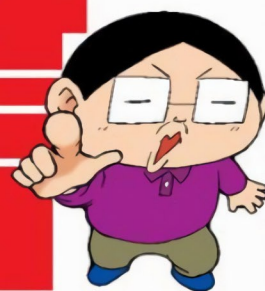


現代麻雀

令和版

押し引きの

教科書



Fukuchi Makoto
福地誠

押し引きに悩んじゃう人たちに
急所をつかませる画期的な
本だと思います。



鉄人文庫

Murakami Jun

村上 淳

赤坂ドリブンズ
最高位戦日本プロ麻雀協会



The Modern Mahjong

Reiwa Edition

Push-Pull

Textbook



Fukuchi Makoto
福地誠

"I believe this is a groundbreaking book that helps those who struggle with push-pull decisions grasp the core essentials."



鉄人文庫

Murakami Jun

村上 淳

Akasaka Driven
Saikouisen Nihon Pro Mahjong



Translator's Note

This English translation was written with the assumption that the reader has a basic familiarity with the terminology commonly used within the Riichi Mahjong community.

Where English terms have become established standards (e.g., *dealer*, *non-dealer*, *round*, *deal-in*), I have used them throughout. However, to maintain strategic accuracy and flow, I have retained the original Japanese loanwords for the core mechanics of the game. This includes relative table positions (*kamicha*, *shimocha*, *toimen*), wait shapes (*ryanmen*, *kanchan*, *penchan*, *shanpon*, *tanki*), and Yaku names (*Tanyao*, *Pinfu*, *Honitsu*, etc.).

Familiarity with foundational concepts such as *tenpai*, *noten*, *genbutsu*, *suji*, *damaten* etc. is also expected. While I have included inline explanations for more technical terms throughout the text, for any terms that remain unfamiliar, I highly recommend referencing the Riichi Mahjong Wiki. To handle table jargon, I applied my own interpretation for how these terms would best be translated, alongside input and consultations from active players in English-speaking community hubs.

Given how scarce translated literature can be in English, my goal was to provide an accessible and reliable resource for the community. I believe this text is well-suited as a guide for intermediate players working to move past the basics and navigate the nuances of the game. At the same time, because the book centers so heavily on the foundations of push-pull theory, it should serve as a compelling way for more experienced players to reflect on and review their own tactical balance. Hopefully, this edition serves as a worthwhile addition to your collection.

- Kakino

The Modern Mahjong Push-Pull Textbook

Reiwa Edition





Introduction

Why focus on "Push-Pull"?

80% of victory or defeat is determined by push-pull!

This is the **first-ever** Mahjong strategy book specialized in "push-pull" (the decision to attack or defend). Some might think it's a very niche book, but in Mahjong, push-pull is the most important element.

How important is it? While push-pull skills likely account for less than 20% of total Mahjong technique, those decisions determine **over 80% of wins and losses**. A "80/20 rule" for Mahjong exists.

This number is based on my intuition and has no scientific proof, but I believe many strong players would say the same. Push-pull is just that critical.

However, isn't Mahjong a game about "**hand-building**"? You might wonder: Mahjong clearly looks like a hand-building game, so why is it that push-pull decides almost everything?

I have been a Mahjong writer for about 20 years, and this has been a long-standing question of mine. Experientially, push-pull is obviously the vital point. But looking at the game's structure, I couldn't quite make sense of it.

While creating this book, I finally found the answer. But let's not rush; first, let me explain what push-pull actually is.

Push-pull is a lottery!

Mahjong is a **game of luck**. No matter how poorly you play, you can still end up winning. That said, we all know there are no strong players among those who dismiss the game by saying, "Mahjong is just luck," or "It's all just intuition."

What does it take to win? It's about consistently making **accurate push-pull judgments**. So, what does "making accurate judgments" actually mean?

It means always **drawing "favorable lotteries."** Imagine every lottery ticket costs exactly 100 yen. Your goal is to only draw tickets with an expected value (EV) of 150 or 200 yen, and never touch the 30 or 50 yen ones.

Mahjong is an **imperfect information game**. You cannot see the tiles in the wall or your opponents' hands. Yet, unlike a simple game of Rock-Paper-Scissors, there are many **hints** scattered about to help you discern if a situation is favorable or not. By gathering these hints, you can largely avoid "losing lotteries."

From the outside, strong and weak players seem to win and lose in similar ways. However, from an EV perspective, strong players only target tickets worth 100 yen or more. Weak players, on the other hand, buy the 30 or 50 yen tickets along with the good ones.

Consequently, the total payout over time is starkly different, and strong players keep winning. Strong players are people who only buy tickets with an EV of 100 yen or more. If you buy those tickets **like a machine, you will win overwhelmingly.**

Mahjong is that kind of game. Strong players are those who keep buying **invisible winning tickets**.

Reborn as a game where push-pull is critical!

Now, let's return to the topic mentioned at the start. Why is Mahjong's outcome decided by the "invisible" push-pull rather than the "visible" hand-building?

Consider this example:

Players A and B both have good hands and reach Tenpai. Both declare Riichi. Players C and D fold. As a result of the showdown, Player A wins a Mangan from Player B. Including the Riichi sticks, Player A leads by 9,000 points. Players C and D are at ± 0 , and Player B is at -9,000 points.

Doesn't this result seem strange?

I understand Player A taking the lead. But why must Player B, who also had a great hand, end up in **last place**? If Mahjong were truly a game about "hand-building," Player B should surely receive some **points for effort** for constructing such a well arranged hand.

Don't you think it's **exceptionally harsh** for Player B to end up below C and D (who had bad hands) just because they dealt the winning tile?

The "discarder pays all" rule is unique to **Japanese Mahjong**; it's found nowhere else in the world. In fact, when Mahjong first arrived in Japan from China, the other three players shared the payment even for a win on discard(Ron), just like a win by self-draw (Tsumo).

However, our ancestors didn't like that. They thought, "Why should I have to pay points when someone else dealt the tile?" and so the rule where only the discarder pays the full amount was born. This happened around the 6th year of the Showa era (1931). It's unknown who started it, but the rule spread across the country in the blink of an eye.

That is the reason why push-pull became so incredibly important. Mahjong, which used to be **a game about building good hands**, was reborn as **a game of push-pull** at that moment. In other countries, Mahjong is still a hand-building game, but in Japan, push-pull is key due to these unique rules.

In short, my answer to "Why is push-pull so important?" is simply: "Because the rules of Japanese Mahjong are **distorted**."

I'm not trying to complain about the rules. It's only natural to think deeply about the rules when trying to figure out how to win. Finding the "distortions" in the rules and specializing in countermeasures for them is the path to victory.

Therefore, if you want to win, you have no choice but to master push-pull. Even if you are poor at hand-building, if your push-pull is accurate, you can become **incredibly strong**. That is the kind of Mahjong we play.

[Important] How to Use This Book

A serious attitude towards learning is unnecessary!

Skimming the explanations is more than enough!

Just glance through Chapter 3 once,

and there is no need to read Chapter 4 at all!



Please just roughly repeat Chapters 1 and 2!
Chapter 2 is overwhelmingly important!
Memorize the mottos (the rules of Push-Pull) by heart!

Don't try to master everything; the most important thing is to become able to reliably execute just the key rules.

Push-pull is like the multiplication tables; it's only worth something if you can actually use it. The rules are simple, but they are notoriously difficult to apply in the heat of a real match. Therefore, aim to be able to recall the rule mottos during play. Everything starts from there, and that alone is sufficient.

The attitude of "I must read this properly" or
"I must master everything" is strictly forbidden.

Just roughly go through Chapter 2 repeatedly.

For those who have way too much free time, reading the
"Pros Play Like This!" section at the end of each chapter will
be very effective.

Reiwa Edition: **Modern Mahjong | Push-Pull Textbook****Table of Contents**

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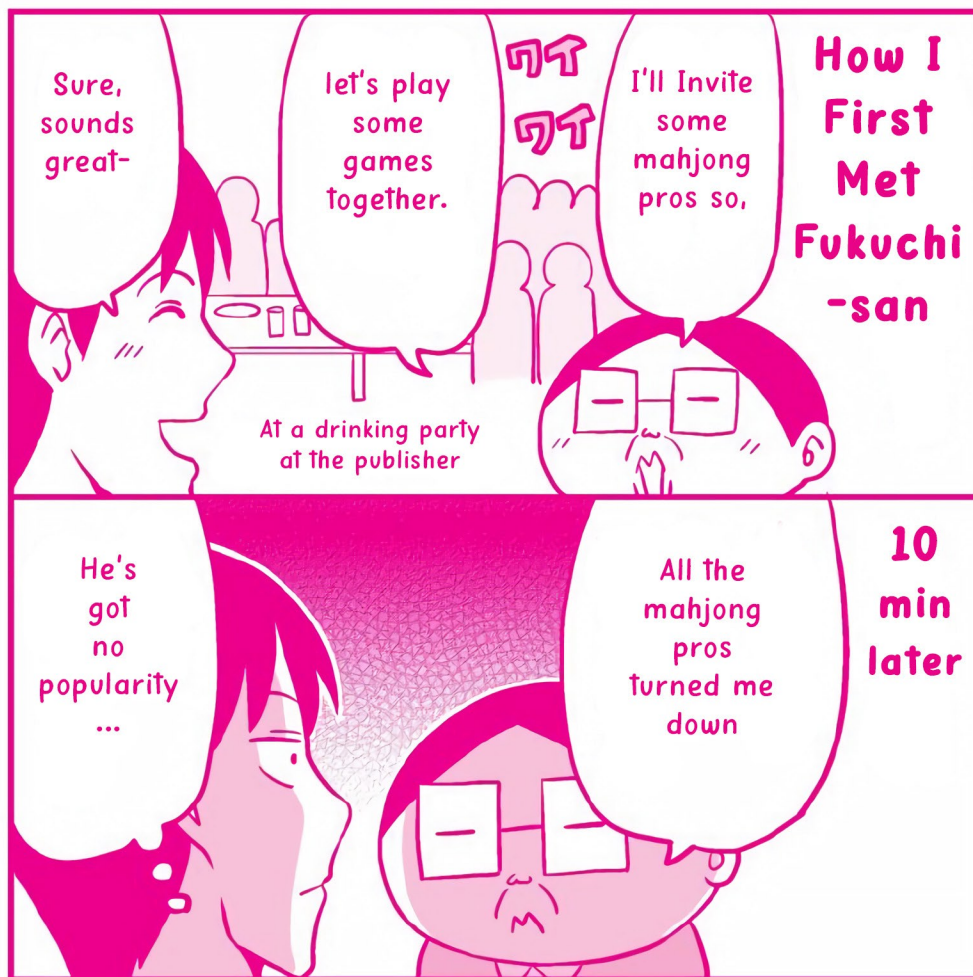
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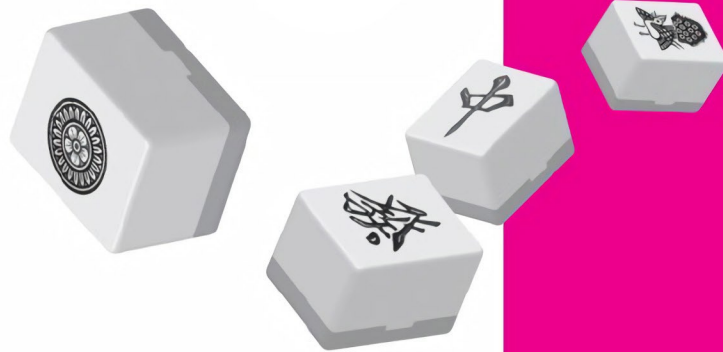
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Pros play like this! (Murakami Jun / Nemata) 125, 203, 293, 361



Push-Pull Based on Your Own Hand

chapter >>> 1



Two years
have passed
since then
and I
haven't
made a
single one

**Sure
I
can!**

Hey, hey
Kanno-kun, can't
you make a LINE
stamp collection
out of the
"Fukuchi-kun"
character?

(Excited)

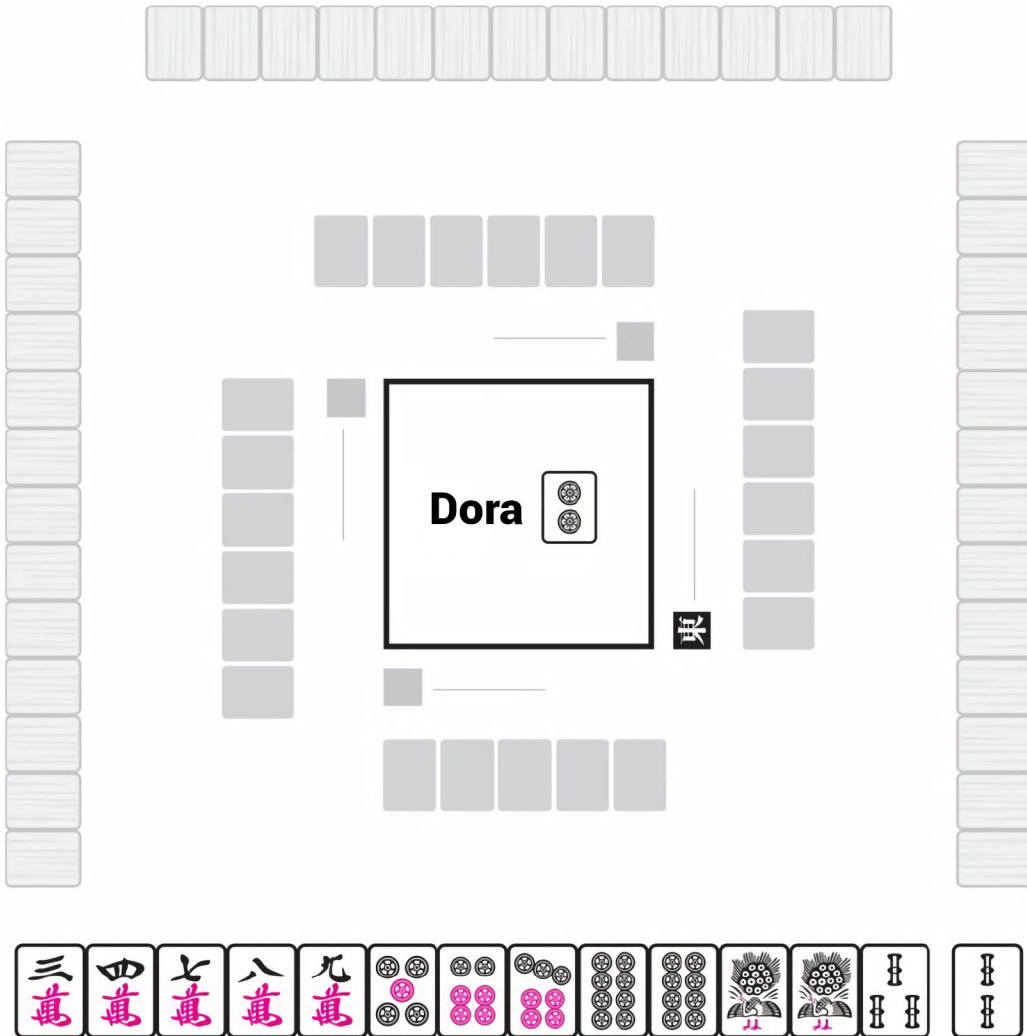
わく
わく

Illustrator
Kanno



Q
001 Pinfu only

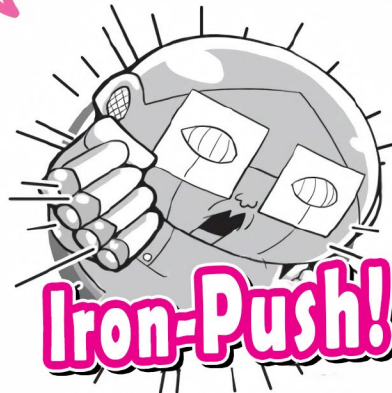
Tenpai with a Pinfu only hand.
Do you riichi this?



A 001 Riichi

A "Riichi Pinfu" hand as a non-dealer has an expected value (EV) of about 3,500 points. It is a hand well worth declaring Riichi for. Doesn't matter whether it's a **2-5** wait or middle waits like **3-6** or **4-7**, you should declare Riichi as a matter of course without worrying.

I declare Riichi in about
80-90% of these cases.



Push-Pull Rule

001

**Pinfu-only is a
standard Riichi!**

Lesson
1

What Are the Factors That Determine Push-Pull?

The 4 Constituent Elements

How many elements are there that determine whether to push or pull?

Push-pull is decided by these four:

- ① Hand value
- ② Wait quality
- ③ Closeness to tenpai
- ④ Current position (current holding points)

Whether you are the dealer or not is included in ①. Push-pull is made of a blend of these 4 elements.

Because these four intertwine and each element might suggest an opposite answer, push-pull is difficult. For example: "The hand value is high, but I'm far from tenpai, and I'm currently in last place—so is the conclusion to push? Or to pull?"

The important thing is the Shanten number

Actually, ④ (Position) is the last thing you should think about. Its importance is slightly lower. Therefore, the things you should consider first are: ①Hand value, ②Wait quality, and ③Closeness to tenpai.

Closeness to tenpai ③ is more important than you might think. Even with an unremarkable hand, if you can be the first player to call Riichi, then for most hands, Riichi is the correct answer. Conversely, even with a fairly good hand, if you are far from tenpai, you cannot push back when an opponent calls Riichi against you.

Push-Pull Rule so far

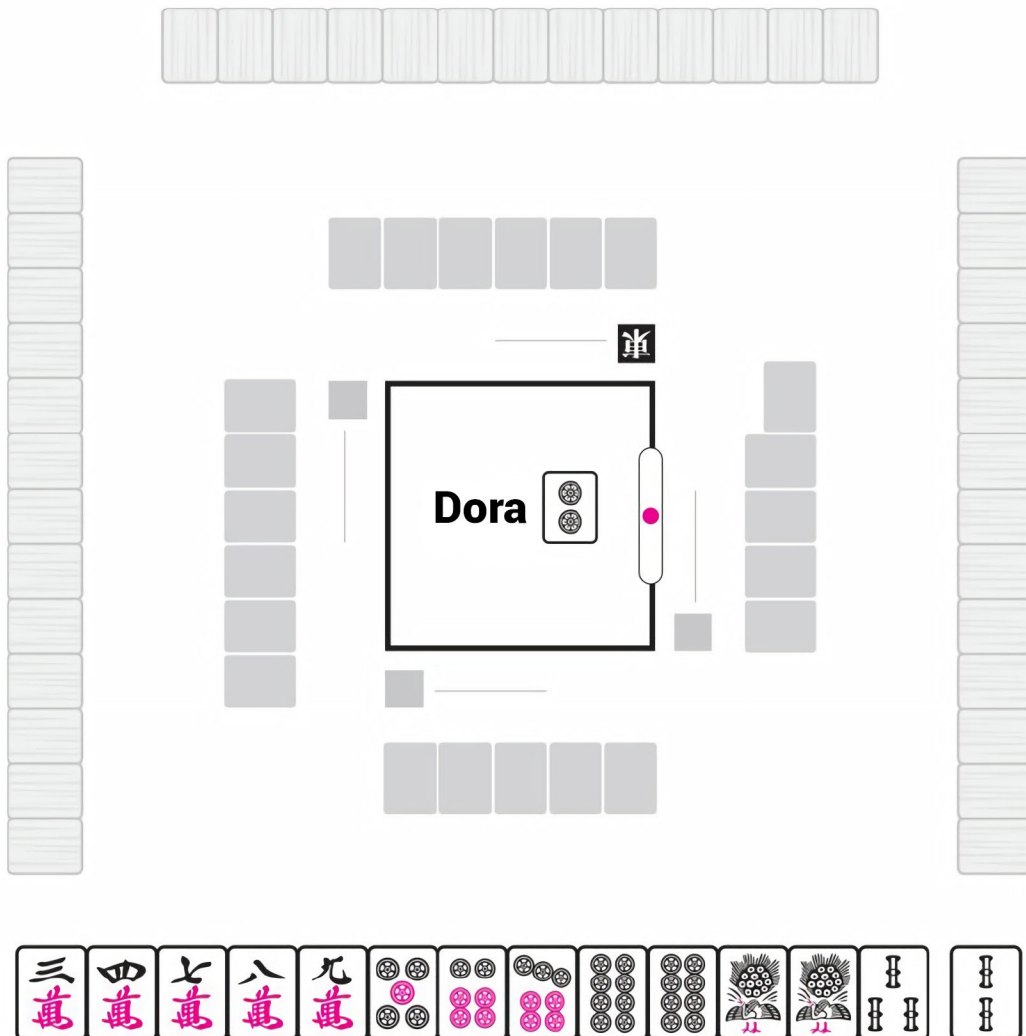
001 **Pinfu-only is a standard Riichi!**

The idea that "Pinfu-only should stay hidden (Damaten)" is a Showa-era theory. If it is a leading Tenpai, calling Riichi is profitable.

*Headstart Tenpai = Tenpai reached when no one else has called Riichi yet.

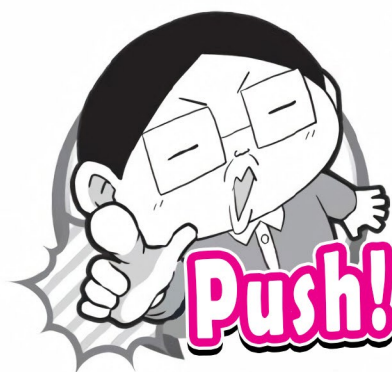
Pinfu only chasing Riichi

In a situation where a non-dealer Riichi has been called, you reach tenpai with Pinfu only. Do you declare Riichi?



A 002 Riichi

If it were a headstart Riichi, a Riichi-Pinfu is a strong enough hand to win, but in a situation where a headstart Riichi has already been called, it's not a hand you can have that much confidence in. Still, pushing is better than folding, so declare Riichi.



It's not strong enough to blindly charge into what looks like an expensive hand.

Push-Pull Rule

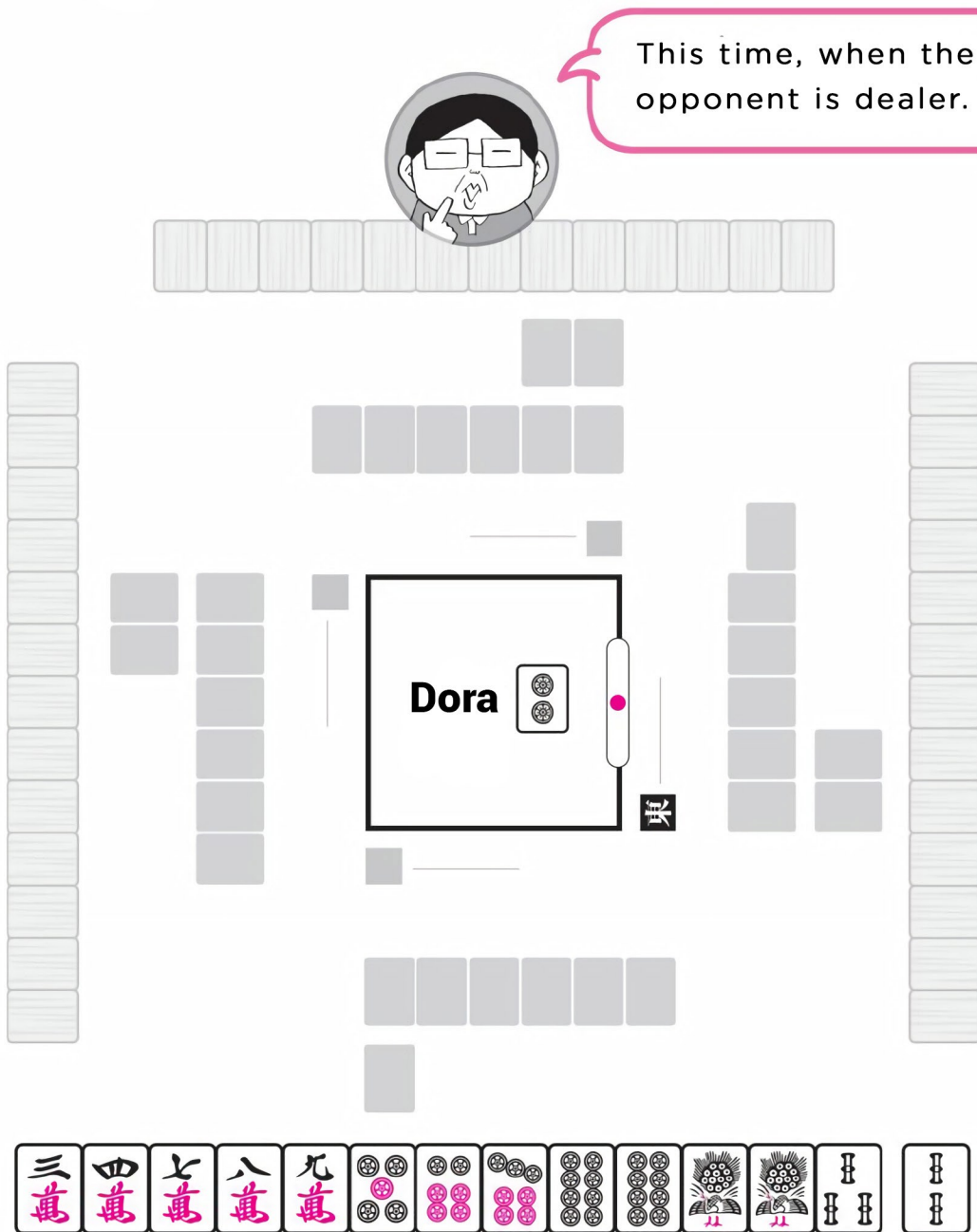
002

Riichi-Pinfu only is a reluctant chase Riichi.

Q

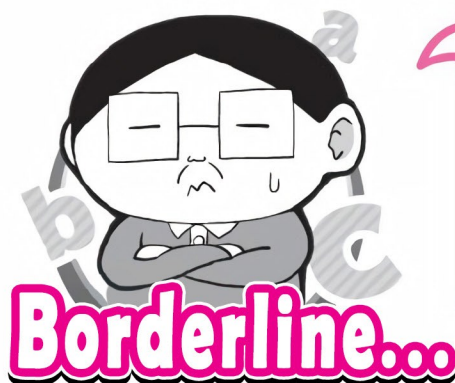
In a situation where a dealer Riichi has been called, you reach tenpai with Pinfu only. Do you declare Riichi?

This time, when the
opponent is dealer.



A 003 Riichi

A non-dealer's Riichi-Pinfu is not strong enough to aggressively fight against a dealer Riichi. The danger level of the tile you must discard is important; it's better not to discard "double-musuji" **4, 5, or 6**. If the tile isn't that dangerous, discard it and call a chase Riichi.



A dealer Riichi is a first-class hazardous material, after all.

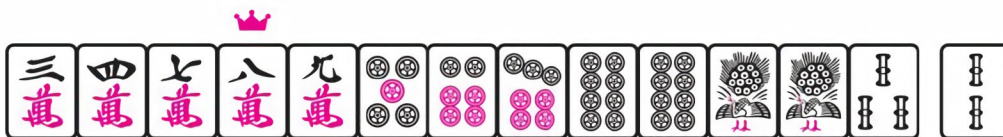
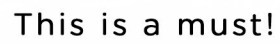
Push-Pull Rule

003

Against a dealer Riichi with a Riichi-Pinfu hand, it's a very reluctant chase Riichi.

Pinfu Dora 1

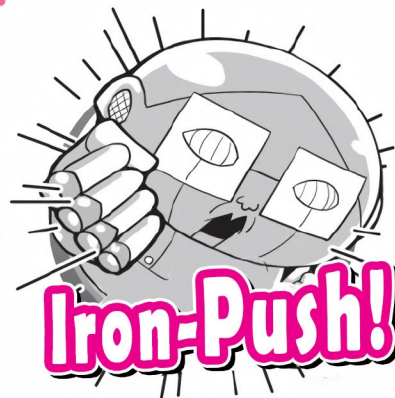
You reach tenpai with Pinfu and 1 Dora.
Do you declare Riichi?



A 004 Riichi

With Pinfu Dora 1, the efficiency of increasing your score through Riichi is incredibly high. Calling Riichi in almost any situation is an ironclad rule.

If you stay dama with this, you'll be called a "bean dama"



Push-Pull Rule

004

**Pinfu Dora 1 is
an ironclad Riichi!**

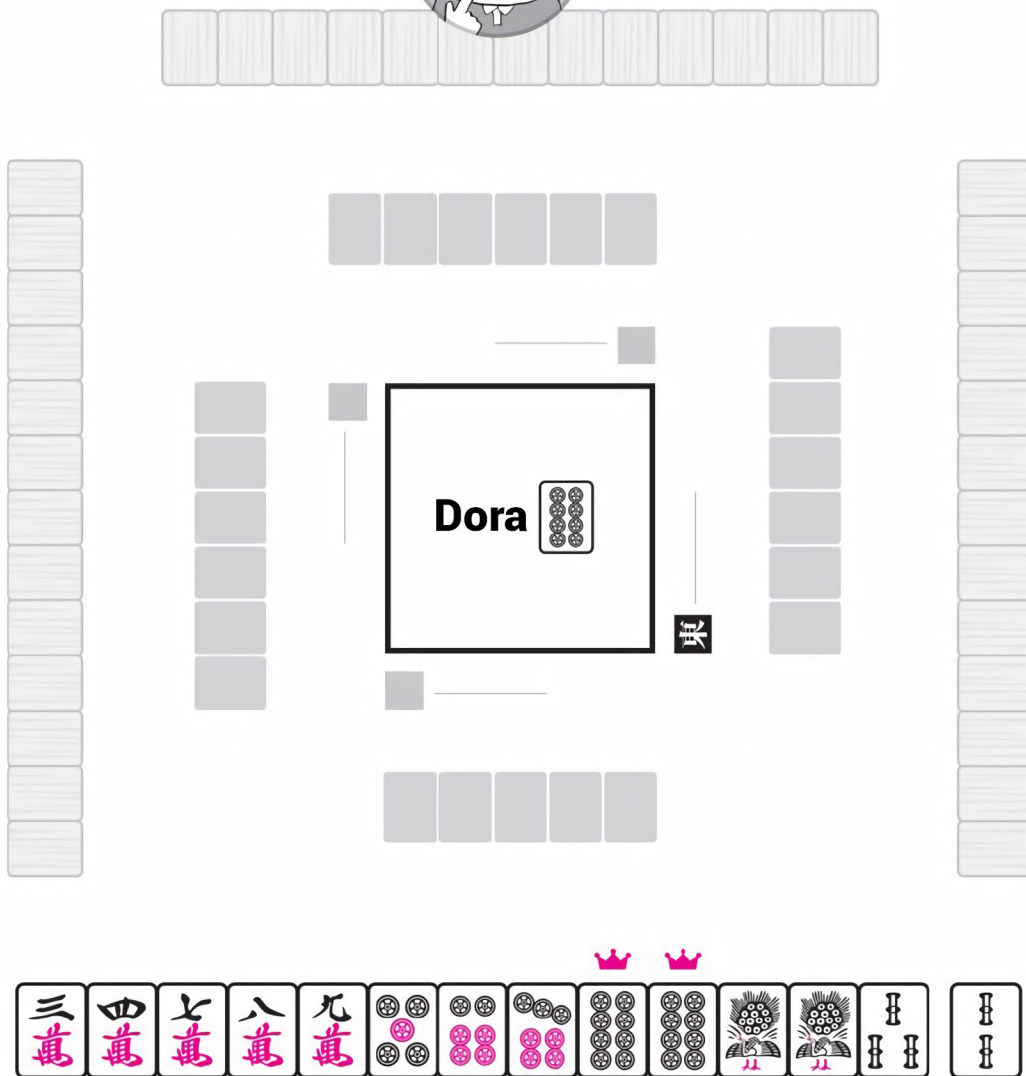
Q
005

Pinfu Dora 2

You reach tenpai with Pinfu and 2 Dora.
Do you declare Riichi?



This is also a must!

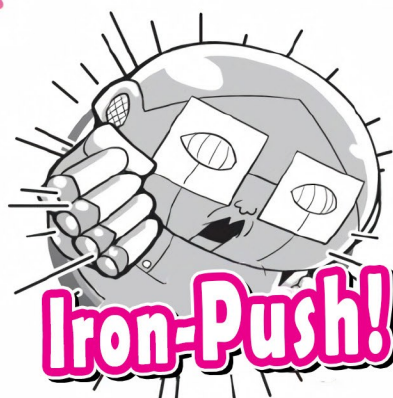


A 005 Riichi

With Pinfu Dora 2, the effect of increasing points through Riichi is also extremely high. Calling Riichi in almost any situation is an ironclad rule.

The difference in value is too great between a damaten 3,900-point hand and a possible Haneman if you declare Riichi draw it by tsumo, and get Ippatsu or an ura-dora.

Again, if you stay hidden with this, you'll be called a "bean dama".



Push-Pull Rule

005

**Pinfu Dora 2 is
an ironclad Riichi!**

Lesson
2

A Headstart Tenpai is an Ironclad Riichi

The Two Most Important Principles of Mahjong

Do you know the most important principles in Mahjong? There are two, and by simply following them, you can instantly level up to a mid-to-high intermediate player.

They are:

- ① Call Riichi immediately upon reaching a headstart tenpai.
- ② Fold without overreaching when someone else calls Riichi.

Just by following these two, you will no longer be among the consistent losers. You might think this is an exaggeration, but it is true. Conversely, those who cannot win are failing to follow these two vital principles.

Once someone else calls Riichi first, the value of your hand drops. A "Pinfu-only" hand was a basic Riichi if you reached tenpai first, but it becomes a delicate situation as a chasing Riichi. It is especially dangerous against a dealer Riichi. A chase Riichi has significantly less value compared to a headstart Riichi.

A headstart Riichi has high value. That is the fundamental principle of Mahjong. Since only one of the four players can win a hand, it is first and foremost a battle of speed.

Push-Pull Rule so far

- 002 **Riichi-Pinfu only is a reluctant chase Riichi**
- 003 **Riichi-Pinfu against a dealer riichi is a very reluctant chase riichi**
- 004 **Pinfu Dora 1 is an ironclad Riichi!**
- 005 **Pinfu Dora 2 is an ironclad Riichi!**

Pinfu-only is a Riichi if it's a headstart tenpai. However, chasing with it is delicate; from the middle of the game onwards, it's safer to refrain. You also cannot push aggressively against a Dealer. On the other hand, Pinfu Dora 1 is an ironclad Riichi in almost any situation.

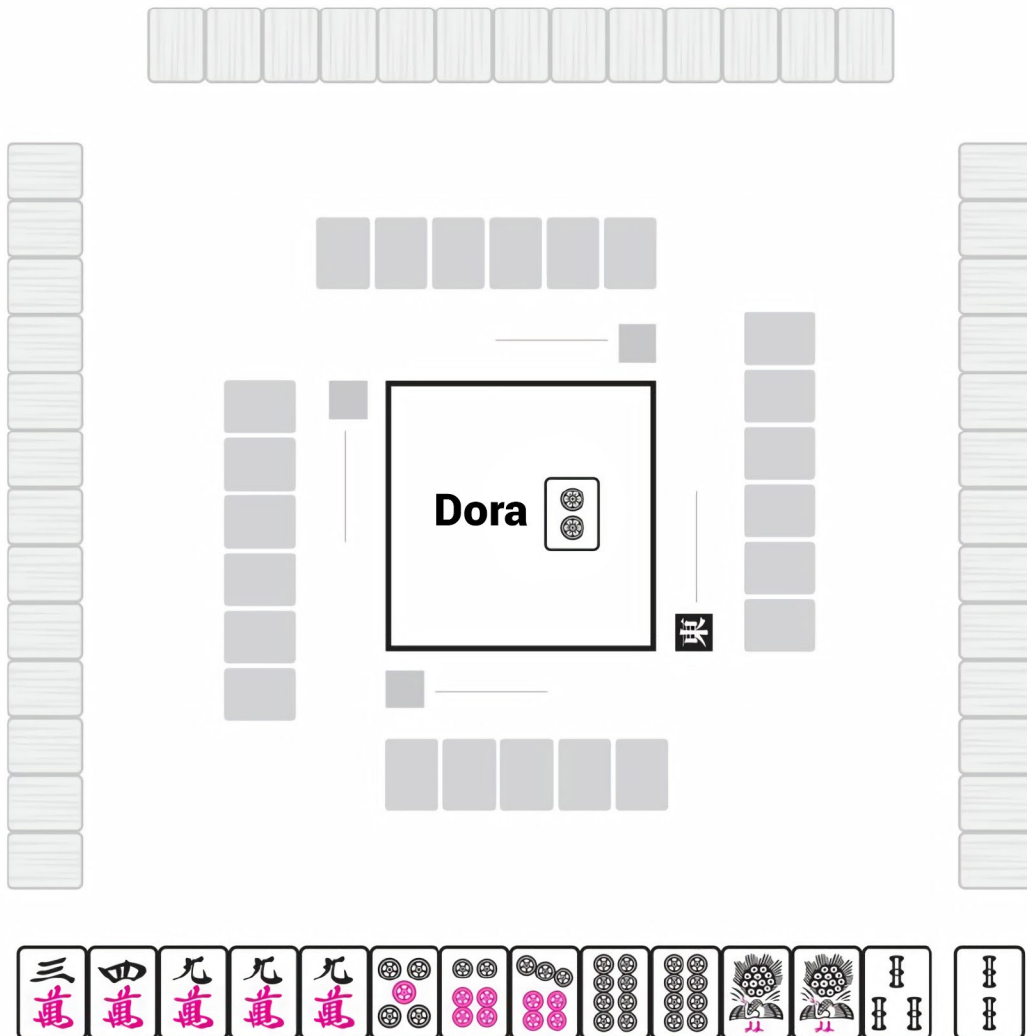
Q
006

Nomi-hand with Ryanmen

You reached Tenpai with a nomi-hand ("Riichi-only") on a ryanmen wait. Do you declare Riichi?



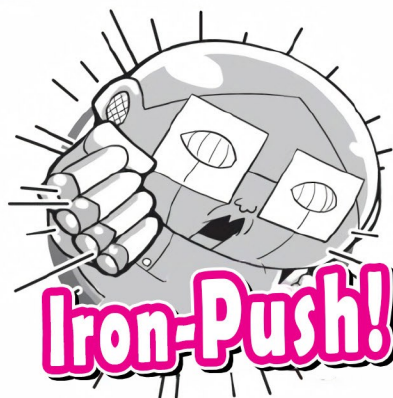
This is a given.



A 006 Riichi

Even with no other yaku, a two-sided wait is an ironclad Riichi. The expected value is around 2500 points, which isn't bad at all. The effect of shutting down other players' winning hands is also quite significant.

I mean, you can't really win
if you don't call Riichi.



Push-Pull Rule

006

**An early nomi-hand ryanmen
is an ironclad Riichi!**

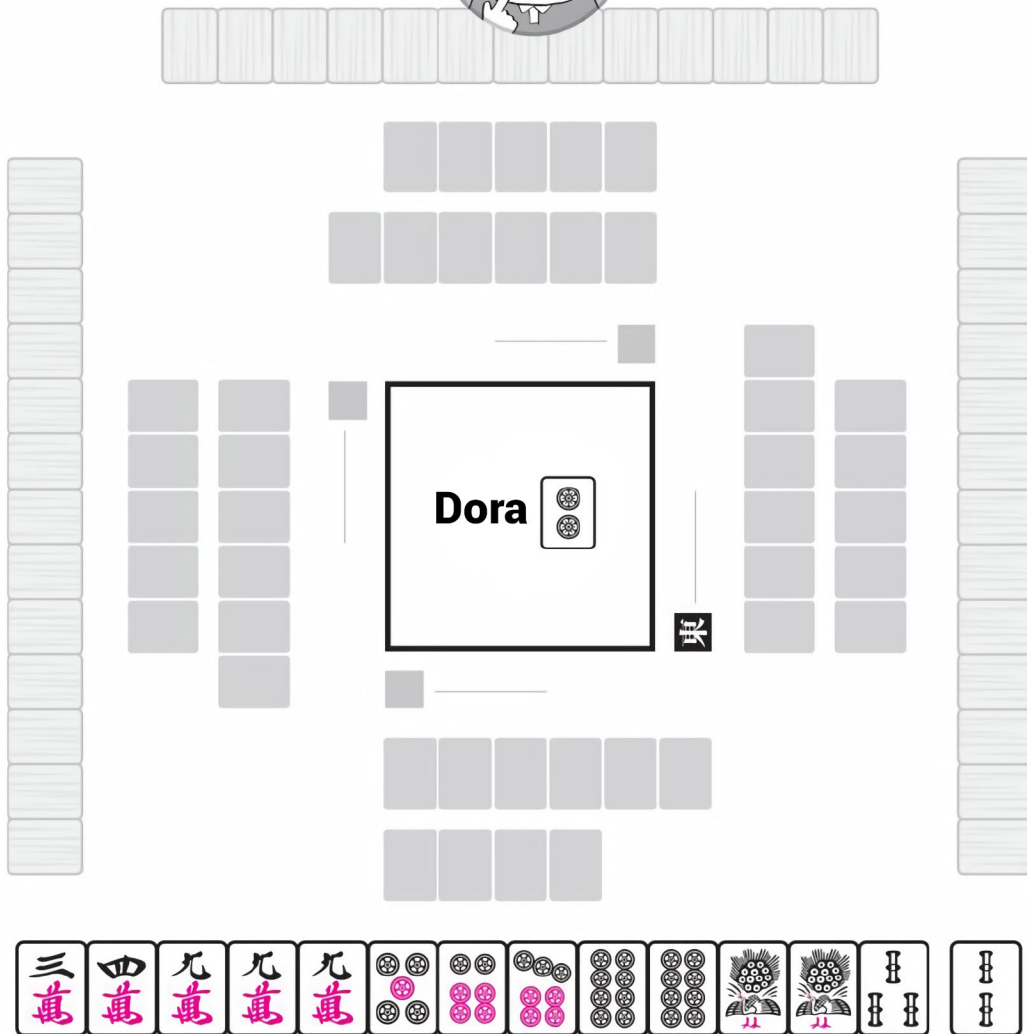
Q
007

Late-Turn Nomi-hand Ryanmen

You reached tenpai with a "Riichi-only" ryanmen wait. It's already deep into the middle of the round. Do you call Riichi?

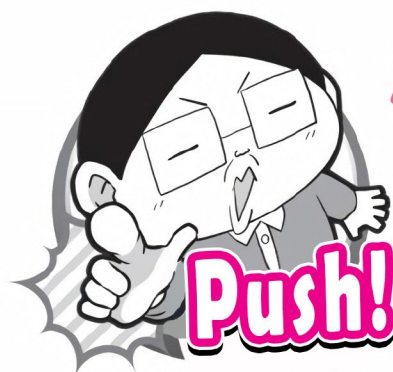


This is where you might hesitate while observing other players' moods.



A 007 Riichi

Even late in the game, if it is a headstart tenpai, you should generally call Riichi. In situations where none of the dora tiles are visible, the backlash could be severe, such as receiving an expensive chase Riichi immediately. Even taking that possibility into account, a headstart ryanmen Riichi has a high win rate. The probability of dealing into a chase Riichi isn't that high, so Riichi is the standard play. A headstart ryanmen Riichi is just that strong.



If someone chases me, I just pray I don't draw their winning tile.

Push-Pull Rule

007

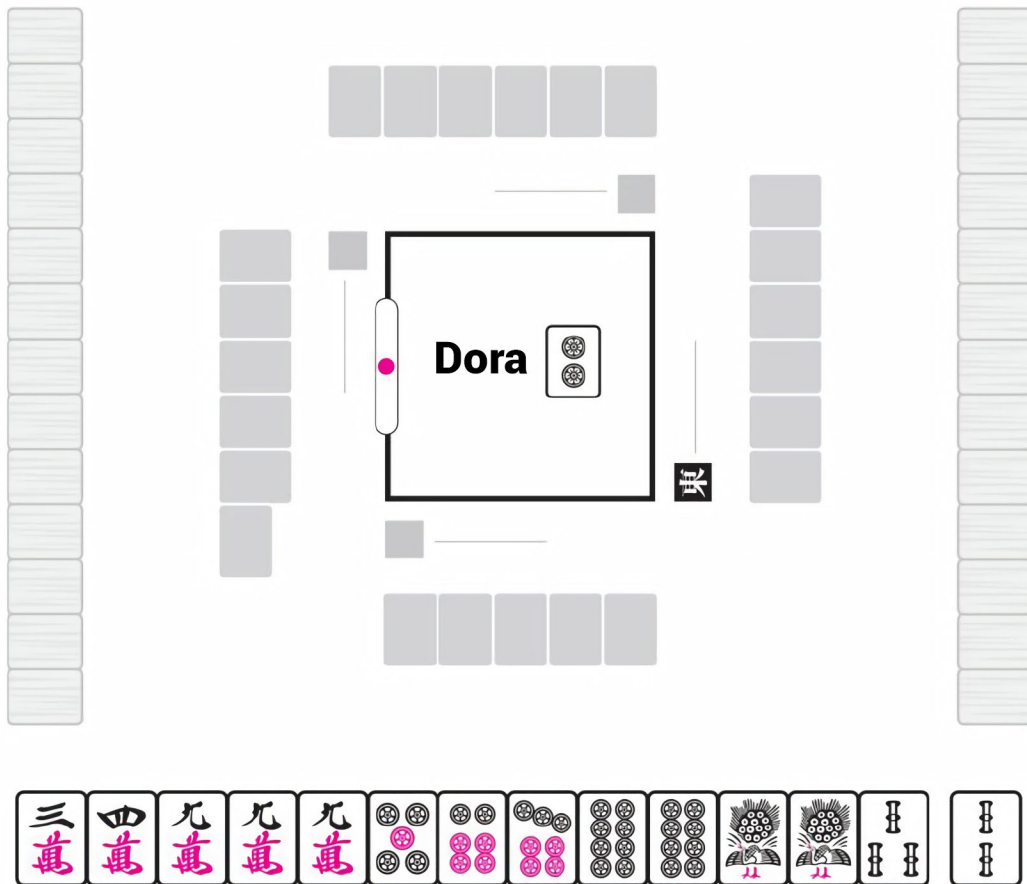
Even for a late-turn nomi-hand ryanmen, Riichi is the standard.

Q Chase Riichi with a Nomi-hand 008 Ryanmen

In a situation where a headstart Riichi has been called, you also reach tenpai. It's just a Riichi-only hand. Do you call a chase Riichi?



If it were the early turns, I'd chase normally, though.



A 008 Either way

A non-dealer's nomi-hand is just barely strong enough to fight another non-dealer's Riichi, but it is no-go to fight a dealer Riichi. Against a non-dealer, chasing is fine until the 9th turn, but from the 10th turn onwards, it's safer not to fight. As the round nears the end, you can much more clearly narrow down what tiles are left that's particularly dangerous, and they would have had more turns to draw into doras to increase their hand value, causing your risk to rise.



If it is in the early turns I would still call a chasing riichi like usual though.

Push-Pull Rule

008

Chasing with a Nomi-hand ryanmen is marginal; it is a "No" against a dealer.

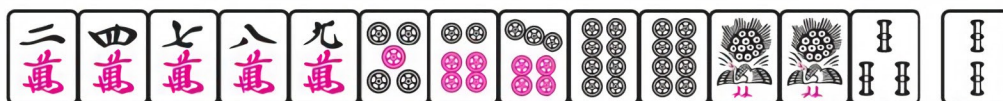
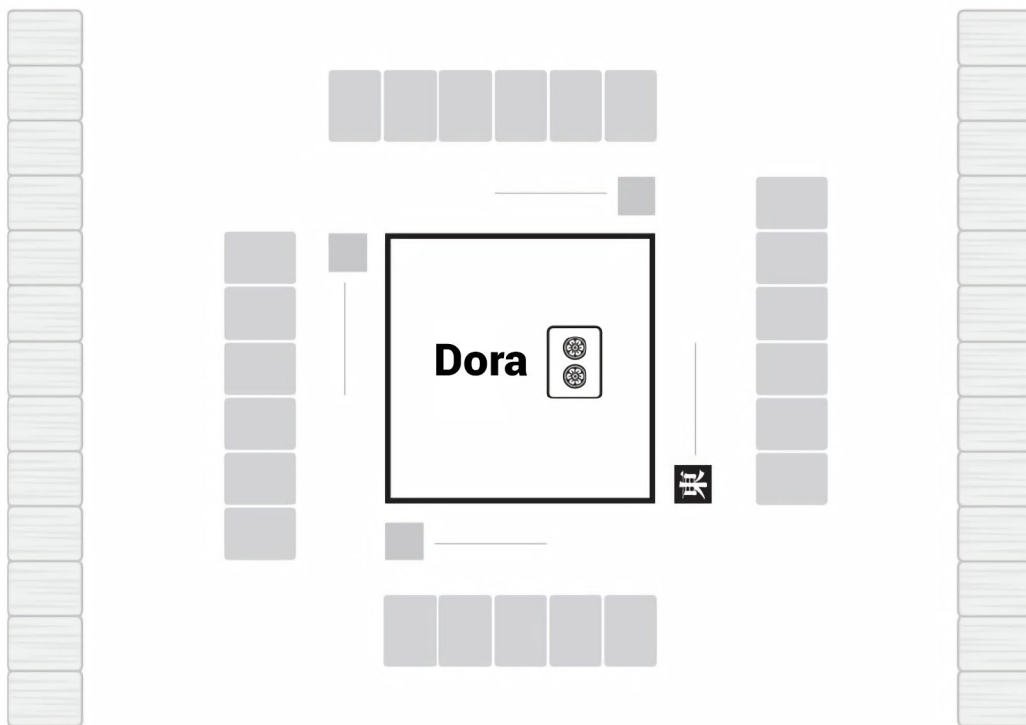
Q
009

Non-dealer Nomi-hand Kanchan

You reached tenpai with a Riichi-only kanchan wait.
Do you declare Riichi?

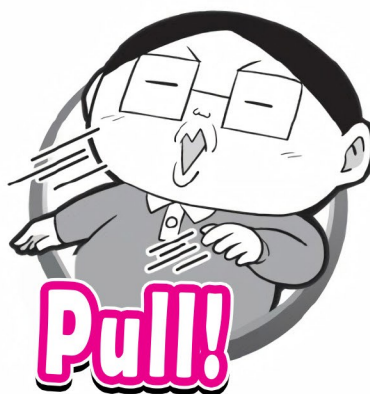


This is a point where one might hesitate.



A 009 Damaten Recommended

A Riichi-only on a kanchan wait is a painful position. It's safer not to call Riichi. From an EV perspective, it's not worth the risk. It's recommended to stay hidden for now and even consider breaking the tenpai to aim for a better hand.



It's tough to endure being in damaten when you can't even win if someone discards your tile, isn't it?

Push-Pull Rule

009

Do not call Riichi with a nomi-hand kanchan.

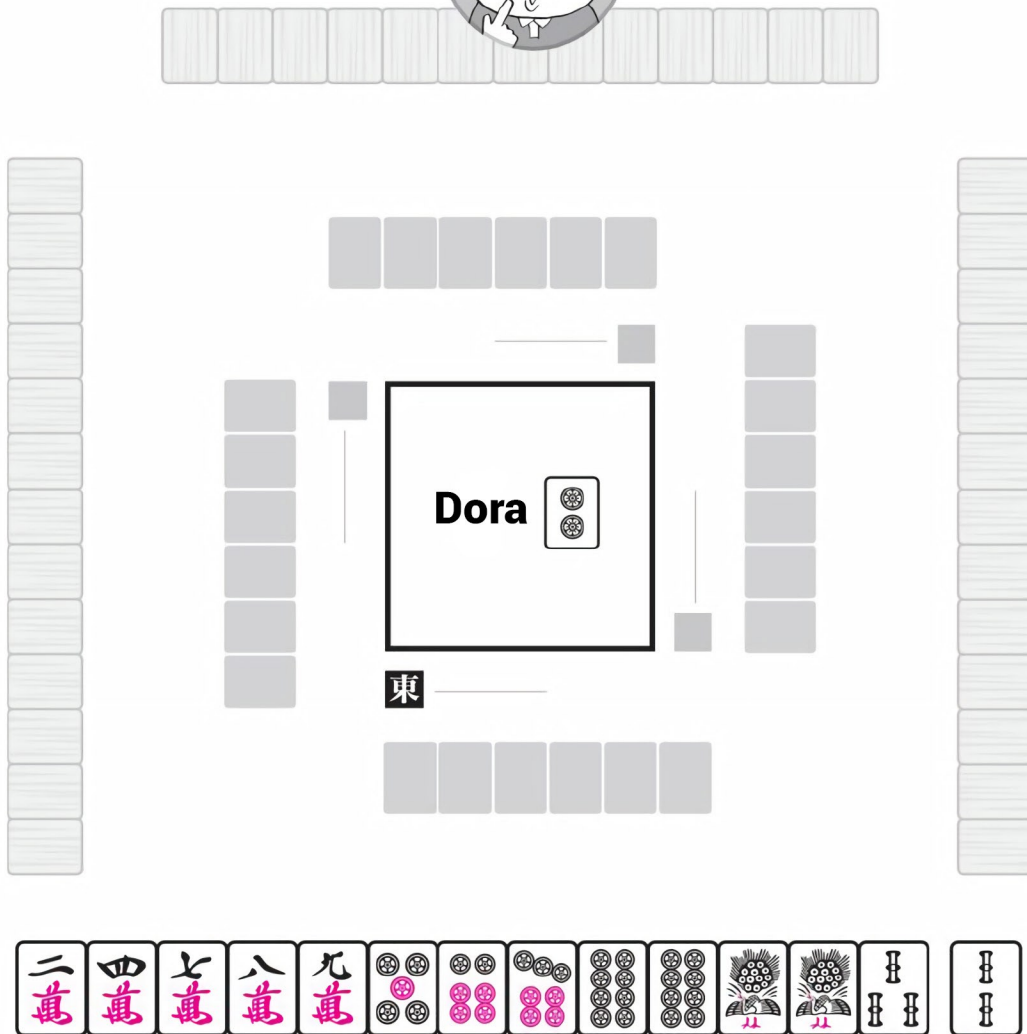
Q
010

Dealer Nomi-hand kanchan

This time you are the dealer. You have a Riichi-only kanchan wait. Do you declare Riichi?



This is another place where it's hard to decide.



A 010 Either way

A dealer Riichi is powerful. However, a nomi-hand kanchan is weak. As a conclusion, it's impossible to say definitively which is better.

Personally, I pay close attention to the "vibe" or signs from the opponents here.



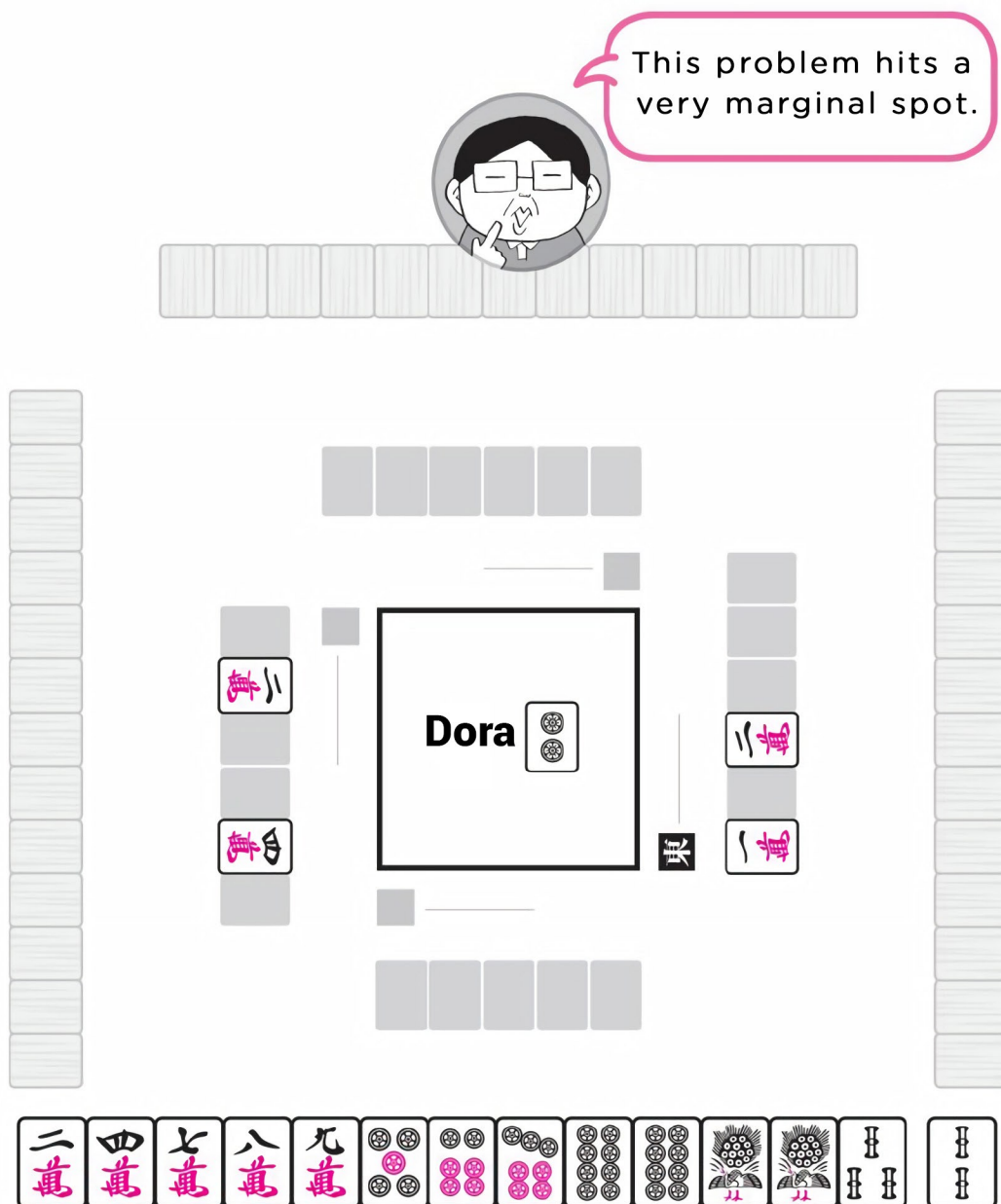
Push-Pull Rule

010

**Do as you like with a dealer
nomi-hand kanchan.**

Q 011 Nomi-hand Kanchan with a Good Wait

You have a Riichi-only kanchan wait, but based on the board, it looks like a good tile to wait for. Do you declare Riichi?



A 011 Either way

Even with a nomi-hand kanchan, if the wait seems good, Riichi is an option. Again, it's impossible to be definitive. Relying too much on "reading the wall" can be dangerous.

I would probably end up calling Riichi, though.



Push-Pull Rule

011

**Do as you like with a
nomi-hand kanchan, if with
a good wait.**

Q
012

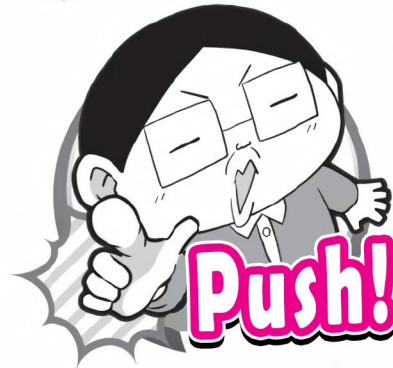
Now as dealer, with a Riichi-only kanchan wait that looks like a good wait. Do you declare Riichi?



A 012 Riichi

A dealer Riichi is strong. If the wait is good, even a Nomi-te kanchan is worth calling Riichi. Here, attacking is the natural choice.

Dealer Riichi is quite powerful.



Push-Pull Rule

012

**A Dealer's Nomi-hand
kanchan with a good wait is
a Riichi!**

Lesson
3**Riichi Judgment for
Nomi-hands****The unexplored region in the realm
of hand building**

Let's talk about "Nomi-hands", which is often called the weakest position—the "Shimane Prefecture" of the hand-building world.*

If you have a ryanmen wait, a headstart tenpai is an ironclad Riichi. Even if the turn is late and the advantage of being first seems to be fading, Riichi is still the basic play. It's like how even in Shimane, the Iwami Ginzan Silver Mine managed to become a World Heritage site.

However, with a kanchan wait, it becomes iffy. Calling Riichi is an act where you invest a 1,000-point stick and take on the risk of being forced to discard every single tile you draw unless it's your winning one. Compared to this level of risk, the return is simply too low.

If it's an uninspiring tenpai, it's perfectly fine to break the hand and pursue the possibility of it becoming something better. Alternatively, you could endure and stay in a "damaten" state, even though you can only win by drawing the tile yourself (since you have no other yaku). There is a very valid argument that doing so might actually be better

*TN: Shimane Prefecture is a Japanese meme known for being often overlooked and easily forgotten about as a place to go for tourism.

than calling Riichi.

That said, there are some strong players who argue that even with a "nomi-hand kanchan," calling Riichi is still better than staying damaten, so the conclusion isn't set in stone. Use your own judgment.

Push-Pull Rule so far

- 006 **An early Nomi-hand Ryanmen is an ironclad Riichi!**
- 007 **Even with a late Nomi-hand Ryanmen, Riichi is the standard.**
- 008 **Chasing with a "Nomi-hand" Ryanmen is marginal; it's a "No" against a Dealer.**
- 009 **Do not call Riichi with a nomi-hand kanchan.**
- 010 **Do as you like with a dealer nomi-hand kanchan.**
- 011 **Do as you like with a nomi-hand kanchan, if with a good wait.**
- 012 **A Dealer's Nomi-hand Kanchan with a good wait is a Riichi!**

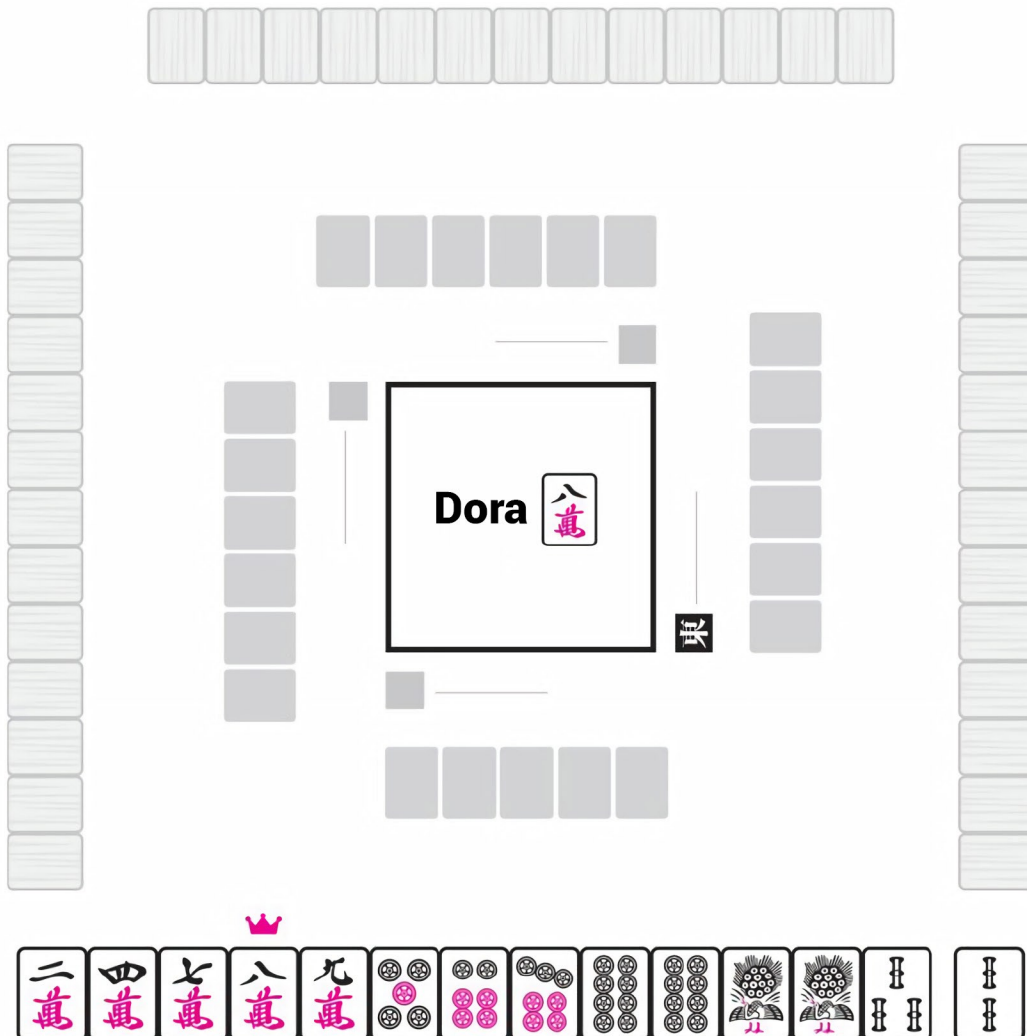
A nomi-hand ryanmen is a Riichi if you are the first to reach tenpai. Chasing with it is marginal, and chasing a dealer is dangerous. For a nomi-hand kanchan, Riichi is not recommended unless you are the dealer or have an exceptionally good wait.

