

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION

NATIONAL MAH JONGG LEAGUE

JANUARY 2026 | OUR 89TH YEAR

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OUR 89th YEAR!

Dear NMJL Members,

Thank you for being an integral part of our growing and thriving Mah Jongg community. This has been a very gratifying year.

We enjoy watching famous personalities and media exposure discussing the game and are glad to see so many tournaments and teachers supporting the game. But we know it all begins with you, playing the NMJL card with friends while enjoying the connection, stimulation and friendship that make the game so special for all of us.

This year's card was challenging but played very well according to your calls and letters. Beginners found their way to easier hands while advanced players enjoyed the challenges. It was a great card.

We took your suggestions and recently published a new NMJL Online game for you. It's fresh, fun, and easy to play. Thousands of games have already been played so go to our website for more details.

Our Collectors did an outstanding job this year. As the lifeblood of the NMJL, they collected a record number of memberships. Their designated charities will receive more than \$1M this year from the NMJL. We are so proud of this wonderful partnership that helps so many. See our Honor Roll for specifics.

Please renew today to ensure timely card delivery in early April.

“Thank you for your loyalty and support. Continue to enjoy the game of Mah Jongg and share the joy of all that is accomplished.

Sincerely



Larry Unger, President

Mailbag

Dear NMJL,
Thank you for bringing light and hope to patients and families tackling childhood cancer.

-Tom Coughlin Jay Fund

Dear NMJL,
Thank you for your partnership and generous support of Damon Runyon. We deeply appreciate your dedication to our mission to fund the most brilliant young cancer researchers.

*-Yung Lie, Ph.D
CEO, Damon Runyon Cancer
Research Foundation*

Dear David and Larry,
Thank you for NMJL's support of Valley Hospital's Serve, Care, Transform project. It ensures that New Jersey communities will have access to the highest level of care for years to come.

*-David Bohan,
Chief Philanthropy Officer, Valley Hospital*

Dear NMJL,
These donations will directly benefit combat wounded military personnel in the Lowcountry and will be allocated among deserving military charities.
Sincerely,

-Russ Spicer, CEO LFWMH

Dear NMJL,
Thank you for your increased support which makes a significant difference in the lives of patients and families facing cancer.

*-Michael Teitell, M.D.
Pres. UCLA Jonsson Cancer Center*

A BIG 'THANK YOU' TO OUR COLLECTORS

Our sincere appreciation for the dedicated players who worked so hard to collect 35 or more memberships and in return, received a donation to their favorite charity. All donation checks are mailed to those charities in October. Your efforts are the lifeblood of the League and make a big difference in the lives of so many. Thank you for a job well done!

Dear NMJL,
With the support of organizations like yours, the JCC has become a cornerstone of Long Island's community. Thank you for standing up with us.

-Nancy Waldbaum, President

Dear NMJL,
As a nonprofit academic health system, donations like yours fuel our progress and we are grateful for your support.

*-Jason Baxendale, MBA, JD
Northwestern Medicine*

Dear NMJL,
As a Dallas collector we appreciate your support of All Community Outreach, New Friends New Life, and Patient Care for Callier Center for Communication Disorders.

-Mary Kennedy

Want to Practice With the NMJL Card?

NMJL Online is always available. Join today.



<https://subscribe.nmjlonline.com/practice>



Mailbag

Dear NMJL,
Your gift allows us to maintain our healthcare, education, advocacy and youth services programs. We depend upon loyal donors like you that want to make a difference.

*-Vivianne Kovacs
National Treasurer Hadassah*

Dear NMJL,
Thank you for your significant gift to the Alzheimer's Association and the 'Longest Day' team. Your participation encourages many others to join the fight.

-J.Schatz

Dear NMJL,
Kudos to the people who made up the 2025 Mahj card. It is creative and challenging. As a player for 60+ years, I enjoy finding new hands. I've been a collector since 1994, raising money for Leukemia and Breast Cancer and St. Judes.

-Helaine Gesas #0422

Dear NMJL,
On behalf of the American Heart Association, we thank you for your generous donation.

