

THE SET — 152 TILES

Bams	Bamboo, 1-9 (4 each)	36
Cracks	Characters, 1-9 (4 each)	36
Dots	Circles, 1-9 (4 each)	36
Winds	東 南 西 北 (4 each)	16
Dragons	Red 中 · Green 發 · Soap 白	12
Flowers	Interchangeable on most hands	8
Jokers	The American difference	8

Retailers sell these as **"166 pieces"** — 152 playing tiles plus blanks and spares. Chinese sets have 144 and **no jokers**: they cannot be used for American play.

THE CALLS

Pair	2 identical — no jokers
Pung	3 identical
Kong	4 identical
Quint	5 identical — needs jokers
Single	1 tile — no jokers
Exposure	A called group, face-up on your rack
Mah Jongg	Declaring a complete hand. You win.

THE RULE EVERYONE GETS WRONG

Jokers work in groups of three or more. Never in a pair or a single.

If your hand needs a pair of 7 Craks, you need two real 7 Craks. This is the most common mistake at a beginner table.

JOKER EXCHANGE

On your turn, if you hold the natural tile matching a joker in *anyone's* exposure, you may swap your tile for that joker. Do it before you discard. Jokers in a player's concealed hand are safe.

READING THE CARD

The card is a list of legal hands grouped into sections. Each line is one hand you may build. Nothing else wins.

FF	A pair of Flowers
DDD	A pung of Dragons
NEWS	One each: North, East, West, South
2026	The year — actual number tiles
111 222	Consecutive runs, any suit

Colour matters. Groups printed in different colours must come from *different* suits. Same colour means same suit. This one detail is the whole trick to reading the card.

PICK A HAND EARLY — BUT HOLD IT LOOSELY

Choose a target hand during the Charleston, then pass away everything that does not serve it. Beginners lose by keeping options open too long and finishing nothing.

THE CHARLESTON — 7 PASSES OF 3

FIRST CHARLESTON · REQUIRED

1 Right	pass 3
2 Across	pass 3
3 Left	pass 3 — blind pass allowed

SECOND CHARLESTON · OPTIONAL, ALL FOUR MUST AGREE

4 Left	pass 3
5 Across	pass 3
6 Right	pass 3 — blind pass allowed

COURTESY PASS · OPTIONAL

7 Across	0-3 tiles, both players agree the number
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TWO HARD RULES

- Jokers can never be passed in the Charleston.** If one slips through, it goes straight back.
- Blind passes only on pass 3 and pass 6.** You may push 1-3 of your incoming tiles straight along without looking at them.

A HAND, START TO FINISH

- Deal.** East deals 13 tiles to each player; East takes 14.
- Charleston.** The seven passes above.
- Play.** East discards first, naming the tile aloud. Then clockwise: draw one, discard one.
- Calling.** Any player may claim the last discard to complete an exposure — call before the next player draws.
- Win.** Complete a hand from the current NMJL card and declare Mah Jongg.
- Wall game.** Tiles run out with no winner — nobody scores.

YOU ALSO NEED THE CARD

American hands come from the **National Mah Jongg League card**, reissued every year. No set at any price includes it — \$15 standard, \$16 large print, direct from the League. Last year's card is a coaster.

FIRST-NIGHT ETIQUETTE

- Name your discard out loud.** Silent discards are the fastest way to annoy a table.
- Don't rearrange after you commit.** Once a tile leaves your rack it is gone.
- Say you're new.** Every club has taught someone. Nobody minds.