Q 013 Dora 1 Kanchan

You reached tenpai with a Riichi + 1 dora hand on a kanchan wait. Do you call Riichi?



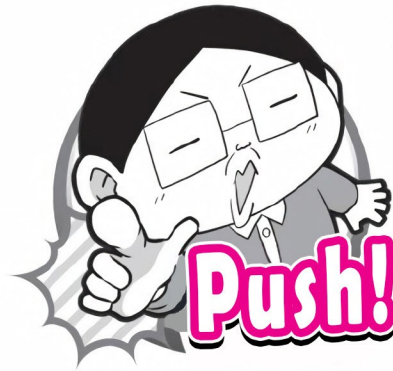
This is something that has been becoming common sense lately.



A 013 Riichi

Dora 1 kanchan is a standard Riichi. That is the winning style of modern Mahjong. However, if 2 or more of your winning tiles are already discarded, it becomes iffy.

Dora 1 kanchan is
an Insta-Riichi



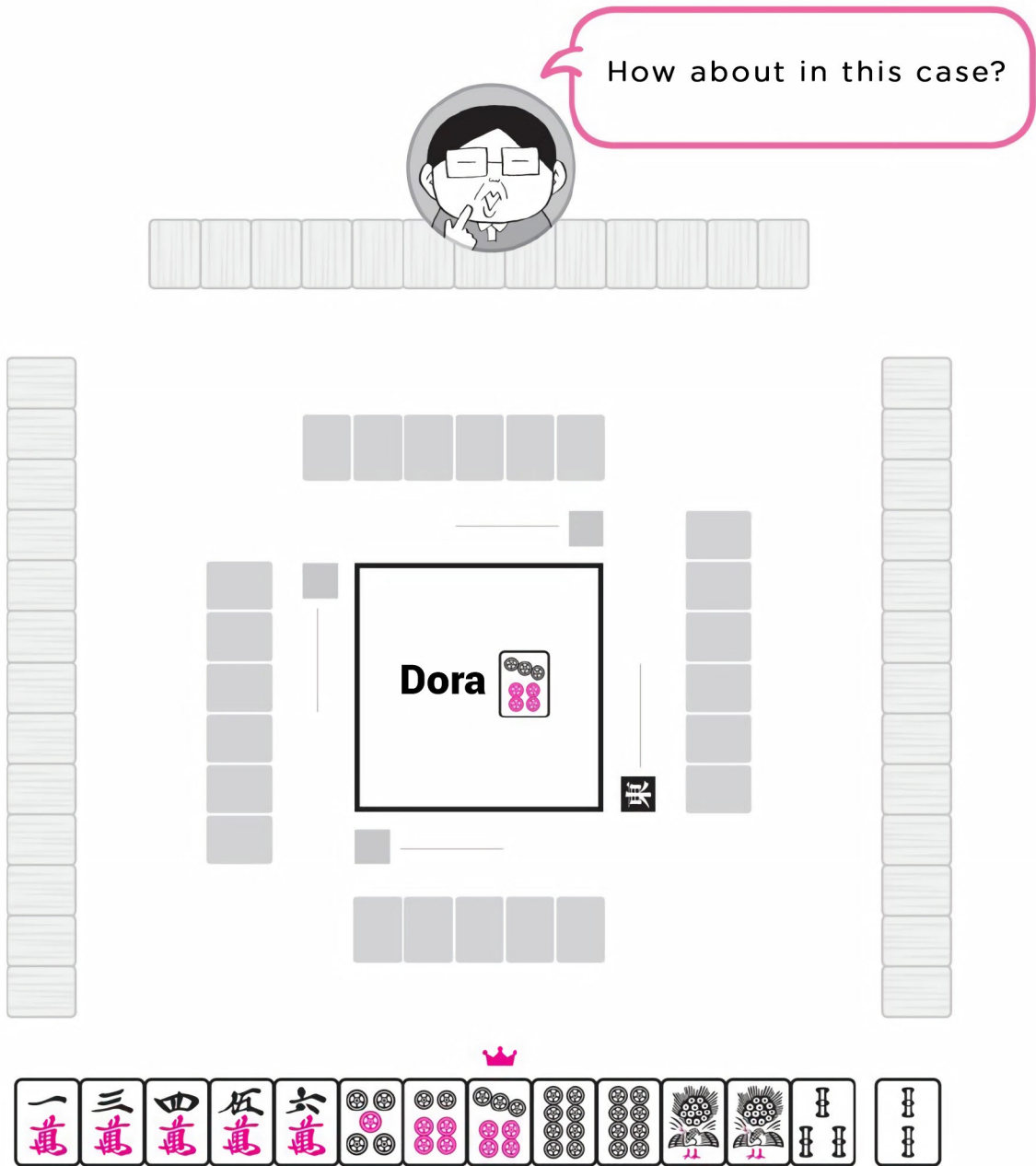
Push-Pull Rule

013

**Immediate Riichi for
Dora 1 kanchan!**

Q 014 Dora 1 Kanchan with Potential

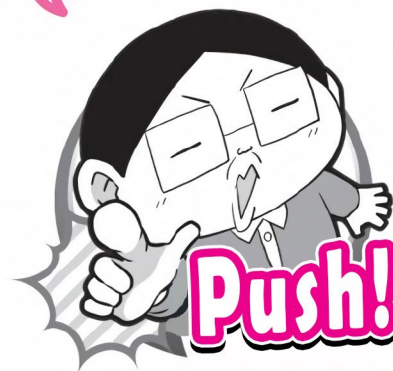
You reached tenpai with a Dora 1 kanchan wait that has potential for improvement. Do you call Riichi?



A 014 Riichi

The tiles that would change your hand into a ryanmen wait or better if you stay dama are   . Just 3 types ( ranks slightly lower). If there are only about 3 types, calling Riichi immediately is more practical in a real game. If there were enough potential, such as having two 4-tile sequence yonrenkei shapes, breaking tenpai by discarding  would be superior.

This is one where it's hard to change your mindset.



Push-Pull Rule

014

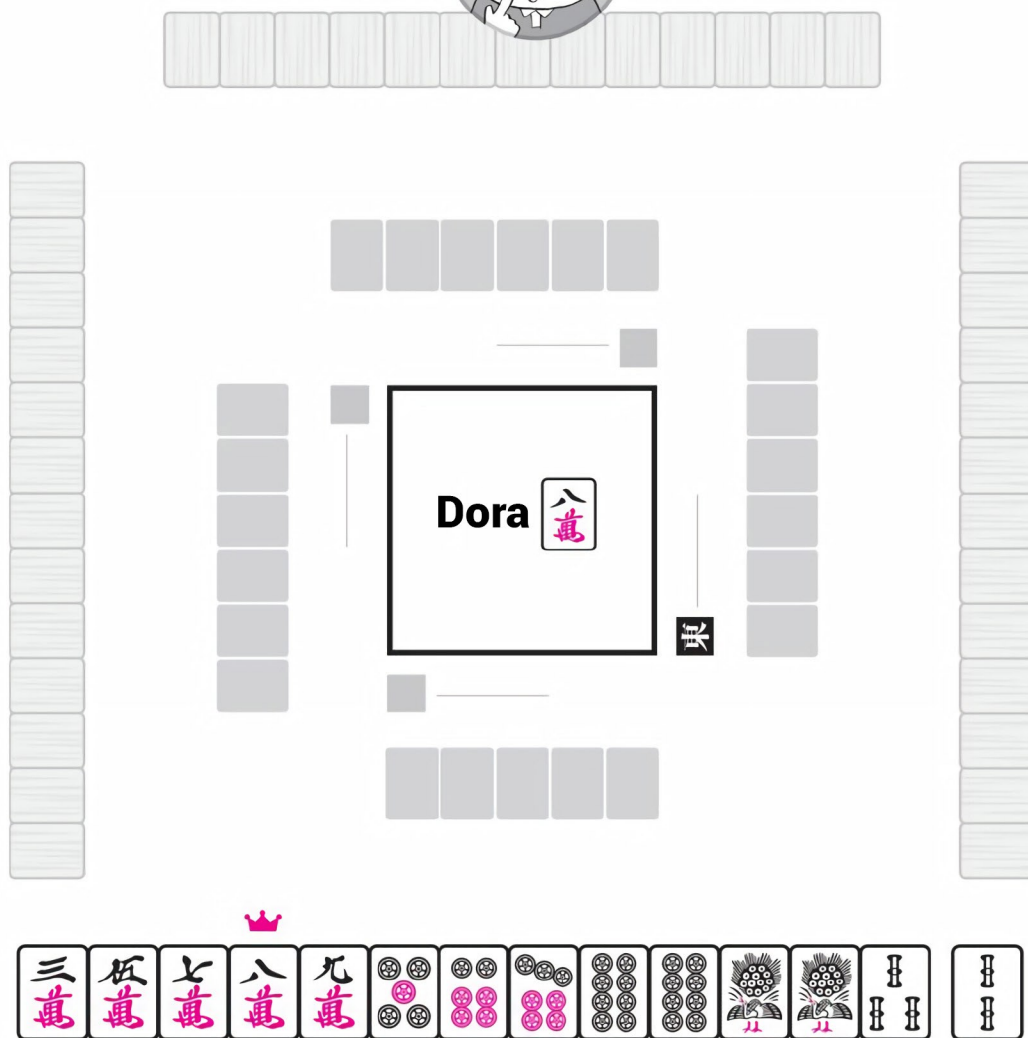
**Insta-Riichi over slight
potential for improvement!**

Q015 Middle-tile Dora 1 Kanchan

You reached tenpai with a Dora 1 kanchan wait that has potential for improvement. Do you call Riichi?



This problem hits
a very marginal spot.



A 015 Either way

Waiting on a **4**, **5**, or **6** for a kanchan wait results in a lower win rate. On the other hand, there are only 2 types of tiles that would improve your wait shape. Judge for yourself based on the board situation.

Personally, I call Riichi quite often here.



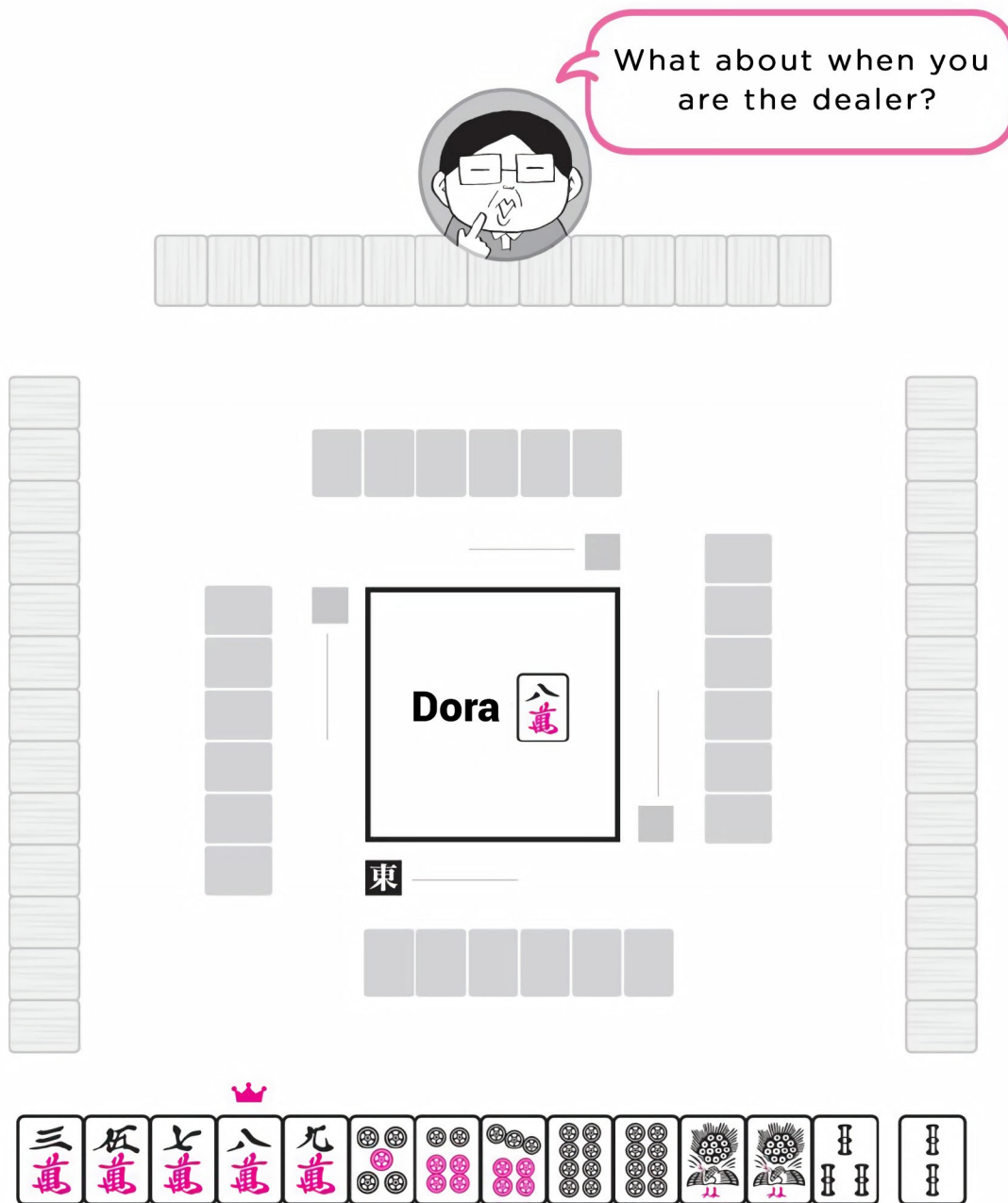
Push-Pull Rule

015

**Do as you like with a
middle-tile Dora 1
kanchan wait.**

Q 016 Dealer's Middle-tile Dora 1 Kanchan

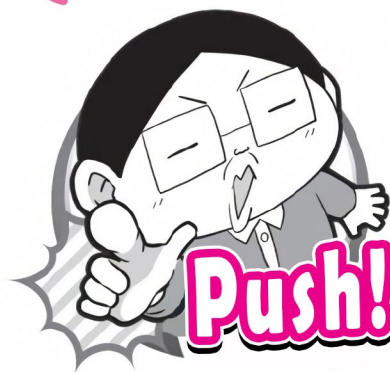
As dealer, you reached tenpai with a Dora 1 kanchan wait on a middle tile. Do you call Riichi?



A 016 Riichi

A dealer's Riichi Dora 1 hand is worth 3,900 points on a discard and 2,000 each on tsumo, so it's not cheap. Therefore, Riichi is the standard. If many of your winning tiles are already discarded or likely held by others, handle those situations individually.

A dealer's Riichi Dora 1 is a strong winning hand.



Push-Pull Rule

016

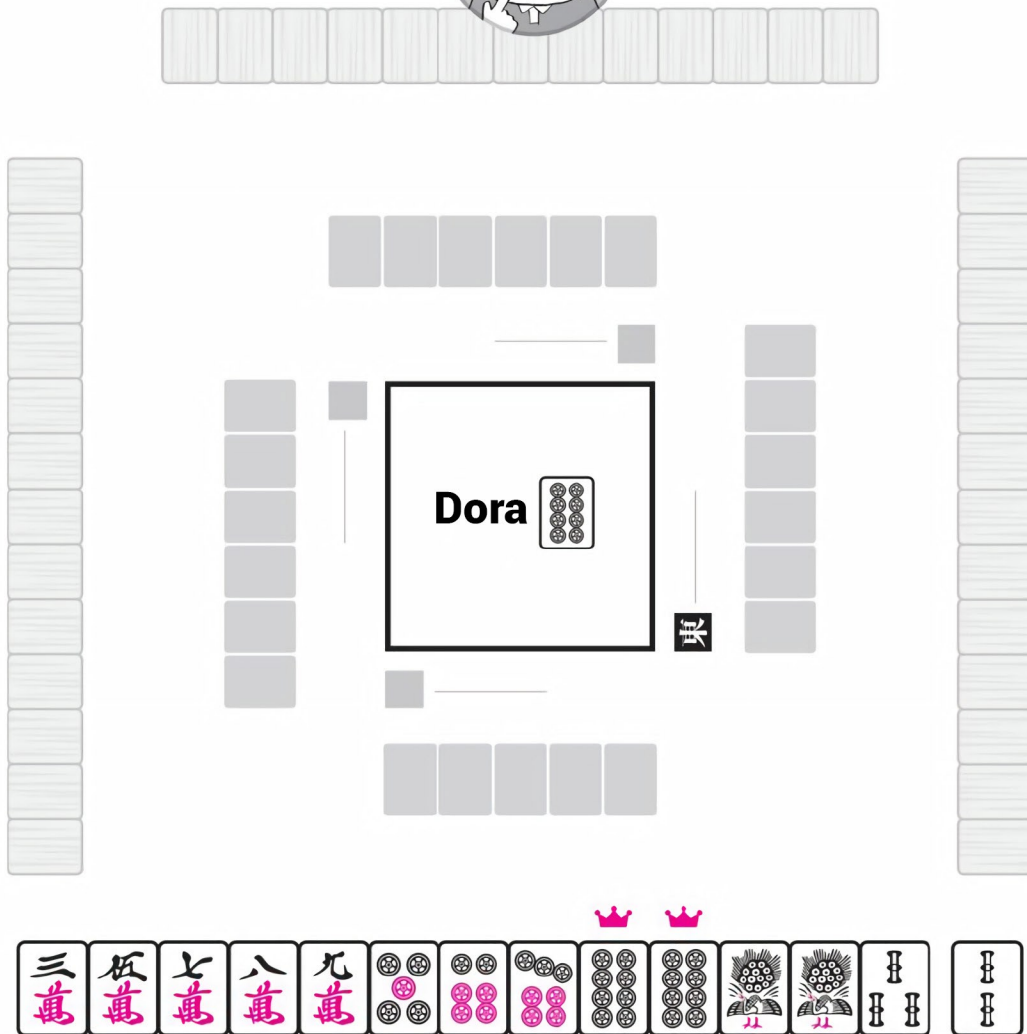
A dealer's middle-tile Dora 1 kanchan wait is a basic Riichi.

Q 017 Middle-tile Dora 2 Kanchan

You reached tenpai with a Dora 2 kanchan wait. It is a middle tile wait. Do you declare Riichi?



You mustn't hesitate on this one.



A 017 Riichi

If you have 2 Dora, it's a decisive hand. Since there are few opportunities to change it into a better shape, call Riichi immediately. It is definitely more profitable to declare Riichi right away than to try and rebuild the hand.

This is ironclad.



Push-Pull Rule

017

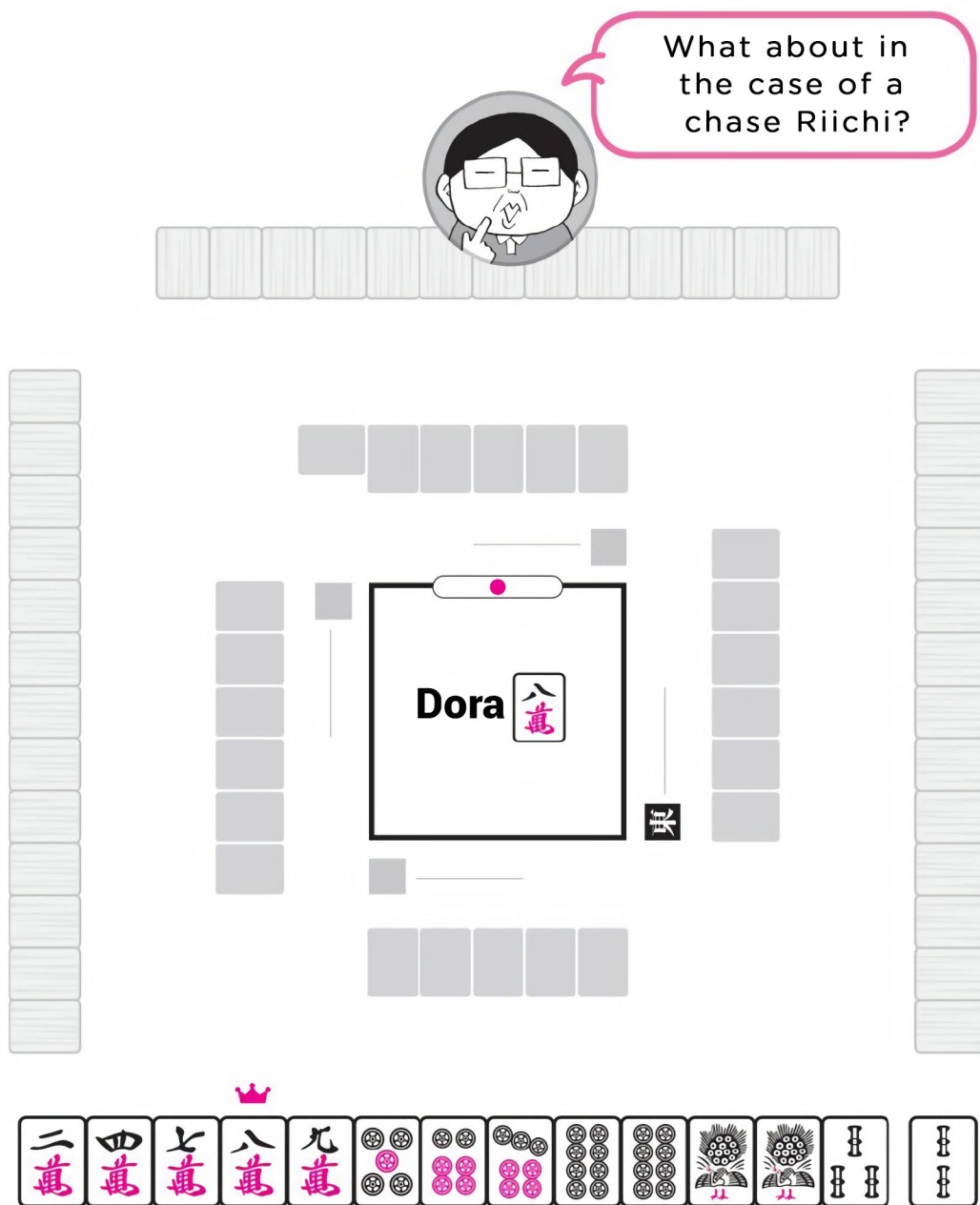
**Insta-Riichi for
Dora 2 kanchan!**

Q
018

Dora 1 Kanchan Chase Riichi

In a situation where a Riichi has already been called, you reach tenpai with a Dora 1 kanchan wait.
Do you call a chase Riichi?

What about in
the case of a
chase Riichi?



A 018 Either way

Calling a chase Riichi is a slightly losing choice. It's not a huge loss, so calling Riichi is an option if you have few safe tiles.

In terms of expected value per round, it's just a tiny minus.



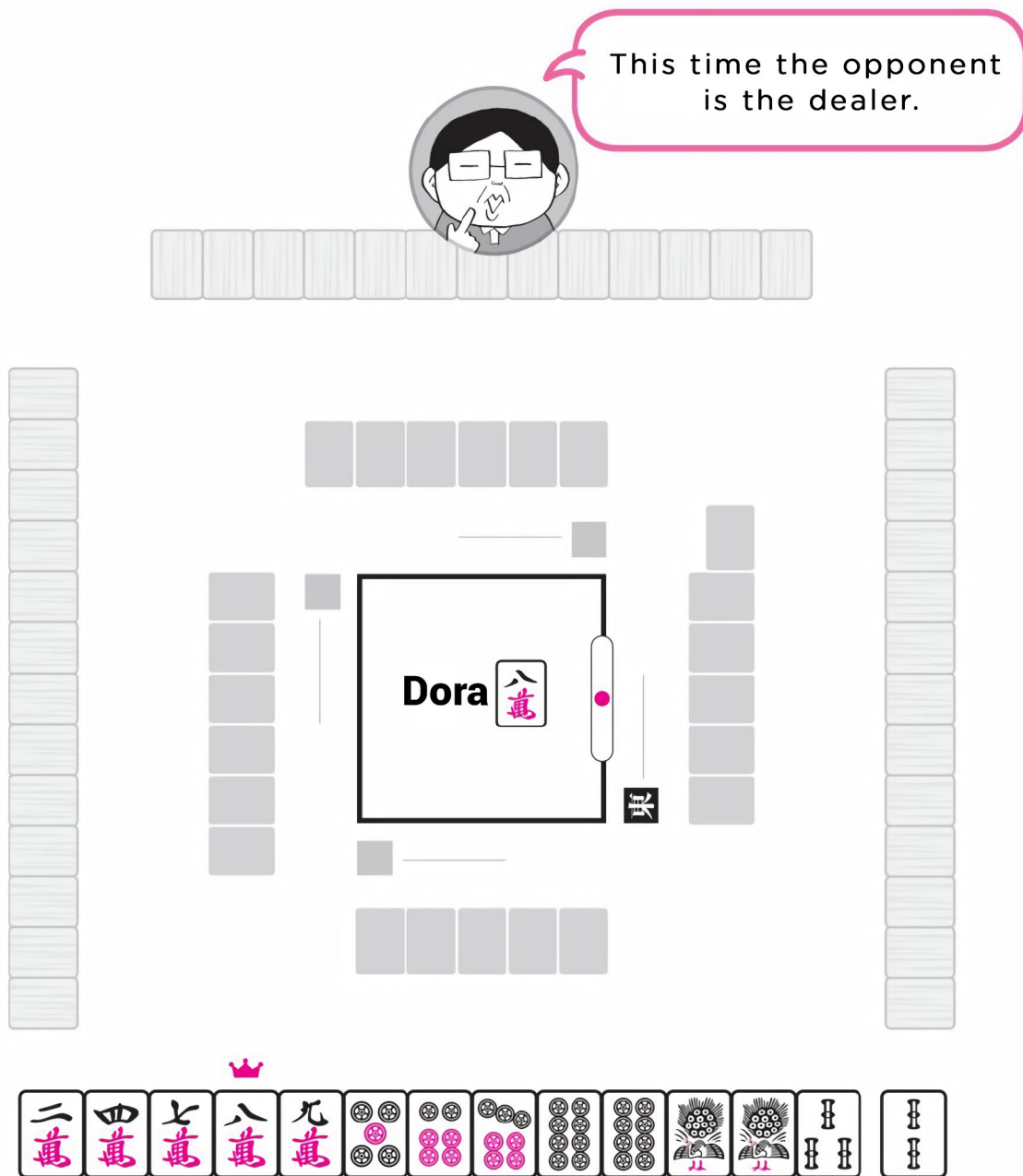
Push-Pull Rule

018

A chase Riichi with a Dora 1 kanchan is marginal.

Q Dora 1 Kanchan Chase Riichi 019 against Dealer

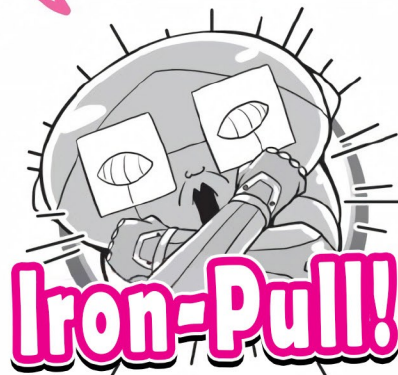
In a situation where the dealer has called Riichi, you reach tenpai with a Dora 1 kanchan wait. Do you call a chase Riichi?



A 019 Fold

Chasing a dealer Riichi is an absolute loss. Even if you have Dora 2, the odds are against you when the dealer is the opponent. Stopping these kinds of chase Riichis is one of the most important things I want to say in this book. This is a situation to turn and run with all your might.

This is an absolute loss.
I've died so many times
doing this.



Push-Pull Rule

019

**Chasing a dealer with a
Dora 1 kanchan is strictly
forbidden!**

Lesson
4**Don't Be Ashamed of
Kanchan Waits****The New Common Sense:
Insta-Riichi with Dora 1 Kanchan**

In the last few years, the feeling that "you shouldn't call Riichi on a kanchan wait" has largely disappeared. A precious Riichi opportunity can vanish while you're staying in damaten. Even if there's some potential for improvement, immediate Riichi is usually the correct answer.

To chase a dealer, you need at least Dora 2

However, chasing Riichis with it are a different story. Chasing even a non-dealer is marginal, and chasing a dealer Riichi is something you should absolutely stop doing. It is a losing gamble. Many people fall into this trap—even I sometimes call Riichi out of desperation when I have few safe tiles. You must be careful; many players' results suffer specifically because of this mistake.

Only when you have 2 Dora is it just barely acceptable to chase a dealer's Riichi. To overcome the statistical handicap of a kanchan wait, you need the scoring power of at least 2 Dora.

Push-Pull Rule so far

- 013 **Immediate Riichi for Dora 1 kanchan!**
- 014 **Immediate Riichi over slight potential for improvement!**
- 015 **Do as you like with a middle-wait Dora 1 kanchan.**
- 016 **A Dealer's middle-wait Dora 1 kanchan is a basic Riichi.**
- 017 **Dora 2 kanchan is an immediate Riichi!**
- 018 **A chase Riichi with a Dora 1 Kanchan is marginal.**
- 019 **Chasing a dealer with a Dora 1 kanchan is strictly forbidden!**

Even with a kanchan wait, if you have 1 dora, immediate Riichi is the standard. However, if it's a wait on a middle tile (4-6) or there are other negative factors, refraining is also an option. If you have 2 or more dora, it is an ironclad Riichi even with a kanchan wait. If you waste time waiting for the hand to improve, your winning opportunity will melt away like spring snow.

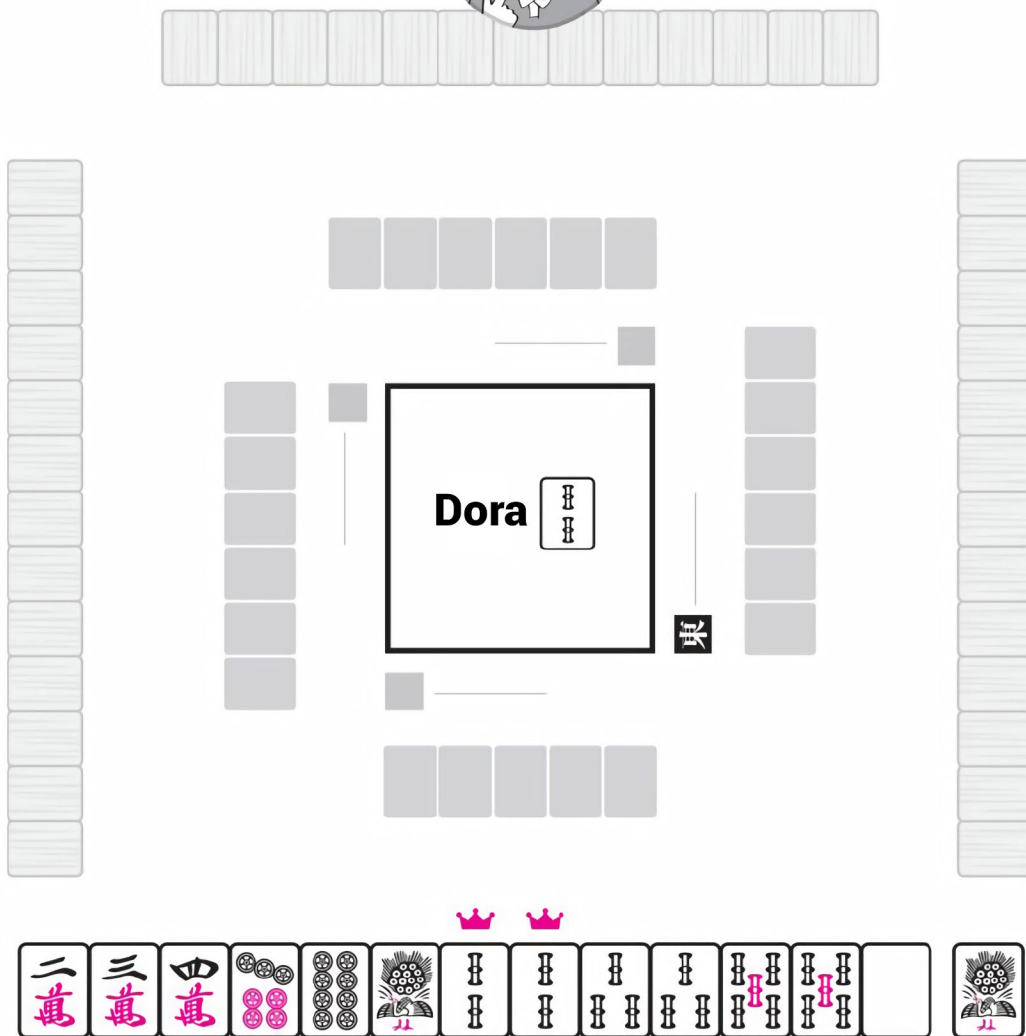
Q
020

Early Turn Edge-wait Dama-mangan

You reached tenpai for a damaten Mangan on a terminal tile. Do you call Riichi?



This is a point of hesitation.



A 020 Either way

If anything, Riichi has a slight advantage. It could become a Haneman through Ippatsu, Ura-dora, or tsumo, and the win rate doesn't drop that much. However, it's a tiny difference, so doing what you like is fine.

Personally, I usually
call Riichi.



Push-Pull Rule

020

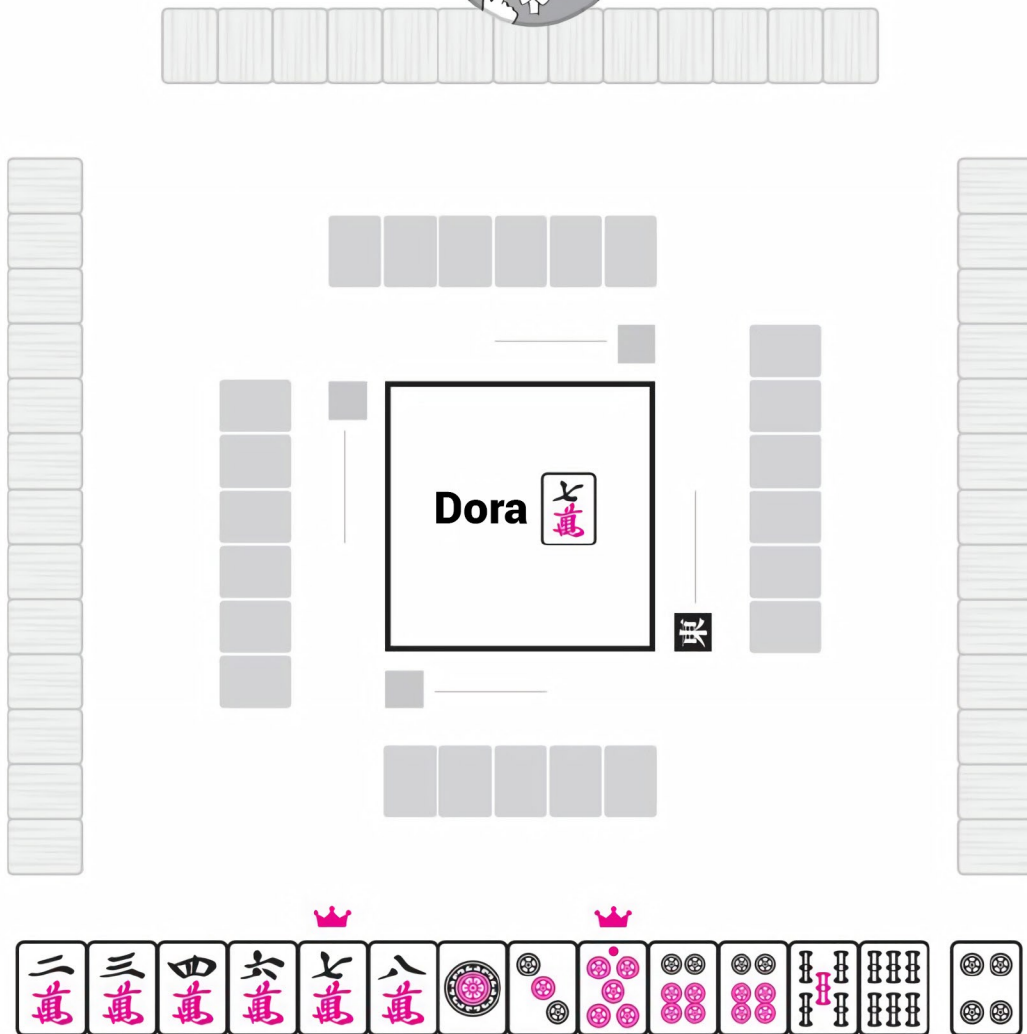
**An early turn terminal-wait
dama-man is marginally
Riichi-superior.**

Q 021 Early Turn Middle-wait Dama-mangan

You reached Tenpai for a hidden Mangan on a middle tile. Do you call Riichi?



This is another point of hesitation.



A 021 Either way

In very early turns, since people won't discard it anyway, Riichi has the advantage. Once you get deeper into the middle turns, the win probability differs quite a bit between Riichi and damaten, so damaten becomes superior. However, it's a tiny difference, so doing what you like is fine.

I might stay dama quite often here.



Push-Pull Rule

021

**An early turn middle-wait
dama-mangan is marginally
damaten-superior.**

Lesson
5**The Golden Hand Known
as "Dama-Mangan"****Win Rate vs. Point Value**

You've reached an early tenpai for a Mangan hand while staying closed. Should you declare Riichi? If you want to maximize your winning probability, staying dama is superior. Declaring a headstart Riichi will cause some people to fold, so it increases the number of self-draw opportunities. However, because of that, "dangerous tiles" (from the opponents' perspective) will stop coming out. Overall, it's easier to win if you don't declare Riichi.

But by declaring Riichi, a self-draw becomes a Haneman, and even a win off a discard can become a Haneman if Ippatsu or an ura-dora is added. The point-increase effect is nothing to scoff at.

Taking all that into account, we can say Riichi is superior before the 6th turn, while damaten is superior after that.

**The Important Factor is the quality
of your wait**

What you should be conscious of is the quality of your suji wait. Middle suji like 3-6 or 4-7 are so dangerous that opponents won't easily discard them. Conversely, they can't fully suppress tiles like 2 or 8, and especially 1 or 9 tiles. When a Riichi is called, it's hard to

discard middle tiles, but for edge tiles, you feel like "if I deal into it, it can't be helped," right?

Therefore, if it's a wait near the edge, Riichi is powerful, while for middle waits, choosing damaten is often more profitable. However, according to data, it's a tiny difference either way. It's not a part where there's a huge difference, so you could say either is OK.

Push-Pull Rule so far

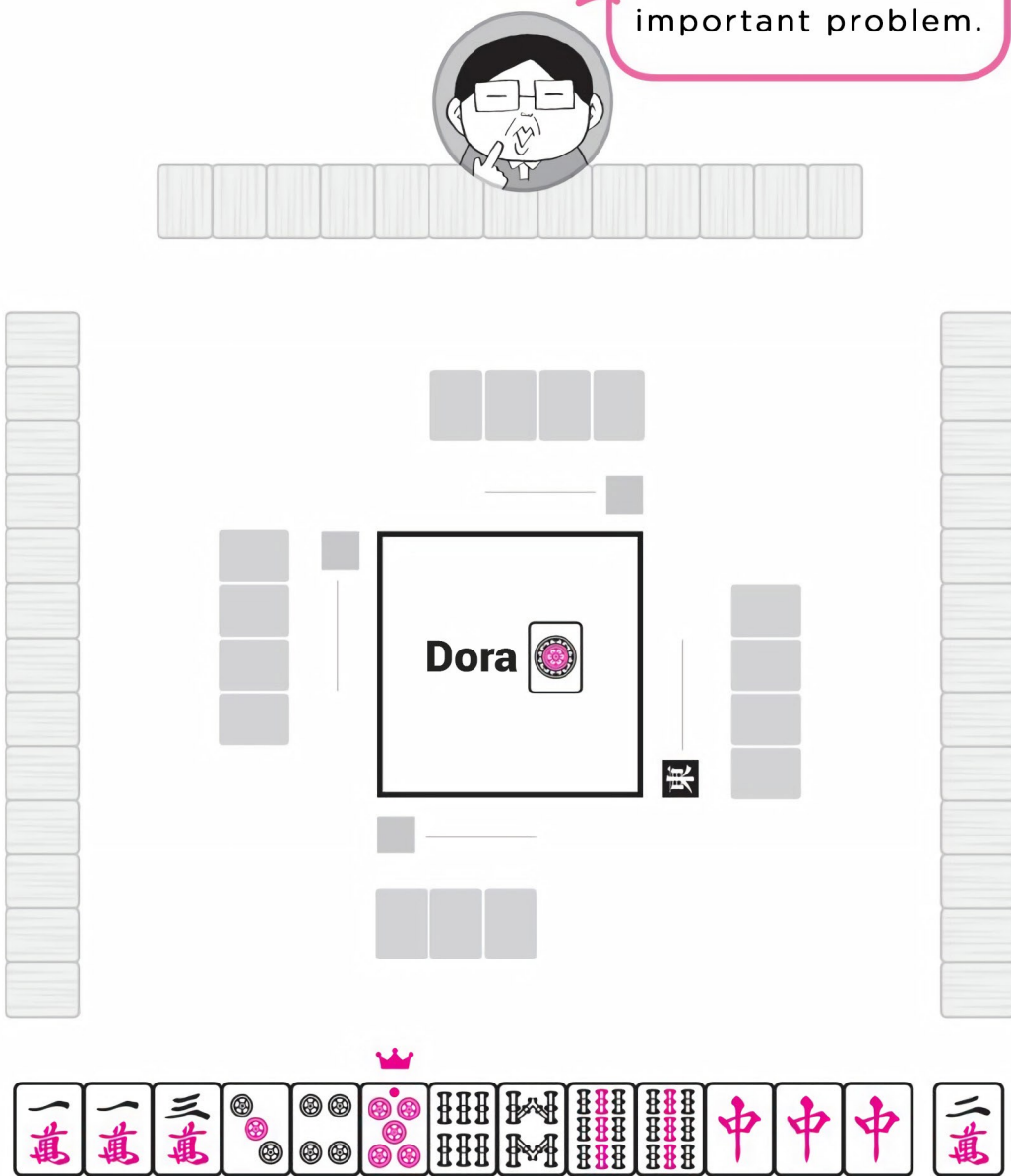
- 020 **An early turn edge-wait dama-man is marginally Riichi-superior.**
- 021 **An early turn middle-wait dama-man is marginally damaten-superior.**

With a hidden Mangan, call Riichi if it's an edge wait, but staying dama is the safer choice for a middle wait.

Q 2600-point hand with Yaku
022

You've reached an early tenpai with a  + Dora 1 hand, waiting on a kanchan. Do you declare Riichi?

This is a very important problem.



A 022 Riichi

Since it already has a yaku, you might be tempted to stay dama, but this is an ironclad Riichi. There are few tiles that would improve the hand, and the point-increase effect is huge. Staying dama here is "Showa-era Mahjong."

Calling Riichi here is essential for winning Mahjong.



Push-Pull Rule

022

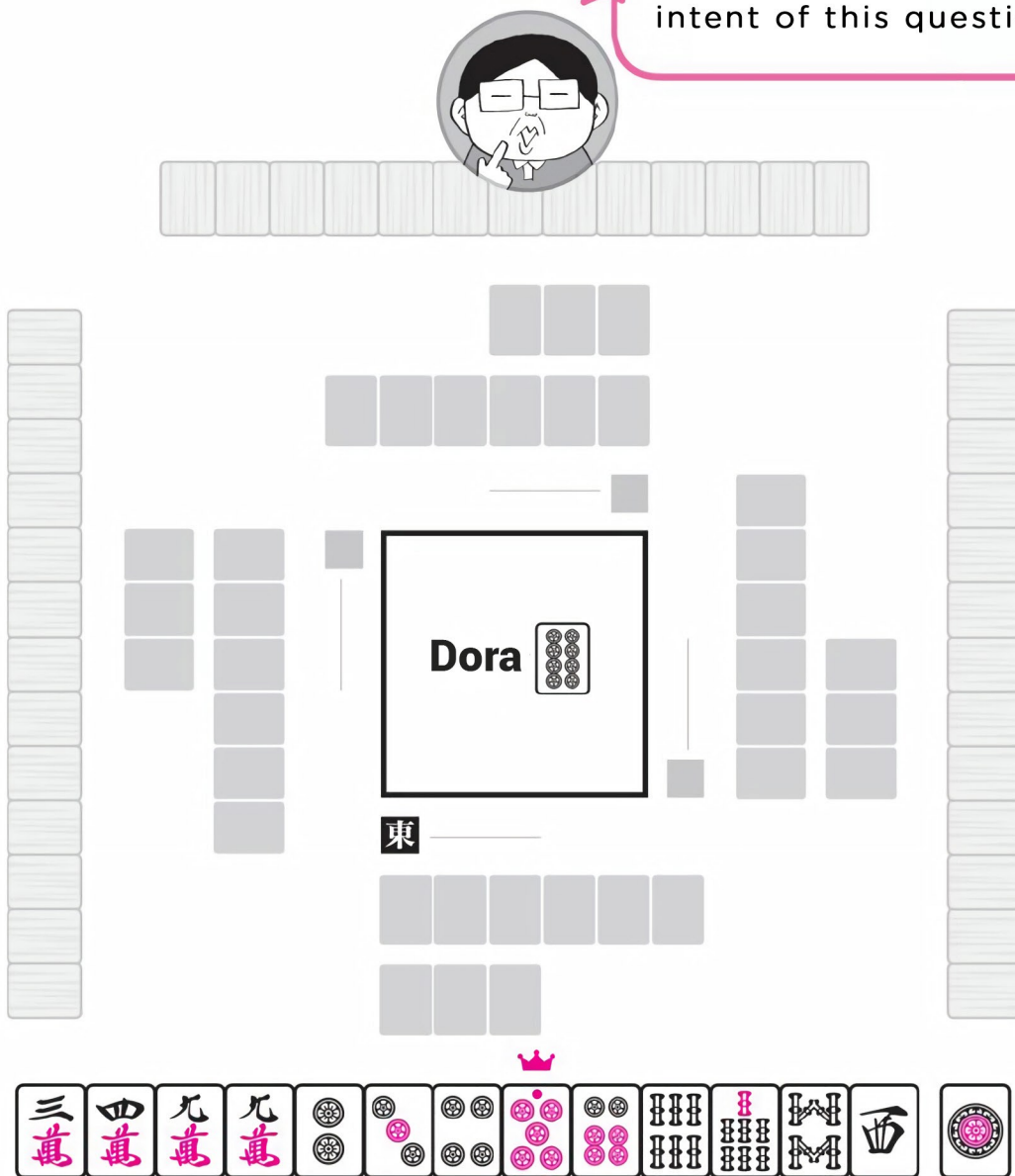
**A 2600-point hand with
Yaku is a basic Riichi!**

Q
023

Dealer mid-game Pinfu Dora 1

As the dealer in the middle of a round, you reach tenpai with Pinfu Dora 1. Do you declare Riichi?

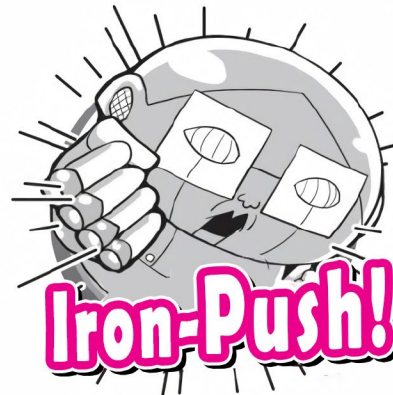
Do you understand the intent of this question?



A 023 Riichi

Review and confirmation question. No need to even think: immediate Riichi. If you stay hidden here, you'll be laughed at as a "Bean Dama" player and be destined to crawl on the ground for the rest of your life. Start clutching your Riichi stick even before you reach tenpai.

This is beyond obvious;
it's ironclad.



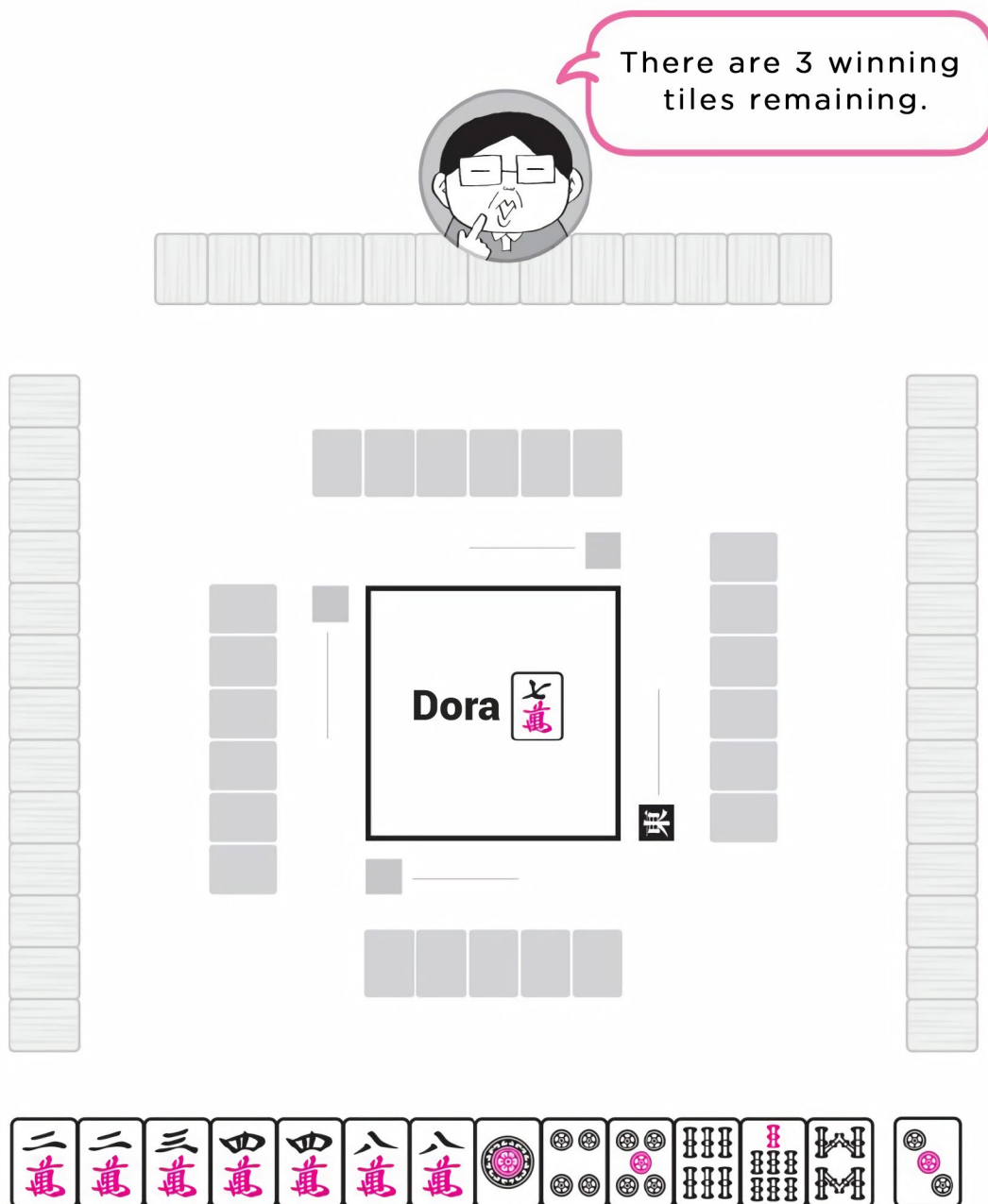
Push-Pull Rule

023

**A dealer's Pinfu Dora 1
is an ironclad Riichi!**

Q 024 Iipeiko Kanchan Wait

You've reached tenpai with Tanyao + Iipeiko, waiting on a kanchan wait. Do you declare Riichi?



A 024 Riichi

The fundamental play is to take a 2600-point closed hand and declare Riichi to make it 5200 points. There are few tiles that would improve the wait, and if the wait does change, the lipeiko will likely break. The difficulty of winning doesn't balance out with the current points, so you should declare Riichi.

Call Riichi if up to one of your winning tiles has been discarded; if two are already gone, the wait is too poor, so stay dama.

When the hand is already worth 5200 points while dama, either Riichi or damaten is fine.



Even if it feels hard to call Riichi, it's more profitable to do so.

Push-Pull Rule

024

A low-scoring kanchan lipeiko hand is a Riichi.

Lesson
6**The Importance of the
Headstart Riichi****An All-Too-Important Review**

This is a review of Lesson 2 on page 31. Since it's incredibly important, I'm writing it again.

There are two most important principles in Mahjong.

They are:

- ① Call Riichi immediately upon reaching a headstart tenpai.
- ② Fold without overreaching when someone else calls Riichi.

Whether or not you can consistently do these two determines a large part of your Mahjong skill. Every single time. It's not about whether you understand the logic, but whether you follow it accurately every time. Mahjong isn't a game of logic; it's a game of routine execution.

Solidifying Your Advantage

You've reached tenpai before anyone else, and since you're concealed, you're in a position to call Riichi. This is a huge advantage, and you must solidify that advantage by declaring Riichi. After that, you just wait for the Riichi to bear fruit.

Conversely, when someone else calls a headstart Riichi, you should fold properly if your hand isn't sufficient. Pushing with an insufficient hand is like buying a lottery ticket that costs 100 yen but only has an expected value of 50 yen—it's a huge loss. That said, if you can catch up without discarding dangerous tiles, then you should head for the win.

These two important rules are two sides of the same coin. Mahjong is essentially a game of "can you reach tenpai first?" or "can you push back?"

Push-Pull Rule so far

022 A 2600-point hand with Yaku is a basic Riichi!

023 A Dealer's Pinfu Dora 1 is an ironclad Riichi!

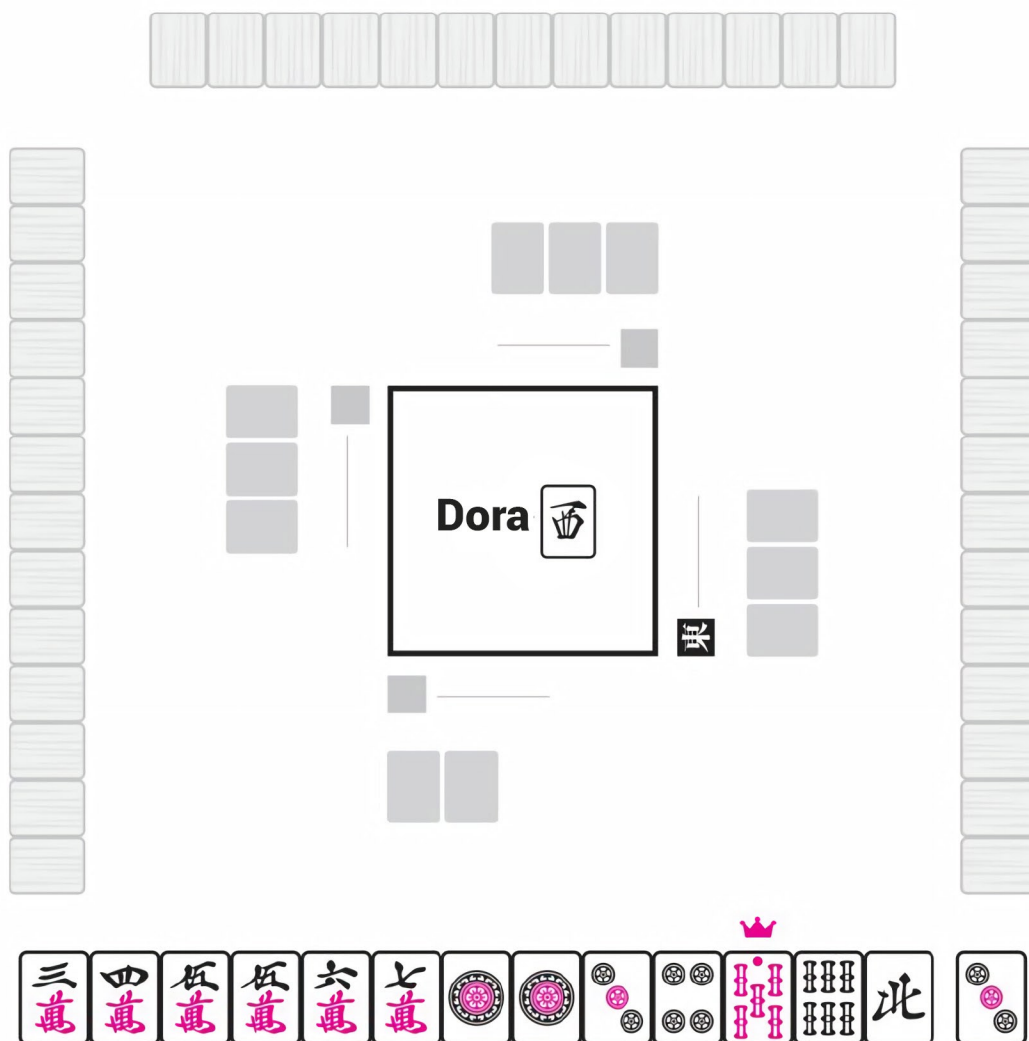
024 A low-scoring Kanchan Iipeiko hand is a Riichi.

Q 025 Should you keep a "Matagi" tile? (1)

Non-dealer. Do you keep the matagi tile ?
Or tsumogiri (discard it upon drawing)?



This is the first of a set of related problems.



TN: A "matagi" tile is a tile adjacent to a proto-run like a 3 in a 334 or a 5 for a 455 that contributes to an increase in tile acceptance of the hand by allowing it to form a triplet out of that block. A surplus tile usually in the context of talking about ryanmen blocks. "Matagi suji" is a theory based on matagi tiles.

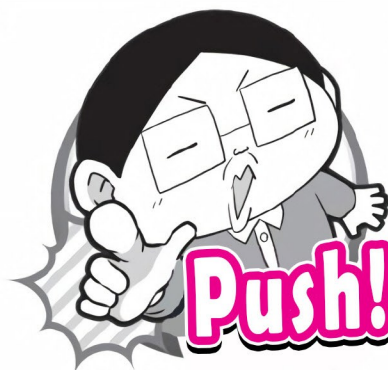
A Discard 此

025

In the early game, maximize your tenpai chances. Not swapping the matagi tile  for a safe tile is a cutting-edge strategy called "5-Block Max Efficiency."

However, if a total of two or more of  and  are already discarded, then discard the  and swap it for a safe tile.

Let's get into the habit of not discarding these tiles early.



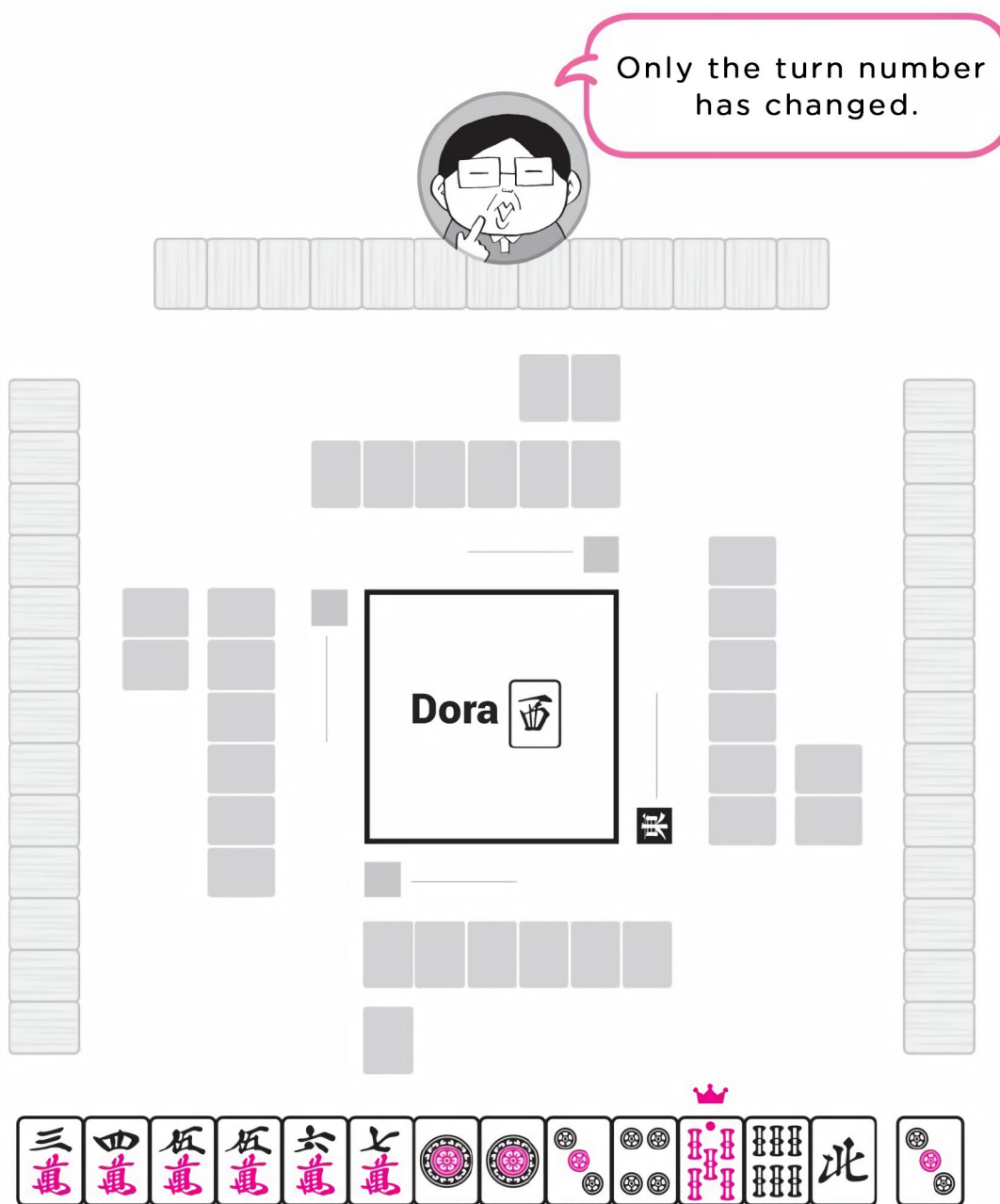
Push-Pull Rule

025

**Go for full efficiency
in the early game.**

Q Should you keep a "Matagi" tile? (2)

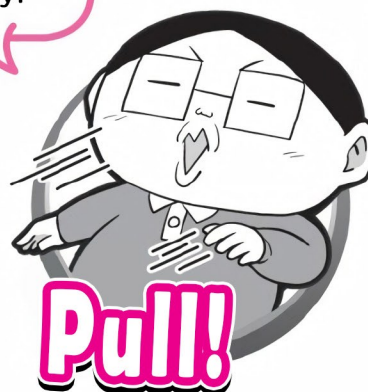
Turn 8. Non-dealer. Do you keep the matagi tile ? Or tsumogiri?



A 026 Tsumogiri

As in the previous question, maintaining maximum efficiency increases your chance of calling a headstart Riichi. That said, Tenpai rates from other players surge starting from Turn 8. If you don't keep your hand "slim," it becomes harder to counter-attack or defend when a Riichi comes from elsewhere. Slimming down is recommended here.

Pros tend to slim down,
while those called
"mass-produced digital
players" tend to stay at
maximum efficiency.



