

# MCR

## Aspects of Mahjong Strategy

Or things to consider before  
you act when playing MCR



# Content

There is too much material for a two-day seminar, so here are a couple of chapters that can be used for preparation

Please note if you have any questions or comments, so we can go through them when we meet

- Intro thoughts
- Conventions
- Theme A: To kong or not to kong
- Theme B: All manner of chows



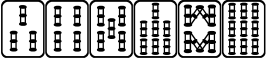
# About the questions and themes

- The intention of this slide set is to give an idea of some themes to consider in different situations when playing the Mahjong Competition Rules (MCR)
- You are expected to know the basics and the point-giving combinations of the game already
- Since often only your own hand (and sometimes discards) is shown here, the situations pictured are not like in a real game
- I try instead to focus on specific isolated themes that can be used as inputs for the considerations needed when playing a real game
- Of course, this also means that in many situations, you will be able to say something in the lines of “if the other players have discarded this and that, I will do so and so” or “this depends on how many tiles are left of that tile”
- In this way the situations pictured will also act as basis for discussions about what to do in more detailed cases
- I cannot include all such considerations and discussions, so please accept that the written explanations are fairly short

# Thoughts about strategy

- A frustrating thing about mahjong can be that even if you do everything right, somebody else wins if they do the same and are more lucky
- I do, however, believe that in the long run, the better player will win more games (which is the reason I have made these slides)
- I recommend taking what you think makes sense and try to incorporate it into your play to see how it works out, possibly a little at a time
- As you will see, I believe that MCR is very much about getting ready quickly
- If these slides can help you making better and quicker decisions while you play, I think that much has been accomplished
- “Practice doesn't make perfect. Practice reduces the imperfection.” Toba Beta

# Conventions

- The slide set is structured into themes, each starting with a bit of advice, then followed by a question (Q), and then the answer (A) on the next slide together with the next question
- If a set is melded, it is always shown on the left of the rest of the hand with a tile turned, e.g.  or 
- Closed tiles and sets are shown without turned tiles, e.g. 
- I have not included flowers as they do not count against the 8-point limit
- In each situation I have described the circumstances that seem relevant for that situation
- If I mention that something is wanted as a discard, it is implied that self drawn is even better (with Chicken Hand and Melded Hand as possible exceptions)
- I have tried to indicate the difficulty level (DL) of the question below the Q
  - DL 1: Beginner (easy)
  - DL 2: Intermediate (moderate)
  - DL 3: Advanced (hard)

# Theme A

To kong or not to kong



# Kong or not A.1

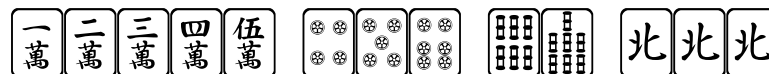
- There are three different kinds of kongs: melded kong by extension of open pung, melded kong declared from concealed pung, and concealed kong
- Making a kong can both reveal your intentions and limit your options, so you should always consider carefully when to make a kong and when not to
- It is very seldom that the 4-point difference of extending an open pung to a kong rather than discarding makes the difference for another player to go out, so this aspect is not touched here



- East round, 1st hand, 5th discard
- East has discarded 北
- You are North and have this hand



DL 1



- Would you make an open kong?

# Kong or not A.2

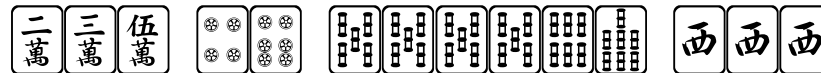
- No, you limit your possibilities by making the open kong
- The extra draw, i.e. skipping two players, is only of minor importance here and should not make you kong when you can stay more flexible
- It makes more sense to keep the option of using 北 as a pair for Mixed Straight or Mixed Shifted Chows
- You can even consider Chicken Hand



- East round, 1st hand, 7th discard
- You are North and have this hand



DL 1

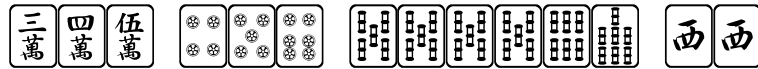



- Would you make a concealed kong at this time?




# Kong or not A.3

- No, you limit your possibilities by making the concealed kong
- Your best chance on this hand is Mixed Shifted Chows, e.g.



