

MERS Tournament Regulations

While the 'Green Book' MCR 2006 by the WMO is the reference for this – and any MERS – tournament, this document is intended to clarify some of the rules and penalties. We follow the 'common practice' of other tournaments today, so most of these clarifications will be familiar.

General guidelines

The official language of the tournament is English; if at any table there are four players of the same native tongue, they may of course converse in their own language. You should maintain a low volume while conversing.

Calls to be used are *hua*, *chow*, *pung*, *kong* and *hu*. For *hua* and *hu* 'flower' resp. 'mahjong' are acceptable – other or diverging pronunciations are allowed, as long as they do not lead to confusion.

It is **not allowed** to discuss strategy, tip or inform a player or otherwise *pass information*. You may **only** point out that a player has a dead hand as a result of taking a tile from the wrong end of the wall and **only after he has placed it between his other tiles**. If you observe another player making a mistake in forming a pattern or forgetting to take a (replacement) tile, you may not comment on that. Failing to follow this rule, results in a **dead hand**.

You should first announce your call and then show your tiles to make it. Observe the waiting time (3 seconds) when making a call – if you don't, another player's call may get priority.

A player's turn should not last more than **10 seconds**, that is from the moment the previous player discarded a tile, until the moment he discards a tile himself. The time allotted is including a possible *chow* with the discard – for claiming a *pung*, *kong* or *hu* by discard you have **3 seconds**.

Clearly show your winning tile, either claimed or (especially!) self drawn. Failing to do so results in not being allowed to claim points for 'single, edge or middle waits', 'last tile' and 'Nine Gates'.

We appeal on all players to practice fair play and to foster self arbitration as much as possible. Don't make a fuss about everything and please refrain from calling a referee for every 'petty mistake'.

Contestations will be ruled by the referee. If you need the referee, play should be frozen immediately – once play has commenced, a referee ruling is no longer possible. The referee also has full authority to sanction a player if he observes cheating, obstruction or stalling for time, even if it is not noticed by the other players.

A player may appeal against a referee ruling: if you want to appeal, make that known immediately, but your appeal will be handled after the current session, so as not to disturb the other competitors any further.

Irregularities

Being late

A player who shows up late for a session, is penalized **10 points** if late under 10 minutes and **20 points** if he shows up within 15 minutes. Play will not commence in the meantime. After 15 minutes he will be disqualified for the current session and his place will be taken by a substitute player. The points are only deducted from the player's own score – if disqualified he will not receive tablepoints for that session.

Erroneous calls

A call **must** be played – a player is not allowed to withdraw the call, unless he is mistaken and **cannot** make the action. In that case he has committed **a foul**.

A call cannot be changed into another call – if a player makes two different calls, i.e. *pung* - *chow* the first call is valid and the action must be made. If that first call **cannot** be made, he has committed **a foul** – even if the second call can be played, he is not allowed to do so.

Hu is hu

A player who calls *hu* cannot undo that call. If he realizes he has no valid *hu* and **does not show** his tiles, he has a **dead hand**. If he does show his tiles and he has 4 correct combinations and a pair but **does not have or cannot find the required 8 points**, he pays **10 points** to every other player. If he shows his tiles and is found to have an **invalid hand**, i.e. an incorrect combination or number of tiles, he pays **20 points** to every other player.

A player having a **dead hand** as a result of an erroneous *hu*, is **not obliged** to discard the tiles in his hand first, whether they are revealed or not.

Taking the wrong tile(s):

When the wall is broken and tiles, either including flower replacements or not, are taken in the wrong order (counter clockwise): play may commence, but should one player want a re-deal, the hand is started over. There is no penalty.

A player taking the wrong tile (i.e. from the wrong end of the wall) and he:

- Puts the tile in his hand – he now has a **dead hand**. He keeps the tile and play continues. (This is the only instance where you are allowed to point out the mistake.)
- Does not put the tile in his hand – he has committed **a foul**. The tile is put back in its place in the wall, even if he has seen it.

