



EMA requirements and guidelines for MERS tournaments (ERGMT)

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In promoting international tournaments (and rankings based on their results), we need to ensure that tournaments are executed in an orderly and uniform manner. For this reason we have compiled the requirements and guidelines below.

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1. MERS certification procedure for a tournament

1.1. Application

Any EMA member organization or applicant country can apply for certification of a tournament. The application should be expressed by an application form sent by the EMA board member of the member organization or applicant country to the board of EMA at the latest 12 weeks ahead of the tournament, and at the earliest one year in advance. The application form is available on the [EMA website](#).

1.2. Tournament planning

While scheduling conflicts cannot be entirely eliminated, coinciding tournaments should be minimized wherever possible. Organizers should always consult the EMA calendar before applying for certification.

Tournaments of the same ruleset are considered to be coinciding if there is less than 36 hours between the end of the last session of a tournament and the start of the first session of the other tournament.

1.2.1. Protected Tournament

When applying for MERS certification, every country can designate one tournament per ruleset as a "Protected Tournament".

To receive MERS certification for a Protected Tournament:

- the tournament must at least meet the minimum conditions of a 2 day tournament ;
- the Protected Tournament designation must be requested at the moment of the application, it cannot be performed afterwards ;
- the designation as Protected Tournament can only occur once between the 1st of January and the 31st of December of the same year.
- The application must be sent to the board at least 16 weeks ahead of the tournament.

A tournament cannot be designated as a Protected Tournament if this tournament coincides with another Protected Tournament of the same ruleset.

The date and time of reception of the application at the EMA is decisive to determine who requested certification for a Protected Tournament first. If applications have been received at the same exact date and time, there will be a lot drawing held by the EMA Presidium to decide which country's event can be designated a Protected Tournament in the case the organisations cannot agree among themselves to resolve the scheduling overlap.

1.2.2. Coinciding Tournaments

a) European Championships

No tournament may coincide with an European Championship of the same ruleset.

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b) Protected Tournaments

Organizers requesting certification for a tournament that coincides with a Protected Tournament of the same ruleset must make a written request to the country holding the Protected Tournament before sending an application. The country holding the Protected Tournament has to accept or reject the request within two weeks; a lack of response will be treated as acceptance.

Organizers cannot request certification for a Protected Tournament if it will coincide with another tournament of the same ruleset for which certification has already been requested.

c) Other tournaments

Tournaments that are neither European Championships or Protected Tournaments are allowed to coincide without restrictions.

1.3. Decision

MERS certification is granted to the tournament automatically after two weeks (since the date of receipt of the application form) if no protests were raised by board members. In case protests are raised, certification is granted after the decision of the board.

2. Number of participants and quotas for a tournament

2.1. Number of participants

There must be at least 16 players from EMA member countries participating (80 players for European Championship); the maximum number of players cannot be lower than 32 players.

The organiser is allowed to set a minimum player requirement for the tournament, if holding the tournament with fewer players would be impractical e.g. due to financial issues. If the required player count is not met by the registration deadline, the organiser can cancel the tournament. The limit must be approved by the Board and must be clearly communicated on the tournament website.

2.2. Quotas

a) European Championships

EMA is responsible for player quotas for European championships (OEMC or ERMIC). Quotas are based on the strength and presence of players in the ranking system. The details of determining quotas are found on [EMA's web site](#).

These quotas are dynamic and the quotas are finalized 6 months before events. Until finalization, the quotas are continuously updated on the EMA web site along with the ranking, allowing constant monitoring of the current preview of country quotas.

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b) Other tournaments

In other tournaments, 25% of the maximum number of seats must be allocated to players outside the local national organization. This quota expires when at least four weeks have passed since the sending of the tournament application, and at least two weeks have passed since the opening of registration.

The organizers may also allocate up to 50% of the maximum number of seats to the local national organization. This quota expires two weeks after the opening of registration.

These quotas apply to the maximum number of seats during their respective time periods. If the size of the tournament is increased later, the quotas are not re-applied. This must not be intentionally abused to e.g. reduce the seats guaranteed to non-local players.

2.3. Waiting Lists

If the number of registered players exceeds the maximum number of seats, the exceeding players must be placed onto a waiting list. This also applies if seats are restricted by a quota.

When players cancel their registrations, or when the quotas expire, the players on the waiting list are entered into the tournament in order of registration.

However, if the size of the tournament is increased, then non-local players are entered into the tournament first before any local players.

2.4. Player eligibility

Certified tournaments must, in principle, be open for participation for all players no matter their nationality.

