

Welcome to Module 4: Opponent Intel

In this module, we're adding a new layer to your game—learning to observe what your opponents are doing. By tracking their discards and exposures, you can get a better sense of what they're building and adjust your strategy accordingly. Just like adjusting a recipe based on how a dish tastes, watching your opponents' moves gives you the intel you need to adjust your strategy. By the end of this module, you'll be able to fine-tune your observations and make smarter moves.

Tracking Discards – Getting the Inside Scoop on Your Opponents

Let's talk about one of the easiest ways to gather intel on your opponents – looking at their discards. Early in the game, discards might not mean much—players are still figuring things out, and so are you! But as the game progresses and players get closer to finishing their hands, those discards start to tell a bigger story. Late-game discards are especially telling—your opponent might be dumping tiles they no longer need or maybe switching up their game plan altogether.

If your opponent discards a tile that you think they should need to keep, that's definitely something to pay attention to. What's going on there?

They might be switching things up on you. Maybe they started with one strategy but then picked up a tile from the wall that fits better with a new hand they're aiming for—one that doesn't need the tile they just tossed. Sneaky, right?

Or, they could be trying to throw you off by discarding that tile on purpose. It's a way of creating confusion or making you think they're going for something they're really not. Either way, it's a move you don't want to ignore.

Here's where it gets fun: pay attention to the pattern of their discards. Are they consistently throwing away high tiles? Low tiles? That can tell you a lot about what suit or range of numbers they might be working with. For example, if your opponent keeps tossing low-numbered suits, they're probably focusing on higher numbers. Or, if you're seeing a lot of Winds or Dragons getting tossed, it could mean they're not interested in those Sections or hands. Keep an eye out for these little clues.

Don't overlook the out-of-place discards, either. If your opponent suddenly throws away a tile that doesn't seem to fit—especially if it's one you know could complete their hand—something's up! They might be bluffing or trying to throw you off. This is where you need to trust your instincts and start connecting the dots.

And here's the big one: Jokers. If your opponent discards a Joker, they obviously don't need it anymore. They're probably just one or two tiles away from calling Mah Jongg, so this is when you need to start paying extra attention. Check their exposures, remember what tiles they've thrown, and be super careful about what you discard next. A Joker discard should raise your alert level for sure!

Sometimes, you can figure out what your opponent isn't trying to do. If you see them throwing away certain tiles, you can use deduction to get a better idea of what they're trying to build.

As you keep an eye on your opponents' discards, you'll start to get a feel for which Safe Tiles you can confidently toss away – Keeping Your Opponents in Check.

Safe tiles are the ones that no one seems to want, kind of like those cans of beans or bags of rice hiding in the back of your pantry. They're the tiles your opponents either don't need or can't call. The more you see a tile tossed without anyone picking it up, the safer it becomes to let go of it yourself.

If you see a discarded tile and no one calls it, you can usually discard that same tile again without worry. But here's where your opponent's strategy comes into play: You don't want to accidentally feed them a tile they're hoping for. Keep an eye on what your opponents are collecting, and be cautious when discarding tiles that could complete their hand.

But don't get too comfortable. A tile that seems safe now might not stay that way. Your opponents might be holding off, waiting for a chance to call it, or they could suddenly have a better setup to use it.

Quick Flower Tip: Flowers discarded early are usually safe, as most players won't have the setup to use them for a Kong or Mah Jongg just yet. Toss them early when the coast is clear!

Hot Tiles – The Key to Unlocking Opponents' Strategies

Now, the opposite of safe tiles are the ones your opponents are eyeing – the "hot" tiles! Discarding one of these could deliver your opponent the final piece they need to complete a Mah Jongg hand.

At the start of the game, most tiles aren't considered hot yet. But as the game moves forward, those tiles that haven't been discarded become increasingly risky. The closer someone gets to Mah Jongg, the more dangerous those discards become.

When there are only a few tiles left in the Wall, even a tile you thought was "safe" could be the missing link for an opponent's winning hand. Since you can't see their hand, you can't always predict what they need to win. A tile that's been lingering around can become crucial, especially if they have Jokers to complete a combination.

