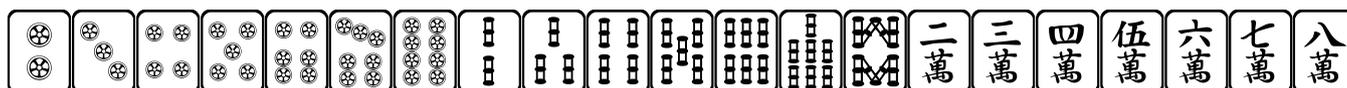
老頭牌 [rōtōhai / raotōhai]

The suit tiles marked 1 or 9 are referred to as the **Rōtōhai** or **Terminals**. Since there are three suits, there are six different terminals in the set.



中張牌 [chunchanpai] / 斷么牌 [tanyaohai]

The remaining suit tiles - those numbered 2 to 8 inclusive - are called the **Chunchanpai** or **Tanyaohai**. In English they are most commonly referred to as **Simples**, although the names "minors" or "middles" might also be used.



字牌 [jihai / tsūpai]

The suit tiles above account for twenty-seven of the thirty-four different designs in a set. The remaining seven are the four winds and three dragons, known collectively as the **Jihai** ("[kanji](#) tiles") or **Honours**. As with the suit tiles, there are four copies of each one in the full tile-set.



風牌 [kazehai / fonpai]

There are four **Kazehai** ("**Wind Tiles**") in a mahjong set, each representing one of the four cardinal directions (compass points). These are marked with the standard Japanese characters for East, South, West and North but, with the exception of South, the names used for them in mahjong are not the usual Japanese readings for these kanji; instead (as with the [numbers](#)) there are special readings used in the game. East is **Ton**, south is **Nan**, west is **Shā** (or sometimes Xia) and north is **Pē** (or Pei), these names being derived from the original Chinese.



The four wind tiles - 東 is Ton (east), 南 is Nan (south), 西 is Shā (west) and 北 is Pē (north)

On some export sets the wind tiles will be marked with the letters E, S, W and N in the corner, but if not that's another four tile characters for beginners to learn, making thirteen in total.

三元牌 [san gen pai]

The other three of the seven honour tiles are the **San Gen Pai**, known colloquially in English as the **Dragons**. Each is a different colour - green, red and white.

On sets with letters/numerals in the corners of the tiles the dragons are usually marked F, C and P (based on their original Chinese names) but since each is a different colour, beginners should have no difficulty distinguishing them without such assistance.



The three dragon tiles - 發 is Hatsu, 中 is Chun and the third is Haku

發 / 發 [hatsu]

Hatsu is the "**Green Dragon**", marked with the Hatsu character in green (發).

中 [chun]

Chun is the "**Red Dragon**", marked with the Chun character in red (中).

白 [haku]

The third is **Haku**. Although I've given the [kanji](#) for "white" here, the "**White Dragon**" tiles in Japanese sets usually have totally unmarked fronts (and are therefore indistinguishable from any blank spare tiles that may also be included in your set).

In mahjong sets from China or other countries the white dragon tile is often marked with a hollow black or blue rectangle which gives the appearance of an empty frame.

么九牌 [yaochūhai]

All the thirteen types of **Terminals and Honours** together - i.e. the ones, nines, winds and dragons - are called the **Yaochūhai** or sometimes "majors".



花牌 [hanahai]

A traditional Chinese mahjong set consists of 144 tiles: the 136 described above plus four **Season** tiles and four **Flower** tiles, known collectively in Japanese mahjong as **Hanahai** ("flower tiles"). Unlike all the other tiles (where there are four copies of each design in the set), each of these eight tiles has a unique design representing a different season or species of plant.

If you play using the Chinese classical rules all 144 tiles are used and any season or flower tiles received by a player are declared, displayed and replaced; each one giving bonus points or [doubles](#). Under the standard modern Japanese rules however these tiles are not used and they should be removed from the set before you commence play.



The four season tiles (left) and four flower tiles (right) from a Chinese set

Although the contents of any given set could vary from the norm, it's common for a Japanese tile-set to contain the standard 136 tiles plus four seasons and four [red five](#) tiles. The red fives (see below) can optionally be included but the seasons will not be used in play.

The four seasons are spring (春), summer (夏), autumn (秋) and winter (冬).

The four flowers are plum (梅), orchid (兰 or 蘭), chrysanthemum (菊) and bamboo (竹). In Japanese culture these are known collectively as 四君子 [shikunshi] or "four wise men".

赤五 [akago] / 赤牌 [akapai] / 赤ドラ [akadora]

One popular variant in Japanese mahjong involves the use of **Red Fives**, known in Japanese as either **Akago** ("red fives"), **Akapai** ("red tiles") or **Akadora** ("red Dora"). These take the form of number 5 suit tiles with totally red markings. If a mahjong set contains four red fives there will usually be two in the [Pinzu](#) suit and one each in the other two suits.



The four red fives and four season tiles from a modern Japanese set

The house or tournament rules will specify how many red fives will be used - sometimes only the two Pinzu tiles are used, or one in each suit, or all four. These are substituted for their non-red equivalents so the game is still played with 136 tiles as usual. Each red five present in a winning hand scores one extra [Han](#), just like [Dora](#) bonus tiles. As with normal Dora, any Han received from red fives do not count towards the [one-Han minimum](#) required for a win.

Red five tiles sometimes have an extra small dot engraved into their faces for the benefit of certain colourblind players who would not otherwise be able to distinguish them.

Red threes and red sevens also exist but red fives are far more prevalent.

スーパ一牌 [sūpā pai]

Sūpā Pai (literally "**Super Tiles**") are a similar concept to red fives, although I've only seen them in one video-game (*Mahjong Haoh: Dankyū Battle 3* on the PS3).

You can play with up to six green five tiles (two per suit) each worth two Han plus two [chips](#) and with one gold seven tile (in the [Manzu](#) suit) which is worth one Han and three chips.

(These serve as an example of some of the more exotic tile options that can be used.)

3. Format and Winds

This section explains the format of each match, the four winds and the seating of the players.

Preliminaries and Seating

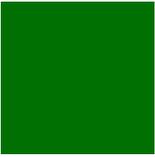
ルール決め [rūru kime]

Even ignoring the many exotic options, there are several basic rules (such as [Kuitan](#), [Kuikae](#) and [Atama Hane](#)) which may be [Ari](#) (allowed) or [Nashi](#) (disallowed) in any given match so the first step before commencing play with new players should always be **Rule Agreement**.

自風 [jikaze] / 門風 [menfon]

The four players sit around the table, one per side. Each of the four sides of the mahjong table - and therefore each of the four players - corresponds to one of the four wind directions (east, south, west and north), although these are not fixed - they rotate during the course of a game.

The allocated wind of a player during any given [hand of play](#) is called their **Jikaze** (literally "self wind") or in English their **Seat-Wind** or **Own Wind**.

North
East  West
South

It should be noted that the four winds are not laid out in the arrangement of a compass or map, instead the west and east positions are switched; this is equivalent to looking up at the heavens from below instead of looking down on the world from above. You might find it beneficial to devise a mnemonic for the sequence "E-S-W-N" which you can use to determine the seat-winds in a counter-clockwise order around the table starting from east.

A player can score by collecting tiles corresponding to their current seat-wind - a [set](#) of three or four gives the scoring element [Yakuhai](#) worth 1 [Han](#) (and a pair of seat-wind tiles gives 2 [Fu](#)).

場所決め [bashogime] / 場決め [bagime]

Before a game can begin, the relative seating positions of the four players must be determined. This process is known as **Bashogime** which means literally "location decision". Quite a long and complicated ritual is used although there is ample potential for abbreviating it if you wish.

Initially the four players sit at the table in arbitrary positions. Six tiles are taken from the set: one of each of the four [wind tiles](#), an odd-numbered [suit tile](#) and an even-numbered suit tile. One player shuffles these six face-down on the table and arranges them into a single row. The player seated opposite then rolls two dice and, using the number obtained, counts around the four people in a counter-clockwise direction, starting with themselves.

仮東 [kariton]

The seat selected by the first dice roll receives the [Chiicha Māku](#) and is designated **Kariton** or **Temporary East**. The seat to the right of this is Temporary South, followed by Temporary West and then Temporary North.

The player at the Temporary East seat then rolls the two dice and counts around the table to select a person. The selected player turns the six tiles face-up and moves each of the two suit tiles to its nearest end, so the row of six tiles now has a group of four winds in the centre, the odd tile at one end and the even tile at the other.



The same player then picks the first wind tile from one end of the group of four; if the sum of the last dice roll was an even number then they start from the end with the even tile and vice versa. The other three players then in turn pick one wind tile each, working around the table in counter-clockwise order and along the row in sequence.

Next the players change seats (where necessary) so that they are each sitting in the seat with the same temporary wind designation as the wind tile they just picked, i.e. the player who drew the west tile sits at the Temporary West seat, opposite the Chiicha Māku (at Temporary East).

起家 [chiicha]

After the [wall](#) has been constructed for the first hand of the game (see [Process of Play](#)), the player now in the Temporary East seat (the one who drew the east tile) throws the two dice and counts counter-clockwise around the table. The player selected by this then rolls the dice one last time and counts around the table again. This final roll indicates the player who will be the **Chiicha**: the person who will have a [seat-wind](#) of east in the first [hand](#) of the game. This player now receives the Chiicha Māku - the marker is placed at the player's right side and stays there throughout the game.

The word Chiicha derives from the original Chinese "Ch'i Chia" meaning "beginning house".

親 [oya] / 莊家 [chancha]

The player with the current [seat-wind](#) of east in any given hand of play is called the **Oya**. In English this player is usually referred to as the **Dealer**, although no dealing is involved!

However the dealer is responsible for breaking the [wall](#) at the start of each hand. The dealer also pays and receives double points (see [Scoring](#)) and has the ability to maintain the dealership in an extra hand of play by meeting certain criteria (see [Renchan](#)).

Although some video-games show a dealer marker, the current dealer is usually indicated by placing the two dice on the tabletop to their right for the duration of their dealership.

子 [ko] / 散家 [sancha]

The other three players are known as the **Ko** or, less elegantly in English, as the **Non-Dealers**. The Japanese word Oya actually means "parent" and Ko means "child".

東家 [toncha] / 南家 [nancha] / 西家 [shācha] / 北家 [pēcha]

The four players can also be given names according to their current seat-wind. The **Toncha** is east (i.e. the dealer), the **Nancha** is south, the **Shācha** is west and the **Pēcha** is north.

下家 [shimocha] / 對面 [toimen] / 上家 [kamicha] / 自家 [jicha]

Three terms are used to refer to the other three players relative to your own seating position. Your **Shimocha** ("lower house") is the player seated to your right, your **Toimen** is seated opposite you and your **Kamicha** ("upper house") is the one seated to your left.

In the same scheme the term **Jicha** ("own house") indicates yourself.

Game Format

場 [ba]

A game of Japanese mahjong is usually played over one or two **Ba** or **Rounds**.

場風 [bakaze] / 莊風 [chanfon]

Each round of the game has an associated wind called the **Bakaze**, or in English the **Round-Wind**, **Prevalent Wind** or **Prevailing Wind**. The round-wind is fixed for the duration of a round and is unrelated to the players' seat-winds.

A player can score by collecting tiles corresponding to the current round-wind - a [set](#) of three or four gives the scoring element [Yakuhai](#) worth 1 [Han](#) (and a pair of round-wind tiles gives 2 [Fu](#)).

東場 [tonba]

The first round of a game is the **Tonba** or "east round". The round-wind is east.

南場 [nanba]

In a game of two rounds, the second round is the **Nanba** or "south round". The second round begins at the point where the seat-winds have completed a full rotation of the table (see below) such that the first player to be east in the game (the [Chiicha](#)) has become east again.

客風 / 才夕風 [otakaze]

The winds which are neither a player's current [seat-wind](#) nor the current [round-wind](#) are known as their **Otakaze**; the [kanji](#) 客 means "guest" so these are often called the **Guest Winds** in English. A player cannot make a [Yakuhai](#) set with any of their guest winds.

半莊 [hanchan] / 半莊戰 [hanchansen] / 東南戰 [tonnansen]

The standard length for a match under modern Japanese rules is two rounds. Such a game is usually known as a **Hanchan** or sometimes a **Tonnansen**.

The kanji 莊 [chan] is used as a countword for mahjong games. A standard game played under the original Chinese classical rules would consist of four rounds (one for each of the four wind directions). The term Hanchan, used for a two-round match, means "**Half-Game**". This can be a little confusing - a full match under Japanese rules is called a half-game!

The name Tonnansen means "east-south match" indicating that the game begins with the east round and ends after the south round has finished.

東風戰 [tonpūsen] / 一風戰 [iipūsen]

A match played over a single round is called a **Tonpūsen** (literally "east-wind match").

This is sometimes called a **Quarter-Game** since it's half the length of a (so-called) half-game.

局 [kyoku]

Each round is comprised of four **Kyoku** (although extra ones can be added - these are known as [Renchan](#) or continuances). Kyoku are also referred to as **Hands** in the same way that you play a "hand of cards" and a card game can be made up of several hands, although there is the same confusion since you would also refer to the tiles (or cards) that each player holds as their "hand". I will therefore tend to use the terms "hand of play" and "hand of tiles" for clarity.

The [seat-winds](#) rotate one place counter-clockwise around the table at the start of each normal hand. The grid below illustrates how the seat-winds change during the course of a match (with the four players labelled A to D in counter-clockwise order). Remember that extra hands can be added to a match (in which the seat-winds do not move) but in this example there are none.

Since there are four hands per round and four winds, each person will play as each of the seat-winds at least once per round and therefore each player gets one turn at being [dealer](#) each round. Exceptions to this would be if a match ended early due either to [bankruptcy](#) or to time constraints in a tournament context.

	First Round (round-wind east)				Second Round (round-wind south)			
	東一局	東二局	東三局	東四局	南一局	南二局	南三局	南四局
	<i>Hand 1</i>	<i>Hand 2</i>	<i>Hand 3</i>	<i>Hand 4</i>	<i>Hand 1</i>	<i>Hand 2</i>	<i>Hand 3</i>	<i>Hand 4</i>
Player A	East	North	West	South	East	North	West	South
Player B	South	East	North	West	South	East	North	West
Player C	West	South	East	North	West	South	East	North
Player D	North	West	South	East	North	West	South	East
Hanchan (two-round game)								
Quarter-Game (one-round game)								

Using English terms I define a complete "match" or "game" comprised of two "rounds" each of four "hands". Some folks might refer to each hand of play as a "game" or a "round".

オーラス [ōrasu]

The term **Ōrasu** is based on the English words "all last" and is used to refer to the final hand of play in a match, e.g. the fourth hand in the south round of a [Hanchan](#) (南四局).

和了止め / アガリ止め / アガリやめ / あがりやめ [agari yame]

Under the optional **Agari Yame** rule, if the [dealer](#) (east) wins the final hand of the match and they are leading on points they can choose whether to play a [continuance](#) as usual (and risk losing) or finish the match early (and ensure their victory). Some video-games will give you the option to finish when you're in this position while others will automatically end the match for you.

(The two characters 止め spell Todome which is a word common in samurai fiction which means "finishing blow" although the same two also form the core of the verb Yameru which simply means "to stop". I prefer the first version!)

聴牌止め / テンパイやめ / 聴牌やめ / ラス親のテンパイやめ [tenpai yame]

An uncommon addition to the above rule is **Tenpai Yame**. This allows a leading dealer in the final hand to end the match if the hand resulted in a [draw](#) and the dealer was [Tenpai](#) (ready).

ぶっとび [buttobi] / トビ / とび [tobi] / ドボン [dobon]

箱点 / ハコ点 / ハコテン [hakoten] / ハコ [hako] / 箱割れ [hakoware]

These are various names used to describe a player whose score has dropped below zero, making them **Bankrupt**. By extension, these terms also refer to the optional rule that causes a match to end early as soon as this happens to one or more players. If this rule is not recognised then the match continues with negative score/s (and it is therefore not possible to track the points totals with [scoring sticks](#) as usual).

In the Japanese language, **Buttobi** (or **Tobi** for short) is a slang term that describes "jumping from one place to another significantly". In everyday usage **Dobon** is an onomatopoeic term used to denote a large splash (Google Translate gives the English equivalent as "ker-plunk!").

飛び罰符 [tobi bappu] / 飛び賞 [tobi shō]

Optionally the player that got busted can be required to pay a **Bankruptcy Penalty** or **Tobi Bonus** (for example 10,000 points, 20,000 points or one [chip](#)) to the opponent that busted them.

終了 [shūryō]

The word **Shūryō** denotes "termination" or "completion" and indicates the end of a match.

A game will end under any of the following circumstances:-

- the final hand is won by a non-dealer
- the final hand ends in a [draw](#) in which the [dealer](#) does not qualify for a [continuance](#)
- a [bankruptcy](#) rule is applied and one or more players' scores drop into negative points
- the [Agari Yame](#) (or Tenpai Yame) rule is applied and the dealer elects to end the match
- the time allocation for a tournament match has been exceeded

The overall positions of the players are determined by their final points totals. If two players have the same score then priority usually goes to the one that had the [seat-wind](#) of east earliest during the match. For example if a match ends and the players at west and north in the final hand are both tied for first place with the same score then the match win would be taken by west (they were east in the second hand of the first round) and second place would go to north (they were east later, in the third hand).

This determination can be applied at any stage of the match so, technically, even at the very start of a game when the four players all hold the same [starting score](#), the east player is 1st and the north player is 4th.

If the [Oka](#), [Uma](#) and [Yakitori](#) rules are in use then the final scores are adjusted accordingly.

The winner also collects any [Riichi](#) stakes remaining on the table at the end of the match.

トップ [toppu]

The player leading on points either during the game or at the end is designated **Toppu** ("top").

ラスト [rasuto] / ぶり [biri]

The player with the lowest score is **Rasuto** ("last").

4. Process of Play

This section summarises the process followed in each [Kyoku](#) (hand of play) during a match.

洗牌 [shiipai]

At the start of each hand the tiles are shuffled; of course this is a significantly different operation compared to shuffling a deck of playing cards. All 136 tiles are placed face-down on the table and mixed thoroughly. This **Shuffling** stage is referred to as **Shiipai**.

The kanji 洗 means "wash" so sometimes the term "washing" is used to describe this process. In some older texts discussing the Chinese classical game it is given the poetic name "the twittering of the sparrows" because of the distinctive sound of the tiles.

山 / 牌山 [yama]

After shuffling, each player gathers thirty-four of the tiles and builds a wall, seventeen tiles long and two tiles high. With a little practice you can make two rows of seventeen tiles each and then, carefully gripping and pushing together, lift one on top of the other. For the less adventurous you can just make seventeen little stacks of two and push them together.

All four players push or lift their tiles into the centre of the table so that they form a large square, known in English as the **Wall**. In Japanese mahjong it's called the **Yama** ("mountain").

幢 [ton]

The term **Ton** is used to refer to each **Stack** of two tiles in the wall.

積む [tsumu]

The verb **Tsumu** (meaning "to stack") can be used to describe the act of building the wall.



A portion of the complete wall before play

The [dealer](#) then takes the two dice and throws them inside the square. He counts around the four sides of the wall, counter-clockwise, starting with himself; the indicated side is the one which will be broken. He then counts the same number of tiles along that side, starting from the right end (as viewed from outside the square), to find the point at which to break the wall, pulling the stacks of tiles apart slightly.

ツモ山 [tsumoyama]

The majority of the 136 tiles in the wall (specifically the 122 tiles not included in the dead wall - see below), constitute the **Tsumoyama** or **Live Wall** - this is the part of the wall from which the players draw their tiles before and during play.

It's common for video-games to not depict the live wall so instead you are shown a simple numerical counter which displays the number of tiles left there. This is typically labelled 残り牌 [nokori pai] which means "remaining tiles" but sometimes only the single character 残 is used.

王牌 [wanpai]

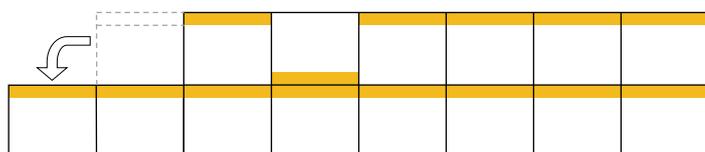
The seven stacks (fourteen tiles) immediately to the right of the break in the wall are called the **Wanpai** (literally "king's tiles") or **Dead Wall** in English; if the dealer's dice roll gave a total of six or less, the dead wall will wrap around a corner of the square wall.

The first two stacks of the dead wall are used as [supplement tiles](#) (after a player declares a [Kong](#)). The dead wall in Japanese mahjong always has exactly fourteen tiles and is "effectively replenished". For each supplement tile taken during a hand of play, one less tile from the back end of the live wall will enter play and the hand will end "one tile early" - so, in effect, the fourteen tiles of the dead wall are replenished by the live wall although you don't actually physically move the tiles across.

The other five stacks in the dead wall function as [Dora](#) indicators; the top tile on the third stack along from the break is always turned face-up at the start of each hand of play to give the normal Dora indicator. Some video-games show only these five stacks to save space on screen. (The structure of the dead wall is illustrated [later](#) in the guide.)



The dead wall with the Dora indicator revealed



Sometimes the top tile from the first stack of the dead wall will be placed on the table adjacent to the bottom tile so that the two ends of the wall can be distinguished clearly.

配牌 [haipai]

The tiles taken by the players at the start of each hand of play are called the **Haipai** (literally "allocated tiles"). Working counter-clockwise around the players - starting with the [dealer](#) (east) and drawing tiles in strict clockwise sequence from the wall starting from the break - the players take two stacks each, then another two and then two more, giving twelve tiles each in total.

チョンチョン [chon-chon]

1	3	5
2	4	

After the initial twelve tiles, they collect a further one tile each and finally the dealer draws one more tile, effectively taking his first draw of the new hand of play. The dealer can take both of his tiles at once (taking 1 and 5 together) and the others then take theirs in turn (2, 3 and 4). The dealer's double draw is referred to as "**Chon-Chon**".

手牌 [tehai]

The term **Tehai** literally means "hand of tiles". Unless they have declared a [Kong](#) and taken a [supplement tile](#), each player's **Hand** will contain thirteen tiles.

Japanese mahjong is therefore known as one of the original "thirteen-tile" variants of the game (in contrast to the Taiwanese version of mahjong for example where each player holds sixteen tiles and makes one additional [set](#)).

理牌 [riipai]

Riipai means **Tile Arrangement**. It's traditional to arrange your hand of tiles into the following order (from left to right): [Manzu](#) suit (1 to 9), [Sōzu](#) suit (1 to 9), [Pinzu](#) suit (1 to 9), [wind tiles](#) (ESWN) and [dragon tiles](#) (white-green-red). Most video-games will use this order.

In real life however you might arrange your tiles differently to confound your opponents!

切る [kiru]

Since the dealer took a fourteenth tile as part of his first turn, he must now study his hand and choose a tile to discard. The verb **Kiru**, which usually means "to cut" (amongst other things) in standard Japanese, is used to refer to the act of selecting and removing a tile.

捨て牌 [sutehai]

The chosen tile is then discarded. A **Discarded Tile** (or more simply a "**Discard**") is called a **Sutehai**, based on the verb Suteru which means "to throw away".

河 [hō]

As it's necessary under Japanese rules to be able to determine who discarded each tile (and in what order), each player's discarded tiles are placed face-up in neat rows of six directly in front of them, inside the wall. The [kanji](#) 河 means "river" but each player's discard area is sometimes called their **Pond** or **Pool** in English.

ツモ / 自摸 [tsumo]

After the dealer has made their first discard, each player takes their turn in sequence, working in counter-clockwise order around the table, drawing a tile and then discarding one.

Although it is also more widely used to describe to a [win declared on a self-drawn tile](#), the term **Tsumo** is used to refer to the tile a player has just drawn from the wall.

A player can declare a win using either a self-drawn tile or an opponent's discarded tile to complete their hand of tiles (see [Win, Lose or Draw](#)). Their winning hand must fulfil the two criteria of having the [required structure](#) and qualifying for at least one [Yaku](#). The declaration of a win ends the current hand of play.

上づも [uwazumo] / 下づも [shitazumo]

A tile drawn from the top row of the [live wall](#) is referred to as **Uwazumo** while one taken from the bottom row is called **Shitazumo**. Since the tiles are in stacks of two and the game is (usually) played with four players, any given person will repeatedly take either a top or bottom tile on each of their draws (unless the turn order is disrupted - see [Calling](#)).

手出し / テダシ / てだし [tedashi]

Tedashi is when you discard a tile from within your hand instead of the one you just drew.

ツモ切り [tsumogiri / tsumokiri]

Tsumogiri is when you discard the new tile you just drew instead of one from your hand.

Some video-games give the option to highlight either Tsumogiri or Tedashi tiles since this gives useful information which you would have if you were playing a real game. A tile discarded from within the player's hand will often be related to a [set](#) they are building, for example if they have a one-sided 3_5 [wait](#) and draw the 6 of the same suit they might switch to the two-sided _56_ wait and drop the 3 (see [Ura Suji](#)).

Also, more simply, when a player repeatedly discards their drawn tile on every turn it's often a sign that they are [Damaten](#) (either that or just unlucky with their draws!).

