

# MCR

## Aspects of Mahjong Strategy

Or things to consider before  
you act when playing MCR



# Agenda, 18-19 January 2025

- Tentative time schedule, breaks are included

## Saturday, 18 January

10:00 – 10:15	Introduction
10:15 – 10:30	Questions on the distributed material
10:30 – 11:30	1. How to float
11:30 – 12:15	2. Keeping options open
12:15 – 13:00	Lunch
13:00 – 14:00	Play and discuss floats and options (not rated)
14:00 – 14:45	3. Dos and don'ts
14:45 – 15:45	4. 8-point hands
15:45 – 16:00	Questions, thoughts?
16:00 – 17:00	Play and discuss dos/dont's and 8-pont hands (not rated)
17:00 – 19:00	Play for fun (rated)
19:00	Dinner
23:00	Close

- Depending on time it will also be interesting to hear examples from the audience

# Agenda, 18-19 January 2025

- Tentative time schedule, breaks are included

Sunday, 19 January

10:00 – 10:30	Questions, thoughts? Experiences from yesterday?
10:30 – 11:15	5. Your own discards
11:15 – 12:00	6. Other players
12:00 – 12:45	Lunch
12:45 – 13:45	Play and discuss own discards and other players (not rated)
13:45 – 14:30	7. Improving your hand when ready or almost ready
14:30 – 15:30	8. Tournament situations
15:30 – 15:45	Ideas for training
15:45 – 16:00	Questions, thoughts?
16:00 – 16:30	Feedback, evaluation
16:30	Close

- Depending on time it will also be interesting to hear examples from the audience

# Author and version

- Author: Henrik Leth
- Version: 2.0, 11-Jan-25
- Contact: [hleth@mail.dk](mailto:hleth@mail.dk) (you are most welcome to mail me feedback and ideas for the slide set)
- Many thanks to Yukari and Kimito Kugimiya, Tina Christensen and Martin Faartoft for all their comments and invaluable contributions, thanks to Ksenia Trishina for inspiration
  
- These slides where started in the summer of 2011
- First version used 8-9 February 2014
- Second version (first two chapters extracted and two new added) used 18-19 January 2025
- The font used for the mahjong tiles is called “Mahjong”, “ma\_\_\_\_\_ .ttf”
  - “This font is provided to you by Fonts2u.com – the largest online repository of free fonts for Windows and Mac.”



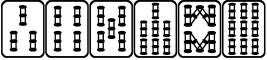
# About the questions and themes

- 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 1

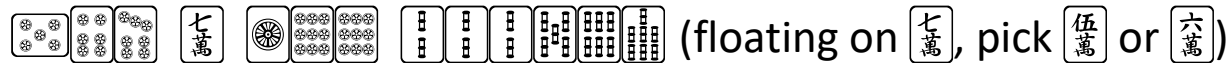
How to float



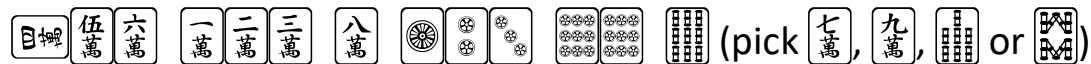


# How to float 1.1

- Floating: Having one tile where you can pick up specific tiles to get ready, e.g.



- It is of course better if you can have a “double float”, i.e. two tiles where you can pick one or more tiles for each to get ready, e.g.



- Floating is important since spotting the right patterns and keeping the right tiles can make you one from ready with quite many chances to get ready



- East round, 1st hand, 7th discard
- East has just discarded 二萬
- You are South and have this hand












- Would you make a chow? If yes, what would you discard?




DL 1

# How to float 1.2

- Yes – and discard 
- Now you will be ready if you pick up , ,  or 
- If you get  or  you will even have enough on a discarded Last Tile on respectively  or 



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











- Would you make a chow? If yes, what would you discard?




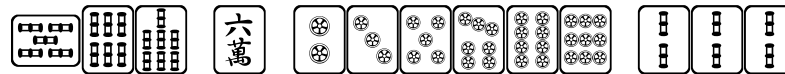
DL 2

# How to float 1.3

- Yes – and discard 
- Now you will be ready if you pick up  ,  ,  or 
- Would you have done the same if  would give 4 points for Last Tile? Or rather discarded ?
  - I would say it depends much on the situation, e.g. is it likely the last  would be discarded (look for neighbouring tiles)?



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



- Would you make a chow? If yes, which chow and what would you discard?



DL 2

# How to float 1.4

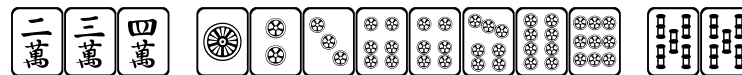
- Yes, – and discard or
- Now you will be ready if you pick up , , or



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









DL 2



- Would you chow? And what is your plan?

# How to float 1.5

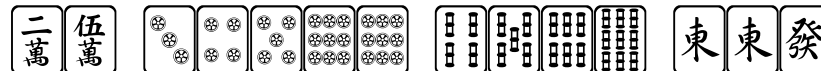
- In this case you are aiming to pick , ,  or 
- So no, you will not benefit from chowing (unless  is spent but there are still )
- This is just to show that you can also be floating with two pairs
- Note: There is an outside chance of Mixed Terminal Chows, but it is too far away





- East round, 1st hand, 3th discard
- You are North and have this hand
















DL 2




- What would you discard? And what is your plan? Would you pung  or .

