

EMA Riichi Rules 2025

Official Annotations

This document is a companion to the 2025 EMA Riichi rulebook. It is intended to provide extra information to people with an in-depth interest in the details of the rules and the ideas behind them. The rulebook itself is still considered a complete document – many items in this list can be derived from it.

The first section lists minor fixes that would be edited into the rulebook if it were a living document.

The second section contains clarifications of rules.

The third section goes more in depth on the procedures of playing in person and handling tiles and sticks.

The fourth section discusses the ideas behind the rules and wordings used.

June 2026
EMA Riichi Rules Committee

Errata

2.2 "Prevalent Wind"

The correct term is "Round Wind".

3.3.8 Tenpai and Noten Example 1

Because all four 9m are part of the hand; the hand could only be completed with a nonexistent fifth 9m.

5.4. "last discarded tile"

"most recent discard"

5.7. Avoid disruptions

Players should also avoid making any unnecessary loud noises.

6.2. "If the tiles were exposed due to no mistake on a player's part, there is a re-deal of the hand, with no penalty."

Riichi sticks are returned to the declarers, in addition to no counters added and no dealer rotation.

6.4.3

Discarding a tile out of turn is punished with a dead hand. The discard is returned to the player.

6.6 "If a player attempts to declare riichi with no tiles in the wall, the riichi declaration is voided and the riichi bet is returned to the player with no penalty."

This is a minor error.

6.7.1 Concealed quad after riichi

As an example of an allowed concealed quad:

123456m7779p [8888p], where the 8p quad has been called before the riichi declaration, you are allowed to call a concealed quad of 7p after riichi.

The rule in 3.3.10 is specifically worded to allow this.

In the 7779p shape, the 7s are interpreted as a pair and part of a sequence with the waiting tile 8p. However, in the above hand, the hand already contains all four 8p. Therefore the 8p is not a waiting tile; therefore the pair-and-sequence does not exist in any "hand completed with any waiting tile".

6.7.1 Concealed quad after riichi - Example 1 (3367m 234p 333345s draw 6s)

If the player attempts to call a quad like this after riichi, they should immediately be punished with a chombo.

Clarifications

3.3.1 Melded set "and/or made with similar immediacy"

In other words, an extremely fast chi call does not override an immediate pon/kan call.

3.3.7 Liability

- "Called" includes concealed quads.
- With the current wording, feeding a claimed quad does trigger liability. Of course, turning a concealed triplet into an open quad is usually a bad move, as it reveals critical information. But it can be done if you specifically want to target someone.
- The hand having any other yakuman (All Honors, Four Quads) does not affect liability in any way.

3.7 "Any riichi bets remaining on the table are collected by the winner; the points are split in case of a tie (any decimals are rounded down)."

If three players tie for first with one stick, each will get 333. With two sticks, 666. If there's three sticks, they all get 1000 points. If there's 4, it's for each 1333 and so on. It is not known if this has ever happened.

6.2. "Even after the hand ends, the players must not expose tiles from the wall, the dead wall, or other players' hands."

Revealing your own hand is fine.

6.5.1 "the player should take the claimed tile within the next two players' turns, i.e. before two other tiles have been discarded."

If the player declares a win within this timeframe, they can still take the claimed tile.

6.5.3 Confusing calls: "A player who... uses a nonstandard term"

The list of three examples here is not exhaustive. In principle, any word or phrase that is not "ron" or "tsumo" is treated in the same way. For example, declaring a win by saying "ippatsu", "sore da" or "bangaranga" would all be treated the same as using "mahjong".

6.5.6 Swap-calling: "punished with a dead hand"

Immediately upon discarding, with no chance of reverting.

6.6.2 Declaring riichi with a noten hand

If the player had a tenpai hand before discarding, but their hand became noten due to discarding the wrong tile, it is counted as "declaring riichi with a noten hand".

6.11 "Passing information or hints"

Whether true or false or something else.