空切り [karagiri]

Karagiri is when you draw a tile and then discard an identical tile from within your hand. This creates the impression that you are still building your hand when perhaps it is already at a very advanced state of completion or even [Tenpai](#).

無駄ヅモ / ムダヅモ [mudazumo]

Mudazumo denotes a useless draw - a tile which doesn't help you to complete your hand.

巡 [jun]

The kanji **Jun** means "go-around" and is applied to the sequence of all four players taking one turn each in counter-clockwise order around the table.

It can be used to denote a player's turn number, for example a detailed WWYD (*What Would You Discard?*) training puzzle in Japanese might state 7巡目 to indicate that it is the player's seventh turn (discard) in the current hand of play. (The additional character 目 is an ordinal suffix, effectively changing "seven" into "seventh").

海底牌 / ハイテイハイ [haiteihai]

The final tile available to be drawn from the [live wall](#) is called the **Haiteihai**.

You cannot declare a [Kong](#) after drawing this final tile.

If this tile completes your hand and you declare a win you can claim the Yaku called [Haitei](#).

河底牌 / ホーテイハイ [hōteihai]

The final tile discarded by the player who drew the Haiteihai is called the **Hōteihai**.

The other players cannot call this discard to complete a set (see [Calling](#)) but they can declare a [Ron](#) win on it and thereby claim the bonus Yaku called [Hōtei](#).

If no-one declares a win on the Hōteihai then the hand of play ends in an [exhaustive draw](#).

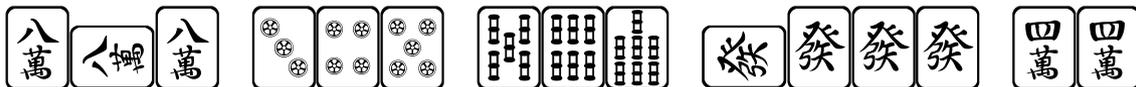
5. Sets and Calling

I will be using the terms Chow, Pung and Kong to refer to the three types of sets that can be made. These are the names I picked up when I learnt mahjong from an English translation of a Japanese video-game and they have been standard in English texts about the game since the great mahjong craze back in the 1920's.

Sets

あがりの形 [agari no katachi]

The required form for a win (**Agari no Katachi**) is a completed hand of tiles composed of four sets and one pair, although two exceptions to this rule are permitted (namely [Chii Toitsu](#) and [Kokushimusō](#)). Each of the four sets in the hand can be a set of three tiles - either a Chow or a Pung - or exceptionally a set of four called a Kong. These are all described below.



A winning hand must also always have at least one [Yaku](#) (scoring element).

頭 / アタマ [atama] / 雀頭 [jantō] / 対子 [toitsu]

The **Pair** of two identical tiles required for a standard hand is most commonly known as the **Atama** which means "head". Other Japanese terms for the pair are **Jantō** and **Toitsu**. In some older English texts the word "pillow" is also used.

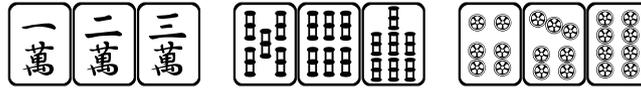


面子 [mentsu]

Collectively the three different types of **Set** (Chow, Pung and Kong) are known as **Mentsu**.

順子 [shuntsu]

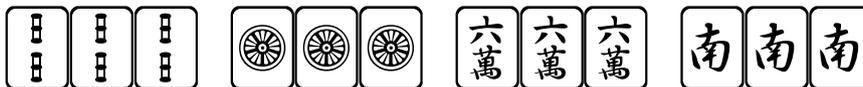
A **Chow** is a set of three tiles from the same suit with consecutive numbers, for example 456. In Japanese mahjong this is known as a **Shuntsu** and sometimes the English terms **Sequence** or **Run** are used. I like to think of a Chow as being like a miniature version of a Straight Flush in poker. Chows can only be made with the numbered [suit tiles](#), not with [honours](#).



Unlike some versions of mahjong, in the Japanese rules there are no restrictions on the number of Chows that a player can include in their hand of tiles.

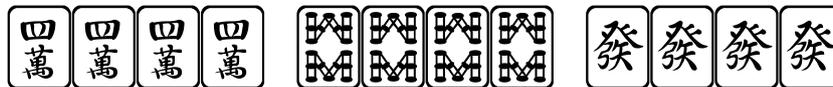
刻子 [kōtsu]

A **Pung** is a set of any three identical tiles. In Japanese mahjong this is called a **Kōtsu**, or sometimes in English a **Triple** or **Triplet**.



槓子 [kantsu]

A **Kong** is a set of any four identical tiles. In Japanese this is called a **Kantsu** or sometimes in English a **Quad**. There are three different ways to make a Kong, each given its own name (see [below](#)). A collection of four matching tiles is not a Kong until you declare or call it as such.



For any [Yaku](#) that requires Pungs you can use one or more Kongs in their place.

嶺上牌 / リンシャン牌 / リンシャンハイ [rinshanhai]

Since it requires four tiles instead of the usual three, declaring a Kong will leave you a tile short overall so you take from the [dead wall](#) an extra tile called a **Rinshanhai** or **Supplement Tile**.

These are taken from the first stack of the dead wall for the first two Kongs to be made and the second stack for the next two. Since only four supplement tiles are available there, no more than four Kongs can be made during a hand of play. In the very unlikely event that all four Kongs are made by the same player, they can make a limit hand called [Sū Kantsu](#). If the four Kongs are made by two or more players then under some rule-sets an [abortive draw](#) is called. A fifth Kong can never be made under Japanese rules.

It is not possible to declare a Kong on either the [final drawn tile](#) or the [final discarded tile](#) in a hand of play as there would be no tile remaining in the [live wall](#) with which to replenish the fourteen tiles of the dead wall after the supplement tile is taken.

Each time a Kong is declared, another [Dora](#) indicator is revealed on the top row of the dead wall (on the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh stacks sequentially). These indicate the [Kan Dora](#).

If the supplement tile received completes your hand and you declare a win on it you can claim the scoring element [Rinshan Kaihō](#).

Calling

鳴き [naki] / 副露 [fūro]

It is possible to "steal" a tile that an opponent has just discarded in order to complete a set - this is known as **Calling** or **Melding**. Sometimes the term **Naki** is used, based on the verb Naku which denotes the singing or "calling" of a bird. Sets made this way are said to be "exposed" (see [below](#)); they are displayed to the right of the player and cannot then be discarded.

A tile can only be called immediately after the player discarded it. Once the next player takes their turn, the previous discard tile becomes unavailable and stays on the table.

チー [chii]

If the player to your left (and only that player) discards a tile which you can use to complete a [Chow](#) using two tiles from your hand then you can claim it with the declaration "**Chii**".

ポン [pon]

If you have a pair of identical tiles in your hand and any other player discards another of the same kind you can say "**Pon**" and take the tile to complete a [Pung](#).

カン [kan]

If you have three identical tiles in your hand (i.e. a Pung) and any other player discards the fourth tile of that kind you can call "**Kan**" and take it to make a [Kong](#), specifically a [Daiminkan](#).

You also say "Kan" when using a self-drawn tile to declare either an [Ankan](#) or a [Shōminkan](#).

When you call a tile it becomes your turn. After completing the set, you discard as usual and play continues normally in a counter-clockwise direction from your right. Consequently after a call of Pon or Kan the normal sequence of play can be disrupted.

If two players claim the same discarded tile, a claim for Pon or Kan takes priority over a claim for Chii, but the declaration of a win ([Ron](#)) supersedes any of these.

喰い替え / 喰いかえ / 喰い変え / 喰い換え [kuikae / kuigae]

When **Kuikae** is allowed you can call an opponent's discard using two tiles from your hand and then immediately discard a third tile which could've formed a set with the other two tiles.

There are two parts to this rule - [Genbutsu](#) (the same tile) and [Suji](#) (the other tile that can form a Chow with the same two consecutive tiles). The Genbutsu aspect allows you for example to call Pon on a 5 with 55 (to make an open 555 Pung) and then discard the fourth 5 in that suit and it also allows you to call Chii on a 4 with 23 (to make an open 234 Chow) and then discard another 4. The Suji aspect lets you call Chii on a 4 with 23 and then discard the 1.

Often a rule-set will disallow Kuikae. In Episode 6 of the *Akagi* anime, the eponymous hero makes a meld and discard of this type and is subsequently required to take it back. Sometimes the Suji aspect is permitted and only the Genbutsu aspect is disallowed.

(The [kanji](#) 喰 denotes "eating" since it refers to capturing or (in a sense) eating an opponent's discarded tile. The same Kui- prefix also appears in the mahjong terms [Kuitan](#) and [Kuisagari](#).)

Open and Closed

A set made by [calling](#) a stolen discard is known as a **Meld** and is described as being **Open** or **Exposed**. Once you've made one meld your whole hand of tiles is said to be open or exposed too. This is a shortcut to completing your hand more quickly but it will often limit your scoring opportunities, restrict your potential for [defence](#) and reveal your intentions to your opponents.

門前 / メンゼン [menzen] / 門前清 [menzenchin]

A hand of tiles with no melded sets is said to be **Menzen**, the equivalent English terms being **Closed** or **Concealed**.

暗 [an]

The prefix **An** is used to indicate a concealed set in your hand - one composed only of tiles you have drawn from the wall. The kanji 暗 denotes darkness or shade.

暗順 [anjun]

An **Anjun** is a concealed [Chow](#) - three sequential same-suit self-drawn tiles in your hand.

暗刻 [ankō]

An **Ankō** is a concealed [Pung](#) - three identical self-drawn tiles in your hand.

暗槓 [ankan]

An **Ankan** is a concealed [Kong](#). It must be declared for it to be recognised as a Kong, otherwise it's just four identical self-drawn tiles in your hand.

After the player has declared the concealed Kong they place the set flat on the table to their right with the four tiles in a row - the middle two tiles face-up and the outer two face-down.



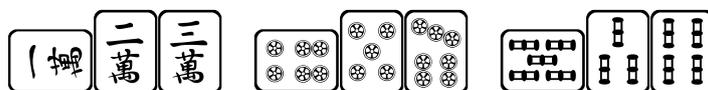
Although the Ankan is placed to the player's side like a meld, it is still a concealed set.

明 [min]

The prefix **Min** is used to indicate an exposed set - one completed by calling a discard tile from another player. The character 明 denotes light or brightness and is composed of the two kanji 日 and 月 which separately mean "sun" and "moon".

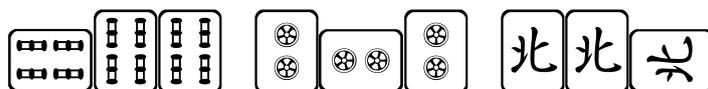
明順 [minjun]

A **Minjun** is an exposed [Chow](#), completed by calling [Chii](#) from the player to your left. Such a set is displayed with the stolen tile turned perpendicularly and placed to the left of the other two.



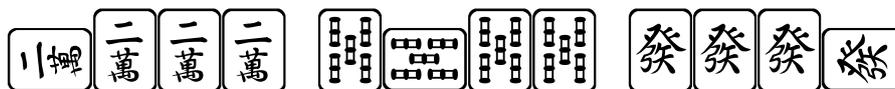
明刻 [minkō]

A **Minkō** is an exposed [Pung](#), completed by calling [Pon](#). The set is displayed with one tile turned perpendicularly to indicate which player the stolen tile was taken from - the left tile indicates the player to your left, the centre tile denotes the player opposite you and the right tile is turned if the set was completed with a discard taken from the player to your right.



大明槓 / 大ミンカン [daiminkan]

A **Daiminkan** is literally a "big" exposed [Kong](#), completed by calling [Kan](#) on an opponent's discard when you are holding a concealed [Pung](#) (Ankō) of the same tile. The set is displayed with the first, second or fourth tile turned perpendicularly if the discard was taken respectively from the player to the left, opposite or to the right.



小明槓 / 小ミンカン [shōminkan] / 加槓 [chakan]

A **Shōminkan** is a "little" exposed Kong, formed by adding a self-drawn tile to a previously melded [Pung](#) (Minkō) thus "upgrading" it to a Kong. The fourth tile is placed on top of the sideways tile and parallel to it. The kanji 加 in the alternative name **Chakan** denotes addition.



6. Yaku (Part 1)

Since there are a lot of Yaku in the game I've split them over three consecutive sections, with the middle one dedicated to [Riichi](#) only because it has several related terms to discuss. There's also a section covering some [Optional Yaku](#) later in the guide.

役 [yaku]

The rules of modern Japanese mahjong recognise a couple of dozen **Yaku**. These are loosely similar to the idea of named "hands" or "combinations" in poker (Two Pair, Straight Flush, etc) except that mahjong's Yaku can be combined and, although many are based on specific combinations of tiles, others are instead awarded for meeting certain conditions; consequently the use of the term "combination" to describe these is inadequate so my preference is to refer to them in English as **Scoring Elements** instead.

Each Yaku present in a winning hand gives one or more [Han](#) (also known as Fan or "doubles"). In a low-scoring hand each Han will add a doubling factor to the points calculation, while in a bigger hand the number of Han will determine which of the five [limits](#) is applied to the score.

If there are multiple ways of arranging the tiles in your winning hand into [sets](#) you must choose one and use only this when reckoning your Yaku. For example if you have 333444555 in the same suit and you count these tiles as three [Pungs](#) 333 444 555 to meet the requirement of one Yaku, you cannot then additionally count them as three [Chows](#) 345 345 345 for another. To give another case, if you have 66778899 in one suit and count this as a 66 pair and 789 789 for [lipēkō](#), you are not permitted to also count them as a 99 and 678 678 for a second lipēkō.

In any hand that requires Pungs you can also use [Kongs](#), for example you can make an "[All Pungs](#)" hand with four Pungs, or three Pungs and one Kong, or two Pungs and two Kongs, etc. The converse, however, is not true - you cannot count Pungs as Kongs.

In my Yaku summaries here I've listed them in order of how frequently they occur during play (based on 2009 data from the statistical logs on the [Tenhou](#) website), starting here with the most commonly occurring at the top. If you're just starting to learn the game and find the full Yaku list a little daunting you should focus your attention on the ones in this section first.

(Just be grateful you're not learning the Chinese Official (CO) rules which use a list of 81 different scoring elements!)

一翻縛り / 1 翻しばり [ji han shibari]

Unlike several other variants, modern Japanese mahjong is played with an **li Han Shibari** or **One-Han Minimum**. This means that, in addition to having the [correct format](#) (usually four sets and a pair), a winning hand must also have at least one [Han](#). You cannot count Han from [Dora](#) towards meeting this requirement so it's perhaps more helpful to think of this as a "one-Yaku minimum". In other words, a winning hand must always have at least one Yaku.

(See also [Ryan Han Shibari](#) for the conditional two-Han minimum rule option.)

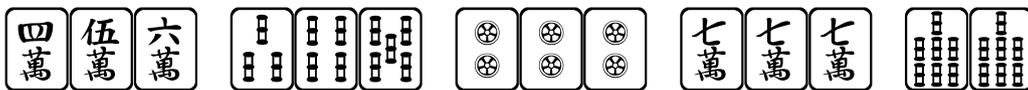
Common Yaku

立直 / リーチ [riichi]

Since **Riichi** is the most significant Yaku in Japanese mahjong, I've devoted a whole separate section to it (see [Reaching](#)). Riichi is worth one Han (but with the potential for bonuses).

断么九 / 断ヤオ九 [tanyaochū] / タンヤオ [tanyao]

Tanyao (also known as **All Simple**s or **Inside Hand**) is awarded for a hand containing only [Simple](#)s - suit tiles with numbers between 2 and 8 (inclusive). It scores one Han.



Usually the [Kuitan](#) rule is used - this allows the Tanyao scoring element can be claimed on an [exposed](#) hand (otherwise it is only permitted with a concealed hand).

役牌 [yakuhai] / 翻牌 / 翻牌 [fanpai]

Yakuhai is a simple Yaku which awards one Han for each [Pung](#) composed of [dragon tiles](#) or tiles of the [round-wind](#) or the player's current [seat-wind](#). It is also called **Fanpai**.

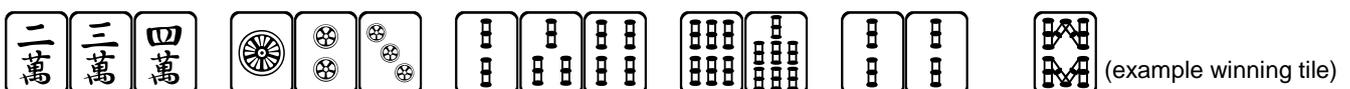
When made with dragons, a Yakuhai set will sometimes be referred to by the name of the tile ([Hatsu](#), [Haku](#) or [Chun](#)). When made with [wind tiles](#), the name of the wind can be used (Ton, Nan, Shā or Pē) or more generally 風牌 [kazehai] (literally "wind tiles") for any scoring wind.



Since they can make a Yakuhai set (or give two [Fu](#) for a pair), the three dragon tiles, the round-wind and a player's seat-wind are sometimes together called the **Value Tiles**.

平和 / ピンフ [pinfu]

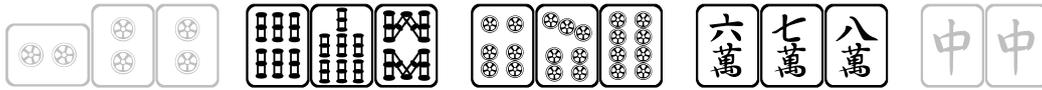
Pinfu is a common scoring element with a simple name but it has the most complicated requirements of any Yaku. Essentially it is awarded for a hand which scores no extra [Fu](#) points on top of those received for winning. To achieve this all four sets must be [Chows](#); the pair cannot be composed of [dragon](#), [seat-wind](#) or [round-wind](#) tiles and the hand must be won on a two-sided [Ryanmen](#) wait. Furthermore the hand must be [concealed](#). Pinfu is awarded one Han.



The word Pinfu comes from "P'ing Ho" in Chinese meaning "even harmony". Some folks use the English name **Peace** for this Yaku because in Japanese the [kanji](#) 平和 translate as "peace".

三色同順 [san shoku dōjun] / 三色 / サンショク [san shoku]

San Shoku Dōjun (Mixed Triple Chow) scores two Han in a closed hand or one Han if open and is composed of three [Chows](#), each with the same three numbers and one in each of the three suits. It's sometimes called **Three Colour Runs**.

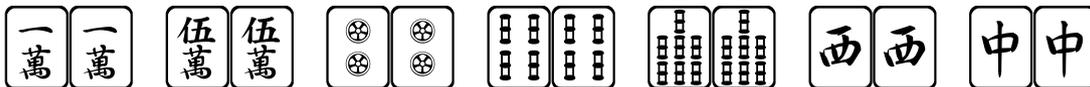


The literal reading of the [kanji](#) name is "three colours, same sequence". There are two standard Yaku with names that begin "San Shoku..." but since the other one ([San Shoku Dōkō](#)) is so rare this one is sometimes known as **San Shoku** (or even **San Sho**) for short.

七対子 / チートイツ [chii toitsu] / にこにこ / ニコニコ [niko-niko]

Chii Toitsu (literally Seven Pairs) is a special hand composed of seven pairs of matching tiles and is therefore one of the two exceptions to the normal [required hand structure](#) of four sets and one pair. You are not allowed to count four identical tiles (i.e. an undeclared [Kong](#)) as two pairs.

As there are no [sets](#) in the hand, it will always be closed. A Chii Toitsu hand scores exactly 25 Fu with no further additions and two Han (see [Scoring](#)).

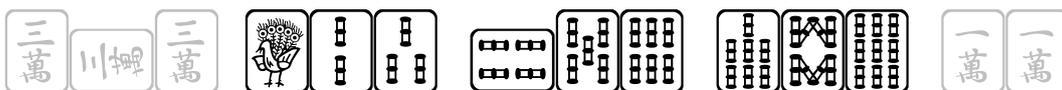


This Yaku is sometimes known informally as **Niko-Niko**. Ni is the Japanese word for "two" and Ko (個) is a general countword so this nickname implies a sequence of pairs. Another English name for this scoring element is **All Pairs**.

Winning a hand with Chii Toitsu is the PSN trophy requirement for the mahjong minigame in the PS3 video-game *Ryū ga Gotoku 4* (subsequently released in English markets as *Yakuza 4*).

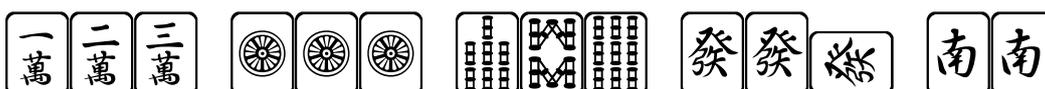
一気通貫 [ikkitsūkan] / いっつう / イツツー [ittsū]

Ikkitsūkan (Pure Straight), or **Ittsū** for short, is a set of three consecutive [Chows](#) in the same suit, i.e. a full sequence of all nine tiles in that suit: 123456789. It scores two Han in a [closed](#) hand or one Han if the hand is open.



混全帯么九 [honchantaiyaochū] / 全帯ヤオ [chantayao] / チャンタ [chanta]

For **Chanta (Mixed Outside Hand)** the four sets in the hand and the pair must all include at least one [terminal](#) or [honour](#) tile (so any [Chows](#) must be either 123 or 789) and there must be at least one Chow. It scores two Han in a closed hand or one Han when open.



The initial character 混 in the full name indicates that the hand is "mixed", i.e. suit and honour tiles are both permitted. In the absence of honours you claim [Junchan](#) instead of Chanta.

清一色 / チンイツ [chinitsu / chiniisō]

Chinitsu (Full Flush) is a hand composed only of tiles from one of the three [suits](#). It's worth six Han closed but you will often need to make one or more [melds](#) to complete it in which case it scores five Han (still a guaranteed [Mangan](#)), although even without open sets your intentions will be made quite clear to your opponents by your discards.



The literal reading of the kanji name is "pure one colour".

Related Terms

食い断 / 食いタン / 食断 [kuitan] / 食い断ヤオ [kuitanyao]

鳴き断 / ナキ断 [nakitan]

Kuitan (or rarely **Nakitan**) is the rule option that allows the [Tanyao](#) (All Simples) scoring element to be claimed on an [exposed](#) hand. If the rule is disallowed then you may only claim Tanyao on a concealed hand.

The names Kuitan and Nakitan mean "eating Tanyao" and "calling Tanyao" respectively.

食い下がり [kuisagari]

The rule of **Kuisagari** applies to certain Yaku, making them worth one [Han](#) less if the hand is [exposed](#) (i.e. if it contains one or more sets that were completed with a stolen discard).

Kuisagari means "eat and decrease".

自風牌 [jikazehai] / 門風牌 [menfonpai]

When you make [Yakuhai](#) specifically with a set of your current [seat-wind](#) this can be called **Jikazehai** (literally "own wind tiles").

場風牌 [bakazehai] / 莊風牌 [chanfonpai]

Similarly, when you make [Yakuhai](#) specifically with a set of the current [round-wind](#) this can be called **Bakazehai** (literally "round-wind tiles").

連風牌 [renfonpai / renfūhai]

If you are fortunate enough to make a set of your seat-wind when this coincides with the round-wind (e.g. when you are dealer (east) in the first (east) round) this is known as **Renfonpai** or **Double Wind**. With a set of double wind you claim the Han for both seat-wind and round-wind so it gives two Han for two instances of [Yakuhai](#) in a single set.

ダブ東 [dabu ton] / ダブ南 [dabu nan]

A double wind can be referred to using the specific name of the wind preceded by Dabu which is a shortened form of Daburu, a Japanese rendering of the English word "double". **Dabu Ton** is double east and **Dabu Nan** is double south.

Since Japanese mahjong is played over only two [rounds](#) - with round-winds of east and south respectively - you won't usually see double wind in west or north (unless you're playing with the [Shānyū](#) rule option which allows additional rounds to be played).

自摸平和 / ツモピンフ / ツモ平和 [tsumo pinfu]
平和自摸 / 平和ツモ [pinfu tsumo] / ピンヅモ [pinzumo]

Normally an additional two [Fu](#) (minipoints) would be awarded when scoring a hand won by [Tsumo](#) (self-draw) but typically - if **Tsumo Pinfu** is allowed in your rules - those Fu are waived so you can meet the "no points" criterion for [Pinfu](#) and claim the two Han (one for Pinfu and one for [Menzen Tsumo](#)).

メンタンピン / 門断平 [mentanpin] / リータンピン [riitanpin]

Mentanpin is a popular abbreviation which denotes the common combination of [Riichi](#) (which always has a [Menzen](#) hand), [Tanyao](#) and [Pinfu](#).

リーピン [riipin] / リータン [riitan] / タンピン [tanpin]

Similarly **Riipin** is Riichi with Pinfu (the foundation of the majority of hands in modern Japanese mahjong), **Riitan** is Riichi with Tanyao and **Tanpin** is Tanyao with Pinfu.

リーヅモ / リーズモ [riizumo]

Riizumo is a combination of Riichi and [Menzen Tsumo](#). Your hand must be concealed in order to declare Riichi so if you win on a self-drawn tile you always get Menzen Tsumo too.

のみ [nomi]

The Japanese word **Nomi** means "only" and can be appended when declaring a winning hand with only one Yaku, for example you might say "Yakuhai Nomi".