# How to float 1.6

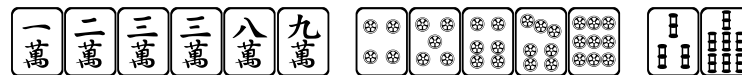
- Discard  (keep  – if you draw one more, you discard )
- You should certainly pung  , it is trickier with 
- When you pung  or keep your hand concealed, you can pick , , , or  to be ready with Mixed Shifted Chows and either Pung of Prevalent Wind or Concealed Hand
- If you pung , you may find yourself in a situation where you have only 7 points on discard (if you pick  or )



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







DL 2







- Would you make a chow? If yes, what would you discard?

# How to float 1.7









- Yes – and discard  (some would say )
- You are aiming for several different main combinations

 with  as padding


 with  as padding

 with  as padding

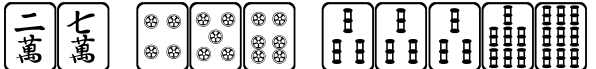



- This means that after chowing you can pick up  (also chow), , , , , ,  or  and be one from ready
- When you get this tile, you will have to give up 1 or 2 of the 3 options above



- East round, 1st hand, 11th discard
- West has just discarded 
- You are North and have this hand















- Would you make a chow? If yes, what would you discard?







# How to float 1.10

- A) Chow hand → B) Mixed chows, pure chows, mixed shifted →
- C) There are of course many ways this can go; there can be some triple or mixed chows if we pick up the proper tiles for that
- But the main plan on this hand would be to chow  and  (possibly  if we pick the right tiles for Pure Straight before we get a chance to chow ) and discard  and 
- Then we will be floating on  and  – waiting for , ,  or 



- You need to keep an eye open for tiles that can be used for floating
- In some cases, early in the hand you may think it does not matter if you discard this or that tile, but if one later can be used for floating this may enable you to win the hand faster
- The backside is that you cannot chow or pung what you need when you are floating like this – you must pick it up yourself
- If you have many chances to draw something useful for a Fully Concealed Hand, you should also hesitate to open it




# Theme 2

Keeping options open




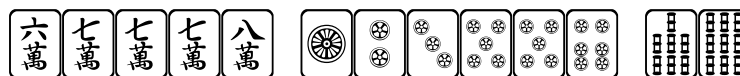


# Options 2.3

- The most obvious plan is Mixed Shifted Chows (missing  and )
- But since there is an outside chance of Pure Shifted in dots, you should discard 








- (Continuation of the previous hand)
- South round, 5th hand, 6th discard
- You are West and draw 




- What do you discard?

# Options 2.4

- Now it makes sense to change again and discard 
- Instead of needing two specific tiles, you can get ready from four different tiles (/ and /) and then needing one specific



- East round, 4th hand, 6th discard
- You are West and have this hand and draw 
















- What would you discard?




DL 2

# Options 2.5

- The original plan needs  and 
- But now you can change so you need  and either / or / – this should be quicker
- If no other relevant tiles are gone, there is one less  so discard 
- Note: You can try to think one step further back if you did not have  already – would you keep -- over other (for example honor) tiles?



- East round, 1st hand, 9th discard
- You are South and have this hand when you draw 








DL 2



- What do you discard?



# Options 2.6

- Discard 
- You are still ready for  (and the hand is slightly cheaper), but now you improve your wait rather than having it fixed
- The best is to draw , but if all  suddenly disappears you can pung  and change the wait






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






DL 2




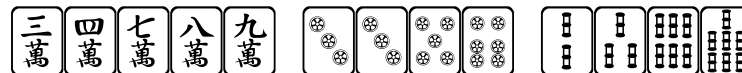
- Two times  and three times  have been discarded
- West discards  – do you chow it?

# Options 2.7

- Yes, you go from being ready on only  to also being ready on 
- You may of course check the other players' hands – if someone looks like they surely have the , it may be better to try to self draw than chow



- West round, 12th hand, 5th discard
- You have this hand and draw 



- What is your plan and what do you discard?



DL 3

# Options 2.8

- Your plan is Mixed Shifted Chows
- Discard - (rather than -)
- Instead of needing both and , you can use either / or /



- North round, 16th hand, 10th discard
- You lead with 117 points, number two has 81 points and two open sets:



DL 3

- You have this hand and the player on your left discards 

四萬







二萬

三萬

六萬

七萬
- Do you chow? If yes, what do you discard?

# Options 2.9

- Yes, chow and discard 
- You lock the  and  that could be dangerous to discard
- And you can now use both  and  (with )



- You cannot stop thinking just because you are ready
- You must try to deduce what is on the other players' hands and adapt accordingly if you get the chance
- And before you are ready, you must keep the tiles that gives you most options of draws rather than locking on to one specific plan


# Theme 3

Dos and don'ts






# Dos and don'ts 3.2

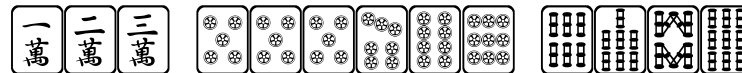
- Don't discard one of the winds to get All Types; discard  and get a quick hand
- It is more important to get the hand and 8 points from each than getting about 6 points more
- If more of the winds have been discarded, or if you have very good reason to believe that other people have them, you can consider to discard a wind instead



- East round, 1st hand, 6th discard
- You are North and have this hand when you pick 



DL 2



- Would you kong or not?

