Learn to Play Riichi Mahjong

WRC Rules (Home Play Edition)

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1) Introduction

Riichi Mahjong is a 4-player game of drawing and discarding tiles to build a winning hand. You can win by:

- **Tsumo** (winning on a tile you draw), or
- **Ron** (winning on another player's discard).

Objective

Win hands by making **a valid** hand and having **at least 1 yaku** (a scoring pattern that allows winning).

Ruleset used in this booklet: WRC Rules

This booklet follows the World Riichi Championship (WRC) ruleset (Home Play Edition).

This booklet is designed for home play and provides enough guidance to get started.

A full game (hanchan) consists of an East round and a South round. Each round plays through multiple hands as the dealer rotates. Players accumulate points across all hands; the player with the most points at the end of the game wins.

Tournament rules may update over time, so competitive players should confirm the current WRC rules before official play.

To keep your home games consistent, agree on these rules before the first hand:

WRC Ruleset Lock (Home Play)

- No red fives (aka-dora are not used).
- Dora are used (including kan dora; ura dora apply only if the winner declared riichi).
- No abortive draws (hands end by win or exhaustive draw only).
- Only one winner if multiple players call ron (resolved by turn order).
- Kuikae (swap-calling) is forbidden. You may not call a tile and immediately discard the same tile. After calling a sequence (chi), you also may not immediately discard the tile from the other side of that sequence.
- Open tanyao is allowed. This means an all-simples hand can still be valid after calling tiles.
- Atozuke is allowed. This means you can call a tile even if you don't yet have a yaku — as long as you have a yaku when you win.

Beginner Tip: If your group is new, focus on turn order, calling rules, and what "yaku" means first. Scoring details can come later.

How a hand works: build the wall, deal the tiles, East discards first, then players take turns drawing or calling a discard. A hand ends when someone wins by tsumo or ron, or when the live wall runs out.

2) What's Included

Your set may include:

- Mahjong tiles (standard riichi set)
- 2 dice
- Wind indicator / dealer marker (optional)
- Score sticks or scoring accessories (varies by set). Under WRC rules, each player starts with 30,000 points. See Section 8 for scoring.

If your set includes red fives:

- Default (WRC): treat red fives as normal 5s, without bonus value.
- Optional house rule is listed in Section 10.

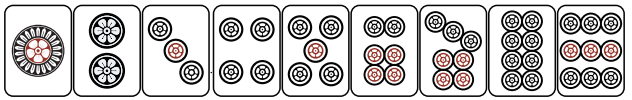
3) Tiles & Hand Basics

Tile groups

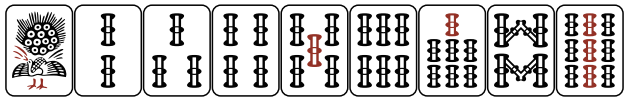
Suits (1–9):

- Characters (Man / 万)

- Circles (Pin / 筒)



- Bamboos (Sou / 索)



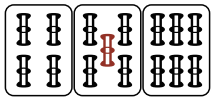
Honors:

- Winds: East, South, West, North

- Dragons: White, Green, Red

Sets (groups)

- **Sequence (Chi):** 3 consecutive tiles in the same suit (ex: 4–5–6 Bamboo)



- **Triplet (Pon):** 3 identical tiles (ex: three Red Dragons)

- **Quad (Kan):** 4 identical tiles

Valid hand shapes (most common)

Most winning hands use the standard hand shape: 4 groups + 1 pair. Groups can be any mix of sequences (chi) or triplets (pon). The single pair is called the 'head' (jantai).

Some special winning hands use a different shape, such as:

- Seven Pairs
- Thirteen Orphans (rare, advanced)

Closed vs Open hands

- A closed hand is one you build without calling another player's discard. (Declaring riichi does not open your hand.)
- An open hand has one or more called groups displayed in front of you.