染め手 [somete] / 一色手 [isshoku te]

Somete (literally "dyed hand") and **Isshoku Te** ("one-colour hand") are both collective terms used to refer to Yaku containing a single suit, i.e. [Honitsu](#) (Half Flush) and [Chinitsu](#) (Full Flush).

メンチン [menchin] / メンホン [menhon]

These terms can be used to refer to the more valuable concealed versions of Yaku that follow the Kuisagari rule (see above), for example **Menchin** is a shortened form of [Menzen Chinitsu](#) (concealed Full Flush) and **Menhon** is Menzen [Honitsu](#) (concealed Half Flush).

馬鹿混 / 馬鹿ホン / バカホン [bakahon]

Bakahon is a slang term for an open Honitsu hand with no [Dora](#) and no other Yaku (therefore worth only two Han). Baka means "stupid"!

7. Reaching

This section discusses rules and terminology relating to the Riichi scoring element.

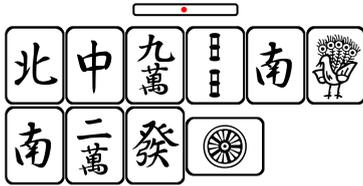
立直 / リーチ [riichi]

The most distinctive aspect of the modern Japanese game that distinguishes it from most other forms of mahjong is **Riichi**, sometimes given as the English equivalent **Reach**. By extension, this term can be used as a verb as well as a noun, e.g. "I reached" or "she's reaching".

Riichi is a special type of [Yaku](#). I like to call it a "ready bet" - when a player declares Riichi they are essentially gambling some of their points, betting on themselves winning the current hand.

There are four requirements that must be met in order to be able to declare Riichi:-

- your hand of tiles must be [concealed](#) (with no sets completed with a stolen discard)
- your hand must be [Tenpai](#) (in a ready state where it can be completed with one further tile)
- you must have at least 1,000 points (this being the stake you wager)
- there must be at least four tiles remaining to be drawn from the [live wall](#)



You can declare Riichi only when it is your turn. You must place one 1,000-point [scoring stick](#) above your first row of discarded tiles, parallel to them. Also, to record the point at which this occurred, you should orient your discard tile perpendicularly to the others (subsequent discards are then placed as normal).

If the tile you discard when "reaching" is taken by a [Chii](#), [Pon](#) or [Kan](#) call then you should place your next discard perpendicularly instead. If it's taken by [Ron](#) for another player's win then your Riichi declaration is invalid and you keep your 1,000 points stake.

Once you've "reached" you cannot change the structure of your hand so each tile you draw from the wall must either be discarded or used to declare a [self-draw win](#) (in video-games this often takes the form of an "autopilot" with non-winning tiles discarded automatically). Some rules do however allow you to declare a concealed Kong (see below).

If you declare Riichi and go on to get the tile you need to win the hand (either by [self-draw](#) or as a [stolen discard](#)) you get your stake returned and you also receive one additional [Han](#) in the calculation of your score. Since Riichi is a Yaku in its own right you can use it to give the one Yaku required for a win, even if your hand has no other guaranteed scoring elements.

There are two other benefits from a win after "reaching", although these are technically optional rules which are sometimes not used. The first is the bonus Yaku called [Ippatsu](#) which gives one extra Han for winning on or before your next turn after declaring Riichi. The second is that additional Dora indicators come into play: the Ura Dora beneath the normal Omote Dora plus the Kan Ura Dora under any Kan Dora that have been revealed during the hand (see [Dora](#)).

There are two variants of the Yaku - [Daburu Riichi](#) (when declared on your first turn) and, optionally, [Open Riichi](#) (exposing your waiting tiles). It should also be noted that, under some rule-sets, all four players declaring Riichi in the same hand can force an [abortive draw](#).

The term Riichi comes from "Li Chih" in the original Chinese denoting a "standing hand".

リ一チ棒 / 立直棒 [riichibō]

The 1,000-point [scoring stick](#) which is placed on the table when you declare Riichi is known as the **Riichibō** (literally "**Riichi Stick**").

If you find that you have no 1,000 pts scoring sticks available you can ask one of the other players to break or change a 5,000 pts stick for you.

供託 [kyōtaku]

Whenever there are one or more Riichi stakes on the table, the next player to win a hand claims them all. If a hand ends in a draw then the sticks are collected on the table in an area called the **Kyōtaku** (literally "deposit") and they will all be taken by the next hand-winner. If two or three players declare a win simultaneously on the same discard tile then the one nearest to the discarder's right gets the Riichi stick(s).

If there are still Riichi stakes on the table at the end of a match (i.e. if the final hand of play results in a [draw](#) without a dealer [continuance](#)) then they are claimed by the overall winner.

立直棒戻 [riichibō modoshi]

Riichibō Modoshi (literally "Riichi stick returning") is an optional rule whereby any [Riichi stakes](#) left on the table after a match will instead be returned to the people that played them.

フリテンリーチ [furiten riichi]

Some rules allow you to declare Riichi when you're [Furiten](#); unsurprisingly this is called **Furiten Riichi**. The usual rule of Furiten applies so you can only win on a self-drawn tile ([Tsumo](#)).

リーチ後の暗槓 [riichi gono ankan]

Some rule-sets let you declare an [Ankan](#) (a concealed Kong) after you have declared Riichi if you already hold a concealed Pung and self-draw the fourth matching tile. You cannot do this if doing so would change your [wait/s](#) or the interpretation of the overall structure of your hand.

This has the potential to add significantly to your score if you go on to win the hand as you will have the benefit of two additional [Dora](#) - a Kan Dora and a Kan Ura Dora. For the same reason it's usually a bad idea to declare a Kong yourself after one of your opponents has "reached"!

ノーテンリーチ [nōten riichi]

A player who is shown to have declared Riichi illegally (i.e. with a hand that was not [Tenpai](#)) is required to pay a [Chombo](#) penalty for **Nōten Riichi**.

即リー [sokurii]

If you declare Riichi as soon as your hand becomes Tenpai it is called **Sokurii**, or "immediate" Riichi. In doing this you lock your hand and eliminate the possibility of improving your [wait](#) (perhaps from a one-sided to a two-sided wait).

先制リーチ [sensei riichi]

If you are the first player in any given [hand of play](#) to declare Riichi it is called **Sensei Riichi**, meaning "head-start" or "pre-emptive" Riichi.

(The Japanese word used here is a different Sensei to the one that means "teacher".)

追っ掛けリーチ [okkake riichi]

If you declare Riichi after one of the other players has already "reached" it is called **Okkake Riichi**, or "chasing" Riichi.

引っ掛けリーチ / 引掛りリーチ [hikkake riichi]

Hikkake Riichi is when you declare Riichi upon discarding one of the end tiles on a "Ryankan" form (i.e. three tiles giving two adjacent [Kanchan](#) centre waits); an example would be if you had the three tiles 4_6_8 in the same suit and declared Riichi discarding the 8.

This can be used as a tactic to trick your opponents into dealing into your hand as they might work on the assumption that you've given yourself an efficient [Ryanmen](#) wait (a two-sided wait on two sequential same-suit tiles) and therefore, using the "1-4-7 principle" (see [Suji](#)), they might also assume in the above example that - since you discarded the 8 - you are not waiting on the 5 tile whereas, in fact, you are!

8. Yaku (Part 2)

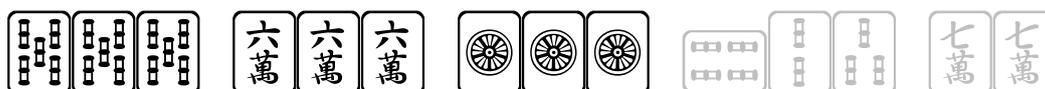
This second section of Yaku lists the scoring elements which are seen less often in play. Again the (relatively) more frequent ones are at the top and the rarer ones towards the bottom.

Remember: you can use one or more [Kongs](#) for any Yaku that requires Pungs.

Uncommon Yaku

三暗刻 [san ankō]

San Ankō (Three Concealed Pungs) is exactly what it sounds like - you need to have three [Pungs](#) that are all composed entirely of self-drawn tiles. You cannot complete any of them by stealing an opponent's discarded tile by [Pon](#) and if you declare a [Ron](#) win on a discard to complete your third concealed Pung you cannot claim this either. The fourth set in your hand, however, can be open.



Three Concealed Pungs scores two [Han](#). It can be claimed in addition to [Toi-Toi](#) (All Pungs) if the fourth set (open or closed) is also a Pung.

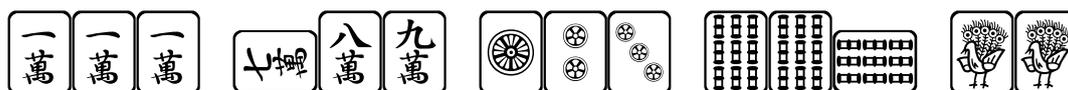
河底撈魚 [hōtei raoyui] / ホーテイ [hōtei] / ハイテイロン [haitei ron]

Hōtei (Last-Tile Ron) is awarded if you declare a [Ron](#) win on the [Hōteihai](#) - the final discarded tile in the [hand of play](#) - and is worth one Han. The full name is adapted from "Ho Ti Lao Yü" in the original poetic Chinese, meaning "catching a fish from the bottom of the river".

純全帯么九 [junchantayaochū] / 純全帯ヤオ [junchantayao]

ジュンチャン / 純チャン [junchan]

For **Junchan (Pure Outside Hand)** the four sets in the hand and the pair must all include at least one [terminal](#) (so any [Chows](#) must be either 123 or 789) and there must be at least one Chow. It's like a stricter version of [Chanta](#), but you cannot claim Chanta in addition to Junchan. It scores three Han in a [closed](#) hand or two Han in an open one.



The initial character 純 in the Japanese name denotes that the hand is "pure", i.e. only suit tiles are permitted, no [honours](#). The English name indicates that each set (and the pair) must contain an "outside" tile, i.e. a one or a nine.

海底撈月 [haitei raoyue] / ハイテイ [haitei] / ハイテイツモ [haitei tsumo]

Haitei (Last-Tile Tsumo) is awarded if you declare a [Tsumo](#) win upon drawing the [Haiteihai](#) - the final tile in the [live wall](#) - and is worth one Han. The full name is adapted from "Hai Ti Lao Yüeh" in the original Chinese, meaning "catching the moon from the bottom of the sea".

An alternate reading of the same four [kanji](#) gives the Japanese phrase "Kaitei Rōgetsu" which is used to refer to an impossible (and therefore pointless) task.

嶺上開花 / リンシャンカイホー [rinshan kaihō]

Rinshan Kaihō (After a Kong) is worth one Han and is awarded when you completed your winning hand with a [Rinshanhai](#) - the supplement tile that is drawn to make up the correct number of tiles in your hand after you declare a [Kong](#) set. Optionally the [Daiminkan Pao](#) rule may apply in cases where you completed the Kong by [calling](#) an opponent's discard tile.

The Yaku name comes from the Chinese "Ling Shang K'ai Hua" meaning "opening a flower on top of a mountain". Rinshan Kaihō is a speciality of the lead character in the *Saki* manga/anime.

ダブルリーチ / ダブル立直 / 二重立直 / W立直 [daburu riichi] ダブリー [daburii]

If your [initial draw](#) of tiles gives you a [Tenpai](#) hand and you declare [Riichi](#) on your first turn (and no-one has previously called [Chii](#), [Pon](#) or [Kan](#) in the current hand of play) then you can claim **Daburu Riichi (Double Reach)** if you win. It scores two Han instead of the usual one.

Since you make only a single discard, your opponents can infer practically nothing about the composition of your waiting hand.

小三元 [shō san gen]

Shō San Gen (Little Three Dragons) can be claimed when you have [Pungs](#) of two of the [dragon tiles](#) plus a pair of the third colour dragon. It always scores two Han but you will also get one Han each for the two [Yakuhai](#) sets making four Han in total. If you can complete all three dragon Pungs then this becomes the limit hand [Dai San Gen](#).

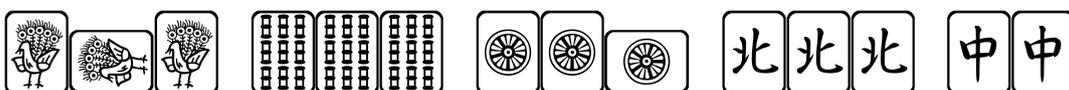


If the other two sets are composed of number tiles of the same suit (or if there's one set of [suit tiles](#) and one set of [wind tiles](#)) then you can also claim [Honitsu](#).

The Yaku name is based on "Hsiao San Yüan" in Chinese which means "little three extremes".

混老頭 [honrōtō]

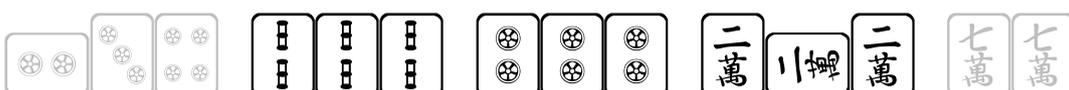
Honrōtō (All Terminals & Honours), as you might've guessed from the English name there, is a hand containing only [terminals](#) (1's and 9's) and [honours](#) (winds and dragons), in other words it's a hand without [Simples](#). It scores two Han but, since such a hand cannot contain [Chows](#), you will always receive an additional two doubles for either [Toi-Toi](#) (for a hand composed of four Pungs and one pair) or [Chii Toitsu](#) (for a hand of seven pairs) making it worth four Han in total.



Honrōtō combined with Toi-Toi is called 混老対々 [honrō-toitoi] and, similarly, Honrōtō combined with Chii Toitsu is called 混老七対 [honrō-chiitōi]. You can think of these as compound Yaku, each with a total value of four Han.

三色同刻 [san shoku dōkō]

As we approach the bottom of this list we come to some of the particularly rare Yaku. **San Shoku Dōkō (Triple Pung)** is the reclusive cousin of [San Shoku Dōjun](#). The requirement is three [Pungs](#) with the same numbers (one set in each suit) and it scores two Han.



搶槓 / チャンカン [chankan]

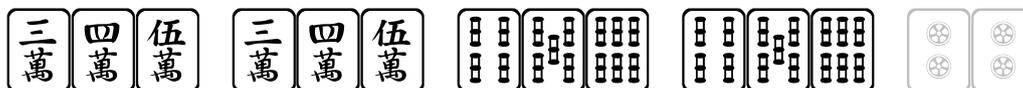
If you have a [Tenpai](#) hand and one of your opponents uses a self-drawn tile (that is one of your [waits](#)) to upgrade an exposed Pung into an exposed Kong (i.e. a [Shōminkan](#)), you can call [Ron](#) on that tile and claim the scoring element **Chankan (Robbing the Kong)**, scoring one Han. The declaration of the Kong is incomplete so an indicator tile for a [Kan Dora](#) is not revealed.

In some rule-sets you are permitted to "rob" a *concealed* Kong (an [Ankan](#)) if specifically you are taking the tile to complete the limit hand [Kokushimusō](#) (or sometimes any [Yakuman](#) hand) but usually this Yaku can only be claimed when taking a tile from an *exposed* Kong.

The name Chankan comes from "Ch'iang Kang" in Chinese meaning "scratching a Kong".

二盃口 / リャンペーコー [ryanpēkō] / ダブルイーペーコー [daburu iipēkō] 二色二順 [ryan sō ryan shun]

Ryanpēkō (Twice Pure Double Chow) is double [lipēkō](#), i.e. it is a concealed hand containing two instances of two identical [Chows](#), and it scores three Han (and you cannot claim any extra doubles for lipēkō). Such a hand will always be composed of seven pairs but, because you are counting twelve of your fourteen tiles as Chows, you cannot also claim [Chii Toitsu](#).



三槓子 / ミカンツ [san kantsu]

San Kantsu (Three Kongs) is awarded for a hand with three [Kongs](#). It sounds so simple but it's incredibly rare, in fact match logs show that it occurs less frequently during play than half of the elusive [Yakuman](#) hands in the game! Despite that, it scores only two Han.



9. Yakuman

This section covers the special, rare, high-scoring Yakuman scoring elements.

役満 / 役マン [yakuman]

A **Yakuman** is a special type of [Yaku](#) which automatically receives the maximum limit of points, either 32,000 points for a non-dealer or 48,000 points for the [dealer](#) (this limit sharing the name Yakuman - see [Limits](#)). When you make a Yakuman hand, any lesser Yaku or [Dora](#) present will not be rewarded but you still receive any available [Riichi](#) stakes and/or [Honba](#) points.

In English such scoring elements are known as **Special Hands** or more usually **Limit Hands**.

(The latter term can be traced back to early English texts on Chinese mahjong but it's perhaps inadequate when applied to modern Japanese mahjong with its system of five limits in which the Yakuman limit is a quadruple multiple of the base limit, [Mangan](#). Therefore you might prefer to refer to the Yakuman hands specifically as **Top Limit Hands** instead.)

As with my earlier Yaku listing, I've given the common English names here in brackets and the Yakuman are listed in order of frequency based on Tenhou stats. The first three are the most common, although even these are pretty rare (each occurring in approximately 0.04% of all winning hands).

(I've listed only the standard Yakuman hands here. See [Optional Yakuman](#) for some more exotic combinations that can be included in your games.)

ダブル役満 / W 役満 [daburu yakuman] / 二倍役満 [nibai yakuman]

An optional rule allows certain hands to be recognised as **Daburu Yakuman (Double Yakuman)**. As the name suggests, these score twice as many points as a single Yakuman so a non-dealer would get 64,000 pts and a dealer would receive a jaw-dropping 96,000 pts! The four usual ones (all special versions of normal Yakuman) are listed in the second section [below](#).

The letter W (short for Warau) is often used as the Japanese version of "LOL" but in this case it's used in place of the phonetically similar "daburu" (double).

シングル役満 [shinguru yakuman]

Where Double Yakuman are disallowed they will instead be recognised as a **Shinguru Yakuman (Single Yakuman)** and score the same as any other Yakuman hand.

Single Yakuman

国士無双 / コクシムソー [kokushimusō] / 国士 [kokushi] / 十三么九 [shiisan yaochū]

Kokushimusō (commonly known as **Thirteen Orphans** in English) is a hand composed of one each of all thirteen [terminal](#) and [honour](#) tiles plus a duplicate of one of these, i.e. it contains three different 1's, three different 9's, four different winds and three different dragons and another one of any of those thirteen to form a pair.



This is one of the two exceptions to the [usual format](#) required for a completed, winning hand (four sets and a pair). Since there are no sets, this hand will always be [concealed](#) and you will need to draw the first thirteen tiles yourself. If you already hold the thirteen unique tiles then you have an awesome thirteen-sided [wait](#) which can optionally be awarded a [Double Yakuman](#) upon completion.

Kokushi means "distinguished citizen" and Musō means "peerless" or "unequaled". The four [kanji](#) together are a recognised term used to refer to a "distinguished person". The alternative (older) name **Shiisan Yaochū** denotes "Thirteen Terminals & Honours".

大三元 [dai san gen]

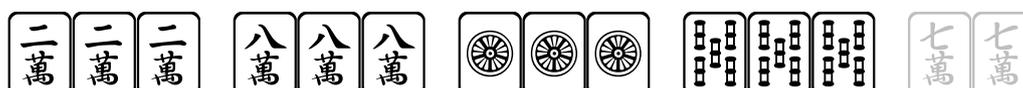
Dai San Gen (Big Three Dragons) is the big brother of [Shō San Gen](#) (Little Three Dragons). It's composed of three [Pungs](#), one in each of the three types of [dragon tiles](#) (plus one other set and a pair which can both be made with any other tiles).



The [Pao](#) rule usually applies to this Yakuman.

四暗刻 [sū ankō]

Sū Ankō (Four Concealed Pungs) is a hand containing four Pungs that have all been made entirely of self-drawn tiles; if a [Ron](#) win stole the tile required to complete the fourth Pung then this Yakuman cannot be claimed. If the four concealed sets are already complete and the hand is won on a [pair-wait](#) then this can optionally be awarded a [Double Yakuman](#).



大四喜 / 大四喜和 [dai sū shii]

Dai Sū Shii (Big Four Winds) is another "big brother" hand, an improved version of [Shō Sū Shii](#) with four complete Pungs of wind tiles (necessarily one set of each wind). It can optionally be treated as a [Double Yakuman](#) but if not it scores the same as the lesser version.



The [Pao](#) rule usually applies to this Yakuman.

九蓮宝燈 [chūrenpōtō]

Chūrenpōtō (Nine Gates) is a concealed flush hand consisting specifically of 1112345678999 plus one additional tile from the same suit (and often restricted to the [Manzu](#) suit only). In the example below the added fourteenth tile is the 3.



If you play around with your tile-set or scribble on the back of an envelope you should see that all nine possible permutations of this Yakuman form a [valid hand](#) of four sets and a pair.

If you make the required thirteen-tile sequence first you can complete the hand with any other tile from the suit so you have a nine-sided [wait](#), or nine ways of "going out" - hence "nine gates"! This multiple-wait version can optionally be counted as a [Double Yakuman](#).

天和 / 天鳳 [tenhō]

Tenhō (Heavenly Win) occurs when the [dealer](#) (east) has a complete hand at the start of the hand of play. In other words it's the dealer version of [Chiihō](#).

四槓子 / 四カンツ [sū kantsu]

If you thought the [San Kantsu](#) scoring element was rare you ain't seen nothing yet! The limit hand **Sū Kantsu (Four Kongs)** requires four [Kongs](#) in your completed winning hand. It's not even listed on the statistical log I'm working from, that's how rare it is!



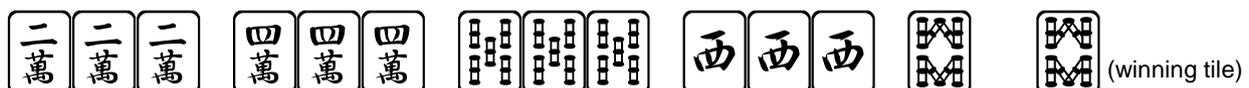
A completed hand of tiles in Japanese mahjong usually consists of fourteen tiles but for each Kong declared an additional [supplement tile](#) is drawn. Consequently, with all four sets as Kongs, a Sū Kantsu hand contains the maximum possible eighteen tiles.

Sū Kantsu is an exception to the rule that forces an [abortive draw](#) after four Kongs are made.

Double Yakuman

四暗刻単騎待ち / 四暗刻タンキ待ち [sū ankō tanki machi] / 四暗刻単騎 [sū ankō tanki]

Sū Ankō Tanki Machi (Four Concealed Pungs on Pair-Wait) is a [Sū Ankō](#) hand where the four concealed [triplets](#) are made first with self-drawn tiles and the hand is then completed by matching the one remaining tile on a [Tanki Machi](#) (pair-wait).



国士無双十三面待ち / 国士無双13面待ち [kokushimusō jū-san men machi]

純正国士無双 [junsei kokushimusō]

Junsei Kokushimusō (Pure Thirteen Orphans) is a [Kokushimusō](#) hand where you already have one each of all [terminal](#) and [honour](#) tiles and you are waiting for a duplicate of any one of the thirteen to form the required pair.

You could well have previously discarded one of the thirteen tiles to achieve this therefore making yourself [Furiten](#) but with this dream thirteen-sided [wait](#) you'd have a pretty good chance of winning fairly quickly with a self-drawn tile.



In the mahjong manga *Mudazumo naki Kaikaku*, prime minister Koizumi's signature hand is the "Rising Sun" - a thirteen-sided Kokushi wait completed with the 1-pin tile.

大四喜 [dai sū shii]

This is the standard [Dai Sū Shii](#) (Big Four Winds) hand as listed above, completed on any wait.



九蓮宝燈九面待ち [chūrenpōtō kyū men machi] / 純正九蓮宝燈 [junsei chūrenpōtō]

Like the other "pure" hand above, **Junsei Chūrenpōtō (Pure Nine Gates)** is a [Chūrenpōtō](#) hand in which you already have the necessary structure (a concealed 1112345678999 flush) and therefore have a nine-sided wait, waiting on any tile from the suit to complete it. Again you could well find yourself in a Furiten state.



Related Terms

四喜和 [sū shii hō]

If [Shō Sū Shii](#) (Little Four Winds) and [Dai Sū Shii](#) (Big Four Winds) are both scored as a single Yakuman then there is little need to differentiate between them and therefore sometimes the name **Sū Shii Hō (Four Winds Win)** is used to refer to both or either of them.

役満重複 [yakuman chōfuku] / 複合役満 [fukugō yakuman]

Some rule-sets allow **Yakuman Stacking** which lets you claim two or more Yakuman on the same hand of tiles, for example combining Tsūisō with Dai San Gen or Shō/Dai Sū Shii.

責任払い [sekinin harai] / 包 / 包則 / パオ [pao]

The rule of **Pao** or **Sekinin Harai** (literally "**Liability Payment**") can be applied to either [Dai San Gen](#) (Big Three Dragons) or [Dai Sū Shii](#) (Big Four Winds). It penalises a player for discarding a tile which is taken by an opponent to complete the final required set for the limit hand but only in cases where all the other required sets are already complete and [exposed](#) (so the opponent's potential for making the Yakuman is quite evident).