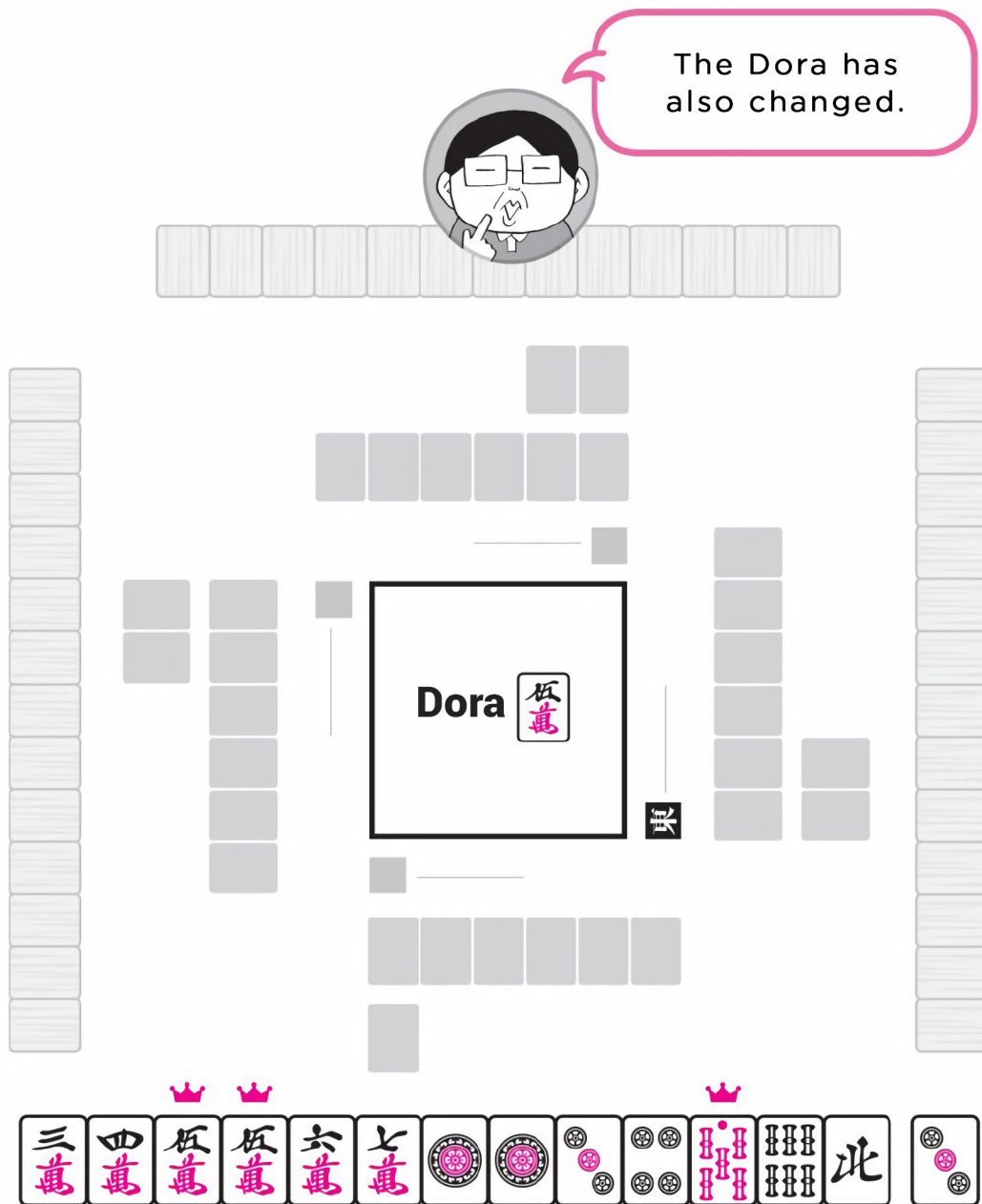
Push-Pull Rule

026

**Slimming down is recommended
once you reach the mid-game.**

Q Should you keep a "Matagi" tile? (3)
027

Turn 8. Non-dealer. Do you keep the matagi tile  ?
Or tsumogiri?



A 027 Either way

If you have Dora 3, the basic rule is to play for maximum efficiency. However, if a headstart Riichi comes from another player, it is dangerous to "zentsu" (push everything) indefinitely. You have to find a good balance.

Your job is to reach tenpai even one second faster.



Push-Pull Rule

027

**Do not reduce efficiency
for expensive hands.**

Lesson
7**When to Discard
"Matagi" Tiles?****An Area Without a Definitive Answer**

When should you discard a "matagi" tile? This is an area where the correct answer hasn't been fully established yet.

In the distant past, there was a trend called "Kouhai Senda", where getting rid of dangerous or useful tiles early (sakigiri) was considered "cool." But that was back in the Showa era.

A bit later, "5-block Theory" became popular. The trend then was to keep these tiles all the way until Tenpai, and if someone else called a headstart Riichi, the correct play was to immediately fold completely.

Recently, the trend has shifted toward discarding these tiles at a certain stage of hand development to build a hand that is easier to push back with if you face a Riichi. All strong players say roughly the same thing these days, and I feel the same way.

The 3 Main Policies for Matagi Tiles

There are three things we can say for sure, and the first is:

- ① In the early game, aim for maximum tile acceptance(ukeire).

If you seem to be able to call a headstart Riichi, keep your tile acceptance at a maximum, so you speed up the number of turns it takes to reach tenpai.

Then ②, even when you have an expensive hand, maintain as much acceptance as possible. Since it is a hand you want to bet on, we expect a high return even if we slightly increase the risk.

And lastly ③, when a total of 2 or more of your matagi tiles or tiles belonging to your "head" (pair) have already been discarded on the board, you should discard the matagi tile early without expecting too much from it.

You could say that these three points are pretty much settled principles.

Push-Pull Rule so far

025 Go for full efficiency in the early game.

026 Slimming down is recommended once you reach the mid-game.

027 Do not reduce efficiency for expensive hands.

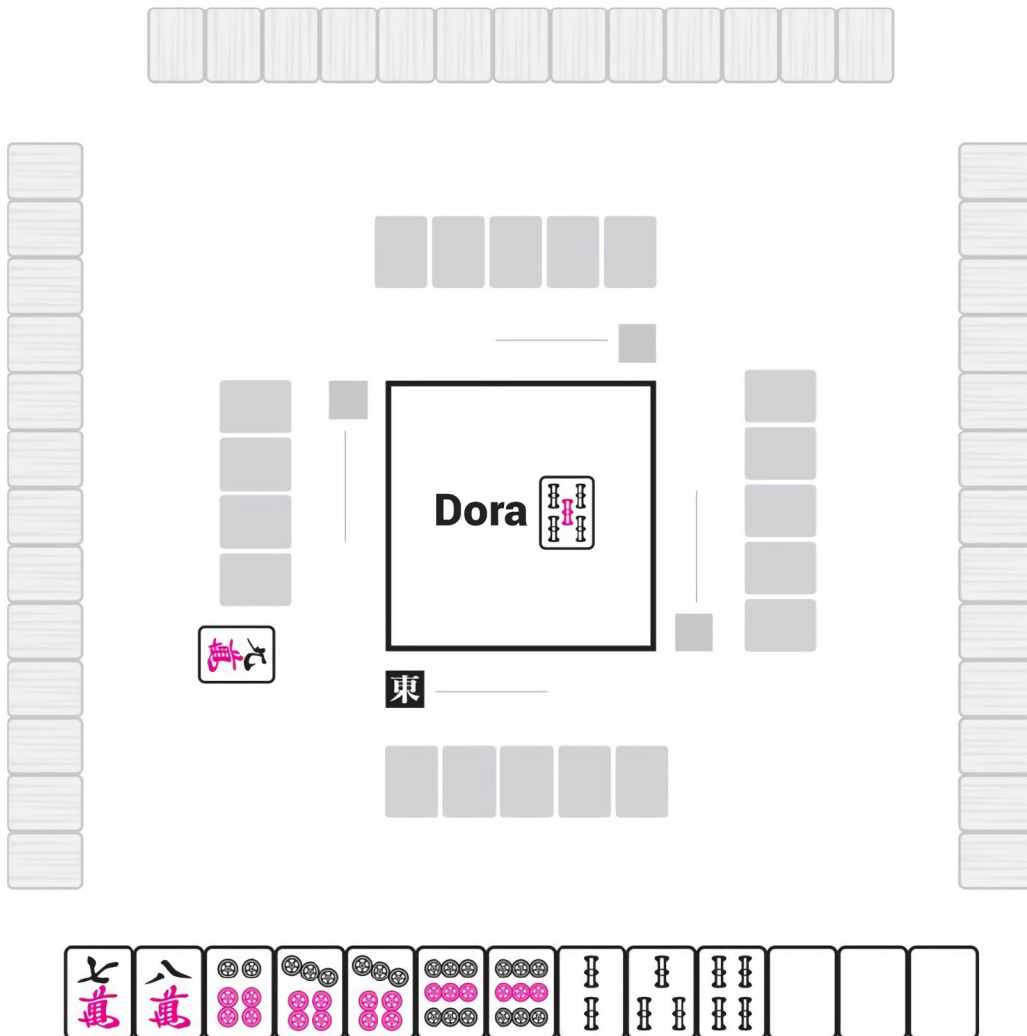
There are three laws that serve as criteria for discarding matagi tiles.

Q 028 only Chi for Tenpai

Turn 5. As dealer, you are 1-shanten for a  only hand. If you Chi the  discarded by your kamicha, you reach tenpai. Do you chi?



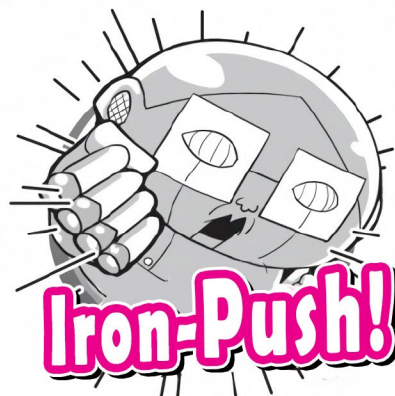
Is this a trap or not?



A 028 Pass

You have a very wide 1-shanten. With this shape as dealer, the junction where you should call to take tenpai is around Turn 8 to 10. A dealer Riichi is powerful, so aiming for Riichi—even if it makes your tenpai later—is the way to win at Mahjong.

I used to Chi here, but I have repented.



Push-Pull Rule

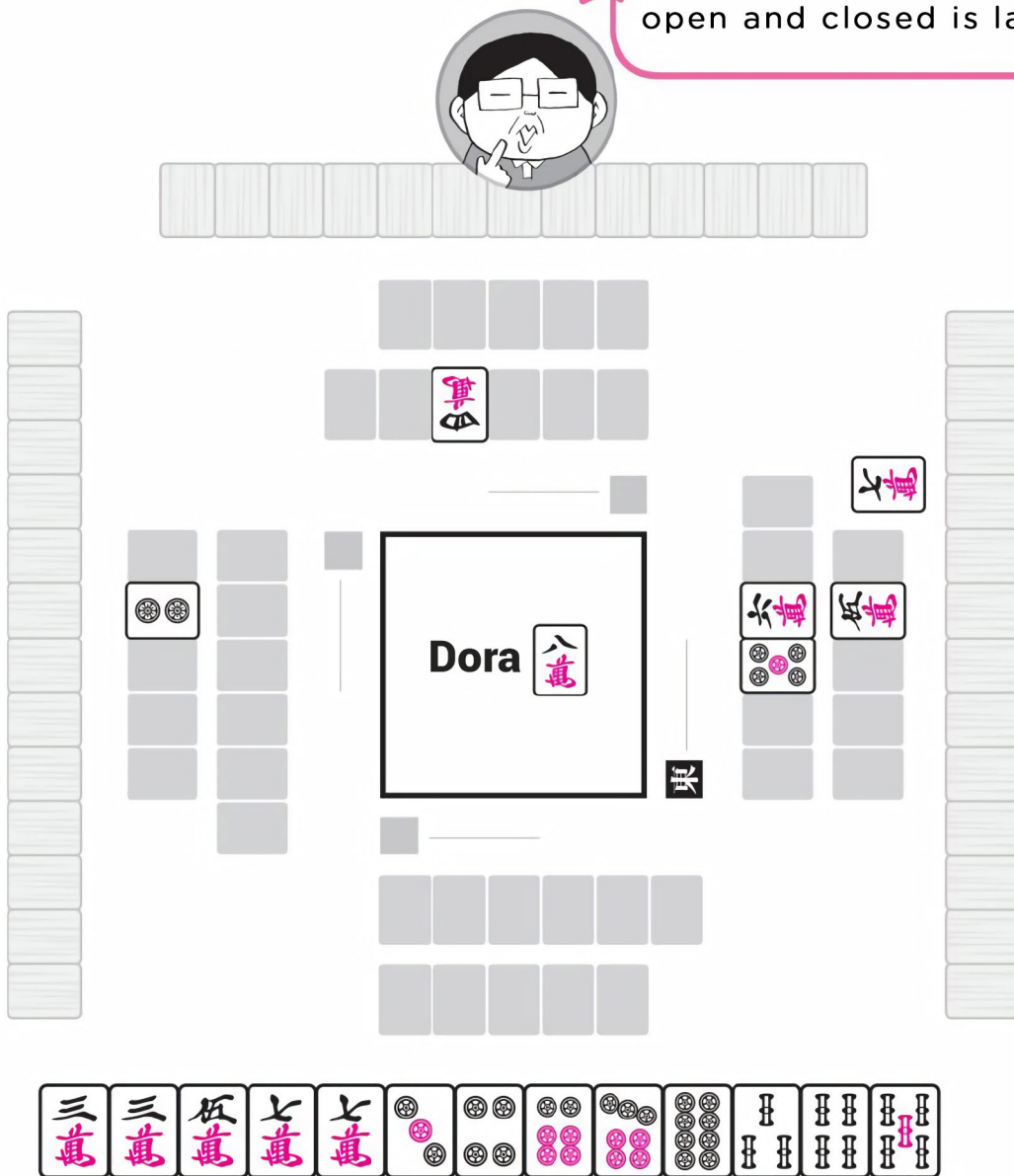
028

For a 1-2 Han hand with good shapes, the junction to call for tenpai is Turn 8-10.

Q 029 Open Tanyao on Turn 12

A chance hand where you can aim for Tan-Pin-Sanshoku.
On Turn 12, a  comes out that allows you to take a Pon-ten. Do you Pon?

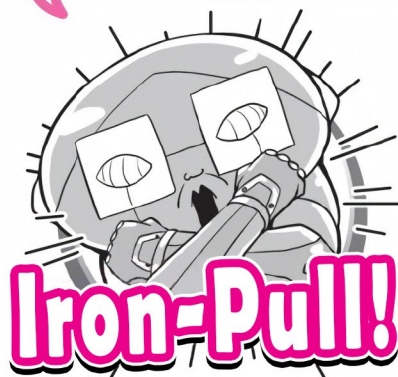
The price gap between open and closed is large.



A Pon 029

It is already Turn 12. At this stage, you should call almost any tile that puts you in tenpai. Calling the  here (even though the hand value becomes cheaper) results in a two-sided wait in pinzu, making it a perfect tile for your shape. A call to take control of the situation so we can kick other's hands with a cheap 1,000-point win.

There are people who are bad at making calls like this, aren't there?



Push-Pull Rule

029

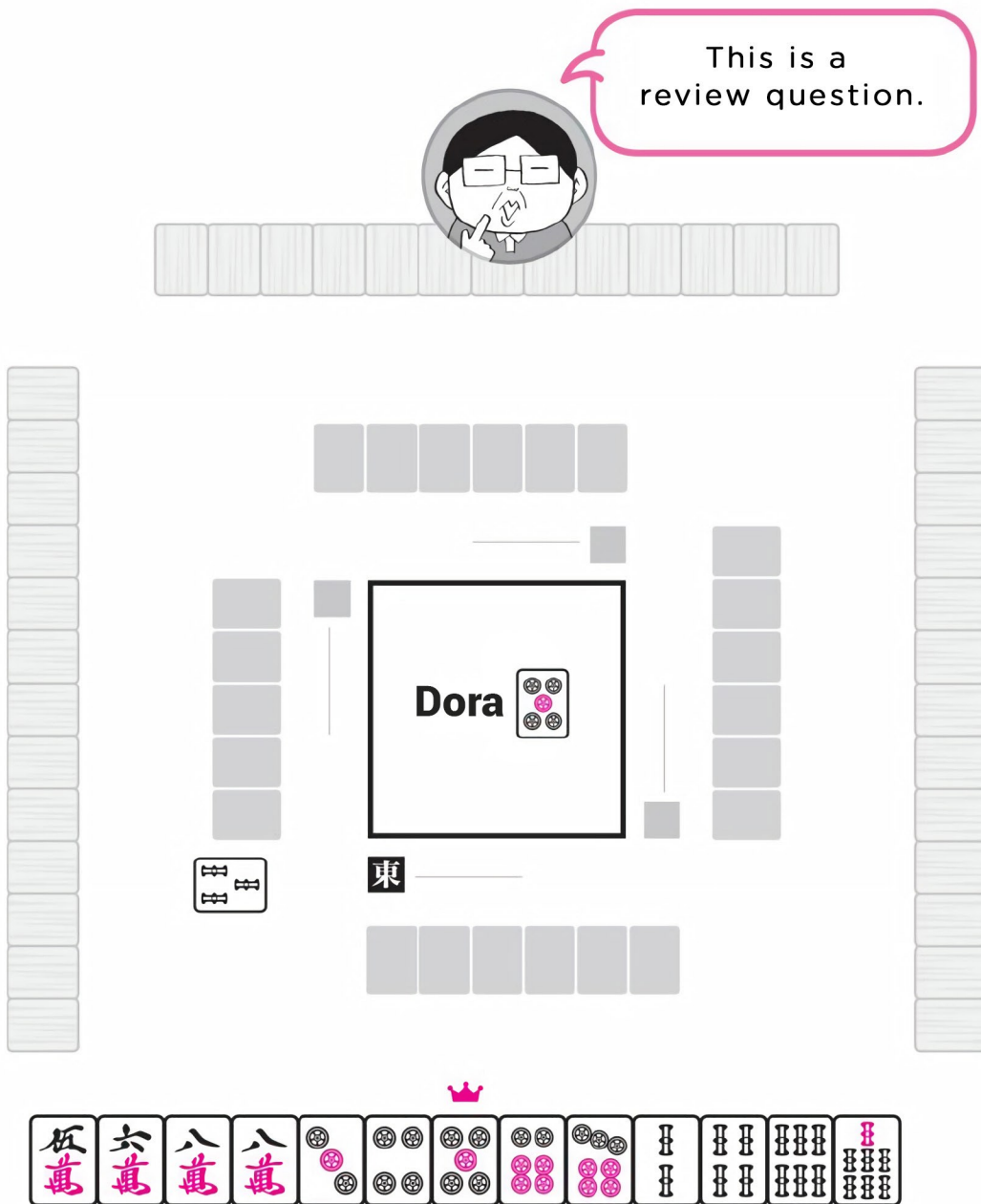
**From Turn 10 onwards,
if calling puts you in tenpai,
take it.**

Q Open Tanyao on Turn 6

030

As dealer on Turn 6, the player to your left discards . Calling this would resolve a kanchan. Do you Chi?

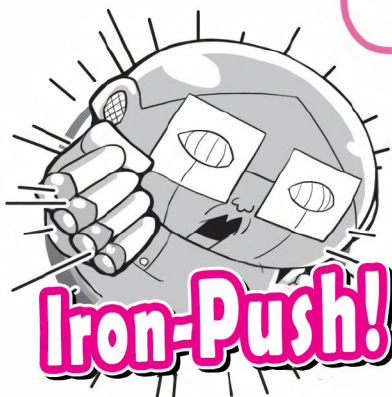
This is a review question.



A 030 Pass

You have enough block candidates even without calling the  kanchan. Continue to push forward while remaining concealed. At the 2-shanten stage, as in this problem, there are many useful tiles, so the hand will progress even without calling. Calling here provides very little speed boost and only makes the hand cheaper.

For a shape like   you can pass it without calling and eventually swap it out for tiles like  or .



Push-Pull Rule

030

As Dealer, your goal is to "crush" them.

Lesson
8**Hands Where a Mangan
is Visible are Precious****Mindset is Vital**

If you have a hand that looks like it can reach Riichi with a good wait, aim for Riichi. If you have a hand that can target a Mangan, target that Mangan. This is incredibly important.

To put it in extremes, Mahjong is a recurring battle between "people trying to win a Mangan" vs. "people who can't make a Mangan and thus try to wash the round away cheaply."

Don't Throw Away the Seeds of Opportunity

Therefore, if you have a yaku like Tanyao or a Yakuhai and it looks like you can reach a two-sided Riichi, that is a Mangan opportunity. With that one yaku plus Riichi, Tsumo, Ippatsu, ura-dora, or an aka-dora, it becomes a Mangan.

In such cases, if it looks like you can proceed while remaining concealed, skipping callable tiles to aim for Riichi is essential for winning mahjong. The junction point is turn 8–10. You should endure until then, but after that point, since everyone is entering the window to reach tenpai, it becomes better to prioritize reaching tenpai by any means.

The skill of transforming a cheap hand into a Mangan is a vital part of hand-building technique. If a hand is capped at 3,900 points, there's no need to force a transformation; it's fine to let it end its life as a cheap hand.

Push-Pull Rule so far

- 028 For a 1-2 Han hand with good shape, the junction to call for tenpai is turn 8-10.
- 029 From turn 10 onwards, if calling puts you in tenpai, take it.
- 030 As dealer, your goal is to "crush" them.

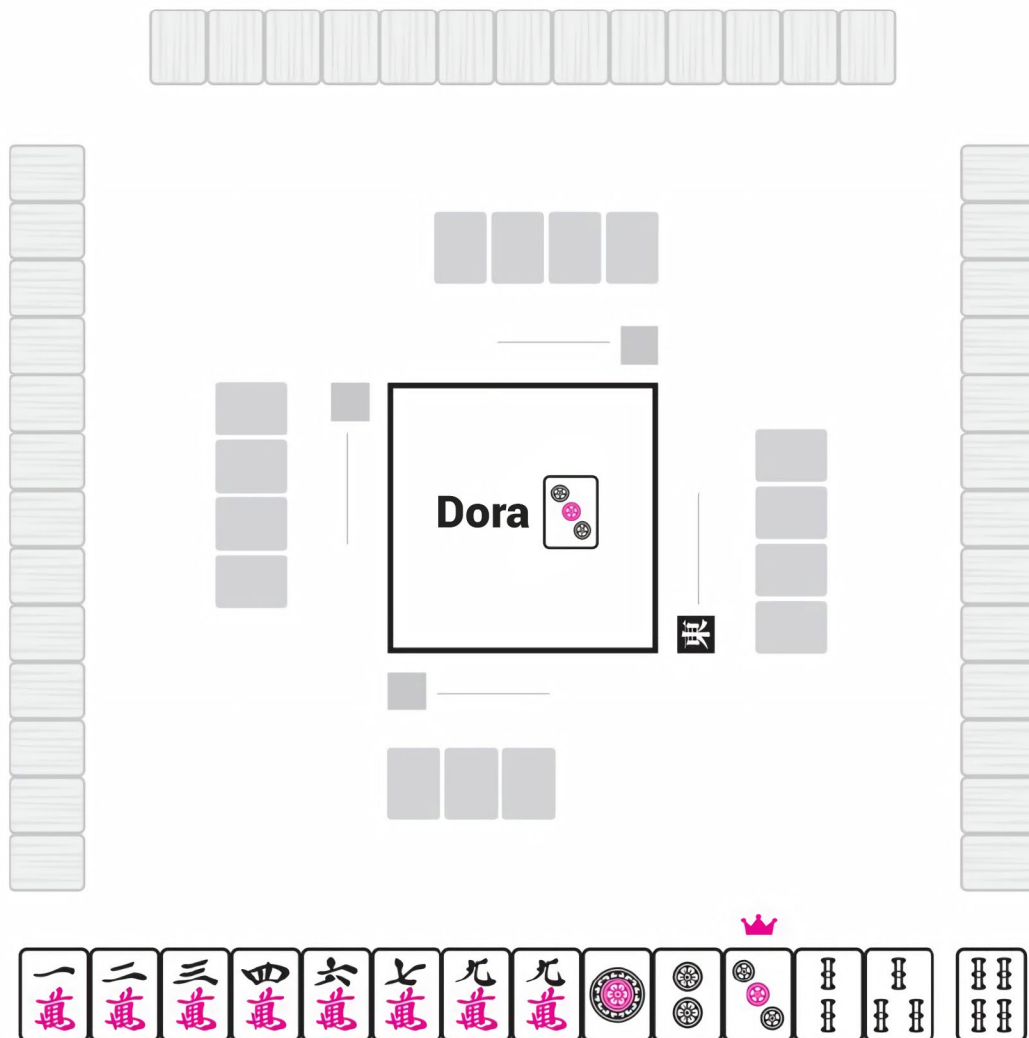
Aim for Mangan until Turn 8-10; after that, prioritize tenpai. This applies to the Dealer as well; it is more profitable not to rush into a cheap win too early.

Q 031 Early Sanshoku Breakdown

Turn 4. You drew a tile that breaks your potential Sanshoku but puts you in tenpai for Pinfu Dora 1. Do you discard ? Discard ? Riichi? Or Damaten?



This is a discussion about whether or not to chase the Sanshoku.



A 031 Discard and Riichi

Pinfu Dora 1 is an ironclad Riichi. There is no need to force Sanshoku. Whether you discard  or , there is only one specific tile type that would transform this into Sanshoku. Waiting for that is "Showa-era Mahjong."

This is a fundamental of real matches. A true basic.



Push-Pull Rule

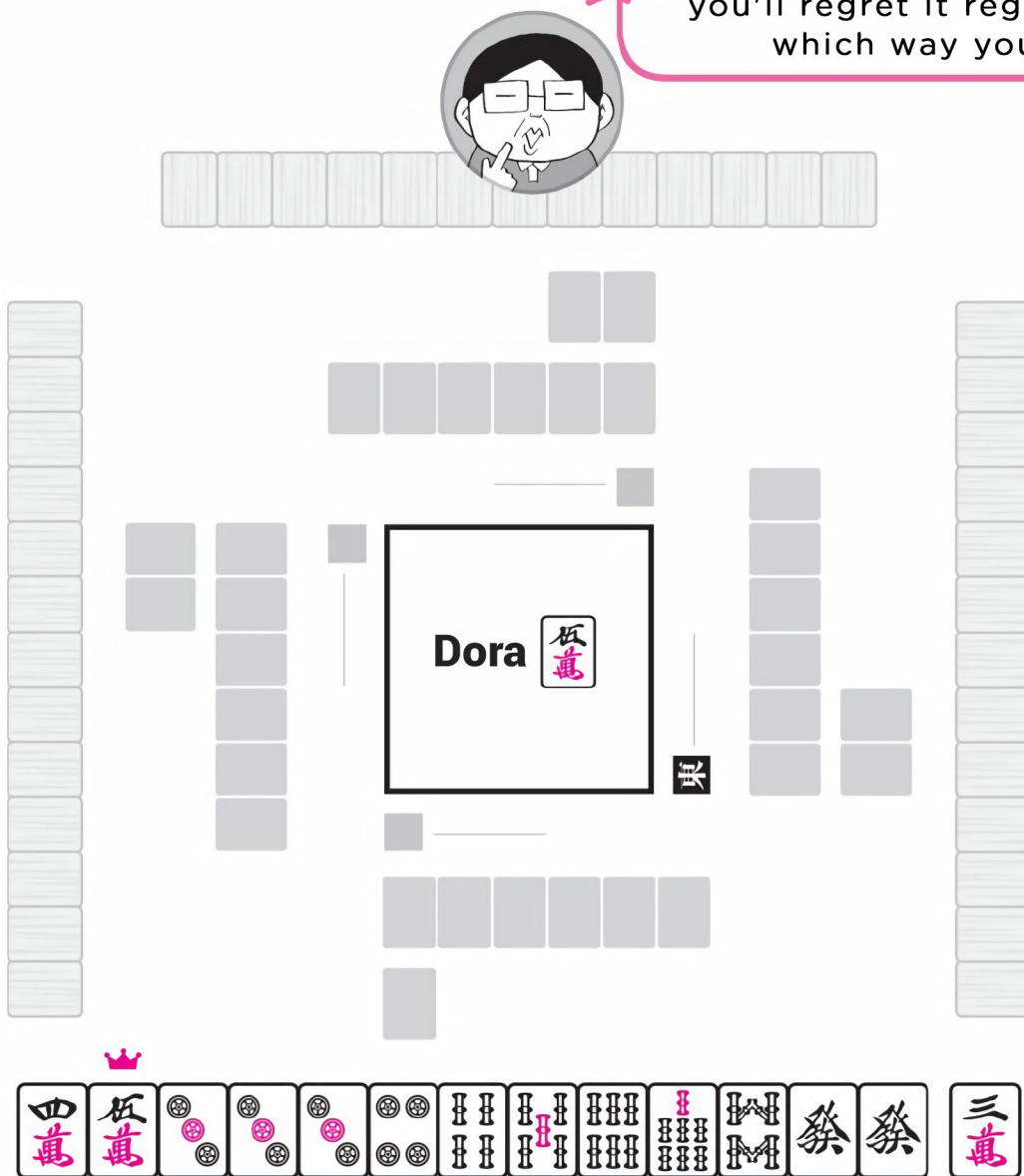
031

**Men-Pin-Dora 1
takes priority over Sanshoku.**

Q Transformation into Tan-Pin-Sanshoku 032

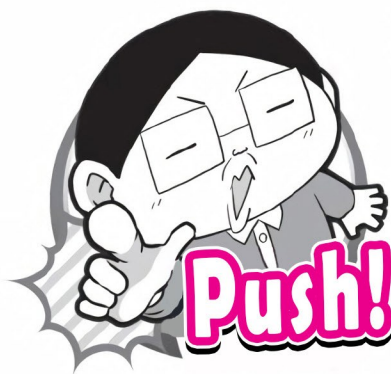
Turn 8, you have a headstart tenpai. If you discard your  pair, you can aim for Tanyao-Pinfu-Sanshoku. Do you call Riichi? Or do you drop the  pair?

This is the kind of choice where you'll regret it regardless of which way you fail.



A 032 Discard and riichi

Thinking you will reach tenpai again immediately after dropping the  pair because you have two 3-sided waits is naive. Even with 22 effective tiles (3 types each in pinzu and souzu), it takes an average of 5 turns to reach tenpai again. Therefore, the comparison is between a Turn 8 headstart Riichi Dora 1 versus a potential Tan-Pin-Sanshoku at Turn 13. If this were Turn 4~5, you'd want to drop the  pair, but at Turn 8, the solid path is to call Riichi and solidify your advantage.



Personally, I have no memory of succeeding by dropping the  pair from this position.

Push-Pull Rule

032

**A leading ryanmen Riichi
is worth its weight in gold!**

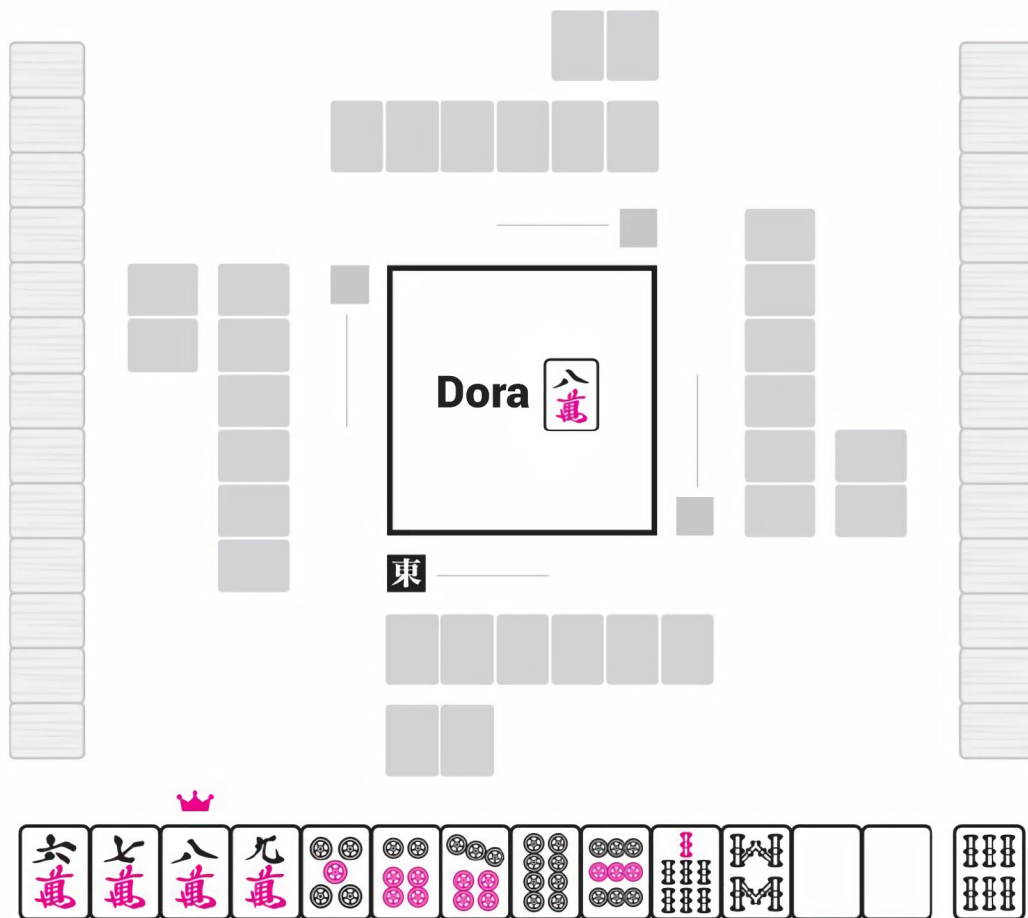
Q
033

Transformation into Sanshoku

Turn 8. As the dealer, you reach tenpai, but the draw broke your potential Sanshoku. Do you declare Riichi here?

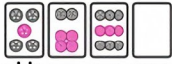


This draw feels like a total spite, doesn't it...



A Discard and Riichi

033

It's frustrating because the components for Sanshoku are in your hand, but the yaku itself didn't complete. However, if you were to discard  to wait for a transformation, you'd only be looking for 4 types of tiles . Furthermore, in most cases where you actually complete the Sanshoku, your number of winning tiles would decrease. Especially since you are the Dealer, continuing a concealed tenpai with no yaku (meaning you can't win on a discard) while waiting for those 4 specific tiles is too weak. Immediate Riichi is the only move.



Let's treat a "visual" Sanshoku like a trap.

Push-Pull Rule

033

Don't wait for a transformation when you have no yaku.

Lesson
9**Don't be Misled by
the Illusion of Yaku****Don't be fooled by bad women**

The problems on the last few pages were actually "trap questions." They share the same theme as earlier problems: "Just call Riichi immediately." However, the hand shapes were designed to make Riichi feel unappealing.

In these moments, you must ignore the "illusion" of a potential Yaku and think in terms of actual tile counts—comparing the tiles needed for the Yaku versus the tiles that complete the Tenpai. Don't be fooled by bad women; life is Riichi.

Don't chase Sanshoku's tail

Similarly, "Men-Pin-Dora 1 over Sanshoku" is a vital theme. Even if you aim for Sanshoku, you'll still be stuck with a "high/low" split where only one tile completes the yaku, and the possibility of a low-value win remains. Therefore, it's better to just call Riichi immediately rather than forcing the chase.

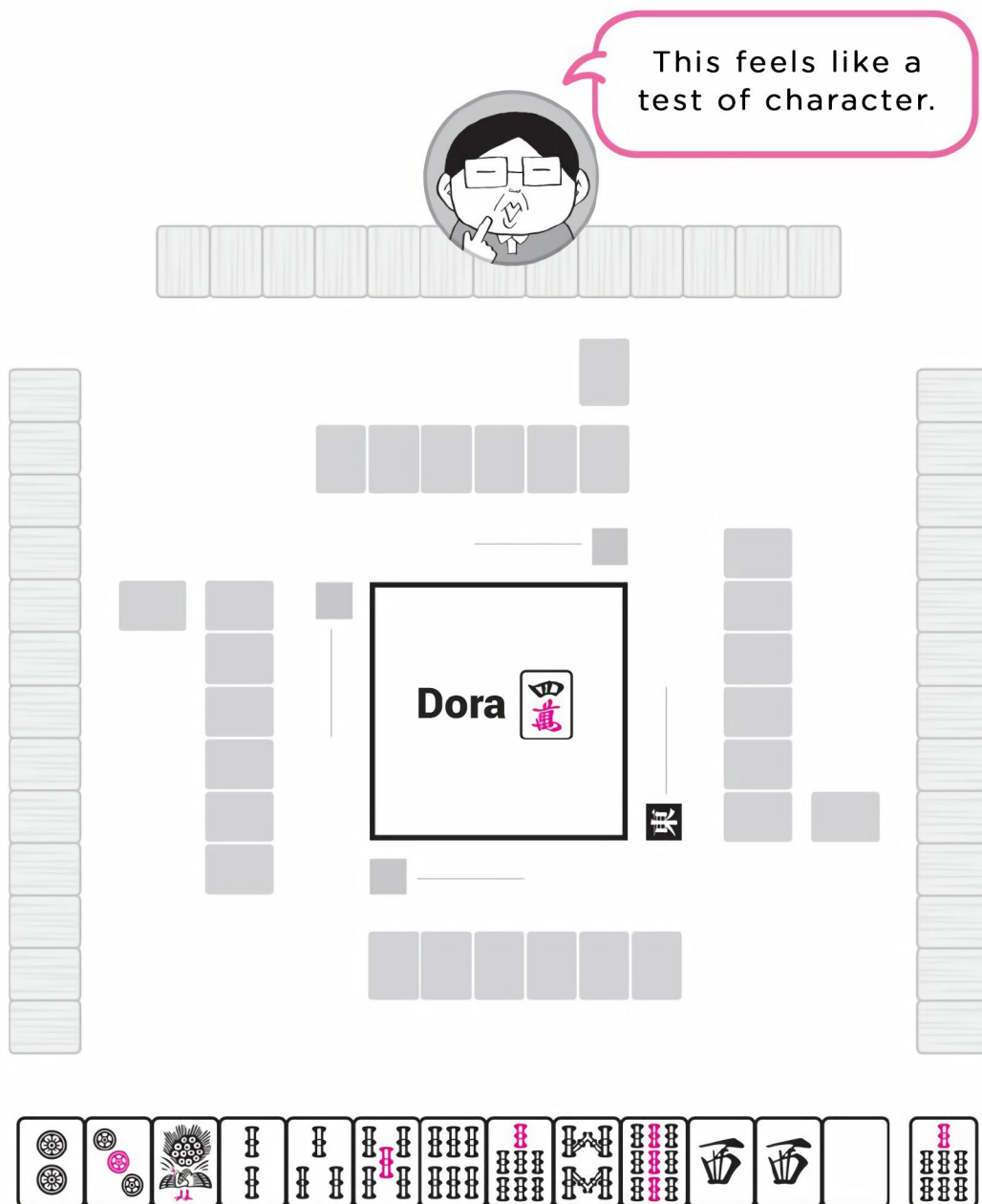
Like a Showa-era ballad saying "A woman shouldn't be chased, she should be made to chase you," Sanshoku is the same: "Sanshoku shouldn't be chased; it should be made to chase you." Though, I have no idea how you'd actually get Sanshoku to chase you.

Push-Pull Rule so far

- 031 Men-Pin-Dora 1 takes priority over Sanshoku.
- 032 A leading ryanmen Riichi is worth its weight in gold!
- 033 Don't wait for a transformation when you have no Yaku.

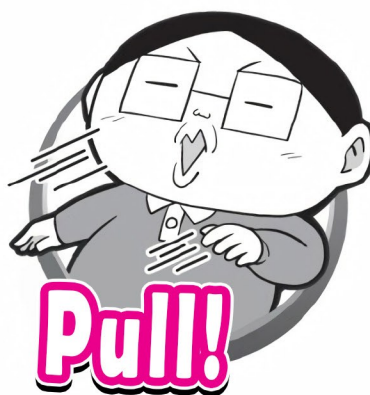
Q Transformation into Honitsu (1) 034

Turn 7. You drew the "low" side of an Ittsu and reached tenpai with Pinfu. You could also aim for a transformation into Honitsu. What do you do?



A Discard and Riichi

With only  as a tile to stick to, shifting to Honitsu would require pretty much two more specific Souzu tiles, which takes a considerable amount of time. If you Pon  and wait on  tanki wait, the hand actually becomes cheaper than a Riichi Pinfu. A headstart ryanmen tenpai is exceptionally strong, so immediate Riichi is the profitable play. Never chase transformations that require two specific tiles.



If you're blinded by the visible luxury of Honitsu, you lose.

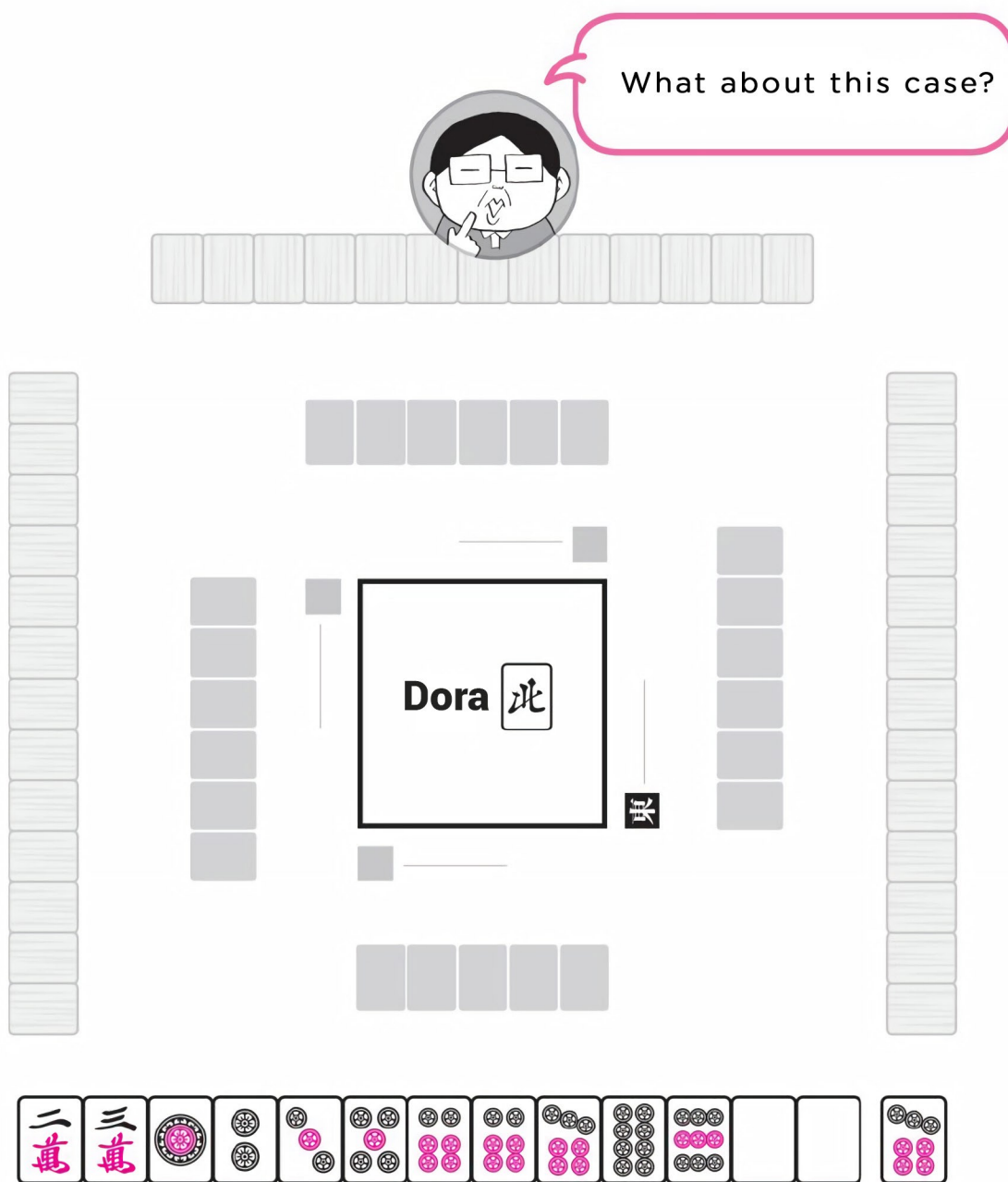
Push-Pull Rule

034

When deciding to switch to Honitsu, the usefulness of your “sticky tiles” is critical.

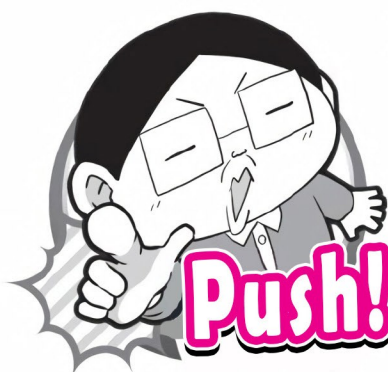
Q035 Transformation into Honitsu (2)

Turn 6, headstart tenpai. If you drop the   here, you can aim for Honitsu. What do you do?



A Discard

Calling Riichi isn't bad; that's how strong a headstart ryanmen Riichi is. However, since it's "Riichi-only", it has no point-value appeal. To transition to Honitsu from here, you just need to draw or Chi any tile from  to , or Pon . Since you can use calls, it's quite fast.



In a game with "Shuugi" (side payments), Riichi is an option, but without Shuugi, isn't Honitsu definitely superior?

Push-Pull Rule

035

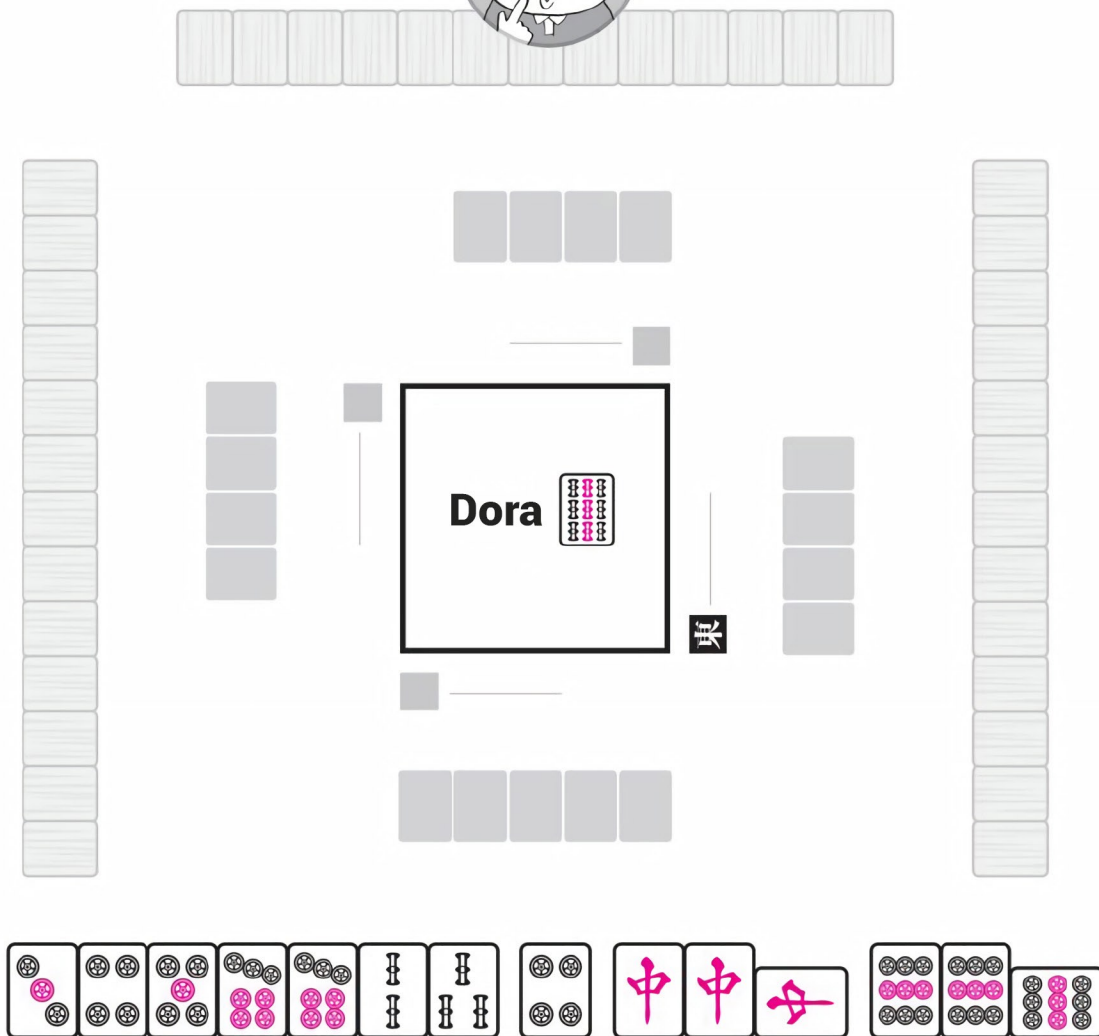
**A Honitsu that can
Pon into Tenpai is fast.**

Q Transformation into Honitsu (3) 036

Turn 6, you are already in tenpai. you draw , which makes a transition to Honitsu easy. What do you discard?



They say the Turn 6 timing is quite delicate.

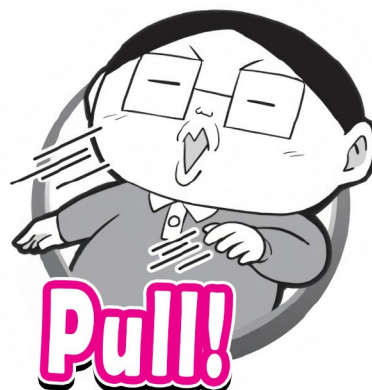


A Discard

036



If you break the tenpai here, it seems like it will take a long time to reach tenpai again. Since you likely haven't discarded any Pinzu yet, dropping  would signal a shift to Honitsu. This would make Pinzu tiles harder to get from others, decreasing your win rate. Unless you are in last place, there's no need to force a winnable 1000-point hand into 3900 points.



Just because you can flush the hand doesn't mean you should.

Push-Pull Rule

036

Don't overreach just to manufacture a 3900-point hand.

A
037

Discard



Even if it becomes harder to win, it is worth manufacturing a Mangan. Whether a Mangan is possible is a critical junction point, not just for mid-game transformations but for early-game policy as well. In the extreme, Mahjong is a game about aiming for Mangan. Hands that can't reach Mangan can be considered "stalling hands" (kawashi-te) intended to crush an opponent's Mangan.

Hand value is quite important.



Push-Pull Rule

037

**If a Mangan is visible, go for it
even if you have to force the
hand-building!**

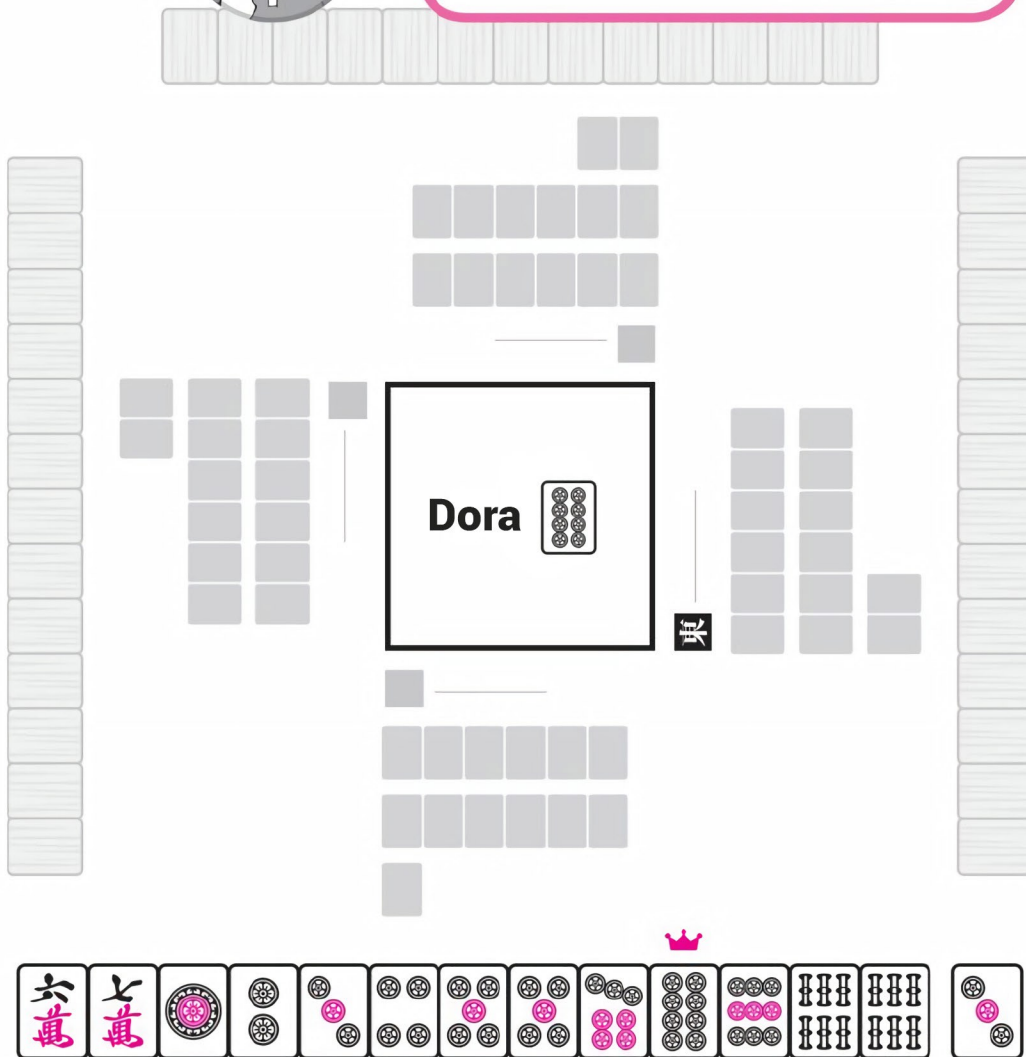
Q Late-game Tenpai

038

On Turn 14, you reach tenpai for Pinfu Dora 1. There are no obvious headstart attackers. You have 3 turn of draws remaining. Do you declare Riichi?



A lot depends on the specific situation, but...



A 038 Riichi

Late-game Riichi is surprisingly effective. Opponents who are already in tenpai often choose to fight, leading to a high rate of scoring "Ippatsu". It also has the effect of increasing the tenpai-payment you get from others at exhaustive draw. If there are 2 or fewer draws remaining, Damaten is recommended because the Riichi stick will likely be wasted; however, if there are 3 or more draws left, call Riichi.



The trick in a real match is to do the things that make your opponent uncomfortable.

Push-Pull Rule

038

Late-game Riichi is surprisingly effective.

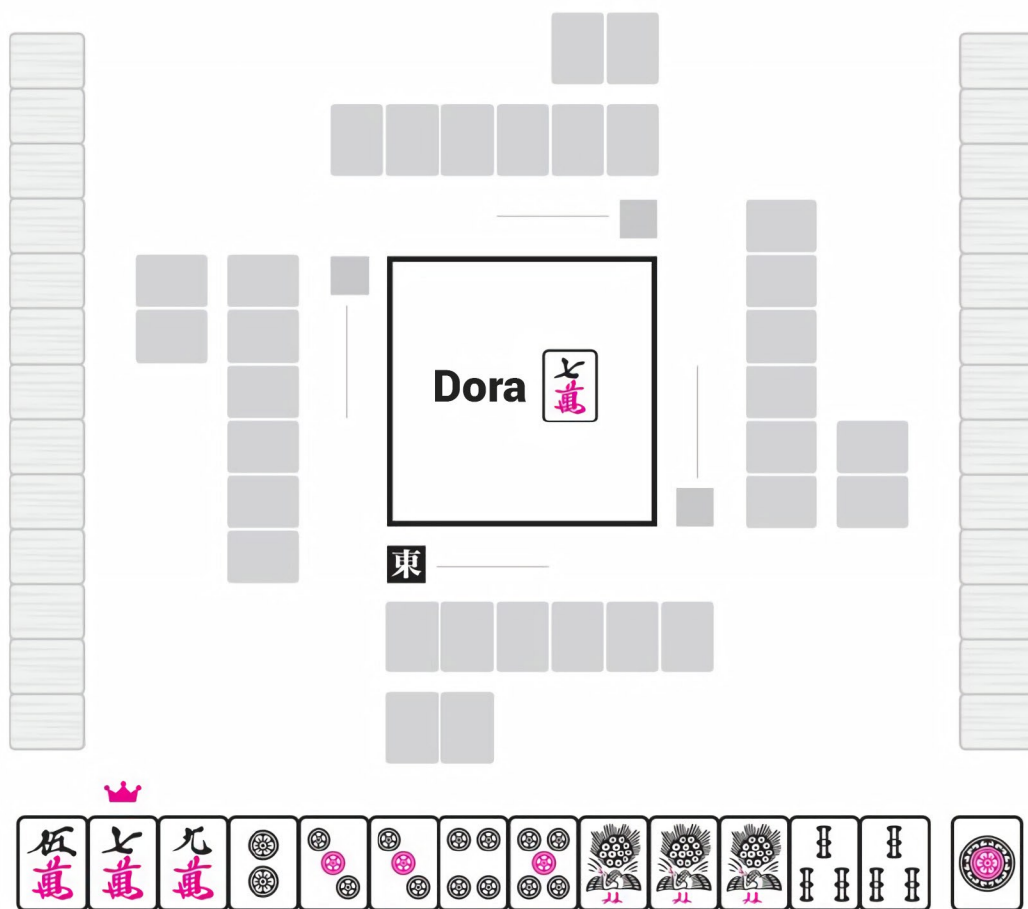
Q
039

Moro-Hikkake (Barefaced Suji Trap)

As dealer, you reached tenpai left with a ryankan shape next to the Dora. Do you call an obvious “barefaced suji-trap” Riichi?



The word “Bare” sounds a bit lewd, doesn’t it?

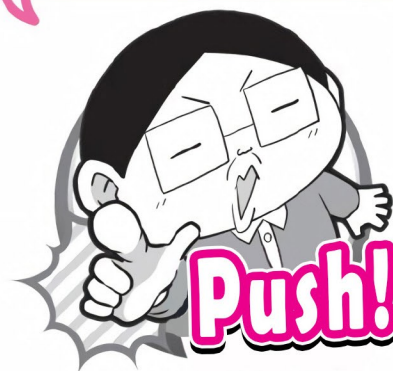


TN: A “Moro-hikkake” Riichi is when the riichi declaration tile itself sets up the suji-trap. It’s become quite well known that the suji to the riichi declaration tile is more dangerous for this exact reason that it can come from a ryankan shape so many will be more wary of discarding it. In slang usage “Moro” has the meaning of “blatant”, “exposed” or “bare” which is why I’ve translated it to “**barefaced suji-trap**” derived from the phrase “telling a barefaced lie”.

A 039 Discard and Riichi

A barefaced suji-trap Riichi near the dora might feel blatant, but opponents can't perfectly read it as that exact single tile. Doing it boldly is the standard way to play. While waiting one turn before calling Riichi makes the tile easier to come out, it gives your opponents a one-turn opening. Since there isn't a huge difference, stick to the standard immediate Riichi.

Saying it's "obvious" is usually just an opponent's sore-loser talk.



Push-Pull Rule

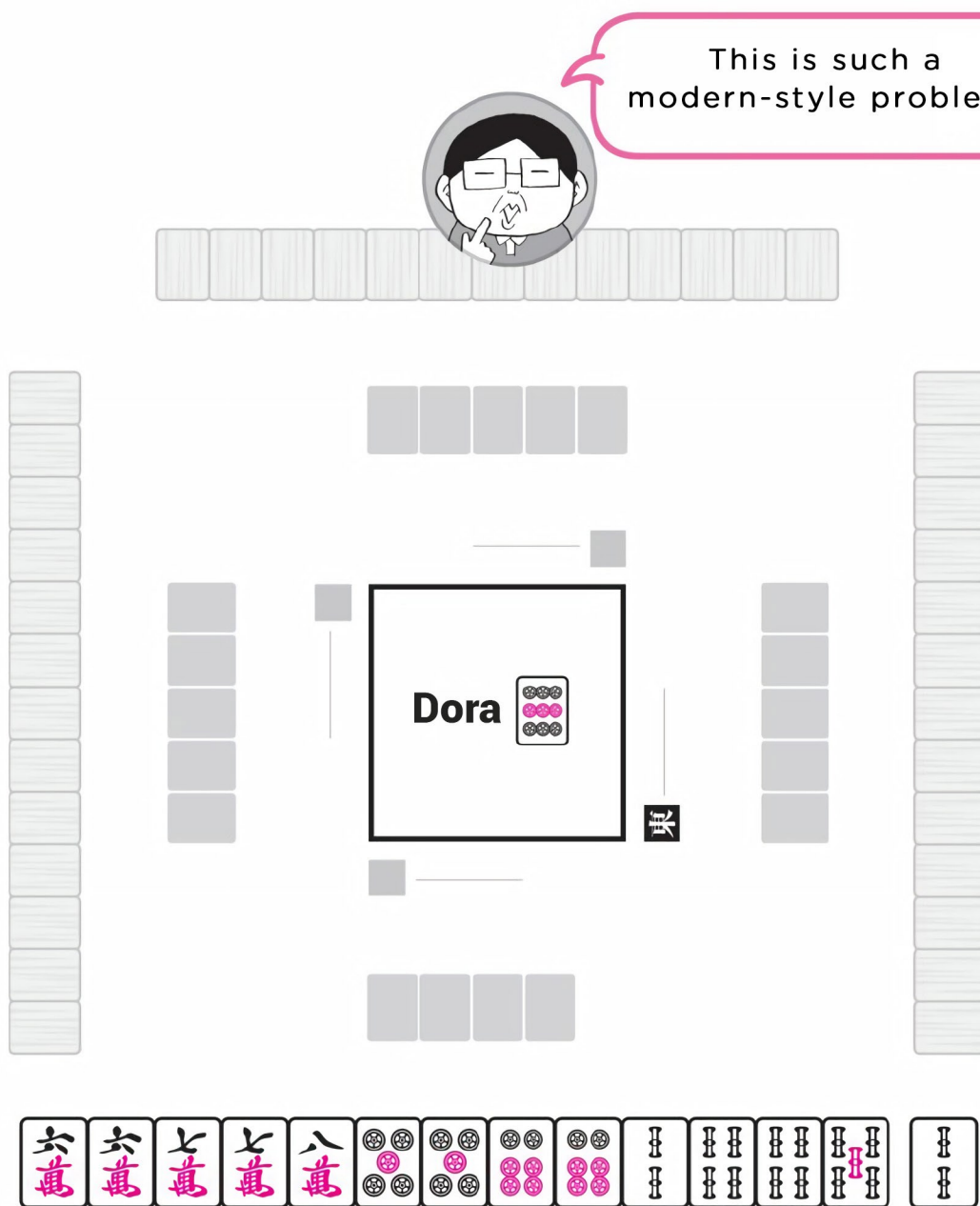
039

A barefaced suji-trap near the dora is a standard Riichi!

Q 040 Tanyao Chiitoitsu

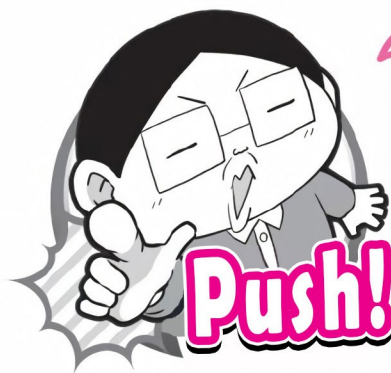
You reached tenpai for Tanyao Chiitoi. The wait is not a trap or anything special. Do you call Riichi?

This is such a modern-style problem.



A 040 Discard and Riichi

Since reaching tenpai itself is difficult with Chiitoitsu, it would be a waste to win with just Chiitoi or Tanyao-Chiitoi. We keep  around in case we draw the red five and then call riichi on an outer tile. For **1, 2, 8, 9** tiles, calling Riichi is OK even if they aren't "suji-traps." A "fresh" (shonpai) tile is ideal, but a tile that's once discarded is also fine. Waiting on a **3** or **7** is marginal. You can't justify calling Riichi on a **4, 5, or 6**, so stay in damaten initially for those. It's also important that tiles that become "late-traps" after Riichi (like  in this case) seem likely to be left in the wall.



You might hesitate on a wait that isn't a trap, but they win fairly often.

Push-Pull Rule

040

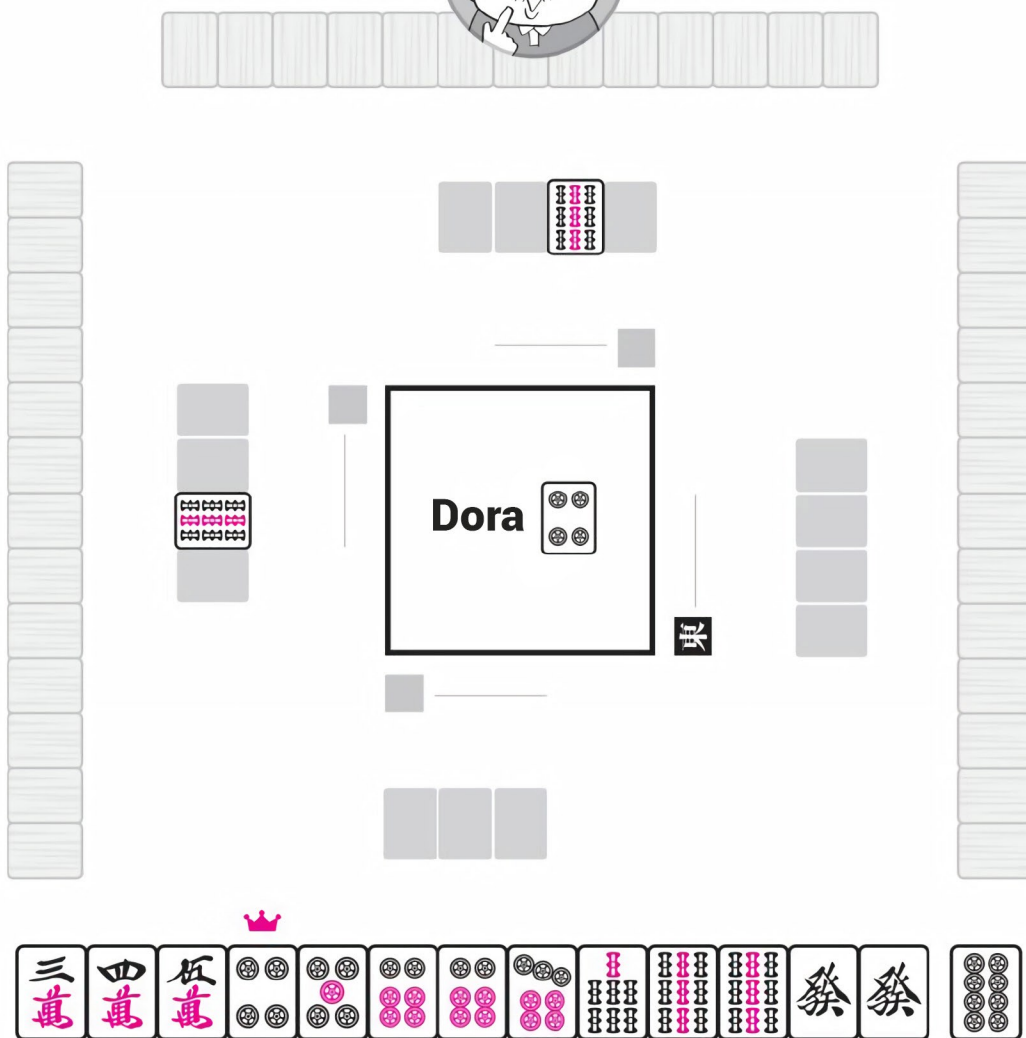
**Call Riichi with Tanyao Chiitoi
on a 2 or 8 wait.**

Q Honor Tile Shanpon with 041 one side exhausted

You reached an early tenpai, but the  you want for your shanpon wait already has 2 copies discarded. What do you do here?