# Dos and don'ts 3.3

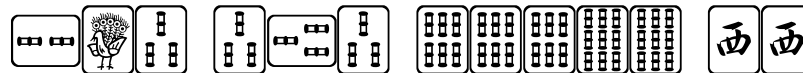
- If you kong, you have the chance of self drawing after the kong (~6 tiles) – or get ready on a single wait (self draw on ~3 tiles, except if you get 一萬-四萬)
- If you do not kong and discard 四萬, you can draw 四萬-四萬-四萬-四萬 (~16 tiles) and then be ready for one of them (~4 tiles)
- You should not kong unless a special situation requires it



- East round, 1st hand, 10th discard
- You are South and have this hand when you pick 四萬











DL 2



- What would you discard?



# Dos and don'ts 3.3

- Don't discard  to get Full Flush
- Discard  to get a quick hand
- If all  and  have been discarded (or expected on other players' hands), you can discard 
- If you have this hand sooner, e.g. in the 5th discard, it is tempting to discard  (especially if you get  or 



- East round, 1st hand, 12th discard
- You are East and have this hand







DL 2



- Would you wait for the Four Concealed Pungs rather than getting it on discard?

# Dos and don'ts 3.4

- It would of course be nice to get Four Concealed Pungs, but don't wait for it (unless you need the points in a tournament)
- In the same way it would of course be nicer to get it on the , but you should take it on  and the other options also
- Another don't: You should not be over focused on a certain combination, as there could be more options than the obvious (in this case you are ready for  on Pure Shifted Chows step 1, and  – did you notice that?)



- Always go for the quick win unless you have a very good reason not to
- The 8 points from each player will matter a lot more than if your hand is improved by e.g. 6, 8 or 12 points

# Theme 4


8-point hands



# 8 points 4.1

- It is always important to spot if you can get 8 points self drawn or on discard, as this may be a faster way to be ready than going for some other combination
- You should be able to count some things without thinking, so people are not warned by a delay in your discard – or so you don't miss that you had 8 points
- An example could be that Concealed Hand, All Simple, All Chows give you the first 6 points, so you just need e.g. a Short Straight and a Double Chow



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



DL 1




- Would you make a chow? If yes, what would you discard?

# 8 points 4.2

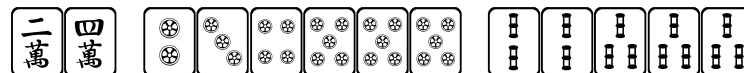
- No, you would say “Hu”!
- You have Concealed Hand (2), Concealed Kong (2), Pung of Terminals (1), Double Chow (1), No Honors (1) and Closed Wait (1)



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



DL 1



- Would you make a chow? If yes, what would you discard?

# 8 points 4.3

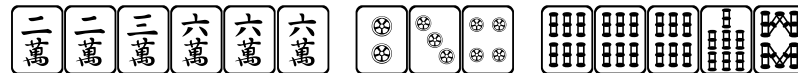
- No, you would say “Hu”!
- You have Concealed Hand (2), All Simples (2), Two Concealed Pungs (2), Double Chow (1) and Closed Wait (1)



- East round, 1st hand, 6th discard
- You are North and have this hand





DL 2



- What would you discard? And what are your plans?



# 8 points 4.5

- This is just to show that it is actually possible to win a hand with eight 1-point combinations – but you must include Self-Drawn
- Discard  and try to self draw  (or get it as last tile) – unless it seems better to play safe somehow
- If you get it, you will have Mixed Double Chow (1), Short Straight (1), Pung of Terminals (1), Melded Kong (1), One Voided Suit (1), No Honors (1), Closed Wait (1) and Self-Drawn (1)



- East round, 1st hand, 11th discard
- You are West and have this hand








DL 2




- What would you discard? And what is your plan?



# 8 points 4.6

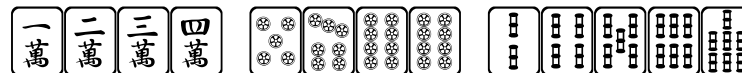
- Often it would make sense to discard  rather than , as the former seems safer, but in this case you should discard  (unless you have a clear suspicion that it is dangerous)
- This is because you have two plans
  - The main plan is to get  and Pure Straight
  - The secondary plan is to get the  as last tile, and in that case you need the Mixed Double Chow to get 8 points on discard



- East round, 1st hand, 11th discard
- East has just discarded 
- You are South and have this hand

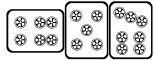





DL 2




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

# 8 points 4.7

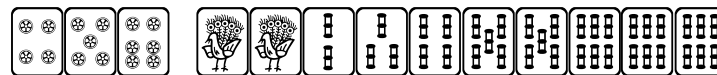
- Yes, chow  and discard 
- Now you are ready for  with All Chows (2), All Simples (2), Short Straight (1), 2 x Mixed Double Chow (2x1) and Single Wait (1)
- You should of course make sure to check how many  are left



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









DL 2




- Would you make a chow? If yes, what is your plan?