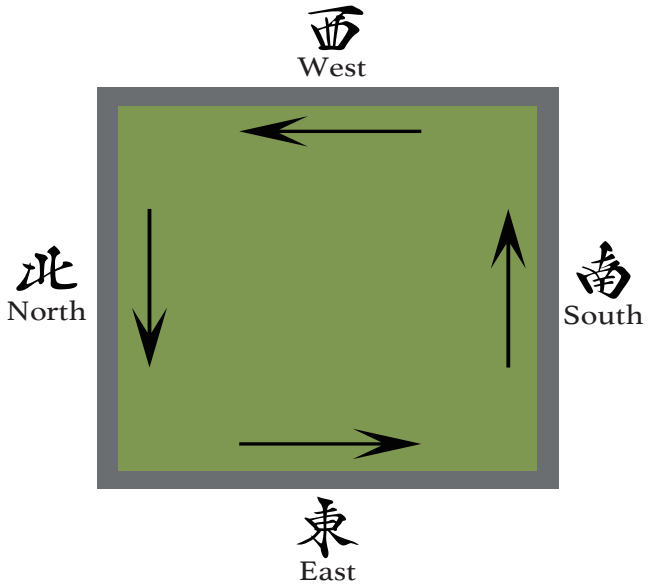
  Many yaku require a closed hand, and riichi requires a closed hand.

4) Starting the Game (Setup & Dealing)

Step 1 — Choose seats / assign winds

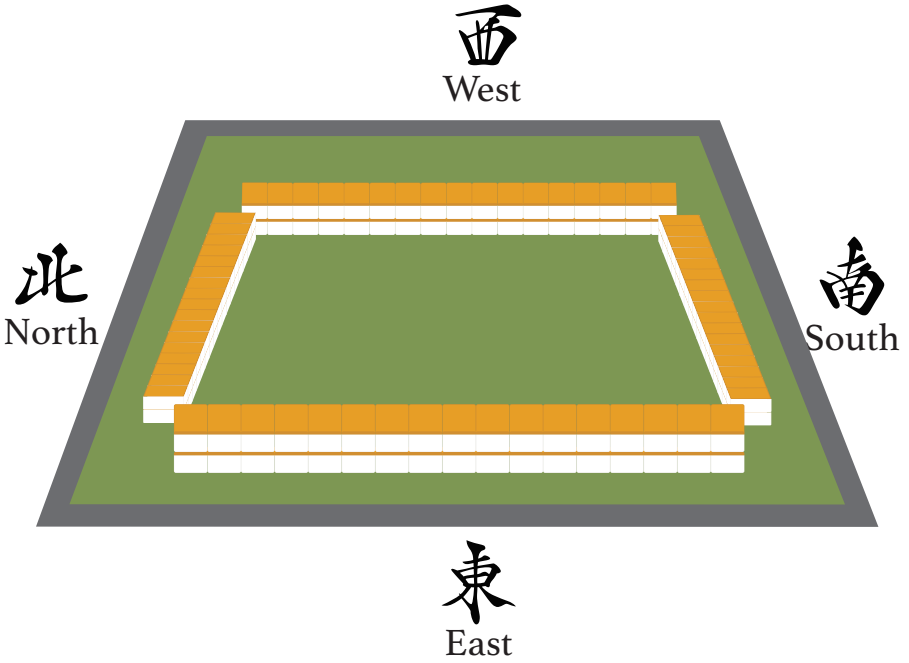
Assign each player one seat: East (dealer), South, West, North. Your seat determines your “seat wind” for the hand (East, South, West, North).

A simple home method: each player rolls dice; highest roll is East. Assign the remaining seats in turn order: the player to East's right is South, the player directly across is West, and the player to East's left is North. (Turns run counter-clockwise: East ➞ South ➞ West ➞ North.)



Step 2 — Build the wall

1. Shuffle tiles face-down.
2. Each player builds a wall section **17 stacks long and 2 tiles high.**
3. Push the four walls together to form a square.