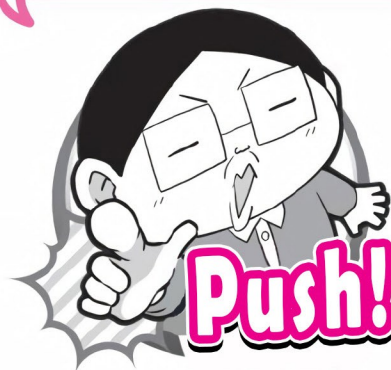
It's easy if you already know the answer, but...



A 041 Discard and Riichi

A shanpon wait involving honor tiles is a good shape tenpai that rivals a ryanmen wait. Even if one side of the wait is exhausted, it is not a "bad shape." Since you want to win on the  anyway, and  isn't particularly unlikely to be discarded, call Riichi here. Calling Riichi on a kanchan  wait or staying in Damaten on the  shanpon are both half-hearted moves.

Once you get used to it, you'll be able to Riichi here without worrying at all.



Push-Pull Rule

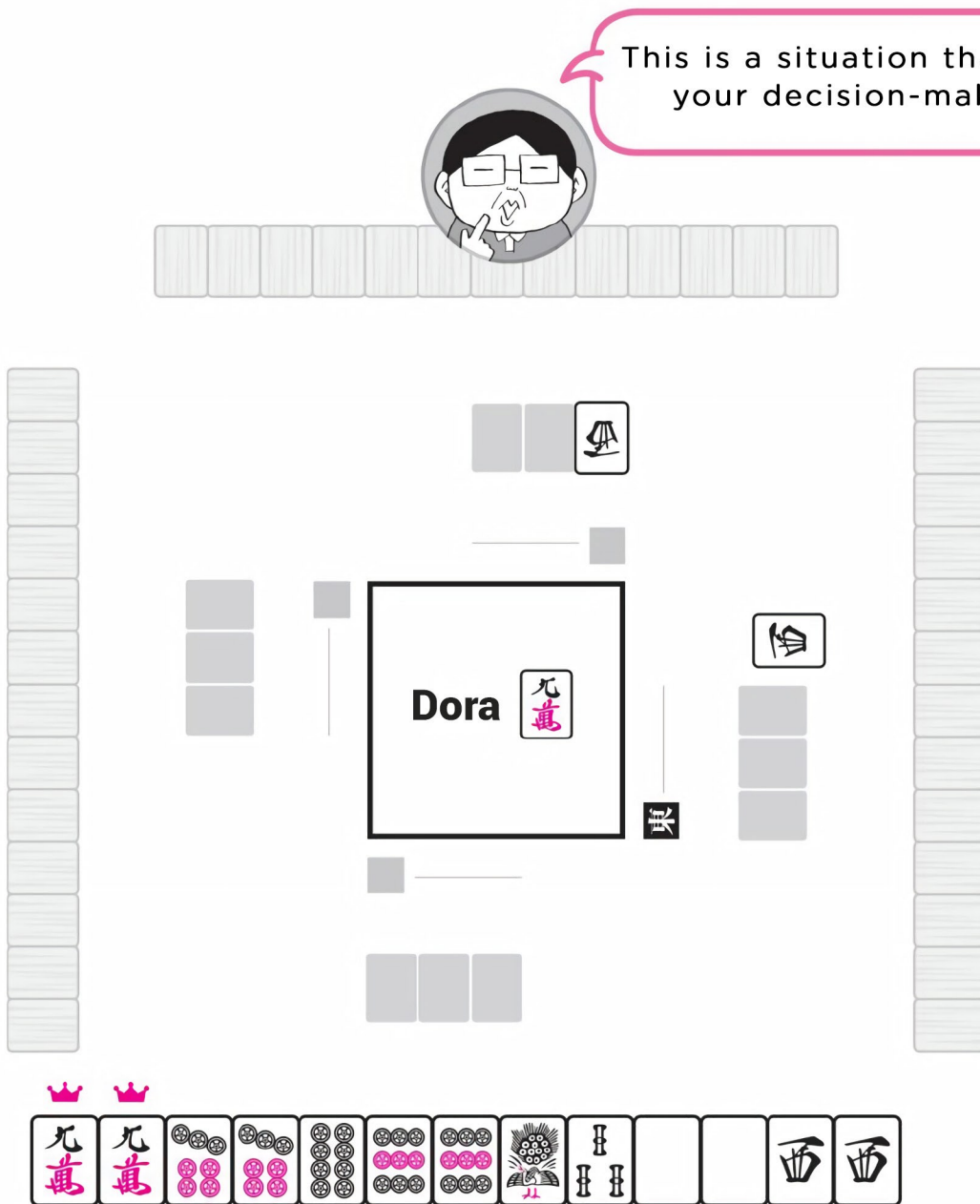
041

A shanpon wait on honor tiles is a good shape equivalent to a ryanmen wait.

Q 042 To Call or go for Seven Pairs?

A chance hand with 2 Dora. On Turn 4, an opponent discards the second . Do you Pon?

This is a situation that tests your decision-making.



A Pon 042

This call changes a concealed Chiitoitsu 1-shanten into a Chanta 1-shanten. Although the shanten count doesn't change, a meld-based hand that can use calls is faster. There are 3 remaining tiles for the kanchan  wait and 4 for the kanchan , but since there is potential to transition into Toitai, discard the .

In a general comparison between Toitai and Chiitai, Toitai is faster. However, a Toitai-only hand with no Yakuhai or Dora has no appeal; in those cases, you should aim for Chiitai instead.



This falls into the "Ironclad Call" category.

Push-Pull Rule

042

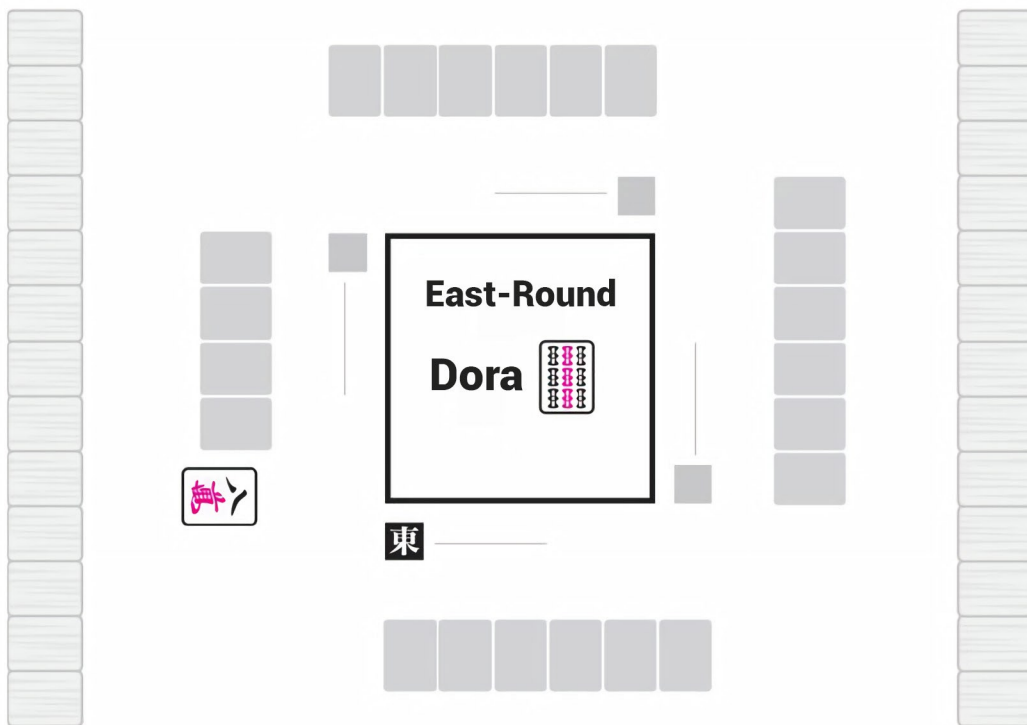
Don't settle for Seven Pairs when you have a decisive hand.

Q
043

東

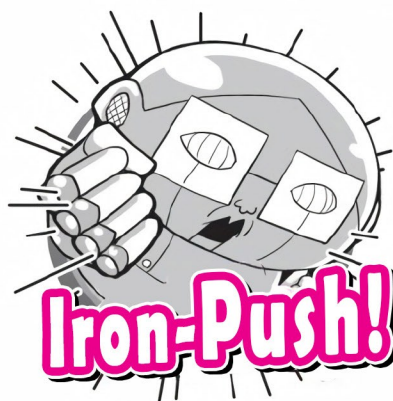


Many people might feel a psychological resistance to calling Kan here.



A 043 Kan

You are already in tenpai and the wait is good. As it stands, the hand is worth 2900 points, but a kan makes it 3900, and if just one new Dora hits, it jumps to 7700. This point increase is significant. You should aggressively call a daiminkan. Even if someone calls Riichi immediately after, this wait allows you to fight on equal or better terms. It's the same logic as calling Riichi.



There are schools of thought that advise against this, but for me, it's an ironclad kan.

Push-Pull Rule

043

If you are confident in winning the hand, declare daiminkan.

**Lesson
10****Attacking is Vital
in Mahjong****With the offensive power of an Asura**

As you solve the problems in this chapter, do you notice the overarching theme?

It is: "Mahjong is an attacking game." It's the "Push" in push-pull. While you must "Pull" (fold) when the situation becomes dire, you should focus solely on attacking otherwise.

Whether it's calling Riichi on a sub-optimal wait or declaring a daiminkan with an open hand, some parts might seem to deviate from traditional common sense. However, attacking with everything you've got is the theory of modern Mahjong.

Offense can mean building for higher value, or it can mean calling Riichi as fast as possible without forcing specific yaku. There isn't one "correct" answer between value and speed; offense is the combination of both. Don't be bound by old-fashioned common sense—strive to possess a demonic level of offensive power.

Push-Pull Rule so far

- 034 When deciding to switch to Honitsu the usefulness of your “sticky tiles” is critical.
- 035 A Honitsu that can pon into tenpai is fast.
- 036 Don't overreach just to manufacture a 3900-point hand.
- 037 If a Mangan is visible, go for it even if you have to force the hand-building!
- 038 Late-game Riichi is surprisingly effective.
- 039 A barefaced Suji Trap near the Dora is a standard Riichi!
- 040 Call Riichi with Tanyao Chiitoitsu on a 2 or 8 wait.
- 041 A shanpon wait on honor tiles is a good shape Tenpai equivalent to a two-sided wait.
- 042 Don't settle for Seven Pairs when you have a decisive hand.
- 043 If you are confident in winning the hand, declare daiminkan.

Pros Play Like This!

Are the problems and answers in this book truly correct? We asked two experts for their opinions. We found "Approval," "Objection," and "Marginal" calls, showing how opinions can be split even among top players.



村上淳

Murakami Jun

Belongs to the Saikouisen Nihon Pro Mahjong Association (A-League). Winner of 3 Saikouisen titles, 2 Saikouisen Classic titles, 1 Japan Open title, and more. In M-League, he plays for the Akasaka Driven and was a driving force behind their first-season victory. He fights with an extremely closed style and high scoring power. Born 1975.



ネマタ

Nemata

Author of the best-selling strategy book "Modern Mahjong Strategy Theory." Despite being an amateur, he turned his website into a book that became the mainstream of Mahjong strategy, gaining many followers. Even in this book, he serves as a theoretician with many believers. His hobbies are mega-sized food portions and food tours. Born 1984.

Chapter 1

Q001

Nemata	Agree	One should not underestimate the power of Ippatsu and Ura-dora.
Murakami	Agree	For a pure 8-tile wait ryanmen, whether it's a 3-6 wait or 4-7 wait it's still a riichi 95% of the time.

Q002

Nemata	Agree	Even with a cheap hand, it turns into a battle more often than you'd think.
Murakami	Agree	You should decide based on your own wait, not the turn number. Even if the turn is late, if the tiles are in the wall, Riichi.

Q003

Nemata	Slightly Riichi	If it's under mahjong parlor rules then it's usually a standard riichi, if I am playing under Tenhou rules and have a lead, I would stay in damaten usually. If I plan on folding on the next dangerous looking tile I draw then dama, but if I'm not planning on backing down for a good while then I would just call riichi from the start.
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Murakami **Borderline** However, an early-turn Dealer Riichi that hasn't made any decisions for what shapes(taatsu) to keep for their hand increases the possibility that their hand is cheap with a bad final wait so my judgment can change depending on the dealer's discards. Turn number is important, but what's most important is the quality of your own wait. If you can see your own win, then Riichi even if there's only one turn left!

Q004

Nemata **Agree** Since Q 001 is a Riichi, this is even more of a Riichi.

Murakami **Of course agree** Even if it's not a simple ryanmen wait I would still be calling riichi.

Q005

Nemata **Of course riichi**

Murakami **Of course agree** For a big chance hand like this ending this at 3,900 points by dama would be a crime.

Q006

Nemata **Of course riichi** The effect of preventing other players from winning is also large.

Murakami **Of course agree** If it's a headstart tenpai, I would call Riichi even on weak waits like 3-6 or 4-7.

Q007

Nemata **Of course riichi** Would still call Riichi to shut down other players' wins.

Murakami **Borderline** "Observing the vibe of the others" is exactly what this is and your precision in doing so is what you would call your mahjong skill level. It is not about the turn number, but what's important is the relative speed of the other three players. If you lack confidence in your reading, immediate Riichi is easier to win with.

Q008

Nemata	Agree	It depends on the danger level of the tile you must discard. If it's a tile that is likely to pass, I'd chase even a dealer, but if the wait is narrowed down too much, even against a non-dealer, I would fold.
Murakami	Borderline	This also depends on the Riichi-caller's discards. If I have confidence in my own wait, I call Riichi; if not, I choose damaten for a pathway to fold later.

Q009

Nemata	Slightly Riichi	For a headstart tenpai with few upgrade possibilities, I think calling Riichi is better than staying in damaten. However, it's more just about the fact that if you find yourself in tenpai then calling Riichi is better.
Murakami	This depends on the skill and playstyle of the three opponents	If the three opponents are abnormally strong compared to the standard, a headstart Riichi is a loss. But even if they are considered strong, if the three are the type to heavily fold against a headstart riichi then it's a gain.

Q010

Nemata	Riichi	As dealer, you don't need to fear dealing in.
Murakami	Exactly Agree	I would call Riichi myself, but against an unpredictable number of opponents, calling immediate Riichi isn't necessarily an advantage.

Q011

Nemata	Riichi	Keeping around relatively good wait blocks for your hand is one part of hand-building.
Murakami	Almost Agree	I think calling Riichi is better regardless of the three opponents' skill levels or playstyle. Another reason is because with the   draw there's now reduced tiles that let's you transition into a pinzu wait.

Q012

Nemata	Agree	If you are Dealer, all the more reason to call Riichi.
Murakami	Agree	Since you'd call Riichi on this even as a non-dealer.

Q013

Nemata	Agree	Even with a kanchan, if it is a headstart tenpai, the risk of dealing in is much lower than a chase Riichi.
Murakami	Agree	Basically, Riichi is the profitable play.

Q014

Nemata	Slightly Riichi	This time, we're getting rid of  for tenpai so there aren't that many tiles that allows us to transform it into a better hand, however, if the tile that would get discarded is a strong middle number tile instead, then I tend to choose to discard the  and break tenpai.
Murakami	Agree	However, that's because it's waiting on 2 that I would call an immediate riichi. If the shape were 24567, then it would be marginal.

Q015

Nemata	Riichi	Simply because it's a middle-tile kanchan.
Murakami	Generally Riichi	Depending on the discards, the skill level/play style of the three opponents or the ruleset at play staying in damaten can also be advantageous.

Q016

Nemata	Agree	As dealer, you don't fear the risk of dealing in.
Murakami	Agree	A dealer is happy just being able to call Riichi.

Q017

Nemata	Agree
Murakami	Agree

Q018

Nemata	Agree	It depends on the danger level of the tile you must discard. If the kanchan wait is on the tougher side, I lean towards folding more so than a nomi-hand ryanmen.
Murakami	Generally Riichi	Even if you lack confidence in the wait, it can't be helped. People who can't fold properly should call Riichi here every time.

Q019

Nemata	Slightly Fold	If the tile you must discard is very likely to pass, I might chase even a dealer, but usually, folding is better for good reasons.
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Murakami Objection

If I have no dora then I would try my utmost to fold, but if I have at least 1 Dora, calling Riichi is also an option. With a Dealer Riichi in place the round EV should be quite negative already, so can't fully claim that a chase Riichi isn't necessarily bringing it down to a loss relatively speaking. If I have no safe tiles, I might call Riichi anyway.

Q020**Nemata Riichi**

Even if everyone folds, when you win, it will definitely be a Haneman or higher.

Murakami No-hesitation Riichi

Riichi causes the win rate of the other three to drop, while your own win rate doesn't drop all that much relatively. If so, I would aim for Haneman or higher every time!

Q021**Nemata Riichi**

If it's a parlor rule set, a basic Riichi. If it's Tenhou rules, I'd stay in Damaten more often because there's less merit in turning a Mangan into a Haneman class hand.

Murakami No-hesitation Riichi

I will aim to tsumo a Haneman or above.

Q022**Nemata Agree**

A hand that's cheap by dama is a standard riichi even if it has a yaku.

Murakami Agree

Always Riichi.

Q023**Nemata Agree****Murakami Agree**

However, holding your riichi stick before even reaching tenpai is seen as an act of intimidation which will get you a severe warning!

Q024**Nemata Agree**

Even if it already has a Yaku, a cheap hand with poor shape is a basic Riichi.

Murakami Agree

Win rates don't change that much even in damaten (because opponents will play freely and win instead), so Riichi is better.

Q025

- Nemata** **Agree** I would not keep a safe tile at the cost of narrowing my tile acceptance from a 1-shanten state.
- Murakami** **Agree** That said, an early  sakigiri discard isn't that bad. Discarding it will delay you with 4 effective tiles on  draws, but those tiles would decrease the potential value of the hand with the loss of Pinfu. In the meaning of securing a safe tile while simultaneously increasing your win rate on  later on so in that sense you could discard it too.
-

Q026

- Nemata** **Usually discard**  However, if  is complete safety for everyone, discarding  is powerful.
- Murakami** This can't be explained by the turn count alone, but **usually tsumogiri**.
For example, if this  is a tile that will almost certainly pass against two players, or if you have no confidence in the  wait while it looks like  is still left in the wall, discard .
-

Q027

- Nemata** **Same as Q026** Pushing for a headstart Riichi and building a hand that is easy to win with is more likely to result in a win, so the number of Dora doesn't affect that judgment much.
- Murakami** **Objection** If you have Dora 3, I can understand the theme of keeping maximum efficiency but usually I would recommend to tsumogiri. I want to keep one safe tile around so I am able to push back against an incoming headstart riichi even when drawing a dangerous tile.
-

Q028

- Nemata** **Agree** If you have a wide 1-shanten that could easily reach tenpai closed and would become cheap when calling then, there's no need to rush for tenpai even if you're the dealer.
- Murakami** **Agree** Can go with the feeling that if you can't reach Riichi, it's fine for the round to even end up with you being noten by the end.

Q029

Nemata **Agree** If calling an sub-optimal shape gets you into a good shape tenpai, take it even if it's cheap.

Murakami **Agree** "Sabaki" (securing a quick win) is also important as a Non-dealer. If I can resolve a poor shape and end up with a two-sided wait I'm satisfied with, even as a menzen-style player, I'd pon.

Q030

Nemata **Agree** You already have 4 meld candidates with just your two-sided waits.

Murakami **Agree** I have no memory of calling this.

Q031

Nemata **Agree** One shouldn't wait for a transformation that has fewer tiles than the current winning tiles.

Murakami **Agree** I have no memory of not calling Riichi on this.

Q032

Nemata **Agree** The number of tiles that would improve the tenpai are extensive but even so, don't break a good shape Tenpai.

Murakami **Agree** Especially in Mahjong with Ippatsu and ura-dora, call Riichi.

Q033

Nemata **Agree** Same as the previous question.

Murakami **Agree** Refusing a headstart Riichi when you are dealer and have Dora 1 with 7-outs is just too selfish.

Q034

Nemata **Agree** Same as Q031.

Murakami **Agree** The wait is sufficient. A headstart Riichi with Pinfu. Don't be greedy!

Q035

Nemata	Agree	There are a lot of improvement draws and a lot of them lead to a significant value increase into a flushed hand then it becomes a different story. I would only call  and  that allows for the hand be worth 3 Han or more. All other callable tiles I would pass.
Murakami	Agree	However, I would pretty much not call for tenpai just for 3900-points.

Q036

Nemata	Slightly Agree	If the souzu were a kanchan, the wait would improve, so breaking tenpai would be an option.
Murakami	Agree	It's a loss to throw away a winnable 1000-point hand just to try and make it 3900.

Q037

Nemata	Agree	Even if the point increase factor is the same (4x), if it can become a Mangan, then aggressively aim for the transformation.
Murakami	Agree	It's a gain to throw away an easily winnable 2000-point hand if just one more step makes it 8000.

Q038

Nemata	Agree	Call Riichi for hands that are cheap in damaten when there are 3 or more draws left. With 2 or fewer, the standard is damaten.
Murakami	Agree	Basically, usually it's always Riichi. If there's even 1 draw left, call Riichi if you're confident!

Q039

Nemata	Agree	I can't say that the  is easy to come out, but there aren't better options.
Murakami	Agree	It's not much different from discarding a  from a    shape and calling riichi.

Q040

Nemata	Agree	One shouldn't wait for tiles upgrades that is easier to win but reduces the point value of the hand. Rather than waiting tanki on  just for the single copy of  , I would take the relatively easier to win  tanki as the wait.
Murakami	Agree	Chiitoi is a decisive hand when it comes to its hand value size so calling Riichi is recommended. In the early game, any tile that hasn't been discarded yet is fine. You should feel happy if you can call a riichi on a 2 or 8 tile when you have a Tanyao-Chiitoi!

Q041

Nemata **Agree**

Even with only 2 tiles left, a wait on honor tiles is not significantly inferior in win rate compared to a kanchan wait on , so I will go with the choice that gives the higher value.

Murakami **Agree**

There are two people that has discarded  early on, so a kanchan Riichi on  isn't bad, but a  shanpon wait is superior for value and win rate. With Dora 1 as a decisive hand, call Riichi proudly!

Q042

Nemata **Agree**

If you are at the same 1-shanten, the one that can use calls is clearly faster. If it's a high-value hand even when open, then call.

Murakami **Depends
on the
opponents**

It's a problem where the answer changes based on what stage the game is played in, the level and style of the three opponents you are fighting, as well as how they perceive you. If it's against unspecified opponents like in a free-play parlor or online Mahjong, calling Pon is advantageous. In top-level A-league matches or televised matches, I almost never call here.

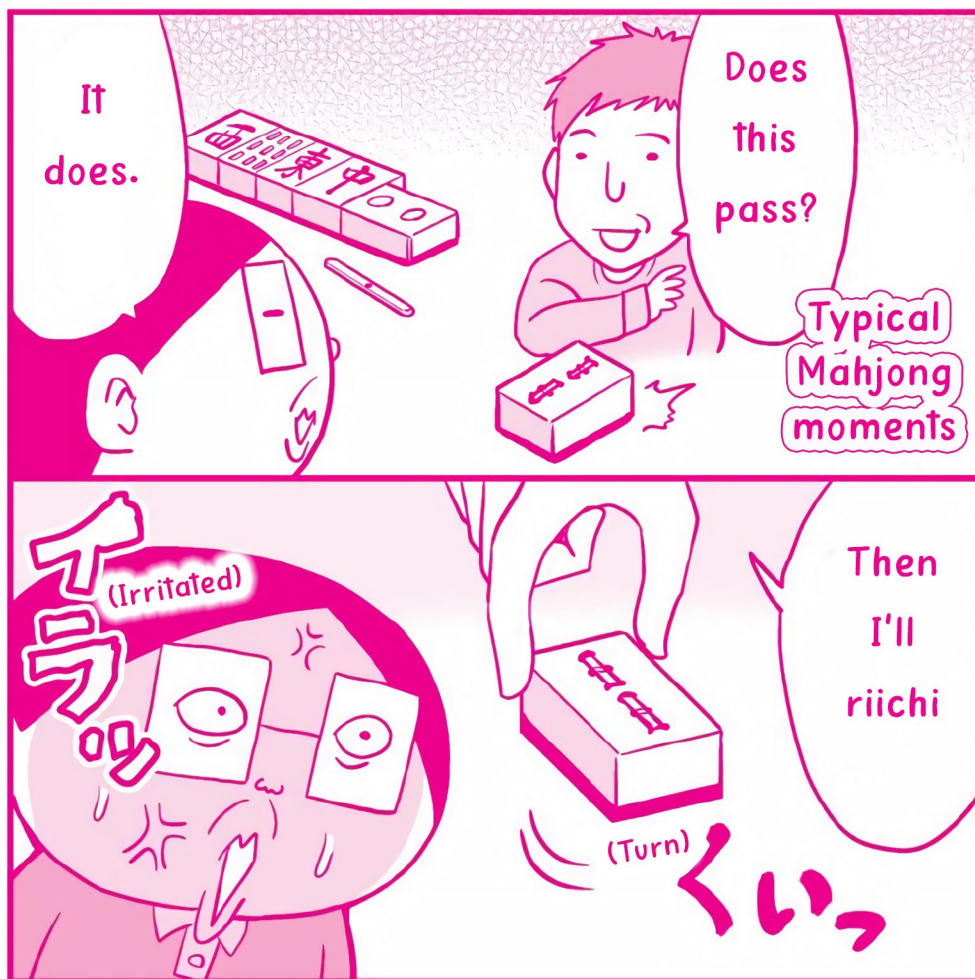
Q043

Nemata **Agree**

If it's a headstart tenpai, aim for even slightly higher value.

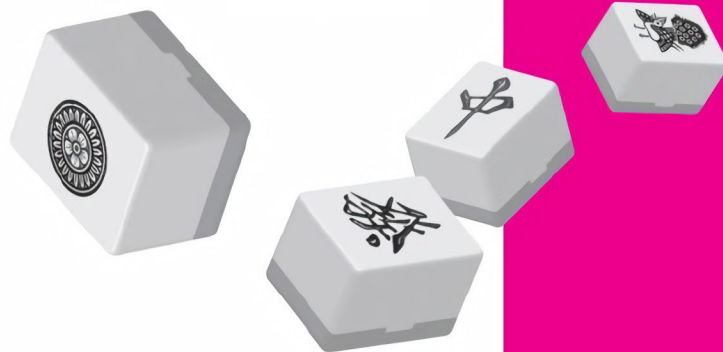
Murakami **Agree**

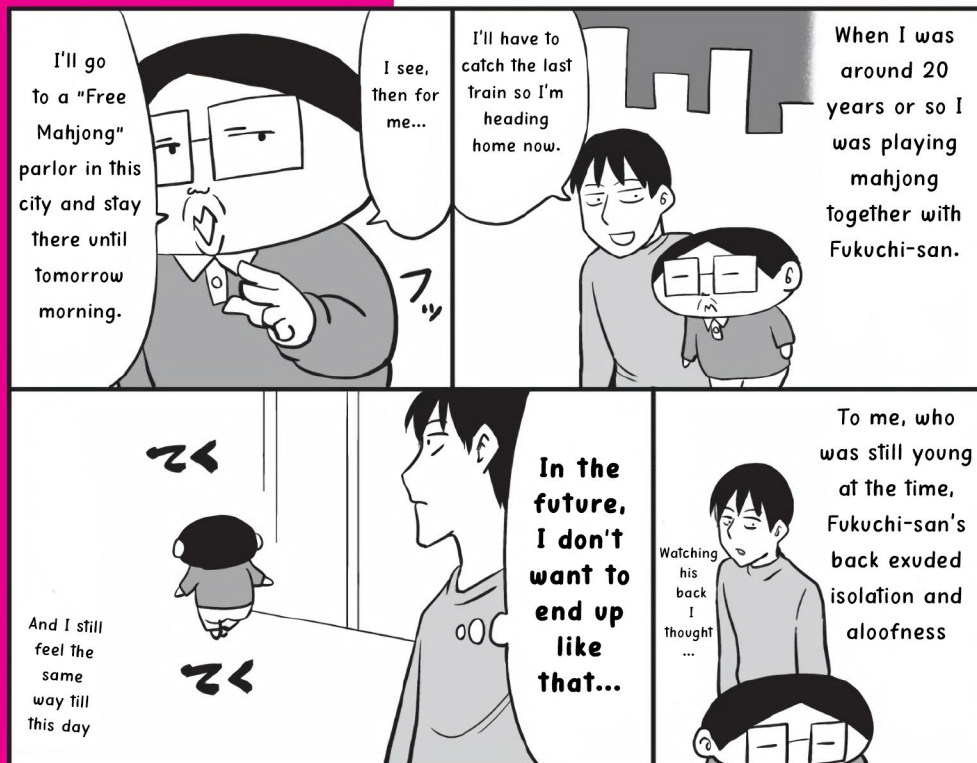
This wait is a chance at this turn count. Aim for a point increase to maximize the potential of the hand. If it hits 7,700 or more once out of 5 times, or a max of 18,000, and since there is a Rinshan chance, so it's a Daiminkan call.



Push-Pull Involving Opponents

chapter >>> 2



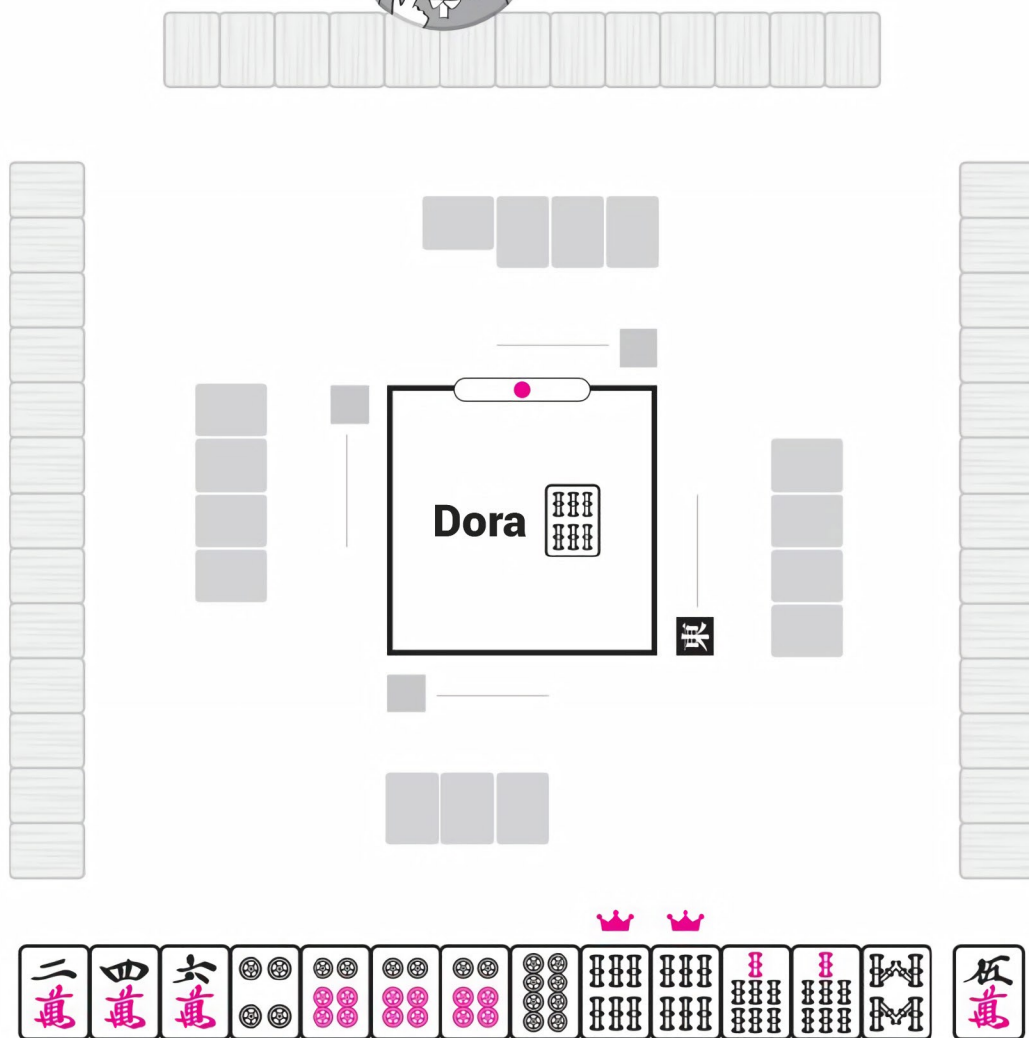


Q Early game Riichi 044 vs. an Excellent Hand

Turn 4. A headstart Riichi came from toimen.
What do you discard?



This is a vague question,
but try not to say so.

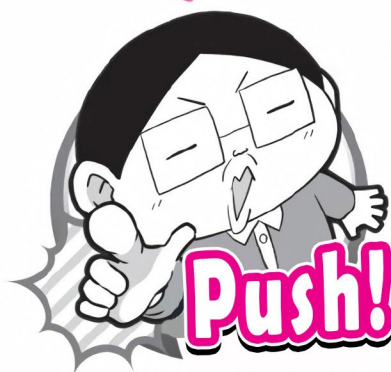


A Discard

044

When you have a hand this strong, it is only natural to fight. Do not try to play it safe by discarding the one-chance  just because you fear Ippatsu. Against an early Riichi, even if you discard a tile that looks dangerous at first glance, the probability of it being a winning tile is low. Try to avoid full folding as much as possible. You want to avoid breaking your hand and making it impossible to recover just for the sake of dodging Ippatsu.

This seems obvious, but the more you get used to Mahjong, the harder it becomes to follow, so be careful.



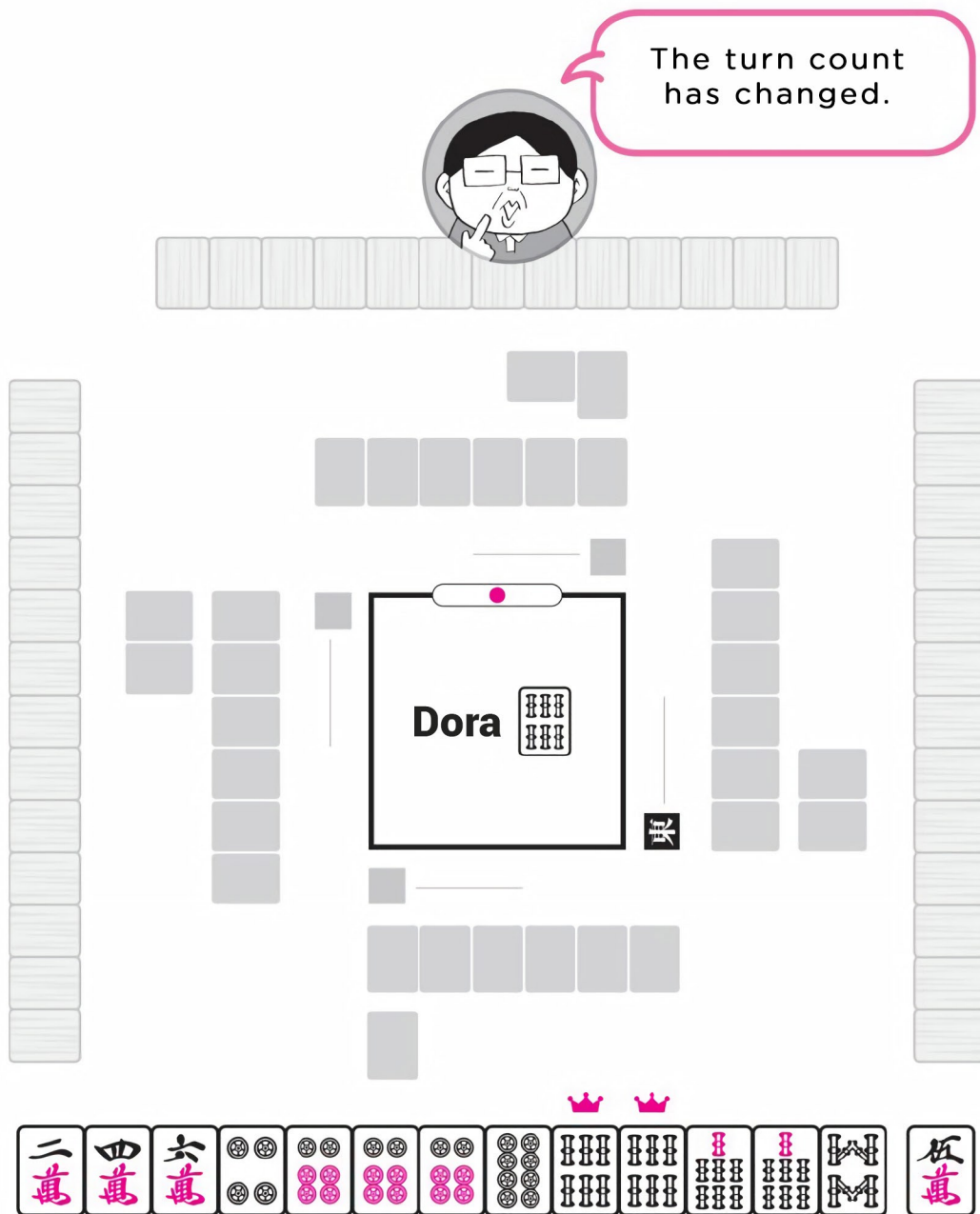
Push-Pull Rule

044

Push everything with an ideal early-game hand.

Q Mid game Riichi 045 vs. an Excellent Hand

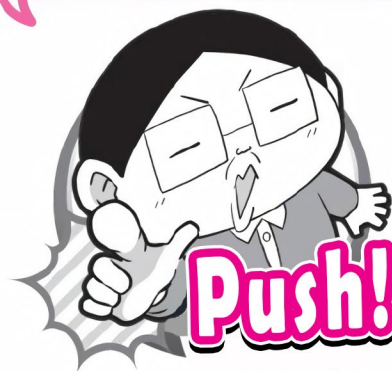
Turn 8. A Riichi came from toimen.
What do you discard?



A 045 Discard 二萬 or 四萬

As you enter the mid-game, the number of safe tiles increases, which conversely means the danger level of each individual unknown tile rises. While you want to avoid dealing in on Ippatsu, you shouldn't fold with a hand this good. While you should minimize pushing musuji (non-suji tiles), the basic stance is still to push. Discarding either the 二萬 or 四萬 is a situational judgment.

This is quite a close call, and it represents an important boundary line.



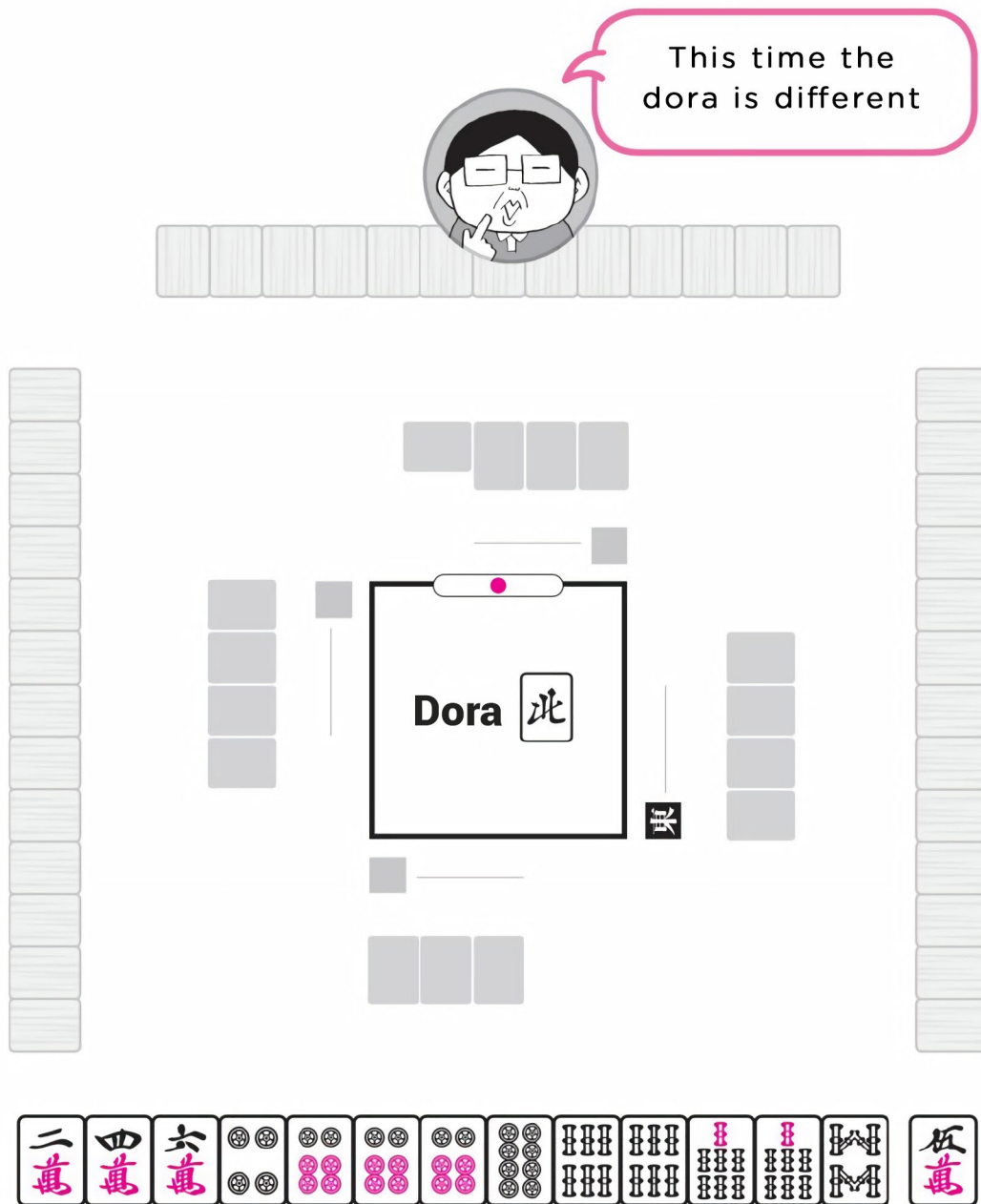
Push-Pull Rule

045

Don't break a strong mid-game hand, but minimize pushing non-suji tiles as much as possible.

Q Early game Riichi 046 vs. a Good Hand

Turn 4. A headstart Riichi came from toimen.
What do you discard?

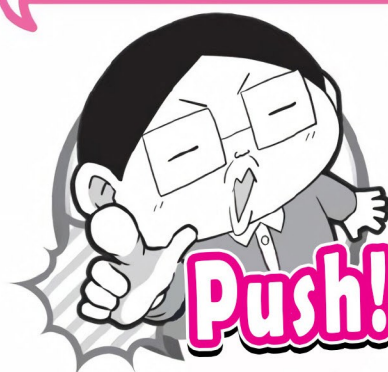


A Discard

046

Since the hand value is lower, the necessity for “Zentsu” decreases, but the basic principle remains to go straight ahead. Early in the game, you have few defensive options anyway, so do not break your hand just to avoid Ippatsu.

The more you get used to Mahjong, the less you'll be able to push with hands like this.



Push-Pull Rule

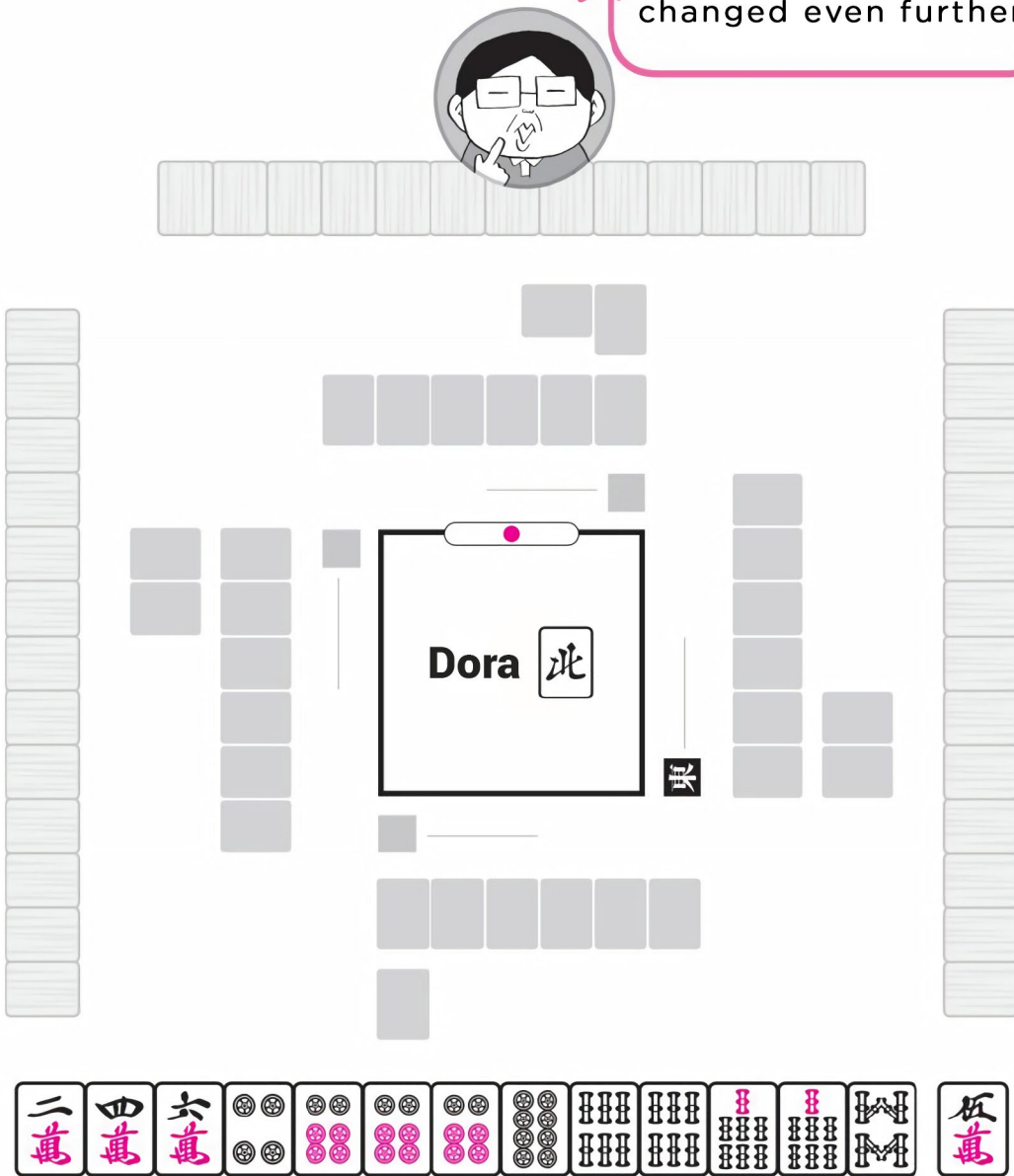
046

**Don't fold with a good shape
1-shanten in the early turns.**

Q 047 Mid game Riichi vs. a Good Hand

Turn 8. A Riichi came from toimen.
What do you discard?

The turn count has changed even further.



A 047 A tile likely to pass

If either    looks like it might pass, discard it. If everything is musuji, discard the "one-chance" . You don't want to fold, but don't overreach either. You want to avoid gambling on a musuji tile before you've even reached tenpai.



This is a borderline case. Tanyao is guaranteed and the hand isn't ultra-cheap, plus the shape is good. There are definitely factors that tempt you to push.

Push-Pull Rule

047

Do not push musuji tiles with a mid-game, mid-strength 1-shanten hand, even with good shape.

**Lesson
11****A Good 1-Shanten is
a Wonderful Asset****The long road out of the darkness**

The difficulty of push-pull decisions stems from the fact that situations are often contradictory. You have a fairly good hand, but someone calls Riichi and you draw a dangerous tile. In that moment, do you prioritize your own hand, or do you prioritize risk avoidance because it is the first turn after the Riichi?

Push-pull judgment requires a different mindset than the "constructive" logic of hand-building. It is a situational logic. One day, a sound will suddenly "click" in your head, and these constructive and situational thought processes will integrate. From that point on, you will understand how to play, but until then, you are walking in the dark.

Whether or not you can cross that wall is the great hurdle in progressing from an intermediate to an advanced player.

Do not throw away assets easily

One of the most common illnesses people contract while walking in this darkness is "Over-folding Syndrome." You fold far too much.

Mahjong is a competition of how many Mangans you can win. An

excellent hand is an irreplaceable asset, like no other.

Folding against an early Riichi simply because you have one safe tile—and breaking a great hand in the process—is a tragic waste.

"Can I really afford to submit to such a Riichi?"

Ask yourself this question, grit your teeth, and maintain your wonderful hand. Folding too early is the path to certain defeat.

Push-Pull Rule so far

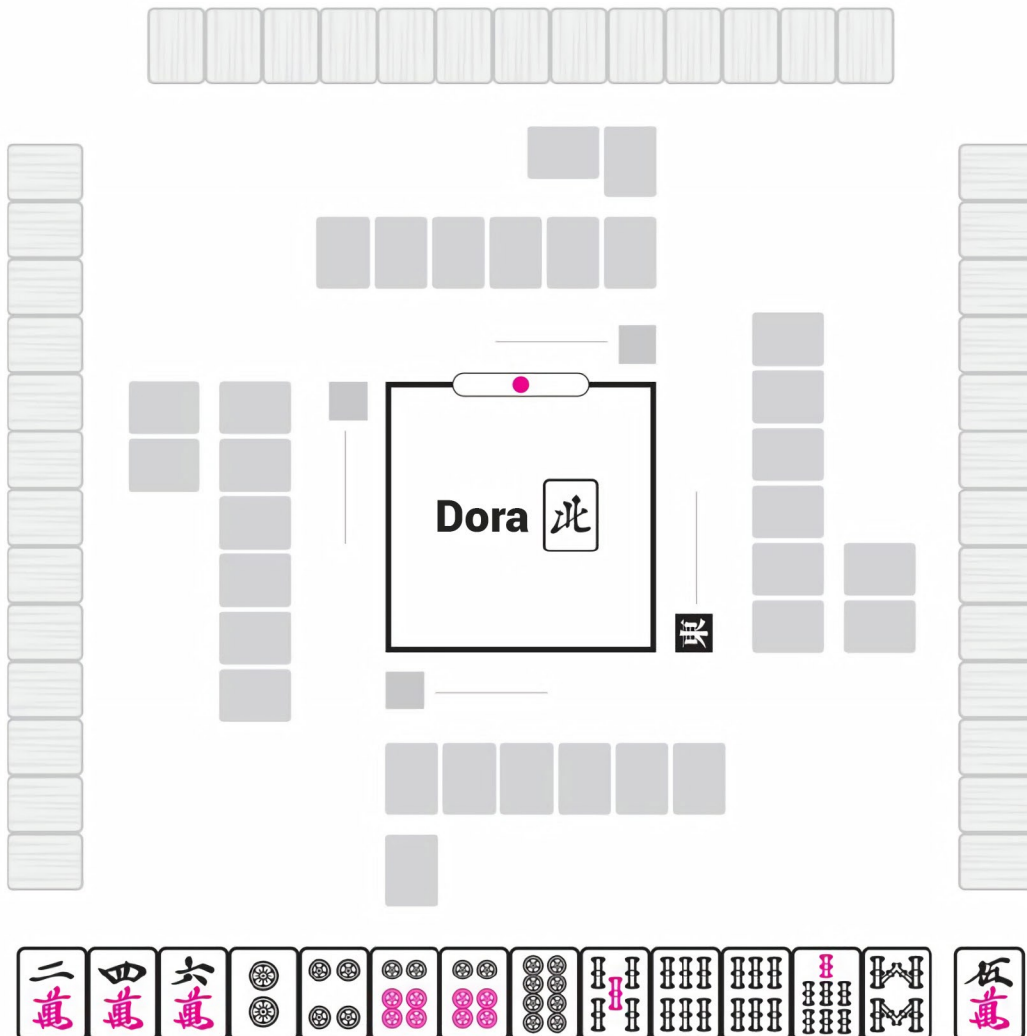
- 044 Push everything with an ideal early-game hand.
- 045 Don't break a strong mid-game hand, but minimize pushing non-suji tiles as much as possible.
- 046 Don't fold with a good shape 1-shanten in the early turns.
- 047 Do not push non-suji tiles with a mid-game, mid-strength 1-shanten hand, even with good shape.

Q Mid-game Riichi 048 vs. a Mediocre Hand

A Riichi came from toimen. What do you discard?



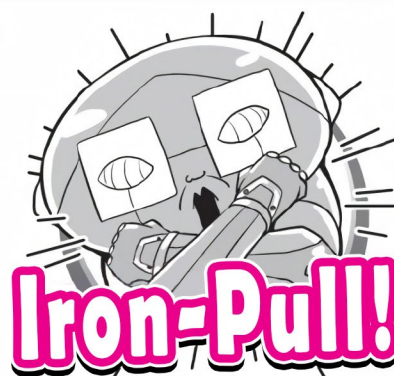
This time the hand is different.



A 048 A tile that will certainly pass

Since Tanyao is guaranteed, this isn't a completely hopeless, cheap hand. However, the problem is the kanchan remains and the shape is poor. Whether it's the early game or not, if you keep pushing with a hand like this in the mid-game, you will never have enough point sticks to survive. Here, you must pull back.

It seems like common sense, but this is the area where the biggest difference in skill level occurs, so take note.



Push-Pull Rule

048

**Slam the brakes on a cheap,
bad-shape 1-shanten hand.**

**Lesson
12****Reckless Pushing is
Proof You are Fodder****One of the most important principles**

If you are discarding dangerous tiles against a Riichi with a hand that isn't up to much, you will lose with incredible momentum.

In times like these, you must fold properly. This is one of the "Two Most Important Principles" for winning at Mahjong. Since it is so vital, I will write it once more.

The Two Most Important Principles are:

- ① Call Riichi immediately upon reaching a headstart tenpai.
- ② Fold without overreaching when someone else calls Riichi.

If you push here, you are true fodder

If we convert a Riichi into points, it's worth about 9,000 points from a dealer and 5,000 points from a non-dealer. If you factor in the danger level of a tile, discarding a tile with a 10% danger level against a dealer Riichi carries a risk of 900 points.

If you are already in tenpai and have a two-sided wait, you can justify pushing if your hand is worth at least half the price of the opponent's

hand. If the opponent is a dealer, that means you need 4,500 points. If you have an sub-optimal wait, you need the same value as the opponent.

If you are only at 1-shanten, the conditions become far stricter. Discarding dangerous tiles with a cheap 1-shanten hand is an act of recklessness akin to walking naked across a high-speed expressway.

The "A good 1-shanten is a wonderful asset" and "Reckless pushing will make you lose at an incredible momentum" exist side-by-side. It's a paper-thin difference. That is the difficulty of push-pull.

Mastering that distinction is truly difficult, but that is where the secret to winning at Mahjong is packed.

Push-Pull Rule so far

048 **Apply the full brake on a cheap, bad-shape 1-shanten hand.**

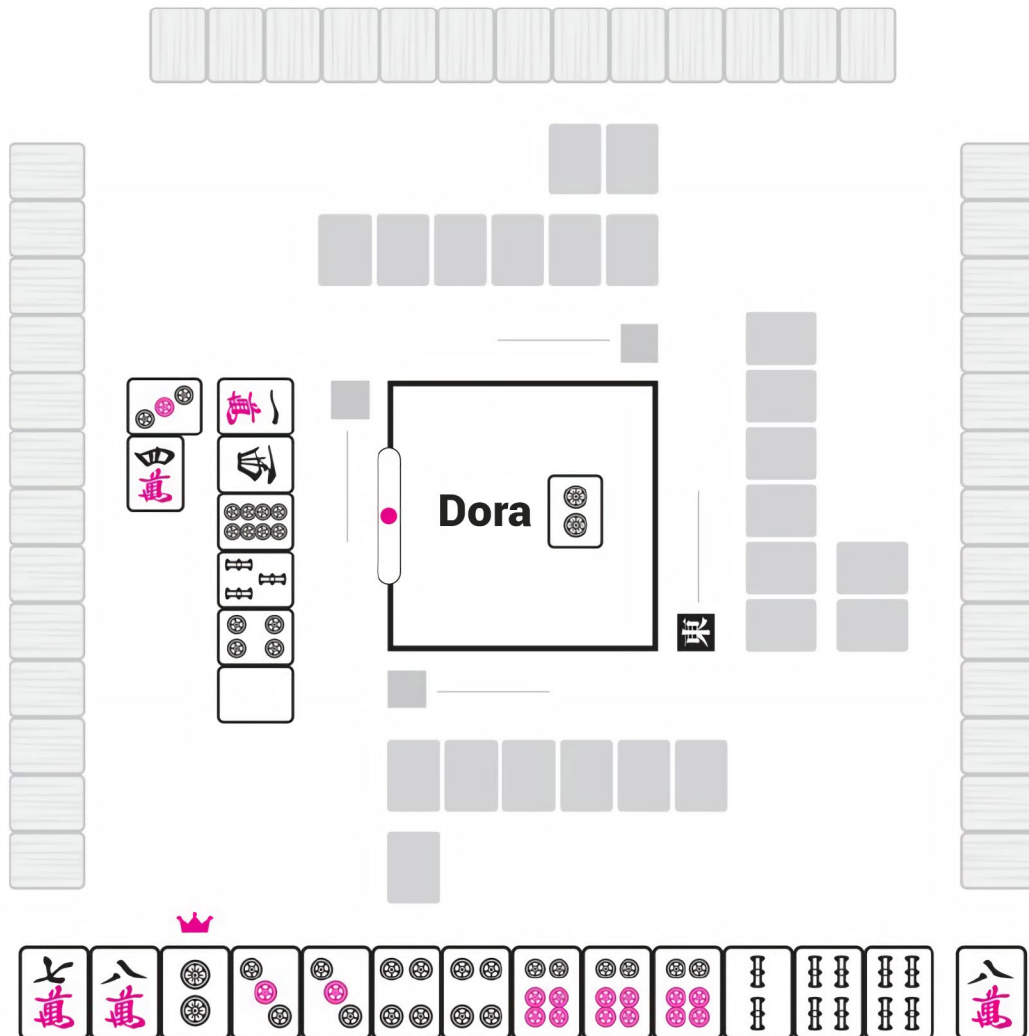
If you cannot follow this, you will lose in a straight line.

Q Mid-game Riichi 049 vs. a Chance Hand

Turn 8. A Riichi came from our kamicha. You are at 1-shanten with a fairly good hand. What do you discard from here? ? ? ?



It feels more like a real match when there are discards to look at~



A Discard

This is a hand where a Mangan or even a Haneman is fully visible. The shape is also good. When you have a chance hand, it's important to hold on as much as possible. You shouldn't push blindly zentsu, but you shouldn't fold completely either. Discarding  is best here. Kamicha discarded a  on Turn 4; the "outer side" of an early discard is significantly safer than a pure musuji tile. Discarding  would lead to folding, and discarding  restricts your hand while being more dangerous than .

How much you can hold on with a hand like this is the borderline between an intermediate and an advanced player.



Push-Pull Rule

049

The safety level increases for tiles on the outer side of an early discard.

Lesson 13

Offensive Power is How Long You Can Hold On

The importance of tenacity

Push-pull decisions cannot be divided cleanly. If you have a good hand, push; if you have a boring hand, fold. It sounds simple, but most hands fall somewhere in between. Furthermore, there are many situations where the tiles you need to discard aren't that dangerous. In those cases, it's better to be tenacious.

If you have a good hand, it's vital that you don't immediately fold just because you face a Riichi. Being tenacious means discarding tiles that carry some risk. By doing so, you risk dealing in. Nevertheless, in a chance hand, your offensive power is measured by how long you can hold on. How far can you push? Where do you retreat? That is the true skill of push-pull.

Push tiles on the outer side of early discards

There are rules to the varying "shades" of danger among tiles. One of the most important is: "Tiles on the outer side of an early discard have a high safety level"(sotogawa).

If an opponent discards a  early, then tiles on the outer side like  or  are less dangerous than other non-suji tiles. The earlier

the turn the tile was discarded, the higher the safety level of its outer tiles.

There are trends in this as well. If everyone starts discarding good tiles early (sakigiri), those early discards can no longer be trusted. Conversely, if everyone is playing with maximum tile efficiency, outside early discards are almost always safe.

Recently, because players who prioritize tile efficiency are the majority, this is the current trend and these tiles are generally safe to pass.

Push-Pull Rule so far

049 **The safety level increases for tiles on the outer side of an early discard.**

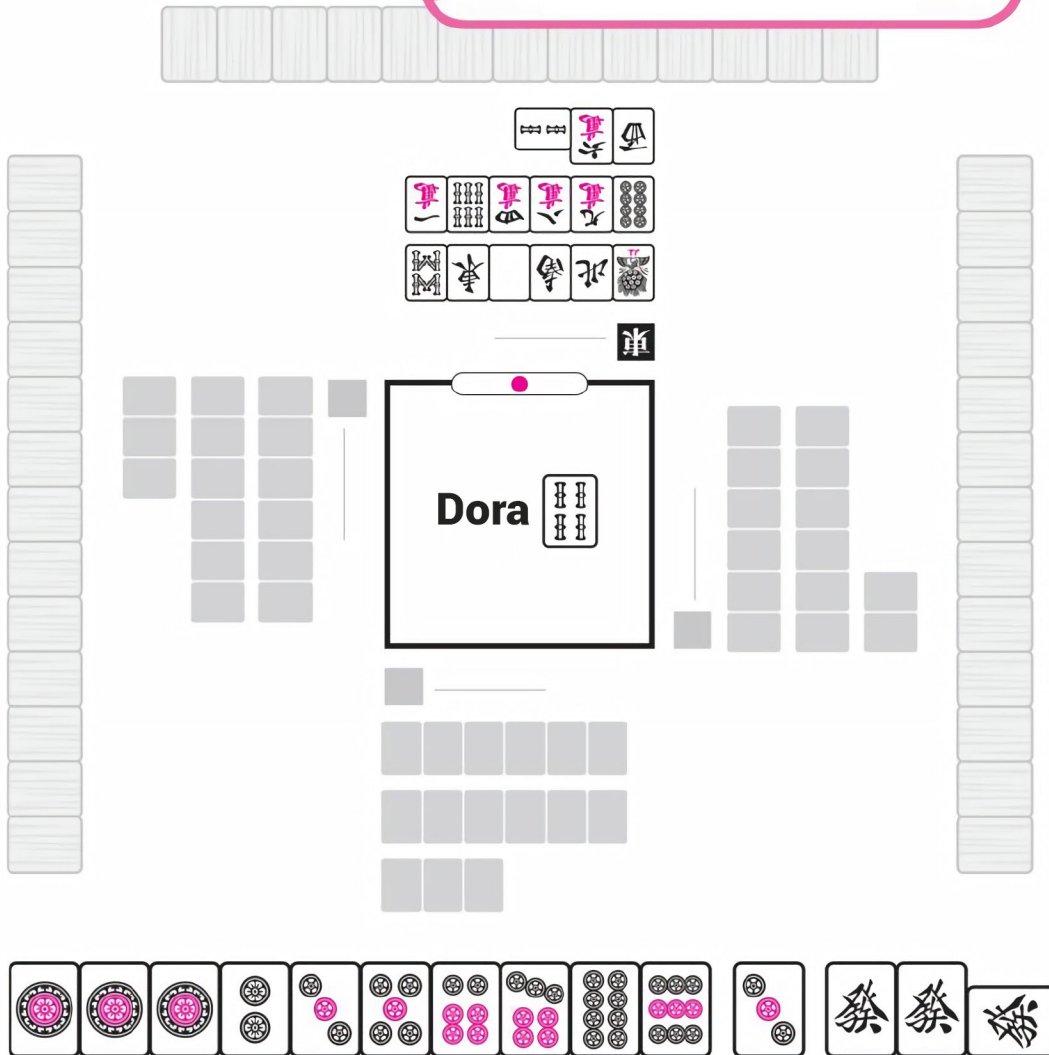
If you do deal into a "Matagi" wait on an early discard, just consider it bad luck and move on.