- There is also an off chance with a concealed hand: Two Concealed Pungs, Tile Hog, (Fully) Concealed Hand, Pung of Honors and Single Wait or Mixed Double Chow, adding up to (10) 8 points
- If you make the concealed kong of , you cannot open your hand as you can with the Mixed Shifted Chows



- East round, 1st hand, 3rd discard
- East has just discarded 
- You are West and have this hand



DL 2



- Would you make an open kong?

# Kong or not A.4

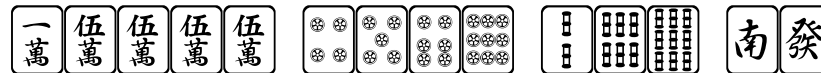
- Yes, here it can make sense to make an open kong early (this is one of the few cases)
- Your hand has a fair chance of becoming All Types, but you may end up with 7 points – by making the open kong you are sure to have 8 points
- If you had two different dragons (e.g. 中 ) it would not be recommended to kong, as you would lock your hand more and have a good chance of getting a single wait



- East round, 1st hand, 1st discard
- You are East and have this hand



DL 2




- Would you make a concealed kong at this time?

# Kong or not A.5

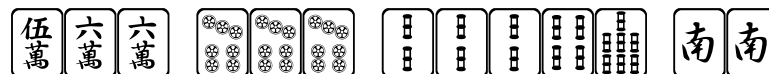
- No, you limit your hand by making the concealed kong
- It makes more sense to keep the hand flexible for, e.g. Mixed Shifted Chows or Mixed Straight
- If you pick tiles so you are close to be ready on a concealed hand, you can always make the kong at that time



- East round, 1st hand, 7th discard
- East has just discarded 
- You are North and have this hand





DL 2



- Would you make an open kong?

# Kong or not A.6

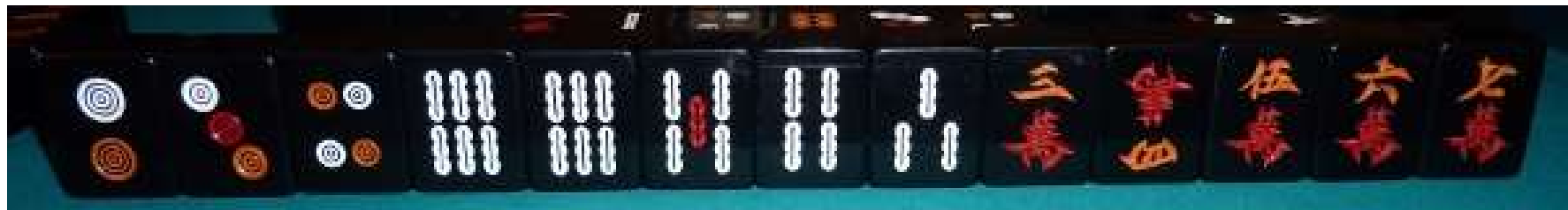
- No, there are at least two reasons not to
- Your concealed pungs are more valuable than an open kong – you may even get Three Concealed Pungs with this hand
- If you do not kong, you are the only one who knows that there will be discarded no more 
- If South chows the  in less than 3 seconds, it could make sense to make the kong if you judge South to be close to ready



- Please remember that when you kong, you remove flexibility and you disclose things that may better stay hidden
- Some people may change their plans when a kong has been declared, where they would have had a useless hand had they remained ignorant
- There can of course be situations where you want to stop someone chowing, and it thus makes sense to declare a kong from a concealed pung for this reason alone
- And it can of course make sense to kong if your hand is open already, and you do not need that tile for a chow

# Theme B


All manner of chows



# Chows B.1

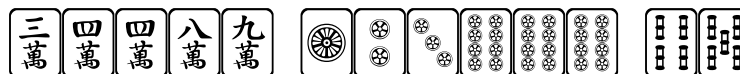
- In MCR, chows are highly valued and as an added bonus they can make the hand quite flexible, frequently with double-ended waits
- You must practice spotting patterns and keeping as many options open as possible, so you can make a quick hand
- It is often that you start with a mediocre hand with several honors, but when you have discarded those, you must be able to see how to make a chow hand out of what you have got



- East round, 1st hand, 8th discard
- South has just discarded 
- You are West and have this hand













DL 1




- Would you chow?

# Chows B.2

- Yes (and discard ) , you are still one away from being ready, but you can use more tiles
- If you do not chow, you will (almost certainly) need  and 
- If you chow, you will still need , but now you can use either  or  – or get a two-sided wait if you get  first
- There is even an off chance getting a kong in , and then pairing  or 



- East round, 1st hand, 9th discard
- East has just discarded 
- You are South and have this hand



DL 1



- Would you chow? If yes, as    , as    or    ? And what would you discard?