Flowers are particularly risky toward the end of the game. Opponents may be holding out for a Flower to complete a Pair, so it's best to hang onto them as the game winds down. Discard them early when you're more likely to be safe, but as the end nears, avoid handing them off.

Analyzing Exposures – What Your Opponents are Really Up To

Exposures are like seeing some of the key ingredients on the counter for a dish that your opponent is making. You spot the tomatoes, noodles, and garlic, giving you a clue that they're

making something pasta-related. But, is it spaghetti? Ziti? Something else? You haven't seen all their ingredients yet. Each exposure helps narrow it down, but you'll need more clues to figure out the full recipe.

First, think: What is the exposure? Is it a Pung, Kong, or Quint? For example, if an opponent lays down a Pung of 8s, you'll want to know how many hands could use that Pung. The more familiar you are with the Mah Jongg card, the quicker you'll be able to identify the possible Sections your opponent is considering.

Next, ask yourself: What kind of number is it? Odd or even? This helps you narrow down which Sections are still in play even more. In other words, you may be able to rule out even or odd sections of the card, as well as other sections.

Finally, are the exposures Flowers, Dragons, or Winds? This should give you even more insight into what your opponents are after.

When you put all these clues together and take into consideration what your opponents are throwing away, you'll start to get a better sense of what they're "cooking" and what tiles you need to avoid feeding them.

Watch Out for Player Tells: Actions and Body Language

Being observant isn't just about paying attention to what your opponent discards—it's also about reading the little tells they give off through their actions and body language. Here are some key things to watch for:

Chatty or Quiet?: Does your opponent talk about their hand, expressing excitement or frustration over the tiles they pass or discard? A player who's vocal may be trying to mislead you or simply be reacting emotionally. On the other hand, a quiet player may be trying to stay under the radar. Either way, notice what they're saying (or not saying) for any clues.

Tile Arrangement: Pay attention to how they handle their tiles. Do they file them neatly in their rack as soon as they pick them up, or do they rearrange them when it's no longer their turn? This could indicate whether they're trying to keep their hand looking more "normal" than it really is, or if they're hiding something.

Exposures Location: When your opponent calls an exposure, where do they place it on their rack? If they consistently put their exposures in the same spot as depicted on the Mah Jongg card, it might give you an idea of what section they're aiming for. But if they mix it up, they could be trying to confuse you.

Body Language: Watch how they carry themselves during the game:

Facial Expressions: A quick smile when they draw a useful tile, or a furrowed brow when they discard a tile, could tell you if they're happy or frustrated with their hand.

Pauses: If they hesitate before discarding, it may indicate they're deliberating between options—or trying to hide a strong hand.

Physical Movement: Leaning forward in anticipation or sitting back with a relaxed posture can indicate confidence or hesitation. If a player is physically engaging more with the game, they might be trying to bluff or throw you off. If they pull back, they could be feeling uncertain.

Nervous Habits: Fidgeting with their tiles, tapping fingers, or even shifting their eyes can all be signs of anxiety or indecision. These nervous habits might suggest that they're unsure about their strategy or hiding a strong hand.

By watching your opponent's words, actions, and body language closely, you can start to piece together what they're really thinking and adjust your strategy accordingly. The more you practice reading these subtle clues, the better you'll get at predicting their next move!

Identifying the Most Dangerous Player & Winning Signs

The player closest to winning is your biggest threat. Look for signs like three exposed melds, and prioritize defense against them. We'll chat more about defense in the next module, but the short and sweet of playing defensively in this situation is to be cautious about what you discard. Avoid letting go of tiles that could potentially help your opponent.

There you have it! In this Module you've learned how to observe your opponents, track their moves, and adjust your strategy accordingly. By reading their discards and exposures, you can gain valuable insights and make smarter decisions as the game progresses.

Now, there's just one final module left: The End Game Edge. I'm going to show you how to finish strong when you're just tiles away from Mah Jongg. It's packed with advanced strategies to help you seal the deal.

Keep going—you're so close to unlocking your full Mah Jongg potential!