*-Meg Gilmartin
Executive Director*

Dear NMJL,
Your support helps us connect care for nearly 4000 patients every day.

-Blanchard Valley Health Foundation

Dear NMJL,
Your donation has been immediately put to good use, toward our SAFE program, assisting women and families in finding their path to growth and independence in Kent and Sussex County.

-Lisa Obermire

Dear NMJL,
Your generosity helps protect endangered sea turtles as well as support rehab, research and marine biological education.

*-Andy Dehart
President, Loggerhead Marine Life Center*

Dear NMJL,
Thanks to your support, 3 new scholarship recipients will benefit from the opportunities that come with being connected to the WLP program at USF.

*-The Women in Leadership and
Philanthropy at USF team*

Dear NMJL,
We are deeply grateful for your ongoing investment in our students and dedication to our mission.

*-Jill Lloyd, Executive Director,
Inner City Scholarship Fund*

Dear NMJL,
A child's wish begins with hope. And hope begins with you. We are grateful you are part of our caring community

*-John Healy, CEO
Make a Wish*

Mailbag

National Mah Jongg League named 2025 Distinguished Philanthropist of the Year Award for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital

- Since 2011, the League's gifts have fueled pioneering research in the Pediatric Cancer Genome Project as well as a lab in the Inspiration4 Advanced Research Center.
- NMJL named an apartment in The Domino's Village patient family housing facility offering comfortable spaces for families during their most challenging times.
- Recently pledged naming opportunity commitment to the new Clinical Center.
- The dedication and generosity of the NMJL exemplifies the spirit of philanthropy and the profound impact that dedicated supporters can have on the lives of children and families at St. Jude.

Discovering Mahjongg

I have tried to stay busy as I have aged,
Staying connected with friends and keeping
my mind engaged.

A few years ago, I thought to myself that
maybe golf I should play? But I'm not a fan
of walking after a ball all day.

Maybe I will learn to crochet or knit?

It turns out you need patience to do that,
which I haven't a bit. I thought some more
what to do. Then Mah Jongg came to me out
of the blue.

I started playing weekly and joined another
group, they are wonderful women and
sometimes we share scoops. We talk about
our health, travels and other fun stuff.

Mah Jongg involves good fortune and using
your brain, but it isn't too tough.

Playing with such lovely ladies is second
to none. The combination of strategy and
luck makes it fun. I play to win, but also for
friendship, which is great, We eat chips, fruit
and other snacks on a plate.

The game starts with East rolling the dice.
We try to keep track which way to go, which
is nice. The exciting element of the game
keeps everyone on their toes. Sometimes we
chat and laugh so much we forget who goes.

Playing Mah Jongg has led to meeting other
friends while away. I recommend learning
Mah Jongg and don't delay.

You'll meet nice people and joy will abound.
People play on Long Island and all around.

-Adrienne Wilber

Q&A

You Asked Us

Changes on our Mah Jongg card are never arbitrary. We make changes because we wish to make the game more challenging and interesting. All new rules and changes are tested and well thought out by a Committee. We test the new card 3 days a week, 6 hours a day from the end of August thru the first week in November. Any and all recommendations and suggestions are welcome.

.....

1 Q. Is a Joker that was exposed before a hand has been called dead available for redemption?

A. Jokers may be exchanged from any and all exposures that were made before a hand is declared dead. Exception: If a hand was declared dead because the exposures were found to be part of a concealed hand, those exposures must be returned to the rack and no Jokers are redeemable.

.....

2 Q. Please explain #7 on the back of the card under "Calling for a Discard." What is meant by "number and type of tiles"?

A. Once you call and place a tile on top of your rack, you may add or subtract from the exposure until you either initiate a joker exchange or discard. The called tile may not be returned to the table.

.....

3 Q. Please clarify: Can a joker be used in the consecutive run 112345?

A. You may not use a joker in the run 112345. This is a grouping of singles and a pair. You may only use jokers in groups of identical tiles, such as Pungs, Kongs and Quints.

.....