If a player has two exposed [Pungs](#) of [dragon tiles](#) and another player discards the tile that lets them make the third set for Dai San Gen, or if a player has three Pungs of [wind tiles](#) exposed and someone discards the tile that lets them complete the fourth for Dai Sū Shii, then the

discarding player has to pay. If the hand is won by [Tsumo](#) the discarding player pays the full amount or if the hand is won by [Ron](#) from a third player then the two discarders pay half each.

Optionally Pao can be extended to apply to any other Yakuman that can be claimed on an open hand, i.e. [Tsūiisō](#) (All Honours), [Sū Kantsu](#) (Four Kongs), [Chinrōtō](#) (All Terminals) and [Ryūiisō](#) (All Green). The liability rule can also be applied to optional Yakuman such as [Sū Renkō](#) (Four Consecutive Pungs) and [Ii Sō Sū Shun](#) (Pure Quadruple Chow).

大明槓の包 [daiminkan no pao] / 大明槓の責任払い [daiminkan no sekinin harai]

An optional version of this rule known as **Daiminkan Pao** can be applied in cases where a player completes a Kong (specifically a [Daiminkan](#)) using a discard tile called from an opponent and then declares a [Rinshan Kaihō](#) win after completing their hand with the [supplement tile](#). The discarder is liable and has to pay for the win in full, just as they would with a [Ron](#) win.

(In Chapter 24 of the *Akagi* manga Ichikawa makes a point of stating the Daiminkan Pao rule quite clearly in advance for Akagi's benefit.)

10. Dora

ドラ [dora]

One of the distinctive features of modern Japanese mahjong is the system of **Dora** bonuses.

For each Dora tile present in your winning hand you receive one additional [Han](#) (double) in the calculation of your score, so if you have a pair of Dora you get two Han.

In every hand of play there will always be at least one Dora but rules commonly allow the addition of an Ura Dora and one or more Kan Dora and Kan Ura Dora (see below).

The optional [red five tiles](#) are also recognised as a special type of Dora.

The term Dora is a contraction of Doragon, the Japanese form of the English word "dragon".

The quantity of Dora tiles in a winning hand is usually expressed using the standard Japanese [numbers](#), for example "Dora Ichi" (one), "Dora Ni" (two), "Dora San" (three), "Dora Yon" (four), etc. Sometimes a single Dora is counted simply as "Dora" and two are given as "Dora Dora", also Ura Dora might be counted separately, for example "Ura Ichi".

ドラ表示牌 [dora hyōji hai] / めくり牌 [mekuri pai]

The Dora are determined by the **Dora Hyōji Hai** or **Dora Indicator Tile(s)** in the [dead wall](#).

For any given indicator, the Dora will be the tile that follows next in sequence. For example if the Dora indicator is the 3 tile in the Pinzu suit then the Dora will be the 4-pin. If the indicator is a 9 tile then the sequence wraps and the Dora is the 1 tile in the same suit.

Since the [honour](#) tiles lack numbers, they are assigned the following sequences:



So for example if the Dora indicator is a south wind tile then the Dora is west, or if the indicator is a green dragon (Hatsu) then the Dora is the red dragon (Chun). You'll notice that the order for the wind tiles is the same as the arrangement of the [seat-winds](#) in counter-clockwise order.

ダブルドラ / Wドラ [daburu dora] / ダブドラ [dabu dora]

If the same tile appears twice among the various Dora indicators then the effects are cumulative and you get a **Daburu Dora (Double Dora)**. For example when there are two 7-man indicators and you win with a hand containing a set of three 8-man tiles you would receive six Han.

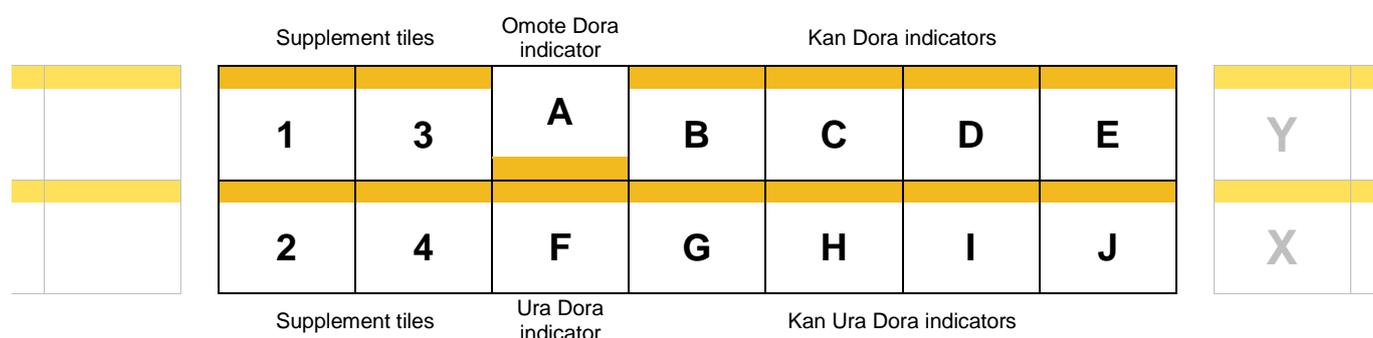
Dora bonuses stack with doubles from [red fives](#) so if the Dora indicator was 4-pin and you had one red 5-pin then that would also be a double Dora worth two Han.

However each red tile always gets only one Han for being red (this effect does not get doubled when there are multiple matching indicators).

(The term Dabu Dora can also describe an exotic optional rule in which two Dora indicators are always flipped at the start of every hand of play.)

表ドラ [omote dora]

The top tile of the third stack is always flipped at the start of each hand of play (shown as tile A in the diagram below). This is the indicator for the standard Dora bonus tile, the **Omote Dora**.



This diagram illustrates the internal structure of the [dead wall](#) under modern Japanese rules, as viewed by the player nearest to it. The initial tiles drawn by the players ([Haipai](#)) are those immediately to the left of this section and the back end of the [live wall](#) is to the right.

槓ドラ / カンドラ [kan dora] / 槓表ドラ [kan omote dora]

Each time a player declares a [Kong](#) they collect a [supplement tile](#), these being taken from the first two stacks of the dead wall starting with 1 for the first Kong, then 2, 3 and 4. Additionally they also flip **Kan Dora** indicators on the top row, one per Kong, in the order B, C, D and E.

(For each consecutive supplement tile taken, the tile which would be the [Haiteihai](#) - the final tile available to be drawn from the back of the live wall - will change. For example, the last tile to be drawn is normally X - the bottom tile of the final stack of the live wall - but when a player declares the first Kong they would take 1 as their supplement tile and, although it isn't moved, X would effectively become one of the fourteen tiles required in the dead wall and the final tile available for drawing would then be Y.)

It is crucial that any given rule-set specifies whether the Kan Dora indicator is revealed either as soon as the Kong is formed or not until the player has taken their supplement tile and safely made a discard, thus completing their turn. This becomes significant if another player declares a [Ron](#) win on the discard, determining whether or not they have the benefit of the Kan Dora.

裏ドラ / ウラドラ [ura dora]

If a player wins a hand after declaring [Riichi](#) they also use the tile underneath the Omote Dora indicator (F) - this becomes the indicator for the **Ura Dora** or **Underside Dora**. If you grab both tiles at the ends you can pick them up together to inspect the face of the Ura Dora indicator, but you can only do this after the win has been declared - the Ura Dora remains secret until then.

(A player who has not declared Riichi may not apply the Ura Dora upon winning a hand, even if one or more of his opponents had "reached" themselves.)

カン裏ドラ / 槓裏ドラ / 槓ウラドラ [kan ura dora]

In the same situation, if any Kongs had been declared then the hand winner can also apply Dora indicators directly beneath the active Kan Dora indicators (i.e. G, H, I and J with each successive Kong declared). These act as indicators for the **Kan Ura Dora** bonus tile(s).

For example if a hand of play saw two Kongs being declared then tiles 1 and 2 would be taken as supplement tiles and B and C would be flipped to become indicators for two Kan Dora. If a player declared Riichi and went on to win the hand they would also apply indicators both for the Ura Dora (F) and for two Kan Ura Dora (G and H). Combined with the normal Omote Dora, this would give six active Dora to potentially add doubles to the calculation of the hand score.

11. Ready and Waiting

This section discusses terms relating to the process of completing your hand of tiles.

テンパイ / 聴牌 [tenpai]

A hand which requires only one more tile to become [complete](#) is referred to as being **Tenpai**, (literally "listening [to the] tiles"). In English you are said to have a **Ready** hand or sometimes to be "waiting", "fishing" or "calling". The original Chinese term is "T'ing P'ai".

As can be seen from the examples of [waits](#) below, although a Tenpai hand is only one tile away from being completed, there could be two or more different types of tile that would achieve this.

ノーテン / 不聴 / 脳天 [nōten]

A hand of tiles which is not Tenpai is described as being **Nōten** (literally "no Tenpai").

Usually when a hand ends in an [exhaustive draw](#) the players with Nōten hands must pay points ([Nōten Bappu](#)) to those that are Tenpai.

A player must have a Tenpai hand to legally declare [Riichi](#); when a hand ends in a draw any player who declared Riichi must display their hand and if this is shown to be Nōten they must pay a [Chombo](#) penalty.

黙聴 / ダマ聴 [damaten] / ダマ [dama] / 闇聴 / 闇テン [yamiten]

If a player becomes Tenpai with a concealed hand but then chooses not to declare Riichi they are said to be in **Damaten** which means "**Silent Tenpai**". A less common name for this is **Yamiten** (literally "dark Tenpai").

When you declare Riichi it draws attention to your hand - you are effectively announcing that your hand is Tenpai - and will therefore often cause your opponents to start playing [defensively](#) (or at least more cautiously). If they don't realise that your hand is Tenpai then they are more likely to discard a tile you can steal for a win.

形式聴牌 / 形式テンパイ [keishiki tenpai]

Keishiki Tenpai (loosely "Tenpai form") is a rule option that recognises a hand of tiles as being Tenpai even if it has no [Yaku](#). This can have an impact on the distribution of [Nōten Bappu](#) and in meeting the conditions for [Renchan](#).

空聴 / カラテン [karaten]

Your hand is **Karaten** (literally "empty Tenpai") when all of your waiting tiles are unavailable, e.g. already discarded or locked in melded sets. The initial Japanese character in the [kanji](#) spelling is the same one found in the words "karate" and "karaoke".

Your rule-set should specify whether a Karaten hand is considered Tenpai or Nōten. Typically it is recognised as Tenpai unless all four instances of the tile that would complete it are already in other sets in the same hand, as in the example below (the hand would be completed only with a 3-man but all four copies of this tile are used in other sets).



向聴 [shanten] / 一向聴 [iishanten] / 二向聴 [ryanshanten]

Your **Shanten** is a count of how many tiles away you are from being [Tenpai](#). This term is preceded by the usual Japanese renderings of the Chinese numerals used in mahjong (see [Numbers](#)) to indicate the number of tiles required. Shanten means "approaching Tenpai".

You are **Ryanshanten** when you need two more tiles to make a Tenpai hand. When you get one of these you are then **lishanten** - you are now only one tile away from being Tenpai and therefore two tiles away from having a complete hand.

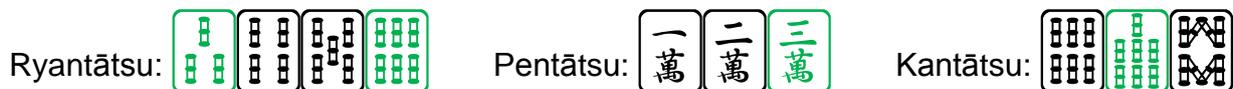
一向聴地獄 [iishanten jigoku]

Often a player will struggle to draw one of the tiles they need to achieve a Tenpai hand. In this situation they might say they are stuck in **lishanten Jigoku** (literally "lishanten Hell")!

塔子 [tātsu]

A **Tātsu** is any group of two suit tiles which have the potential to form a [Chow](#).

There are three types of Tātsu which correspond directly to the three types of [basic waits](#) where a winning hand is completed by finishing a Chow (i.e. [Ryanmen](#), [Penchan](#) and [Kanchan](#) waits).



両面搭子 [ryanmen tātsu] / 両塔子 [ryantātsu] / 両塔 [ryantā]

A **Ryantātsu** is a "serial pair" of two sequential tiles which could form a set by the addition of a tile at either end, for example a 45 element completed with either a 3 or a 6.

辺張塔子 [penchan tātsu] / 辺搭子 [pentātsu] / 辺塔 [pentā]

A **Pentātsu** is like a Ryantātsu but it contains either a 1 or a 9 and can therefore only form a set directly by adding a tile on one side, for example by adding a 3 to a 12 element.

嵌張塔子 [kanchan tātsu] / 嵌搭子 [kantātsu] / 嵌塔 [kantā]

A **Kantātsu** consists of two tiles that can form a set by the addition of a tile in the middle, for example a 6_8 element requiring a 7.

A Kantātsu always has the potential to make either one or two types of Ryantātsu if you draw an adjacent tile, for example if you have a 3_5 Kantātsu you can make a _23_ Ryantātsu if you draw a 2 or a _56_ Ryantātsu if you draw a 6.

受け入れ [uke-ire]

Your **Uke-ire** is the total number of tiles currently available that would reduce your [Shanten](#).

If your incomplete hand has one Ryantātsu and one Pentā then there are three types of tiles that would allow you to progress. There are four copies of each tile in a mahjong set but usually some of those will be unavailable (e.g. if they've already been discarded). So for example if two of them are unavailable your Uke-ire in this scenario would be ten ($3 \times 4 - 2 = 10$).

牌理 [hairi] / 牌効率 [haikōritsu]

The terms **Hairi** (pronounced "hai-ri" not "hairy"!) and **Haikōritsu** both refer to the theories of **Tile Efficiency**. Converting a Kantā into a Ryantātsu usually increases your Uke-ire and therefore improves the "efficiency" of your hand - it increases your chances of making Tenpai.

浮き牌 [ukihai]

The term **Ukihai** (literally "floating tile") describes an **Isolated Tile** - one that is not part of a set, a pair or a Tātsu (so you cannot make a set with the addition of just one tile).

裏目 [urame]

Urume means "**Backfire**" and can refer in mahjong to a situation where you made an unlucky choice, for example if you had a less efficient 7_9 Kantātsu element and decided to discard the 9 but then immediately drew an 8 tile in the same suit (which would've completed the set).

Basic Waits

待ち / マチ [machi]

Machi means **Wait** (or Waits) and refers to the tile (or tiles) that would complete a [Tenpai](#) hand.

The five basic types of wait are the [Ryanmen](#), [Penchan](#), [Kanchan](#), [Shanpon](#) and [Tanki](#). These are described and illustrated below along with some related terms and variations.

面 / メン [men]

The term **Men** is used to describe the number of "**Sides**" to a wait, i.e. how many different tiles could complete it. For example, a Penchan wait is a one-sided wait.

(It should be noted that the [katakana](#) spelling メン is also used as an abbreviation of [Menzen](#).)

両面待ち [ryanmen machi] / 両面 [ryanmen]

A **Ryanmen Machi** (literally "**Two-Sided Wait**"), or simply **Ryanmen**, consists of the serial pair of a Ryantātsu [element](#). Two different tiles could complete the Chow and therefore the hand.



Of the five basic wait types this one gives the highest chances of winning - you are waiting on two different tiles and there could be as many as four of each still available, for eight in total. (Some of these might be unavailable though if already discarded, in a melded set, in the [dead wall](#) or being retained by one of the other players, so eight is the theoretical maximum number.)

A hand must be won on a Ryanmen wait in order to qualify for [Pinfu](#).

辺張待ち / ペンチャン待ち [penchan machi] / ペンチャン [penchan]

A **Penchan** or **Edge Wait** is based on a Pentätsu [element](#) and will always be completed by either a 3 (on a 12_ wait) or a 7 (on a _89). You will be waiting on up to four copies of that tile.



嵌張待ち / カンチャン待ち [kanchan machi] / カンチャン [kanchan]

A **Kanchan** is a **Centre Wait** or **Closed Wait** formed from a Kantätsu [element](#). You wait on one type of tile and up to four copies of this will be available.



シャンポン待ち / 双碰待ち [shanpon machi] / 双ポン [shanpon] / しゃぼ [shabo]

A **Shanpon** wait is a case where you have three completed sets and two pairs. One of the pairs must be made into a [Pung](#) to complete the hand. With this one too you are waiting on four tiles but this time two each of the two different waits.



単騎待ち / タンキ待ち [tanki machi] / 単騎 [tanki] / アタマ待ち [atama machi]

A **Tanki** or **Pair-Wait** is a hand with four complete sets leaving only a single tile waiting for another of the same type to make the required pair. As there are four copies of each tile in the game - and you already have one of them - you are waiting for only three tiles.



The word Tanki means "lone horseman".

裸単騎 / ハダカ単騎 [hadaka tanki] / ストリップ [sutorippu]

A **Hadaka Tanki** is literally a "naked" (exposed) Tanki wait or a "strip" hand where you have four [open](#) sets which leaves a single concealed tile to match for your pair.



Winning a hand on such a wait is the PSN trophy requirement for the mahjong minigame in the PS3 video-game *Ryū ga Gotoku 3*.

Akagi confounds his rival with a Hadaka Tanki wait in Episode 12 of the anime - and then spends most of Episode 13 explaining it!

地獄待ち [jigoku machi] / 地獄単騎 [jigoku tanki]

A **Jigoku Machi** (literally a "Hell Wait") or sometimes **Jigoku Tanki** is a Tanki wait where two of your three winning tiles are unavailable so you are waiting on a single instance of a single tile. (In the example below the other two 7 tiles are locked in the [melded](#) Chows.)



腹ボテ [harabote]

A **Harabote** wait is a Tanki or half of a Shanpon wait embedded inside a Chow. In the following example it's a pair-wait and only two tiles would complete your hand.



The name Harabote means "visibly pregnant" - the wait is "showing" inside the Chow like a pregnant woman's bump!

高目 [takame] / 安目 [yasume]

In a situation where one of your waiting tiles would give you more [Yaku](#) than the other, the more valuable wait tile is the **Takame** and the other is the **Yasume**. Taka means "expensive" and Yasu means "cheap".

In the following example the Takame is the 1 tile as this would give you the additional scoring elements [Chanta](#) and [lipēkō](#); the Yasume is the 4 tile. You might choose to skip an opportunity to call a [Ron](#) win on a discarded 4 if you think you can get the 1 later. If you self-draw the 4 and discard it you will be [Furiten](#) and only able to win if you draw another winning tile later.



安手 [yasude]

The term **Yasude** (using the same [kanji](#) as Yasume above) literally means "cheap hand".

持ち持ち [mochi-mochi] / 対死 [toisū]

Mochi-Mochi is the situation in which two players are both sitting on a pair of the same tiles waiting for a third one that never appears because the other player has them. The other name for this is **Toisū** which literally means "dead pair".

Complex Waits

延べ単 [nobetan]

A **Nobetan** ("stretched Tanki") is a wait based on a sequence of four sequential tiles in the same suit giving a [Tanki](#) wait at each end. In the example below you could complete the hand with either a 2 (giving 22 345) or a 5 (giving 234 55). You are waiting on up to three instances each of two types of wait tile so six tiles in total.



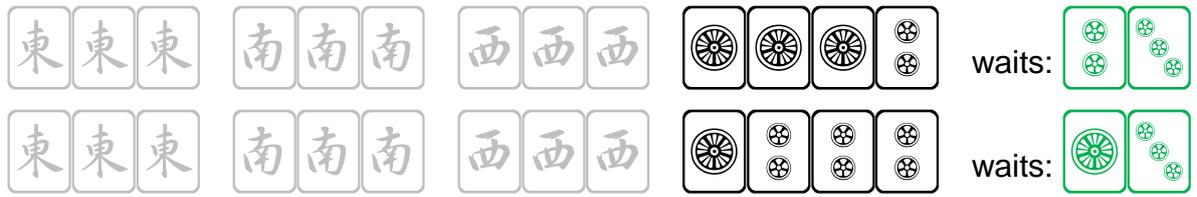
三面単 [sanmentan]

An extension of the previous concept gives the **Sanmentan** ("three-sided Tanki") which you get from having a sequence of seven consecutive tiles. This gives you three pair-waits and you are waiting on a potential total of nine tiles.



辺単 [pentan]

A **Pentan** wait is a combination of a [Penchan](#) and a [Tanki](#). There are two forms this can take - in the first example you have either a 111 set with a 2 pair-wait or a 11 pair with a 12_ Penchan and in the second there's either a 222 set with a 1 pair-wait or a 22 pair with a 12_ wait again.



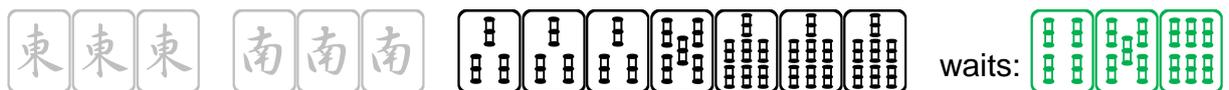
嵌単 [kantan]

Similarly, a **Kantan** wait is a combination of a [Kanchan](#) and a [Tanki](#).



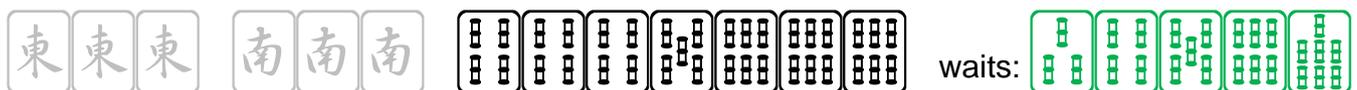
嵌単嵌 [kantankan]

A **Kantankan** consists of two Kanchan waits and a Tanki pair-wait in combination.



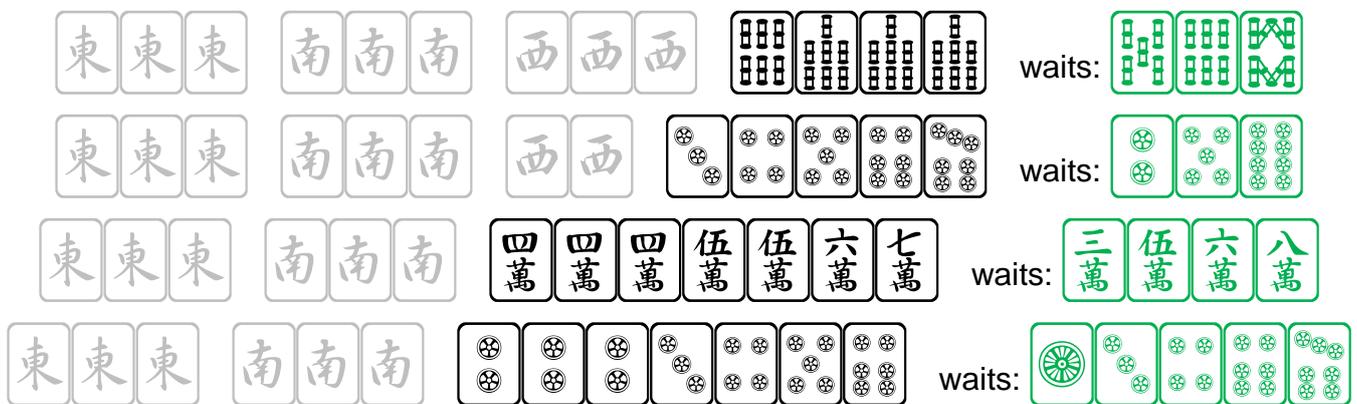
竜巻 [tatsumaki]

A **Tatsumaki** (literally "tornado") wait has a similar form to the previous type but it can be completed with five types of tiles instead of three.



多面待ち [tāmen machi]

Tāmen Machi is a general name for any wait with three or more sides. I've given a few more examples below, all based on groupings of same-suit tiles.



The best possible waits occur when you have the core structure of either the [Chūrenpōtō](#) (Nine Gates) or [Kokushimusō](#) (Thirteen Orphans) limit hands in which case you can complete the hand by matching any tile you already hold, giving you a nine- or thirteen-sided wait respectively.



Furiten and Defence

振り聴 / 振聴 / フリテン [furiten]

Alongside [Riichi](#), [Dora](#) and the [one-Han minimum](#), Furiten is one of the trademark features of modern Japanese mahjong. Although sometimes unpopular among players who learnt the Chinese version of mahjong first, Furiten is an important part of the Japanese game and crucial to the defensive play required in a rule-set where the discarder pays in full on a Ron win.

A player is **Furiten** when they have a [Tenpai](#) hand and have previously discarded during the current hand of play *any* of the tiles that would now complete their ready hand. The penalty for being Furiten is that the player is forbidden from calling [Ron](#) on *any* discard which they could normally take to complete their hand; they can however still win by [Tsumo](#) with a self-drawn tile. The player may attempt to change the structure of their hand so that they are no longer Furiten.



For example say a player has the ready hand illustrated above. They have a [Ryanmen](#) wait for the 2-pin and 5-pin tiles and either of these will complete the fourth set (and the hand). However, because their discards (shown to the left) include the 2-pin, they are not permitted to call Ron on either the 2-pin or the 5-pin.

If the same player then went on to draw a 4-pin they could discard the 3-pin to give themselves the hand shown below. This is also a ready hand but it now has a [Shanpon](#) structure, waiting on either a 4-pin or a 2-man to complete a set. Since neither of these tiles are among the player's discards, they are no longer Furiten and can now legally declare a win by Ron (when available).