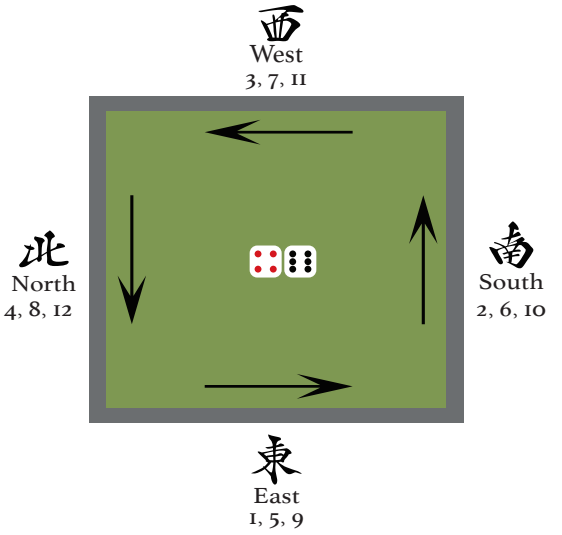


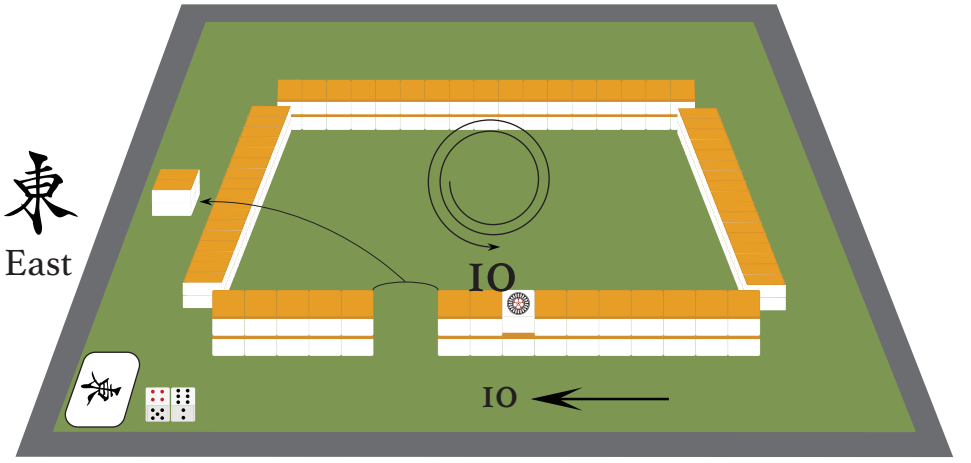
Step 3 — Break the wall (dice)

East rolls both dice:

1. Count **counter-clockwise from East** to choose which wall is broken.
2. Then count **clockwise from the right end** of that wall section to find the break point.

Example: East rolls 10. ① Select the wall — count counter-clockwise from East: East=1, South=2, West=3, North=4, East=5, South=6, West=7, North=8, East=9, South=10. ➞ Break the South wall. ② Find the break point — starting from the right end of the South wall, count 10 stacks clockwise. The break falls between stacks 10 and 11.



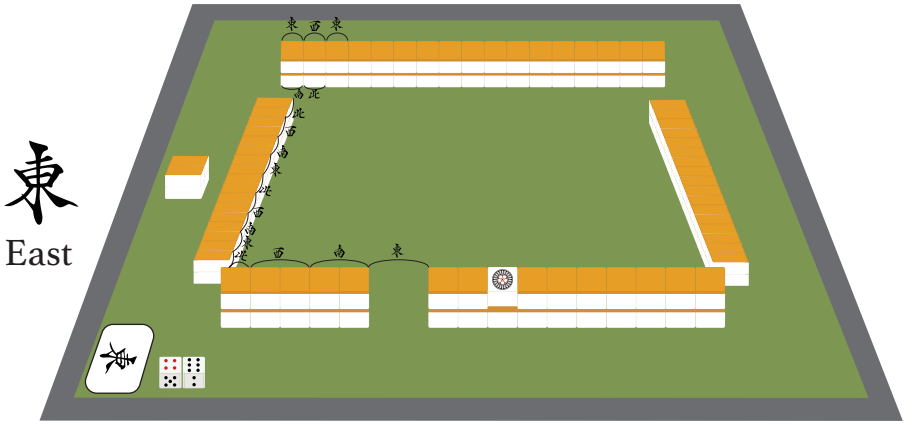


Step 4 — Deal tiles

Tiles are drawn from the live wall clockwise starting at the break. This means East draws first from the stack immediately to the left of the break gap, and drawing continues clockwise around the wall from there.