Certified tournaments must operate a fair and transparent registration process. For example, first-come, first-served.

Players with EMA numbers must provide their EMA number to the tournament organisers.

EMA member countries can require players representing them to obtain an EMA number from the country's national association before they participate in a tournament. The list of countries which require this can be found on the EMA website.

The tournaments must be a welcoming and safe environment for all players. Players with disabilities or other conditions affecting their ability to participate must be accommodated within reason.

The organizers have the right to refuse the participation of a player who does not know the rules of the ruleset being played.

The organizers have the right to exclude a player who poses a threat to the safety and/or well-being of the tournament or its players.

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3. Tournament requirements and guidelines

This paragraph contains requirements and guidelines on tournament organization.

Requirements are phrased as 'must', all other types of phrasing are guidelines or recommendations.

3.1. Location

The place should be easily accessible for players. Organizers should choose a venue well served by public transportation. Also they should give information regarding parking areas.

3.2. Playing room and playing conditions

The playing room should be big enough to play in comfortable conditions. Tables with a minimum area of 70cm x 70cm should be used and the space per table should allow referees to move easily between players. Tables should preferably be square, with a soft surface and a lip (or be furnished with a soft, lipped mat).

Give consideration to ventilation or air conditioning when organizing a summer tournament, and a heating system when organizing a winter tournament. Take care to consider quiet conditions. Organizers should also consider good lighting conditions, cover windows in case of direct sunlight, and remove or cover any mirrors in the room.

Provide an area to store belongings and adequate toilet facilities for the number of participants; if there are few toilets, consider lengthening the breaks. Provide enough break space for the players to use after their games are over but other games are still in progress.

3.3. Information

The tournament must be announced on the website of the organizing EMA member state and/or on a specific website for this tournament. A direct link to the tournament webpage must be submitted to the tournament calendar on the EMA website at least 12 weeks before the tournament. These webpage(s) must include information in English on:

- Dates, location, name of event
- Tournament format
- Registration procedure and fee
- Date and time of opening of registration, if applicable. Registration should be open to public at least 8 weeks before the date of the tournament
- Date and time of closure of registration, and payment deadline
- Time schedule
- Usage of personal data including photos
- Any specific requirements regarding health and security measures
- Prizes (e.g. prizes for individual ranking 1st, 2nd, 3rd. Team prize for best team.)
- Referees
- EMA observer (when decided)
- List of participants and waiting list (regularly updated)
- Catering
- Procedure if a player wants to cancel their registration
- Procedure in case of cancellation of the tournament
- Info on accommodation and local transport in a way that is accessible for non-locals.

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3.4. Registration fee for tournaments

Organisers should not aim to profit from hosting tournaments. The registration fee should be used to cover costs directly related to the organization of the tournament, and the maintenance of equipment used for tournaments.

3.5. Registration procedures

Organizers may decide whether to open registration for a tournament immediately or on a specific date.

If organizers choose to open registration on a specific date, this date must be at least 8 weeks before the first day of the tournament and the date that registration opens must be advertised on the tournament website at least two weeks in advance of opening.

The organizer can choose to only accept registrations in groups of four players. The organizer can choose to not accept registrations until a player's tournament fee has been received.

3.6. Tournament rule sets

MERS tournaments must adhere to the official EMA rules for the respective rule set. Mahjong Competition Rules are published by the World Mahjong Organization and amended for European competitions by the MCR Tournament Regulations and the Referee Manual published by EMA. The EMA Riichi Competition Rules (RCR) for Japanese Mahjong are published by EMA.

3.7. Tournament format

MCR tournaments must include at least the minimum number of sessions and minimum length of sessions stated below :

1 day	4 sessions	of	120 minutes
2 days	7 sessions	of	120 minutes
3 days	10 sessions	of	120 minutes

The Standard for MCR tournaments is to not have more than 4 sessions a day, but it is allowed to have more if clearly announced on the tournament webpage.

Note that the gong is sounded 5 minutes before the scheduled end time of the session. After the gong the current hand is played to the end.

RCR tournaments must include at least the minimum number of sessions and minimum length of sessions stated below. Note that the gong is sounded 15 minutes before the scheduled end time of the session. After the gong the current hand is played to the end and at most one more hand is played.

1 day	4 sessions	of	90 minutes
2 days	7 sessions	of	90 minutes
3 days	11 sessions	of	90 minutes

The Standard for RCR tournaments is to not have more than 5 sessions a day, but it is allowed to have more if clearly announced on the tournament webpage.