# Chows B.3

- Yes, as and discard
- You will get ready and this will hide your intentions better
- You want someone to discard , and that is more likely if it is unclear what you are doing



- East round, 1st hand, 10th discard
- North has just discarded
- You are East and have this hand







DL 1



- Would you chow? If yes, how and what would you discard?



# Chows B.4

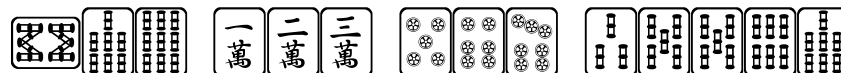
- Yes, as  and discard 
- You will get ready and this will hide your intentions better than if you chow 
- You want someone to discard , and that is more likely if it looks like you are doing something else, like Mixed Triple Chow or Lower Four
- Note: It may be an advantage not to sort your tiles like they are shown – attentive opponents may notice that you have more characters in the hand



- East round, 1st hand, 8th discard
- You are West and have this hand















DL 2





- What would you discard?

# Chows B.5

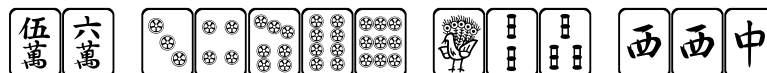
- Discard 
- Now you will get ready if you get    or  (Mixed Straight), or   or  (Pure Shifted Chows)
- In the case of    or  you can even chow them



- East round, 1st hand, 9th discard
- One  has been discarded earlier
- South has just discarded 
- You are North and have this hand










DL 2




- Would you pung? And what is your plan?

# Chows B.6

- No, it will most likely not make you win faster, as you would need to find another pair somewhere
- If you wait, you can chow , ,  or  to be ready on Mixed Straight or Chicken Hand
- And in all cases, you will have a double-ended wait
- If you pick up another  before the chow, you could consider to discard  or  (if no one looks like knitting, as you otherwise may end up with two pairs you cannot pung)



- East round, 1st hand, 8th discard
- West has just discarded 
- You are North and have this hand



- Would you chow? If yes, how? What would you discard, and what is your plan?



DL 2

# Chows B.7

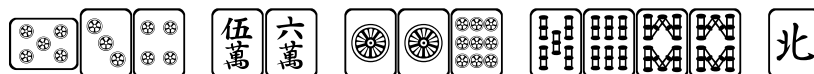
- You should chow and discard or
- In this way, you can use both and , making respectively Mixed Straight or Mixed Shifted Chows
- You should of course look out for which is the more dangerous of and – in some situations it may be more safe to chow and discard



- East round, 1st hand, 5th discard
- You are South and have this hand



DL 2



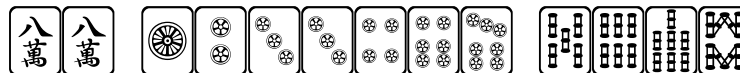
- Would you pung or if they are discarded? And what is your plan?

# Chows B.8

- It is fine to pung ☯, as this can give you 8 points with Mixed Shifted Chows, Pung of Terminals and No Honors
- If you pung ☱, you may end up with only 7 points (unless you self draw)
- It would of course be nice to pick something like ☰ and make a chow with the ☱, but you should pung ☯ if you get the chance
- Note: You have an advantage that you may chow the two double ended on both sides to get ready – if you needed two specific tiles you would limit yourself too much with the pung



- East round, 1st hand, 6th discard
- East has just discarded ☱
- You are South and have this hand

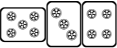









- Would you chow? If yes, as ☱☱☱, ☱☱☱ or ☱☱☱ and why? And what would you discard?



DL 3

# Chows B.9

- Yes, as  and discard 
- You will get ready for  and you will have the possibility of going out on the last  (because you have Last Tile, All Chows, Short Straight and Double Chow)
- If you chow  you cannot get last tile on  without opening your hand further
- If  looks significantly more dangerous to discard than , you should of course balance the risk with the chance of getting Last Tile on discard



- When playing a chow hand, the hand must be evaluated all the time!
- Maybe a Pure Straight should go into something Mixed (Straight or Shifted Chows), maybe some chows should be shifted up or down to increase the number of tiles you can use
- Usually, the hand is so flexible that you can work something out even if some tile you need is punged or konged
- It is often an advantage to keep the hand concealed until you know which way it is going to go