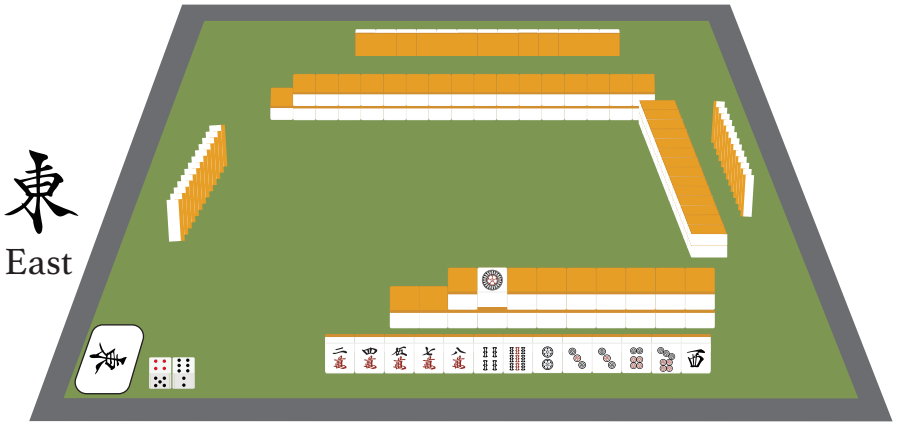
Dealing pattern (beginner-friendly):

1. Starting with East, each player takes **4 tiles** (two stacks) at a time, in turn order.
2. Repeat this for **3 rounds** (each player now has 12).
3. Then East takes 2 tiles, and each other player takes 1 tile.
4. East begins with **14 tiles**; the others begin with **13 tiles**.



Step 5 — Set up the dead wall + reveal the dora indicator

1. The dead wall is 14 tiles (7 stacks) to the right of the break.
2. Reveal the initial dora indicator: flip face-up the top tile of the 3rd stack from the right end (the far end) of the dead wall. This tile indicates which tile is dora — the actual dora is the next tile in sequence, not the indicator itself. See Section 8 for how dora sequences work.
3. Leave the rest of the dead wall face down until a kan or other rule requires another tile to be revealed.



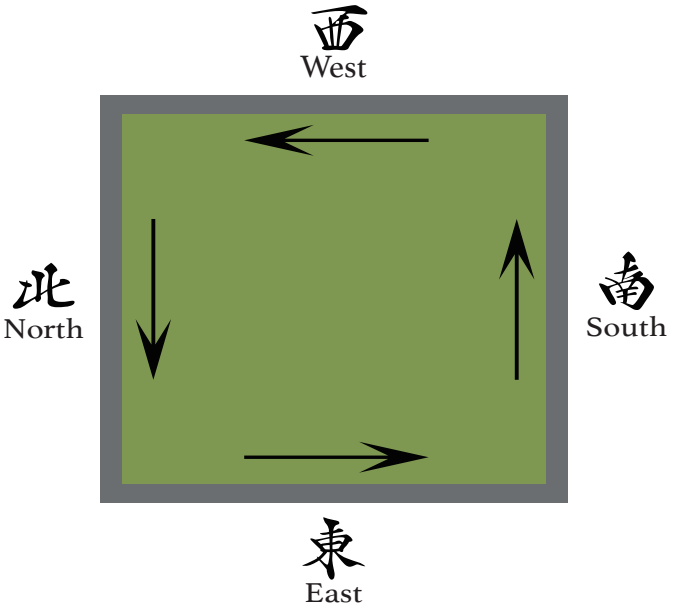
Step 6 — Start the hand

East begins the first turn, but **does not draw** (East already has 14). East starts by **discarding one tile**.

