

MERS Tournament Regulations – Mahjong Competition Rules

While the 'Green Book' MCR (ed. 2006) by the WMO is the reference for any MERS tournament, this document is intended to clarify some of the rules and penalties, more specifically those mentioned in section 3.11 of the official rulebook. It describes the 'common practice' of MERS tournaments in Europe today.

1. General guidelines and rules of behavior

- 1.1. 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'
- 1.2. 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.
- 1.3. 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.
- 1.4. It is not allowed to discuss strategy, tip or inform a player or otherwise pass information. If you observe another player having an incorrect number of tiles, making a mistake in forming a pattern or forgetting to take a (replacement) tile, you may not comment on that.
- 1.5. You should at all times keep your tiles visible for all players. Do not set tiles apart, put them on top of each other or face down on the table and don't unnecessarily 'play around' with them.
- 1.6. When discarding a tile, make sure that the other players are able to see it. Do not cover it with your hand or fingertips and take into consideration that not every player may have an equally good view on your discards.
- 1.7. For claiming a discard to make a meld or *hu* you have 3 seconds. You should first announce your call, then show your (matching) tiles, then take the claimed tile. Observe the waiting time when you want to make a meld (i.e. *chow*) – if you don't, another player's call may get priority.
- 1.8. A player's turn should not last more than 10 seconds, that is from the moment he claims or picks a tile, until the moment he discards a tile himself. The time allotted may also be used to determine if you have achieved a valid *hu* – i.e. you do not have to declare *hu* within 3 seconds in case of a self pick.
- 1.9. Clearly show your winning tile, either claimed or self drawn. Failing to do so results in not being allowed to claim points for 'single, edge or middle wait', 'last tile' and 'Nine Gates'.

2. Irregularities

- 2.1. Contestations will be ruled by the referee. If the referee is needed, 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.
- 2.2. A player may appeal against a referee ruling: if he wants to appeal, this must be done immediately, but the appeal will be handled after the current session, so as not to disturb the other competitors any further.
- 2.3. **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 table points for that session.
- 2.4. **Passing information** – when a player passes information, true or false, he has committed a foul. Depending on the nature of the offence, the referee may decide on an additional penalty.
- 2.5. **Erroneous calls**
 - 2.5.1. A call for a meld **must** be played – if a player is mistaken and **cannot** make the action, he has committed a foul.
 - 2.5.2. A call cannot be changed into another call. If a player makes two different calls:
 - Not involving *hu*, 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.
 - Involving *hu*, i.e. *pung* – *hu*, he must make the first call. If he cannot make the first call, he has committed a foul – in either case, he will have to wait for a next opportunity to make *hu*.
 - 2.5.3. If a player uses any other than the allowed or tolerated term, he has committed a foul and he may not make / finish the intended action. In case of *hu* he has a dead hand.
- 2.6. **Taking the wrong tile(s):**
 - 2.6.1. 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 from thereon in the right order. There is no penalty.
 - 2.6.2. If a player takes the wrong tile (i.e. from the wrong end of the wall) and he:
 - Does not put the tile between his other tiles – he has committed a foul. The tile is put back in its place in the wall, even if he has seen it.
 - Puts the tile between his other tiles – he must keep the tile and he now has a dead hand. In this case you are allowed to publicly point out the mistake and this is not considered *passing information*.
 - 2.6.3. **Touching** a tile from the wall, means **taking** that tile. A player may not 'change his mind' and decide to call a discarded tile.
 - 2.6.4. **Reaching** for a tile from the wall but not touching it, is not considered an action – a player may still call the discarded tile.

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2.7. Errors in exposing sets / tiles

- 2.7.1. If a player shows his tiles or takes a discarded tile *before making a call*, he may no longer make his action and in case of 'hu' he now has a dead hand. Any tiles exposed will have to be discarded on his next turn(s) first.
- 2.7.2. If he makes a call and takes a claimed tile *before showing the matching tiles* (to play the call), he has committed a foul but he may still complete his action, also in case of 'hu'.
- 2.7.3. 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.
- 2.7.4. 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 not having put the replacement tile between his other tiles – he has committed a foul but may correct the mistake. However, he must discard erroneously 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.

- 2.8. **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 from the wall are put back in place and he is not obliged to discard the revealed tile(s) from his own hand.

A player accidentally knocking over **another player's** tile(s) has committed a foul – however, the referee may decide on an additional penalty.

2.9. When hu is declared

- 2.9.1. A player who calls hu cannot undo that call (see 2.10.1).
- 2.9.2. The other players are **not allowed to help** the winner with his counting – they may only object when too many points are being added.
- 2.9.3. Only discarded tiles may be used to count the value of the winning hand; this also includes adding additional points for flowers.
- 2.9.4. Adding ones own flowers to count the score, makes these additional points invalid.
- 2.9.5. The hand itself **must remain intact** until the value is determined and agreed upon.
- 2.9.6. Failing to keep the winning hand intact (i.e. use the tiles for counting) results in dead hand.
- 2.9.7. Forgetting to add the winning tile to the hand will be penalized with a deduction of 10 points (only from the players' total, i.e. no points are paid to his opponents).
- 2.9.8. 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.
- 2.9.9. If the hu is found to be invalid, an opponent who has revealed his tiles has a dead hand and will have to discard his revealed tiles first.
- 2.9.10. Prematurely destroying the wall is considered a foul and in case of an invalid hu the referee may decide on an additional penalty.

2.10. Errors in calling hu

- 2.10.1. If a player calls hu, then realizes he has no valid hu and **does not show** his tiles, he has a dead hand.
- 2.10.2. If he calls hu and:
 - He has 4 correct combinations and a pair but does not have or cannot find the required 8 points, he has a **false hu** resulting in a dead hand and he pays **10 points** to every other player.
 - He is found to have an invalid hand, i.e. an incorrect combination or number of tiles, he has a **false hu** resulting in a dead hand and he pays **20 points** to every other player.
- 2.10.3. A player having a dead hand as a result of a false hu, is **not obliged** to discard the tiles in his hand first, whether they are revealed or not.

3. Summary of penalties

- 3.1. **(Repeated) Fouls:** warning -> 5 points -> 10 points -> 20 points -> 30 points -> et cetera. Points are only deducted from the offending player's score.
- 3.2. **Dead hand:** offending player may not call hu but play continues. He may still claim tiles and replace flower tiles.
- 3.3. **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.
- 3.4. **Referee ruling:** the referee may additionally rule on a penalty, for instance when a player is deliberately destroying the wall or when a player is found to be stalling for time.
- 3.5. **Disqualification:** severe disturbance of the competition, cheating or *repeatedly* stalling for time will result in – immediate – disqualification.
- 3.6. 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.*