Q 050 Vs. A Late-Game Riichi

You were in tenpai for a takame Mangan when the dealer toimen called Riichi. You draw a  that looks dangerous. What do you do?



You don't want to fold, but
pushing is also scary.

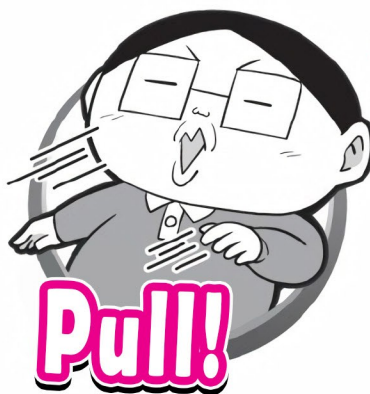


A Discard

050



Fighting with dangerous tiles late in the game is worth less because even if the tile passes, the probability of the round ending in a draw is high. Here you want to take note of their early  discard and then discarding . The  is dangerous. Discarding the  isn't a huge difference in terms of danger. Discarding the safe  would be pulling back too much. Gaining the tenpai-payment is important, and even if you take a kanchan wait, the possibility of winning still remains.



Pulling back slightly—it's a very practical, subtle push-pull decision.

Push-Pull Rule

050

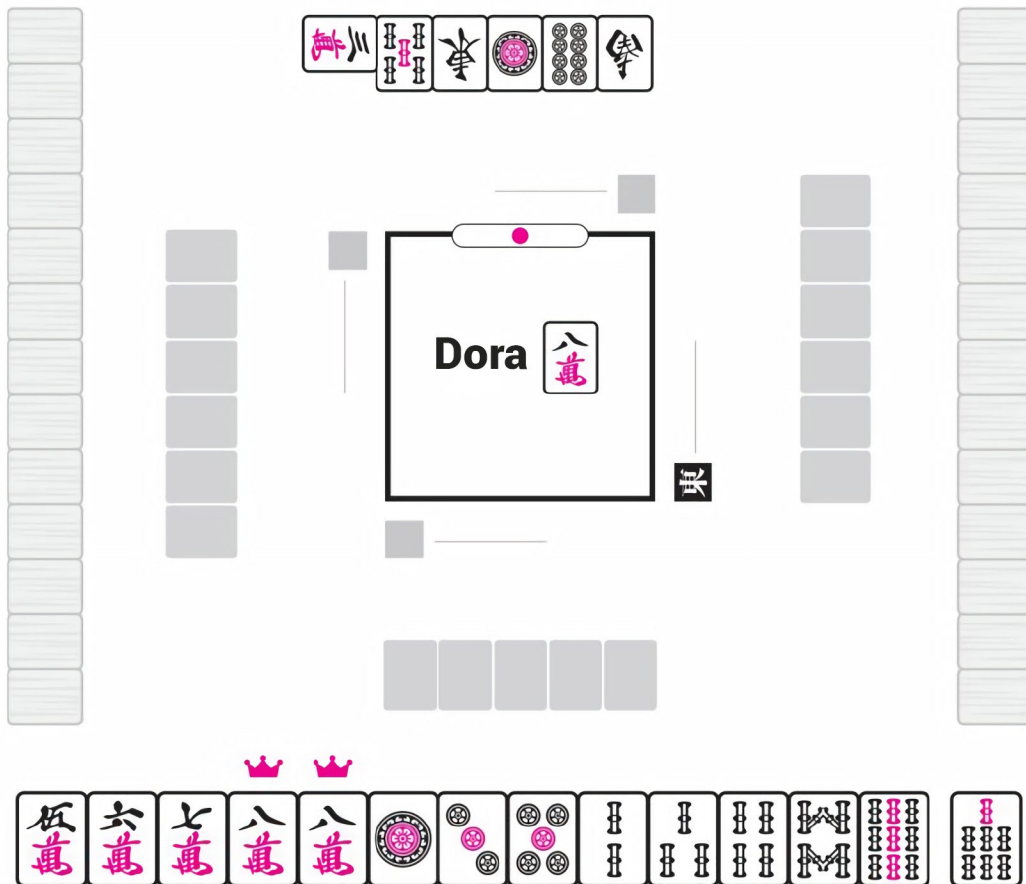
Avoid a showdown with
a late-game Riichi

Q 051 vs. Riichi, Moro-hikkake

A headstart Riichi has come from the player across. You also reach tenpai. Do you call a Barefaced Suji Trap (Morohi) Riichi by discarding  ?



This might be quite a vague question.

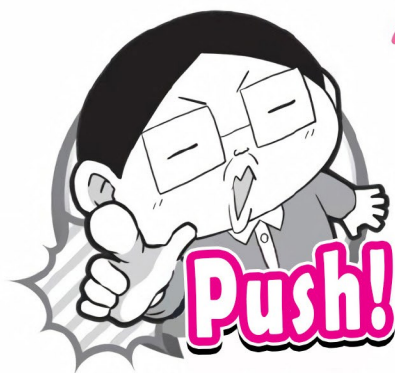


A
051

Morohi Riichi discarding



"Morohi" is short for Moro-hikkake. Since you have Dora 2, you should call Riichi regardless. The choice is between discarding a dangerous tile to create a wait that is easier to win with, or discarding a safe tile for a wait that is harder to win with. Using a suji-trap wait is effective in the early and middle turns, but its effectiveness decreases in the late turns as safe tiles increase. Since it is still Turn 6, go with the suji-trap wait.



This is the kind of move that is effective in a two-person Riichi battle where mutual safe tiles become scarce.

Push-Pull Rule

051

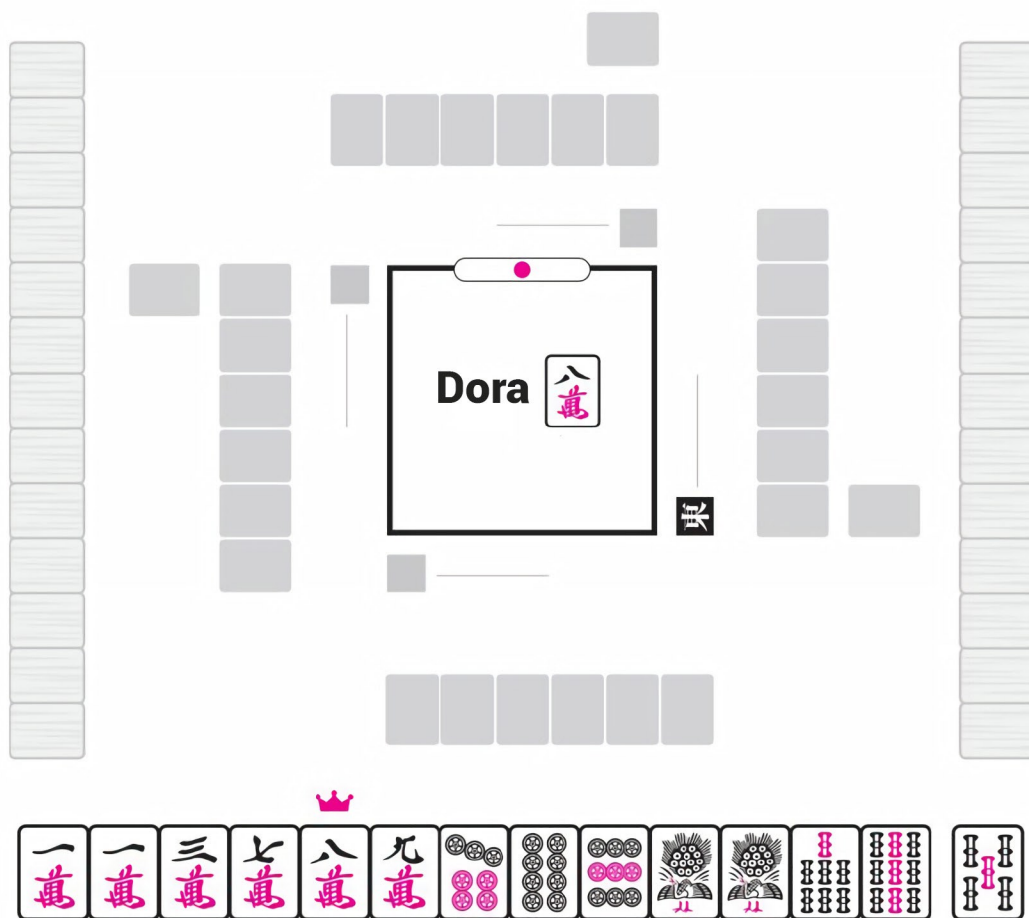
A chase Morohi Riichi is
a rational tactic.

Q vs. Riichi, High-Value 052 Poor-Shape 1-Shanten

You have a 1-shanten hand for Junchan Sanshoku. Your toimen calls Riichi, and you draw a , which is not safe. Do you push or pull?



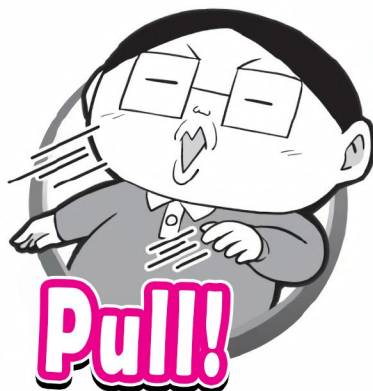
Don't complain that it's hard to think without discards. Just think in general terms.



A Pull

052

To overstrain yourself with a high-value hand with poor shape at 1-shanten can easily make you a "sucker." It is one of the biggest traps in push-pull. Visually, it looks like a great hand, but the tenpai chance is narrow so challenging the riichi becomes a massive loss. We're not risking  (because it has not passed). If either  or  looks riskfree to discard, then you can extend the life of the 1-shanten by discarding those, but if those aren't safe either, just swiftly fold. You can only contest with them once you reach tenpai.



Folding with this hand is painful, but trying to reach a showdown here is a straight line to your downfall.

Push-Pull Rule

052

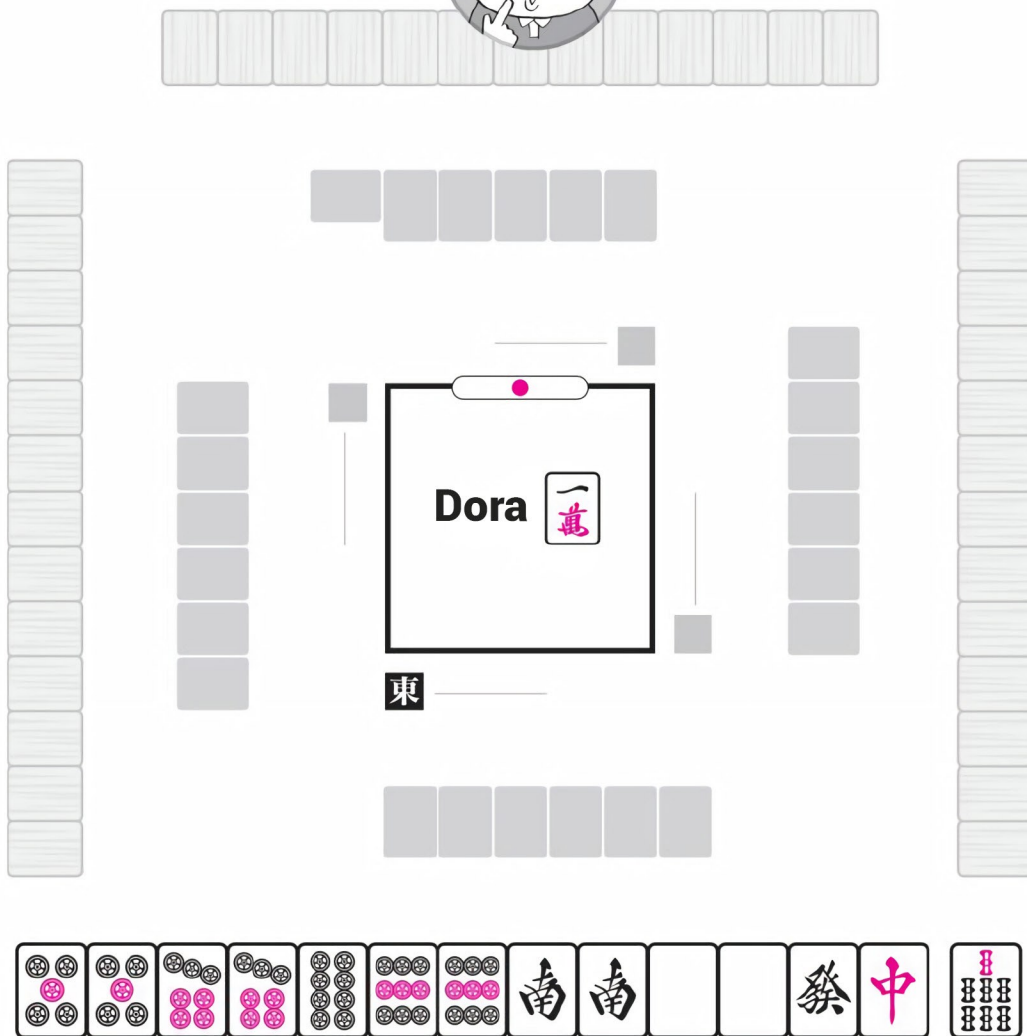
Contesting with a poor-shape high-value 1-shanten is the door to hell.

Q053 vs. Riichi, Chiitoitsu

As Dealer, you have a 1-shanten hand for Men-Hon Chiitoe. A Riichi is called. You draw a dangerous tile on Ippatsu. Do you push?

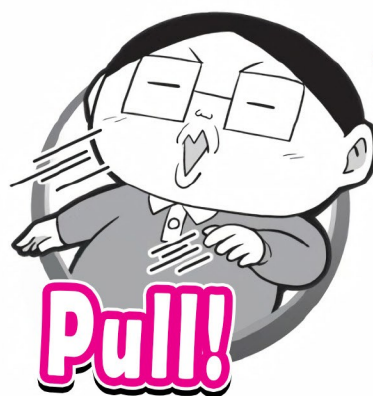


Are you going to try
playing around it by
discarding an honor tile?



A 053 Pull

Chiitoi takes a long time to get from 1-shanten to tenpai; you simply cannot fight from a 1-shanten state. You might think it's okay to discard an honor tile that has been cut once, but any further contest should be stopped. Once you reach tenpai, a chase Riichi is fine. However, reaching that tenpai is the hard part. The existence of a completed Men-Hon Chiitoi is practically an urban legend. Forced chasing is a direct descent into defeat.



Don't get caught in the Men-hon Chiitoi scam.

Push-Pull Rule

053

With Seven Pairs, do not overreach if you couldn't reach Tenpai first.

Lesson
14**The Trap of the Poor-shape
High-value 1-Shanten****A man's pride is worth less than a flea**

In the mahjong strategy books I read in my youth, they often spoke of "the pride of a man who refuses to back down," leading players to push against a Riichi from a Kokushi 1-shanten.

There is no greater fodder than this. Such pride is worth less than a flea. In fact, it's such a delicious feast for your opponents that it's more like a premium bluefin tuna that fetches ten million yen at auction. With these monster hands, the gap between 1-shanten and tenpai is a vast distance. Trying to settle the score before you've even cleared that hurdle is a suicidal kamikaze run. Junchan Sanshoku is no different; often left with many kanchan and penchan waits, you only truly have a decisive hand once you reach tenpai.

Chiitoitsu 1-shanten is a lost cause

Chiitoi is the same. Its merit lies in the ability to strike with a total surprise wait, but the downside is the low number of winning tiles, making it weak in a head-to-head showdown. Whether it's Men-hon Chiitoi or Chiitoi Dora 4, being at 1-shanten is a position of total weakness.

Even those who know better might feel the pressure of the South round and try to force a reckless push.

Folding is a test of mental strength. Perhaps the true nature of a high-value hand is revealed at 1-shanten.

Push-Pull Rule so far

- 050 Avoid a showdown with a late-game Riichi
- 051 A chase Morohi Riichi is a rational tactic.
- 052 Contesting with a poor-shape high-value 1-shanten is the door to hell.
- 053 With Seven Pairs, do not overreach if you couldn't reach Tenpai first.

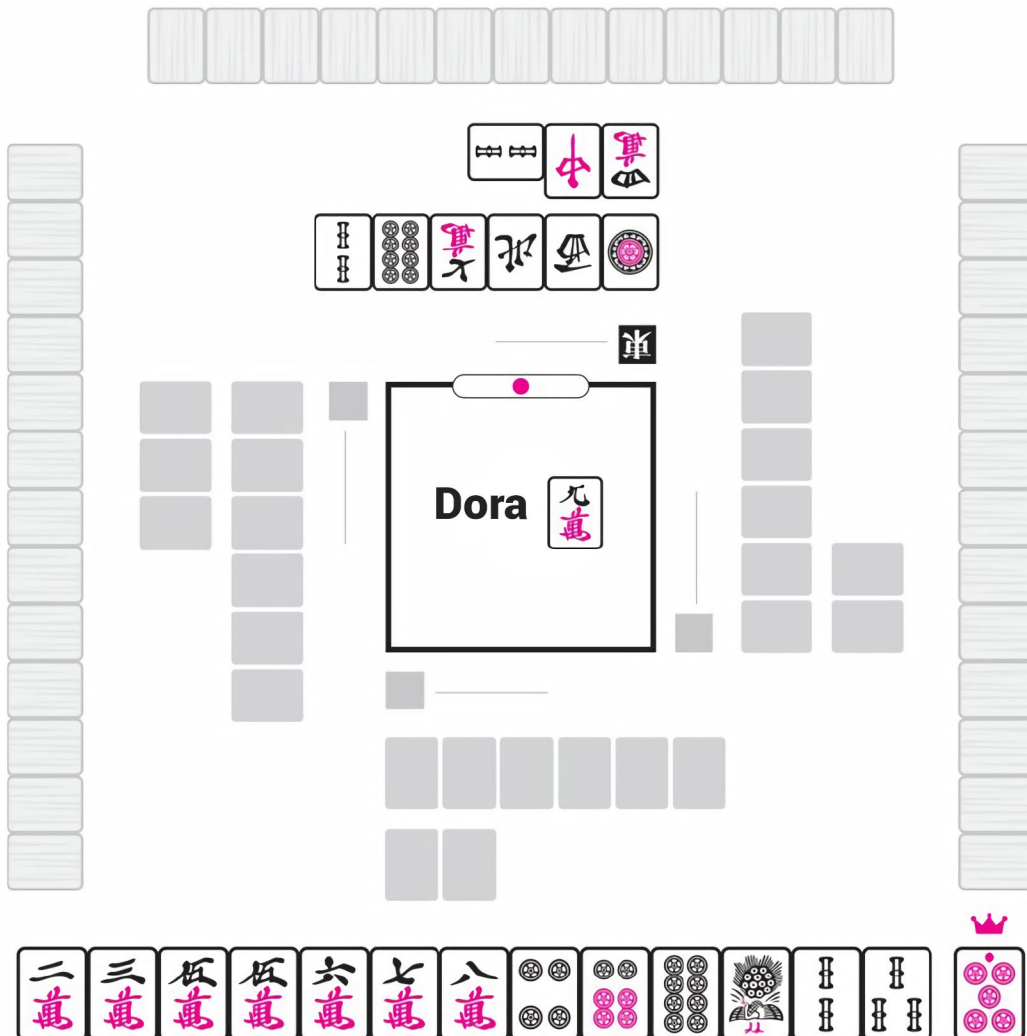
Handling late-game Riichi is quite important; reckless pushing is strictly forbidden.

Q 054 **Waiting on a Riichi's Genbutsu**
Pinfu Dora 1

Turn 9. A dealer Riichi has been called. On the same turn, you also reach tenpai with Pinfu Dora 1. Your wait is on the dealer's genbutsu, but do you call Riichi?



This is the first of a
4-problem set.



A 054 Riichi

Staying in damaten makes it easier to win, but not twice as easy. If you call Riichi, your expected value increases by about 1.5x, making it more profitable. In modern Mahjong, if you have a hand with high point-increase efficiency, you call Riichi even if you are waiting on a dealer's safe tile. This is a major difference from Showa-era tactics.

This was considered a damaten in Showa Mahjong, but looking at the data, calling Riichi is clearly superior. This is a good example of why you shouldn't overvalue interpersonal mind games.



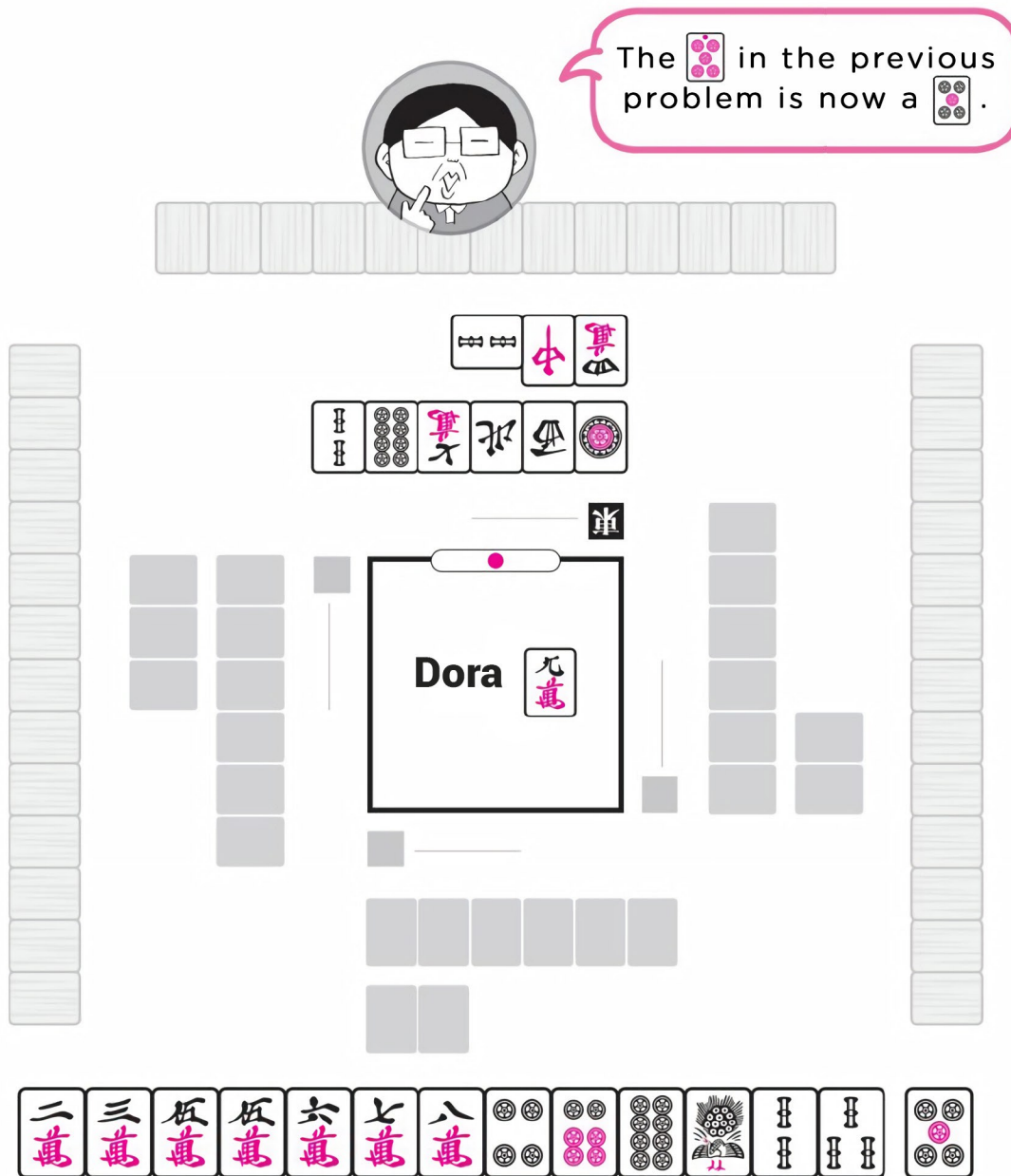
Push-Pull Rule

054

**Call Riichi even on a dealer's
genbutsu-wait if it's Pinfu Dora 1!**

Q 055 Waiting on a Riichi's Genbutsu Pinfu Only

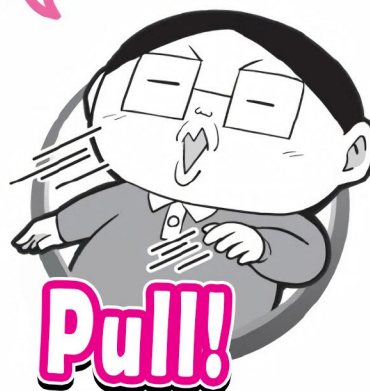
Turn 9. A Dealer Riichi has been called. On the same turn, you reach Tenpai with Pinfu only. You are waiting on the Dealer's genbutsu tile, but do you call Riichi?



A 055 Damaten

Pinfu-only becomes Riichi-Pinfu, but for a chase Riichi, the point-increase efficiency is not worth the risk. This is a hand where you should prioritize win rate over point value. It is more profitable to stay in Damaten and avoid a head-on showdown with the Dealer Riichi. If you draw a dangerous tile, you can simply fold.

Men-Pin by itself simply lacks firepower.



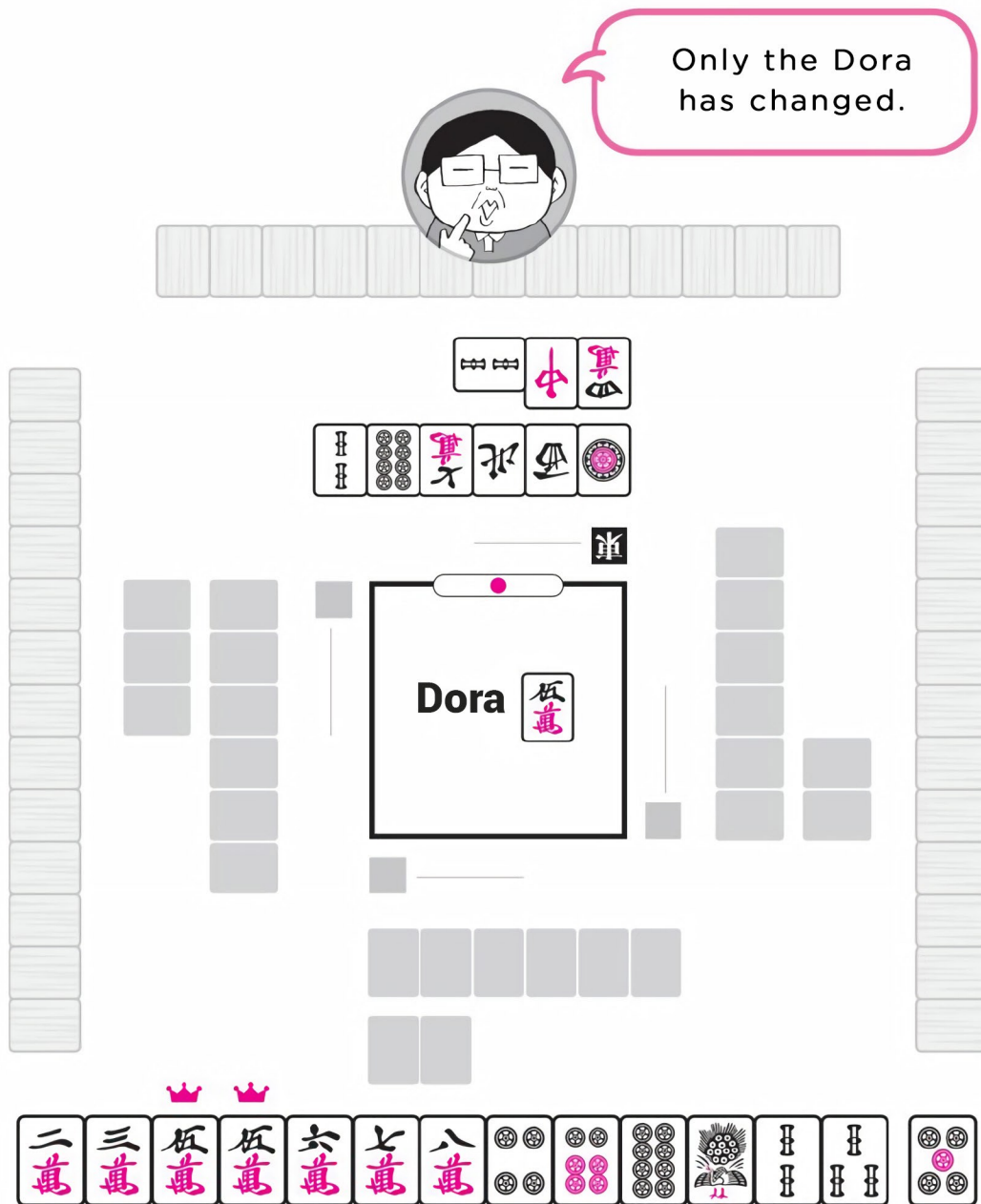
Push-Pull Rule

055

Do not pick a fight with a Dealer Riichi for just a Riichi-Pinfu.

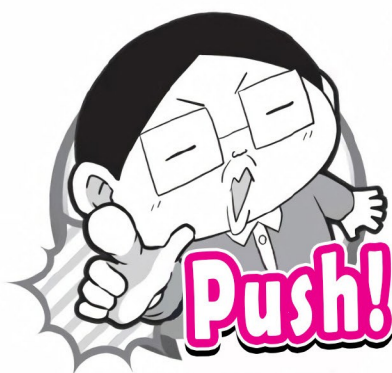
Q 056 Waiting on a Riichi's Genbutsu Pinfu Dora 2

Turn 9. A dealer Riichi has been called. On the same turn, you reach Tenpai with Pinfu Dora 2. You are waiting on the Dealer's genbutsu tile, but do you call Riichi?



A Riichi 056

Staying in damaten makes it easier to win, but the point-increase efficiency for Pinfu Dora 2 through Riichi is incredibly high. When you have a hand that can aim for anything from a Mangan to a Haneman, choosing to prioritize the win rate of a 3900-point hand is a losing choice. This hand shouldn't be used as a stalling hand; treat it as a decisive hand. You should want to aggressively go toe-to-toe here.



It's a scary choice against a Dealer Riichi, but if you consider that it could reach Haneman, this is a decisive hand.

Push-Pull Rule

056

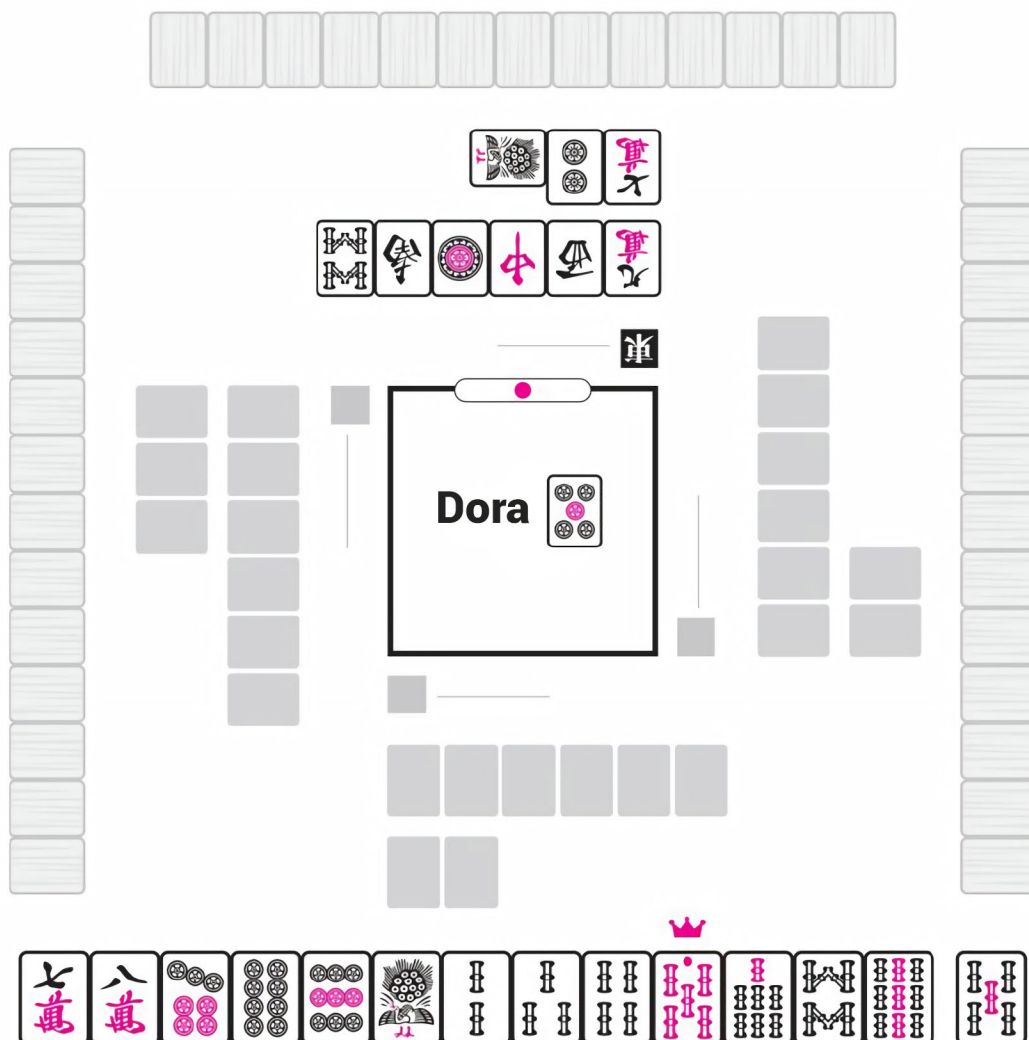
**Call Riichi with a dama
3900-point hand, even when
waiting on a genbutsu!**

Q 057 Waiting on a Riichi's Genbutsu, Dama-mangan

Turn 9. A dealer Riichi has been called. On the same turn, you reach tenpai for a potential Mangan. Your takame (high-side) wait for Sanshoku on  is the dealer's genbutsu. Do you call Riichi?



This time the takame is a Mangan even in Damaten.



A 057 Damaten

While calling Riichi offers the possibility of a Haneman, it is more important to value the situation where you can easily win a Mangan. Discard the  and stay in Damaten. The fact that the Riichi-caller is the dealer is a plus. The lack of middle tiles in the discards is also a major positive factor. If the yasume (low-side) wait comes out, just take the win. Even if you draw and discard a dangerous tile, do not give up; continue to dama even if your wait on the safe tile becomes obvious.

In IRL mahjong, the ability to maintain a "straight face" in these situations is a vital skill.



Push-Pull Rule

057

With a hidden Mangan waiting on a genbutsu, snatch the win from the side.

**Lesson
15****What To Do When You Reach Tenpai
Waiting on a Riichi's Genbutsu****Do not fall into the trap of
interpersonal mind games**

In the past, it was considered "skillful" to reach tenpai waiting on a headstart Riichi's genbutsu and stay in damaten to snatch a quiet win. There was even an atmosphere that made calling a chase Riichi on a genbutsu wait feel like a taboo.

However, statistical data has revealed that if the hand has good point-increase efficiency, it is more profitable to call a chase Riichi. The logic makes sense. Is it really a gain to keep your hand value low just to increase your win rate against the other players while in a head-to-head drawing battle with the headstart Riichi? You fought your way all the way to tenpai; why wouldn't you maximize your scoring potential and treat it as a decisive hand to bet on? The probability of winning by tsumo or by winning from the Riichi-caller is not all that low enough to begin with.

To conclude: if you have Pinfu Dora 1, Tanyao Dora 1, or Pinfu Dora 2, call a chase Riichi even on a genbutsu. If you have only Pinfu, or Tanyao Dora 2 or anything above, stay in damaten. According to the data, this is the strongest way to play.

The variety of genbutsu held by the headstart Riichi-caller is also important. In the early turns, they have fewer tiles discarded in their discard pile, making it easier to win on a genbutsu wait. By the late turns, they have many, so the effect of the trap is weakened.

Push-Pull Rule so far

- 054 **Call Riichi even on a Dealer's genbutsu -wait if it's Pinfu Dora 1!**
- 055 **Do not pick a fight with a Dealer Riichi for just a Riichi-Pinfu.**
- 056 **Call Riichi with a dama 3900-point hand, even when waiting on a Genbutsu!**
- 057 **With a Mangan waiting on a Genbutsu, snatch the win from the side.**

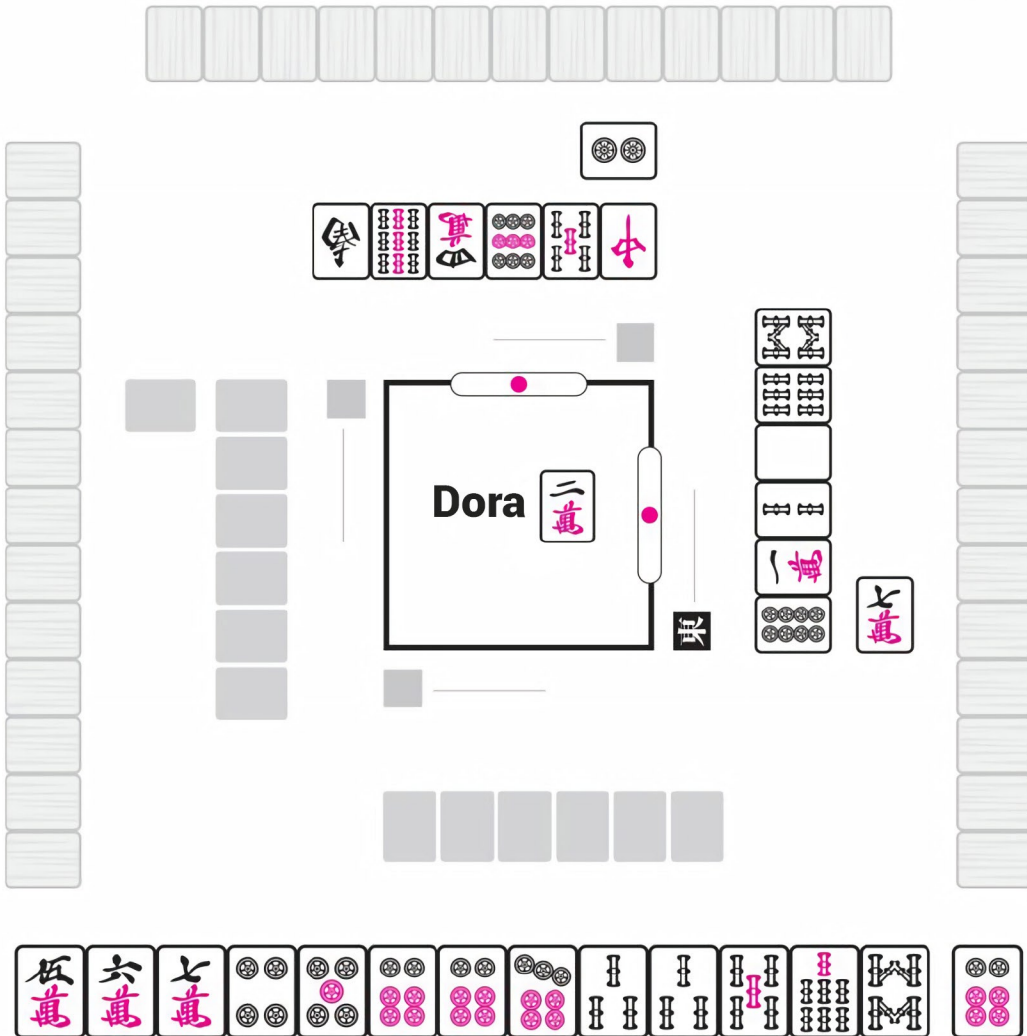
Usually Riichi. Stay in Damaten when you lack confidence in the hand or when the effectiveness of the Genbutsu wait is exceptionally high.

Q vs. Two Opponents in Riichi, No-ten

You have a chance hand where a 567 Sanshoku is visible, but two people have called Riichi. You draw a third . What do you discard?



Is it okay to continue aggressively aiming for the Sanshoku?

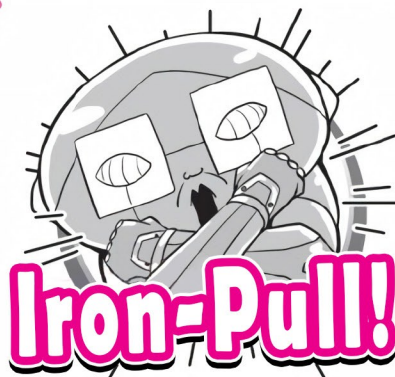


A Discard

058

Bluntly forcing a push from 1-shanten against two Riichis is strictly forbidden. Once it reaches this point, you must focus entirely on defense. Even if you draw  on the next turn, thinking you can then pick a fight by discarding the  is naive. Against two Riichis, prioritize safety over hand value. The danger level of   is roughly the same, but discard the Dealer's Genbutsu just to be sure.

You should assume the possibility of the hand coming back to life is nearly zero.



Push-Pull Rule

058

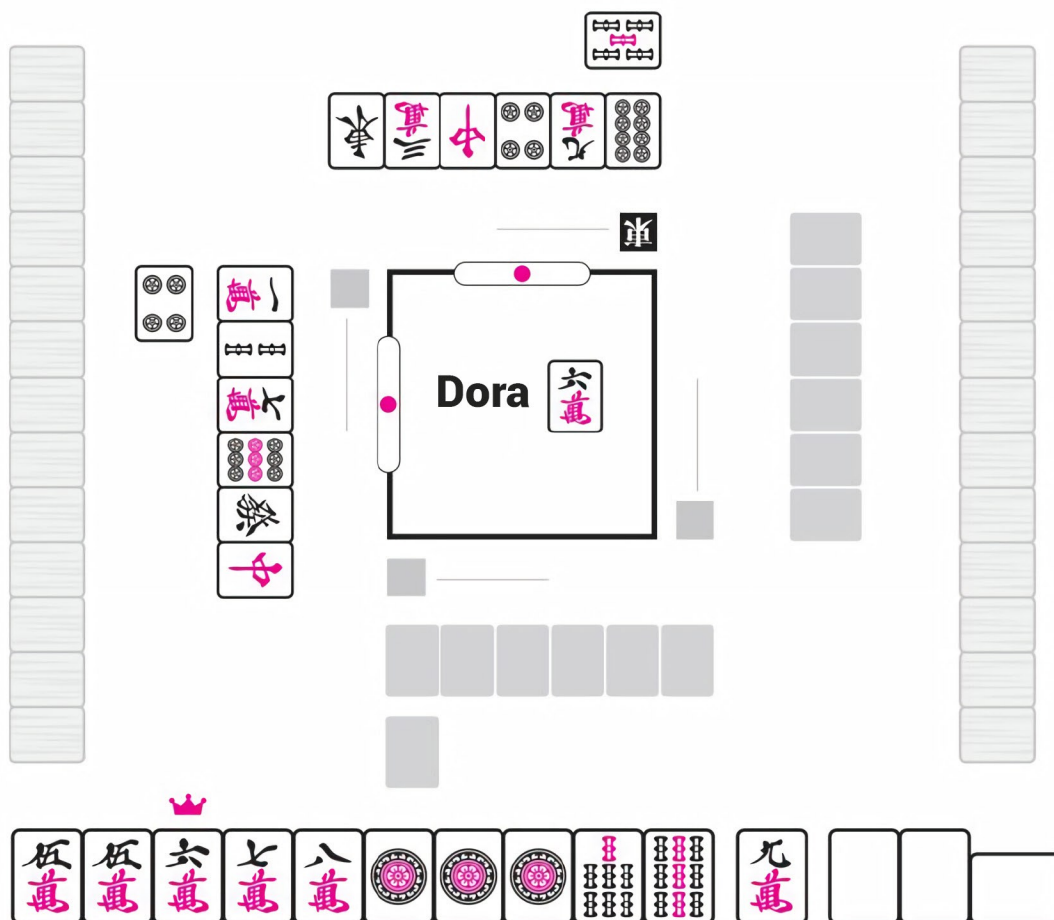
Against two Riichis, focus entirely on defense from 1-shanten!

Q vs. Two Opponents in Riichi, Tenpai (1)

You are in Tenpai for  + Dora 1 when two people call Riichi in succession. Do you risk discarding  that is safe against one of them?



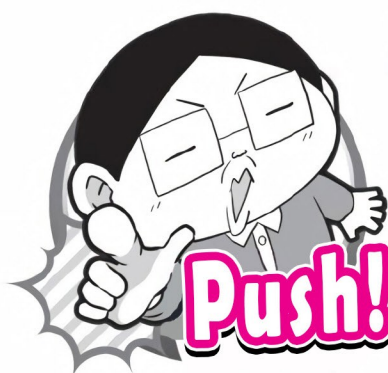
This is a common situation, isn't it?



A Discard

059

The rule "don't pick a fight against two Riichis" applies when you are still no-ten. If you are already in tenpai, you want to aggressively contest the hand. In a two-person Riichi situation, there are at least two Riichi sticks on the table, making pushing more profitable than usual. For example, this 2600-point hand is effectively worth 4600 points due to the two sticks. Therefore, push with a tile like . Dropping a triplet of  with this hand would be far too timid.



If you don't discard dangerous tiles at this level, you'll suffer a defeat by total paralysis.

Push-Pull Rule

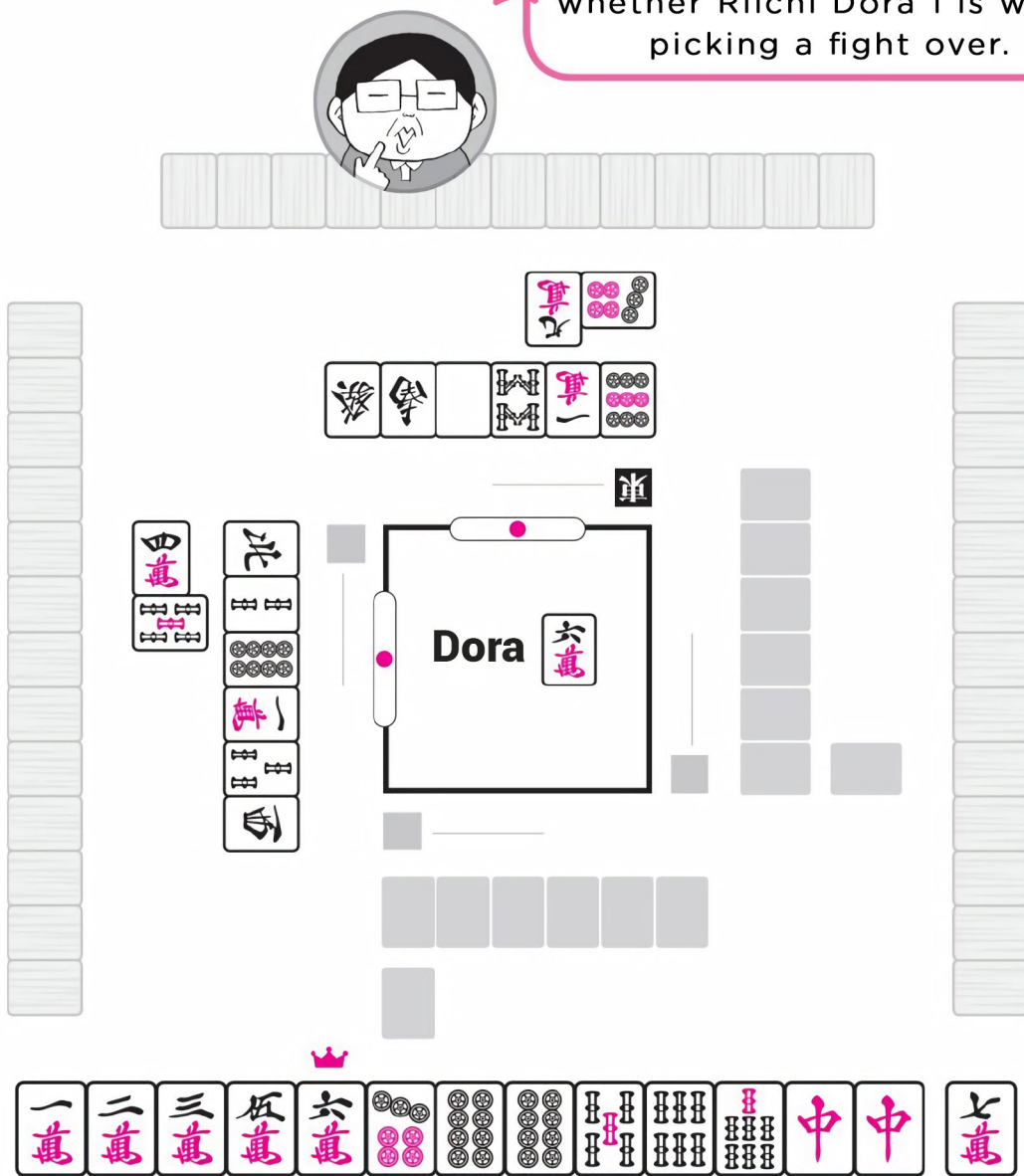
059

Pushing is profitable when there are two Riichi sticks on the table.

Q vs. Two Opponents in Riichi, Tenpai (2)

In a situation where two people have already called Riichi, you also reach tenpai. Do you challenge them? If you do, what wait do you choose?

This is a discussion about whether Riichi Dora 1 is worth picking a fight over.



A
060

Riichi discarding



A two-sided menzen Dora 1 hand is worthy of picking a fight. Call a chase Riichi. If this were a headstart Riichi, a shanpon wait on  would be a powerful option, but in a head-to-head drawing battle, tile count takes priority. Call Riichi while waiting on the ryanmen wait.

Even as the third person to call Riichi, it is a natural move if you have a two-sided wait.



Push-Pull Rule

060

Prioritize tile count for
chase Riichis.

**Lesson
16****Risks and Rewards Against
Two Opponents in Riichi****Dealing in while in No-ten confirms
you as fodder**

First, play very defensively if you are no-ten. Discarding dangerous tiles and dealing in while you are only at 1-shanten—even with a very good hand—means you have no choice but to be certified as fodder.

This is an important point: I often see people discard musuji tiles against two Riichis and deal into a Haneman-class hand. That is the very definition of being fodder.

A situation where pushing is profitable

On the other hand, if you are in tenpai, you can push quite hard. In a two-person Riichi situation, there are at least two Riichi sticks on the table. Even if your hand is only worth 1,000 points, it becomes a 3,000-point income. It's a very profitable spot to push.

Prioritize tile count when joining the fight

And for the final tip: prioritize tile count over hand value. In a head-to-head drawing battle, you should prioritize the number of winning tiles. The trick is to join the fight with a wide wait as possible.

Push-Pull Rule so far

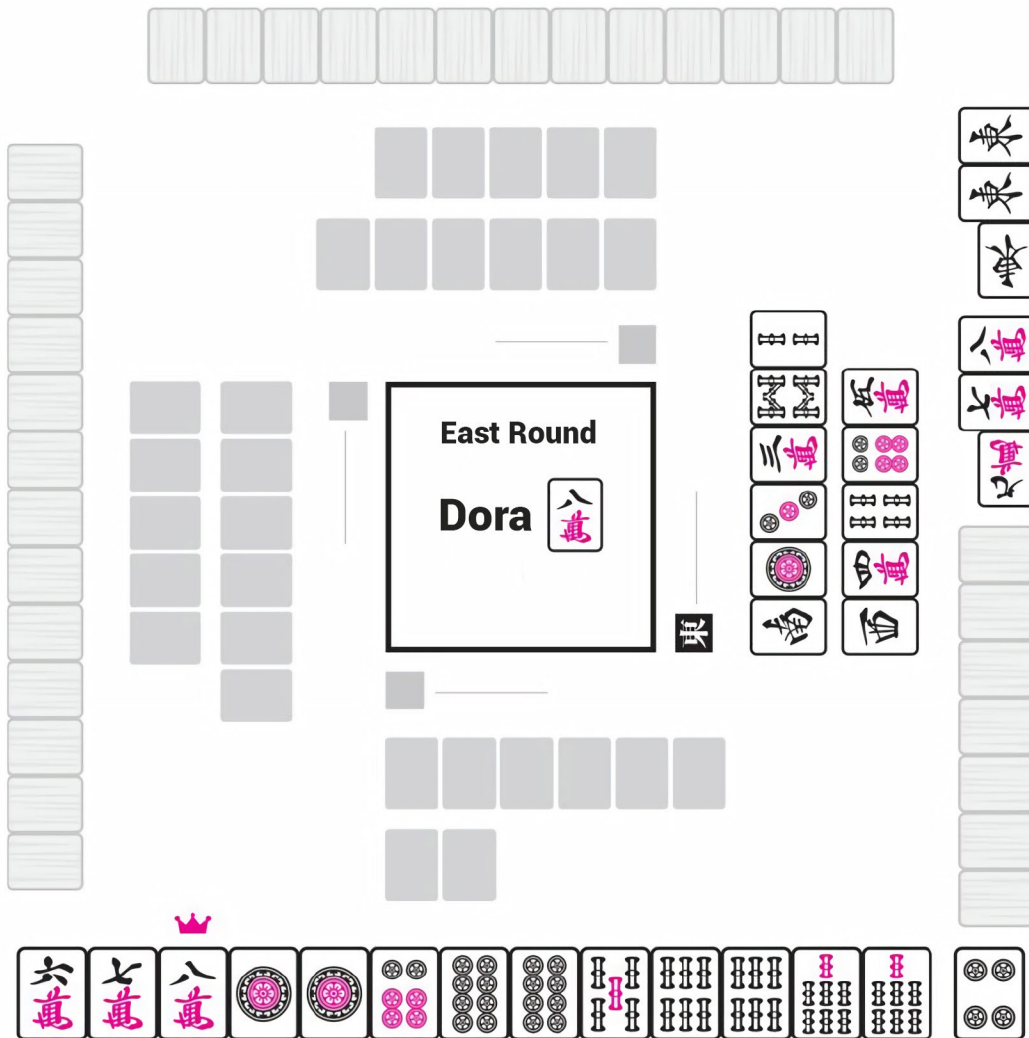
- 058 Against two Riichis, focus entirely on defense from 1-shanten!
- 059 Pushing is profitable when there are two Riichi sticks on the table.
- 060 Prioritize tile count for chase Riichis.

Q vs. Double 東 Dora 1
061

The Dealer Shimocha has called two sets, including Double  and Dora 1. They are likely in Tenpai. You are at 1-shanten for Sanshoku; what do you discard?



Is it okay to charge straight ahead for the Sanshoku?



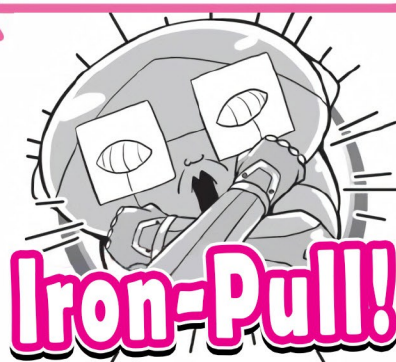
A
061

Discard



A dealer's double 東 + Dora 1 is a sufficiently dangerous hand. They discarded valuable number tiles and are likely in tenpai. We are still in no-ten so this is not a stage where you can discard tiles carelessly. The dealer's discards contain many middle tiles, so you should avoid discarding anything apart from those established suji lines.

If you deal into this carelessly, your point sticks will vanish like spring snow, no matter how many you started with.



Push-Pull Rule

061

Do not deal into a double 東 dora 1 carelessly.

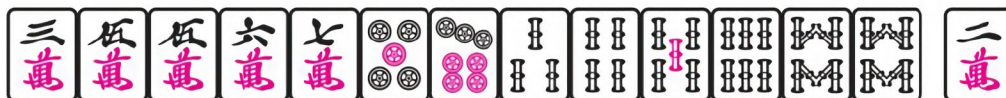
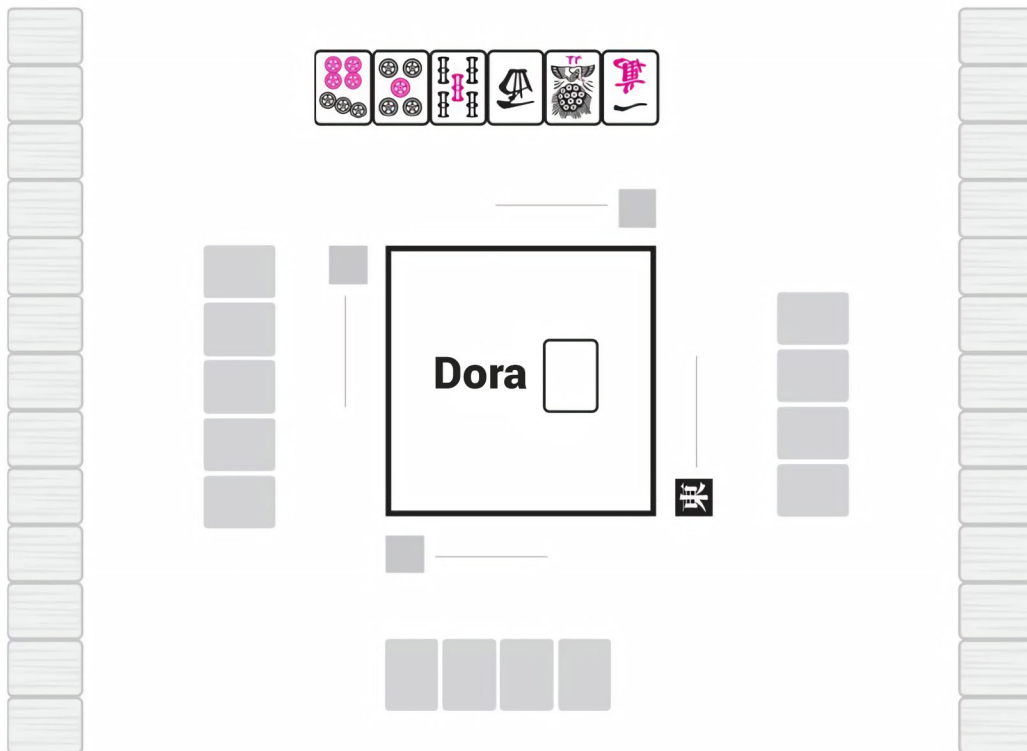


Q vs. Dora Pon, No-ten 062

Our toimen has poned the dora and has two open sets. You have a decent hand, but what do you discard?



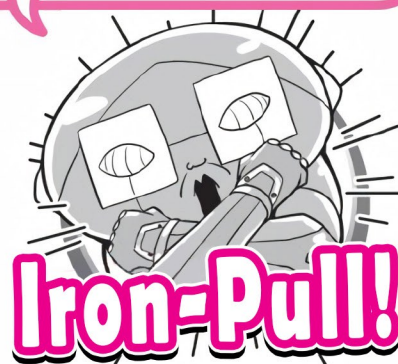
Is toimen already
in tenpai...?



A 062 Discard and fold

Compared to a Riichi, people tend to respond too casually to a Dora Pon, but this is actually the scarier situation. It's still early, and you can't tell if they are in Tenpai, so you might be tempted to discard a risky tile. However, because their middle-tile discards were fast, you have no choice but to cautiously enter defense by discarding  . Recognize that the situation no longer allows for an easy  discard. Discarding that  here would be "sweeter than half-baked chocolate" (too naive).

Whether you can react sensitively to an opponent's early middle-tile discards is your lifeline.



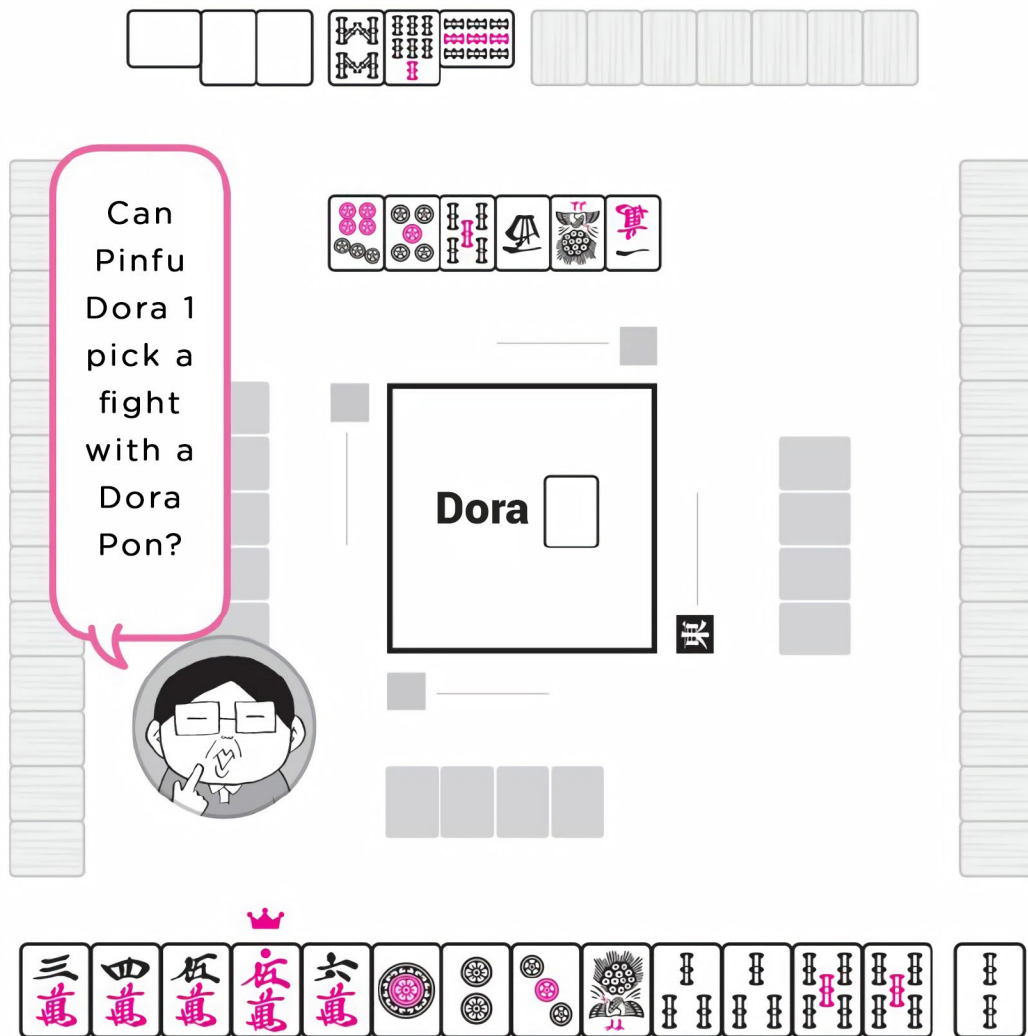
Push-Pull Rule

062

**Do not underestimate the
Dora Pon!**

Q vs. Dora Pon, Pinfu Dora 1 063

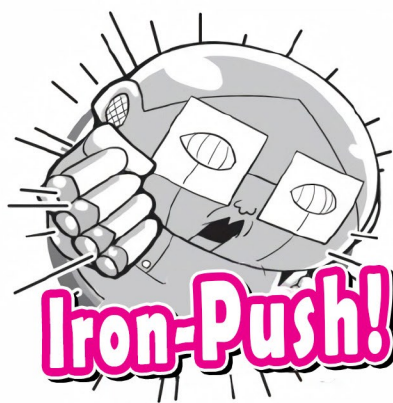
The situation is the same as the previous problem, but your hand is different. You have reached Tenpai with Pinfu Dora 1. Do you call Riichi?



A Riichi

063

A Men-Pin-Dora (Riichi-Pinfu-Dora) is a hand capable of taking on a Dora Pon. With a ryanmen wait, you can contest the round if your hand is worth at least half of the opponent's likely value. While this hand is guaranteed at 3900 points, its actual value is over 5000, making it worthy of a showdown. In this situation, it's vital to increase your value and step into the ring of the head-to-head drawing battle.



Staying in damaten in this spot is being "push-pull tone-deaf."