Detailed Procedures

2.7 The dora indicator: "turning the top tile over"

Done by the player in front of the dead wall. If the dice roll is 2, either South or West can turn the dora indicator.

2.8 " Whenever possible, the dice are placed at East's right; this way, it is always clear to all players which player is East."

On an automatic table this is not possible. The table may have a dealer indicator but this is not necessarily always reliable. Take appropriate adjustments when playing on automatic tables.

When using a compass or similar item, it is permissible to put the dice on it. However, they should not be put in a position that could indicate the wrong person as East (for example, to the West's right).

3.3 "East should wait until all players have seen their tiles before making the first discard"

To be specific: The East should check that all players have drawn all their tiles and seen them. South also should not draw if they notice that, for example, North has not drawn their 13th tile.

The players should turn their tiles upright at a reasonable pace, and not delay the game by sorting the tiles before viewing all of them.

3.3. "[Players] should keep the drawn tile separate from their hand"

Putting the tile on top of the hand is fine.

3.3. "Placing the drawn tile inside the hand after waiting a few seconds is allowed, e.g. if the player needs to think about a complicated shape."

This should be done only if necessary. It should not be done constantly. Intentionally abusing this for the purpose of hiding which tile was drawn is wasting time.

3.3. "Players should take care to discard tiles without covering the faces with their hand, and so that every player sees the face of the tile at the same time."

If a discard is obscured so that not every player can see it, then the next player should wait before it is visible to everyone before drawing or calling chi.

3.3.1 "The most recently discarded tile may be claimed for a triplet/quad by any other player until the next player draws."

This rule should not be interpreted strictly. When playing at a reasonably fast pace, it is normal for a player to call a tile while the next player is in the process of drawing a tile. The drawing player may even see the face of the tile, but this is still ok.

Once the player has completed their draw by placing it down, it's probably too late unless the draw was very fast. Once the player discards (or puts the tile inside their hand after waiting a few seconds), it is definitely too late.

3.3.3 Melded set: "the order of the two actions is not important"

The following rule of thumb could be recommended:

- If you know what you want to discard, discard first and then take the tile.
- If you have to think about what you want to discard, take the tile while thinking.

3.3.10 "riichi bet is returned to the riichi declarer."

(if any). Because the tile is supposed to be discarded before placing the bet, in most cases the bet is never placed before the tile is claimed for the win.

3.3.10 "must not touch the tiles of their hand."

After riichi, the rule is stricter than the rule about not putting the tile inside the hand immediately. Putting the tile at the edge of the hand or on top of the hand are both errors.

3.4.4 Counters

There currently seems to be no global consensus on how exactly to place the counters and riichi sticks. The EMA rulebook does not specify it either. The important thing is that the counters and sticks are visible to all players and not obscured by the edge of the table/mat or East's called sets. For example, a stick placed along South's edge of the mat may be difficult for South to see.

3.5. "the tiles are shuffled face-down"

All players should work together to turn the tiles face down and only start shuffling after that is done.

3.6 "A calculator may be used for this purpose."

This may be the calculator of a phone.

4.1 "Each player has the primary responsibility for counting the han and minipoints of their own hand. They may ask for help if necessary"

Players should clearly and promptly say if they do not know how to score their hand, so that the other players may help them.

4.1.4 "a player may be asked at any time to count up their sticks."

During a hand, the appropriate time for this is the turn of the asking player (including before the player draws). Another player's turn shouldn't be interrupted for a score check.

4.1.4 " The player should borrow point sticks"

This should also be done if the player doesn't have enough points left to declare riichi or place counters

5.2 "East indicates which wall is to be broken"

Verbally or with a gesture.

5.4 "Players must not obscure any discards or called sets with their hand or arm"

Fixing a messy discard pile is acceptable if done quickly. Excessively fixing the discards just obstructs the others' view of them for no reason.

