

Welcome to Module 2: The Hand Selection Success Formula!

Now that you understand how to read the Mah Jongg card, we'll focus on how to confidently choose the best hand, or pick out the perfect recipe! We'll also look at how to arrange your tiles, zero in on the strongest Sections, and make smart decisions before the Charleston even begins. No more second-guessing!

Here's why this is important! Choosing the right hand early gives you a serious advantage. Mah Jongg isn't just luck—it's strategy too. When you can consistently pick the right Section and hand, you'll win more often. And that's the goal, right?

I'll guide you through a simple formula that will help you make these decisions quickly and confidently, so by the end of this module, you'll know exactly what hand to focus on in a game and how to spot winning hands faster.

Let's get started and pick the perfect hand!

The First Step in the Hand Selection Success Formula is M for Manage – Organize Your Tiles for Success

Before you can decide on the best hand to play, you need to get your tiles organized. Think of it like prepping all your ingredients before you start cooking—a little upfront work makes everything else easier.

Here's how to set yourself up for success:

Group Your Tiles by Suit and Number

Start by arranging your tiles into the three suits: Bams, Craks, and Dots. Put each suit in ascending order, going up from 1 to 9. This creates a clean, easy-to-read layout of your tiles. Next, group the Dragon, Wind, Flower, and Joker tiles. By organizing them this way, you'll quickly spot areas of strength and figure out what tiles you're missing to complete sets.

Manage Your Rack to Match the Sections on the Card

Now that your tiles are grouped and organized, it's time to manage your rack by matching them to the Sections on the card. This step helps you see exactly where your tiles fit or don't... Think of it like sorting your ingredients into dry and wet groups before baking. When you manage your tiles this way, you'll be able to spot where you can start building your hand with tiles that work together.

Speaking of building your hand, let's take a look at which sections of the card tend to be easier to win with. First up, the "Consecutive Run" section. It's one of the easiest to play because it's so flexible, and usually doesn't require any rare tiles. You just need numbers in consecutive order within the same suit to make pairs, pungs, and kongs. What makes it great is the sheer number of tiles you have to work with, which give you plenty of chances to form melds. Statistically, it's

the most likely section to complete because of how many tiles are available. With all 152 tiles in play, the odds are definitely in your favor.

Next, let's talk about the "2468" and "13579" sections. These are also pretty easy, mainly because there are so many tiles available. In the 2468 section, the 2s, 4s, 6s, and 8s appear in all three suits, so your chances of drawing the tile you need are much better. The same goes for the 13579 section—more tiles mean more chances to complete your melds!

Whether you're a seasoned pro or just starting out, these sections are a great place to focus your energy. They're straightforward, there are tons of tiles to choose from, and they're easier to complete. In fact, some players swear by focusing on just these sections to win often! So, it's definitely worth considering.

Assess – Spot Core Combos (Your Building Blocks)

Now that your tiles are organized, it's time to assess your options and find the Core Combinations—or Core Combos—that will shape your hand. Think of this like gathering the key ingredients for your favorite dish. If you're making a stir-fry, you need essentials like veggies, protein, and sauce. In Mah Jongg, your essentials are Core Combos that lay the foundation for your hand.

Identify Core Combos Early

So, as you start placing tiles on your rack, keep an eye out for Pairs, Pungs, and Kongs—these Combos are the building blocks for most hands and spotting them early will help guide your strategy.

But here's the key—Core Combos only matter if they match a hand on the card. It's like having cheese when you're making stir-fry—great ingredient, wrong recipe. Once you spot a Pair, Pung, or Kong, check the card to see which Sections can use it. If you've got multiple Core Combos that fit into the same Section, that's usually your recipe for a winning hand.

Prioritize Pairs (They're More Important Than You Think)

Pairs are an integral part of your Core Combos and can make a big difference in getting your hand to the finish line. When you spot a pair, think about which Sections on the card can use it and look for other tiles that connect with it too. Just like having the perfect seasoning in your recipe, the right pair early on can help bring everything together and give you a clearer path forward.

That being said—not every hand requires pairs. Some Sections may need multiple pairs, while others might not need them at all. If you're holding onto a pair but the matching tiles aren't showing up (or worse, they're being discarded), it's time to reassess. Think of it like realizing you're missing a key ingredient—time to switch to another recipe (or hand) that relies on other tiles instead.

If you've got the pairs you need for a particular hand, stick with them. If the tiles are in your favor and you've got the right Core Combos, there's no need to change direction. Let those pairs work for you and keep building your hand.