A break should be present between 2 sessions. The duration of this break, at least 15 minutes, is depending on the number of participants and should permit all players to rest and to consult the

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results of the previous session. Lunch breaks should be at least 30 minutes and should consider the logistics of all players getting lunch and rest.

During the tournament results of previous sessions must be clearly displayed before the beginning of the next session.

During the tournament the remaining time of the current session must be clearly displayed on a countdown clock visible from all tables.

3.8. Table matchings

Table matching at the tournament must be done in a transparent and random fashion, in the presence of the players at the start of the tournament or at an event before. If the latter, the event must be open to players, streamed live and/or recorded, so that the fairness of the drawing can be verified.

Organisers are encouraged to determine starting wind (E, S, W, N) for each player. For riichi this should be done as fairly as possible, so that the starting winds are equally distributed. The rotation pattern should be assigned randomly to the players.

3.9. Play materials and tournament equipment

Mahjong tile sets should be standard sets. For special occasions, flower tiles and bamboo 1 and dot 1 could be redesigned as long as they are clearly identifiable.

The sets should be of a good size and homogeneous from one table to another, preferably without Arabic numbers.

The following equipment has to be present in all tournaments:

- Countdown clock visible from all tables
- Gong (or equivalent for sounding beginning and end of sessions)
- Tables, tiles, incl. spares in case of breakdown/loss
- Sheets or sticks for keeping score during play at the tables
- Sheets for recording final scores at the tables. For riichi: additionally an all-last sheet.
- Player schedules indicating starting time and table number for each session at a minimum. Additional information may include: starting wind and names of opponents.
- Sign at each table identifying the table number
- Sign displaying the direction of East (for MCR tournaments only)
- IT equipment for keeping scores and displaying or printing results before each session

The tournament organizers can use smartphone, tablet or computer applications to handle the scoring instead of score sheets or sticks. In this case, the organizers should have reserve devices available for tables where no player has a smartphone with the app or where no player consents to their smartphone being used for scoring purposes. The application must be configured to accurately follow all rules of the ruleset used. The application should be in English and the organizers must make sure every player knows how it works. A device used for scoring should always be on the table and visible to all players, and should not be used for other purposes during the session. The device should be in silent mode. Calls and messages received by the device are not penalized, but should be dismissed immediately. Tournament organizers must not make it a requirement for players to use personal devices for participation in an event.

3.10. Substitute players

The organisers are responsible for always having substitute players available during sessions. In case of illness, absence or other unforeseen events, the referee must be able to replace missing players with substitute players. If enough substitutes cannot be provided, the organizers can use referees as substitute players. If there is no reasonable way to provide enough substitutes, a

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table(s) can be removed from the tournament. In this case, the pairings have to be redrawn (in compliance with section 3.8). If removing a table requires the removal of players from the tournament, the players removed should be (1) if applicable, playing referees and (2) players of the hosting nation. If the substitute player is in position to replace a player from the beginning of the tournament, organizers must ask the substitute, before the first round starts, if they want their results taken into account in the ranking.

Settlement of table points and ranking result of a substitute player are described in the "MERS Tournament Regulations" document for MCR and in EMA Riichi Rules for RCR.

Procedure for substitute player scoring:

If a player is replaced by a substitute for a session(s), but remains in the ranking list, the player's score for the session(s) will be

* 0 table points and 0 points in MCR.

* -15000 uma and -15000 points in Riichi.

Note that the table points / uma for the other players are affected differently depending on whether the substitution happened before or during the session.

- If the substitution happened during the session, the other three players will always be ranked 1st/2nd/3rd regardless of the substitute's score in the session.
- If the substitution happened before the session, their score in the table affects the ranking of the other players.

If a player withdraws from a tournament due to an unforeseen situation leading to the player's incapacity to continue to participate, they will be replaced in the ranking by a "SUBSTITUTE PLAYER" entry (unless the substitute played from the beginning of the tournament and wanted their results to be added into the ranking). These are ranked below any non-disqualified players in the ranking.

If a player is disqualified (e.g. due to cheating or unexcused absence), they will remain in the ranking list, ranked below any non-disqualified players and substitutes.

If a player was disqualified and replaced with another player, or a table was removed from the tournament, the disqualified player can be reported as an additional last-place player that does not increase the size of the tournament.

3.11. Referees

Tournament organizers are responsible for appointing referees to manage issues during the tournament. The names of referees must be announced at the beginning of the tournament (before the first session starts).

For all tournaments, as a general guideline, one non-playing EMA-certified referee should be available per 32 players. The layout of the venue and the experience level of the players should be taken into account when choosing the number of referees.