# 8 points 4.8

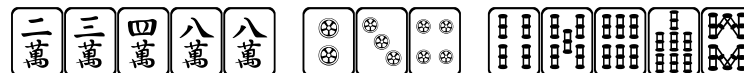
- You have enough on self draw on  and 
  - Fully Concealed Hand (4), Two Concealed Pungs (2), Voided Suit (1), No Honors (1) (and Pung of Terminals (1) if )
- You should, however, make the chow and discard  so you can get Pure Shifted Chows and more on , and you can self draw on 
  - All Chows (2), Tile Hog (2), Mixed Double Chow (1), Short Straight (1), Voided Suit (1) and Self-Drawn (1)



- East round, 1st hand, 4th discard
- North has just discarded 
- You are East and have this hand



DL 3



- Would you make a chow? If yes, what would you discard?

# 8 points 4.9

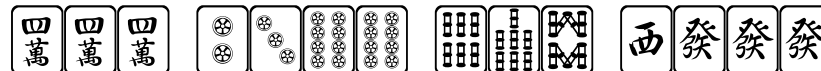
- There is no reason to chow this – you would only be ready for
- If you keep your hand concealed, you are still able to get on discard, and in addition and self drawn
- discarded would give you Concealed Hand (2), All Chows (2), All Simples (2), Mixed Double Chow (1) and Short Straight (1)
- self drawn would give you Fully Concealed Hand (4), All Chows (2), All Simples (2) and Mixed Double Chow (1)
- self drawn would give you Fully Concealed Hand (4), All Chows (2), Mixed Double Chow (1) and Short Straight (1)



- East round, 1st hand, 4th discard
- You are North and have this hand








DL 2



- What would you discard, and what is your plan?



# 8 points 4.11

					
Discard	7	8	6	7	6
Discard, last tile	11	N/A	N/A	N/A	10
Self drawn	9	10	8	9	8
Self drawn, last tile	13	N/A	N/A	N/A	12



- Some times it makes sense to keep the hand closed and try to self draw rather than claiming a set and limit the possibilities
- You should always check all the tiles you are waiting for and count how many points they would give both on discard and self drawn
- You should also check if last tile would bring you above 8 points
- Furthermore, you should practice counting to 8 quickly – and it is important to know all the combinations giving 1, 2, 4 and 6 points by heart

# Theme 5

Your own discards



# Discards 5.1

- It can be important to choose your discards right – not only to avoid helping others, but also to improve the chances of getting your own hand
- You should now and then look at your discards and try to deduce how others will interpret them
- If you can mask what you are doing without delaying your hand, you should certainly consider doing so



- East round, 1st hand, 7th discard
- Your first 6 discards are 

發	北	三萬			
---	---	----	--	--	--
- You are East and have this hand  








七萬	七萬	七萬	八萬	九萬															
----	----	----	----	----	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
- What would you discard?












DL 1



# Discards 5.2

- Discard 
- The idea is to get Mixed Triple Chow 7-8-9, and you need only one pair, so you should decide between  and 
- If you discard , you will look increasingly like Upper Tiles
- If you discard , the others should be less worried about discarding  and 
- You should of course also check the discard on your right before deciding



- East round, 1st hand, 10th discard
- Your first 9 discards are         
- You are East and have this hand












DL 1



- What would you discard?

# Discards 5.3

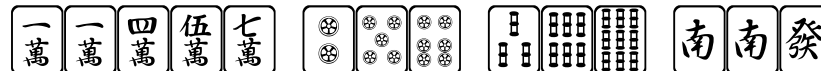
-  or  (and the other right after)
- You want a Pure Straight and a double-ended padding
- It is too late to go for Full Flush, but the other players may fear it if you discard  and , and you will not get 
- Of course, you should also look at how many / compared to / are already used
- You should of course also check the discard on your left (Half Flush?) and right before deciding



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



DL 2



- In what order would make your first discards (assuming you get something you can use)? And why?

# Discards 5.4

- You have 10 tiles for knitting (All Types or chow combinations are more distant)
- If you start out by discarding middle tiles, you will typically attract more attention, so I suggest to discard in this order



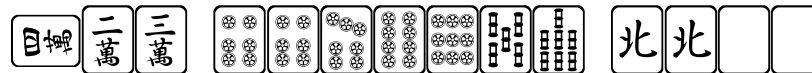
- This also makes it possible to switch to chow combinations in case many of the honors are quickly punged
- You should of course also consider not holding on the middle tiles for too long, so South gets more ready for them
- Note: It is also possible to argue to discard the middle tiles first for other reasons



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






DL 2



- What would you discard and in which order (assuming you get something you can use)? And why?

