

MAHJ for a MISSION

Tournament Rules

April 18, 2026

Thank you for your interest in supporting the teenagers of Northern Hills Baptist Church as they prepare to host a 4-day Vacation Bible School for the children and families of Leon, Mexico. Below are the rules for the competitive category.

COMPETITIVELY

SCORING: We are keeping it simple!

- Player who declares Mahjong gets the amount shown on the card.
(for example: 25 on card = 25 points)
- Player picks their own winning Mahjong tile = add 10 points (except for a heavenly hand).
 - A. If a player claims a discarded tile for an exposure and then exchanges a different symbol tile from within their hand for a Joker **in an opponent's exposure** and declares Mahjong with that NEW 14th tile within their hand – then that Mahjong is a SELF-PICKED Mahjong and earns an additional 10 points.
 - B. If a player claims a discarded tile for an exposure and then exchanges a different tile from within their OWN HAND for a Joker **from within their OWN HAND** and declares Mahjong – then that Mahjong is NOT a SELF-PICKED Mahjong. No additional points earned.
- Player has a winning hand with no jokers = add 20 points
(Singles & Pairs wins do not get extra 20 points)
- Wall Game = Every player at table receives 10 points (see note about Dead Hand)
- Player throws Mahjong to a hand with 2/more exposures = lose 20 points
- Time's up before game is finished = Each player gets 0 points for that game – must mark with an X
- Players who do not Mahjong (win the game) get 0 points for that game – must mark with an X
- Dead hands = lose 20 points (even if it is a wall game)

VERIFYING SCORES: EAST will verify WEST scores and initial their official score card, and vice-versa. NORTH will verify SOUTH scores and initial the official score card, and vice-versa. The scorekeeper will not accept any unverified scorecards. After each round (which is equal to four games), the scorecards must be turned into the tournament director. No changes will be made after the cards are turned in.

TIE BREAKER: In the event there is a tie for first place, it will be decided by rolling two dice. The person with the highest sum of the two dice will be the grand prize winner.

RULES

YOU MUST BE ON TIME! Check in is at 8:30am and the event begins at 9am. Arrive as close to 8:30am as possible to receive your table assignment and become familiar with the tiles. If you are not on time, you forfeit your spot and your registration fees.

YOU MUST BRING YOUR OWN 2025 NMJL CARD! No off-brand substitutes here – it is required that you bring the official card. Don't have one? We encourage you to reach out to a friend who may have one or the tournament director. Why the 2025 card? Well, not everyone has received their 2026 card yet and those who have may not feel comfortable with it yet! Let's stick to 2025!

COURTESY: We sincerely value the quality and nature of our tournament and wish for it to be played in a gracious and courteous manner. We have instituted a "ZERO TOLERANCE CODE" as it applies to inconsiderate, rude, or abusive players:

- A. Upon the first complaint, the offending player will be asked to refrain from discourteous activity
- B. If there is a 2nd complaint, the offending player will be disqualified.
- C. At the end of each round, please do not sit around and talk. Please leave the area until the next round is ready to begin.
- D. It is discourteous to criticize your opponents' playing. Please do not push your opponents to play faster until the final game of a round; in this situation time may be of the essence.

TIME LIMIT: 70 minutes are allotted for each round (4 games per round).

DING DON'T YOUR HAND IS DEAD: If a player's hand goes "Dead," or is declared "Dead," player gets -20 points even if it is a "Wall Game." You can be declared "Dead" for:

- A. picking ahead of your turn;
- B. discarding before picking;
- C. exchanging for a joker before picking;
- D. declare **and** expose **all** tiles for Mahjong in error (both things have to occur)
- E. not placing a tile called for exposure on top of the rack – a player claiming a tile for an exposure or Mahjong must place the tile ON TOP of their rack, not in their rack. A player's hand will be declared "dead," for putting the claimed tile in the rack. Known as "continuation of line of sight," this is to assure that the claimed tile is indeed the tile that was discarded; and allows verification of the actual tile by the other players.

You MAY NOT declare yourself "Dead"!

JOKERS can really shake things up—here's how to handle them:

A. Before You Swap for a Joker...

Before you exchange a tile for a Joker from someone else's exposed rack, make sure you've already started your turn by either:

- Picking a tile from the wall, or
- Claiming a discarded tile and adding it to your exposure.

B. Once You Say It, It's Locked In!

If you're about to discard a tile but spot a Joker you could swap it for, you have to act before you start naming that tile or before it touches the table. Examples: saying "Seven Bam," "Seven Ba," "Seven," "Sev," or even "Se." locks you in—you cannot exchange that tile for a Joker afterward.

MISNAMED TILES – IT HAPPENS! Every now and then, someone might accidentally say the wrong name when discarding a tile. Hey, we're human! Simply correct yourself (or someone else) and move on!

LET'S RACK AND ROLL – STEPS TO GET STARTED!

BUILD THE WALL! Walls will be built with a double stack of 19 tiles; no blanks or extra jokers.

ROLL THE DICE! We like to keep things fair and smooth; everyone rolls the dice once at the beginning of each round. The lucky one who rolls the highest number earns the honor of being EAST, which means they get to start the game, dealing and enjoying the bonus of a 14th tile.

A. Playing with Less than Four Players? Here's the Twist:

If your table has only 3 players, then for the fourth and final game of the round, everyone rolls the dice again to see who will be EAST. Fresh roll, fresh chance! If your table has only 2 players, roll both dice at the beginning and the highest number begins as EAST with each game after that rotating.

B. Let EAST Go First: The game doesn't officially begin until EAST throws the first tile. If someone else gets too excited and tosses a tile early—no worries! Just put it back on your rack. No harm, no foul.