4 Q. Please tell me if this is done correctly, Debbie is playing a quint hand. The player to the left of Debbie discards a 7 crak. Debbie calls the 7 crak. Debbie exposes on her rack: 77JJ, only four tiles. Debbie then steals a Joker from the player to her right. Debbie places the Joker with her four tiles: 77JJJ. Now she has five in her exposure for her Quint and her turn is over.

A. Once an exposure has been made, a player cannot then initiate a Joker exchange and add the Joker to the exposure. Although it is the same turn, these are two separate moves. If the Joker stays in the exposure and the player discards, the player has an incorrect exposure and the hand should be declared dead.

.....

5 Q. During a Joker exchange, Player B erroneously put an 8 crak onto Player A's rack. Player A noticed the error before discarding and replaced the incorrect 8 crak with the proper tile, a 3 crak. Is this legal?

A. If Player A had noticed the error immediately, she could have returned the 8 crak to Player B and put the Joker back in its place. However, once Player B discarded, Player A had an erroneous exposure and her hand should have been declared dead, with no penalty to Player B. You may never exchange a symbol tile for another symbol tile, and Joker exchanges should be done hand-to-hand over the table.

.....

Q&A

You Asked Us

6 Q. Can you call someone dead if you have their tiles which are needed for a pair in your hand?

A. You may not call a player's hand dead based on the tiles in your hand, only based on tiles visible to all - either discarded on the table or exposed on the racks

.....

7 Q. Two players want a discarded tile. Neither will Mah Jongg with it. Does it matter if the tile has been racked by the first to call for it?

A. When two players want the same tile for exposure, the player nearest in turn to the discarder gets preference, unless the other caller has claimed the discard by either placing the called tile on top of their rack or exposing tiles from their hand.

.....

8 Q. Is there a new rule that allows you to call a Joker for mahjongg?

A. No, you may never call a discarded Joker for any reason. On rare occasion a Joker may be misnamed and a player, not watching the table, will call the misnamed tile for mahjongg. In that case the game ceases and the misnamer pays claimant 4 times the value of the hand. The caller does not have mahjongg, as a tile cannot be claimed until correctly named.

.....

9 Q. It is my turn, and someone has just discarded a 5 crak. I hesitate and touch a tile on the wall. I do not put the tile on my rack or look at the tile. I then decided to take the 5 crak. Am I dead?

A. You may, when it is your turn, touch a tile on the wall, then change your mind and call the prior discard. Your hand is not dead if you do so. If you move the tile, however, you cannot change your mind and put the tile back in its place.

10 Q. I have an etiquette question. I play each week with a group of six tables. We are all at a similar skill level, except one who is a tournament player. She wins almost every game, leaving the other players feeling hopeless. We don't mind losing, but there must be some possibility of winning. Can you make any suggestions on how to solve this problem?

A. It can be frustrating to play with a player who always wins, but rather than feeling hopeless, try to up your game! You may ask her for some tips, or pay very close attention to why she wins so often. Pay attention to the tiles you give her in the Charleston and see what she keeps. Notice what hands she gravitates to and play defensively to not give her too much information about your hand. Since you have six tables, make sure she rotates around so all players get a chance to learn from her.

.....

11 Q. I made a Singles and Pairs hand. Since it is Jokerless do I get paid double the amount shown on the card?

A. A player is paid double for a Jokerless hand. However, no Jokerless bonus is given for Singles and Pairs hands. These are inherently made without Jokers and are paid accordingly.

.....

12 Q. Do "calling a tile" and "claiming a tile" mean the same thing?

A. No. Calling means verbally announcing the intent to take a tile (e.g., "call," "take"). Claiming means actually taking it—by placing the called tile on top of the rack or exposing matching tiles from the sloping part of the rack.

NEW RULE

A tile that is called for either an exposure or for Mah Jongg must be placed on the top of the rack.

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You are responsible for shipping charges on returned merchandise. This includes the shipping charge to you as well as the returned shipment. Items must be returned with original wrapping and packaging. A re-stocking fee of 10% will be charged on all returned merchandise.

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