

The Charleston

One thing that differentiates American Mah Jongg from other versions is that it's divided into two phases, The Charleston phase and the pick and discard phase.

The purpose of the Charleston phase is to gather tiles that strengthen your starting position. The first Charleston is compulsory where you get 3 tiles at one time in 3 passes - that's 9 tiles! The second Charleston is optional and it can be stopped by any player with no questions asked. However, it can improve your position exponentially if you continue. Those next 9 tiles can make or break your position going into the pick and discard phase.

Staying flexible is important but eventually you need to whittle down your options. It's just a matter of whether you do it during the Charleston phase or during the pick and discard phase. If you stop the 2nd Charleston, you are delaying the inevitable and turning down 9 tiles that could strengthen your position.

This is why decision making during the Charleston is so critical. If you adopt the strategies in these guidelines, you will see an improvement in your game.

Situation

Between two categories

Between hands in one category

Committed to one hand with 4 or more discards, or

Committed to one hand and you have a gap with 3 discards

Committed to one hand with 2 or fewer discards, or

Committed to a pair hand with 3 or fewer discards regardless of gaps

Stop the Charleston

No

No

No

Yes

Next Step

Choose the category that uses the most of your multiples or, if you have no multiples, the most of your tiles; if there are gaps in one of the categories, choose the category with no gaps

Choose the hand that uses the most of your multiples or, if you have no multiples, the most of your tiles; if there are gaps in one of the hands, choose the hand with no gaps

Pass as normal for the 2nd left; if you run out of discards for the cross pass, you will need to sacrifice a needed tile:

- If you are playing a jokerless hand with singles, pass a single because that can be called to win
- If you are not playing a jokerless hand, pass a tile that will not leave a gap
- If the sacrifice was adverse, you can recover during the pick and discard phase of the game

For the optional cross, so you don't get push back, say you want 2; do not expect anything in return - if anyone stops the Charleston, it is good strategy to not pass tiles in the optional cross because you can be feeding a near-ready or ready hand!

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National Mah Jongg League
When to stop the Charleston

Instructions for long term use:

- 1. Print double-sided on 80 lb cover stock*
- 2. Cut above the dotted line then trim edges to create a consistent margin*
- 3. Tri-fold and hand out*