

Welcome to Module 3: Conquering the Charleston!

In this module, we're diving into the "shopping" phase of the game! The Charleston is your chance to refine your hand by passing and receiving tiles. Think of it like shopping for the ingredients you need to make the recipe you chose in Module 2. We'll cover how to strategically pass tiles, choose the right ones, and make the most of this phase to set yourself up for success.

Why does this matter? The Charleston is crucial because it lets you fill in the gaps in your hand while keeping an eye on what your opponents are up to. Knowing how to navigate this phase can mean the difference between a winning hand and a missed opportunity.

By the end of this module, you'll feel confident in your ability to conquer the Charleston. Let's get started!

I get it—sometimes the Charleston can feel a little overwhelming, but remember, you've already laid the groundwork. You know how to read the card and choose the right hand. Now, with that hand in mind, the Charleston becomes much clearer.

Here's what you need to know as you "shop" for the right ingredients to build your winning Mah Jongg hand.

Pass Smartly

Not loving your tiles? No problem. Don't overthink it—just pass three tiles that don't fit your hand. You'll have up to seven chances (or 21 tiles) to find what you need, so don't worry if the first few passes aren't perfect.

Unrelated Tiles: Pass tiles that clearly don't connect—like an even number tile in one suit and an odd number tile in a different suit. Or, a low number tile and a high number tile. This keeps your hand flexible.

"Possible" Tiles: Don't hold onto those "just in case" tiles. Once you've chosen your hand, commit to it. Pass anything that doesn't fit. Ask yourself, "Does this tile make my hand better?" If not, pass it along.

Pairs: Got an extra pair that doesn't connect to your hand? It's just taking up space. Let the pair of tiles go (but don't pass both tiles at once!).

Repeat Tiles: If the same tiles keep coming back, don't stress. Just keep passing them along. It's part of clearing the clutter to build a stronger hand.

Special Tiles (Pairs, Flowers, Winds/Dragons)

Flowers: Flowers are versatile and valuable. With 8 in the set, they pop up often and fit into many hands. Holding onto them keeps your options open—and prevents opponents from using them. Pass flowers only if your hand definitely doesn't need them.

Winds: Winds are fine to pass, but don't pass three at once. Passing two is safe; passing three might help someone else too much.

Same Suit: Avoid passing multiple tiles of the same suit. Mix it up to keep your opponents guessing.

At the end of the Charleston, reassess your hand. If you see two possible hands, count your tiles and go with the hand that has the highest number.

Keep Track of Your Passes – It's More Important Than You Think!

Alright, let's talk about a simple tactic that can really boost your game: remembering what you pass, what's passed to you, and how your opponents react. Don't worry—it's not as hard as it sounds!

Start with Your Own Passes: If you're new, a great place to start is simply remembering the tiles that you pass. What did you let go of? As you get better at keeping track of your own passes, you can move to the next level of the memory game!

Add What's Passed to You: Once you're a little more experienced, start paying attention to the tiles passed to you—and who's passing them. Was it a tile you could use? Did it give you any clues about their hand? The more you track, the better you'll get at understanding what others are working with.

Watch Your Opponents: Here's the fun part: notice how others react to your passes. Are they racking those tiles quickly, or are they casually passing them along to the next person? Are they looking pleased with the tiles they got, or do they seem frustrated? These little clues can tell you a lot about what's going on in their hands.

We'll dive deeper into reading your opponents' behavior in the next module, but trust me, paying attention to these small details during the Charleston can make a big difference.

The Blind Pass

The Blind Pass is a clever move, but it's often overlooked. Here's how to implement it:

If you're stuck during the last pass of the Charleston and don't have three tiles you want to pass, you can do a Blind Pass. This allows you to pass 1-3 tiles without looking at them and it keeps your hand intact.

How to do it:

When it's your turn to pass, take up to two tiles from your hand and place them face down nearest the player you're passing to.

As another player passes their tiles to you, take enough of those tiles and add them to the tiles you're passing (for a total of three tiles).

You're essentially completing the Charleston pass while keeping your hand intact—This ensures you don't sacrifice important tiles.

Why use it?

The Blind Pass helps you hold on to valuable tiles you don't want to give away, while still completing the Charleston pass.

It also throws off your opponents because they might assume you have enough tiles to be close to winning Mah Jongg, which adds an element of unpredictability to your strategy.

Remember, the Blind Pass can only be used during the last pass of the Charleston (the first left or last right pass), so use it wisely when you need to protect your hand.

Stopping the Second Charleston

The Second Charleston is optional—if someone wants to stop it, it stops. Once it begins though, it must be completed. If you want to stop it, just say so before anyone looks at their tiles. A quick “I'm stopping the Charleston now” keeps things moving without slowing down the game with unnecessary debate.

The Strategy Behind the Charleston

The Charleston might seem like a simple tile exchange, but it's the backbone of your entire game. Each pass shapes your hand—and potentially your opponent's. Thinking carefully about what you pass, hold, and receive can set you up for success.

At the same time, the Charleston is a great chance to block opponents by keeping valuable tiles out of their hands. Paying attention to their habits (like stopping the Charleston early) can give you valuable insight into their strategy.

Wrapping Up

Great job—you're halfway through the Virtual Mah Jongg Boot Camp! You've figured out how to assess your hand and learned how to make smart passes. With this solid foundation, you're setting yourself up for success.

Next up, we'll dive into advanced strategies—how to read your opponents and how to finish strong when you're close to Mah Jongg. That's right, things are about to get even more tactical, you won't want to miss the final modules.

Keep it up—your hard work will pay off at the Mah Jongg table!