# Discards 5.5

- You are aiming for All Types, and you are sure to get at least 8 points as you will get 2 points from your wind or dragon pung
- You must discard from the dots, and that could be either  twice or  and 
- The first will often be better as you only discard one type of tile instead of two, and thus typically help the player on your right less (or the other players for that matter)
- You should of course check what the other players are doing, and if it will be last tile
- There may be other situations where you can discard two different tiles or a pair, and often it makes most sense to discard the pair (though it may get more dangerous late in the game)



- Discards can be powerful!
- You can mask your intentions and even lead people to help you when they think they are making your life more difficult
- You should of course also consider how to make the opponents' plans more difficult with your discards
- It is also good to have variation in mind, so you do not always do the same things when playing the same people, thus making you too predictable


# Theme 6

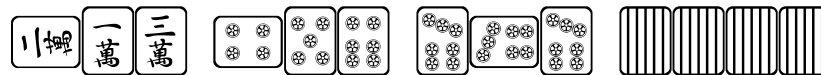
Other players

# Other players 6.1

- You want to know as much as possible about your opponents: Are they good or bad players? Do they take risks? Do they favor specific combinations? How do you best play them?
- Other info can be derived just from looking at the discards and open sets
- And you will of course have an advantage if you can spot when an opponent is ready



- East round, 2nd hand, 9th discard
- You are North, and South has this hand after chowing 



- South discards 
- Are there any tiles that seems extra dangerous?

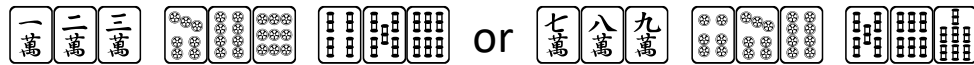


DL 1



# Other players 6.3

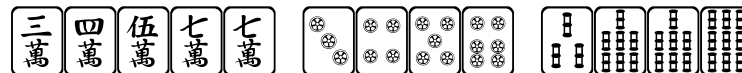
- The obvious plans are Mixed Straight or maybe Mixed Shifted Chows, e.g.



- This means that one of the pairs must be discarded
- Due to the open sets, 10000 looks more likely to help the player on the right (it could also be 110000-120000-130000 but that does not have an impact on your decision)
- The pair of 140000 should be discarded



- North round, 13th hand, 6th discard
- You are North and have this hand and pick 110000















- The player on your left has a pung in 110000
- What is your plan? What would you discard?



DL 2



# Other players 6.4

- Normally, I would suggest to hold , so I can chow both sides of 
- In this case, I will not get  from the left, so I discard 
- This improves my chances for the padding (both pung / and chow  – and I can get ready for last tile on 
- The only drawback is to draw  before I am ready, but then I can chow several tiles to get ready (,  and  apart from the padding options)



- Knowledge is power!
- You must use some time watching the other players at the table and adapt your plans accordingly
- And if you have a quick session, go and watch someone you will play later

– What to look for?

Examples:


- Favor for example All Pungs or Half Flush
- Quick or slow to get ready
- Plays safe or risky
- Any tells when ready



# Improving 7.1

- Some times when people are happy because they are ready or almost ready, they don't think much about improvement
- But you should be prepared if you suddenly get a tile that makes you consider a different plan
- You have to evaluate the different options and go for the best one



- East round, 1st hand, 11th discard
- You are South and have this hand when you pick 




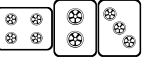






DL 1




- What would you discard? And what is your plan?



# Improving 7.3

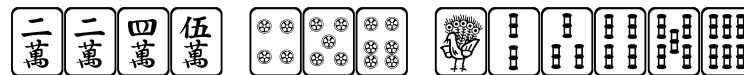
- The original plan was to get  and a Mixed Straight
- But now you can make a  chow and discard 
  - You could also chow  and discard , but the tiles you need look less dangerous with a  chow
- Then you are still ready for the , but you are also ready for  on a Chicken Hand (if it is not Last Tile)



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










DL 1




- Would you make a chow? If yes, what would you discard?

# Improving 7.4

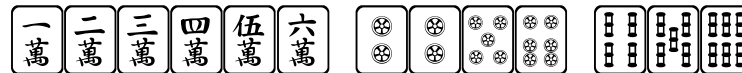
- The original plan was to get  self drawn or  discarded or self drawn
- But now you can make either a  or  chow and discard 
- This makes your hand more flexible, as you are ready for both  and  on discard with respectively Mixed Shifted Chows or Mixed Triple Chow



- East round, 1st hand, 10th discard
- You are East and have this hand when you pick 








DL 2




- What would you discard? And what is your plan?

# Improving 7.5

- The original plan was to get  self drawn or  discarded or self drawn
- But if you discard , your hand will be more flexible
- You will not have Mixed Triple Chow anymore, but you will be ready for both  and  on discard (Concealed Hand, All Chows, All Simples, Short Straight and Mixed Double Chow)



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



DL 2



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

# Improving 7.6

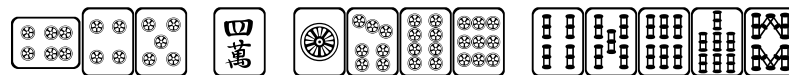
- You are already floating, i.e. waiting to draw 伍萬, 六萬, 四萬 or 四萬
- But if you chow 四萬四萬四萬 and discard 四萬 you will have more chances of getting a Pure Straight or Pure Shifted Chows (and you win on the last 四萬)
- Now you can chow or draw 四萬 or 四萬 to get ready, and you can draw 四萬
- All in all, you can use one tile fewer, but you can chow two of them instead of having to draw them – and the hand is more expensive
- You should of course check if the needed tiles are still available



- East round, 1st hand, 9th discard
- You are West and have this hand when you pick 四萬













DL 2



- What would you discard and what is your plan?