Continued

Touching a tile from the wall, means **taking** that tile. A player may not 'change his mind' and decide to call a discarded tile. **Reaching** for a tile from the wall but not touching it, is not considered an action – a player may still call the discarded tile.

Errors in exposing sets / tiles

If a player shows his tiles *before making a call*, he has committed a **foul**. If he takes a claimed tile *before showing the matching tiles* (to play the call), he has also committed a **foul**.

A claimed tile must be taken before the second player next in turn (opposite you) has finished his turn. Failing to do so results in a **dead hand**.

If a player composes a **false figure** (set) or **mistakenly claims a flower replacement** (for example thinking Bamboo 1 to be a flower) and he notices his mistake:

- Not having discarded a tile or putting the replacement tile between his other tiles – he has committed a **foul** but may correct the mistake. However, he must discard the revealed tile(s) first.
- Having discarded a tile or having put the replacement tile between his other tiles – he now has a **dead hand**. Revealed tiles remain revealed and are considered as 'on the table' and they still count for determining points for last tile.

Knocking over tiles

Provided that tiles are knocked over accidentally, a player will not be penalized for knocking over (a) tile(s) of **his own**, or **from the wall**. Revealed tiles, either from the wall or of his own, must be shown to all players – he is not obliged to discard the revealed tile(s).

A player accidentally knocking over **another player's** tile(s) has committed a **foul**.

Winning hand

Only discarded tiles may be used to count the value of the winning hand; this also includes adding additional points for flowers. The hand itself **must remain intact** until the value is determined and agreed upon. The other players are **not allowed to help** the winner with his counting – they may only object when too many points are being added.

Failing to keep the winning hand intact (i.e. use the tiles for counting) or failing to **add the winning tile** to it (most often a discard), results in an incomplete hand and a **false hu**, penalized with a **60 point** payment (20 points to each player).

Adding ones flowers to count the score, makes these additional points **invalid**.

Until the *hu* is found valid and the score is agreed upon, the other players should keep their hands closed and should not destroy the (remaining) wall.

If the *hu* is found to be invalid, a player who has revealed his tiles has a **dead hand** and will have to discard his revealed tiles first. Prematurely destroying the wall is considered a **foul** in case of an invalid *hu*, but the referee may decide on a different penalty.

Summary of penalties

- (Repeated) Fouls: **warning** -> **10 points** -> **20 points** -> **30 points** -> **et cetera**. Points are only deducted from the offending player's score.
- False *hu*: **dead hand** and **30 or 60 points** penalty, depending on the nature of the false *hu*. This only applies when the player has shown his tiles – if not, he has a **dead hand**, but does not pay a penalty. Points are paid equally to the other players.
- Dead Hand: offending player may not call *hu* but play continues. He may still claim tiles and replace flower tiles.

The penalty count (for all players) is reset at the start of every session, *except when a player has been warned or penalized for obstruction or stalling for time*.

The referee may rule that points will be deducted from a player's score or paid to one or all player(s), for instance when deliberately destroying the wall, or when he is found to be stalling for time.

Severe disturbance of the competition, cheating or *repeatedly* stalling for time will result in – immediate – disqualification.

Definitions

- Player's hand – the tiles of a player. Between turns, a player cannot have more than 13 tiles, not counting flowers and supplemental tiles after Kong.
- Player's turn – a player's turn starts the moment a tile is acquired (either through a claim or by picking from the wall) and is finished after the player has discarded a tile.
- Go-around – every player has had one turn.
- Hand – phase of play from building the wall until a player declares (a valid) mahjong, or until the tiles run out (exhaustive draw).
- Round - phase of play consisting of four hands, in other words: every player has been East once. Each round has its own 'prevalent wind': East, South, West and Nord respectively. Seats are exchanged between rounds.
- Game – four complete rounds, totalling 16 hands.
- Session – maximum duration of play, with a minimum of 90 minutes. If one game (16 hands) has been completed, the session is finished, even if there is time remaining.