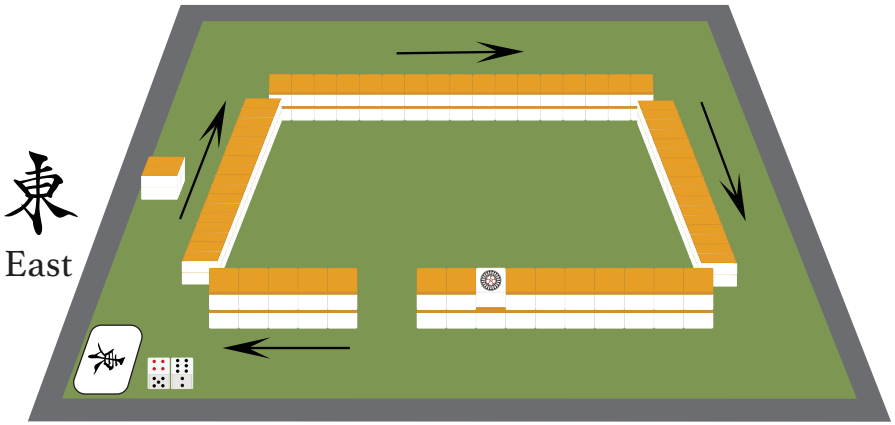
5) Gameplay (Turns & Calls)

Turn order vs draw direction (important)

- **Turn order:** counter-clockwise (East → South → West → North)



- **Draw direction: clockwise from the live wall**



What happens on your turn

1. Draw the next tile from the wall (unless you call a discard). Keep your drawn tile separate — hold it apart from your hand tiles or rest it in front of you — until you decide what to discard. This signals to other players that you are still deciding, so they know to wait.
2. Optional actions (when allowed):
   - declare **kan**
   - declare riichi
   - declare tsumo (win)
3. If you do not win: discard one tile face-up into your discard row. Place discards in neat rows (commonly 6 per row) so everyone can track what was discarded and when.

Tile count (quick check):

- Usually you will have **14 tiles on your turn**, and **13 tiles when it is not your turn.**

Calling tiles (Chi / Pon / Kan / Ron)

- You may only call the most recently discarded tile.
- You cannot call your own discard.
- The next player in turn order — the player to the discarder's right, since turns run counter-clockwise — may call chi, pon, kan, or ron.

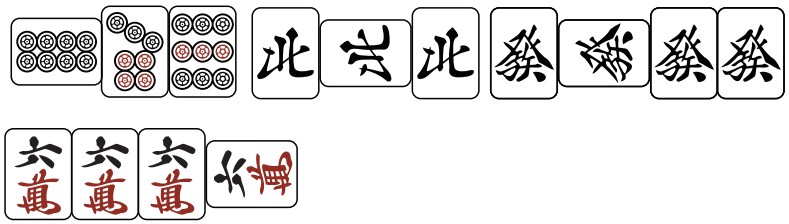
- Any other player may call pon, kan, or ron, but not chi.

After you call a discard for chi or pon, you take the discarded tile, make the meld, and then discard one tile immediately (no draw). After your discard, play continues with the next player in turn order after you, so players between the discarder and caller may be skipped.

If you call or make a kan, follow the kan replacement-tile rule below.

Displaying called groups (melds)

When you display a called group:
- Place the group in front of you.
- The called tile is placed sideways to show which player discarded it:
  — Sideways tile on the left = came from the player on your left —
  Sideways tile in the middle = came from the player across from you —
  Sideways tile on the right = came from the player on your right



Call priority (when more than one player calls)

When multiple players call the same discarded tile, use this priority order:
1. **Ron** — winning on the discard
2. **Pon/Kan** — making a triplet or quad
3. **Chi** — making a sequence; only the next player may chi

If more than one player can call ron, WRC allows only one winner: the player closest in turn order.

Note: Tsumo happens on your own draw, so it does not compete with calls on another player's discard.

Last-tile rule: When no tiles remain in the live wall, you may not declare chi, pon, kan, or riichi. A winning declaration (ron) may still be made on the final discard.

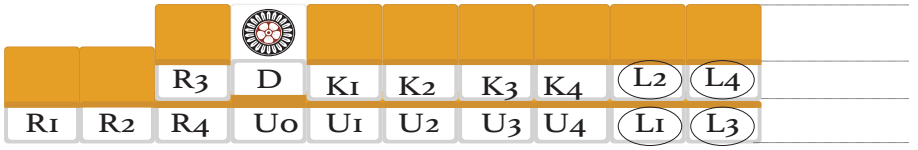
Quads (Kan) and replacement tiles

A kan can be made in three ways:

- Called kan: call an opponent's discard when you already hold the other three identical tiles.
- Promoted kan: during your turn, add the fourth identical tile to a triplet (pon) you previously called.
- Concealed kan: during your turn, declare all four identical tiles from your own hand. A concealed kan does not open an otherwise closed hand.