# Improving 7.7

- I am assuming that there are 2-4  left (if not, the answer would be to go for something Mixed)
- Discard  and go for the Pure Straight
- Now you can chow or pick up , and you can pick up , ,  or 
- If you draw  you may consider to discard  or  to self draw the other for 8 points, but that really limits the number of tiles you can use, and you must self draw



- Do not limit your thinking to the most obvious combinations
- Always think in advance what can improve your hand, so you do not miss the opportunity when it arises!



# Theme 8

## Tournament situations

NO.	FROM	NAME	SESSION 1		SESSION 2		SESSION 3		SESSION 4		SESSION 5		TOTAL	
1	DK	Freddy Christiansen	0	-117	4	447	2	52	4	347	4	72	<b>18</b>	855
2	FR	Kim Iversen	4	132	4	211	4	311	0	-138	4	158	<b>18</b>	708
3	SE	Jonas Hagerlid	2	17	2	88	4	234	2	-10	4	343	<b>16</b>	717
4	DK	Zishen Mou	1	-39	4	153	2	67	4	226	0	-146	<b>15</b>	488
5	DK	Jesper Nøhr	2	11	2	45	0	-126	4	90	4	286	<b>14</b>	385
6	DE	Stefanie Duhme	1	-45	4	165	4	104	4	149	0	-42	<b>13</b>	207
7	DK	Henrik Leth	0	-68	1	-83	2	30	4	100	2	-23	<b>13</b>	30
8	DE	Axel Eschenburg	2	60	4	219	2	-2	1	-59	2	54	<b>12</b>	221
9	DK	Claes Schütt	4	139	4	99	2	-1	1	-31	1	-14	<b>12</b>	119
10	DE	Heike Schäfer	1	-61	2	81	4	111	0	-128	1	-27	<b>12</b>	64

# Tournament 8.1

## How to calculate what hand is needed

- Imagine yourself in a tournament, playing the last hand of a session where you want to know what hand is needed to overtake one or more of the other players
- If the difference is less than 40 points it is easy – you will gain at least 40 points on anyone, since with an 8-point hand you will get 32 points and the others will pay 8 (or 16)
- Generally speaking, where  $D$  is the difference to the player you want to overtake, and  $x_n$  is the value of the hand that would bring you even
  1. Feed from other player:  $x_1 = D - 32$
  2. Feed from player to overtake:  $x_2 = \frac{D-32}{2} = \frac{x_1}{2}$
  3. Self drawn:  $x_3 = \frac{D-32}{4} = \frac{x_2}{2}$
- For easy calculation, note that you find  $x_2$  by halving  $x_1$ , and  $x_3$  by halving  $x_2$  (remember to round up!)
- See next slide for an example!

# Tournament 8.2

## Calculation example

- You are second, and the leading player is 81 points in front of you
  1. You would need at least a 50-point hand to win by feed from other player:  $x_1 = D - 32 = 81 - 32 = 49$
  2. You would need at least a 25-point hand to win by feed from player to overtake:  $x_2 = \frac{D-32}{2} = \frac{49}{2} \approx 25$
  3. You would need at least a 13-point hand to win by self draw:  $x_3 = \frac{D-32}{4} = \frac{49}{4} \approx \frac{25}{2} \approx 13$
- Note that it is important to round up – a self-drawn 12-point hand would give you 20 points from each and thus get you 80 points closer, but that would be missing 1 point
- See next slide for a table!

# Tournament 8.3

- Table for the score needed to catch up

Excel/pdf with larger table

$D$	$x_1$	$x_2$	$x_3$	$D$	$x_1$	$x_2$	$x_3$	$D$	$x_1$	$x_2$	$x_3$
40	8	8	8	49	17	9	8	58	26	13	8
41	9	8	8	50	18	9	8	59	27	14	8
42	10	8	8	51	19	10	8	60	28	14	8
43	11	8	8	52	20	10	8	61	29	15	8
44	12	8	8	53	21	11	8	62	30	15	8
45	13	8	8	54	22	11	8	63	31	16	8
46	14	8	8	55	23	12	8	64	32	16	8
47	15	8	8	56	24	12	8	65	33	17	9
48	16	8	8	57	25	13	8	66	34	17	9



MCR Diff



MCR Diff

- Remember you may need 1 more point to overtake (always for  $x_1$ ; for  $x_2$  and  $x_3$  in last instance of number)

# Tournament 8.4

- Tournaments call for specific skills in calculating scores and keeping an eye on your closest competitors
- You will sometimes have to make a decision to go after a quick and cheap hand even if you have an expensive-looking one
- And you will at other times have to go for a slow and expensive hand rather than making a quick and cheap one





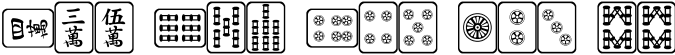
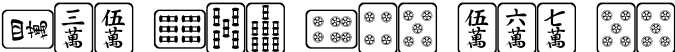
- You are playing a tournament and are about to start on the last hand of a session
- The scores are
  - East -2 points
  - South (you) 37 points
  - West 95 points
  - North -130 points
- What thoughts do you have before starting the hand?