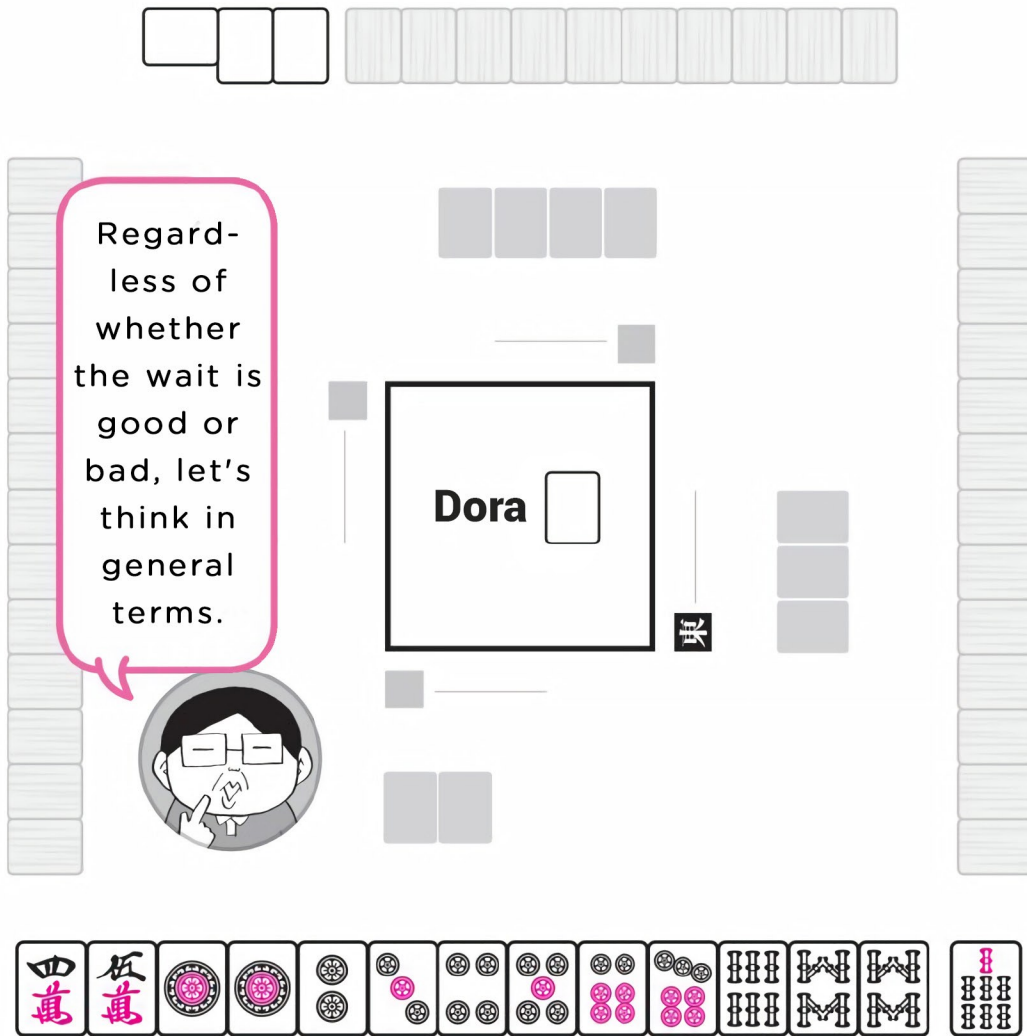
Push-Pull Rule

063

If you have Men-Pin-Dora 1, pick a fight with the Dora Pon.

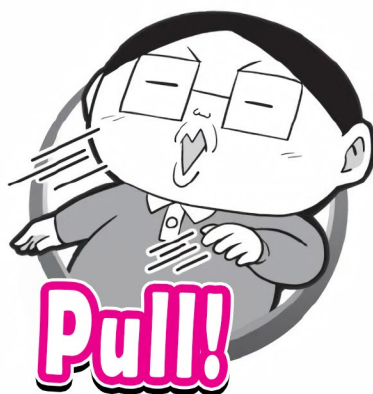
Q vs. Dora Pon, Pinfu Only

In a situation where a dora pon has been called, you reach tenpai early on turn 4 with Pinfu only. Do you call Riichi?



A 064 Damaten

If you call Riichi here, the other two players will likely fold, but the Dora Pon player definitely won't. As a result, it easily becomes a 1-on-1 situation against the Dora Pon. A Men-Pin-Dora 1 would be a bold Riichi, but you shouldn't commit to a head-to-head drawing battle against a Dora Pon with just a Men-Pin. The risk is too high for such a low reward. If the wait were **1-4** or **6-9**, you might call Riichi because the tiles are easier to come out, but for any other wait, stay in Damaten and aim for a quiet win. If the situation becomes dangerous, you can still fold.



If it looks like the opponent is in tenpai, it's vital not to overreach. Control yourself with an iron will.

Push-Pull Rule

064

If your hand isn't strong enough for a head-to-head drawing battle, stay in a quiet damaten.

**Lesson
17****Read the Timing of Tenpai
for Open Hands****An especially difficult field**

Push-pull against open hands is particularly difficult and is an area usually cleared through experience. The reason for the difficulty is that it's hard to tell when the opponent actually reaches tenpai.

When discarding unneeded tiles, an opponent will discard dangerous-looking tiles before they reach tenpai and then switch to safer-looking tiles once they are ready.

Against a Riichi, you know the exact moment they become ready but against an open hand, you don't. That makes the push-pull judgment much harder.

To know when they reached tenpai, look at the number of “tedashi” (discards they make from within their hand) after calling. The number of tedashi and the progress of the hand are proportional. It varies depending on how many calls they have already made but, if they have one call, they are likely in tenpai if they do three more tedashi discards and multiple of them are middle tiles. With two calls, if they do two tedashi then they are likely in tenpai. If they have three calls, then they are already quite dangerous.

Check the number of times they hesitated

That said, many people find it impossible to track tedashi discards. However, even strong players will almost certainly hesitate/think for a moment when making a tedashi discard. Checking the number of times they hesitated is a key trick. This method can even be used in online mahjong. When you reach the mid-game stage where you think, "This is almost getting too dangerous..." and then your opponent does a prolonged thinking pause before discarding, after that point treat them as being in tenpai and respond accordingly.

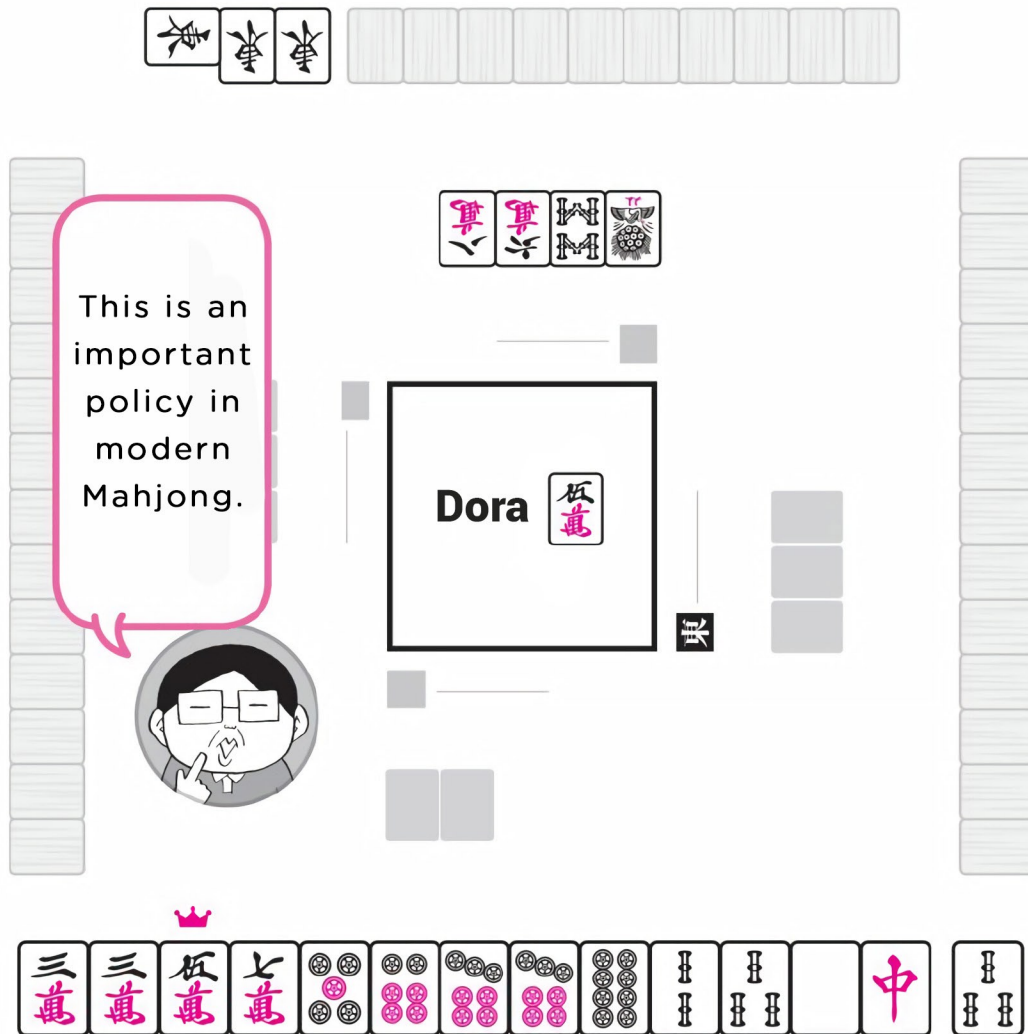
Push-Pull Rule so far

- 061 Do not deal into a Double  carelessly.
- 062 Do not underestimate the Dora Pon!
- 063 If you have Men-Pin-Dora 1, pick a fight with the Dora Pon.
- 064 If your hand isn't strong enough for a head-to-head drawing battle, stay in a quiet Damaten.

Staying in a quiet Damaten isn't actually recommended that often. Basically, you should either engage in a proper head-to-head drawing battle or fold.

Q vs. Honitsu (1) 065

You have a decent hand. Toimen appears to be going for a Honitsu. Should you discard   here? Or the ?



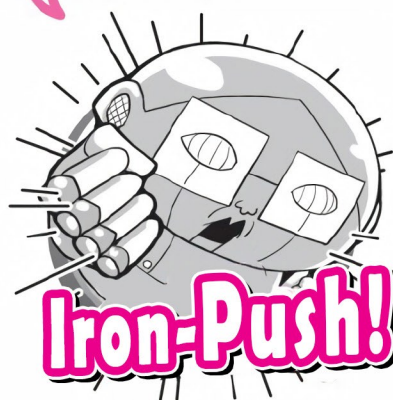
A
065

Discard



Postponing the discard of   only increases the likelihood that it will be called later. Although you are still far from tenpai, as long as you have a hand with Mangan potential, you should discard unnecessary honor tiles quickly. Discard them while observing the progress of the Honitsu player, up until the point their hand "boils down" to Tenpai. It is bad to throw away a decent hand too early.

If you have a hand you intend to push, discarding the dangerous tiles early is one of the ironclad rules of modern Mahjong.



Push-Pull Rule

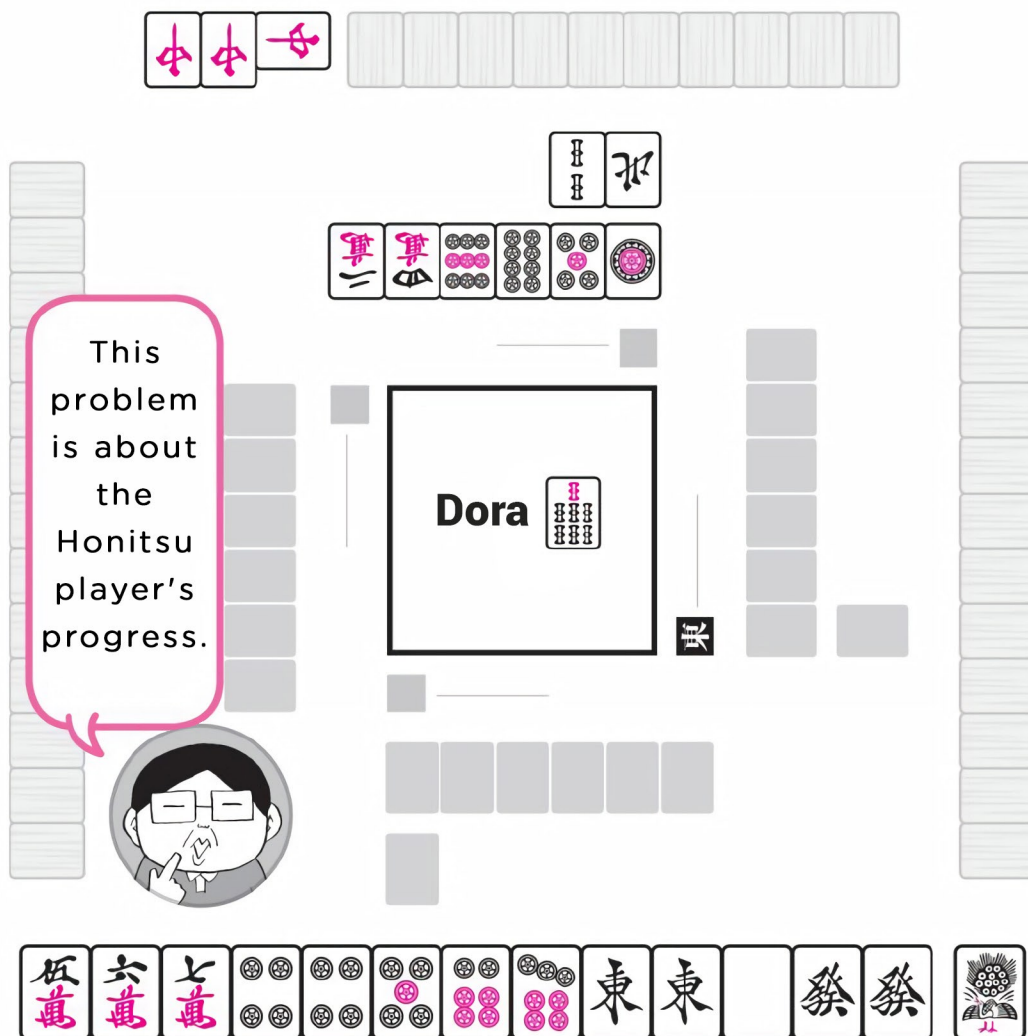
065

If you have a viable hand, do not suppress honor tiles.

Q vs. Honitsu (2)

066

A fairly well-structured hand. The player across shows signs of a souzu Honitsu. You draw a dangerous tile from that suit. What do you discard? 東 are all shonpai (fresh live tiles).

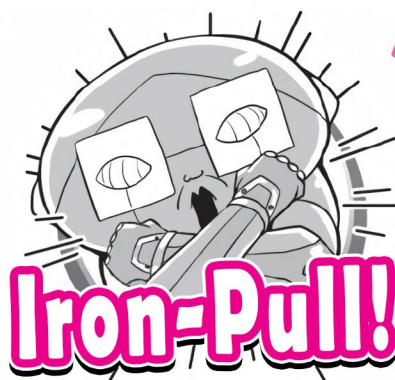


A Discard

066



The player across has an overflow in souzu; their tenpai probability is likely around 50%. Even though your hand is well-structured, starting from here to discard  and then trying to win with hard-to-get   is far too naive a prospect. You want to hold on without breaking the hand if possible, but since  is too dangerous to discard, discard  and dream of a miraculous recovery.



You must not deal in from a state of No-ten against an opponent who is building for a flush hand that's overflowing in their suit.

Push-Pull Rule

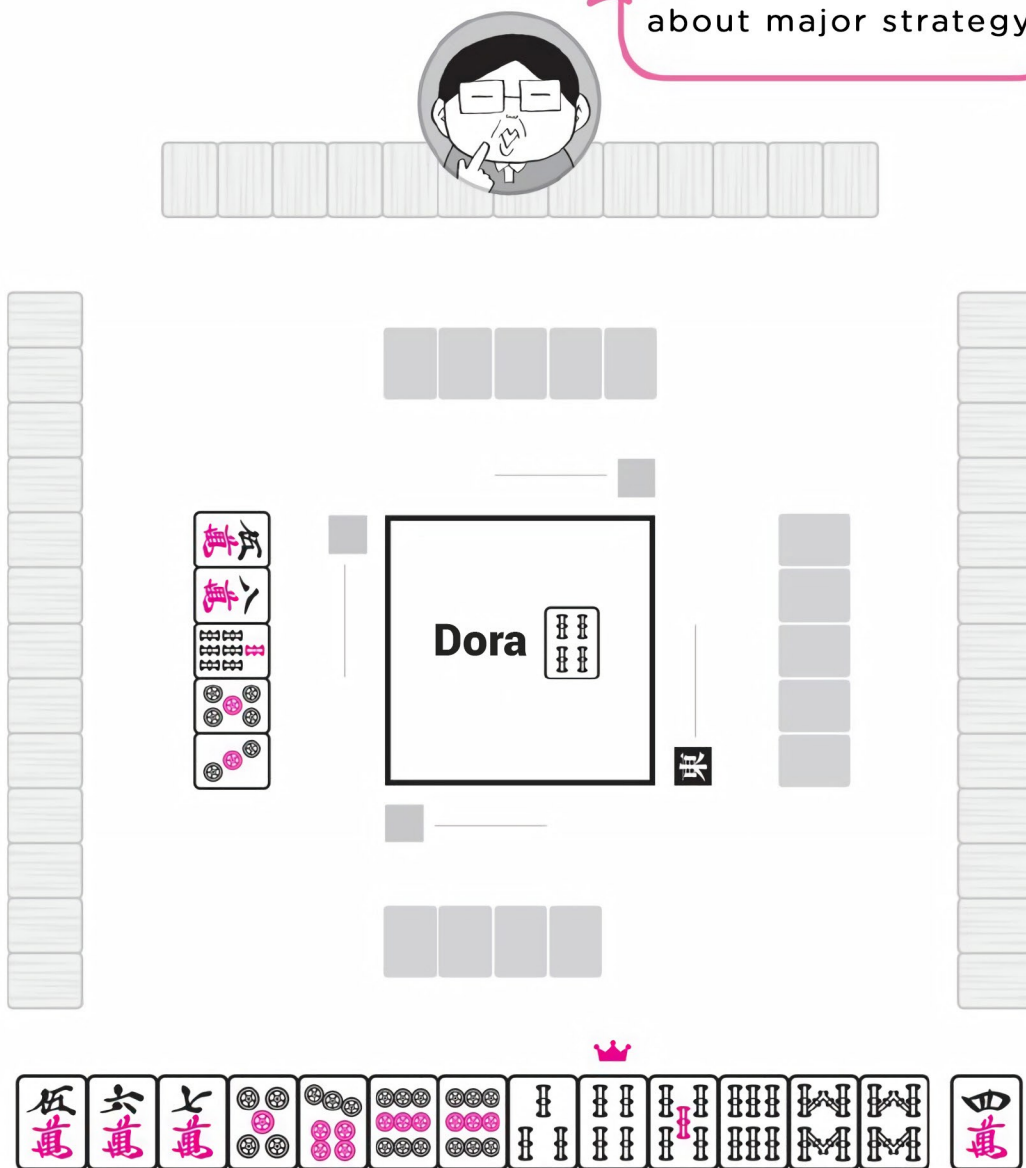
066

For Honitsu, read the timing of tenpai rather than focusing on the wait.

Q vs. Kokushi Musou (1) 067

A situation where the player to your kamicha is clearly going for Kokushi Musou. Should you play while cautiously holding terminal tiles, or proceed toward a Tan-Pin-style hand? What do you discard?

This is a question about major strategy.



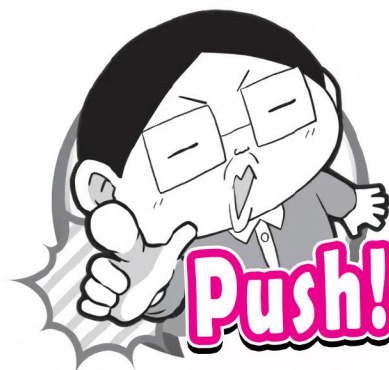
A Discard

067



A round containing a Kokushi hunter is a "chance round." You can ignore the hunter and treat them as someone who is essentially folding. Instead of half-heartedly holding back terminal tiles, you should aim for the highest-value hand and proceed toward a Tan-Pin-style hand.

Being afraid of Kokushi is like being afraid of stories from your past life.



Push-Pull Rule

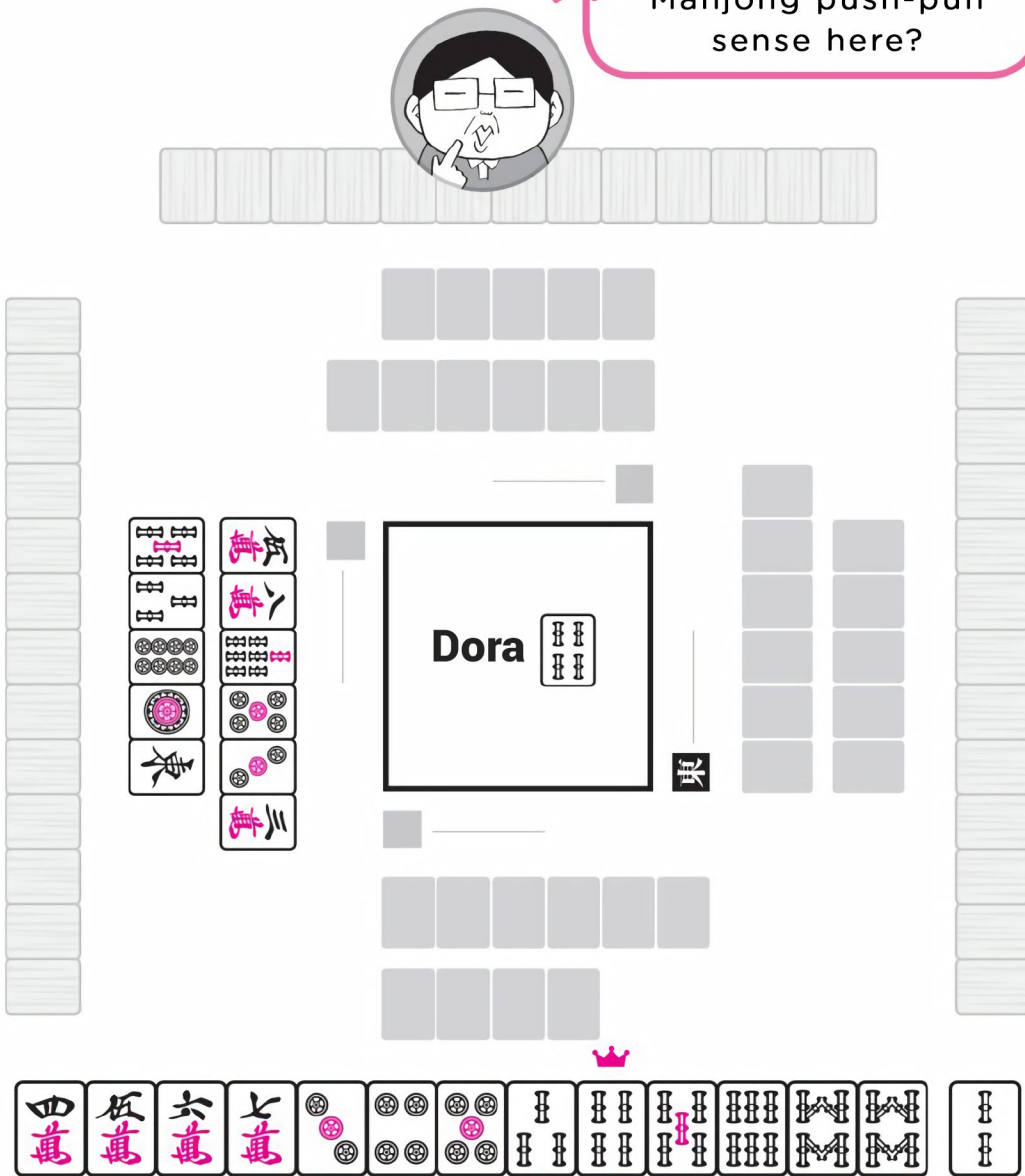
067

Thirteen Orphans = Slime.
Treat it as weak foe and
assertively push.

Q 068 vs. Kokushi Musou (2)

The player to your left is going for Kokushi Musou and has now overflowed a terminal/honor tile. You reach tenpai for a decisive strong hand. Do you call Riichi?

What is the modern Mahjong push-pull sense here?



A
068

Riichi Discarding



The fact that the Kokushi hunter is overflowing terminal/honor tiles could mean they are bluffing or have folded; but it could also mean their hand is truly progressing. Even if they are in Tenpai, the wait for Thirteen Orphans is like aiming for the "last available tile" in the game—you are overwhelmingly favored. It is a mistake to be excessively cautious just because the opponent has the possibility of a Yakuman. A head-on Riichi pursuing the highest value is best.



You won't deal into a Kokushi as easily as you might think.

Push-Pull Rule

068

Step in without fearing a
Thirteen Orphans
"traffic accident."

**Lesson
18****Read the Timing of Tenpai
for Honitsu as Well**

In the early game, do not suppress tiles, instead, discard them early.

Defending against a Honitsu is a specific sub-field of push-pull against open hands. There are several unique tricks to handling it. First, if your own hand is somewhat promising, do not suppress tiles (shibori) in the early turns. Since players often pivot toward Honitsu from a messy starting hand, it is best to process and discard any tiles related to their suit as quickly as possible.

However, if the person who sits as their kamicha discards number tiles in the suit they are going for, their hand suddenly becomes a lot easier to win. It's a question that you have to relate to your own hand's progress, but you must ask yourself: "Sitting as their kamicha is it really okay to assist my shimocha like this?" before discarding tiles likely to be called.

The important thing is Tenpai timing

The most important factor is reading exactly when they reach Tenpai. Tiles generally leave their hand in a specific sequence: tiles of other suits → honor tiles → excess tiles of their chosen suit. It's still safe territory if they are discarding honor tiles that have been discarded several times on the board already. However when live honor tiles shonpai start coming out, the situation is becoming

dangerous. Once numbered tiles of their chosen suit start coming out, the danger is clear.

You cannot "read" the wait in a traditional sense, as a Honitsu is often forced together by any means necessary. Suji are not reliable. Focus solely on reading the tenpai timing; once you enter that "danger window," do not discard tiles of their suit or honor tiles unless your hand is worth a showdown.

Push-Pull Rule so far

- 065 If you have a viable hand, do not suppress honor tiles.
- 066 For Honitsu, read the timing of Tenpai rather than focusing on the wait.
- 067 Thirteen Orphans = Slime. Treat it as weak and be aggressive.
- 068 Step in without fearing a Thirteen Orphans "traffic accident."

Both Honitsu and Thirteen Orphans are hands where the timing of Tenpai is easy to understand. Until you see those specific signs, do not apply the brakes to your own hand.



Chapter 2

Q044

Nemata **Agree**

In the early game, if you have good shape and high value, the basic play is to push even from 1-shanten.

Murakami **Agree**

People who fold on an early  in this situation should reflect on their playstyle.

Q045

Nemata **Borderline**

Depends on the danger level of the tile you need to discard. Whether you can push from 1-shanten once you've passed the middle turns with a good-shape, high-value hand is borderline. If the  is musuji but the  has passed, then I would discard the .

Murakami **Objection**

Discard . In this decisive hand, I think reducing your acceptance by 4 tiles is a massive loss. Even if  is genbutsu, I still usually would discard . There are almost no cases where just the  are abnormally dangerous at this turn count.

Q046

Nemata **Agree**

With this hand early on, you have few safe tiles, and the danger level of  is also low so it's better to push.

Murakami **Agree**

The danger levels of  and  aren't much different at this turn count.

Q047

Nemata **Fold**

If you intend on maintaining the 1-shanten by discarding a tile that hasn't even passed half-way, it would still be better to be stubbornly pushing with a poor-shape tenpai than to be pushing with this. The gap between tenpai and 1-shanten is that significant.

Murakami **Objection**

Even if  or  were safe tiles, I would still discard . I'd maximize the acceptance fully so I can call Riichi here on after.

Q048

Nemata **Agree**

Especially for a cheap 1-shanten with bad shape remaining, you should fold all the more.

Murakami **Agree**

That said, let's say if only 2 suji waits have passed against the riichi, even if you had genbutsu it would be okay to push . The probability that it would deal-in would not amount to much. If they have a flashy discard pile then just straightforwardly discard genbutsu.

Q049

Nemata **Agree**

With a good-shape, high-value hand I will push anything that looks relatively easy to push.

Murakami **Agree**

For this kind of hand you have to discard  regardless if there is an early  in their discards or not.

Q050

Nemata **Agree**

If there were a few more draws left, I'd push, but then instead I think a strong option would be to go with the relatively safer  which would be worth 5,200 on  which doesn't change the effective value of the hand by all that much.

Murakami **Borderline**

If the Dealer Riichi is waiting on ryanmen it's highly likely to be in pinzu, but it's not like  is a guaranteed safe tile either. Since fully folding seems difficult here, discarding  to maximize your own win rate is perhaps the better move.

Q051

Nemata **Agree**

Pushing is advantageous. The principle is to take a wait that's easy to win on while passing one dangerous tile.

Murakami **Agree**

Since it's a Dora-Dora decisive hand, I'd rather take the wait that should have the higher win probability—the kanchan wait on .

Q052

Nemata **Agree**

Even with high value, you fold from a bad-shape 1-shanten.

Murakami **Agree**

...But don't you need to see their discard pile! If you truly have zero safe tiles, then surely you'd just discard , right? (Laughs).

Q053

Nemata **Agree**

Same as the previous problem.

Murakami **In terms of basic strategy, I agree** But the strength of the Riichi discard pond matters. At turn 6, the probability of  dealing-in is under most cases under 10%. If I'm the Dealer, I'd often discard the . The real question is how many musuji tiles you would have to push against them. Pushing just 1, or 2 musuji doesn't have to be a loss. If either  or  are genbutsu then I would go with that for the Ippatsu turn. If both are shonpai then I would discard .

Q054

Nemata **Agree**

For a hand with good shape and high value increase by calling Riichi, it's a standard Riichi even on a genbutsu wait.

Murakami **Agree**

Since the Dealer will discard the , it's as if two people are drawing tiles for your  win. Ironclad Riichi!

Q055

Nemata **Borderline**

Pinfu only is also a hand that has high value increase by calling Riichi so you are in need of points then there is a choice to call Riichi as well

Murakami **Objection**

Even if it is a genbutsu wait, if you have confidence in the wait, you should call a chase Riichi. Riichi-Pinfu is a decent decisive hand.

Q056

Nemata **Agree**

Same as Q054.

Murakami **Of course Agree**

As I'm already considering chasing with just a Men-Pin hand.

Q057

Nemata **Slightly
Dama**

Since you can also win on the yasume, it's a close call whether dama is actually more advantageous. It's not a hand you'd fold anyway, so one option is to start in dama; if the other two opponents throw a lot of genbutsu besides the , then you can pivot into a tsumogiri Riichi.

Murakami **Either
way is
fine, but
I'd Riichi**

It's painful to have the  stopped by both sides, but I want to avoid winning on the  in dama for just 2,000 on a ron or 700–1,300 tsumo when the hand has Mangan potential via Riichi. If your own discard pond is strong, it's possible that opponents cornered by two Riichi calls would discard the  while prioritizing the dealer's genbutsu.

Q058

Nemata **Slightly
iffy**

I don't push musuji tiles against two Riichis while no-ten. If you do reach a good-shape tenpai, it's worth taking them on even with a cheap hand, so I would discard the  to keep the ryanmen rather than the Sanshoku.

Murakami **Agree**

However, if I draw a  next, I would call Riichi by discarding the . Since many suji in manzu and pinzu haven't passed yet, I think a takame Tan-Pin-Sanshoku tenpai is worth the risk of discarding the  from your ankou. Drawing a  and risking the  is also fine, but if I draw an  that breaks the Sanshoku, I would retreat.

Q059

Nemata **Agree**

If the tile passes against one player, go ahead and push even with poor shape, provided the value is decent.

Murakami **Agree**

Besides, a  is a very easy tile to push in this spot.

Q060

Nemata **Agree**

Since we're discarding a tile that will pass against one of them, we push. When fighting from a trailing position, prioritize winning probability over hand value.

Murakami **Agree**

Even without a dora, I'd call Riichi if I'm confident in the wait. With dora 1, it's an ironclad Riichi.

Q061

Nemata **Agree**

Murakami **Of course
Agree**

Dealing into a hand with this much information already revealed in their discard pond is a definite "No."

Q062

Nemata	Agree	A Dora pon hand has higher potential value than a Riichi. Since they are highly likely to be in tenpai, you should not push any musuji against them.
Murakami	Of course Agree	A Dora pon is several times scarier than a Riichi ippatsu.

Q063

Nemata	Agree	If you have a hand that you are clearly meant to push against a Riichi, you should do the same against a Dora pon.
Murakami	Agree	That being said, since there are many safe tiles, you could discard the  and stay in dama; if you draw a musuji tile a few turns later, you can maneuver around them by discarding the  . Against a Dora pon with this discard pond, you can narrow down their wait significantly based on their next tedashi discard, so damaten is a viable option too.

Q064

Nemata	Objection	If the probability of the Dora pon opponent being in tenpai is high, staying in dama to retain the ability to fold later is effective. However, at this stage, it's fairly likely they are still no-ten. In that case, you don't need to consider folding that much. Furthermore, staying in dama might encourage the shimocha to feed tiles to the toimen that help them reach tenpai, so I would call Riichi.
Murakami	Agree	However, if you choose damaten, be prepared to fold after seeing one or two tedashi discards from the Dora pon player. Have a "they probably aren't ready yet, but I'm watching just in case" mindset.

Q065

Nemata	Agree	If they call, their high value is confirmed, but the toimen is often still far from winning. As long as you can see your own win, don't narrow your acceptance by suppressing tiles.
Murakami	Agree	Discard both honor tiles swiftly. If they end up calling and then discard an overflow pinzu tile, you should retreat as soon as you draw any pinzu or shonpai.

Q066

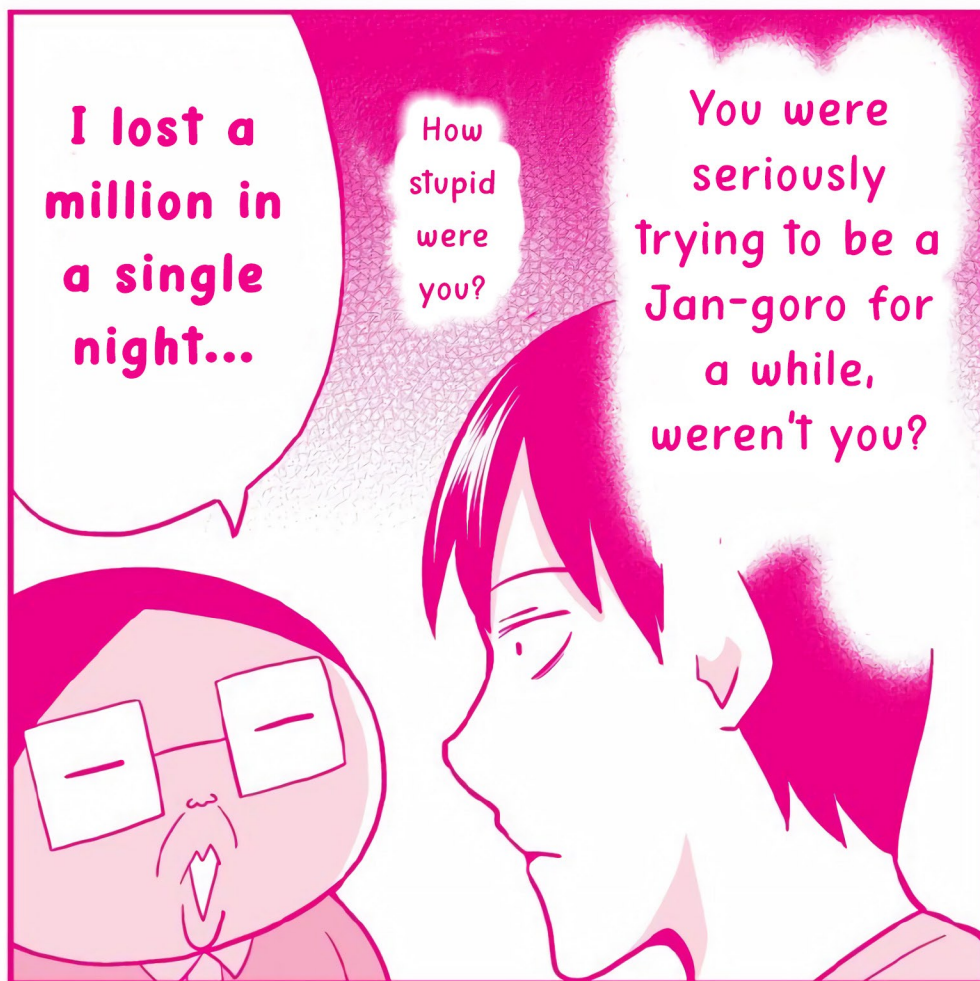
Nemata	Agree	It's borderline whether to push even if you reach tenpai, so if you have to risk discarding dangerous tiles from 1-shanten, you should properly fold.
Murakami	Agree	An overflow in the Honitsu suit is a major danger signal. Unless it is a decisive hand, fold completely without any lingering attachment.

Q067

Nemata	Agree	Don't warp your hand-building just to guard against extremely rare cases.
Murakami	Agree	An early-game Kokushi Musou is a slime, but if you don't see four copies of any tile by the end of the round and they don't seem to be folding, then you should seriously start being cautious.

Q068

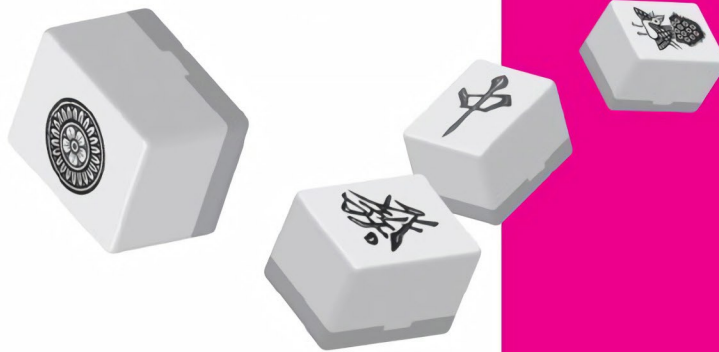
Nemata	Agree	By this point, a Kokushi tenpai isn't all that uncommon. But even assuming they are in tenpai, there is no reason to consider folding with a hand like this.
Murakami	Agree	Even if the Kokushi is in tenpai, calling Riichi is still the more advantageous play.

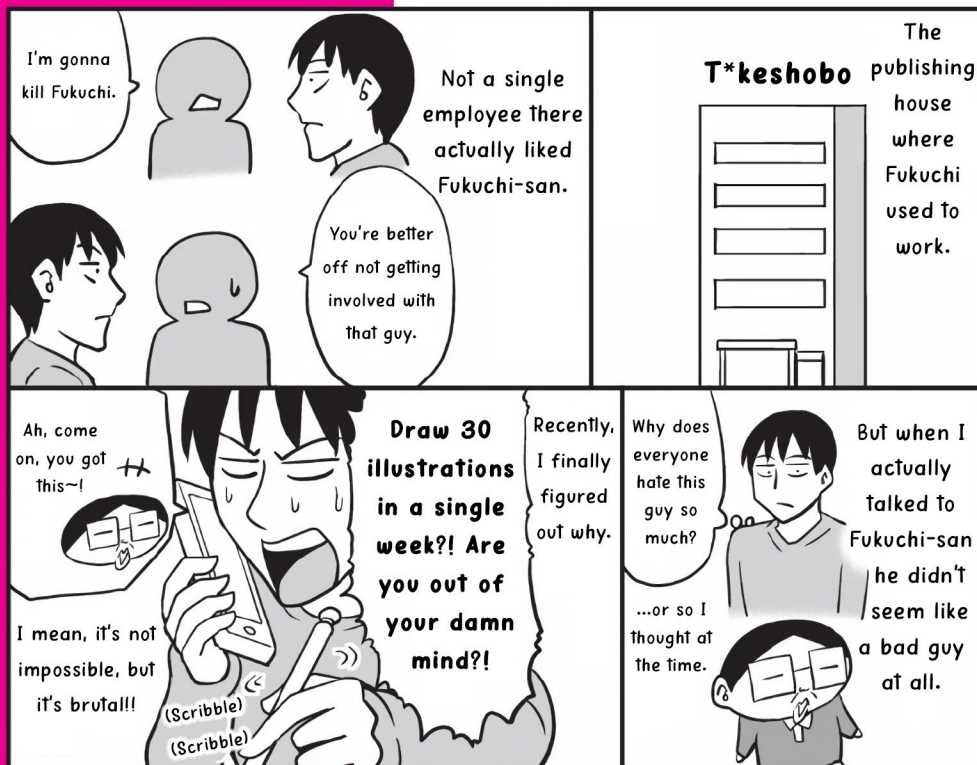


TN: Jan-goro (雀ゴロ) is a slang term for a mahjong "hustler" or "grinder" who lives entirely off gambling stakes.

Push-Pull Involving Placements

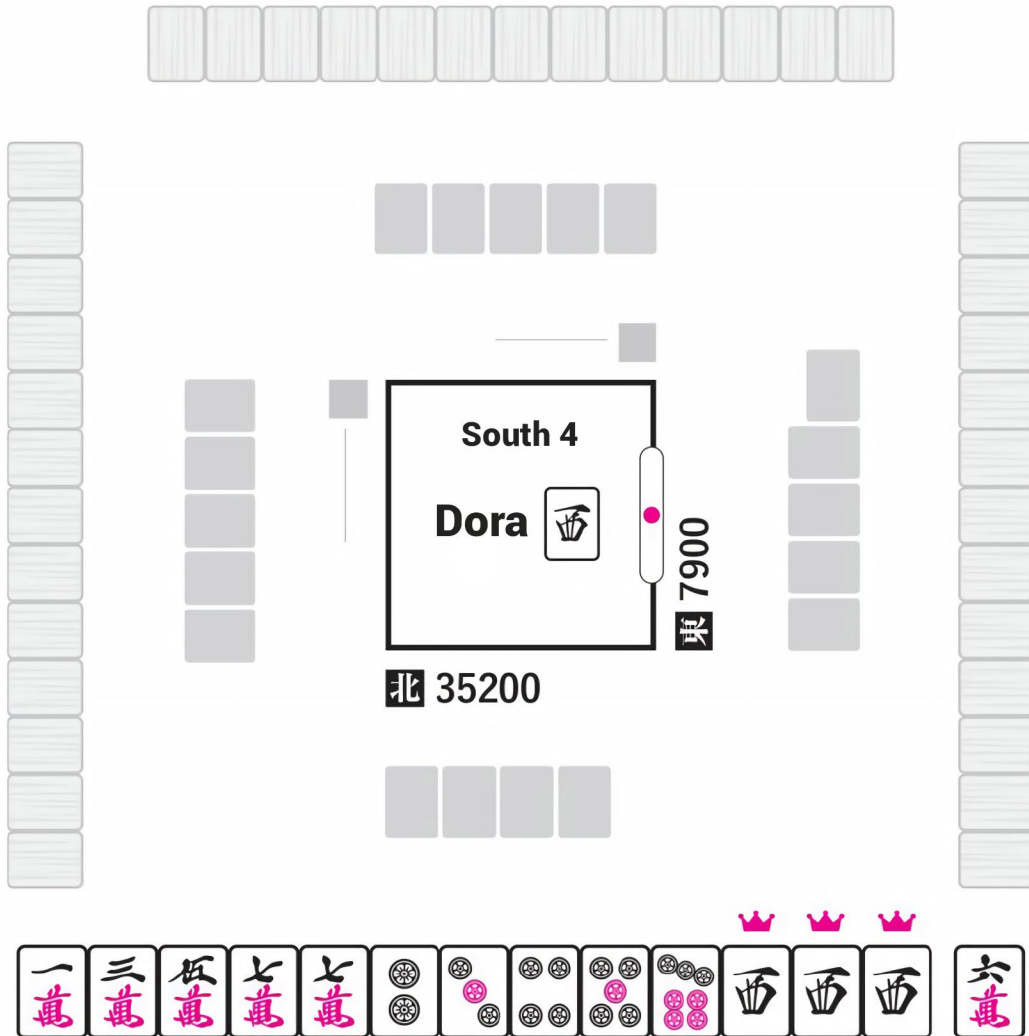
chapter >>> 3





Q 069 **Top Place in All-Last (1)**

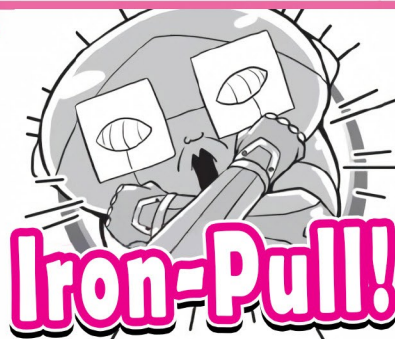
All-last. You are currently in first place and have a hand with a Dora ankou. However, the dealer, who is in dead last, called an early Riichi. What do you discard?



A 069 The Safest Tile

When you are in first place in the all-last, the point value of your hand does not matter. The only thing that matters is whether you win or not. If we ignore the Dora ankou, this hand has two remaining kanchan waits and no Yaku. The other three players are all hoping that the top player deals into the last-place dealer and falls from grace. Do not grant them that wish. Discard your safest tile. If you have nothing else, drop the Dora ankou one by one.

The ability to make this kind of detached judgment instantly is what defines true push-pull skill.



Push-Pull Rule

069

The top player's job is to watch the spectacle from safe high ground.

Lesson
19**What are Techniques Other Than Winning Hands?****Mahjong is not a game about winning hands**

Mahjong is a game about winning hands. However, those who simply believe it is merely that will not be able to reach the level of an advanced player.

So, how should you think about it? Mahjong is a game about taking higher placements. Winning a hand is merely one means to that end. Once you have established yourself in first place, you don't even need to win hands yourself; as long as the round develops in a way that is convenient for you, that is enough.

“Even if you tell me that, I can't think about complex things like assisting other players or making sashikomi (making intentional deal-ins on purpose)!” some might say. It doesn't have to be that complicated. This is because people in lower placements have no choice but to try and increase their own point sticks, as otherwise there is no meaning for them. Therefore, they have no choice but to rush towards a win like a work-horse.

Skill is revealed in the "First Place Maintenance Rate"

Therefore, it is the player in first place who has the most room to utilize various techniques. Please look at the themes of each problem

in this chapter. Most of them are about being in first place. Specifically, problems involving being in first place during the South round or all-last are numerous.

The more the game progresses into the second half, the more room there is for techniques other than winning, and a clear difference in results appears based on how skillfully or clumsily one handles them. Reaching first place involves luck, but maintaining first place is where true skill is revealed.

Players from a free-play parlor background tend to be good at winning, but not so great at folding and often have a tendency to never even think about techniques outside of winning. This is because they play under rulesets like "shuugi" (side payments) where the win itself has inherent value.

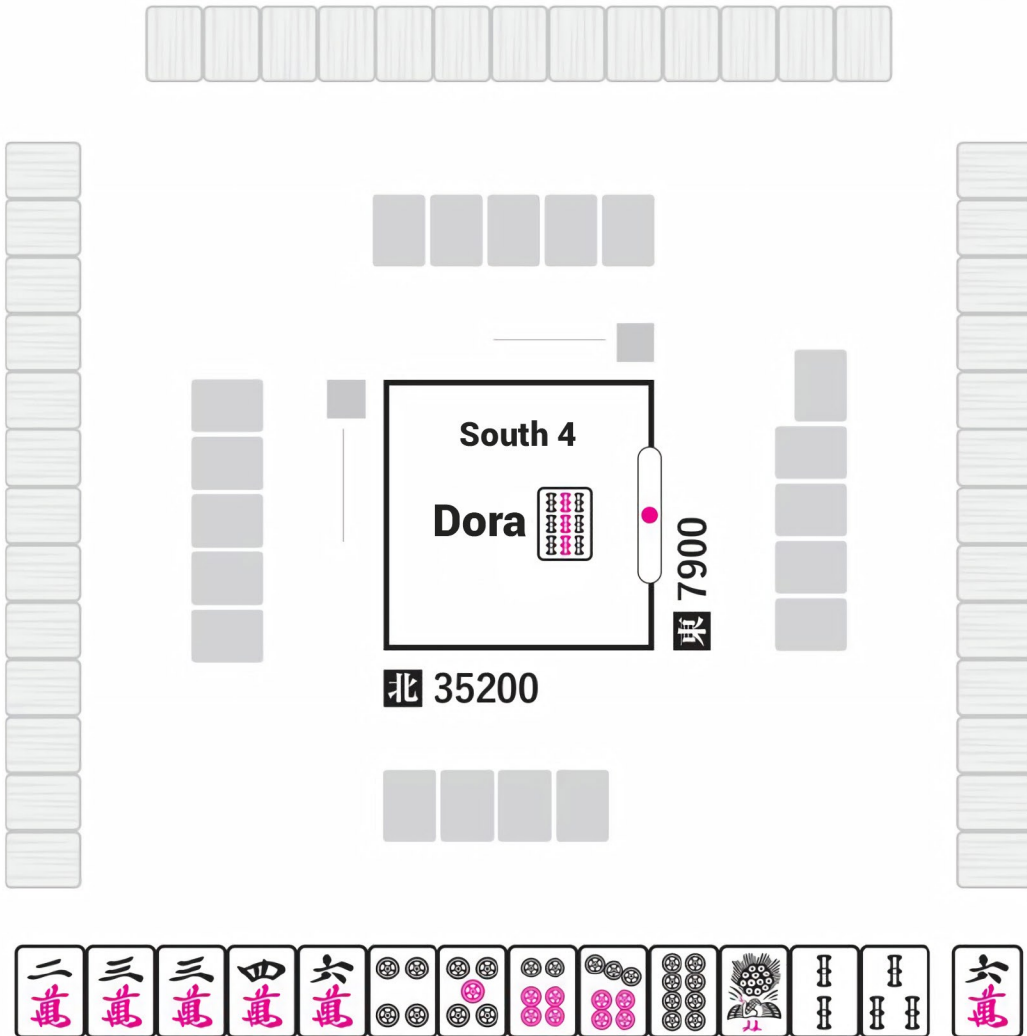
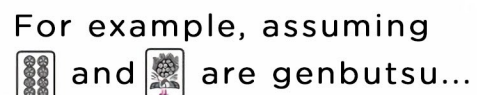
For those types of players, there is a great deal of room for growth. Please try opening the door to a way of playing that is conscious of placement. A whole new world of Mahjong will surely open up for you.

Push-Pull Rule so far

069 **The top player's job is to watch the spectacle from safe high ground.**

Q Top Place in All-Last (2)
070

Turn 5 of all-last. On the same turn the last-place dealer calls Riichi, you also reach tenpai. The tile you need to discard is dangerous, but what do you do?

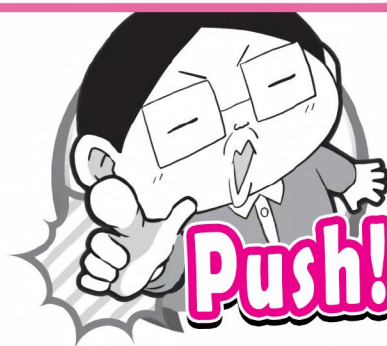


A Discard

070

In this situation, you definitely don't want to deal in. However, with this wait, the probability of winning is high. If you feel you can win on your own power, you should aim to solidify your first-place rank even if it means taking some risks. If you don't solidify your win when you have the chance, you never know what will happen later. Even if this ends in a deal-in, do not let your spirit break. Note that you should stay in dama to avoid unnecessary risk.

If you manage to win a hand like this, the dealer who called Riichi will feel an overwhelming sense of helplessness.



Push-Pull Rule

070

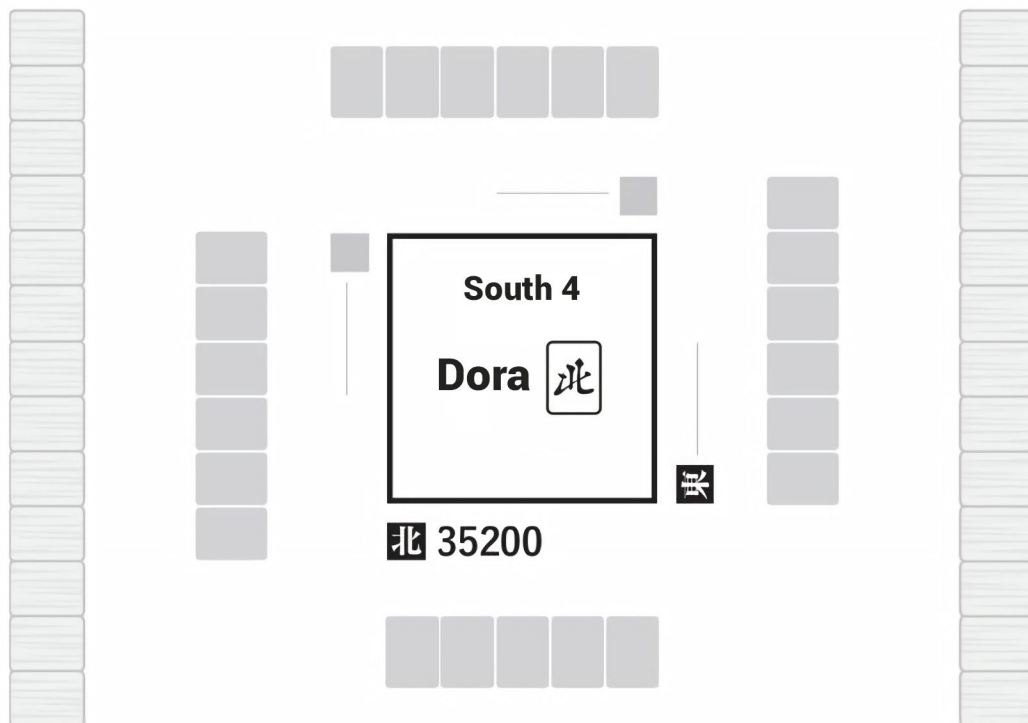
If your hand has a good wait early on, pick a fight even if you are in first place.

Q 071 Top Place in All-Last (3)

You reach tenpai for a nomi-hand with a ryanmen wait. Do you call Riichi?



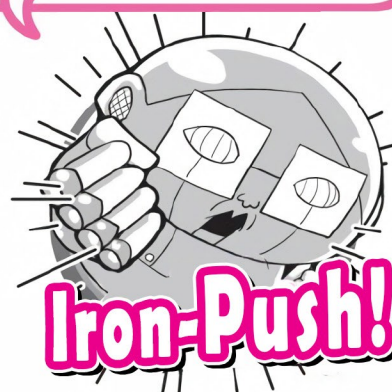
When I'm in first place, I'd rather not call Riichi, but...



A 071 Riichi

If you already had a yaku, you would stay in dama, but for a hand with no Yaku and a ryanmen wait, call an immediate Riichi. A headstart ryanmen Riichi is even stronger than you might expect. Even if you are in first place and hesitant to call Riichi, an immediate Riichi on a headstart ryanmen is the correct answer.

Even in the all-last as the top player, a ryanmen wait is justice.



Push-Pull Rule

071

**Winning the hand yourself
is the strongest way to end
the round.**

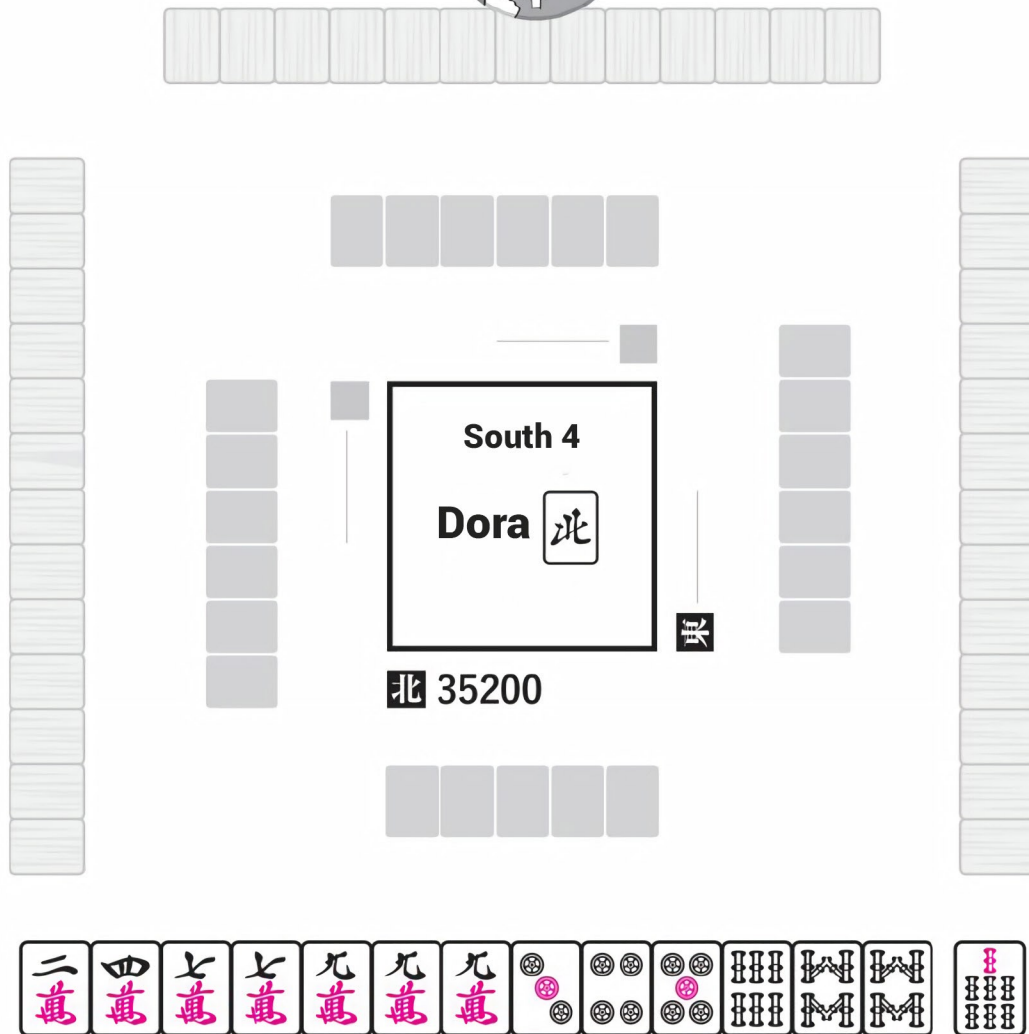
Q
072

Top Place in All-Last (4)

You reach tenpai with a nomi-hand kanchan wait. Do you call Riichi?

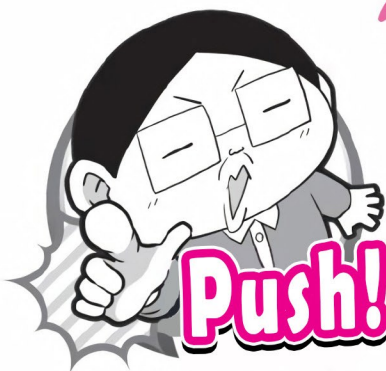


It's hard to call Riichi with a kanchan, but...



A 072 Riichi

Even with a kanchan, calling immediate Riichi is basically the correct answer. Between staying in dama with no yaku or calling Riichi even on a somewhat painful wait, the probability of ending the round still in first place is higher if you call Riichi. However, it is a risky choice, so there are situations where you should stay in dama to prioritize risk avoidance, such as when the point lead between first and last place is small.



In a point situation where you might drop two or more placements depending on how the round develops, it depends on the wait.

Push-Pull Rule

072

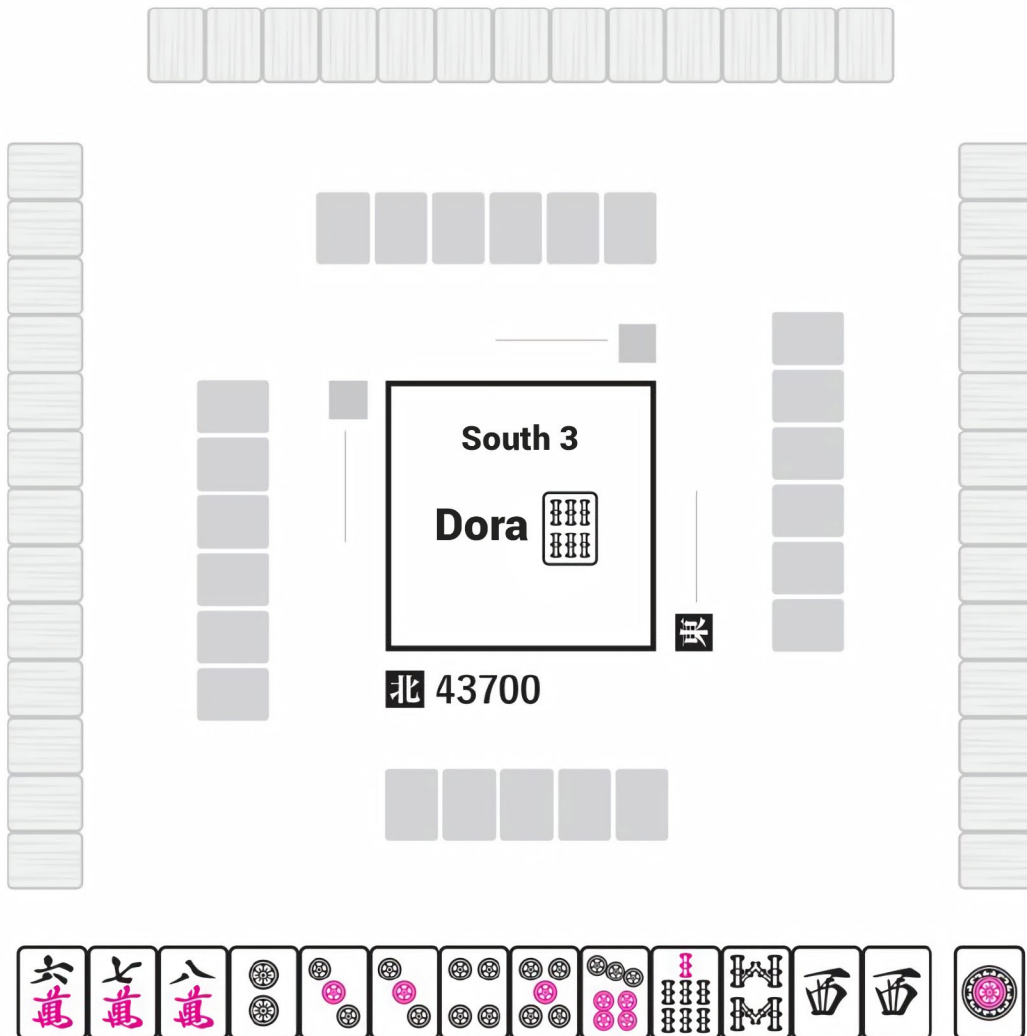
Even with a no-yaku kanchan wait, calling Riichi yields a higher rate of securing the win.

Q073 Top Place in South Round (1)

You have a significant lead as the top player in the South round. You reached tenpai with a Pinfu hand waiting on a dora suji. Do you call Riichi?



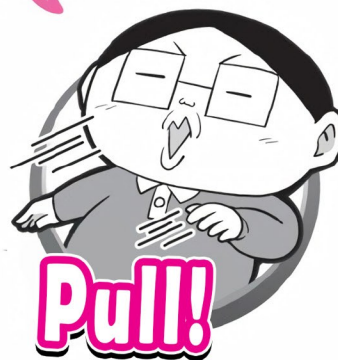
Aggressive or cautious?
Both policies are viable,



A 073 Dama

A top player in the East round aims to rack up as many points as possible. A top player in the South round aims to "end" the remaining rounds. The objectives are different. While you could call Riichi intending to tsumo a Dora in the East round, in South Round 3 with a comfortable lead, you should prioritize ending the round. Since winning tiles are harder to get on a Dora suji wait, you should stay in dama to maximize your win probability.

Whether you have the concept of "ending the round" makes a huge difference.



Push-Pull Rule

073

The job of the first-place player in the South round is to end the remaining rounds.

**Lesson
20****Adopt the Perspective of
Ending the Round**

**In the East round everyone is a commoner,
the South round is a class struggle.**

In the East round, your job is to earn as many points as possible. Whether you are in first place or last, everyone tries to accumulate points and participate aggressively in head-to-head drawing battles. There is no difference in status.

The South round is different. Leaders aim to protect their lead. Trying to widen the lead further creates risk, and if that risk is too great, they should simply advance the round without taking it. If the top player can advance one round while keeping their lead, that round is effectively a victory.

Conversely, those in lower placements lose if they advance a round uselessly. Even with a hand that can win for 1,000 points, advancing the round with such a cheap win just makes your own position worse. It's better to let the dealer repeat their turn rather than letting the number of remaining rounds decrease.

The side aiming for revolution vs. the side trying to block it

The South round is a battle between those trying to advance the rounds and those waiting for big-value hands while trying to stop the rounds from advancing.