After declaring a kan, follow these steps in order:

1. Draw a replacement tile from the dead wall.
2. A kan dora indicator is revealed before you discard.
3. If the replacement tile completes your hand, declare tsumo. Otherwise, discard one tile to end your turn.



D = Starting dora indicator (flipped at the beginning of the hand)
K1–K4 = Kan dora indicators (one new indicator is flipped after each kan)
U0–U4 = Ura dora indicators (flipped at scoring only if the winner declared riichi)
R1–R4 = Replacement tiles (draw one from here after each kan)
L1–L4 = Last tiles of the live wall; become part of the dead wall each time a kan is made, keeping the dead wall at 14 tiles

6) Riichi & Furiten

Tenpai (ready hand)

A hand is **tenpai** when it is one tile away from becoming a valid winning hand.

Riichi (declaration)

You may declare **riichi** when:

- your hand is **closed**, and

- you are in **tenpai**.

Common riichi procedure:

1. Declare “Riichi.”
2. Discard one tile sideways to mark the riichi discard.
3. Pay the riichi bet, typically a 1000-point stick if you are using point sticks. Riichi deposits stay on the table and are collected by the next winning player (they remain if the hand ends in a draw).

After declaring riichi:

- You may not freely change your hand.
- On later turns, discard the tile you draw unless it wins by tsumo.
- A concealed kan after riichi is allowed only when it uses the tile drawn on that turn and does not change the structure of your hand or your winning tiles (your 'wait'). If you are unsure, skip the kan and discard the drawn tile normally — this is always a safe choice.
- You may still win by ron, unless you are furiten.

Furiten (cannot win by ron)

Furiten means you cannot win by calling a discard (ron) in certain situations. While furiten, you may still win by tsumo.

Common furiten situations:

- If any tile in your own discard row would complete your current hand, you are furiten. You cannot ron on any winning tile while any tile in your current wait appears in your own discard row.
- If you pass on a winning discard before declaring riichi, you are temporarily furiten until your next draw.
- If you pass on a winning discard after declaring riichi, you remain furiten for ron for the rest of the hand.

Beginner Tip: Furiten is one of the most important rules to learn early. If you are unsure, ask the table to confirm before calling ron.

7) Ending a Hand (Win / Exhaustive Draw)

A hand ends when:

- a player wins (tsumo or ron), or

- there are no tiles left in the live wall and nobody wins on the final discard (exhaustive draw).

WRC note: WRC does not use abortive draws (special early draw conditions).

Winning Checklist (Beginner)

- Your hand must be a valid hand shape.
- You must have at least 1 yaku to win.
- Dora are bonus han, but dora are not yaku.
- If your hand is closed and you are in tenpai, you can declare riichi.

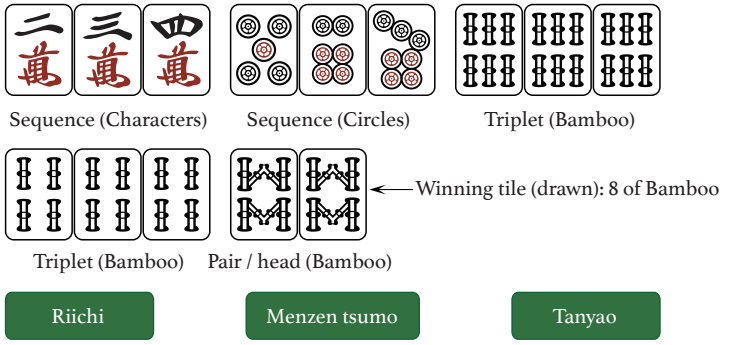
Note: A hand with only dora cannot win — dora add to your score but do not count as yaku.

Common beginner yaku examples:

- Riichi: closed hand, in tenpai, with a riichi declaration.
- Menzen Tsumo: winning by self-draw with a closed hand.
- Tanyao: all simples — no terminals (1s or 9s) or honor tiles anywhere in your hand, including called melds. Under WRC home play rules, open tanyao is allowed: tanyao remains valid after calling chi or pon.