A player enters a **Temporary Furiten** state if they pass on a discarded tile which would complete their [Tenpai](#) hand (even if without [Yaku](#)). As with normal Furiten, such a player cannot declare a Ron win. They will remain in temporary Furiten until their next turn.

However if the player has already declared [Riichi](#) and they pass a winning tile they will remain Furiten until the end of the current hand of play.

ベタ降り [betaori] / 降りる / オリる [oriru]

Origami isn't the only Japanese pastime that involves folding! Although a player is not permitted to actually drop out of a hand of play (as in poker), they may choose to stop building their hand of tiles and instead switch to purely defensive play, discarding only tiles which they think will be safe. A player might do this if one of their opponents has declared Riichi or has otherwise given indications of having a Tenpai and/or high-scoring hand.

In English this is known as **Folding**. The Japanese use the term **Betaori** or the verb **Oriru** (which means "to climb down" or "to disembark") to describe this type of play.

合わせ打ち [awaseuchi]

Awaseuchi is when you discard a tile immediately after the player to your left discarded the same one. This is always safe because the discarder would be Furiten on that tile and the other two players would be in temporary Furiten if that tile would complete their hand.

ラス牌 [rasuhai]

The **Rasuhai** (literally "last tile") is the fourth remaining copy of any type of tile after the other three have all been played. The fourth copy of an [honour](#) tile is a very safe discard because it can only be taken for a win with [Kokushi](#) (Thirteen Orphans) and that scenario could be readily identified from an opponent's discarded tiles.

現物 [genbutsu]

One core defensive technique relies on the [Furiten](#) rule. If you've decided to fold because an opponent has declared [Riichi](#) you know that you can safely discard any tile that they have already discarded themselves with no risk of that player stealing it for a Ron win because if they were waiting on that tile they would be Furiten from it and therefore not allowed to call Ron.

The word **Genbutsu** means "actual thing" (i.e. "same thing") so in the context of defensive play it refers to a tile that matches one in another player's discard pool.

Since a player who has declared Riichi becomes Furiten on any "missed win" tiles, you can also safely discard any tiles that have been dropped by the other two players since the Riichi player "reached" - but don't overlook the possibility of the other two being or becoming Tenpai too!

筋 / スジ [suji]

More advanced defensive tactics involve "discard-reading" whereby you attempt to determine a player's waits by studying which tiles they've discarded already (and in what order).

Some methods work on the assumption that your opponent has given themselves an efficient two-sided [Ryanmen](#) wait (with up to eight winning tiles available). The term **Suji** refers to the tiles that would complete a Ryanmen wait, for example a 2 or a 5 would complete a _34_ wait.

Each Suji consists of two numbers, three spaces apart, e.g. 3 and 6 or 4 and 7. The Suji can be combined to form three sequences: 1-4-7, 2-5-8 and 3-6-9.

Say your opponent has discarded a 5-pin tile then you might infer that they have neither a _34_ wait (for the 2 and 5) nor a _67_ wait (for the 5 and 8) in which case both the 2-pin and 8-pin tiles might be safe too.

裏スジ [ura suji]

As you build and improve your hand during the course of play you will be discarding tiles which betray your actions. If you're holding a one-sided 5_7 wait and then draw a 4 in the same suit you would probably drop the 7 giving you a more efficient two-sided _45_ wait. The 7 discarded from your hand is an **Ura Suji**, revealing a [Kanchan](#) wait that was converted into a Ryanmen.

The Ura Suji ("back Suji") tile will have a number that is one higher or lower than one of the two sides in the Ryanmen wait. In the previous example the Ura Suji was the 7 tile and this was adjacent to the 6, one of the two tiles in the 3-6 Suji.

またぎスジ [matagi suji]

Another possible scenario is when you have a surplus pair of tiles in your hand and then draw an adjacent tile which you retain, dropping one of the original pair to give a two-sided wait. For

example if you have a pair of 3's in your hand, draw a 4 in the same suit and then discard one of the 3's leaving you with a _34_ wait. In this case the discarded 3 is a **Matagi Suji**.

In such a case the Matagi Suji ("branch Suji") will be one of the two tiles in the serial pair forming the new [Ryanmen](#) wait, although your discard-reading opponents will not be able to tell which one. In my example the dropped 3 could indicate a _34_ form in which case the waits are 2 and 5 or it could be a _23_ form waiting on 1 and 4.

間四軒 / 間4軒 [aida yon ken]

Often you will see two or more discard tiles that are revealing information about the same waiting set. One simple case is named **Aida Yon Ken** (loosely "four-house interval") - a situation where there are two discarded tiles in the same suit with a gap of four numbers between them, the two discards both being Ura Suji (one above and one below) for a Ryanmen wait sandwiched between them.

For example a 4 and a 9 are both Ura Suji for a _67_ element which waits on a 5 and an 8.

カベ / 壁 [kabe] / ノーチャンス [nō chansu]

Another useful concept - in both offence and defence - is the **Kabe** ("wall").

If you have sight of all four copies of a specific suit tile (in your hand, among the discards, in [melded sets](#) and/or flipped as a [Dora](#) indicator on the dead wall) you will know that certain types of [Ryanmen](#) waits are impossible - there is "**No Chance**" that a player will have one.

For example if you can see all four 7-man tiles then you know that no-one is holding either a _67_ or a _78_ wait in that suit so the 8-man and 9-man might be safer discards. However a player could still be waiting on the 5-man with a _34_ wait or the 6-man with a _45_ wait and they could even have a [Tanki](#) or [Shanpon](#) wait on the 8-man or 9-man. The discard-reading techniques rarely give the complete picture but they do provide useful information.

The table below shows the tiles that are potentially safer discards for each type of wall.

Kabe:	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Safer Tile/s:	1	1 and 2	2 and 3	3 and 7	7 and 8	8 and 9	9

Kabe (wall) should not be confused with the [tile wall](#) which is called the Yama (mountain).

ワンチャンス [wan chansu]

Slightly less reliable than the Kabe is the situation where you can see only three copies of one specific tile instead of four. Now there is **One Chance** the fourth tile is used in a Ryanmen wait.

完全進攻 [kanzen shinkō] / 全ツツパ / ゼンツツパ [zentsuppa] / ゼンツ [zentsu]

Kanzen Shinkō (literally "complete attack") or **Zentsuppa** is when you push to complete a winning hand with no consideration of defence. This is the opposite of [Betaori](#).

回し打ち / まわし打ち [mawashiuchi] / 打ち回し [uchimawashi]

Mawashiuchi is when you try to discard safe tiles while also still building your hand.

差し込み [sashikomi]

Sashikomi is when you intentionally deal into another player's hand, perhaps to end the match or to prevent another opponent from completing a big win.

山越し [yamagoshi]

Yamagoshi is when you declare a Ron win on a tile that matches one discarded by another player in the previous [go-around](#) - the player that discarded the second copy probably thought it was fairly safe because the previous copy wasn't taken for a win.

This might occur incidentally if you were [lishanten](#) on the first cycle and then your next drawn tile made you [Tenpai](#). Alternatively you might do it deliberately if your hand was already Tenpai - passing a win on the first tile would put you in temporary Furiten but only until your next turn.

(This is not possible after reaching since a missed win then would put you in permanent Furiten.)

安全牌 / 安全パイ [anzenpai] / 安牌 [anpai]

An **Anzenpai** is a tile which is totally safe to discard.

危険牌 [kikenhai]

Conversely a **Kikenhai** is a potentially dangerous one that might help one of your opponents.

12. Win, Lose or Draw

Each [hand of play](#) in a game will always end in either a win or a draw - as described here.

Wins

アガリ / あがり [agari] / 和了 [hōra]

The term **Agari** refers to a player declaring a win on the current hand of play (as opposed to winning the overall match). Their hand of tiles must have the [required structure](#) and contain at least one [Yaku](#). In older English texts this is sometimes called "going out" or "going mahjong".

If the [dealer](#) wins a hand then they stay on as dealer in an extra hand (see [Renchan](#)).

There are two ways of completing a winning hand: Tsumo and Ron.

ツモ / 自摸 [tsumo] / ツモあがり [tsumo agari]

Although it can also describe any "self-drawn" tile that the player takes from the [wall](#) on their turn, the term **Tsumo** refers to a win declared using such a tile. The player says "Tsumo" and displays their tiles on the table, keeping the winning tile separate so the [wait](#) can be determined.

The word follows the original term "Tzū Mo" in Chinese, meaning literally "self-drawn".

Tsumo is usually written as ツモ using [katakana script](#).

If the hand of tiles is [concealed](#), i.e. if all the tiles present were self-drawn, then the player can claim the scoring element [Menzen Tsumo](#). Such a hand is described as being "strongly closed".

ロン / 栄 [ron] / 出あがり [de agari]

The other way to achieve a win is to steal any opponent's newly discarded tile to complete your hand - this is called **Ron**. Your spoken declaration of "Ron" takes precedence over any call of [Chii](#) or [Pon/Kan](#) and, unlike those, the captured tile can be used to complete any part of the winning hand - a [Chow](#), a [Pung](#) or a pair (or the required structure for [Kokushi](#)).

As with Tsumo, the katakana form ロン is the one most commonly used for Ron.

A player is not permitted to declare a Ron win when they are [Furiten](#).

門前ロン [menzen ron]

Menzen Ron describes a [concealed hand](#) that is completed by Ron. Such a hand is referred to as being "weakly closed" - it still meets the condition of any [Yaku](#) that requires a concealed hand (e.g. [Pinfu](#)) but if the winning tile was used to complete a [Pung](#) then that set is counted as being exposed when it comes to reckoning the [Fu](#) (minipoints) for the hand's score.

A case of Menzen Ron receives an additional 10 Fu on top of the 20 Fu normally given for a win.

後付け / 後付 / 後づけ [atozuke]

The **Atozuke** rule allows you to claim a [Ron](#) win with a hand that did not previously have any confirmed [Yaku](#). Atozuke is also known as **After-Attaching** or **Backdoor Win**.

先ヅケ / 先付け [sakizuke]

Sakizuke is the opposite of Atozuke (so Sakizuke [Ari](#) is the same as Atozuke [Nashi](#)).

放銃 [hōjū]

The term **Hōjū** denotes a situation where the player discarded the tile that was taken by one of their opponents for a Ron win. In English you would commonly say that the first player "dealt into" the other's hand or that they got "ronned".

振り込み / 振込み / 振込 / フリコミ [furikomi]

In a Ron win the player who discarded the winning tile is required to pay the full amount of the hand's points value (see [Scoring](#)). The word **Furikomi** describes such a payment.

同時あがり [dōji agari] / 多家和 [tā cha hō]

It is possible that more than one player will declare a Ron win off the same discard tile. This is called **Dōji Agari** or "simultaneous win".

ダブルロン [daburu ron] / ダブルロン [dabu ron] / ニ家和 [ryan cha hō]

When two players declare a Ron win on the same tile it's called **Daburu Ron** (literally "**Double Ron**") or **Dabu Ron** for short.

If Double Ron is disallowed in the local rules then Atama Hane (see below) applies and only one of the wins is recognised.

トリプルロン [toripuru ron] / トリロン [tori ron] / 三家和 [san cha hō]

The term **Toripuru Ron** ("**Triple Ron**") describes the situation where all three other players simultaneously declare a win on a tile discarded by the fourth.

In cases where house rules do not permit all three players to claim their wins, they will instead either allow only a single player's win (according to Atama Hane order as explained below) or force an [abortive draw](#) (with no winners).

複数ロン [fukusū ron]

Fukusū Ron (Multiple Ron) refers to both Double Ron and Triple Ron.

頭跳ね / 頭ハネ [atama hane]

The **Atama Hane** or "**Head Bump**" rule applies in any cases where multiple Ron wins off the same tile are disallowed. Only one winner is recognised, this being the one sat nearest to the discarder's right, working around the table in counter-clockwise order.

Exhaustive Draws

流局 [ryūkyoku]

A [hand of play](#) is deemed to have resulted in a **Ryūkyoku** (draw) when a player has drawn the final available tile from the [live wall](#) and made the discard that follows (i.e. the [Hōteihai](#)) without a win being declared. Specifically this is an **Exhaustive Draw** - the supply of tiles in the wall has been totally depleted (or "exhausted").

不聴罰符 / 不聴罰 / ノーテン罰符 [nōten bappu]

In the event of an exhaustive draw, each player in turn (starting with east) can reveal their tiles if their hand is [Tenpai](#) (ready). If a player declared [Riichi](#) then it is mandatory that they show their tiles (to confirm that the Riichi was legal) but in other cases showing the hand is optional (a player might occasionally choose to keep the contents of their hand a secret).

An exchange of points called **Nōten Bappu** ("Nōten penalty points") then occurs in which a total of 3,000 points are paid to the players with revealed Tenpai hands by the players whose hands were [Nōten](#) (unready). The possible outcomes are summarised in the following table.

	Number of Players with Tenpai Hand				
	no players	1 player	2 players	3 players	all players
Tenpai player/s each receive:	nil	3,000 pts	1,500 pts	1,000 pts	nil
Nōten player/s each pay:	nil	1,000 pts	1,500 pts	3,000 pts	nil

連荘 / レンチャン [renchan]

If a hand of play results in either a [dealer](#) win or an exhaustive draw where the dealer is [Tenpai](#) then an extra hand is played; this is called a **Renchan** or **Continuance**. Such a hand does not count as one of the four [standard hands](#) played per [wind-round](#) and the [seat-winds](#) do not move (so the east player "stays on" as dealer in the next hand of play).

Variations of the rules can change the conditions for Renchan. Sometimes the dealer only gets a continuance if they win and not in a draw, or sometimes they get a continuance on a win or any draw (regardless of whether their hand was Tenpai or not).

南場不聴 [nanba nōten]

Yet further variations can apply different Renchan conditions in the [first round](#) and [second round](#) of a match. Perhaps the most common is **Nanba Nōten** (literally "south round Nōten") whereby the dealer gets a continuance for a win or a Tenpai draw during the first round and the conditions are relaxed to additionally allow a continuance on a dealer [Nōten](#) draw in the second.

Some video-games allow various permutations of Renchan condition options; the most flexible games allow all nine possible combinations.

積み棒 / ツミ棒 [tsumibō] / 百点棒 [hyakutenbō]

Each time a hand of play ends in either a dealer win or an exhaustive draw, regardless of whether the local rules give a continuance, a **Counter** is placed on the table. Since mahjong sets don't contain suitable counters, one of the dealer's 100-point [scoring sticks](#) is used. These are known as **Tsumibō** (loosely "heaped sticks") or **Hyakutenbō** ("hundred-point sticks").

If an exhaustive draw occurs in which the seat-winds move and the dealer changes (for example if the rules allow dealer Tenpai continuances but the dealer was Nōten) then the former dealer must take back their sticks and the new dealer should replace them with their own, adding one to the total for the draw that has just occurred.

The number of counters on the table is significant if the [Ryan Han Shibarī](#) rule option is used.

本場 [honba]

The accumulated counters on the table indicate the **Honba** count. Each time a player wins a hand they receive an additional amount of points equal to the Honba count multiplied by 300, so for example with three counters on the table they get an extra 900 pts. On a [Ron](#) win the payer must pay the full amount but on a [Tsumo](#) win the three losers all pay an equal share.

After a non-dealer win (with the Honba points added to the total) the counters are removed from the table, reclaimed by the current dealer, and the Honba count is effectively reset to zero.

Although it's always nice to get more points, the 300 multiplier doesn't usually have a major effect on game scores. Some video-games give the option to change the amount to 500, 900, 1,500 or even 3,000 points, but this is uncommon in practice.

平場 [hiraba]

A **Hiraba** is a hand of play with no counters on the table (so there will be no multiples of 300 points added to a winning score).

積み場 [tsumiba]

A **Tsumiba** is a hand of play with one or more counters.

輪莊 [rinchan / ronchan] / 親流れ [oya nagare]

Rinchan is the opposite of Renchan - it's the situation where the following hand is played after rotating the [seat-winds](#) as normal. This is described in the term **Oya Nagare** which means "dealer flow", this showing that the dealership passes (flows) to the next player in turn after a draw in which the dealer doesn't receive a Renchan.

Abortive Draws

途中流局 [tochū ryūkyoku]

Optionally the rules of Japanese mahjong recognise the following five situations which can cause a **Tochū Ryūkyoku** or **Abortive Draw** to be called. This is when a draw occurs either during a [hand of play](#) or at the beginning of one.

Tochū means "midway" - unlike an [exhaustive draw](#), the abortive draw occurs during the hand instead of at its end.

四風連打 [sū fon renda] / 四風子連打 [sū fontsu renda]

The draw of **Sū Fon Renda** (literally "four winds barrage") occurs at the start of a hand if all four players discard the same [wind tile](#) on their first turn.

九種九牌 [kyū shu kyū hai] / 九種么九牌倒牌 [kyū shu yao kyū hai tō hai]

If, after taking their first draw from the [wall](#), a player holds nine or more different [terminals](#) (1's and 9's) and [honours](#) (winds and dragons) they can, at their discretion, choose to declare a drawn hand. This draw is called **Kyū Shu Kyū Hai** which means "nine types, nine tiles".

三家和 [san cha hō] / 3人あがり [san nin agari]

The draw of **San Cha Hō** ("three player win") occurs if three players simultaneously declare a [Ron](#) win on the same tile after it is discarded by the fourth player.

If your local rules do not recognise this optional abortive draw then they will specify either that all three players' wins are valid ([Triple Ron](#)) or that only the player immediately to the discarder's right takes the win (by [Atama Hane](#) order).

四家立直 / 四家リーチ [sū cha riichi] / 4人リーチ [yonin riichi]

The **Sū Cha Riichi** ("four player Riichi") abortive draw is declared when a player calls [Riichi](#) after his three opponents have already "reached" in the same hand of play. As with any drawn hand, the players that declared Riichi (all four in this case) must reveal their tiles.

四開槓 [sū kai kan] / 四槓流れ / 4カン流れ / 四カン流れ [sū kan nagare]

The fifth abortive draw is **Sū Kai Kan** (four declared Kongs). This applies when a player declares a [Kong](#) after three Kongs have already been declared in the same hand. The only exception to this is when all four Kongs were declared by the same person, in which case the game continues and he can attempt to make the almost impossibly rare [Sū Kantsu](#) limit hand; in this scenario the declaration of a fifth Kong will either cause an abortive draw or be disallowed.

Although the abortive draws are mostly founded in superstition, the limit of four Kongs per hand is also a practical one - in the [dead wall](#) there are only four tiles available as [supplement tiles](#) and there are only four tiles that can be used as [Kan Dora](#) indicators. Consequently, if the Sū Kai Kan abortive draw is disallowed under local rules, the declaration of a fifth Kong in any given hand must be prohibited.

13. Scoring

Scoring in any form of mahjong can appear a little complicated at first sight and the Japanese version is no exception. The video-game from which I learnt mahjong described the basic rules and [Yaku](#) but made no attempt to explain how the scoring worked. I thought I'd never understand how the game derived all those numbers, but luckily I found some resources that explained clearly the various stages of scoring calculation - and I will now try to do the same.

点 [ten] / 点数 [tensū]

Ten means "point" or "points".

原点 [genten] / 返し [kaeshi] / 返し点 [kaeshiten]

Each player usually buys into a match with 30,000 points; this is known as the **Genten** (literally "starting point" or "original points") or **Kaeshi**.

配給原点 [haikyū genten] / 持ち点 [mochiten] / 初期持ち点 [shoki mochiten]

スタート [sutāto]

The **Haikyū Genten** or **Mochiten** is the allocation of points that each player holds at the start of the match; the most common amounts are 25,000 pts, 27,000 pts or 30,000 pts.

The [katakana](#) word **Sutāto** is simply a Japanese spelling for the English word "start".

一二四十 [ichi nii yon tō]

With standard 25,000 pts starting scores the [scoring sticks](#) are distributed in a 1:2:4:10 ratio:

one x 10,000 pts + two x 5,000 pts + four x 1,000 pts + ten x 100 pts

オカ [oka] / トップ賞 [toppu shō]

When the Haikyū Genten differs from the Genten, the difference is paid into a pot which then forms a bonus called the **Oka** which is paid to the winner at the end of the match. For example if the four players all start with 25,000 pts they will each pay 5,000 pts into the jackpot so the Oka will be 20,000 pts (4 x 5,000). This can be likened to the **Ante** in a card game.

Calculation

The points value of a winning hand is calculated using two quantities - Fu and Han.

符 [fu]

The **Fu** are usually known as **Minipoints** in English. They're awarded for winning the hand and for the type of win, the type of wait, the types of sets and the type of pair.

The Fu are summed and then rounded up to a multiple of 10 before the next step of the score calculation, for example a total of 22, 24, 26 or 28 would be rounded up to 30 Fu.

If a hand has [Yaku](#) and [Dora](#) totalling five or more Han (see below) then there is no need to determine the Fu since the hand will always be paid at one of the five tiered [limits](#).

副底 [fūtei] / 台の点 [dai no ten]

You receive 20 Fu for winning the hand. These points are called **Fūtei**.

The one exception is the [Chii Toitsu](#) (Seven Pairs) hand which scores exactly 25 Fu with no further additions and no rounding up.

A hand gets an extra 2 Fu for any win by [Tsumo](#) (self-draw). These points might be waived under local rules in cases of [Pinfu](#) to meet its "no points" requirement (see [Tsumo Pinfu](#)).

門前加符 [menzen kafu]

Alternatively a hand gets 10 Fu for a [Menzen Ron](#) win (completing a concealed hand with a stolen discard). These are called **Menzen Kafu** (literally "Menzen added points").

喰い平和 [kuipinfu] / 鳴き平和 [nakipinfu]

Exceptionally 2 Fu are added for a Ron win with a **Kuipinfu (Open Pinfu)** hand. The scoring element Pinfu can't be claimed on an exposed hand but this bonus is applied if your winning hand meets the other three requirements of Pinfu, i.e. four Chows, a non-scoring pair (see below) and a Ryanmen wait. This quirky rule is a legacy of [pre-war Japanese mahjong](#).

(Since Pinfu is invalid in an open hand under the modern rules, such a hand must qualify for at least one other Yaku - typically [Tanyao](#) - for a legal win.)

By definition the hand qualifies for no other Fu so the total will always be rounded up to 30 and therefore a Ron win with either proper closed Pinfu or "open Pinfu" is always worth 30 Fu.

As it is the easiest type of set to make, a [Chow](#) receives no Fu. An exposed [Pung](#) of [Simples](#) is awarded 2 Fu. This score will be doubled if the set is [concealed](#) or if the tiles are either [terminals](#) or [honours](#), and if the set is a [Kong](#) instead of a Pung it receives four times as many minipoints. These factors are cumulative so a concealed Kong of terminals or honours gets 32 Fu ($2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 4 = 32$). A set completed by calling Ron counts as being exposed.

In addition to the four sets, the pair is also considered. If it's composed of [dragon](#), [round-wind](#) or [seat-wind](#) tiles (the so-called "value tiles") then it scores 2 Fu; if the pair is in [double wind](#) (when the round-wind is the same as the player's current seat-wind) it will receive either 2 or 4 Fu according to your local rules. Any other type of pair is worthless (and suitable for Pinfu).

The hand receives a further 2 Fu if it was completed on a one-sided wait, i.e. a [Penchan](#) (edge wait), [Kanchan](#) (centre wait) or [Tanki](#) (pair-wait). The two-sided [Ryanmen](#) and [Shanpon](#) waits are deemed easier to complete and therefore receive no minipoints.

(These rules are summarised in tabular form in the [Reference](#) section later.)

Mathematically this can be represented by the following formula where "Han" represents all the Han from Yaku and Dora, 2 is added to this for the Bazoru and then the rounded Fu count is multiplied by 2 raised to the power of the overall Han total, i.e. it's doubled (Han + 2) times.

$$\text{Base Points} = \text{Fu} \times 2^{(\text{Han} + 2)}$$

You might prefer the version below which is equivalent but slightly simpler in appearance. The Fu total is doubled once for each Han from Yaku and Dora and then multiplied by four (for the two doubles from the Bazoru).

$$\text{Base Points} = \text{Fu} \times 2^{\text{Han}} \times 4$$

The final stage is to determine the payments to be made - this depends on two factors. The first is whether the hand was won by [Tsumo](#) (self-draw) or [Ron](#) (stolen discard); on a Ron win only the player who discarded the winning tile pays but on a Tsumo win all three opponents must pay a share. The second is whether the player that won the hand was the current [dealer](#) or one of the three non-dealers.

The Base Points (BP) total represents the standard payment made individually by a non-dealer on a Tsumo win by another non-dealer player. You'll recall that the dealer "pays and receives double" so they pay two lots of BP in a Tsumo win by a non-dealer or receive twice the BP from each of the three non-dealers if they get a self-draw win themselves.

In a Ron win the player who won the hand receives the same number of BP units as a Tsumo win but all from a single player, i.e. a non-dealer gets 1 x 2BP plus 2 x 1BP for a Tsumo win so they receive 1 x 4BP for a Ron win and similarly the dealer gets 3 x 2BP if they win by self-draw so they take 1 x 6BP from a player they ronned.

These payment ratios are summarised in the table below.