DL 1



# Tournament 8.6

- It is very hard to decide, you have to realize that you are taking a great risk
- It seems unlikely that you will get your hand, and you can discard  and  pretty safely – but if you feed East a cheap hand before West gets his, you can win the table
- If East has e.g. Mixed Shifted Chows, All Chows and Short Straight everything will be fine: 
- But if East has Mixed Shifted Chows, All Chows, Mixed Double Chow and All Fives, you will go below West: 



- You have to be very sharp on the points in the end game!
- There is not really room for calculation mistakes – if you don't take a hand because you think it is not expensive enough, or if you take one that turns out to be too cheap, you only gain a few mini points rather than a few table points
- See the next slides to see how much mini points help compared to table points



# Tournament 8.7

## **How much do mini points and table points matter?**

- It is interesting to see how much mini points and table points matter, e.g. thinking “If I had got 2 more table points, how would my ranking have improved?”
- I have found some larger tournaments on the EMA homepage and done some investigations, see the tables on the next slides
- I am looking at a player in the middle (e.g. 80 of 160), as this will typically give the largest effect
- I am assuming this person got 0 mini and 0 table points in the last round, and I check what happens if that had been different (without looking at changes for other players)

# Tournament 8.8

## Tournament investigation

Tournament	Participants	Sessions	+50 mp	+100 mp	+200 mp	+1 tp	+2 tp	+4 tp
WMC 2012	188	10	0	0	6	10	26	48
OEMC 2011	160	9	0	0	1	10	15	41
WMC 2010	208	9	1	4	6	13	26	52
OEMC 2009	152	9	0	0	0	11	25	43
WMC 2007	144	9	1	2	3	7	17	32
<b>Average</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>43</b>

“mp” is mini points, “tp” is table points

The number shown is the number gained in ranking

# Tournament 8.9

## Tournament investigation, normalized to 100 participants

Tournament	Participants	Sessions	+50 mp	+100 mp	+200 mp	+1 tp	+2 tp	+4 tp
WMC 2012	100	10	0	0	3	5	14	26
OEMC 2011	100	9	0	0	1	6	9	26
WMC 2010	100	9	0	2	3	6	13	25
OEMC 2009	100	9	0	0	0	7	16	28
WMC 2007	100	9	1	1	2	5	12	22
<b>Average</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>25</b>

“mp” is mini points, “tp” is table points

The number shown is the number gained in ranking

# Tournament 8.10

## **Conclusion for a tournament of 9-10 sessions with 100 participants**

- +50 mini points will usually not help you
- +100 mini points will gain you 1 position
- +200 mini points will gain you 2 positions
- +1 table point will gain you 6 positions
- +2 table points will gain you 13 positions
- +4 table points will gain you 25 positions (jump a quarter forward)
- In real life, you must of course check the scoring table before the last session!
- You should expect a smaller effect if you are close to the top or bottom, rather than the middle

# Tournament 8.11

- When playing in a tournament, it is not only about strategy and technique – it also moves to a level that is best called sport
  - You need to be at least somewhat fit to be able to concentrate for 4 times 2 hours a day
  - Nerves play a larger part than when playing normal games, so you need to be able to control your nerves and stay calm and focused
  - Even more than usual, you must know your opponents strengths and weaknesses, so you can use them to your own advantage and sometimes play the opponents more than you play your own game
  - You need to stay mentally focused: Move on from the last hand (even when it was annoying), control the urge to ‘let out steam’

# Ideas for training

How to improve yourself further

# Training – playing mahjong

- It is good to practice playing – see a lot of situations
- But more is needed to improve – when possible, go through games afterwards and study what happened (here online gaming is a great help)
- And discuss situations with others
- Online MCR places
  - MahjongSoft (free): <https://mahjongsoft.com/>
  - MahjongTime (fee): <https://mahjongtime.com/>

# Training – variations

- Important skills in MCR is to optimize hands, calculate probabilities and calculate scores (in tournaments)
- You can get some variation in the training if you can find other areas to train these skills



# 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

# Theme A

To kong or not to kong



# Kong or not A.1

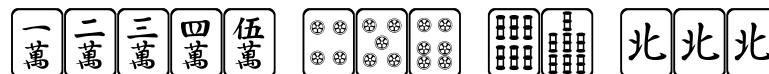
- There are three different kinds of kongs: melded kong by extension of open pung, melded kong declared from concealed pung, and concealed kong
- Making a kong can both reveal your intentions and limit your options, so you should always consider carefully when to make a kong and when not to
- It is very 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

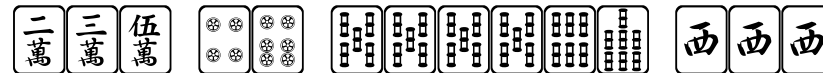
- No, you limit your possibilities by making the open kong
- The extra draw, i.e. skipping two players, is only of minor importance here and should not make you kong when you can stay more flexible
- It makes more sense to keep the option of using 北 as a pair for Mixed Straight or Mixed Shifted Chows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



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



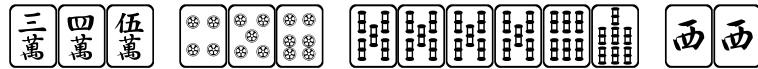
DL 1



- 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 10,000 (一萬), you cannot open your hand as you can with the Mixed Shifted Chows



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



DL 2



- Would you make an open kong?