For European championships, one non-playing EMA-certified referee must be available per 32 players. Also, countries are requested to appoint referees.

As part of the calculation of EMA member quota, a number of extra seats will be reserved in the invited player section, the so-called referee bonus seats. Their number is equal to the number of referees necessary for the championship. Following the call for referees by EMA, every member state that *voluntarily* provides a referee will be distributed an extra seat from the referee bonus seats. If after some period not all referee seats are filled, countries will be *requested* to provide a

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referee (and receive a bonus seat as a reward), according to their ranking in the player quota list.

Member states that have already provided a volunteer for this tournament or for the previous tournament in this rule set may pass the obligation to the next on the list.

The organizers should provide benefits for the referees.

- For European Championships, this should include as a minimum: accommodation from the night before the tournament to the last day of the tournament and catering and benefits during the tournament on the same level as the players. Funding part of the travel price is suggested.
- For other tournaments, the referees should at minimum be provided with catering, and any benefits received by the players. Funding accommodation, travel costs and/or participation in the organizer's other tournament(s) is suggested.

3.12. EMA observer

Tournament organizers are responsible for appointment of an EMA observer. The observer should preferably be an EMA board member from another country, or an experienced tournament player from another country.

The role of the EMA observer is to report to EMA whether the tournament organisation was satisfactory, and to report any complaints or irregularities communicated by players. The name of the observer must be announced to the players at the beginning of the tournament.

The EMA observer should submit a small report shortly after the tournament containing:

- Name of the EMA observer
- Tournament name, location and dates.
- Ruleset and MERS weight.
- Playing schedule: Number and length of playing sessions
- Number of participants and number of countries represented
- Names of the referees and whether they were playing or non-playing
- Number of prizes and what they are awarded for
- A few comments on the overall organisation, like playing venue, the equipment (tiles, tables), catering
- Information and communication before and during the tournament. Was a clock clearly visible during sessions, and were results clearly communicated between sessions?
- If any substitutions, disqualifications etc. occurred
- Irregularities experienced, if any
- Complaints received or questions raised, if any
- Brief conclusion

The observer should speak English and the report should be written in the English language. A template for observer reports is available on the EMA website. EMA observer reports will be publicly available on the EMA website.

3.13. Prizes – Trophies

The tournament must have at least one prize for the three highest ranked players.

Team prizes are customary in MCR but optional in both rulesets, either for the winning team, or for several teams, e.g. top 3 teams.

The tournament prizes cannot consist of money prizes, equivalent items such as gift cards, or items with a large resale value, given to the players.

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3.14. Submitting results

Organizers must submit tournament results to the ranking manager in the correct format with EMA ID numbers for players, as described on the EMA website.

Organizers are responsible for correct EMA-id's when submitting results to the EMA database manager.

3.15. Cancelling a tournament

If there is the risk that a tournament may be cancelled, the organizer must inform all registered players of the risk. If a tournament has to be cancelled, the organizer must inform all registered players and refund all registration fees.

3.16 Personal information policy

The names, nationalities and results of all participants can be published freely.

The tournament organizers have the right to take photos and video of the tournament and its participants. However, they must inform the players of their photo/video policy on the tournament website and/or the registration form. The registration form must contain a field for the player's consent to being photographed or recorded. This may also include options for limited photography or recording, e.g. only consenting to podium photos.

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4. Complaints and Sanctions

If a tournament fails to follow the requirements above, the players or other concerned parties may raise a complaint by:

- Contacting the EMA Observer, who will add the complaint to the Observer Report
- Contacting their EMA representative

The national EMA representatives can contact the Board and/or Presidium of the EMA.

The tournament organizers are also encouraged to proactively report any unusual situations or rulings that happened during the tournament, via the Observer or their EMA representative, so that they can be discussed and a common guideline be established if needed.

The national association has the final responsibility for the proper organization of tournaments, and is the body the EMA will contact in response to a complaint. The national associations are responsible for their own member organizations and players.

Single and/or minor failures to meet the requirements are handled with suggestions of improvement, given by the Board and/or Presidium.

Major and/or repeated failures to meet the requirements may be punished by sanctioning a national association. The sanction process can be started with a formal complaint sent to the Presidium, or by the Presidium on its own initiative. The nature of the failure to meet requirements, its sanction and its level will be analyzed and proposed by the Presidium, and approved by the majority of the Board or a General Assembly

Sanctions may include:

- Formal warning
- Decrease or removal of MERS weight of an improperly organized tournament
- Loss of the MERS certification for one year
- Loss of quota or guaranteed seats for European and World Championships
- Loss of the affiliation to EMA