	Player wins by Tsumo	Player wins by Ron
Non-dealer wins hand	Dealer pays 2 x Base Points and other two pay 1 x Base Points each	Discarder pays 4 x Base Points
Dealer wins hand	Non-dealers pay 2 x Base Points each	Discarder pays 6 x Base Points

Each player's individual payment amount is always rounded up to the nearest multiple of 100 (since this is the smallest denomination of [scoring stick](#) available) which in some cases has the effect of the total payments for a Tsumo win differing from the equivalent Ron amount.

(For example in a win with 1 Han and 40 Fu the Base Points are 320 pts (40 x 2 x 4). On a dealer Tsumo win the hand winner would receive 2 x 1BP from each player (640 pts) and each player's payment would be rounded up (700 pts) so the dealer would receive 2,100 pts in total (700 x 3). However on a Ron win they would get 1 x 6BP from the discarder (1,920 pts) and again this would be rounded up to the nearest hundred to give a payment of 2,000 pts.)

Continuing with my previous example winning hand with 60 Fu, let's say it was the east round, the player has a [seat-wind](#) of west (making him a non-dealer) and [Hatsu](#) (green dragon) is the [Dora](#). The Pung of east tiles gives him one Han for [Yakuhai](#) and the pair of Dora yields a further two doubles giving three Han overall from Yaku and Dora.

$$\text{Base Points} = \text{Fu} \times 2^{(\text{Han} + 2)} = 60 \times 2^{(3 + 2)} = 60 \times 2^5 = 60 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 = 1920$$

So the dealer pays 3900 points to the hand winner (BP doubled then rounded up to the next hundred) while the two other players pay 2,000 points each (BP rounded up).

Instead of performing these calculations every time, players can use scoring look-up tables to reckon the payments for a win. I've included these in the [Reference](#) section later.

The player who won the hand receives any [Honba](#) points (from the payer/s) and any [Riichi sticks](#) (from the table) in addition to the calculated score for the hand.

If the Base Points for a hand come to 2,000 or more then a limit will be imposed.

オール [ōru]

In a dealer Tsumo win the three other players all pay the same amount of points and these payments are sometimes expressed using the term **Ōru** which is the Japanese rendering of the English word "all". For example in the case with 1 Han and 40 Fu you would say that the payments were "700 ōru" or "700 all".

Limits

Due to the doubling factor in the score calculations it is common to play mahjong with a points limit. Under the modern Japanese rules, mahjong is played with a series of five tiered limits which are multiples of the standard limit (Mangan). Any winning hand worth five or more [Han](#) will always be paid at one of the levels given here.

As with smaller hands, the discarder pays the full amount on a [Ron](#) win and on a [Tsumo](#) win the payment is split and paid to the winner by the three other players (the limit points being split in the ratio 1:1:1 for a dealer win and 2:1:1 for a non-dealer).

満貫 [mangan]

The lowest limit is **Mangan**. Although sometimes defined as only applying to hands with 5 Han, the correct definition of this limit is 2,000 Base Points (see above) and therefore this payment level applies to any hand with 5 Han, or 4 Han and 40+ Fu, or 3 Han and 70+ Fu. The Mangan payment is 12,000 points to the dealer or 8,000 pts to a non-dealer.

跳満 / ハネ満 [haneman]

The second limit is **Haneman** (sometimes Hanemangan). This applies to any hand with either 6 or 7 Han and it pays 18,000 pts to the dealer or 12,000 to a non-dealer (i.e. 1½ x Mangan).

倍満 [baiman]

The third limit is **Baiman** (or Baimangan) which is achieved with a winning hand worth 8, 9 or 10 Han. It pays 24,000 pts to the dealer or 16,000 pts to a non-dealer so it's twice as big as Mangan (hence the name - the [kanji](#) 倍 means "double" or "times").

三倍満 [sanbaiman]

The next limit is **Sanbaiman** (or Sanbaimangan). You need 11 or 12 Han to hit this limit and the payments are three times those of Mangan, i.e. 36,000 pts and 24,000 pts.

The kanji spelling looks like "three Baiman" but it actually means "three times Man[gan]".

役満 [yakuman]

The top limit is **Yakuman** (or Yakumangan). This is obtained by completing one of the special limit hands which collectively are also referred to as [Yakuman](#). The payment level for this limit is 48,000 points for a dealer win or 32,000 points for a non-dealer (quadruple Mangan).

Where allowed, the Yakuman limit can also be achieved by winning with a hand worth 13 or more Han; this is called [Kazoe Yakuman](#) (counted Yakuman). If your rule-set disallows this then such a hand will be capped at the previous Sanbaiman limit instead.

Although exceedingly rare, some rules recognise special variants of limit hands that score as [double Yakuman](#) and the combining of limit hands to give multiple Yakuman points.

(The five limits are summarised later in the [Reference](#) section.)

Related Terms

満貫切り上げ / 満貫切上げ / 満貫切上 [mangan kiriage]

Mangan Kiriage literally means "Mangan rounding up". A winning hand with either 30 Fu and 4 Han or 60 Fu and 3 Han gives a total of 1920 Base Points which is just short of the 2,000 required to be classed as a Mangan but under this optional rule the score is rounded up in either of these cases and scores as a normal Mangan (8,000 pts for a non-dealer or 12,000 pts for the dealer). This results in a gain of no more than 400 points so it's a fair approximation.

青天井 [aotenjō]

Aotenjō is an optional scoring rule, most commonly seen in manga, where the limits system is not used and so, for example, a non-dealer's winning hand with 40 Fu and 7 Han would be worth a mighty 82,000 points instead of the usual 12,000 (Haneman limit).

Also Han from [Yaku](#) and [Dora](#) are included if you make a Yakuman hand so it's possible for your score to be doubled more than thirteen times which makes for some truly astronomical scores that will probably break your calculator!

The word Aotenjō means "skyrocketing" or "blue sky".

親満 [oyaman]

Oyaman is a contraction of Oya Mangan. When the [Oya](#) (dealer) achieves a win at the [Mangan](#) limit they receive 12,000 points (compared to 8,000 pts for a non-dealer) - a reminder that you should be especially careful to avoid dealing into east's hand.

ごみ / 塵 [gomi]

While there are slang terms for most common hand values and payments this is a more interesting example. A hand worth only 1,100 points on a non-dealer [Tsumo](#) win (where the dealer pays 500 pts and the other two players pay 300 pts each) is known as **Gomi**.

This is a play on words - the numbers five and three can be pronounced "go" and "mi" but also the word Gomi means "garbage"!

240Z / 二四〇Z [nii yon maru zetto]

A hand worth 24,000 pts (i.e. a dealer [Baiman](#)) is sometimes known by the slang term **240Z** - a reference to the 70's sports-car the Nissan Fairlady Z, also known as the Datsun 240Z.

14. Penalties

This section describes some of the errors and illegal moves that may occur during play and the penalties that apply to them.

冲合 / チョンボ [chombo]

In Japanese mahjong the maximum penalty, imposed for major errors, is called **Chombo**.

The player who made the error pays an amount of points equal to the [Mangan](#) limit, split in the same distribution as a Mangan payment received - i.e. a non-dealer pays out 8,000 points (4,000 pts to the [dealer](#) and 2,000 pts each to the other two players) while the dealer pays 12,000 points (4,000 pts each to all three non-dealers).

Any [Riichi stakes](#) from the current hand are returned to the players. The hand is then replayed with the same [seat-winds](#) and no [counter](#) added.

Often in tournaments an incurred penalty will not be applied until after the game has ended. The match is scored as usual and the penalty is then simply deducted from the cumulative points total of the player who fouled. In this case the other players do not receive any extra points.

アガリ放棄 [agari hōki]

For lesser infractions, the player's hand of tiles is declared a **Dead Hand**. The player continues to take his turns as normal - drawing and discarding - but he is not permitted to [call](#) tiles and he must not declare a win (this would be punishable by Chombo). Furthermore the hand cannot be recognised as [Tenpai](#) so he will not receive [Nōten Bappu](#) if the hand of play ends in a draw.

The term **Agari Hōki** means "win renunciation".

A Dead Hand is the penalty for a player acting out of turn or looking at another player's hand.

誤チー [go-chii] / 誤ポン [go-pon] / 誤カン [go-kan] 空チー [kū-chii] / 空ポン [kū-pon] / 空カン / 空槓 [kū-kan]

These terms signify incorrect calls of [Chii](#), [Pon](#) or [Kan](#) when attempting to steal an opponent's tile to complete a [set](#). The player who made the **False Call** returns the tiles involved and is then penalised with a Dead Hand. Where disallowed, the same penalty applies to cases of [Kuikae](#).

In some rules the player must pay a 1,000-point [scoring stick](#) into the [Kyōtaku](#).

The [kanji](#) 誤 means "false" and 空 means "empty" or "null".

ミスあがり [misu agari] / 誤ロン [go-ron] / 誤自摸 [go-tsumo]

Misu Agari or **Mistaken Win** is an incorrect declaration of a win. If the player revealed their full hand of tiles to their opponents then the penalty is Chombo.

Go-Ron is a false [win on a stolen discard](#) and **Go-Tsumo** is a false [self-draw win](#).

誤ロン(発声のみ) [go-ron (hassei nomi)]

If a player's invalid win declaration was verbal only, i.e. if they did not reveal their tiles, then instead of Chombo they get a Dead Hand.

無翻あがり [muhan (?) agari] / 役なし [yaku nashi]

If a player declares a win and their hand is shown to be **Yaku Nashi** ("without [Yaku](#)") then Chombo applies. A winning hand must always have at least one scoring element.

フリテン・ロンあがり [furiten ron agari]

When a player declares a [Ron](#) win on a stolen discard but they are shown to be [Furiten](#) they must pay Chombo for a **Furiten Ron Win**.

ノーテン・リーチ [nōten riichi]

If a player declares [Riichi](#) and either they win the hand or it ends in a [draw](#) then they must display their hand of tiles to show that they "reached" legally with a [Tenpai](#) hand. If the hand is seen to be [Nōten](#) (unready) they must pay Chombo for **Nōten Riichi**.

リーチ後の暗槓 [riichi gono ankan]

This phrase describes the declaration of a concealed Kong ([Ankan](#)) after Riichi. If this changes the waits or overall structure of the hand then the declaration is illegal and, when discovered on revealing the tiles in the event of a drawn hand, the Chombo penalty applies.

ゲーム続行を不可能にする行為 [gēmu zokkō o fukanō ni suru kōi]

This phrase refers to an action that occurs during a match making it impossible to continue the current hand of play, for example if someone reveals a significant number of tiles after knocking over a portion of the [wall](#) or someone's hand. The Chombo penalty applies in such a case.

多牌 [tāhai] / 少牌 [shōhai]

A player will normally hold thirteen tiles in their hand so that drawing a tile from the [live wall](#) on their turn gives them fourteen tiles which is the number required to form a [complete hand](#) consisting of four sets of three tiles each plus a pair. For each [Kong](#) declared by the player they will take a [supplement tile](#) giving them one extra tile overall.

If a player is seen at any time during play to have fewer tiles than they should this is called **Shōhai** or a **Short Hand** in English. Conversely if they have too many tiles it is known as **Tāhai** or a **Long Hand**. Both situations are punished with a Dead Hand.

15. Optional Hands

An article on the Japanese Wikipedia site lists a remarkable sixty-four different optional [Yaku](#) (and [Yakuman](#)) that can be allowed in Japanese mahjong under "local rules" or house rules but I'll only be listing here the more prominent and/or interesting examples that I've encountered.

Some of these are archaic and most are quite uncommon in standard play.

Optional Yaku

流し満貫 / 流しマンガン [nagashi mangan] / 么九振切 [yaochū furikiri]

The most common of the entries here is **Nagashi Mangan (All Terminal & Honour Discards)**. This is a special Yaku which can be claimed if a hand of play ends in an [exhaustive draw](#), the player has discarded only [terminal](#) (1's and 9's) and [honour](#) (wind and dragon) tiles and none of these have been [called](#) by other players; they do not need any structure within their remaining hand of tiles. The player receives a [Mangan](#) payment from their opponents.

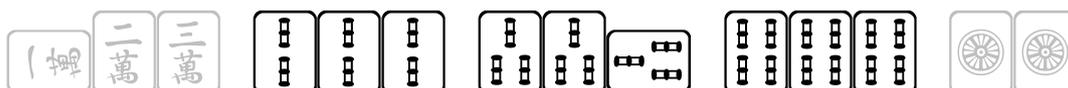
開立直 / オープン立直 / オープンリーチ [ōpun riichi] / プンリー [punrii]

Open Riichi is a special variant of [Riichi](#) in which either the whole hand or just the waiting portion of it is exposed to the other players at the point of "reaching". With a concealed [Tenpai](#) hand the player has the choice of declaring either normal Riichi (worth one [Han](#)) or Open Riichi (worth two Han), in either case paying 1,000 points as usual. This might be used early in a hand of play with a many-sided wait (giving you a good chance of winning on a self-drawn tile) or in a situation where one or more of your opponents have already "reached" and are therefore unable to play defensively.

In an optional variation of this rule, any player foolish enough to discard a tile which is claimed by [Ron](#) to complete an Open Riichi hand must pay the top limit ([Yakuman](#)) instead of the normally calculated amount of points. There are two cases of Open Riichi in Episode 11 of the *Akagi* anime; in that example they play the version that requires the full waiting hand to be revealed but disallow the option where dealing into it counts as a Yakuman.

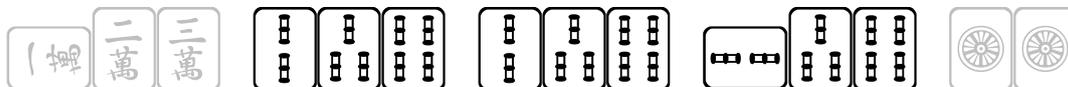
三連刻 [san renkō]

San Renkō (Three Consecutive Pungs) is awarded for having three [Pungs](#) in the same suit with sequential numbers, for example 222 333 444. It can be played in either an open or a closed hand but both ways give two Han.



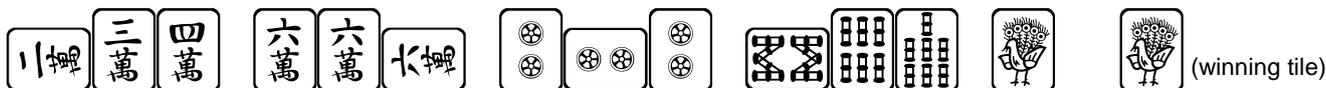
一色三順 [ji sō san shun]

li Sō San Shun (Pure Triple Chow) is made by having three identical [Chows](#) (with the same suit and same numbers). You'll notice that this would have the same form as San Renkō above (for example 234 234 234 is equivalent to 222 333 444) but, whereas San Renkō is a Pung-based hand, this one is a Chow hand like an extended version of [lipēkō](#) (except that it can be played open). It gives three Han in a concealed hand or two Han in an exposed one.



金鷄独立 [kinkei dokuritsu]

Kinkei Dokuritsu is awarded for winning on a (fully exposed) [Hadaka Tanki](#) wait specifically winning with the 1 tile in the [Sōzu](#) suit; the character 鷄 means "chicken" and is obviously a reference to the bird on the tile. Kinkei Dokuritsu gives a [Mangan](#).



An alternative version of this rule can be found in the Nintendo DS version of *Mahjong Taikai*. There the open hand can be completed with any tile but the Yaku is worth only one Han.

客風三刻 / 才夕風三刻 [otakaze san kō] / 客風三風 [kō fon san fon]

Otakaze San Kō requires three [Pungs](#) composed of [Otakaze](#) ("guest winds"). It is therefore only possible to achieve when your [seat-wind](#) coincides with the [round-wind](#) and you make the required sets from the other three winds. It's worth three Han in a closed hand or two if open.

It could often be combined with [Toi-Toi](#) (All Pungs) or [Honitsu](#) (Half Flush).



五門齊 / 五門齋 / 五門齊 / 五門齋 [ū men sai] / 五族協和 [go zoku kyōwa]

Ū Men Sai is awarded for a closed hand of four sets and one pair featuring all three [suits](#), one type of [wind](#) and one type of [dragon](#). It's worth two Han.



Alternatively it can be recognised as a Yakuman if all four sets are Pungs (or Kongs) and it has a pair of your current [seat-wind](#).



Another name for this hand is **Go Zoku Kyōwa (Harmony of the Five Nations)**.

カン振り / 槓振 / カンブリ [kanburi]

Kanburi is a one-Han scoring element which can be claimed when you declare a [Ron](#) win off a tile discarded by a player after they have just declared a [Kong](#), taken their [supplement tile](#) and then discarded.

燕返し [tsubame gaeshi]

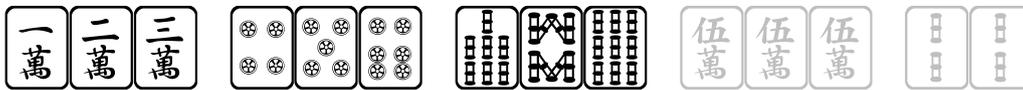
Tsubame Gaeshi (literally "swallow reversal") is an optional Yaku worth one Han, given for declaring a [Ron](#) win on the tile discarded by an opponent at the point of declaring [Riichi](#).

Confusingly it's also the name of an infamous and audacious mahjong cheating technique in which the player loads a complete hand into the bottom layer of their section of the [wall](#) after shuffling and then, if their section remains intact after the dice roll and [initial draw](#), switches their drawn tiles for the loaded ones and then declares either a [Chiihō](#) or [Tenhō](#) win as appropriate. This technique should be instantly familiar to anyone who's watched the mahjong anime *Shōbushi Densetsu Tetsuya* (Legendary Gambler Tetsuya); if not then see Episodes 3 and 20.

(Tsubame Gaeshi was also a sword-fighting technique employed by the legendary 16th-century Japanese swordsman Sasaki Kojirō. It's the name of a counter-throw in Judo too!)

三色通貫 [san shoku tsūkan]

San Shoku Tsūkan (Mixed Straight) is a hybrid of [San Shoku Dōjun](#) (Mixed Triple Chow) and [Ikkitsūkan](#) (Pure Straight) and it's worth the same - two Han in a closed hand or one Han if open. The requirement is a 123-456-789 straight composed of one set in each suit.



小三喜 [shō san shii]

Shō San Shii (Little Three Winds) is a reduced version of the limit hand [Shō Sū Shii](#) (Little Four Winds). It requires two wind [Pungs](#) (instead of three) and a wind pair. It's worth two Han.



大三喜 [dai san shii]

Dai San Shii (Big Three Winds) is a reduced version of the limit hand [Dai Sū Shii](#) (Big Four Winds). It requires three wind [Pungs](#) (instead of four). It's worth three Han but you will nearly always get additional Han for [Yakuhai](#), [Honitsu](#) and/or [Toi-Toi](#).



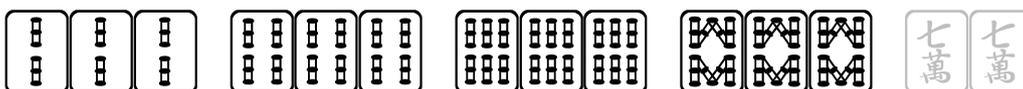
偶数連刻 [gūsū renkō]

Gūsū Renkō (Consecutive Even Pungs) requires 222 444 666 888 sets in any suit/s. It's worth two Han in a closed hand or one if open. You can also claim [Toi-Toi](#) on such a hand.



清偶数連刻 [chin gūsū renkō]

Chin Gūsū Renkō (Pure Consecutive Even Pungs) requires 222 444 666 888 sets all in the same suit. It's worth three Han in a closed hand or two if open. In addition to Toi-Toi it would be easy to combine this with either a full flush or a half flush.



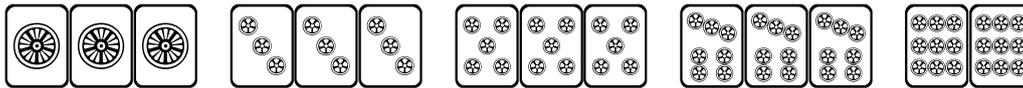
奇数連刻 [kisū renkō]

Kisū Renkō (Consecutive Odd Pungs) requires 111 333 555 777 sets and a 99 pair in any suit/s. It's worth two Han. You can also claim [Toi-Toi](#) on such a hand.



清奇数連刻 [chin kisū renkō]

Chin Kisū Renkō (Pure Consecutive Odd Pungs) requires 111 333 555 777 sets and a 99 pair all in the same suit. It's worth three Han in addition to the guaranteed doubles from [Chinitsu](#) for the flush and [Toi-Toi](#) for the sets.



Optional Yakuman

数え役満 [kazoe yakuman]

Kazoe Yakuman (Counted Yakuman or Natural Limit) is awarded when you win with a hand worth a total of thirteen or more [Han](#) from Yaku and Dora (all named [Yakuman](#) hands like [Dai San Gen](#) also have a nominal value of thirteen Han). If counted Yakuman are disallowed then the top limit for "natural" hands becomes the [Sanbaiman](#) limit.

(Unusually my first ever Yakuman was a counted one. The hand had two [Kongs](#) and, even though I wasn't playing with [red fives](#), a total of eleven [Dora](#)! Combined with [Riichi](#) and [Tanyao](#) it gave me the thirteen Han required.)

人和 [renhō]

Renhō (Human Win) is related to [Chiihō](#) but, instead of winning on your first turn, you win before your first turn by calling [Ron](#) on an opponent's discard. Like [Ippatsu](#), [Daburu Riichi](#) and [Chiihō](#), if any of the others players call [Chii](#), [Pon](#) or [Kan](#) prior to this then it cannot be claimed.

Renhō can be scored as a Yakuman but in some rules it's only awarded a [Mangan](#).

八連荘 [pā renchan]

Pā Renchan (literally "eight Renchan") is awarded for eight consecutive [dealer](#) wins (including any consecutive hands won immediately before becoming east). Despite the name, the streak will be broken if the player earns a [Renchan](#) by having a Tenpai hand in a draw.

Since this Yakuman can only be achieved by the dealer it's always worth 48,000 points.

十三不塔 [shiisan pūtā]

Shiisan Pūtā (Thirteen Unrelated Tiles) is awarded to a player who begins a hand of play with thirteen tiles that cannot form sets together (e.g. having either 3 and 4 or 3 and 5 in the same suit would not be permitted) plus a duplicate of one of the thirteen. Like [Renhō](#) above it can be scored as a Yakuman or sometimes as a [Mangan](#). I've made this on the *Mahjong Taikai IV* video-game on the PS3, although of course it took no skill on my part - it's purely luck-based.



十三 means "thirteen", 不 means "bad" or "non-" and the final [kanji](#) 塔 is the same one that appears in the term [Tātsu](#) - so the full name indicates that the thirteen tiles do not include any groups of tiles with the potential to form [Chows](#) together.

十四不塔 [shiisū pūtā]

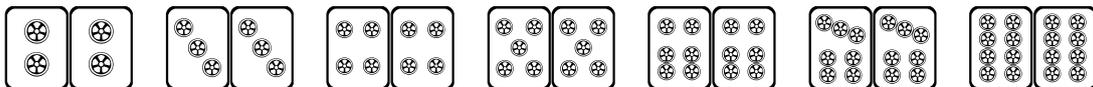
Shiisū Pūtā (Fourteen Unrelated Tiles) is a less common variant of Shiisan Pūtā above - it requires fourteen unconnected tiles instead of thirteen unconnected tiles and one duplicate.



大車輪 [dai sharin]

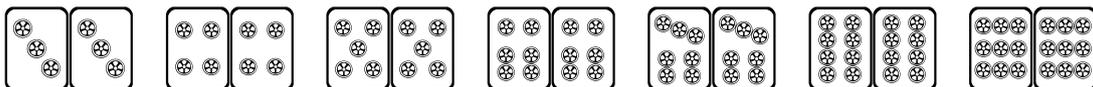
Dai Sharin (literally Big Wheels) is awarded specifically for a hand of 22334455667788 in the [Pinzu](#) suit; this is treated as a [Chii Toitsu](#) (Seven Pairs) hand so it cannot include open [Chows](#) and the hand must always be played [closed](#).

Even if this hand is not recognised in your rule-set you would still always get closed [Chinitsu](#) plus [Tanyao](#), [Ryanpēkō](#) and [Pinfu](#) for a guaranteed minimum of eleven Han.



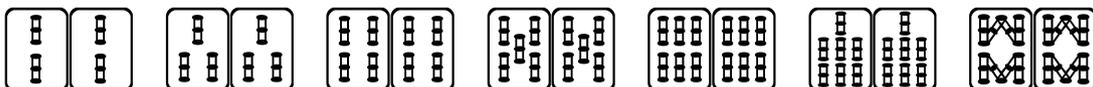
小車輪 [shō sharin]

Shō Sharin (Little Wheels) is a less common but slightly more flexible version of Dai Sharin. It can be made with a Pinzu flush of 11223344556677 or 33445566778899.



大竹林 [dai chikurin]

The rare hand **Dai Chikurin (Big Bamboo Forest)** has the same 22334455667788 structure as Dai Sharin but in the [Sōzu](#) suit.



大数隣 [dai sūrin]

The rare hand **Dai Sūrin (Big Neighbouring Numbers)** has the same 22334455667788 structure as Dai Sharin (and Dai Chikurin) but in the [Manzu](#) suit.