Example winning hand - tsumo

14 tiles: 4 groups + 1 pair, drawn to complete the hand
This hand is closed and was won by self-draw (tsumo) after declaring riichi.



The hand contains no terminals or honor tiles, so it scores: riichi + menzen tsumo + tanyao (3 yaku, before dora). All tiles are 2–8, so tanyao applies. Use the scoring table to calculate the final payment.

- Yakuhai: a triplet or quad of a dragon tile scores 1 han. A triplet or quad of a wind tile scores 1 han if it matches your seat wind or the current round wind. If the same wind is both your seat wind and the current round wind, it scores 1 han for each — 2 han total for that group.

  Yakuhai examples: Each of these triplets scores 1 han when the conditions are met —

Dragon yakuhai - always scores

Seat/round wind yakuhai - only counts if the wind matches your seat wind or the current round wind

Winning by Tsumo

If you draw your winning tile:

1. Say **"Tsumo."**
2. Reveal your hand.
3. Score the hand.

Winning by Ron

If another player discards your winning tile:

1. Say **"Ron."**
2. Reveal your hand.
3. In WRC, if multiple players could ron the same discard, **only one winner** is chosen by turn order.

Exhaustive draw (no one wins)

When the live wall runs out, players reveal whether they are tenpai or noten. Tenpai hands are shown face-up.

For WRC scoring, a total of 3,000 points is exchanged between tenpai and noten players:

- 1 player tenpai: that player receives 3,000; each other player pays 1,000.
- 2 players tenpai: each receives 1,500; each noten player pays 1,500.
- 3 players tenpai: each receives 1,000; the noten player pays 3,000.
- 0 or 4 players tenpai: no payment is made.

Beginner option: For a casual first game, your group may agree to record the hand as a draw without exchanging tenpai/noten points.

8) Scoring Basics (Beginner Method)

Riichi scoring can be detailed. For a beginner-friendly approach:

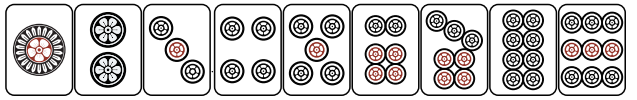
Step-by-step beginner scoring

1. Confirm the hand has at least 1 yaku.
2. Count han from your yaku and any dora tiles in your hand.
3. If the winner declared riichi, reveal the ura dora indicators — the tiles sitting directly under each active dora indicator in the dead wall, including any kan dora indicators. Count any ura dora tiles that match tiles in the winning hand as additional bonus han.
4. For your first games, use a riichi scoring app. If your group is ready to use the WRC scoring table, count both han and fu to find payments. Fu is a hand-complexity value; a scoring app calculates it automatically.
5. Dora are bonus han, but dora are not yaku. You still need at least 1 yaku to win.

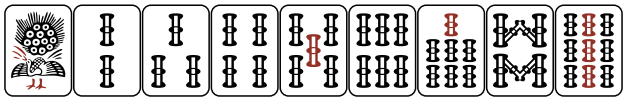
Dora basics (by indicator):

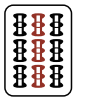
- Suit tiles: next number (9 wraps to 1)

If the dora indicator is , then the dora is .



If the dora indicator is , then the dora is .

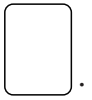


If the dora indicator is  , then the dora is .

- Winds: East → South → West → North → East

If the dora indicator is , then the dora is .

- Dragons: White → Green → Red → White

If the dora indicator is , then the dora is  .

After finding the base payment in the table, add honba (continuance counters) and collect any riichi deposits.

Example: You win by ron as Non-East with 1 han and 30 fu. In the Non-East column, find the 30 fu row under 1 Han: the discarder pays 1,000 points. If there are 2 honba sticks on the table, add 2 × 300 = 600, so the discarder pays 1,600 total. Collect any riichi deposits from the table.

WRC Scoring Table

For exact payments, use the WRC scoring table below
For easiest scoring, use a riichi scoring app (search "riichi calculator" in your app store).
To use the table: find the row that matches your fu value and the column that matches your han count. Read the payment for your win type (tsumo or ron) from that cell.