# Kong or not A.4

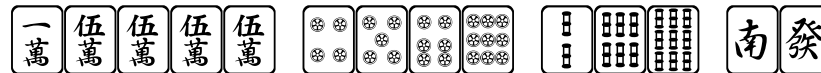
- Yes, here it can make sense to make an open kong early (this is one of the few cases)
- Your hand has a fair chance of becoming All Types, but you may end up with 7 points – by making the open kong you are sure to have 8 points
- If you had two different dragons (e.g. 中 ) it would not be recommended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

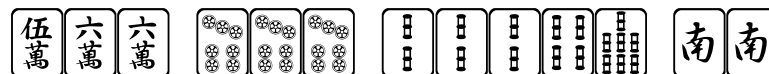
- No, you limit your hand by making the concealed kong
- It makes more sense to keep the hand flexible for, e.g. Mixed Shifted Chows or Mixed Straight
- If you pick tiles so you are close to be ready on a concealed hand, you can always make the kong at that time



- 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

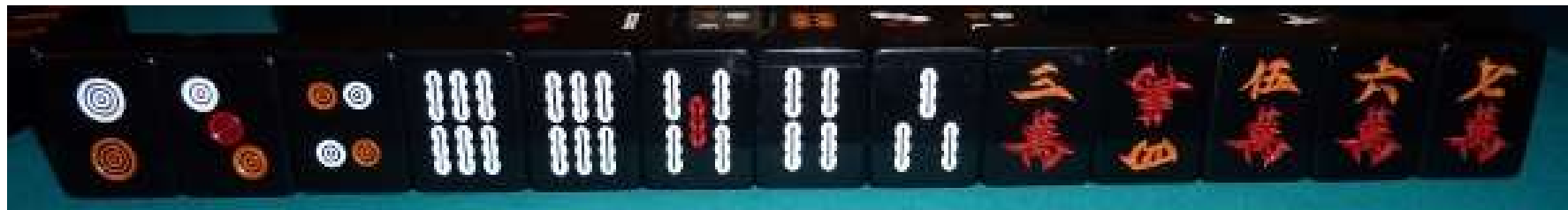


- Please remember that when you kong, you remove flexibility and you disclose things that may better stay hidden
- Some people may change their plans when a kong has been declared, where they would have had a useless hand had they remained ignorant
- There can of course be situations where you want to 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

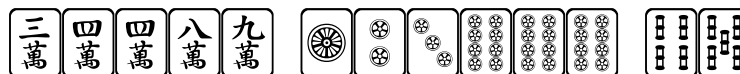
- In MCR, chows are highly valued and as an added bonus they can make the hand quite flexible, frequently with double-ended waits
- You must practice spotting patterns and keeping as many options open as possible, so you can make a quick hand
- It is often that you start with a mediocre hand with several 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

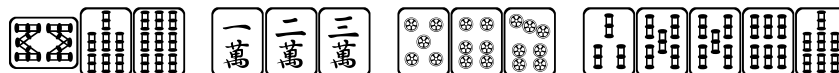
- Yes, as  and discard 
- You will get ready and this will hide your intentions better than if you chow 
- You want someone to discard , and that is more likely if it looks like you are doing something else, like Mixed Triple Chow or Lower Four
- Note: It may be an advantage not to sort your tiles like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

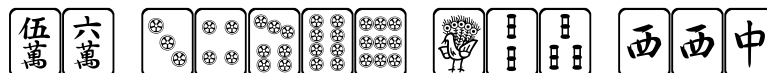
- Discard 
- Now you will get ready if you get    or  (Mixed Straight), or   or  (Pure Shifted Chows)
- In the case of    or  you can even chow them



- 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

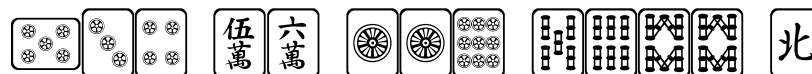
- You should chow  and discard  or 
- In this way, you can use both  and , making respectively Mixed Straight or Mixed Shifted Chows
- You should of course look out for which is the more dangerous of  and  – in some situations it may be more safe to chow  and discard 





- 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

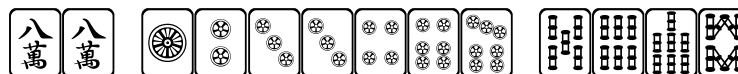
- It is fine to pung , as this can give you 8 points with Mixed Shifted Chows, Pung of Terminals and No Honors
- If you pung , you may end up with only 7 points (unless you self draw)
- It would of course be nice to pick something like  and make a chow with the , but you should pung  if you get the chance
- 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

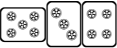









DL 3



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

# 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



# Feedback?

# Questions? Comments?

I would like to develop these strategy slides, so you are most welcome to suggest improvements