Your true skill is revealed in whether you can identify this perspective. If a top-place player recklessly aims for an expensive hand, or a last-place player wins a cheap hand effortlessly, they are acting like a clueless amateur. Pursuing objectives that match your current placement once you reach the South round is the very crux of high-level Mahjong.

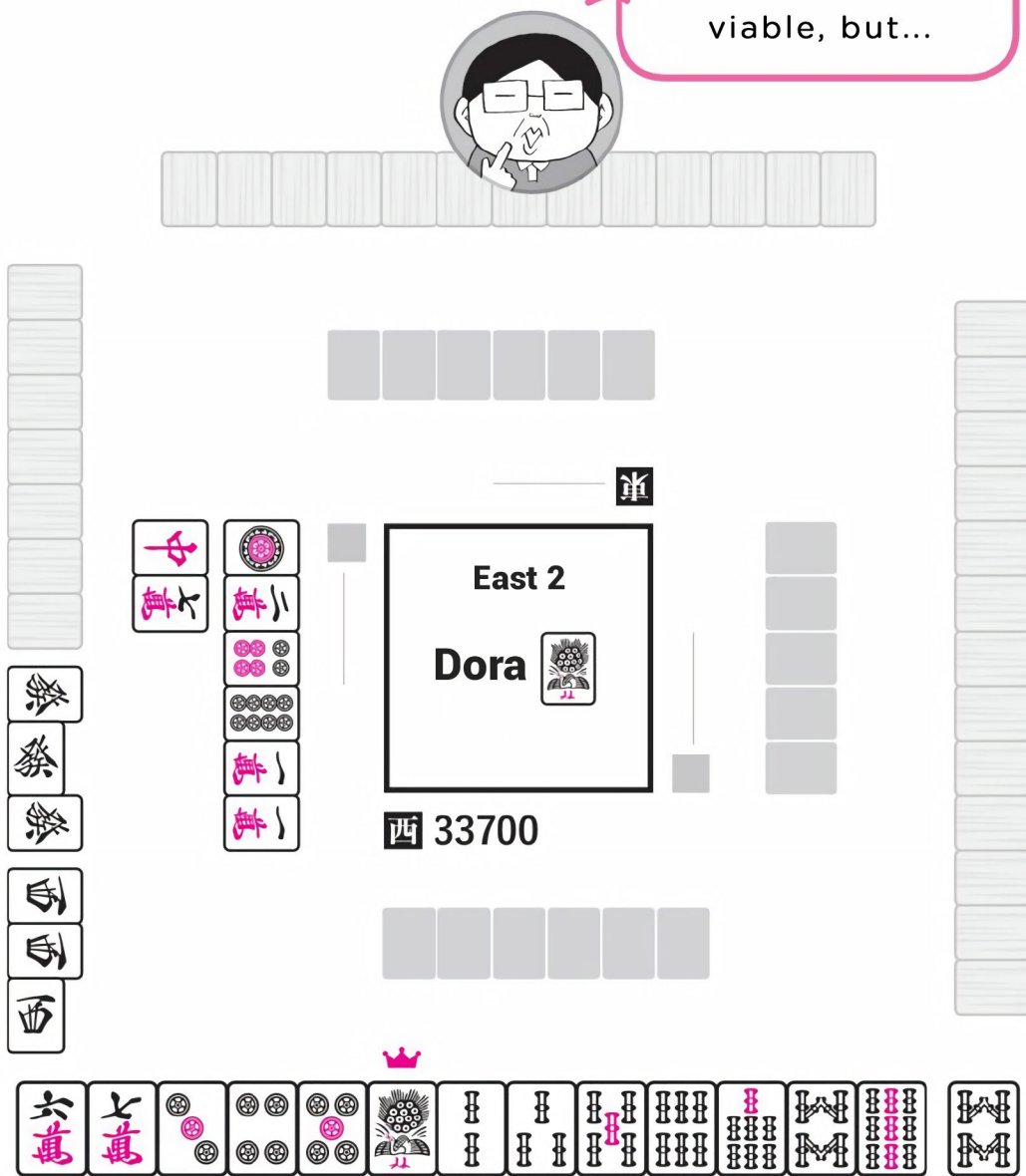
Push-Pull Rule so far

- 070 If your hand is fast and has a good wait, pick a fight even if you are in first place.
- 071 Winning the hand yourself is the strongest way to end the round.
- 072 Even with a no-Yaku Kanchan wait, calling Riichi yields a higher rate of securing the win.
- 073 The job of the first-place player in the South round is to end the remaining rounds.

Q074 Top place in the East round (1)

The Honitsu from the player to your left is reaching maturity, and you reach tenpai with a different suit. A dama would make it easier to win, but do you call Riichi?

Either choice is viable, but...



A 074 Riichi

The kamicha's suit is hard to come by on the board. This means other suits are easier to come out → dama advantage. Conversely, the kamicha will discard suits they don't need anyway → Riichi advantage. Both logics hold up. Riichi-Pinfu-Dora 1 is one of the most efficient hands for calling Riichi. Here, we follow the "golden theory" that Pinfu Dora 1 is a Riichi. With this level of point lead in the East round, you shouldn't go into a defensive shell.



Trying to just "end the round" with this many point sticks is being far too timid.

Push-Pull Rule

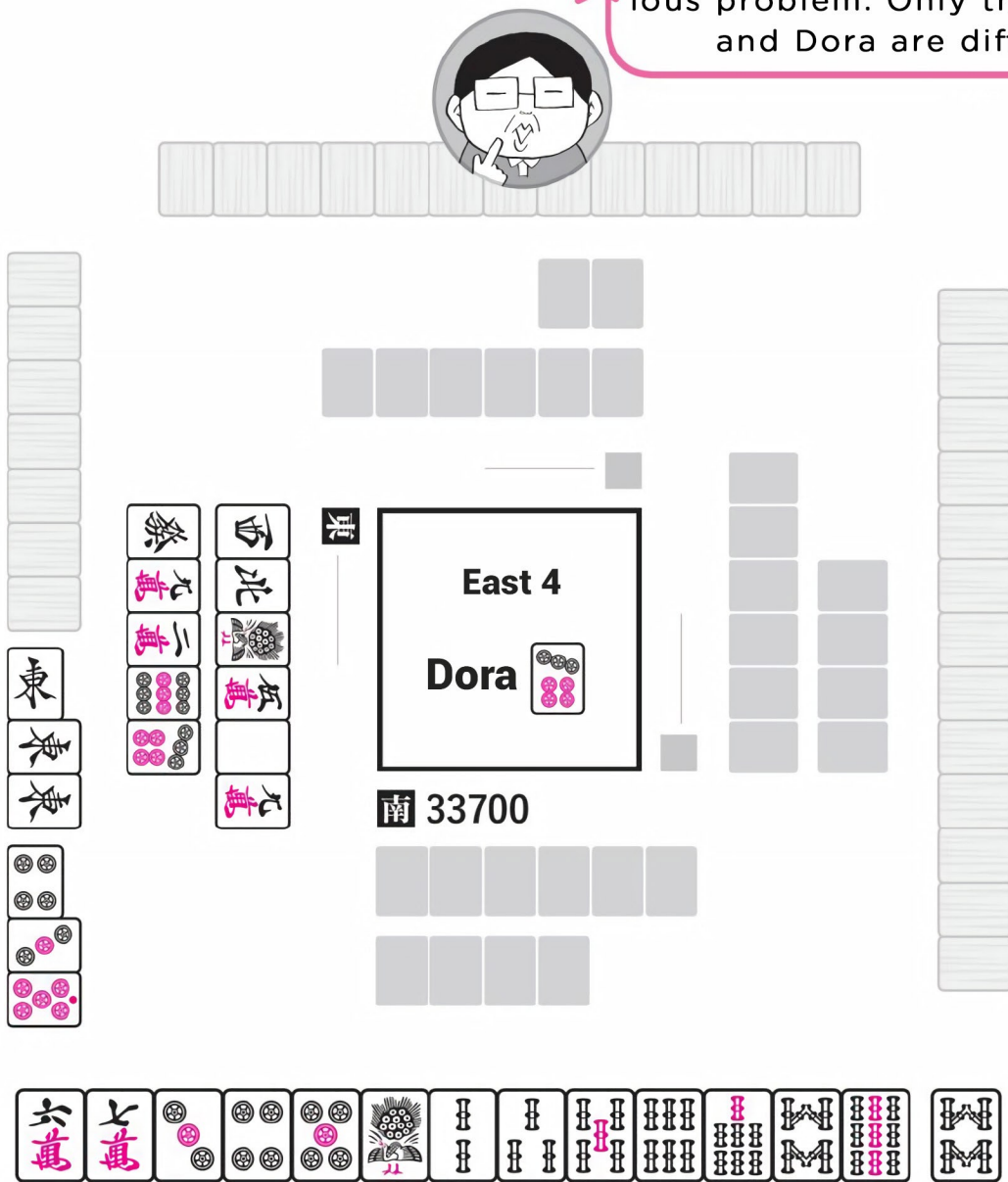
074

Do not go into a defensive shell just because you are in first place during the East round.

Q Top place in the East round (2)
075

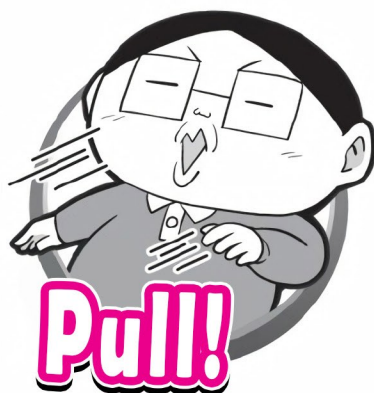
The dealer to your left shows signs of a maturing hand with Double East and Dora 1. You reached tenpai with a genbutsu wait. Do you call Riichi?

Hand is the same as the previous problem. Only the situation and Dora are different.



A 075 Dama

With Pinfu only, the effectiveness of Riichi is one step short. Furthermore, since the maturing dealer's discards lack middle tiles, other players have few safe tiles to discard, making dama much easier to win with. Here, prioritizing kicking the dealer's hand is more important than racking up points. Just because it's the East round doesn't mean you should take on every fight.



If you stay in dama, and end up winning on  on your next draw on what would have been ippatsu, it's important not to let that bother you. Reality will often betray you like that.

Push-Pull Rule

075

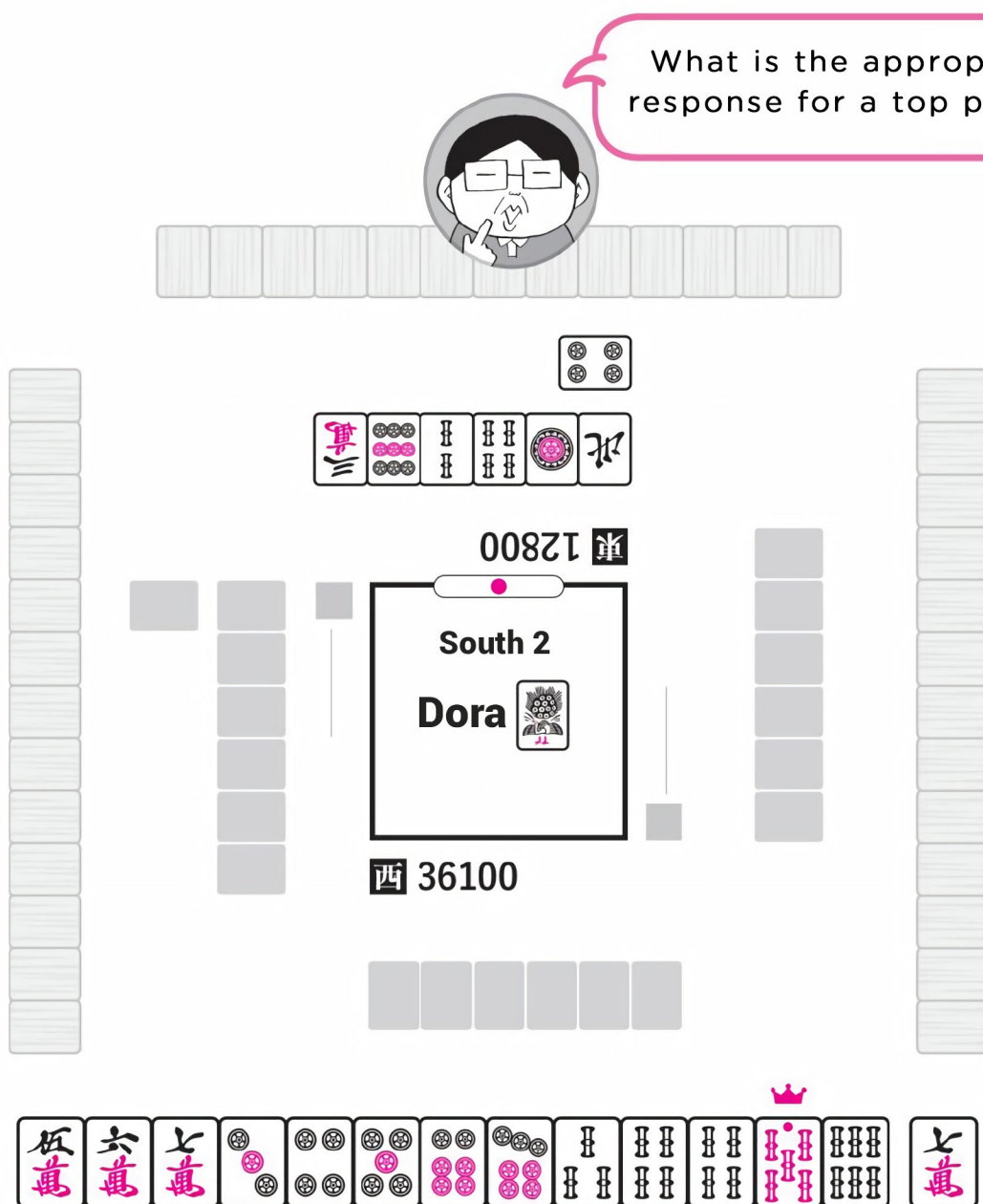
As the top player in the last round of the East, cautiously end the round.

Q
076

Top place in the South round (2)

An ideal 1-shanten for Tan-Pin-Sanshoku. However, at the same moment the dealer across calls Riichi, you draw a dangerous tile. Do you pick a fight?

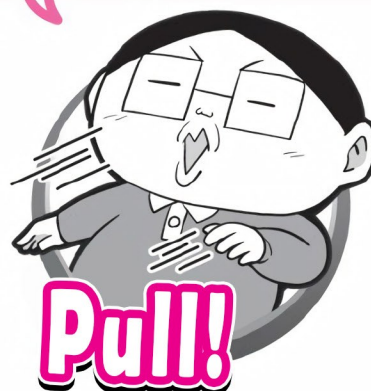
What is the appropriate response for a top player?



A 076 Do not pick a fight

For a player in first place, winning a big-value hand and dealing in are not of equal value. The loss from dealing in is far greater. If you were in tenpai, taking them on would be an option, but dealing in from 1-shanten is "sweeter than Japanese chestnut roll cake". Here, discard  and search for a way to win without overreaching. If that seems impossible, just go to beta-ori (full fold).

This is the kind of thinking you want to be able to do naturally.



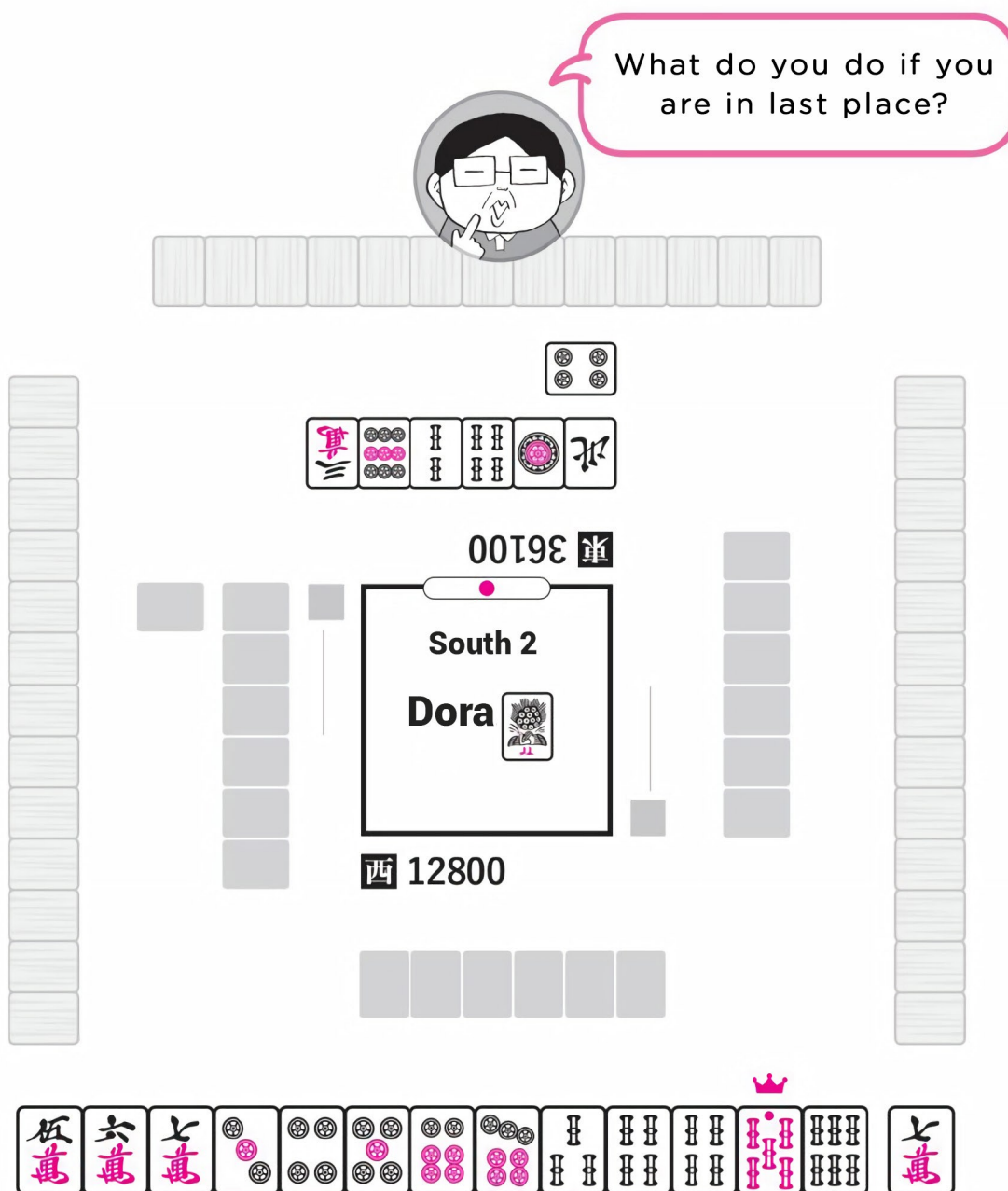
Push-Pull Rule

076

The top player in the South round should not pick a reckless fight.

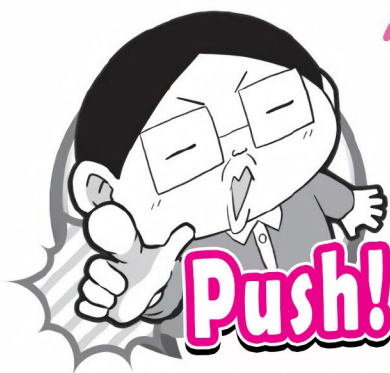
Q 077 Last place in the South round (1)

Same hand and same situation as the previous problem. The only difference is your point sticks—you are in last place. Do you take them on?



A 077 Either way

It's already South 3. Since you are in last place, folding is not an option. However, discarding  to take a detour is still a viable chance hand. The choice between pushing and detouring is roughly balanced. If this were a hand that could not afford a detour, you would push.



It is a fact that this is a disadvantageous showdown. If you feel there are still better spots to fight ahead, detouring is an option.

Push-Pull Rule

077

When in last place, commit to the hand until the end if it's a chance hand.

**Lesson
21****The Balance of What is
Gained and What is Lost****The top player's job is status maintenance**

For the player in top placement, there is no higher "up." There is no 0th place above 1st. Currently, if you are the top player and you win a Haneman, you are simply stacking 12,000 points on top of your lead.

However, if you deal into a Haneman, you don't just lose 12,000 points; you also lose your placement points. The value of this loss changes depending on the rules, but in a ruleset like M-League, dropping from 1st to 2nd placement results in a loss of 40,000 points. Therefore, the top player in the South round cannot discard aggressive tiles against a Riichi. This is because the risk and reward (return) do not balance each other out. A head-to-head drawing battle is something that should be avoided if it is at all possible to avoid it.

The last-place player has no choice but to push

Last place is different. Even if you deal into a Haneman, you "only" lose 12,000 points. But if you can win a Haneman, you might be able to climb to 2nd or 3rd placement. Under M-League rules, reaching 3rd place nets you 20,000 points, and reaching 2nd place nets you 40,000 points.

This is a much larger gain than the simple point value of the hand from the top player's perspective. Because of these differences in situational status, the tiles you choose to discard will change between being the top player and being in last place, even when holding the exact same hand.

However, Mahjong tiles are heartless. No matter how much you want to win, it has no relation to the result. Even so, the expert understands the position they have been placed in, while simultaneously performing their judgment calmly. First comes the hand, and then comes the situation.

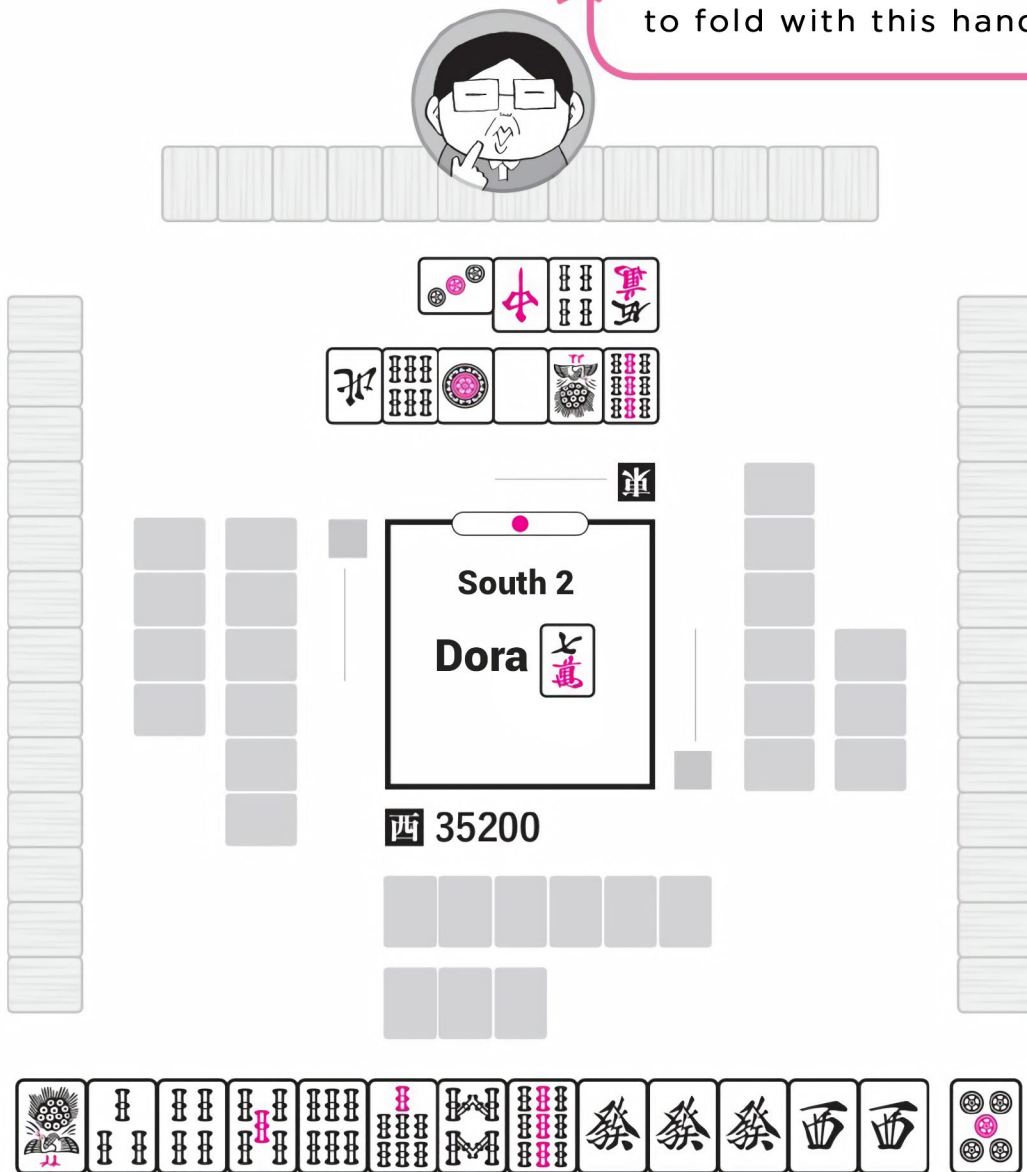
Push-Pull Rule so far

- 074 Do not go into a defensive shell just because you are in first place during the East round.
- 075 As the top player in the last round of the East, cautiously end the round.
- 076 The top player in the South round should not pick a reckless fight.
- 077 When in last place, commit to the hand until the end if it's a chance hand.

Q078 Monster Hand in first place during the South round

You were secretly in tenpai for a Men-Hon Ittsu when the dealer called Riichi. You draw a dangerous tile on their ippatsu turn. Do you pick a fight?

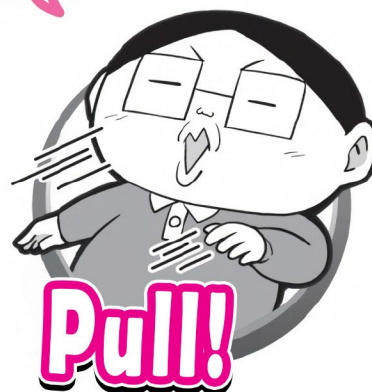
Is there even an option
to fold with this hand?



A 078 Do not pick a fight

It takes courage to fold with a hand this good. However, if you set aside the hand value for a moment, it is a clear loss to enter a head-to-head drawing battle with a kanchan wait against a dealer Riichi. If you can discard the  to find a path for a later recovery, do so; if that's impossible, just discard honor tiles and fold.

Honestly, if you can fold a hand of this class without hesitation, it's quite an impressive feat.



Push-Pull Rule

078

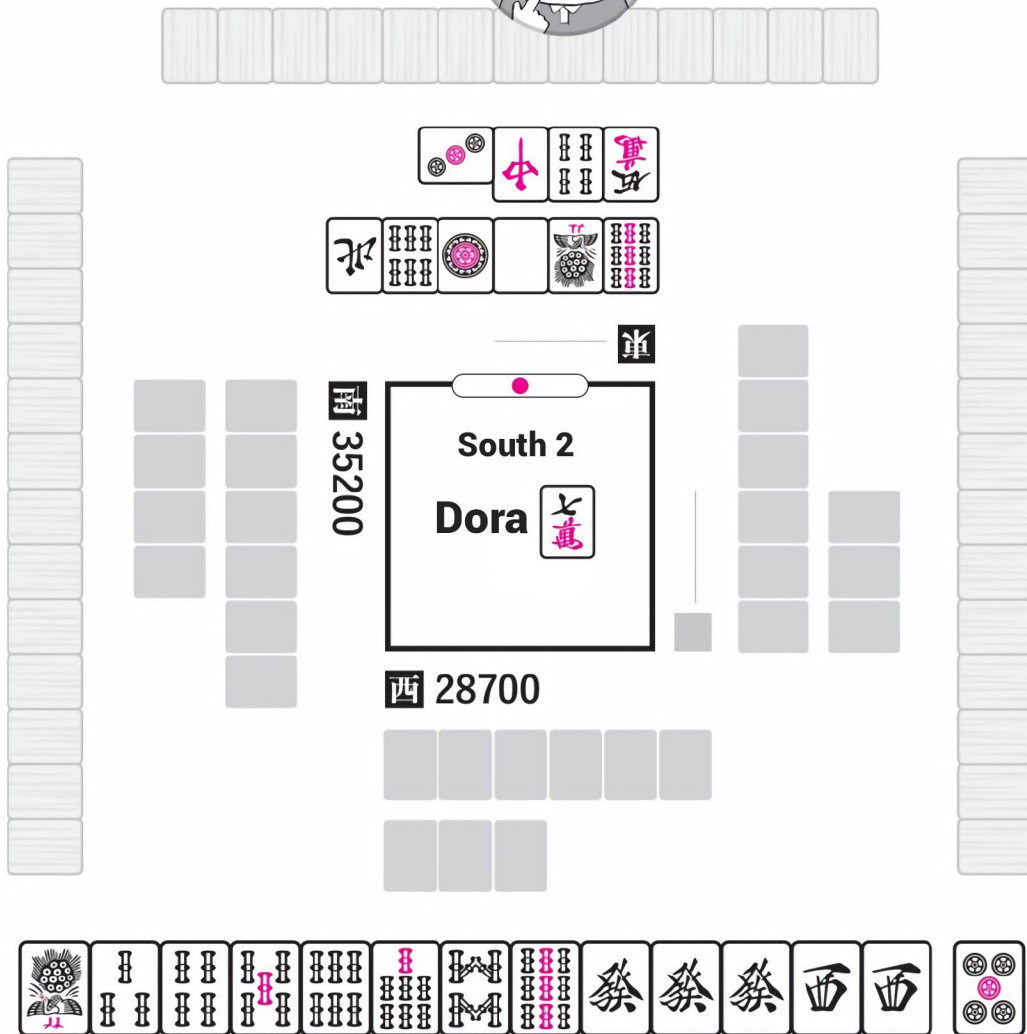
**For the player in first place,
wait quality is more important
than hand value.**

Q 079 Monster Hand in second place during the South round

The hand and the situation are the same as the previous problem. The only difference is your point sticks—you are currently in second placement. Do you take them on?

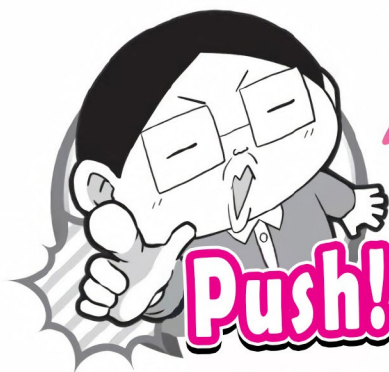


What do you do when you're in second place?



A 079 Pick a fight

The meaning of this hand changes entirely between being in first place versus second. For the top player, it's just about status maintenance. For the second-place player, it's a chance for a comeback. While a deal-in could potentially drop you to last place, when you have a hand this strong, it is only natural to bet on it and pick a fight. Push with a tsumogiri. However, you should stay in dama because calling a chase Riichi would likely scare the other players into not discarding your Souzu winning tiles. If you draw tiles like  or  that increase your winning tiles, you can then discard the Ittsu to expand your wait.



With a hand like this, pushing is just a given, isn't it?

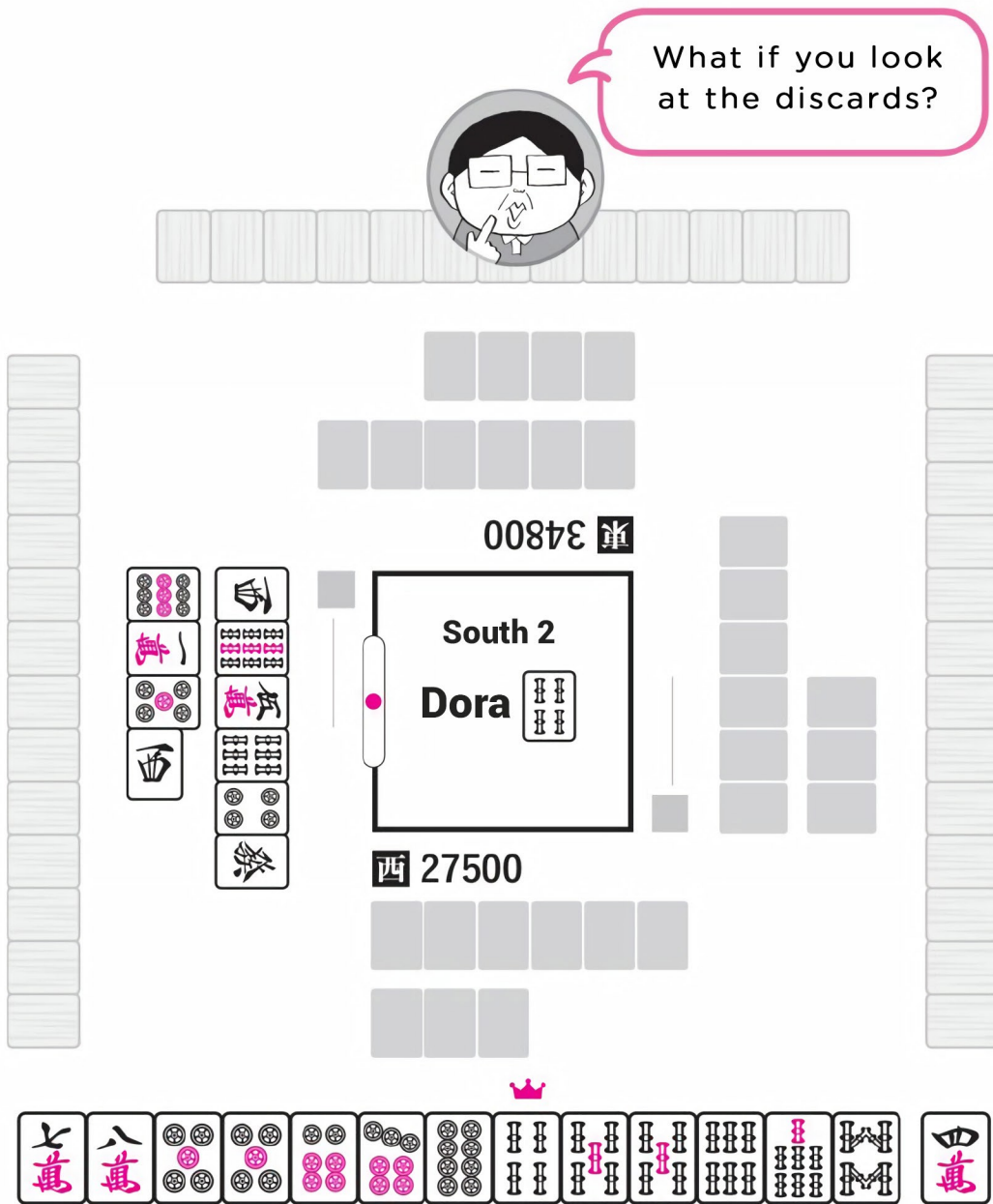
Push-Pull Rule

079

The second-place player should pick a fight with hunger.

Q South round, second place
080

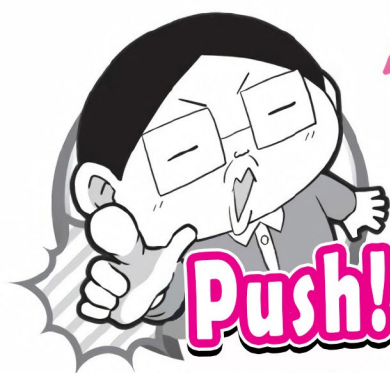
You've reached 1-shanten for a 6-7-8 Sanshoku when a Riichi comes from your kamicha. Do you risk the  you just drew on their ippatsu turn?



A Pick a fight

080

You shouldn't go for a full zentsu (pushing everything), but you should push to a certain extent. When a  is discarded early, the dangerous tiles are  , or  . Since the  has already passed, it's okay to take them on with the . If they happen to be waiting on  , just consider it bad luck. Even if you draw the takame  later, don't discard the , discard the  instead. Push on a borderline.



If you have a hand where a Mangan is visible, it's important to be tenacious and hold on until the very last second.

Push-Pull Rule

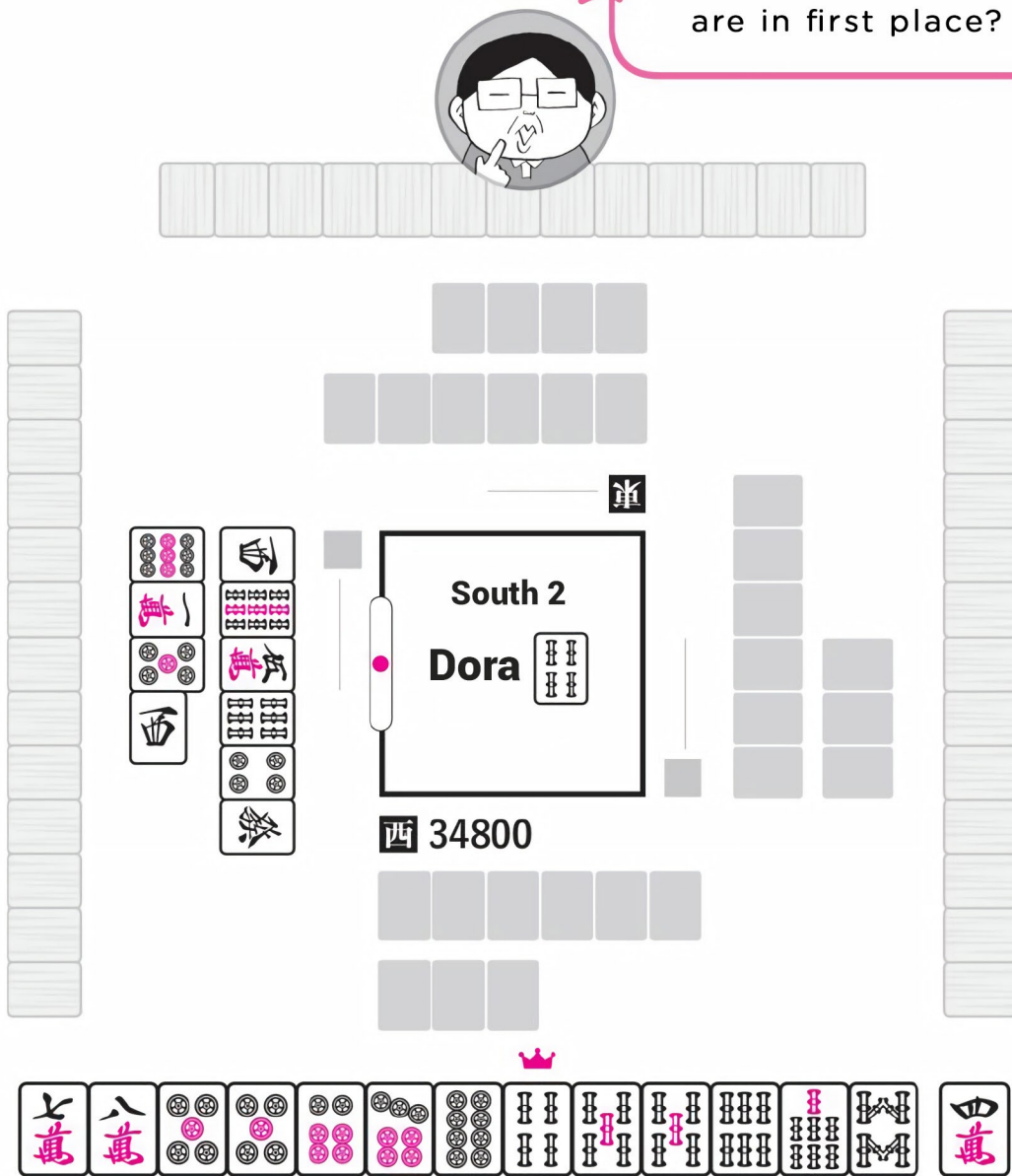
080

In second place, don't go for a head-on collision, but don't throw away the win either.

Q081 Top Place in South Round (3)

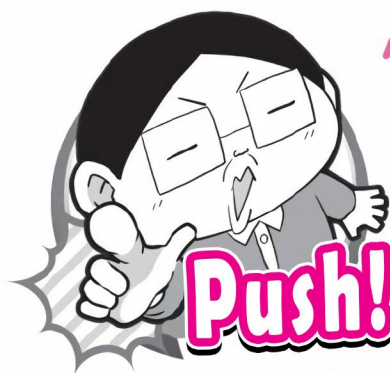
The hand and the situation are the same as the previous problem. The only difference is your point sticks—you are in first place. Do you take them on?

What about when you
are in first place?



A 081 Pick a fight

Even in first place, you should pick a fight with a tile of this level. It's a mistake to rely too much on sideways point transfers (one dealing-in to another). The most reliable way to protect your lead is by winning the hand yourself. However, even if you reach tenpai, given this score situation, you don't want to commit to a drawing battle via Riichi. Stick to dama or calling.



Pushing a musuji of this level is actually quite important.

Push-Pull Rule

081

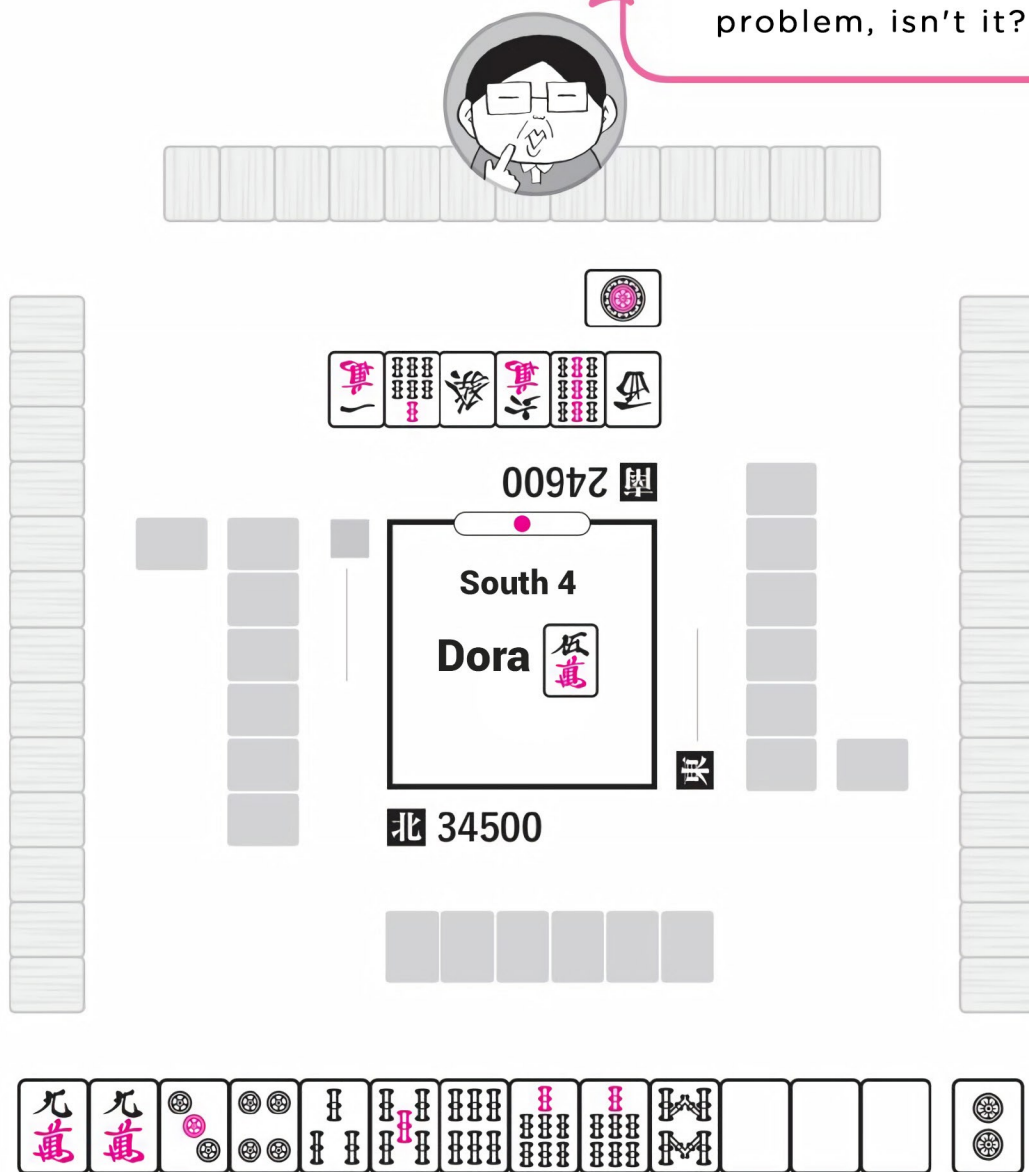
**Do not enter a defensive shell
even if you are in first place.**

Q Top Place in All-Last (5)

082

A Riichi has come from the second place player, who is within a Mangan Tsumo gap. On the same turn, you also reach tenpai. Do you discard the genbutsu , or do you pick a fight?

This is quite a detailed problem, isn't it?

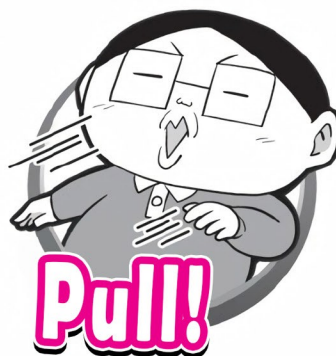


A Discard

082



Clearing a Mangan Tsumo condition is difficult, so the opponent is likely banking on ippatsu, Dora, or the Tsumo itself. What's especially scary is a 5,200-point direct hit with ippatsu, which would result in an immediate overtake. Here, you must prioritize avoiding a direct hit over winning the hand. For now, take the tenpai with a kanchan on . While taking them on with a "one-chance" later might be okay, you must avoid challenging with the . Depending on the board, you might even discard the and fold. Let the dealer win if they have to and move to the next round.



Unless you deal in, there are many cases where they simply cannot overtake you.

Push-Pull Rule

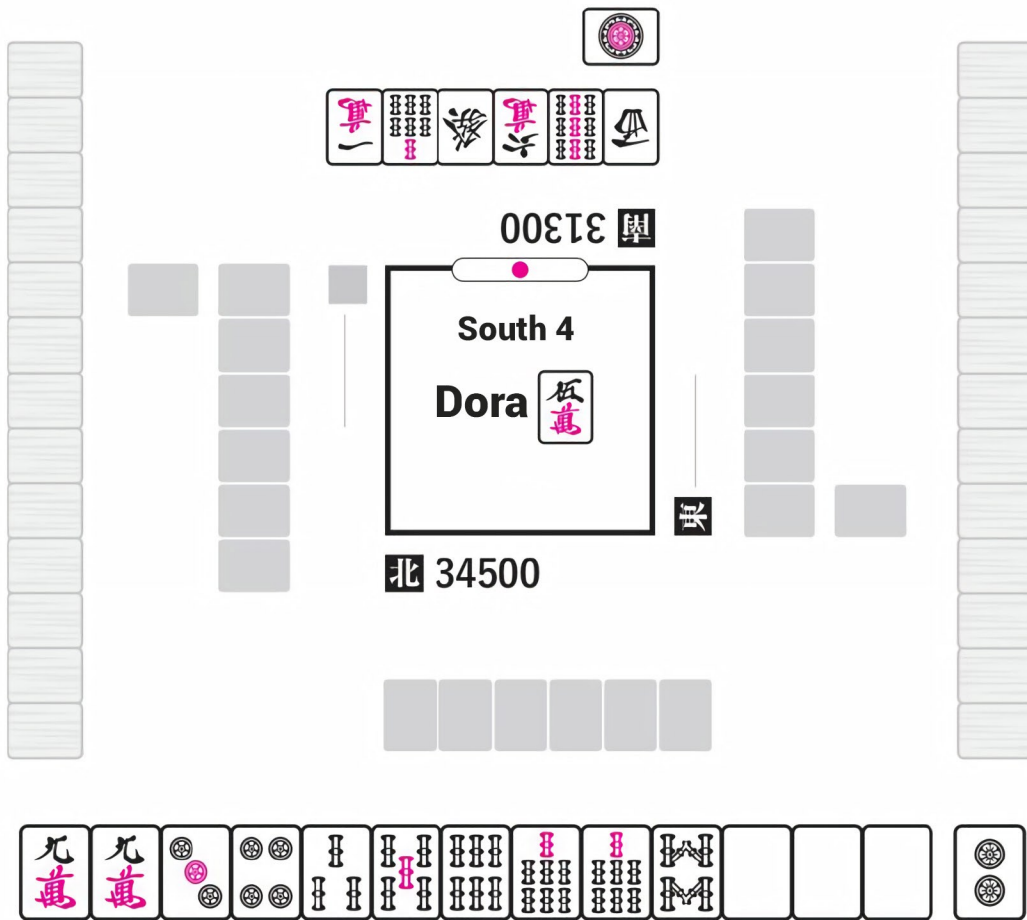
082

Avoid a direct hit from an opponent who is in Mangan Tsumo range.

Q083 Top place in All-Last (6)

The situation is the same as the previous problem, but the score difference is different. With a Riichi from 2nd place, what do you discard?

Your response changes
depending on the point gap
with the 2nd place player.

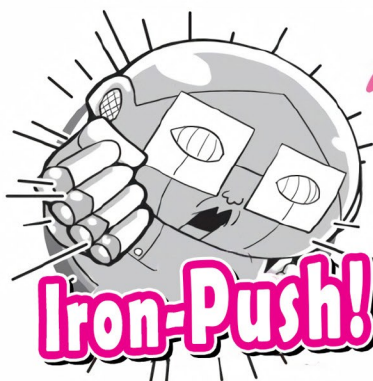


A Discard

083



A 2,200-point lead (before the Riichi stick is out) means that if the opponent wins the hand, you must assume a reversal in placement. Therefore, you have no choice but to push toward a win, even if you have to take on some risk. The  is dangerous, but discarding a safe genbutsu like  here only lowers your own win probability (especially since there are plenty of other unpassed musuji). Also, even if this is a 1-on-1 showdown with 2nd place, you should avoid putting out your own Riichi stick. If the round ends in a draw or the dealer wins, it will change the condition for the next round.



If you play a weak-kneed Mahjong in this situation, you'll look incredibly fragile.

Push-Pull Rule

083

When the lead is slim, your only option is to win the hand.

**Lesson
22****Fighting Based on
Point Differences****Check the point difference before
entering a head-to-head drawing battle**

Imagine you were in a massive lead in the all-last. A Riichi comes in from 2nd, and since you too had a wonderful hand, you pick a fight and deal into their Mangan. When you check the scores afterward, you realize you lost the top placement by just 100 points. Haven't you had an experience like that?

A deal-in to a Mangan changes the score gap by 16,000 points. If you were up by 15,900 points and get too attached to your own hand, you will lose that lead.

What if you were up by 17,900? Dealing into that Mangan would be okay, but if you put out a Riichi stick and then deal into a Mangan that creates a 18,000 points point swing.

Situations where dealing in is not a loss

Imagine you are in first place. If a Riichi comes from 3rd or 4th place and the gap is large enough that a deal-in wouldn't change your placement, then by calling Riichi, whether you win the hand or deal in, you still finish the round in the lead. And then the Dealer has no

room to begin their fierce unending streak of Dealer repeats anymore. Cases such as this exists too.

The ability to adjust your policy according to the point difference is what ties directly into your results. This is the essence of all-last push-pull.

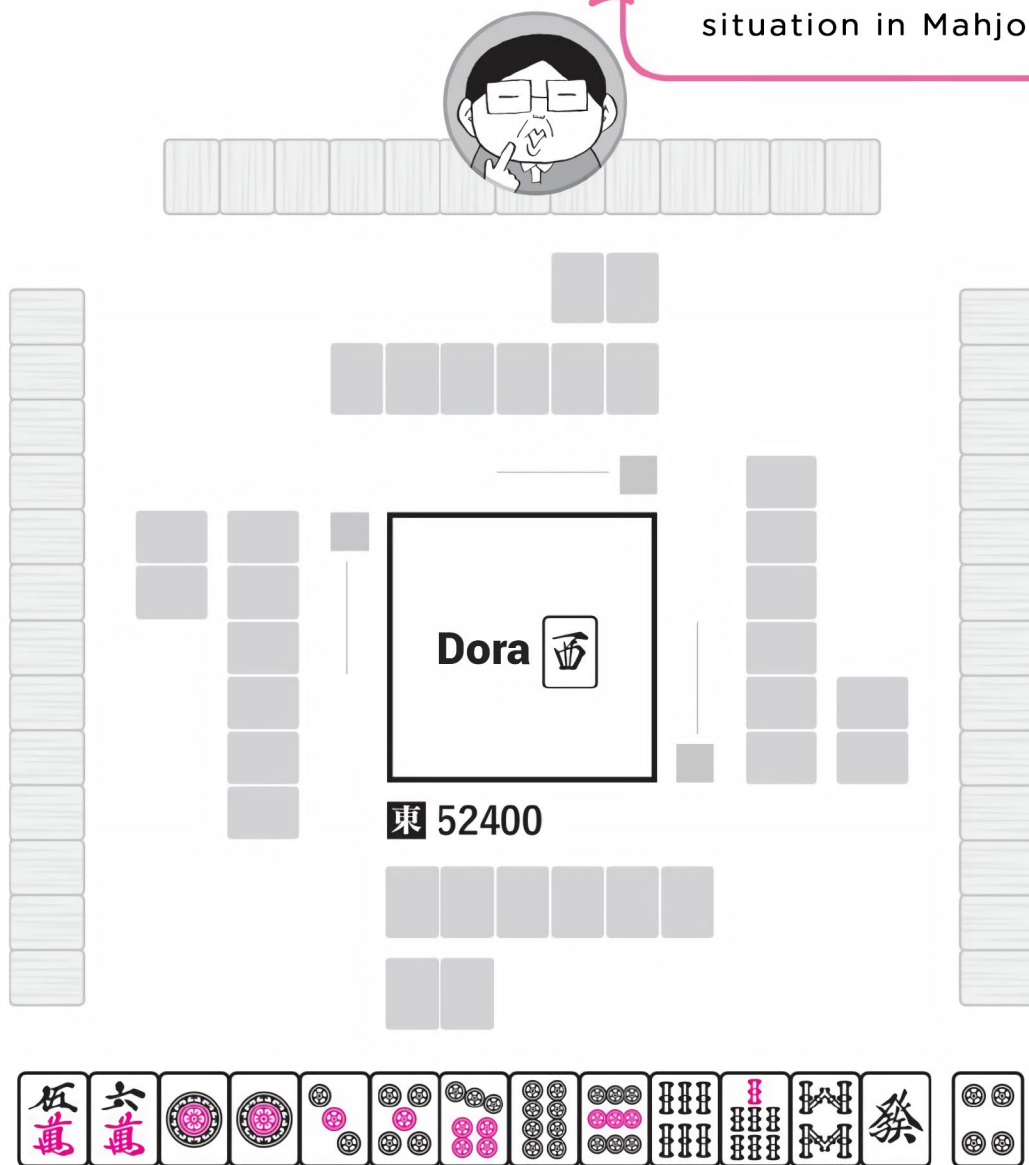
Push-Pull Rule so far

- 078 For the player in first place, wait quality is more important than hand value.
- 079 The second place player should pick a fight with hunger.
- 080 In second place, don't go for a head-on collision, but don't throw away the win either.
- 081 Do not enter a defensive shell even if you are in first place.
- 082 Avoid a direct hit from an opponent who is in Mangan Tsumo range.
- 083 When the lead is slim, your only option is to win the hand.

Q Dealer with Massive Lead 084

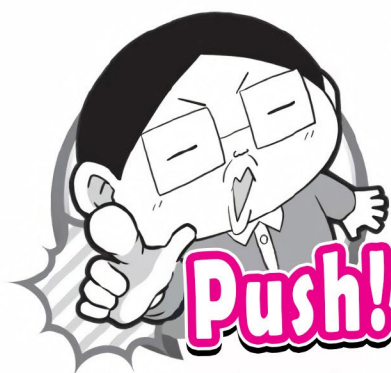
You are a dealer with a massive lead and don't seem to need any more points. You reach tenpai with Pinfu only. Do you call Riichi?

This is the most enjoyable situation in Mahjong.



A 084 Riichi

It is hard for opponents to oppose a Riichi from a dealer with a massive lead. There is a psychological reason (Flow Theory) but also a point-based reason: the three players in lower placements are already fighting among themselves, and it would be foolish for them to get injured by picking a fight with the massive lead. Therefore, a massive lead dealer's Riichi often becomes a "solo journey" (where everyone else folds). Take advantage of this situation and sweep up as many points as you can.



Use the fact that opponents find it hard to oppose you to your advantage in push-pull.

Push-Pull Rule

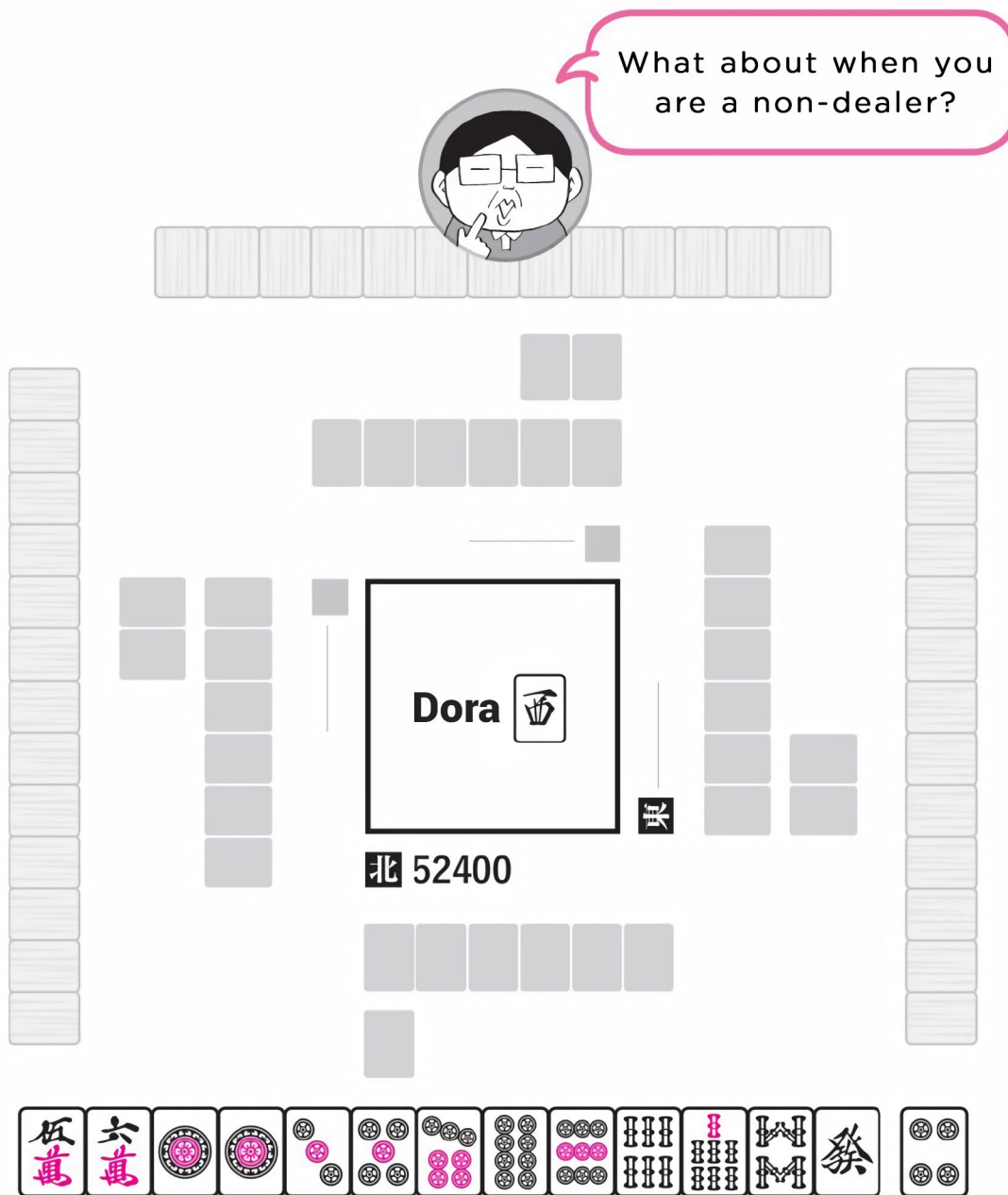
084

A massive lead dealer has a chance to sweep up points.

Q
085

Non-Dealer with Massive Lead

The situation is the same, but you are a non-dealer. Do you call Riichi?



A 085 Damaten Recommended

Once you have a massive lead, you should rack up points while you are the dealer, but focus on advancing the rounds once you are a non-dealer. While calling Riichi is fine in terms of point expectation (EV), it isn't strictly necessary. You want to avoid a 1-on-1 showdown with the dealer while the other two non-dealers have folded. For a hand like Riichi-Pinfu, it's safer to avoid the Riichi.

This area is all about the knack for advancing rounds.



Push-Pull Rule

085

When you have a massive lead, focus on advancing the rounds once you become a non-dealer.

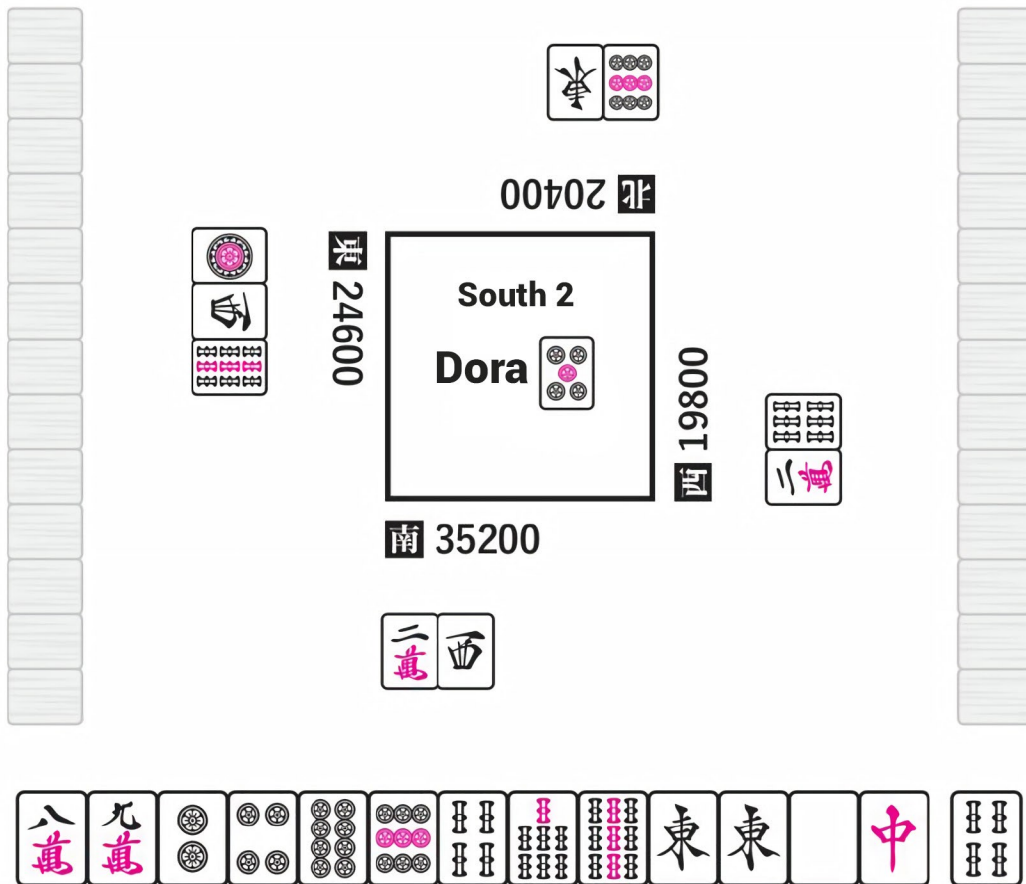
Q Top Place in South round (4)

086

It's still the early turns. You have a hand where you can aim for Sanshoku, but what policy do you take and what do you discard?



What is the policy befitting a top-place player?

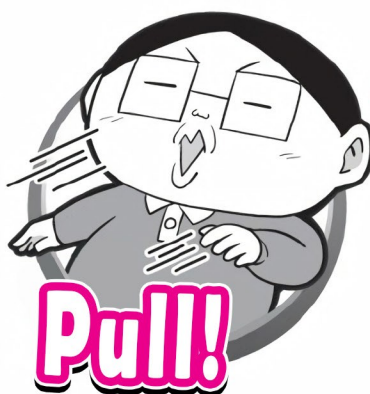


A Discard



The policy for this round is: ① Scoring extra points is not a priority. ② The most important thing is advancing the round. ③ You don't want to pick a fight.

Specifically, while you wouldn't want to miss a potential Sanshoku, there is no need to force it. Letting your shimocha chi your tiles is welcome, and you absolutely do not want to take on a Dealer Riichi. your shimocha might be going for a Pinzu Honitsu; if so, having them call on your or is ideal. This makes it harder for the Dealer to play and helps the round progress more easily.



Some people struggle with this mindset, but you can't rise above a certain skill level without mastering it.