East					Non-East			
4 Han	3 Han	2 Han	1 Han	Fu	1 Han	2 Han	3 Han	4 Han
2600 all	1300 all	700 all	400 all	20 (tsumo tsumo / ron ron)	200/ 400	400/ 700	700/ 1300	1300/2600
7700	3900	2000				1300	2600	5200
4000 all	2000 all	1000 all	500 all	30 (tsumo tsumo / ron ron)	300/ 500	500/1000	1000/2000	2000/4000
12000	5800	2900	1500		1000	2000	3900	8000
	2600 all	1300 all	700 all	40 (tsumo tsumo / ron ron)	400/ 700	700/1300	1300/2600	
	7700	3900	2000		1300	2600	5200	
	3200 all	1600 all	800 all	50 (tsumo tsumo / ron ron)	400/ 800	800/1600	1600/3200	
	9600	4800	2400		1600	3200	6400	
	4000 all	2000 all	1000 all	60 (tsumo tsumo / ron ron)	500/1000	1000/2000	2000/4000	
	12000	5800	2900		2000	3900	8000	
		2300 all	1200 all	70 (tsumo tsumo / ron ron)	600/1200	1200/2300		
		6800	3400		2300	4500		
		2600 all	1300 all	80 (tsumo tsumo / ron ron)	700/1300	1300/2600		
		7700	3900		2600	5200		
		2900 all	1500 all	90 (tsumo tsumo / ron ron)	800/1500	1500/2900		
		8700	4400		2900	5800		
		3200 all	1600 all	100 (tsumo tsumo / ron ron)	800/1600	1600/3200		
		9600	4800		3200	6400		
		3600 all		110 (tsumo tsumo / ron ron)		1800/3600		
		10600				7100		

Han		Han	
4000 all / 12000	5	5	2000/4000 / 8000
6000 all / 18000	6 - 7	6 - 7	3000/6000 / 12000
8000 all / 24000	8 - 10	8 - 10	4000/8000 / 16000
12000 all / 36000	11 - 12	11 - 12	6000/12000 / 24000
16000 all / 48000	13 +	13 +	8000/16000 / 32000

4 Han	3 Han	2 Han	1 Han	Fu	1 Han	2 Han	3 Han	4 Han
3200 all	1600 all			25 (tsumo tsumo / ron ron)			800/1600	1600/3200
9600	4800	2400				1600	3200	6400

East wins	Legend	Non-East wins
All	tsumo tsumo paid by ron ron	Others/East
Discarder		Discarder

Add the value of continuance counters and riichi deposits.

9) Continuing the Game (Dealer & Rounds)

Dealer continuation (Renchan)

The dealer (East) remains East if:

- East wins the hand, or
- the hand ends in an exhaustive draw and East is tenpai.

Otherwise, seat winds rotate counter-clockwise: the player who was South becomes the new East, West becomes South, North becomes West, and the previous East becomes North.

Honba

A honba stick is placed in the center of the table after East wins a hand, and after any exhaustive draw. Each honba stick adds 300 points to the winner's payment — paid by the discarder for ron, or 100 points per opponent for tsumo. All honba sticks are removed when a non-East player wins.

Rounds and game end

A round ends after all four players have served as East and the dealership would return to the player who began that round as dealer. After the East round ends, the round wind changes to South and play continues. After the South round ends, the hanchan is over. The player with the most points wins.

For casual play, your group may agree on a time limit instead.

> **Home Play Note:** Use the scoring and payment guidance in this booklet for casual games. Tournament groups should confirm current WRC numbers before official play, especially starting points, counter values, and noten payments.
>
> Remaining riichi deposits: If the hanchan ends while riichi deposits are still on the table, they are left unclaimed and are not added to any player's score.

10) Optional House Rules (Common Variations)

These are optional and are not part of WRC default rules unless your group agrees.

Optional House Rule: Red Fives (Aka Dora)

Default (WRC): No red fives (aka-dora are not used).

If your set includes red fives and your group wants the common online style:

- Treat each red five as a normal 5 **and** as **one dora.**

If you use this option, announce it before the first hand.

Optional: Beginner "Mistake Rule"

WRC tournament penalties may be detailed. For home play:

- If a mistake cannot be fixed cleanly, **redeal the hand** and keep the same dealer.

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