四連刻 [sū renkō]

Sū Renkō (Four Consecutive Pungs) is an extension of the optional scoring element [San Renkō](#). It's made with four [Pungs](#) in the same suit with sequential numbers, e.g. 333 444 555 666. Open sets are permitted.



(In the English translation of the CO rules this is known as Four Pure Shifted Pungs.)

一色四順 [ii sō sū shun]

li Sō Sū Shun (Pure Quadruple Chow) is made by having four identical [Chows](#) (with the same suit and same numbers) - an extension of the optional Yaku [li Sō San Shun](#) (Pure Triple Chow).



"Papa Bush" makes a flush hand of this form in Chapter 17 of the mahjong manga *Mudazumo naki Kaikaku* (a.k.a. *The Legend of Koizumi*) but it's not recognised as a limit hand there, instead only scoring as a special case of [Ryanpēkō](#) (combined with [Chinitsu](#)).

百万石 / 百萬石 [hyakuman goku]

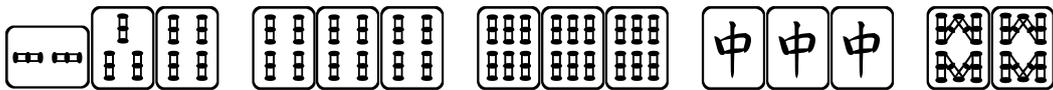
Hyakuman Goku (One Million Stones) is awarded for a full flush in the [Manzu](#) suit in which the numbers on the tiles sum to 100 or more.

The first character in the name is 百 which means one hundred and the second character is either 万 or 萬 (from old or new Manzu tiles) and both mean ten thousand - hence "one million".



紅一点 [kōitten] / 一点紅 [ittenkō] / 万緑叢中一点紅 [ban ryokusō chū ittenkō]

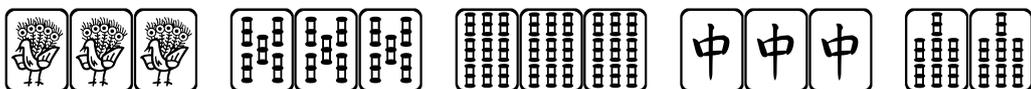
Kōitten (Crimson Speck) is a minor variant of [Ryūiisō](#) (All Green) which uses the same five pure green [Sōzu](#) tiles but with [Chun](#) (red dragon) permitted instead of [Hatsu](#) (green dragon).



The name is a poetic expression meaning "a single spot of red (a flower) that stands out in a field of ten thousand green thickets" or by extension "one item of quality among many other items" or commonly "the only woman in a group of men".

紅孔雀 [beni kujaku]

Beni Kujaku (Crimson Peacock) is another variant of [Ryūiisō](#) which swaps out [Hatsu](#) for [Chun](#) but it also uses only the [Sōzu](#) tiles with green and red markings (the 1, 5, 7 and 9) instead of the pure green tiles of that suit.



It's significantly harder to complete than [Ryūiisō](#) or [Kōitten](#) (which are already very rare anyway) because only five types of tile are permitted instead of six and also [Chows](#) are not possible.

青の洞門 [ao no dōmon]

On a loosely similar theme **Ao no Dōmon (Tunnel of Blue)** only permits the 2, 4 and 8 in the [Pinzu](#) suit and any [wind tiles](#), plus sometimes [Hatsu](#) (green dragon). Since no sequential number tiles can be used, such a hand must always have either an "[all Pungs](#)" or an "[all pairs](#)" structure (much like [Honrōtō](#)).



五筒開花 [ūpin kaihō]

Ūpin Kaihō is the "Gathering the Plum Blossom from the Roof" limit hand from the Chinese classical rules. It's awarded for the scoring element [Rinshan Kaihō](#) (After a Kong) when achieved specifically with the ūpin tile - the number 5 tile in the [Pinzu](#) suit which is marked with five blue circles said to resemble plum blossom.

一筒撈月 [iipin raoyue]

iipin Raoyue is the "Plucking the Moon from the Bottom of the Sea" limit hand from the Chinese classical rules. It's awarded for [Haitei Raoyue](#) (Last-Tile Tsumo) when achieved specifically with the iipin tile - the 1 tile in the [Pinzu](#) suit which has a single large circle resembling a full moon.

二索槍槓 [ryansō chankan]

Ryansō Chankan is the "Scratching a Carrying Pole" limit hand from the Chinese classical rules. It's awarded for [Chankan](#) (Robbing the Kong) when achieved specifically with the ryansō tile - the 2 tile in the [Sōzu](#) suit.

大七星 [dai chisei / dai chii shin] / ビッグセブンスター [biggu sebun sutā]

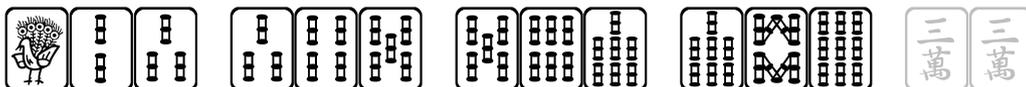
Dai Chisei (Big Seven Stars) is arguably the most beautiful and perfect hand in the game.

A Double Yakuman is awarded for making [Tsūiisō](#) (All Honours) with a Seven Pairs format - two each of all four winds and all three dragons.



金門橋 [kinmonkyō]

Kinmonkyō (literally "**Golden Gate Bridge**") is a hand containing four overlapping [Chows](#) 123-345-567-789 in the same suit and any pair. Sometimes either a full flush or a concealed hand is required and a concealed flush hand might be recognised as a Double Yakuman.



花鳥風月 [kachō fūgetsu]

The term **Kachō Fūgetsu** is a Yojijukugo (a four-character idiom) used to refer to the traditional Japanese aesthetic themes of Nature's beauty. It's written with the four [kanji](#) meaning "flower", "bird", "wind" and "moon" respectively and the requirement for the Yakuman of the same name is four [Pungs](#), each corresponding to one of these!

The flower is the 5-pin tile (blossom), the bird is the 1-sō of course, the wind is either the player's [seat-wind](#) or the current [round-wind](#) and the big circle on the 1-pin is the full moon.



風花雪月 [fūka setsugetsu]

Fūka Setsugetsu is a similar hand that also represents the beauty of Nature. It has the same wind, flower and moon sets but it has "snow" represented by a set of [Haku](#) (white dragon) instead of the 1-sō bird set.



16. Optional Rules

This section lists a few optional rules in addition to those I've already mentioned on previous pages (I've added a hyperlinked list of these at the end of this section). Even some features of the game in widespread use are technically optional, for example the [Ippatsu](#) scoring element.

ルール [rūru]

Rūru is a Japanese rendering of the English word "rules" (or "rule").

あり / アリ / 有り / 有 [ari]

Ari means "with" and is used to indicate a rule that is in use, e.g. "[Kuitan](#) Ari".

なし / ナシ / 無し / 無 [nashi]

Nashi means "without" and denotes a rule that is not in use, e.g. "Kuitan Nashi".

(As a mnemonic you can remember that Nashi has the same initial N as "not" and "negative".)

アリアリルール [ari ari rūru]

Ari Ari is a common rule-set in which [Kuitan](#) and [Atozuke](#) are both allowed (Ari).

(Also when ordering coffee at a mahjong parlour you can say "ari ari" to specify that you want it with both milk and sugar!)

ナシナシルール [nashi nashi rūru]

Nashi Nashi is the opposite of Ari Ari - [Kuitan](#) and [Atozuke](#) are both disallowed (Nashi).

二翻縛り / 2 翻しばり / 二翻しばり / ニハン縛り [ryan han shibari]

五本場二翻縛り [go honba ryan han shibari] / リャンシ / りゃんし [ryan shi]

The **Ryan Han Shibari** rule (**Ryan Shi** for short) applies a **Two-Han Minimum** (instead of the standard [one-Han minimum](#)) when there are five or more [counters](#) on the table from preceding consecutive hands of play that ended in either a dealer win or a draw. A hand of tiles must have [Yaku](#) with a value of at least two [Han](#) in order to be able to declare a win with it.

(The word Shibari ("binding") is used in English to refer to the aesthetic and elaborate Japanese forms of erotic bondage and can therefore yield some quite exotic results on internet searches!)

馬 / ウマ [uma] / 順位馬 / 順位ウマ [jun'i uma] / 順位点 [jun'i ten]

The **Uma** is a final exchange of **Position Points** at the end of the match. Usually the player in third place pays a pre-defined amount to the player in second and the player in fourth pays a larger amount to the one in first. These are often written as two numbers, showing how many thousands of points are in each payment, for example with a "10-30" Uma the player in 3rd pays 10,000 points to the player in 2nd and then 4th pays 30,000 points to 1st.

It's also possible to have an asymmetrical Uma, for example +25/0/-10/-15.

Uma means "horse" and Jun'i means "position" (i.e. placing).

沈みウマ [shizumi uma] / 浮きウマ [uki uma]

With a **Shizumi Uma (Sinking Uma)** each player with a negative [final score](#) pays 10,000 pts to the winner so the payments are therefore +30/-10/-10/-10, +20/0/-10/-10 or +10/0/0/-10.

With an **Uki Uma (Floating Uma)** each player with a positive final score receives a share of 30,000 pts and the payments would be +30/-5/-10/-15, +20/+10/-10/-20 or +15/+10/+5/-30.

ビンタ [binta]

Binta is a type of Uma in which the players exchange multiples of a pre-defined amount (either points or money) at the end of a match but the multiples applied depend on how many people finished the game with a score equal to or greater than the [starting score](#) (e.g. 25,000 points).

Considering all six pairings of the four players in turn (e.g. AB, AC, AD, BC, BD and CD), within each pair the player with the lower score pays the other, so 4th always pays 1st, 2nd and 3rd; 3rd pays 1st and 2nd; 2nd pays 1st (and 1st pays no-one). In each pair the payment will be the specified Binta amount if both players have points totals less than the starting score or if they both have totals equal to or greater than the starting score. If, however, only one player's points are less than the starting score they must pay double the Binta to the other player in that pair.

There are only three possible outcomes and these are summarised in the table below which shows the overall multiples of the Binta amount paid or received by the four players.

	First	Second	Third	Fourth
Three players under starting score	+6 x Binta	±0	-2 x Binta	-4 x Binta
Two players under starting score	+5 x Binta	+3 x Binta	-3 x Binta	-5 x Binta
One player under starting score	+4 x Binta	+2 x Binta	±0	-6 x Binta

I first encountered this rule option in the Nintendo DS game based on the *Mukoubuchi* manga where the high-stakes gambling games allow a maximum Binta amount of 20 million Yen so the player in first place can receive up to ¥120 million per match! (sadly not real money)

一荘 [iichan] / 一荘戦 [iichansen]

Optionally a match can be played over the full four [rounds](#) of the Chinese classical mahjong rules (instead of the standard Japanese two-round [Hanchan](#)). Such a match is called an **lichan** (literally "one game") and would require a round-wind indicator that shows all four winds.

東北戦 [tonpēsen]

A **Tonpēsen** ("east-north match") is played over two rounds: an east round and a north round. This follows the pattern of Chinese classical rules - starting on east and finishing on north.

Evidently this option is most common in the north-east of Honshu and on Hokkaido.

東々戦 [tontonsen]

A **Tontonsen** is a match with two east rounds, or rather one long east round played over eight hands (east 1 to east 8). The 々 symbol in the name is used to denote a repeated character (also used in [Toi-Toi](#)) so 東々 is read as 東東 (which sounds a bit like a smelly animal).

西入 [shānyū]

Under the **Shānyū** rule, if all players have failed to achieve a specified target score by the end of the second (south) round of a [Hanchan](#) (two-round match) then a third (west) round is played.

Shānyū means "entering west" - after the south round you enter the west round.

(If you were playing an exotic match with two east rounds then you would play a third east round with east 9, east 10, east 11 and east 12 hands or if you were playing an east-north match the third round would be another east round.)

最低点 [saiteiten]

The term **Saiteiten** (literally "minimum points") can refer to the target score for Shānyū.

A typical target is 30,100 points which represents a player making a profit over the 30,000 points [Genten](#) (buy-in).

北入 [pēnyū]

Pēnyū is an extension of the Shānyū rule. If the target score is still not achieved at the end of the west round then a fourth (north) round is played (effectively giving a four-round [lichan](#) match of the Chinese classical rules). Pēnyū means "entering north".

返り東 [kaeriton]

The **Kaeriton** rule is a further extension of the Pēnyū rule that allows the match to continue beyond the north round, starting with another east round. Kaeriton means "returning east".

白入 [hakunyū] / 発入 [hatsunyū] / 中入 [chunnyū]

Instead of continuing with a second east round, the exotic options **Hakunyū**, **Hatsunyū** and **Chunnyū** allow you to play fifth, sixth and seventh rounds where the dragons are "[round-winds](#)"!

南入 [nannyū]

When playing a [Tonpūsen](#) (one-round match) the **Nannyū** rule causes an additional south round to be played if the target score is not achieved.

東入 [tonnyū]

When playing an uncommon [lichan](#) (four-round match) the **Tonnyū** rule causes a second east round to be played if the target score is not achieved.

延長戦 [enchōsen]

The term **Enchōsen** describes any additional rounds played as "overtime".

サドンデス [sadon desu]

A variation under Shānyū, etc, is the **Sudden Death** rule whereby the match will end as soon as someone achieves the target score if you are already playing "overtime".

割れ目 / 割目 / ワレ目 / われめ / ワレメ [wareme]

Wareme (meaning "gap" or "split") is a luck-based gambling rule which doubles the points paid / received by the player whose section of the [wall](#) was broken at the start of the hand of play. This doubling effect is in addition to the usual multiplier applied to [east](#) so a dealer [Mangan](#) is worth a massive 24,000 points. Points from [Riichi](#) stakes and the [Honba](#) count are not doubled.

In video-games that allow the Wareme option the player affected by this rule is often indicated with a small table-top marker, usually marked with the 割 [kanji](#). If the game has no marker then you would need to use the dice throw to determine which side of the wall was broken.

大割れ目 [dai wareme]

Dai Wareme (literally "big Wareme") is a more extreme variant of the Wareme doubling rule.

If the same number shows on both dice the Wareme player pays/receives four times the standard amount instead of double! Since the dice total will always be an even number this effect can only ever be applied to players in the north and south seats.

導火線 [dōkasen]

Dōkasen (literally "fuse") is another variation of the Wareme rule. The doubling effect is applied to the player sitting adjacent to the end of the [live wall](#) from which tiles are being drawn.

The wall gradually shortens like the fuse of a bomb. When all the tiles on one side of the wall have been depleted the doubling effect passes to the next player in turn.

トップ打ち切り / トップ打切り [toppu uchikiri] / 天辺 / てっぺん [teppen]

When **Toppu Uchikiri** (literally "top ending") is allowed, the match will finish early when one player's score exceeds a predefined level, typically fifty, sixty or seventy thousand points.

A specific setting for this rule might use the [kanji](#) 万 which denotes a multiple of 10,000. For example with 6万点打ち切り the game would end if someone achieved a score of 60k or more.

焼き鳥 / 焼鳥 / ヤキトリ / やきとり [yakitori]

In Japanese cuisine **Yakitori** is a dish consisting of pieces of chicken grilled on a skewer. Under this rule in mahjong each player is given a Yakitori marker, usually depicting a cartoon image of a skewered bird - this sits next to them on the table from the start of the match. When a player wins a hand their marker is inverted or removed. Any players who have not won a hand by the end of the match (their marker is still face-up on the table) must pay a penalty or forfeit, for example 3,000 or 5,000 points to each player, or an amount determined by rolling the dice.

(The initial character 焼 is one of my favourite kanji - I think it looks like a little man putting his arm around the shoulders of a robot. Yes, I have an overactive imagination.)

焼き豚 [yakibuta]

Yakibuta is another term from Japanese cookery, this time denoting roast pork. In mahjong it's an extension of the Yakitori rule - if a player avoids the Yakitori penalty by getting their first win in the final hand of a match by winning off an opponent's discard ([Ron](#)) then it is the discarder who must pay the penalty instead.

焼き直し [yakinaoshi]

Yakinaoshi is a variant of the Yakitori rule. It's also known as the "**Phoenix**" rule because if all four players win a hand then the Yakitori markers are reset - reincarnated like the mythical bird.

焼き鳥返し [yakitori kaeshi]

The **Yakitori Reversal** rule can be applied either throughout the whole match or only when there is one Yakitori marker remaining. If a player with a marker wins by Ron then their marker is transferred to the discarder.

If the rule is always in effect then it's possible for one player to have two or more Yakitori markers in which case each hand win removes only one marker and the standard penalty must be paid for each active marker at the end of the match.

チップ [chippu] / 祝儀 [shūgi]

When playing a game for money, circular **Chips** (essentially casino chips) can be used to track any luck-based bonuses that a player receives during play, for example when they make [Ippatsu](#), get an [Ura Dora](#), use a [red five](#) or complete a [Yakuman](#).

These **Shūgi (Tips)** can then translate at the end of the match into either points (e.g. 2,000 pts or 5,000 pts per chip) or a cash bonus (e.g. ¥100 or ¥500 per chip).

In the case of the Nintendo DS version of *Mahjong Taikai* each chip is worth 5,000 points. A player receives two chips from the discarding player for Ippatsu [Ron](#) or two chips each from their three opponents (six total) on an Ippatsu [Tsumo](#) win. Similarly with Ura Dora they receive one chip per Dora from the discarder on Ron or one chip each on Tsumo and for a Yakuman win they get fifteen chips (worth 75,000 points!) with the discarder paying all fifteen on Ron or the three other players paying five each on Tsumo.

With other optional rules applied the chips can also be paid as [Arisu](#), [Toriuchi](#) and [bankruptcy](#) bonuses or for declaring a win using a [Haku Pocchi](#) tile.

アリス [arisu]

Under the **Arisu** (Alice?) rule a player who wins with a [concealed](#) hand (or optionally with Riichi or any winning hand) they get to flip the next tile on the top row of the [dead wall](#) immediately after the active [Dora](#) indicator(s). If the revealed tile matches one or more in their hand then they receive one additional [Han](#) or [chip](#) per matching tile and they get to flip another tile, working counter-clockwise along the dead wall and into the [live wall](#) if necessary. This process continues until either the latest flipped tile gives no matches (so if the first tile to be turned has no matches then the player gets no extra doubles or chips) or they reach the end of the wall.

(It should be noted that a tile in the hand must exactly match that on the wall to give the bonus; it is not like the Dora system where the lucky tile is the next tile in sequence after the indicator.)

鳥撃ち [toriuchi]

This is an interesting one! When playing with the **Toriuchi** ("shooting birds") rule, the 鳥 (**Tori**) in the title means "bird" and refers to the 1 tile in the [Sōzu](#) (Bamboos) suit. The winning player receives one [chip](#) from the discarder for each bird tile in their winning hand on a Ron win.

There are two complications though. Firstly the 7p tile (in the [Pinzu](#) suit) is the ピストル (**Pisutoru** or "pistol") and if the discarder holds any pistol tiles in their own hand then all birds are shot and the payment is not made. However, secondly, the 8s tile is the 鳥かご (**Torikago** or "birdcage") and any such tiles in the winner's hand will protect their bird/s from incoming gunfire, nullifying the effect of any pistol tiles, so the chip payment is still made.



= Tori (bird)



= Pisutoru (pistol)



= Torikago (birdcage)

白ポッチ [haku pocchi] / オールマイティー牌 [ōrumaitii pai]

A **Haku Pocchi** is a special version of a [Haku](#) (white dragon) tile marked with a single red gem or red dot in the centre of its face. One or more of these can be added to the tiles in play replacing the standard Haku tiles (in the same way as [red fives](#)).

If a player draws one for an [lppatsu](#) win (or sometimes any [Riichi](#) win) it can be used as a wildcard in place of any other tile to give an automatic win, but at other times it's treated as a normal Haku. Such a wildcard may also be referred to as an "almighty tile".

差し馬 / サシ馬 [sashi uma]

A **Sashi Uma** is a **Side-Bet** between two players who agree to pay a specified sum to whichever wins the match (or finishes with the higher score). There's an example of this in the first episode of the mahjong anime *Shōbushi Densetsu Tetsuya* (Legendary Gambler Tetsuya).

薄氷 [hakuhyō]

Hakuhyō means "thin ice" and is the name given to a special variant of the game played over a single [wind-round](#) and with each player starting with only 13,000 points. If a player is [busted](#) then the match ends early and they have to pay an extra bonus to the player in first place.

(The following rules, features and scoring elements can also be added, removed or adjusted in any given rule-set: [red fives](#), [Agari Yame](#), [Tenpai Yame](#), [bankruptcy](#), [Kuikae](#), [lppatsu](#), [open Tanyao](#), [Atozuke](#), [Tsumo Pinfu](#), [concealed Kong after Riichi](#), [Double Yakuman](#), [Pao](#), [Yakuman stacking](#), [Kan Dora](#), [Ura Dora](#) and [Kan Ura Dora](#) bonus tiles, [Keishiki Tenpai](#), [Double Ron](#), [Triple Ron](#), [Nōten Bappu](#), [continuance](#) conditions, [Honba](#) value, [abortive draws](#), [starting score](#), [Oka](#), Fu for a [double wind pair](#), [Mangan rounding](#), [skyrocketing scores](#) and [Riichibō Modoshi](#).)

17. Miscellaneous

This section contains a random list of terms which don't really fit into the others.

対局 [taikyoku]

Taikyoku means a game or the act of playing a game.

相手 [aite]

Aite is the Japanese word for **Opponent**.

戦 [sen]

A **Sen** is a match (or more generally it can mean "fight" or "battle").

牌譜 [paifu]

A **Paifu**, usually known in English as a **Hand History**, is a record of the evolution of a hand of tiles including all draws and discards made by the player. It's similar to the term 棋譜 [kifu] which is a record of the moves made during a game of shōgi (Japanese chess).

闘牌 [tōhai / tōpai]

Tōpai (meaning "tile war") is another name for mahjong sometimes used in mahjong media.

ネット麻雀 [netto mājan] / オンライン麻雀 [onrain mājan]

Net Mahjong or **Online Mahjong** is mahjong played with a computer via the internet.

リアル麻雀 [riaru mājan]

Real Mahjong is, of course, mahjong played with actual [tiles](#) and proper people.

健康麻雀 / 健康麻将 [kenkō mājan]

Kenkō Mājan (literally "**Healthy Mahjong**") is the principle of a campaign launched in 1988 to promote mental and social stimulation for the elderly in Japan, with hundreds of special parlours established in which gambling, drinking and smoking are forbidden.

インフレ [infure] / インフレ麻雀 [infure mājan]

Infure is short for "infurēshon" which is the Japanese version of the English word "inflation". It describes **Inflated** rules where larger amounts of points exchanged, for example in the PS3 game *Mahjong Taikai IV* the Infure rule-set includes the [Wareme](#) doubling rule and a large 20-30 [Uma](#). Such a rule-set might also include excessive numbers of [red fives](#).

ポンジャン [ponjan]

Ponjan (also **Donjara**) is a simplified version of mahjong for kids. Start them young!

大会 [taikai] / トーナメント [tōnamento]

A **Taikai** (literally "big meeting") is a tournament, hence the name of the long-running Japanese video-game series *Mahjong Taikai* (麻雀大会). **Tōnamento** is the Japanese rendering of the English word "tournament".

準決勝 [junkesshō] / 決勝 [kesshō]

In a tournament with a standard elimination format the **Junkesshō** are the semi-finals and the **Kesshō** is the final.

審判 [shinpan]

Shinpan is the Japanese word for **Referee**, for example an umpire at a tournament.

雀荘 [jansō]

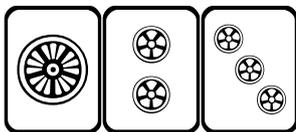
A **Jansō** is a mahjong parlour where you can play against other customers or resident players, using the equipment provided (usually including [automated tables](#)). Mahjong is very popular in Japan - an article in *Japan Times* in June 2010 reported that there were approximately 8,900 Jansō across the country in 2009 (although it noted that the number had declined significantly from a total of around 50,000 at the end of the 1970's).

フリー [furi]

At a parlour you can play so-called **Free** games against other customers.

レート [rēto]

Gambling games at a parlour are usually played at a specific monetary **Rate** which states how many hundred Yen the players pay per thousand points, e.g. on a higher "1-0" rate you pay 100 Yen per 1,000 points or on a lower "0-3" rate you pay only 30 Yen per 1,000 pts. If three numbers are given then the second and third denote the [Uma](#), for example with a "1-2-3" rate you would pay 100 Yen per 1,000 pts and at the end of the match the player in 3rd would pay 2,000 Yen (or 20,000 points) to the one in 2nd and 4th would pay 3,000 Yen (30,000 pts) to 1st.



An advertising sign outside a mahjong parlour will sometimes show [Pinzu](#) tiles or dice to illustrate the rate/s and Uma available, so 1p, 2p and 3p together would indicate the 1-2-3 rate. Such signs will also use images of tiles to show if (and how many) [red fives](#) are used there.

The 0-3 rate is called **Ten-San** (literally "point three"), 0-5 is **Ten-Go** and 1-0 is **Pin**.

ノーレート [nō rēto]

If you lack the confidence/funds to gamble you can look for a parlour offering **No Rate** games.