5.5. "Players should discard tiles swiftly and cleanly so that every opponent sees the discarded tile at the same time. Slowly revealing a tile, or slowly sliding it from the hand to the discards, should be avoided."

If a player reveals a tile and it's not clear if it's a discard or not, the other players should wait for the player to clarify whether or not it's a discard before taking any action.

5.6. "When scoring is done with sticks..."

When handling multiple payments (tsumo, multiple ron), it is allowed to settle each payment sequentially and use the sticks from that payment for the next payment.

For example, when winning a 1,300/2600 tsumo, where the players give 1300, 1500 and 3100, you can:

1. Take the 1300 points
2. Give two 100 point sticks from that as change for the 1500 payment and take the 1500
3. Give the 500 point stick from that as the change for the 3100 payment.

5.6. "arrange their point sticks in advance if they have time."

When playing on a junk mat or a similar setup with visible point boxes, each player should have their sticks in the same order of largest to smallest. This way, if a point stick accidentally falls to the corner of the mat, it will be clear whose point box it came from.

The ideas behind the rules

2.4 "When Shuffling the tiles by hand"

The other option is an automatic table. Or a computer program.

3.3.8 "During a player's turn, their hand is considered tenpai if it is possible for it to be tenpai after discarding."

Relevant for declaring riichi.

3.3.10 "the tiles can be interpreted as three identical sequences"

There are actually hands where the shape is interpreted as sequences for maximum score.

3.4.2. "Players announce whether they are tenpai or noten in order... Declaring out of turn is not penalized, but the announcement cannot be changed."

This is important in all-last situations. It also helps prevent players erroneously revealing their hand before the exhaustive draw.

4.1.2 "any base value greater than 1,900 becomes 2,000."

Mangan round-up (Kiriage Mangan)

5.2 Breaking the walls: "based on the dice roll"

8 can be quite difficult to split as East.

6.7.2 Drawn tile touching the hand after Riichi

The idea is to prevent cheating by swapping tiles into the hand with sleight-of-hand tricks.

6.8 "In the case where the winning tile is placed by the discards before the player clearly calls tsumo"

The idea is to prevent a player waiting for others' reactions to the discard before deciding whether or not to call "tsumo" (for example with a cheap winning tile).

6.10 Misfilled all-last sheet: "if it impacted the game"

This can only be judged case by case. Player testimony is key.

7.5 "Different tournaments may use different procedures for score sheets and all-last sheets."

For example, mandating that players have a referee check and sign their score sheet before returning it.

6.6 Errors with riichi declaration

The underlying principles here are:

- Discarding a tile and waiting for the opponents' reactions before deciding whether to declare riichi gives the player extra information and must not be allowed.
- Tiles may be discarded sideways by accident. Therefore, a sideways discard by itself should never count as declaring riichi.
- Both saying "riichi" and placing a riichi bet tell the other players that the player is either Tenpai or close to it. Therefore, doing either of these without actually declaring riichi would be passing information.

Therefore, saying "riichi" and placing a riichi bet are treated as equivalent when it comes to committing a riichi. After either, the riichi cannot be cancelled without receiving a dead hand, and a tile may be discarded for a valid riichi. However, starting with the riichi stick is a minor error while starting with the call is proper play.

Any other intentional actions that communicate that the player is Tenpai or close to it, such as fiddling with a Riichi stick while thinking, could be punished with a dead hand for passing information at the referee's discretion.

Discarding a tile and waiting for the opponent's reactions before cancelling a riichi must also not be allowed. Therefore a player is locked into a declared riichi after discarding.

Not clearly calling "riichi" could lead to the other players missing the riichi declaration. Not rotating the tile could lead to issues with determining furiten. Therefore failing to do either is punished with a dead hand.

A missing Riichi stick is easy to correct later. Forgetting to rotate a tile after the riichi discard was called is a common accident and easy to fix. Therefore these are not punished. If repeated, they could be punished like minor errors.