

# 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 Just For fun category.

## JUST FOR FUN

Unlike the competitive tournament that leans into strict rules and high-stakes competition, today is about something different. It's about playing the game we all love and indulging in the joy and camaraderie that Mahjong brings. Most importantly, it's about supporting children and families who would benefit from hearing the gospel!

**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!

**DON'T CALL ME DEAD!** Thankfully, when you play for fun, no one is calling anyone's hand "dead". If a mistake is made, simply fix it and move forward. We're here to have fun!

**PLAY IT THE FUN & EASY WAY!** Blanks and the extra jokers are included in this game. You can use a blank tile to recover a "dead" discarded tile—that is, any tile that's already been tossed and is no longer up for grabs because the next player has taken their turn.

Here's How It Works:

1. A blank may be swapped for any dead discarded tile - except for jokers.
2. Blanks may be exchanged discreetly at any time EXCEPT for during your turn.
3. The only exception to exchanging a blank is if you draw a blank on your 14th tile and can exchange for Mahjong.
4. A blank CAN be exchanged for a dead tile (not on your turn) that is then exchanged for an exposed joker on your turn.

So keep your eyes open, your blanks ready, and your moves subtle. You never know when a "dead" tile might come back to life!

Jokers can really shake things up—here's how to handle them fairly and keep the game fun:

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 and move on! It's JUST FOR FUN!

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

**BUILD THE WALL!** Since we are playing with a full 160-tile set, walls will be built with a double stack of 20 tiles.

**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!

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. Picking -and- Racking – Take a Beat, Be Sweet

Some players have picked up the habit of “picking-and-racking” in one lightning-fast motion—grab the tile and slam it on the rack before anyone can blink! While we admire the enthusiasm, this move can be a little too speedy and may prevent others from having a fair chance to claim the previous discard. Let's play it cool and pause for just a second between picking your tile and racking it. It keeps things fair, relaxed, and respectful at the table. And hey—it gives everyone a chance to keep up!

E. 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.

**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? It's okay – don't be discouraged. Simply place your tiles back down on your rack and let the game continue. Again, it's JUST FOR FUN!

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. It helps everyone learn and remember, it's JUST FOR FUN!