セット [setto]

The alternative to playing a free game at a parlour is to bring your friends and rent a table for a **Set** hourly fee.

徹夜マーじゃん [tetsuya mājan] / 徹マン / てつまん [tetsuman]

Tetsuman means "all-night mahjong".

代打ち [daiuchi]

A **Daiuchi** or **Rep Player** is an expert player brought in to play on behalf of an individual or an organisation (typically representing a Yakuza family in mahjong-based manga).

初心者 [shoshinsha]

Shoshinsha means **Beginner**.

研修会 [kenshūkai]

A **Kenshūkai** is a training session or workshop.

リーグ [riigu]

Riigu is the English word "league" converted into Japanese.

級 [kyū]

Some mahjong leagues (and the excellent video-games of the *Mahjong Fight Club* series) use the same system of Kyū and Dan grades that are used in some martial arts schools.

The **Kyū** grades are the lower of the two schemes. There are ten numbered grades, players starting at 10 (lowest) and working up to 1 (highest). Each is written by prefixing the Kyū character with the appropriate numeral (see [Numbers](#)), e.g. 四級 is Yonkyū - the 4th Kyū grade.

The Japanese PS3 game *Janline-R* uses twenty Kyū grades, from 20 up to 1.

段 [dan]

Promotion up from the top Kyū grade leads to the higher **Dan** ranks (equivalent to black belts in martial arts!). There are nine such ranks, numbered from 1 (lowest) up to 9 (highest). Again these are written using the number [kanji](#), so 六段 is Rokudan - the 6th Dan rank.

初段 [shodan]

Instead of being labelled with the character for 1, the first rank in the Dan series is **Shodan** (literally "beginning Dan").

二段 / 貳段 [nidan]

The second Dan rank is **Nidan**. This is sometimes written using the kanji 貳 which is a formal Daiji character for the number 2 that would be used in legal and financial documents (since it would be so easy for someone to change a normal 二 into a 三!),

三段 / 参段 [sandan]

Similarly the third Dan, **Sandan**, can be written using the Daiji kanji for 3 which is 参.

名人 [meijin] / マスター [masutā]

Meijin and **Masutā** both mean "master".

プロ [puro] / プロ雀士 [puro janshi]

Puro is a Japanese version of the English term **Pro**, denoting a professional player.

プロテスト [puro tesuto]

A player is required to pass a comprehensive **Puro Tesuto (Pro Test)** to become a pro.

日本プロ麻雀連盟 [nihon puro mājan renmei]

Nihon Puro Mājan Renmei - also known as the **Japan Pro Mahjong League**, the **JPML** or simply "Renmei" - is a major mahjong federation consisting of ten leagues of professional players (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2, C3, D1, D2 and D3).

Their official site for online play is [ロン²](#) (Ron2) and Konami's *Mahjong Fight Club* video-game series is accredited by the JPML and features forty-eight of their pro players as opponents.

日本プロ麻雀協会 [nihon puro mājan kyōkai]

Another prominent professional body is **Nihon Puro Mājan Kyōkai**, alternatively known as the **Japan Pro Mahjong Association**, Nihon Pro Mahjong or just "Kyōkai".

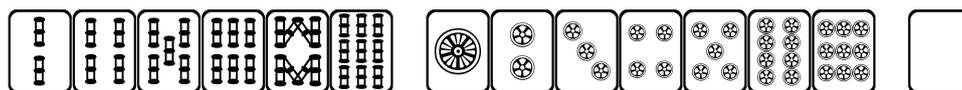
Sega's awesome *MJ5* mahjong arcade game is accredited by this organisation.

近代麻雀 [kindai mājan]

Kindai Mājan (literally "modern mahjong") is a long-running mahjong manga publication.

触らずの十四枚 [sawarazu no jū-yon mai]

The phrase **Sawarazu no Jū-yon Mai** (loosely "fourteen tiles without touching") refers to the fourteen types of tile that possess rotational symmetry and look the same when inverted.



Often tiles drawn from the wall will arrive in your hand upside-down and need to be rotated in order to have the proper orientation but you will never need to touch these ones.

ヨンマ [yonma]

Yonma is an abbreviation of Yonin Mājan - standard **Four-Player Mahjong**.

サンマ / 三雀 [sanma]

Sanma is an abbreviation of Sannin Mājan - **Three-Player Mahjong**.

抜きドラ [nukidora]

In some Japanese rule-sets for three-player games the north wind tiles (which will never be used as [seat-winds](#)) are treated as bonus tiles like the [flower tiles](#) in the Chinese classical rules - the tile is declared, removed from the hand and replaced by a new one. These special [Dora](#) bonus tiles that are taken out of your hand are called **Nuki Dora** or **Extracted Dora**.

二十二麻雀 / アールシーアール [ārushiiāru mājan]

Ārushiiāru Mājan or **Twenty-Two Mahjong** is the form of the game that was prevalent in pre-war Japan. It was closer to Chinese mahjong, with matches played over four [rounds](#) and with no [Dora](#), fewer [Yaku](#), eight [Hanahai](#) (four flowers and four seasons) and [Pinfu](#) allowed in an open hand. The lowest possible score for a hand was 22 points (hence the name).

In order to preserve this defining feature of the game, any Pinfu hand (open or closed) was granted an additional 2 points (even though Pinfu is the "no points" hand) to give a total of 22. This exception carried over partially into the modern Japanese rules where an open hand with a Pinfu shape ([Open Pinfu](#)) receives an additional 2 Fu (which is then rounded up to 30 Fu).

枚 [mai]

Mai is a countword used to indicate a specific number of flat objects, such as mahjong tiles.

骨牌 [koppai]

Koppai means "bone tiles" and refers to traditional mahjong tiles made from bone. During the mahjong craze in the 1920's, demand for mahjong sets in the U.S. was so high that there was a shortage of cattle shin-bones in China and a supply from America had to be arranged.

イカサマ [ikasama]

Ikasama means "cheating", a popular feature of mahjong fiction. Many cheating techniques involve using sleight of hand to arrange and exchange tiles illegally.

(I've decided not to cover cheating techniques in this guide but if you have an academic interest then check out my GameFAQs [guide](#) to the Nintendo DS game *Akko de Pon: Ikasama Hōrōki*. The video-game includes an impressive range of twenty-five cheating techniques (76 variations in total) and these are explained in detail in the guide, complete with ASCII-art diagrams.)

盲牌 / 摸牌 [mōpai]

Mōpai is the ability to identify an engraved mahjong tile by touch instead of sight.

In the manga *Akagi* a special version of the game called Washizu Mahjong is played - three quarters of the tiles are transparent (one instance of each type of tile is opaque). Since tiles are drawn blind from a hole in the centre of the table (instead of from a [wall](#)) it is required that all players wear a leather glove to prevent them from being able to discern tiles by touch.

雀球 [jankyū]

Jankyū (literally "mahjong ball") is a curious hybrid of mahjong and [pachinko](#).

流れ [nagare]

Nagare is usually translated into English as "flow". It describes the streaks of good and bad luck that a player might experience during a match.

オカルト [okaruto]

Devotees of the **Occult** school of thought believe that events in a game are determined by luck and chance. Such a player will make decisions based upon their perception of Nagare.

デジタル [dejitaru]

Adherents of the rival school, **Digital**, believe that games are governed instead by the laws of mathematics and probability. They make their choices based on statistical analysis.

一人浮きトツプ [hitori uki toppu (?)]

If only one player has a positive score after the final [score adjustment process](#), i.e. if they were the only person to make a profit in the match, this is referred to as "one person floating top".

18. Reference

This appendix gives an overview of the standard Yaku, look-up tables for scoring, a quick guide to the use of numbers and a simple list of menu options you might encounter in video-games.

Yaku Summary

Japanese Name		English Name/s	Han Value	
Script	Rōmaji		Closed	Open
立直	Riichi	Reach	1	-
断么九	Tanyao	All Simples*	1	1
役牌 / 翻牌	Yakuhai / Fanpai	Set of Value Tiles, Dragon/Wind Pung	1	1
平和	Pinfu	Pinfu	1	-
門前ツモ	Menzen Tsumo	Concealed Self-Draw	1	-
一発	Ippatsu	One-Shot Win	1	-
混一色	Honitsu	Half Flush†	3	2
一盃口	ipēkō (iipeikou)	Pure Double Chow	1	-
対々和	Toi-Toi Hō (Toi-Toi)	All Pungs	2	2
三色同順	San Shoku Dōjun	Mixed Triple Chow†	2	1
七対子	Chii Toitsu	Seven Pairs, All Pairs	2	-
一气通貫	Ikkitsūkan (Ittsū)	Pure Straight†	2	1
全帯么	Chanta	Mixed Outside Hand†	2	1
清一色	Chinitsu	Full Flush†	6	5
三暗刻	San Ankō	Three Concealed Pungs§	2	2
河底撈魚	Hōtei	Last-Tile Ron	1	1
純全帯	Junchan	Pure Outside Hand†	3	2
海底撈月	Haitei	Last-Tile Tsumo	1	1
嶺上開花	Rinshan Kaihō	After a Kong	1	1
ダブル立直	Daburu Riichi	Double Reach‡	2	-
小三元	Shō San Gen	Little Three Dragons	2	2
混老頭	Honrōtō	All Terminals & Honours	2	2
三色同刻	San Shoku Dōkō	Triple Pung	2	2
搶槓	Chankan	Robbing the Kong	1	1
二盃口	Ryanpēkō	Twice Pure Double Chow	3	-
三槓子	San Kantsu	Three Kongs	2	2

* *Tanyao* can only be claimed on an open hand if the [Kuitan](#) rule is allowed.

† Observes the property of [Kuisagari](#) making it worth one Han less in an open hand.

‡ *Daburu Riichi* scores two Han instead of the one received for standard *Riichi*.

§ The three Pungs must be closed but the hand overall can be open.

Yakuman Summary

Japanese Name		English Name
Script	Rōmaji	
国士無双	Kokushimusō	Thirteen Orphans
大三元	Dai San Gen	Big Three Dragons
四暗刻	Sū Ankō	Four Concealed Pungs
字一色	Tsūiisō	All Honours
小四喜	Shō Sū Shii	Little Four Winds
緑一色	Ryūiisō	All Green
清老頭	Chinrōtō	All Terminals
地和	Chiihō	Earthly Win
大四喜	Dai Sū Shii	Big Four Winds
九蓮宝燈	Chūrenpōtō	Nine Gates
天和	Tenhō	Heavenly Win
四槓子	Sū Kantsu	Four Kongs
四暗刻単騎待ち	Sū Ankō Tanki Machi	Four Concealed Pungs on Pair-Wait*
純正国士無双	Junsei Kokushimusō	Pure Thirteen Orphans*
大四喜	Dai Sū Shii	Big Four Winds*
純正九蓮宝燈	Junsei Chūrenpōtō	Pure Nine Gates*

* These four variations can optionally be scored as a double Yakuman.

Scoring Tables

The tables below summarise the allocation of [Fu](#) (minipoints). These are totalled for the winning hand and then rounded up to the next multiple of 10; the exception to this is the [Chii Toitsu](#) (Seven Pairs) hand which receives exactly 25 Fu with no additions.

Fu for Wins

Win	20
Extra points for Tsumo win	2
Extra points for concealed Ron win	10
Extra points for "Open Pinfu" Ron win	2

Fu for Waits

Penchan (edge wait)	2
Kanchan (centre wait)	2
Tanki (pair wait)	2
Ryanmen (two-sided wait)	0
Shanpon (double pairs)	0

Fu for Sets

		Open	Closed
Pung	Simples	2	4
	Terminals or Honours	4	8
Kong	Simples	8	16
	Terminals or Honours	16	32
Chow		0	0

Fu for Pair

Dragons	2
Seat-Wind or Round-Wind	2
Double Wind	4*
Any other pair	0

* Double wind is when the [seat-wind](#) and [round-wind](#) coincide. Some rules only give 2 Fu for such a pair.

The next set of scoring tables can be used to find the payment(s) required for any given combination of Fu and Han thereby removing the need to perform the calculations yourself.

The top tables are for [Ron](#) (stolen discard) wins and the bottom ones are for [Tsumo](#) (self-draw) wins. The left sides apply to wins by the [dealer](#) (east) and the right sides to non-dealers.

The [Han](#) totals listed along the top only count Han from [Yaku](#) and [Dora](#), not the extra 2 Han ([Bazoro](#)) received for the win. For hands with 5 or more Han use the limits table that follows.

Dealer Ron Wins

Non-Dealer Ron Wins

Han Count				Fu	Han Count			
4 Han	3 Han	2 Han	1 Han		1 Han	2 Han	3 Han	4 Han
-	-	-	-	20	-	-	-	-
11,600*	5,800	2,900	1,500	30	1,000	2,000	3,900	7,700*
Mangan 12,000	7,700	3,900	2,000	40	1,300	2,600	5,200	Mangan 8,000
	9,600	4,800	2,400	50	1,600	3,200	6,400	
	11,600*	5,800	2,900	60	2,000	3,900	7,700*	
	6,800	3,400	70	2,300	4,500			
	7,700	3,900	80	2,600	5,200			
	8,700	4,400	90	2,900	5,800			
	9,600	4,800	100	3,200	6,400			
10,600	-	110	-	7,100				
9,600	4,800	2,400	-	25†	-	1,600	3,200	6,400

discarder pays full amount

discarder pays full amount

Dealer Tsumo Wins

Non-Dealer Tsumo Wins

Han Count				Fu	Han Count			
4 Han	3 Han	2 Han	1 Han		1 Han	2 Han	3 Han	4 Han
2,600	1,300	700	-	20	-	700 / 400	1,300 / 700	2,600 / 1,300
3,900*	2,000	1,000	500	30	500 / 300	1,000 / 500	2,000 / 1,000	3,900 / 2,000*
Mangan 4,000	2,600	1,300	700	40	700 / 400	1,300 / 700	2,600 / 1,300	Mangan 4,000 / 2,000
	3,200	1,600	800	50	800 / 400	1,600 / 800	3,200 / 1,600	
	3,900*	2,000	1,000	60	1,000 / 500	2,000 / 1,000	3,900 / 2,000*	
	2,300	1,200	70	1,200 / 600	2,300 / 1,200			
	2,600	1,300	80	1,300 / 700	2,600 / 1,300			
	2,900	1,500	90	1,500 / 800	2,900 / 1,500			
3,200	1,600	100	1,600 / 800	3,200 / 1,600				
3,600	-	110	-	3,600 / 1,800				
3,200	1,600	-	-	25†	-	-	1,600 / 800	3,200 / 1,600

all non-dealers pay amount shown

dealer pays first amount / non-dealers pay second amount

* Hands with either 3 Han and 60 Fu or 4 Han and 30 Fu can optionally score as Mangan under [Mangan Kiriage](#).

† The bottom row (25 Fu) applies only to [Chii Toitsu](#) (Seven Pairs) hands.

Limits

This table summarises the five [limits](#) used in Japanese mahjong. In the case of a [Tsumo](#) win the payment amount is divided by the usual ratios - 1:1:1 for a dealer win or 2:1:1 for a non-dealer win. For example on a dealer Sanbaiman win the three losers each pay 12,000 points and for a non-dealer Haneman win the dealer pays 6,000 pts and the other two pay 3,000 pts each.

Limit		Requirement	Dealer Win	Non-Dealer Win
満貫	Mangan	3 Han and 70+ Fu	12,000 points	8,000 points
		4 Han and 40+ Fu		
		5 Han		
跳満	Haneman	6 Han	18,000 points	12,000 points
		7 Han		
倍満	Baiman	8 Han	24,000 points	16,000 points
		9 Han		
		10 Han		
三倍満	Sanbaiman	11 Han	36,000 points	24,000 points
		12 Han		
役満	Yakuman	13+ Han*	48,000 points	32,000 points
		Limit hand		

* Some rule-sets do not allow [Kazoe Yakuman](#) (counted Yakuman) and the hand is capped at Sanbaiman.

Numbers

Instead of using the standard Japanese readings of the number characters, most terms in Japanese mahjong (for example [Ryan Han Shibari](#) and [Chii Toitsu](#)) use the Chinese readings rendered into Japanese. These are given in the fourth column of the table below.

The tiles of the [Manzu](#) suit are marked with the [kanji](#) for the numbers 1 to 9 as shown in the second column.

Arabic	Kanji	Standard Japanese	Japanese Mahjong	English
1	一	ichi	ii	one
2	二	ni	ryan	two
3	三	san	san	three
4	四	shi / yon	sū	four
5	伍 or 五	go	ū	five
6	六	roku	ryū	six
7	七	shichi / nana	chii	seven
8	八	hachi	pā	eight
9	九	kyū	chū	nine
10	十	jū	shii	ten
11	十一	jū-ichi	shii-ii	eleven
12	十二	jū-ni	shii-ryan	twelve
13	十三	jū-san	shii-san	thirteen

Final Scores

At the end of a match the scores will sometimes be presented in a more concise format using the following process:

- Step 1 The [Oka](#) bonus (if any) is awarded to the player in first place.
- Step 2 The 30,000 points [Kaeshi](#) (buy-in) is deducted from each person's score. The four scores will now sum to zero.
- Step 3 Each score is divided by 1,000 and rounded up or down to give an integer. A result ending in .5 will be rounded down, so for example 34,500 pts would become 34.5 after division and be rounded down to 34. The winner's score is processed after the other three and may need to be adjusted so that the zero sum is preserved.
- Step 4 The [Uma](#) payments (if any) are applied.

In the following example the buy-in was 30,000 pts and the starting scores were 25,000 pts, this giving a 20,000 pts Oka. The Uma is 5-10 so the payments in Step 4 are 5,000 and 10,000 pts.

Player	Placing	Score	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
Alice	1st	40,300 pts	60,300 pts	30,300 pts	+30	+40
Bob	2nd	38,400 pts	38,400 pts	8,400 pts	+8	+13
Carlos	3rd	11,600 pts	11,600 pts	-18,400 pts	-18	-23
Diane	4th	9,700 pts	9,700 pts	-20,300 pts	-20	-30

So the final scores would be presented as Alice +40, Bob +13, Carlos -23 and Diane -30.

In this format the players' individual scores will always sum to zero and the adjusted totals given by this process reflect the relative profits and losses incurred during the match. A running total of such scores can be kept across a series of several matches in league or tournament play.

The title character in the *Saki* manga/anime has acquired a peculiar talent for being able to engineer the exact values of her winning hands such that her final adjusted scores consistently come out as ± 0 . This score would be called プラマイゼロ [puramai zero] which is a shortened form of "purasu/mainasu zero" (literally "plus/minus zero" in English).

Uma is a quite common optional rule but there are several less common rule options that can further complicate the process given above. Any penalties for [Yakitori](#), [Dobon](#) and [chip bonuses](#) must be paid after the Uma since they might cause the placings to change. If any [Sashi Uma](#) (side-bets) have been made then these must be settled at the very end of the process after all other adjustments have been made.

Gaming

Here are some words you may encounter when playing mahjong in a Japanese video-game or on a Japanese website.

Japanese		English	Japanese		English
Script	Rōmaji		Script	Rōmaji	
はい	hai	yes	チー	chii	chow
いいえ	iie	no	ポン	pon	pung
メニュー	menyū	menu	カン	kan	kong
選択	sentaku	selection	リーチ	Riichi	reach
確認	kakunin	confirmation	ロン	ron	ron
設定	settei	setting	ツモ	Tsumo	Tsumo
決定	kettei	decision	アガリ	agari	win
調整	chōsei	modification	パス	pasu	pass
キャンセル	kyanseru	cancel	見送り	miokuri	let pass
デフォルト	deforuto	default	次へ	tsugi e	next
リセット	risetto	reset	スルー	surū	ignore
戻る	modoru	return	セーブ	sēbu	save
やめる	yameru	quit	オフライン	ofurain	offline
終了	shūryō	end	オンライン	onrain	online
はじめ	hajime	begin	ログイン	roguin	login
ランダム	randamu	random	起動する	kidō suru	log on
カスタム	kasutamu	custom	パスワード	pasuwādo	password
採用	saiyō	apply	ログアウト	roguauto	logout
不採用	fusaiyō	do not apply	名前	namae	name
ルール	rūru	rule(s)	プレイヤー	pureiya	player
アリ / あり	ari	with	あなた	anata	you
ナシ / なし	nashi	without	ロビー	robii	lobby
オプション	opushon	option(s)	(対)戦	(tai)sen	match
BGM	BGM	music	ゲーム	gēmu	game
音量	onryō	volume	対局	taikyoku	(play) game
ボイス	boisu	voice	半荘	Hanchan	2 rounds
音声	onsei	voice	東南	ton nan	2 rounds
効果音	kōkaon	sound FX	東風	ton pū	1 round
制限時間	seigenjikan	time limit	データベース	dētabēsu	database
速度	sokudo	speed	回	kai	count
速い	hayai	fast	率	ritsu	percentage
普通	futsu	normal	中断	chūdan	pause
遅い	osoi	slow	過去	kako	history
タイトル	taitoru	title screen	勝	shō	win(s)
残(り牌)	noko(ri pai)	tiles left	敗	hai	loss(es)

19. Japanese

This appendix gives a brief insight into aspects of the Japanese language.

Scripts

Written Japanese uses a combination of three separate character-sets: hiragana and katakana (known collectively as kana) and kanji.

The **Kanji** are a system of ideographic characters borrowed from the Chinese; most have more than one meaning and more than one possible reading (pronunciation) and they can be combined to form compound words. For a general level of literacy you need to learn a standard list of 1,945 kanji, although a comprehensive twelve-volume dictionary will list over 50,000 in total! The kanji are generally more complex than the kana characters - it takes up to twenty-three pen or brush strokes each to write the ones in the standard list.

Examples of kanji words: 満貫 [mangan]

役牌 [yakuhai]

点棒 [tenbō]

The two **Kana** scripts are phonetic syllabaries where each character represents a unique syllable (or more correctly a Mora or Moji) in the Japanese language. Both schemes consist of forty-six symbols, each written with between one and four strokes, although there are also variations of these used to represent palatized syllables, voiced consonants and bilabial syllables (see below).

The more rounded **Hiragana** characters are used to spell Japanese words in situations where kanji are not used and also in grammatical roles as prepositions and to apply inflectional endings to kanji words.

Examples of hiragana words: あがり [agari]

ぶっとび [buttobi]

なし [nashi]

The more angular **Katakana** characters are used mainly to spell foreign names and "loanwords" from other languages (for example ダブル [daburu] is a rendering of the English word "double"). You might also have seen them used in manga for onomatopoeic sound effects ("pa-chin!"), on advertising signage or scrolling down the screen in *The Matrix*!

Examples of katakana words: ツモ [tsumo]

ドラ [dora]

テンパイ [tenpai]

Japanese text is written without spaces and presented either horizontally, reading from left-to-right and then top-to-bottom, or vertically, reading from top-to-bottom and then right-to-left.

Like the English word "sheep", Japanese nouns do not take a plural form, so you could have one Yaku or (with a suitable combination of luck and skill) six Yaku.

Pronunciation

The Japanese language is composed of the following "building blocks" which are represented directly by the two kana scripts.

Standard: a, i, u, e, o, ka, ki, ku, ke, ko, sa, shi, su, se, so, ta, chi, tsu, te, to, na, ni, nu, ne, no, ha, hi, fu, he, ho, ma, mi, mu, me, mo, -n

Palatized: kwa, kya, kyu, kyo, sha, shu, sho, cha, chu, cho, nya, nyu, nyo, hya, hyu, hyo, mya, myu, myo, rya, ryu, ryo

Voiced: ga, gi, gu, ge, go, za, ji, zu, ze, zo, da, de, do

Bilabial: ba, bi, bu, be, bo, pa, pi, pu, pe, po

Combinations: gwa, gya, gyu, gyo, ja, ju, jo, bya, byu, byo, pya, pyu, pyo

You'll notice that most of these consist of a consonant sound followed by a vowel. This shows the proper way to parse Japanese words and names, for example it's "Mi-tsu-bi-shi" not "Mit-su-bish-i" (the car company) and "Hon-i-tsu" not "Ho-nit-su" (the scoring element).

Each syllable should be pronounced, with even stress and fairly quickly. The exceptions are stopped (double) consonants and extended (double) vowels, for example "Nōten Bappu" contains both. In this guide I've used macrons (horizontal overscores) to denote extended ā, ē, ō and ū sounds, for example "kō" is a long "ko" sound. (It would often instead be represented with an extra letter as "kou" which can lead to errors in pronunciation - certainly I had to un-learn some bad habits!)

There are only five vowel sounds in Japanese and these are pronounced as follows.

a - as in "car" / i - as in "we" / u - as in "soon" / e - as in "get" / o - as in "rope"

Two adjacent vowels are both pronounced so for example "ai" is spoken like the English word "eye", e.g. in the word in "Tenpai" (also see below).

Most consonants are pronounced how you would expect them to be (in English) so I'll only list a few cases.

g - as in "go" / j - as in "jar" / s - as in "sit" / y - as in "yet" / tsu - as in "hot soup"

r - somewhere between an R and an L sound

The -n sound at the end of a syllable is pronounced as in English except when it occurs before a bilabial consonant (B, P or M) in which case it is pronounced as -m. For example, although the word Tenpai would be spelt using the kana for -n, it is spoken as "tempai".

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