LET'S CHARLESTON! The First Charleston is a Must! Our Mahjong dance begins with a compulsory First Charleston of 3 passes in the order: Right → Across → Left (ROL). After that, if everyone's feeling good about it, we move on to the optional Second Charleston: Left → Across → Right (LOR). ✨ Remember: ROL then LOR—just like a little two-step around the table!

A. Less Than Four Players = No Charleston

When there are only 2-3 players at a table, we skip the Charleston entirely.

B. What if You Get a "Heavenly Hand"?

If EAST is dealt a complete, winning hand right off the bat, or after the Charleston (also known as a Heavenly Hand or Hole-in-One), they can proudly declare it – and celebrate the victory! No additional points are earned outside the score listed on the card.

C. The Blind Pass

Like what you already have? During the **first Left and/or last Right** passes of the Charleston, you're welcome to make a blind pass—just pass 1-3 tiles straight from what has been passed to you, without peeking at it. It's like a little Mahjong mystery move! BUT... if curiosity gets the best of you and you sneak a look—No Blind Pass for you – you will have to select 3 from your existing hand to pass along!

PICKING YOUR TILE! One Tile at a Time, Please! Each player must pick a tile before discarding one—or before swapping a tile for a Joker in someone else's exposure. ✨ No early birds! Wait until the player before you has finished their turn before reaching for the next tile. No sneaky pre-picks!

A. When Does Your Turn Actually Start?

Your turn officially begins when you touch the next tile in the wall -OR- when you claim a discarded tile for an exposure. Important: Until you've racked that tile on the sloped part of your rack or made your discard, someone else can still claim the previous discard—so move with intention!

B. Changed Your Mind? That's Okay—Unless...

You're allowed to change your mind about claiming a discarded tile—but only if you haven't touched it yet. If you touch it, it's yours—no take-backs! So be sure before you reach.

C. Oops! Wrong End of the Wall? Be Kind.

If someone accidentally goes for the wrong end of the wall (hey, it happens!), gently point it out. A

little kindness goes a long way—and keeps the game smooth for everyone.

D. When You Touch the Tile, It's Yours

As soon as you touch a tile in the wall, your turn has officially begun. That tile is yours, and you can no longer call a previously discarded tile—no take-backs! However, your fellow players can still claim that last discard until you place your drawn tile on the slanted part of your rack (a.k.a. “racking” it). So again—take a quick pause before racking. It's a small thing that makes a big difference in keeping the game fair and fun.

DISCARDED TILES! A tile is considered DISCARDED if it is named, or touches the table, or is placed on the table. Discarded tiles can be claimed for either Mahjong or an exposure, but timing is everything! You can claim that tile right up until the next player either:

- Discards their tile, OR
- Racks their drawn tile (remember: racking = placing it on the slanted part of your rack—not the top or the front).

A. Call It Out Loud

When you want to claim a discarded tile, say something clear like: “Pause!” “Hold!” “Call!” “Mine!” or any obvious equivalent. The key is to make sure everyone hears you loud and clear.

B. Careful What You Say (and When You Say It!)

If you're about to discard a tile, but then realize it can be swapped for a Joker—act fast, but speak carefully! If you start to say the tile's name (even just “Se...” for “Seven Bam”), or if the tile touches the table, it's too late to do the Joker exchange. The discard stands. Bottom line: don't name it unless you mean it!

C. Two People Want That Tile for Exposure? Who gets it? The player closest in turn after the discarder.

D. Two People Want That Tile for Mahjong? Same rule as above: first priority goes to whoever is next in turn after the discarder—even for Mahjong.

E. Two players call – but not at same time? If neither player has physically touched the tile, the player closer in turn to the discarder still has the right to take it—even if the other player called it first.

F. Two People Want That Tile – one for Mahjong and one for an Exposure? First priority goes to the one for Mahjong.

OOPS - Exposing in Error! Sometimes, excitement takes over and a player exposes their tiles a little too early—or grabs the wrong discard. Let's walk through what happens when that occurs and how to recover (if possible!).

A. If You Touch It, You Gotta Use It!

Once you touch a tile you've claimed for an exposure, you've committed—it must be used in your exposure. So make sure it's the tile you need before reaching for it!

B. Fixing Exposures (While It's Still Your Turn)

Made a little goof when building your exposure? You can adjust your exposure during your turn—whether it's tweaking a pung into a kong or making a quint. Just be sure to fix it before discarding to end your turn. Once you toss that tile, your exposure is set in stone.

C. Mahjong in Error? If a player claims Mah Jongg in error, and displays or exposes **all** tiles in the hand, the player is “dead,” and receives -20 points. **HOWEVER**, please note: if a player has claimed a discard and has begun to make an exposure with the claimed tile - and also has declared Mah Jongg - **BUT DOES NOT expose any other tiles other than the exposure with the claimed tile**...if they realize they do not have Mahjong, then that player can continue to play.

D. If a player who has been playing an exposed hand calls Mahjong and exposes **all** tiles in error, any exposures made BEFORE the error stay on top of rack, and any player may still use those exposures for Joker exchanges when it is their turn. Player with erring hand is dead and stops picking and discarding.

E. If a concealed hand is incorrectly exposed for Mahjong, tiles must be returned to rack. Jokers cannot be redeemed and player stops picking and discarding.

WINNER WINNER – TACO DINNER! When you call Mahjong, please display your hand just like it's shown on your Mahjong card. During regular play, you don't have to keep your exposures perfectly in order—only when you officially declare Mahjong. Then, tell the table which line you successfully completed and don't be weirded out if they want to verify it is correct.

The Tournament Director's ruling will be the final decision in any disputes.