Work with Mixed Combos

Sometimes your tiles will give you a scattered mix of pairs, pungs, and kongs that don't seem to fit together right away—and that's okay. Think of it like having a variety of ingredients for a meal, but not yet knowing exactly what dish you'll make. Even if your tiles seem mismatched, hold onto them for now. A pung of 5 Dots and a pair of 2 Bams might not seem like they belong together, but as the Charleston continues, more tiles could fill in the gaps. The key is to stay flexible, just like keeping a few options open in the kitchen. You can always adjust your strategy and build around the strongest combos as the game develops.

Hone In – Choose the Easier Hand

Once you've assessed your tiles and identified the Core Combos, it's time to focus on which hand to pursue. Look at your hand and count how many tiles will help you complete a Section on the card. A good hand has at least 5 tiles that can help you. If you have 7 or more tiles that fit, that's a great start! If you don't have enough tiles for a good start, try rearranging your tiles to focus on a different Section on the card.

After counting your tiles and finding the best Section, you can finally choose the hand within that Section that has the most tiles moving toward Mah Jongg. This gives you the strongest starting point, because more tiles in play increases your chances of completing the hand.

Here are a couple tips to keep in mind: Favor Exposed hands over Concealed hands when possible. Exposed hands allow you to use discarded tiles, speeding up your path to completion and making it easier to adjust your strategy as the game progresses.

When choosing a hand, pick one that requires fewer Pairs. Hand that need multiple Pairs are trickier to complete and rely more on luck. Instead, focus on hands that require only one Pair or none at all, since they offer a clearer path to winning.

Lastly, look for hands that have no gaps. Gaps are missing numbers or incomplete sequences. The fewer gaps you have, the easier it is to finish your hand. A hand with no gaps is more predictable and has fewer dependencies on drawing specific tiles, giving you a more reliable route to Mah Jongg.

Juggle – Adapt & Maximize Jokers

Okay, we've got one final step in the formula to choose the best starting hand: And that is to Juggle! (Adapt and maximize Jokers!)

Jokers are powerful tiles, but to use them effectively, you need to stay adaptable and strategic—like a chef making adjustments to a dish as you go along.

Use Jokers to Complete Pungs and Kongs:

Jokers are like the perfect ingredient substitute in the kitchen—they can step in to complete a Pung or Kong when you're missing a tile. For example, if you need a 5 Dots for a Pung and don't have it, the Joker can act as a stand-in. This keeps you progressing toward your hand without relying on a single, specific tile.

Jokers Connect and Bridge Gaps:

Jokers also serve as connectors, bridging the gaps in your hand and making the connections needed to complete your sets. They give you the flexibility to adjust your strategy as you go.

Stay Flexible:

While Jokers are invaluable, don't get too fixated on one specific combination. If you're holding onto a Joker for a certain set but new opportunities open up with different tiles, be ready to pivot. Jokers are meant to enhance your options, not restrict your choices..

By using Jokers wisely and staying flexible, you can increase your odds of selecting the winning hand. Now that you've got the know-how, it's time to put it all together with a simple formula that's easy to remember... M.A.H.J.

The M.A.H.J. formula is your roadmap to picking the best hand to play. Start by managing your tiles—group them by suit and number to bring some order to your rack. Next, assess what you've got by spotting Core Combos, like Pairs, Pungs, and Kongs, which can set the foundation for your hand. Then, hone in on the strongest Section by counting how many tiles fit into each one—aim for at least five tiles. After that, juggle things around by using Jokers to fill any gaps and stay flexible as the game moves forward. Put all of this together, and you'll be ready to choose the hand that gives you the best shot at winning.

Time to shake things up! Start by turning all the tiles face down, giving them a good mix, and then grab 13 tiles at random. Place them on your rack, and let's get to work with the M.A.H.J. formula!

M – Manage: Organize your tiles by Suit and Number (1-9), and separate out the Dragons, Winds, Flowers, and Jokers.

A – Assess: Spot Core Combos like Pairs, Pungs, and Kongs in your hand, and compare them to the Sections on the card—start with the easy Sections before you move on to the harder ones.

H – Hone in: Focus on the Sections where you have the most tiles (aim for at least five). This is where you can finally decide on a hand!

J – Juggle: Now, juggle things around by using Jokers to strengthen your hand and fill in the missing pieces.

Keep practicing this routine until you can quickly identify the Sections and hands that fit your tiles. The more you practice, the faster you'll get at making smart, winning choices!