Push-Pull Rule

086

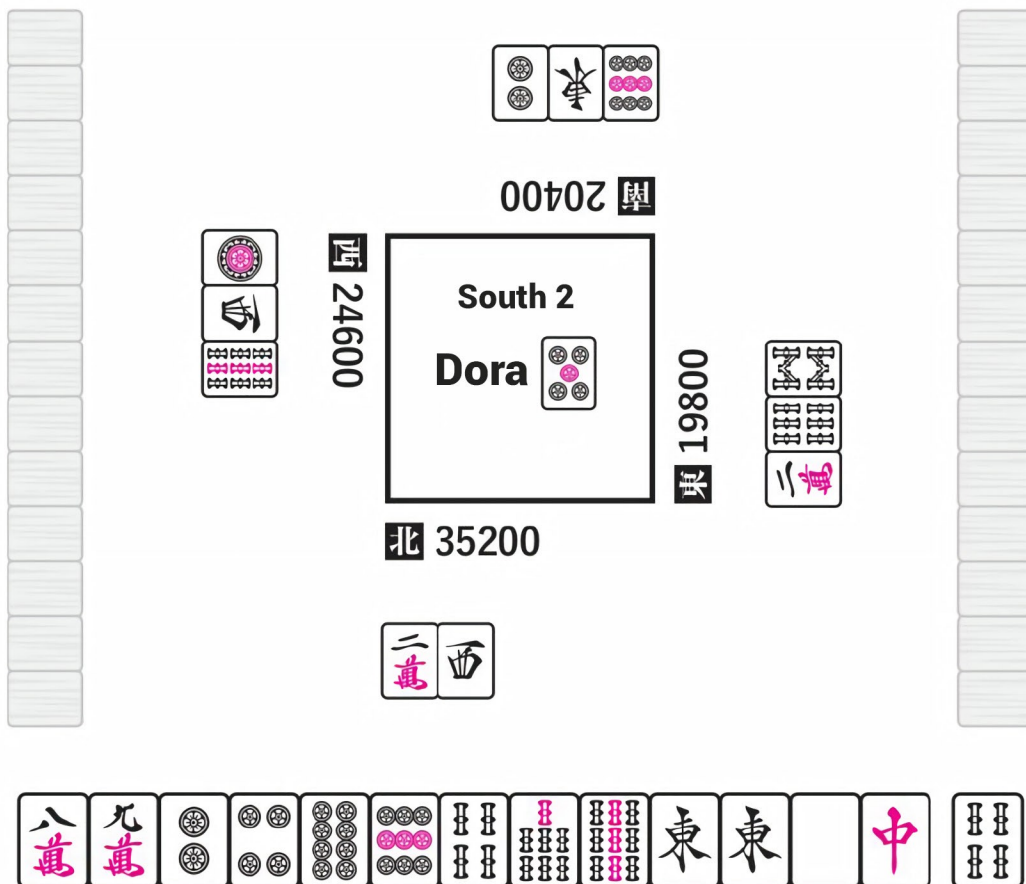
If you are in first place and your shimocha is a non-dealer, welcome their calls.

Q 087 Top Place in South Round (5)

The situation is the same as before, but only the dealer's position has changed. This time, your shimocha is the dealer. What do you discard?



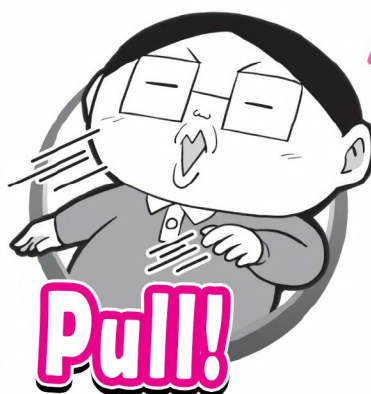
What if the dealer is your shimocha?



A Discard

087

If you are in first place and the player to your right is the dealer, recklessly discarding tiles while aiming for a low-probability Sanshoku is no use. Since your winning chances are low anyway, use the round-advancement technique of preventing the dealer from calling while letting your toimen or your kamicha win instead. The dealer might be going for a Pinzu Honitsu; if so, do not let them call even once. The Dora indicator  is likely a key tile. Play defensively by avoiding discarding honor tiles and begin by dropping your  pair.



This here is really fundamental so it's best if you could play like this naturally.

Push-Pull Rule

087

If you are in first place and your shimocha is the dealer, your job is to prevent them from calling.

Lesson
23

**The Top Player's Job is to
Prevent the Dealer From Calling**

Suppressing tiles against your shimocha is a vital technique

Modern players have a tendency to be lenient regarding the suppression of tiles (“shibori”). While “holding back tiles” was considered a vital tactic back in the day, it is often dismissed today. The mindset of “you should suppress Yakuhai early on” has largely disappeared, and I don't think it's something you need to pay attention to in real games to begin with. However, “not letting the dealer call” remains a crucial job for the player in first place. In the South round, your priority is to prevent the dealer from repeating their turn and continuing their streak.

Imagine a dealer in dead last desperately chasing a Honitsu. Then their kamicha carelessly fed them a Dora-indicator penchan, which led to the dealer eventually winning a 4,000-all.

This happens because their kamicha lacked strategic depth. Of course, they cannot know exactly which tiles an opponent needs, but feeding them tiles that clearly allow them to call and resolve their sub-optimal shapes is a mistake.

Conversely, when your shimocha is not the dealer, the player in first

place might intentionally let them call a difficult shape to help them win and “kick” the dealer.

This technique is often called “playing sweet to your shimocha,” and it is a common sight in expert-level matches. Honitsu hands have very clear vital points. Letting an opponent call those points makes it exponentially easier for them to win.

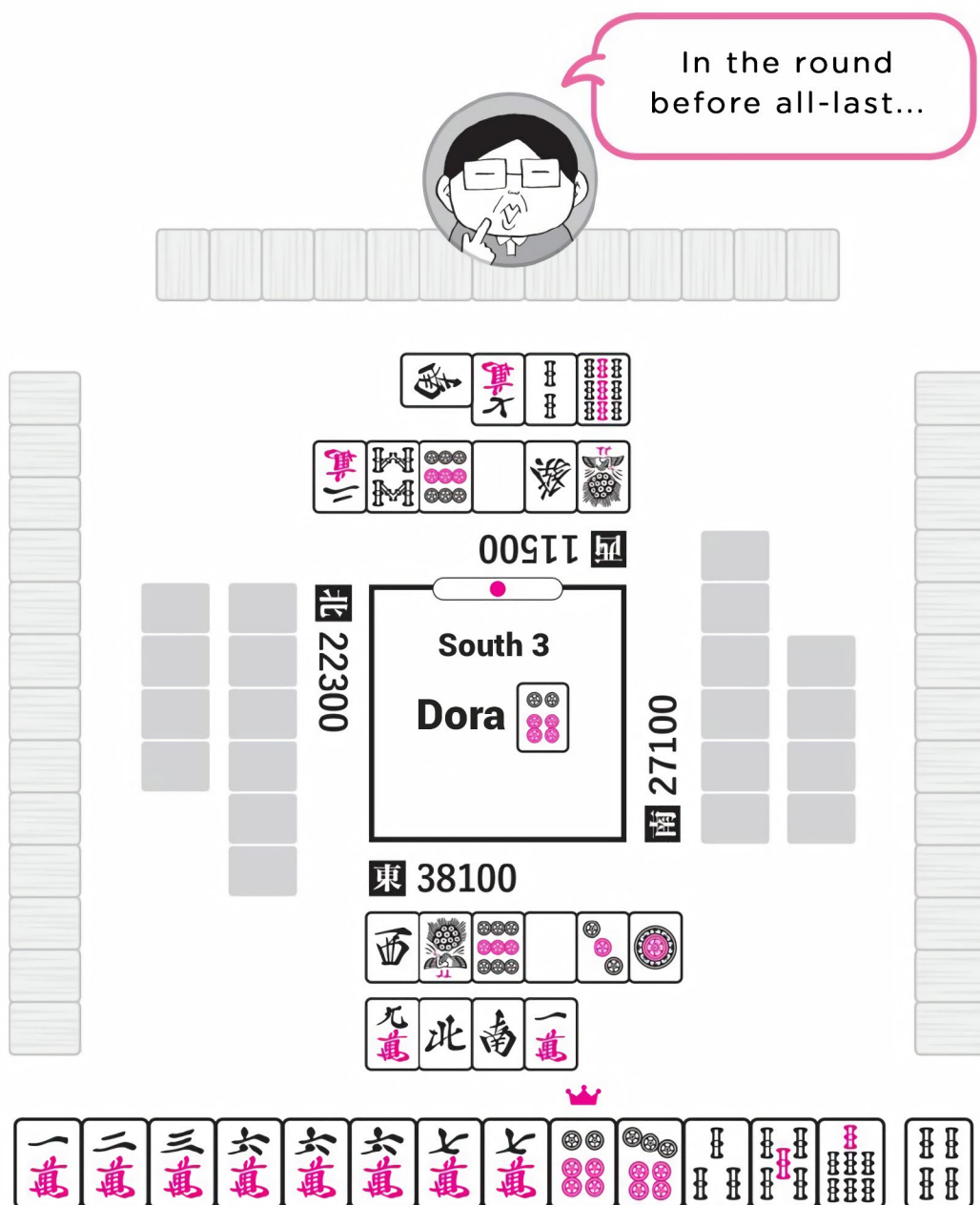
Push-Pull Rule so far

- 084 A massive lead dealer has a chance to sweep up points.
- 085 When you have a massive lead, focus on advancing the rounds once you become a non-dealer.
- 086 Do not enter a defensive shell even if you are in first place.
- 087 If you are in first place and your shimocha is the dealer, your job is to prevent them from calling.

Q Top Place in South 3

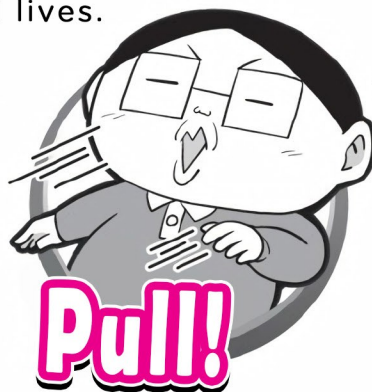
088

You are the dealer in South Round 3. Toimen that's in last-place has called Riichi. You also reach tenpai. Do you call a chase Riichi?



A 088 Fold discarding

If the top player enters a head-to-head drawing battle with the player in dead last, only the 2nd and 3rd place players benefit. There is no need to step into that ring. It is better to silently let the dealer turn end or let someone else win to increase your overall first-place rate. However, if you only focus on this, you risk losing by total paralysis. Just remember: in the South round, don't call a chase Riichi, but if you have a headstart tenpai, calling Riichi is still important. Even here, the rule of "A Headstart Riichi is overwhelmingly advantageous" still lives.



Simply by not being the 'perfect target' for your opponents to win from, your results will improve dramatically.

Push-Pull Rule

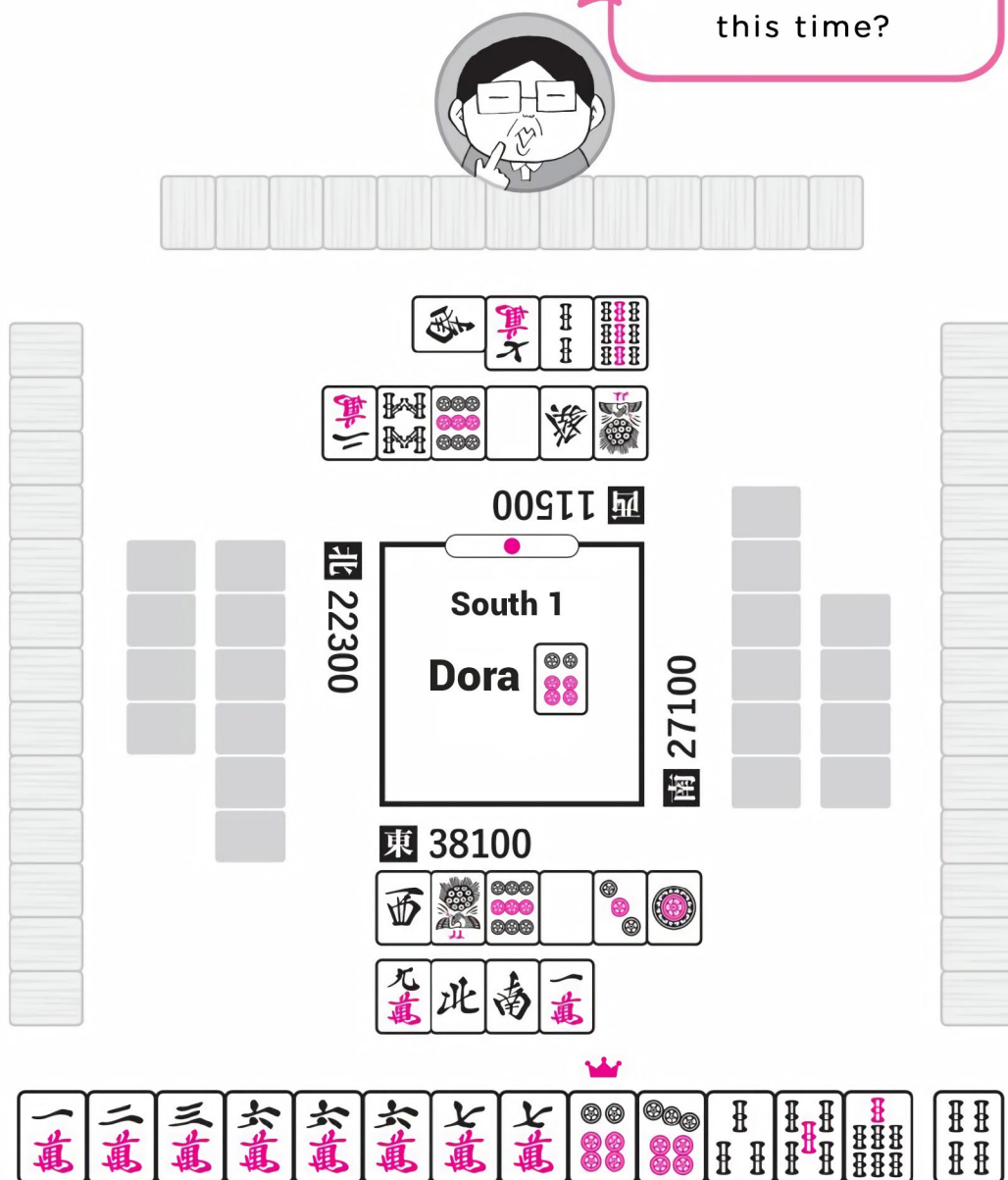
088

The top player in South 3 should not call a chase Riichi.

Q Top Place in South 1 089

The situation is exactly the same as the previous problem, but the round is South 1. Do you call Riichi?

What about this time?



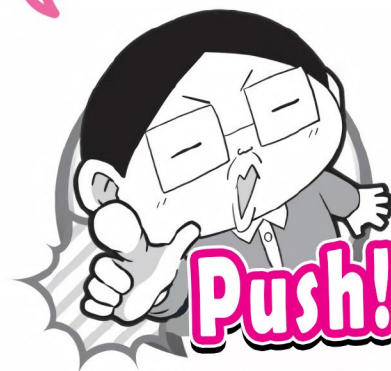
A
089

Riichi discarding



As the dealer, a menzen Dora 1 is a decisive hand. Call a chase Riichi without overthinking and enter the head-to-head drawing battle. South 1 is not yet the time to go into a defensive shell. Folding is an act of retreating from the "lottery," which in itself is a minus.

This is a beyond-obvious Riichi.



Push-Pull Rule

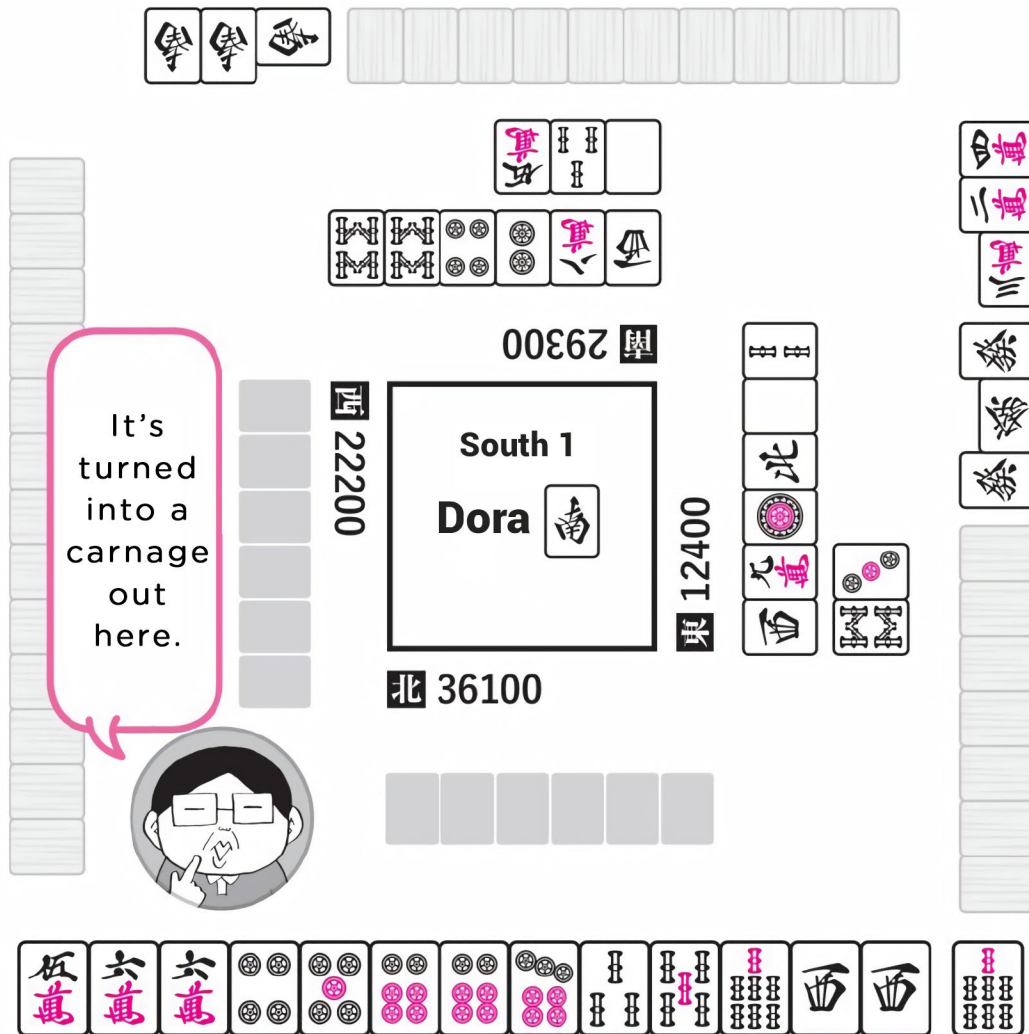
089

**Attack naturally
in South 1.**

Q Top Place in South Round (6)

090

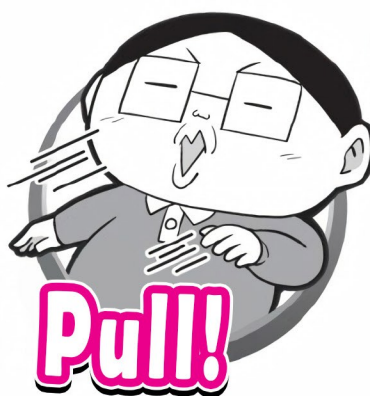
Your shimocha dealer is desperately trying to repeat their turn, while your toimen in second place has a Dora pon. As the top player, what is your policy and what do you discard?



A Assist discarding

090

The dora pon from your toimen is too scary. It's at least a Mangan, and with one akadora, it becomes a Haneman. If they win, you will be overtaken instantly. This round looks like it will be "dead-last dealer vs. 2nd place." Ideally, you'd want to end the round without the dealer winning, but through process of elimination, you must assist the dealer in repeating their turn. Rather than , discard    that's safe against toimen to help the dealer. Letting the dealer call your tiles is welcome here; if you deal in, just consider it an unavoidable cost.



The knack is to discard "sweet" tiles to the opponent who is most convenient for you.

Push-Pull Rule

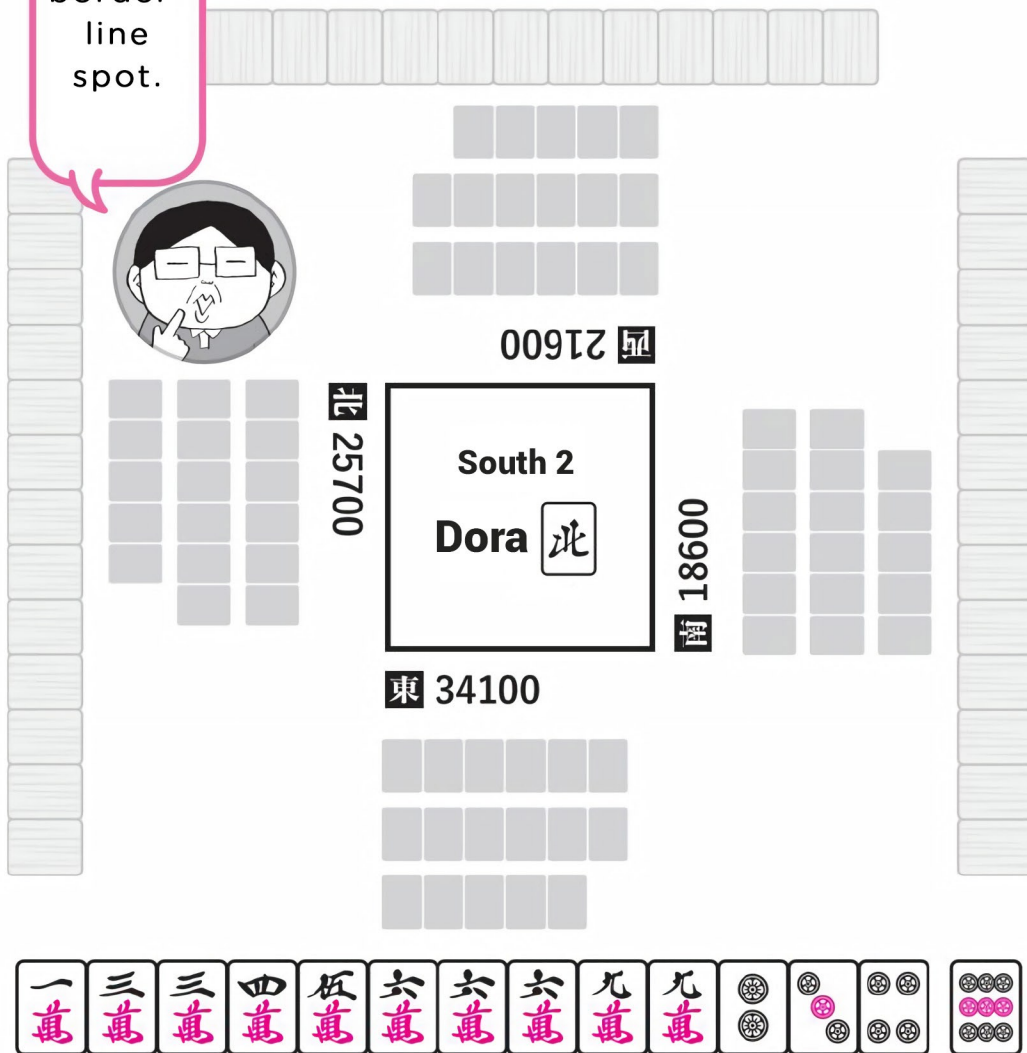
090

The top player should obstruct others' comeback hands.

Q Remaining Rounds vs. Point Gap

You are in first place in South 2. You can safely take tenpai. Do you reduce the remaining rounds by ending the round, or do you repeat the dealer turn to maintain your point lead?

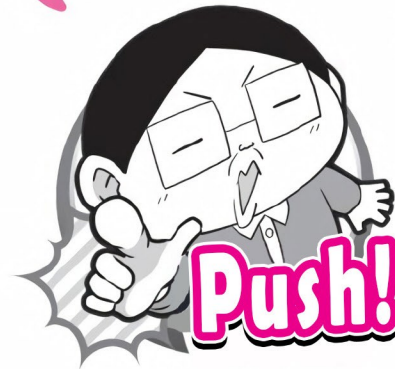
This
problem
hits a
border-
line
spot.



A 091 Repeat Dealer Turn

Looking at the statistics, the weight of the point gap is overwhelming for securing first place; the number of remaining rounds has less impact than expected. Therefore, there is no need to throw away a 4,000-point lead just to reduce the game by one round. Proudly repeat the turn and play one more round as the dealer.

This was an unexpected statistical result.



Push-Pull Rule

091

**Do not narrow the point gap
just to reduce the remaining
rounds.**

Lesson
24

**Finding the Balance for a
Top Player in the South Round**

Attack naturally to a certain extent

A top player in the South round should not overreach. This is the correct way to advance a round when conscious of placement. However, if you have the chance, winning the hand yourself is the most reliable way to advance. If you have an opportunity and don't increase your point sticks, the players in lower placements will target you, and you will eventually be overtaken.

If you defend too much, you will actually be overtaken more easily. Even as the top player in the South round, you should attack normally to a certain degree.

Skill lies in the ability to maintain the lead

Finding the balance between offense and defense is an eternal theme. The top player in the South round must maintain a different balance than in the East round. As I have written many times, reaching first place involves luck, but maintaining it is skill. How you go about maintaining the first place, please search for that balance in your own way.

I recommend reading the "Pros Play Like This!" section starting on

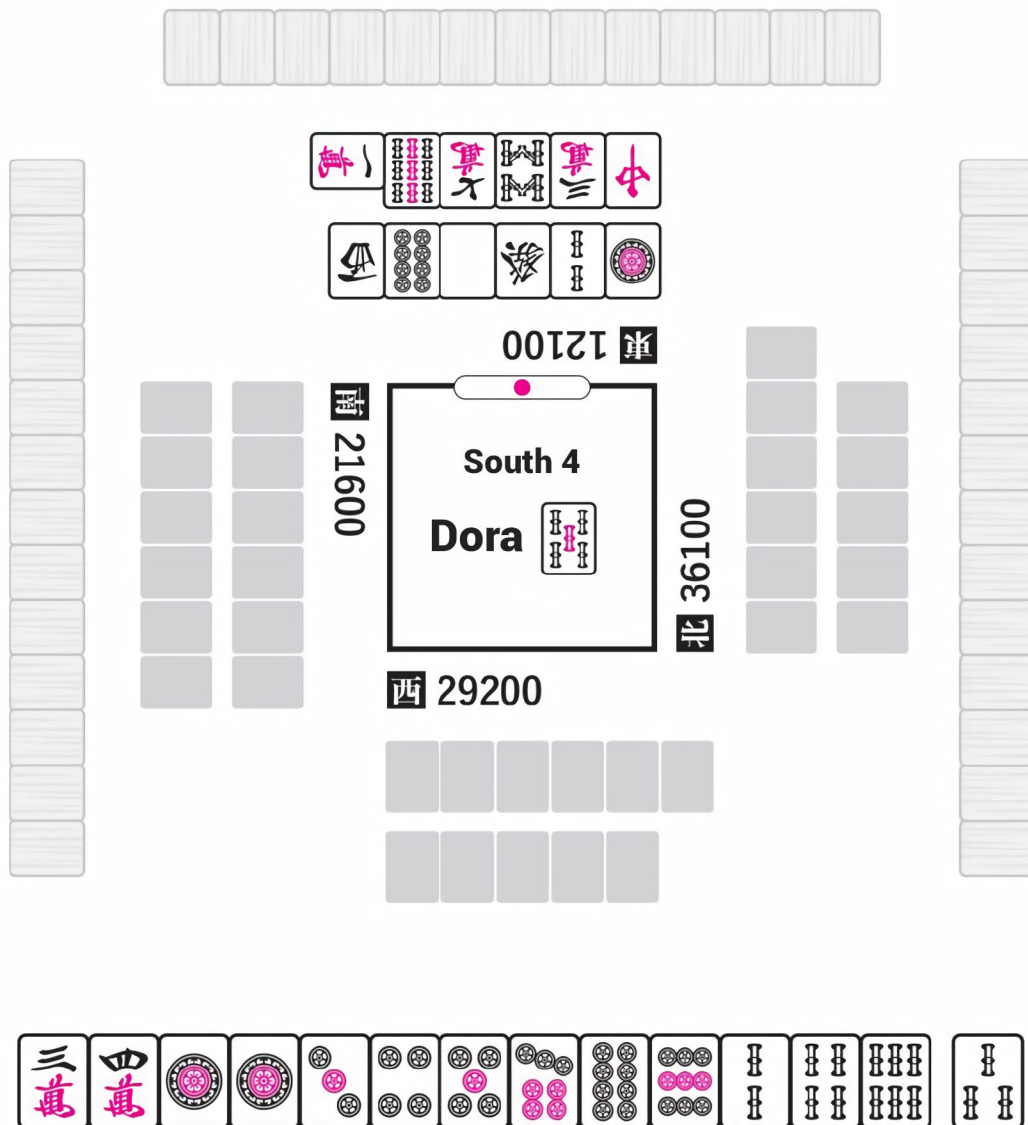
page 293, especially the Chapter 3 portions. You will see the two experts sometimes providing answers that differ from the ones in this book, which will serve as great reference material.

Push-Pull Rule so far

- 088 The top player in South 3 should not call a chase Riichi.
- 089 Attack naturally in South 1.
- 090 The top player should obstruct others' comeback hands.
- 091 Do not narrow the point gap just to reduce the remaining rounds.

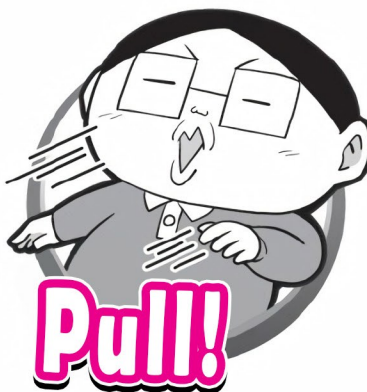
Q 092 Second Place in All-Last

In All-last, you are in second place, 6,900 points behind the lead. The last-place dealer has called Riichi. On the same turn, you reach tenpai. What do you discard?



A 092 Discard and Detour

Even if you call Riichi, you need to tsumo and hit one ura-dora to take first place. It is foolish to enter a head-to-head drawing battle with a last-place dealer for such a condition. Here, drop the  and take a detour. If the hand becomes capable of a comeback later, push; otherwise, fold. The ones who really want this dealer Riichi to be kicked are your shimocha who wants to end the game in first and your kamicha who doesn't want to be overtaken for 3rd. Since your own "back is not on fire", don't do the work for others.



Recognizing which opponents to refuse a showdown with is a key push-pull rule to master.

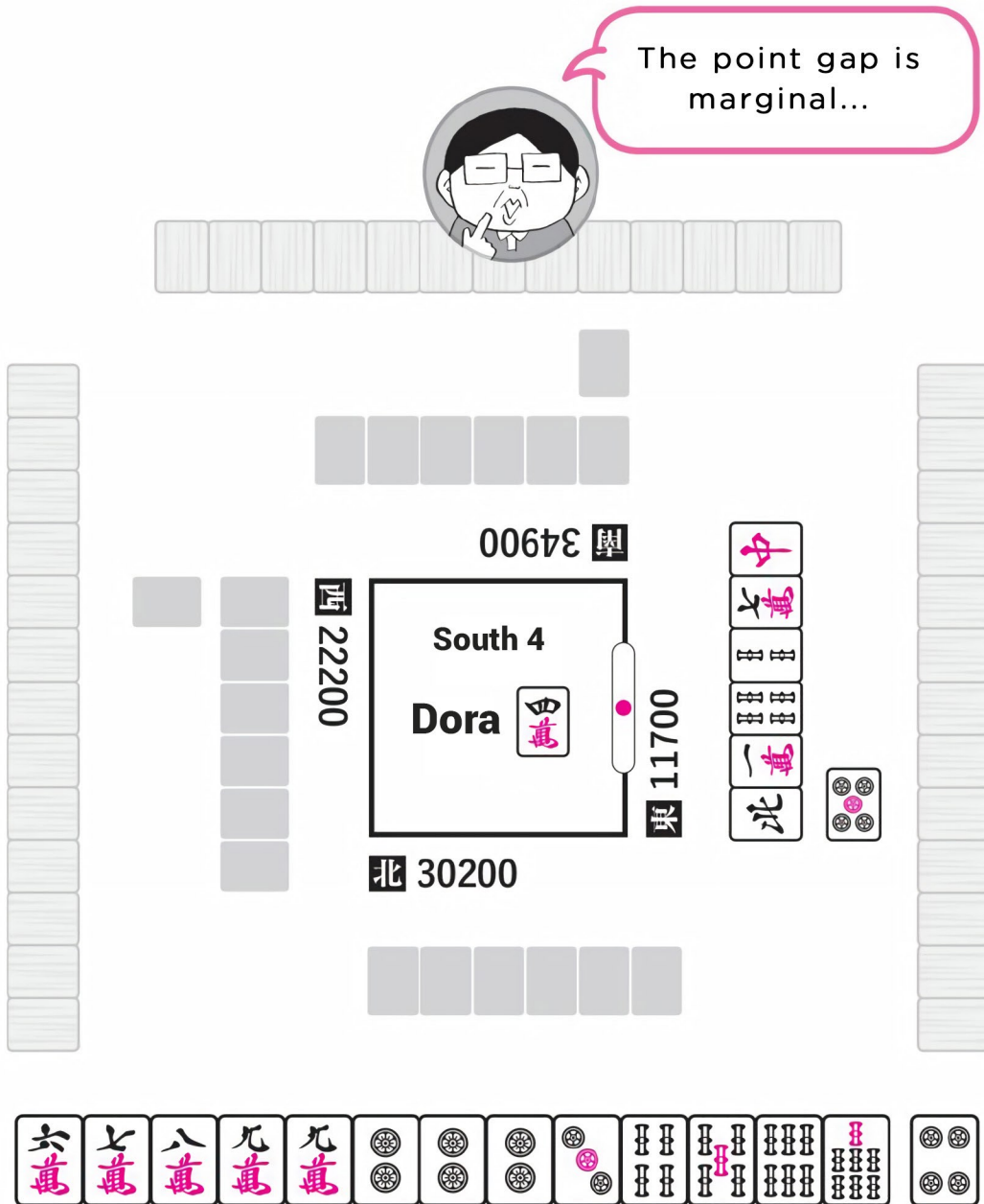
Push-Pull Rule

092

Step aside for a last-place dealer's Riichi.

Q 093 Second Place in All-Last (2)

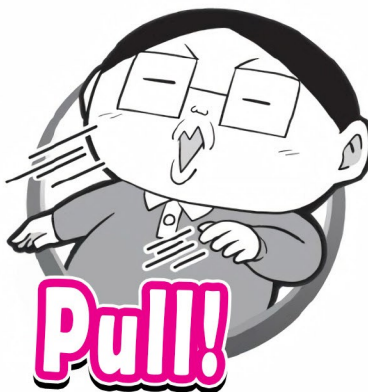
In All-last, you are in second place, 4,700 points behind the lead. The last-place dealer calls Riichi. On the same turn, you reach tenpai. What do you discard?



A Discard

093

Discarding the genbutsu  to call a chase Riichi is a play that succumbs to the temptation of immediate safety and immediate tenpai. With this tenpai, you cannot overtake the lead unless you tsumo and hit one ura-dora. Entering a drawing battle with the last-place dealer under these conditions is a losing choice. If you drop the  and move toward a Men-Tan-Pin hand, you have a sufficient outlook for a comeback hand. Take on a little risk and drop the  pair. This is a temporary "pull" to set up a future "push."



Pulling back now to strike back later. Are you capable of this kind of foresight?

Push-Pull Rule

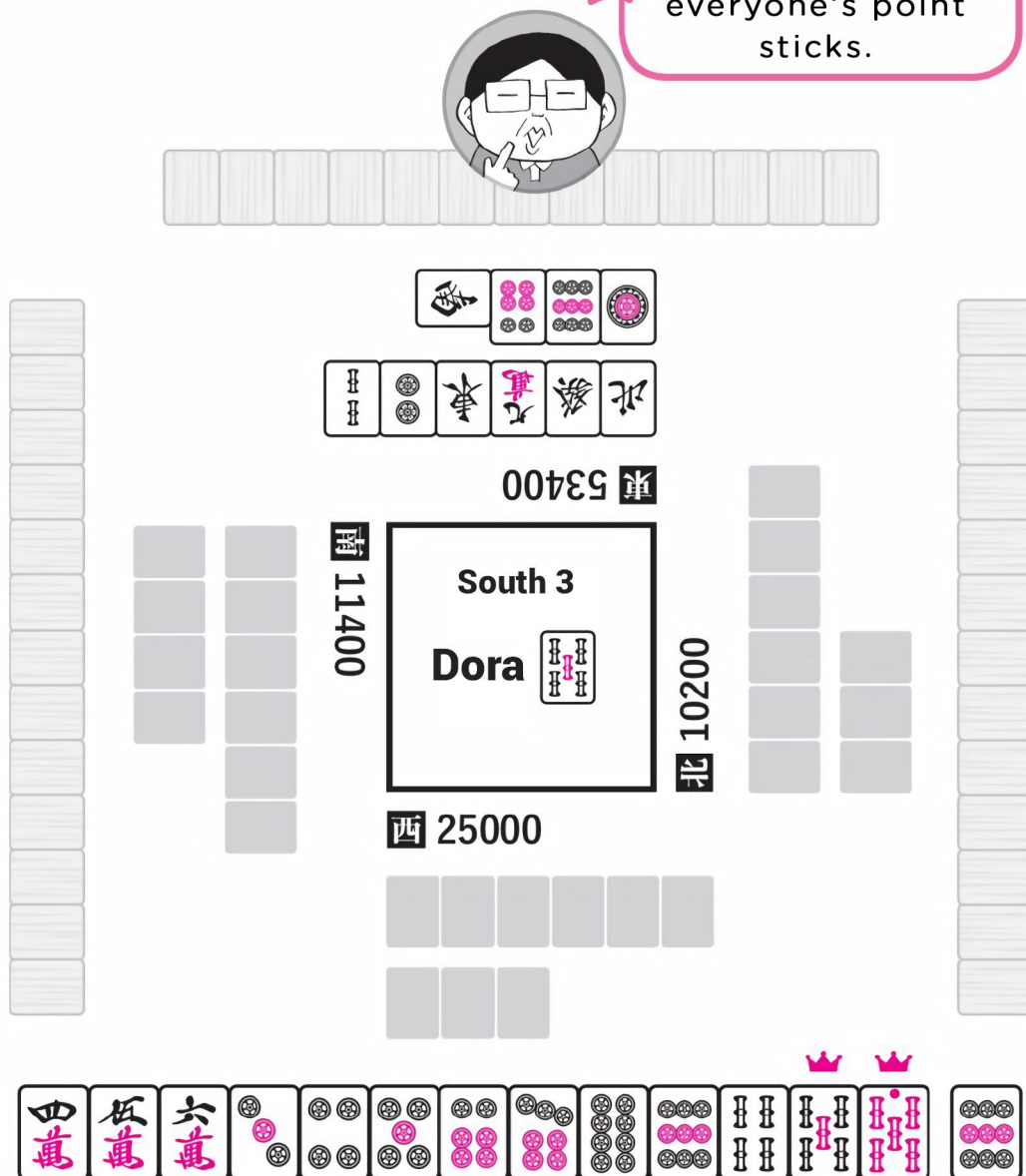
093

Only join a head-to-head drawing battle with a last-place dealer once you have a comeback hand ready.

Q 094 Second place in the South round

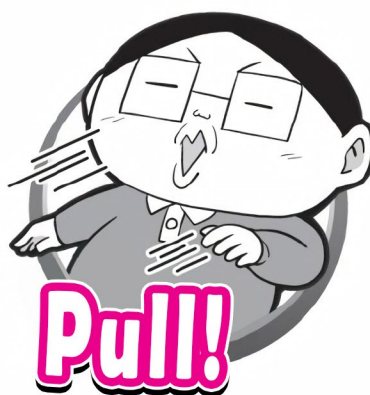
South 3. You are West. On the ippatsu turn of a dealer Riichi, you also reach tenpai for a chance hand. The tile you must discard is the Dora. Do you pick a fight?

Look closely at everyone's point sticks.



A 094 Do not pick a fight

In the East round, you would call Riichi and take them on with this hand as it's a decisive hand for Mangan. However, it is already the next to last round. Even a direct hit on the top player with this hand won't make you the winner. If you deal into a high-value hand here, your chances of dropping to 3rd or 4th place skyrocket. Based on the scores, challenging the dealer is high-risk, low-reward.



It's a hand I really want to call Riichi with, though.

Push-Pull Rule

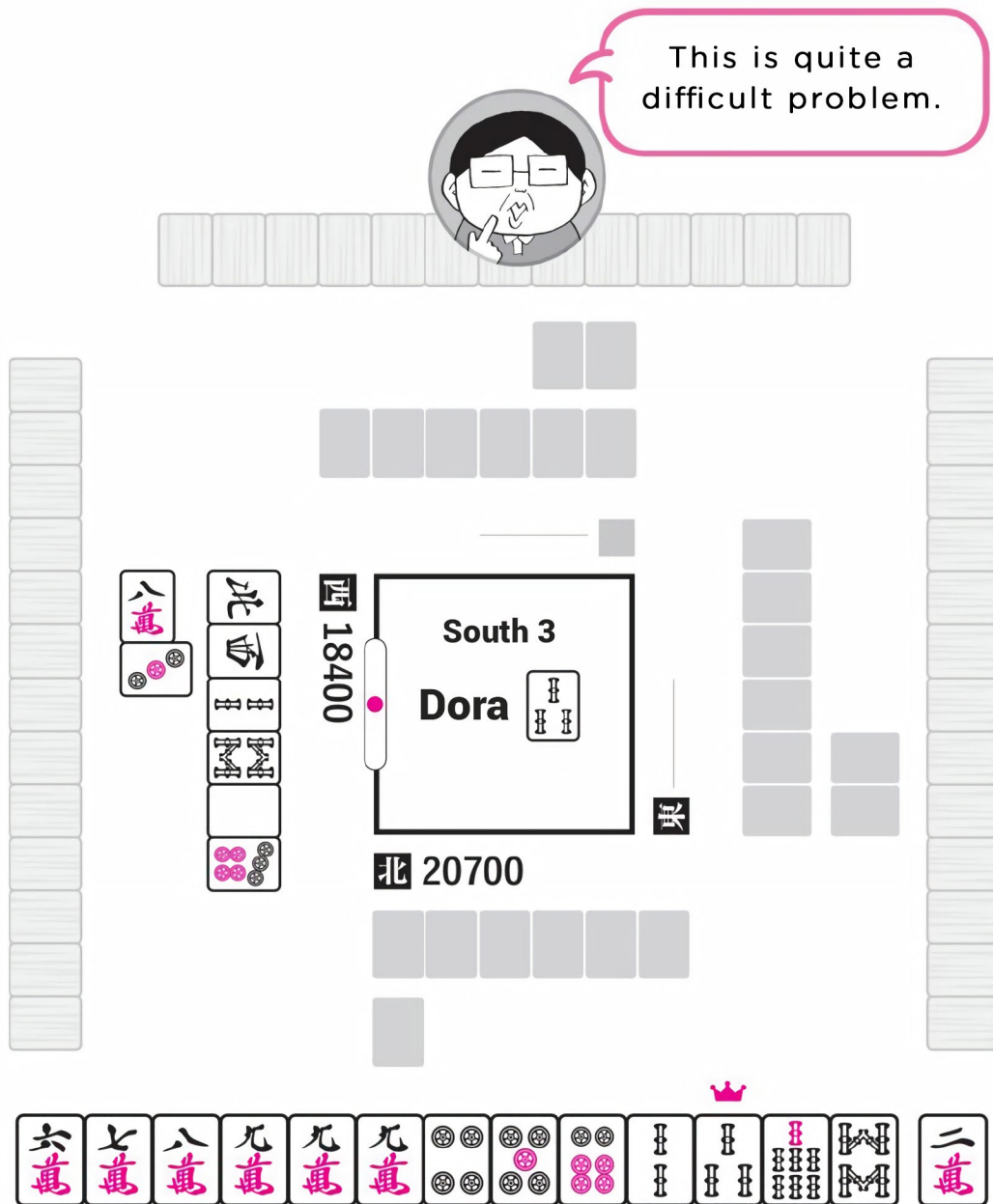
094

Once you enter the South round, look at the point gaps above and below you and understand your position.

Q 095 Third place in the South round (1)

South 3. You are North. Your hand is a wide 1-shanten. The last-place player has called Riichi, and you draw a . Do you take them on?

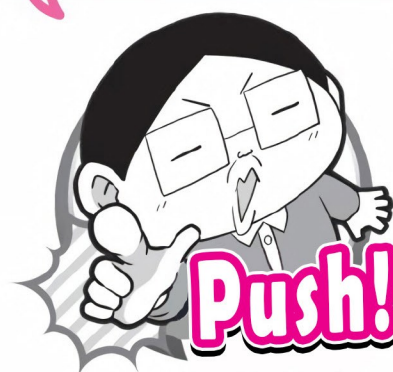
This is quite a difficult problem.



A 095 Pick a fight

If you fold and they win, you drop to last place. Even a noten penalty would flip your placement. There are many unpassed suji waits, and while the  is dangerous, it only has about a 5% deal-in probability. You should contest the round here to maintain 3rd place and chase after 2nd place.

Judgment changes based on point difference, so deciding during a real match is tough, isn't it?



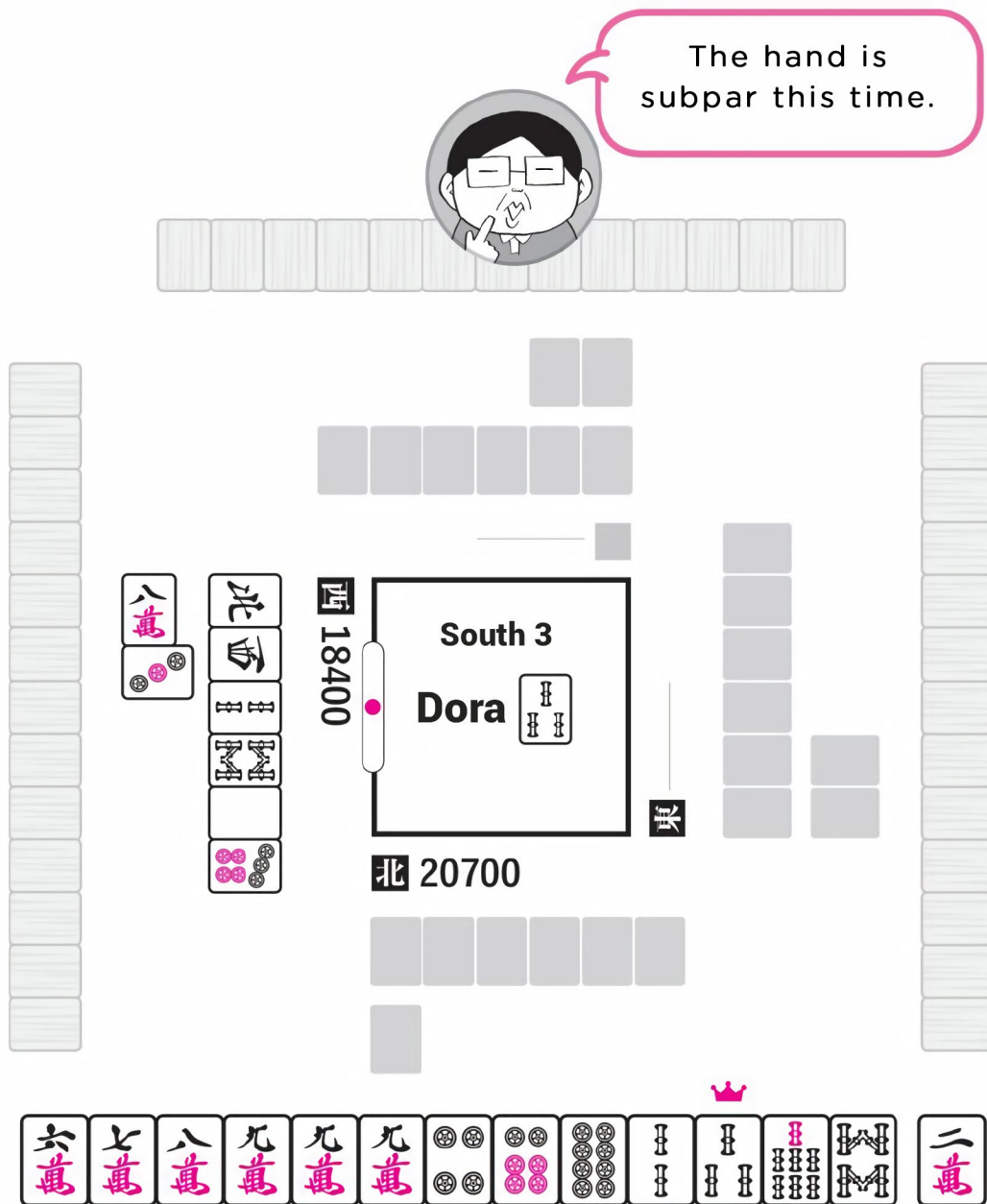
Push-Pull Rule

095

Do not fold if even a noten payment will flip your placement.

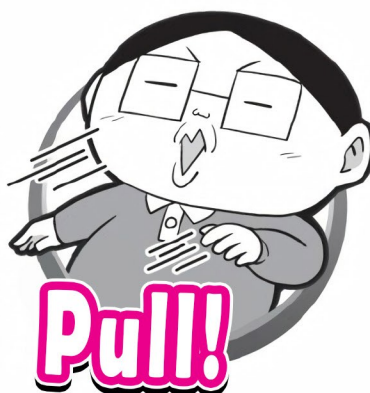
Q Third place in the South round (2) 096

The same situation as the previous problem, but your hand is slightly different. Do you take them on?



A 096 Do not pick a fight

While the situation is the same as the previous problem, if you fold, you must be prepared to drop to last place. That said, if your winning chances are too thin, it is a fact that not dealing in is better. Pushing and pulling are both painful here, but if you deal into a decent-sized hand, your chances of a comeback in all-last become almost non-existent. Endure for now and pray that your shimocha or your toimen wins.



No matter how painful the situation is, there are times when you simply have to endure.

Push-Pull Rule

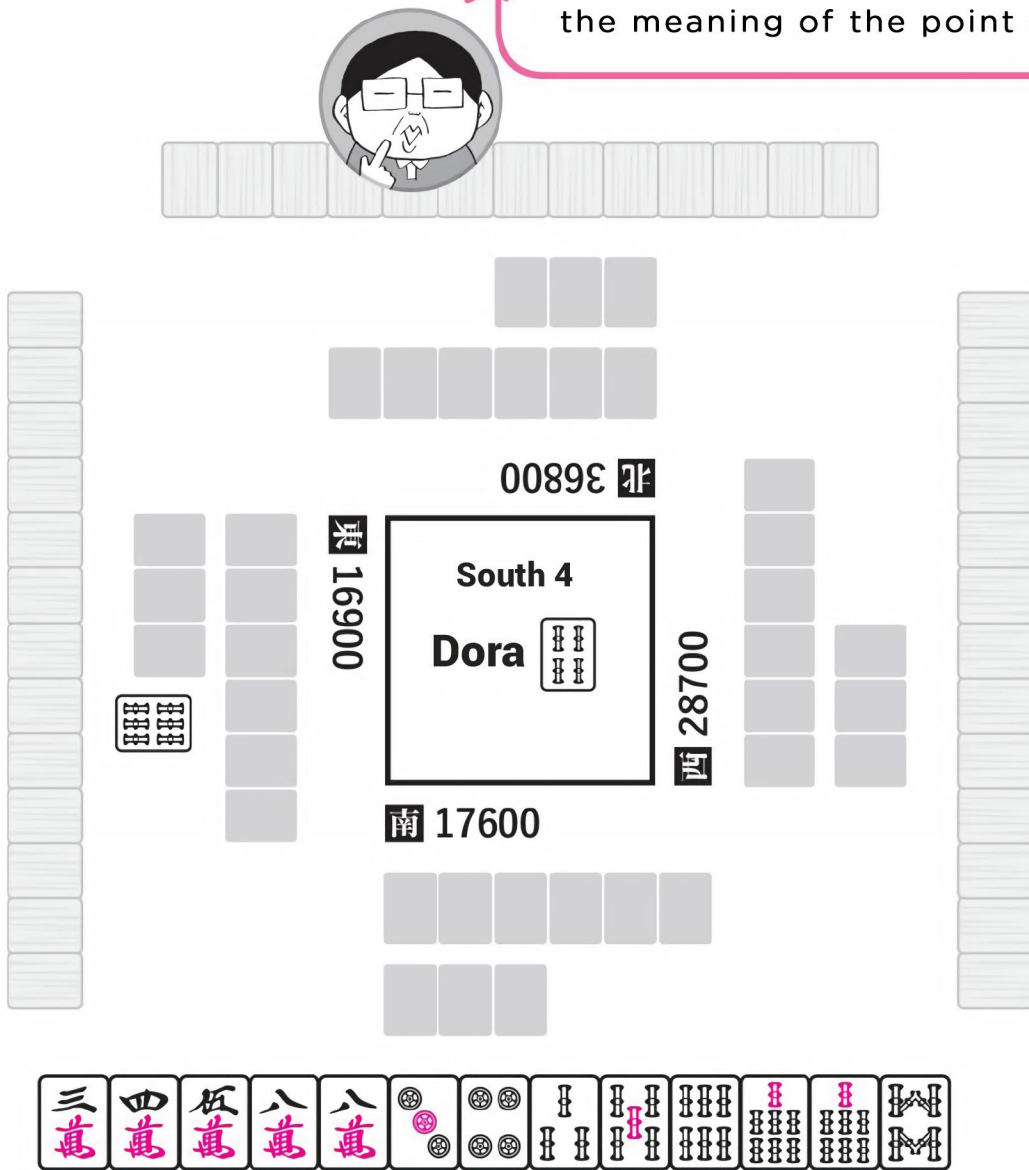
096

Reckless pushing is equivalent to self-destruction.

Q Third place in All-Last
097

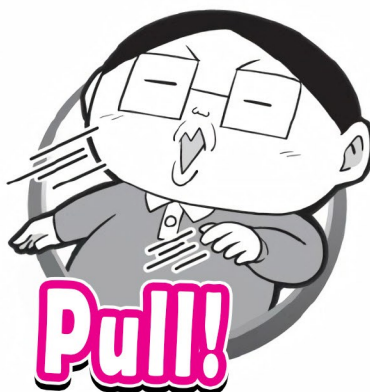
1-shanten with potential for Tan-Pin-Sanshoku. In the middle of the round, a  comes out that would put you in tenpai. Do you chi?

It is important to properly consider the meaning of the point sticks.



A Chi 097

Looking at the point sticks, reaching 2nd place requires a Haneman by ron, and catching up to 1st requires a Baiman tsumo. On the other hand, last place is within 1,000 points. In this situation, the probability of reaching 2nd or higher is too low. The realistic judgment is to aim to maintain 3rd place. When looking at this as a problem, it seems obvious, but in real matches, players often fail to grasp the point gaps this clearly. Whether you can turn the game around with a Mangan tsumo is an important metric. If a Mangan tsumo doesn't change anything, don't force the comeback.



The probability of this hand actually completing itself seems quite low, doesn't it?

Push-Pull Rule

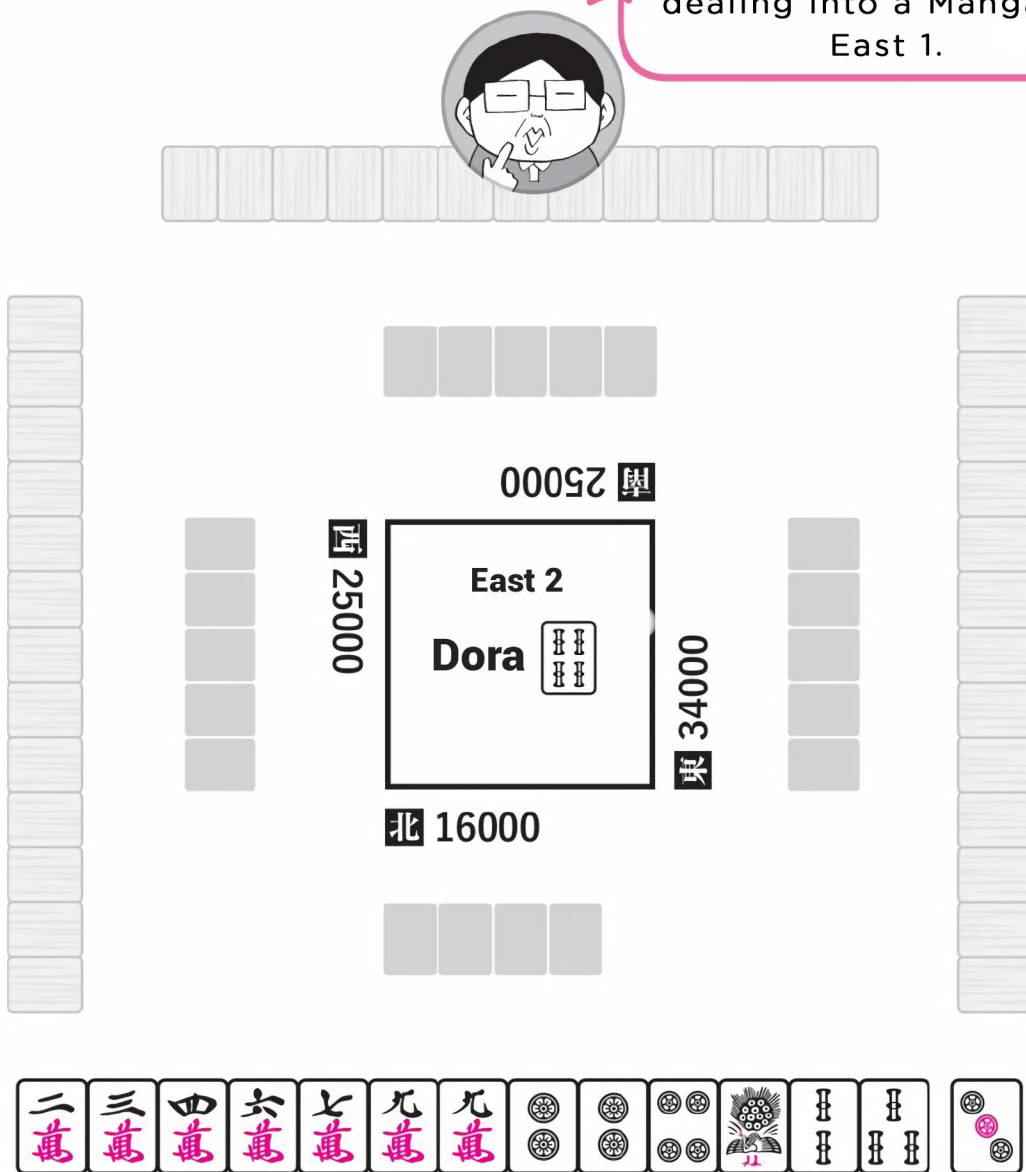
097

Do not force a comeback that a Mangan Tsumo cannot resolve.

Q098 Last place in the East round

East 2, you are in last place. On Turn 5, you reach tenpai for Pinfu only that in one transformation would make it a Sanshoku Mangan. Do you call Riichi?

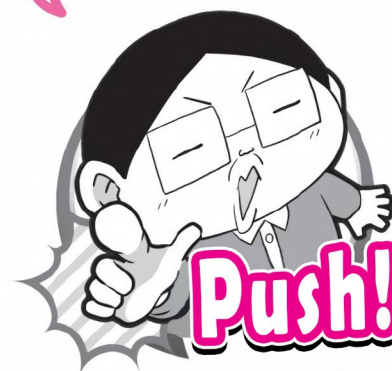
This is the round after dealing into a Mangan in East 1.



A 098 Riichi

You want to connect this hand to high points, but calling an immediate Riichi is better than waiting for a low-probability Dora draw. A Pinfu-only Riichi has an average value of about 3,500 points, which is a respectable hand. Do not regret it if you draw the  dora tile after calling Riichi.

You can agree with this, right?



Push-Pull Rule

098

Even in last place, do not wait for a transformation if only one specific tile type makes it happen.

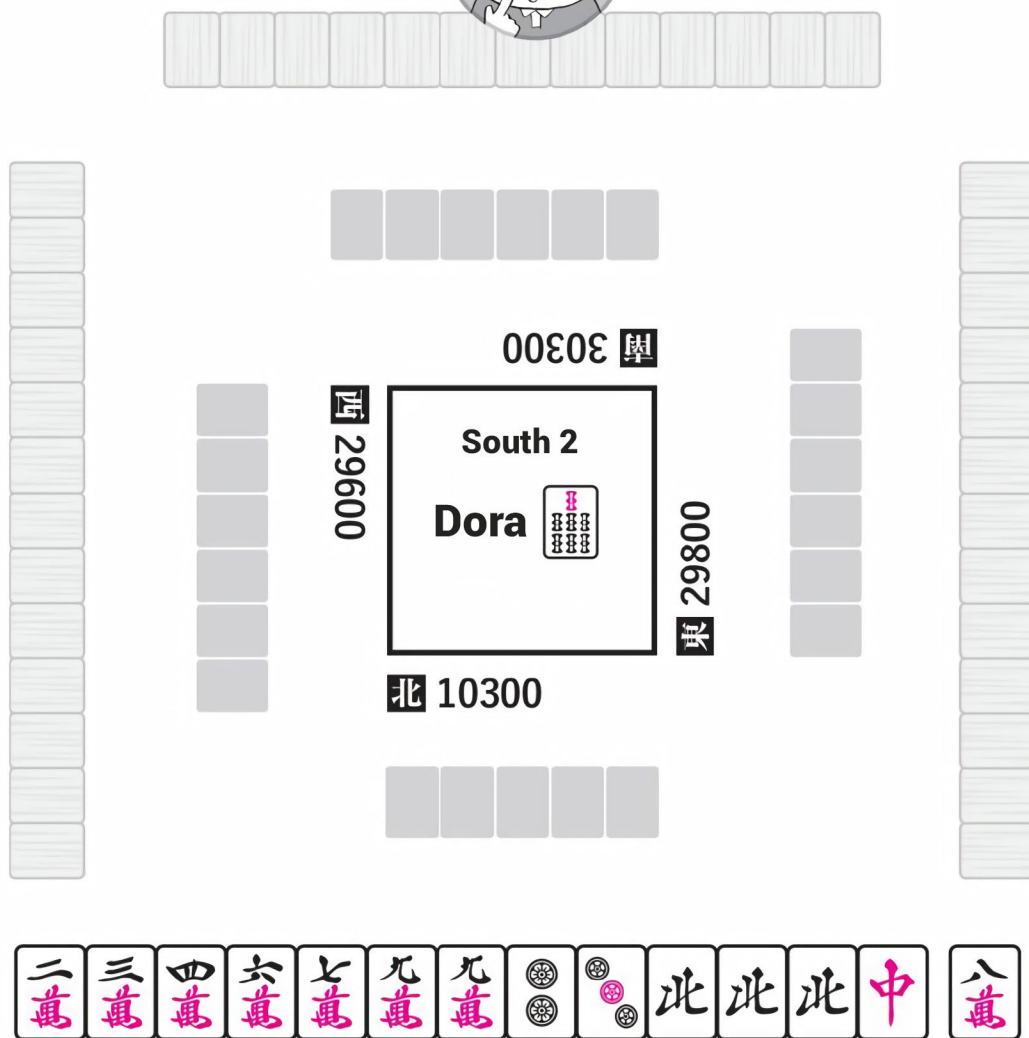
Q
099

Last place in the South round (2)

South 2, last place. You reach tenpai with a cheap hand, but Honitsu is a possibility. Do you call Riichi?



We had a similar problem before, but...

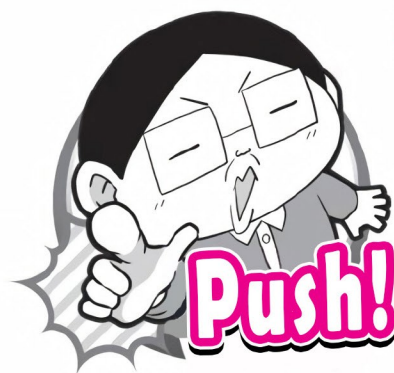


A
099

Discard



As seen in Q034 of Chapter 1, in a neutral state, immediate Riichi would be the correct answer. Reaching tenpai for Honitsu from here will take a considerable amount of time. However, once you are in last place during South 2, you have no choice but to chase that possibility, even if you have to force it. Discard the  ryanmen, treating them as two isolated tiles.



Being able to successfully land a monster hand from a position like this once every few times is a condition for being an expert.

Push-Pull Rule

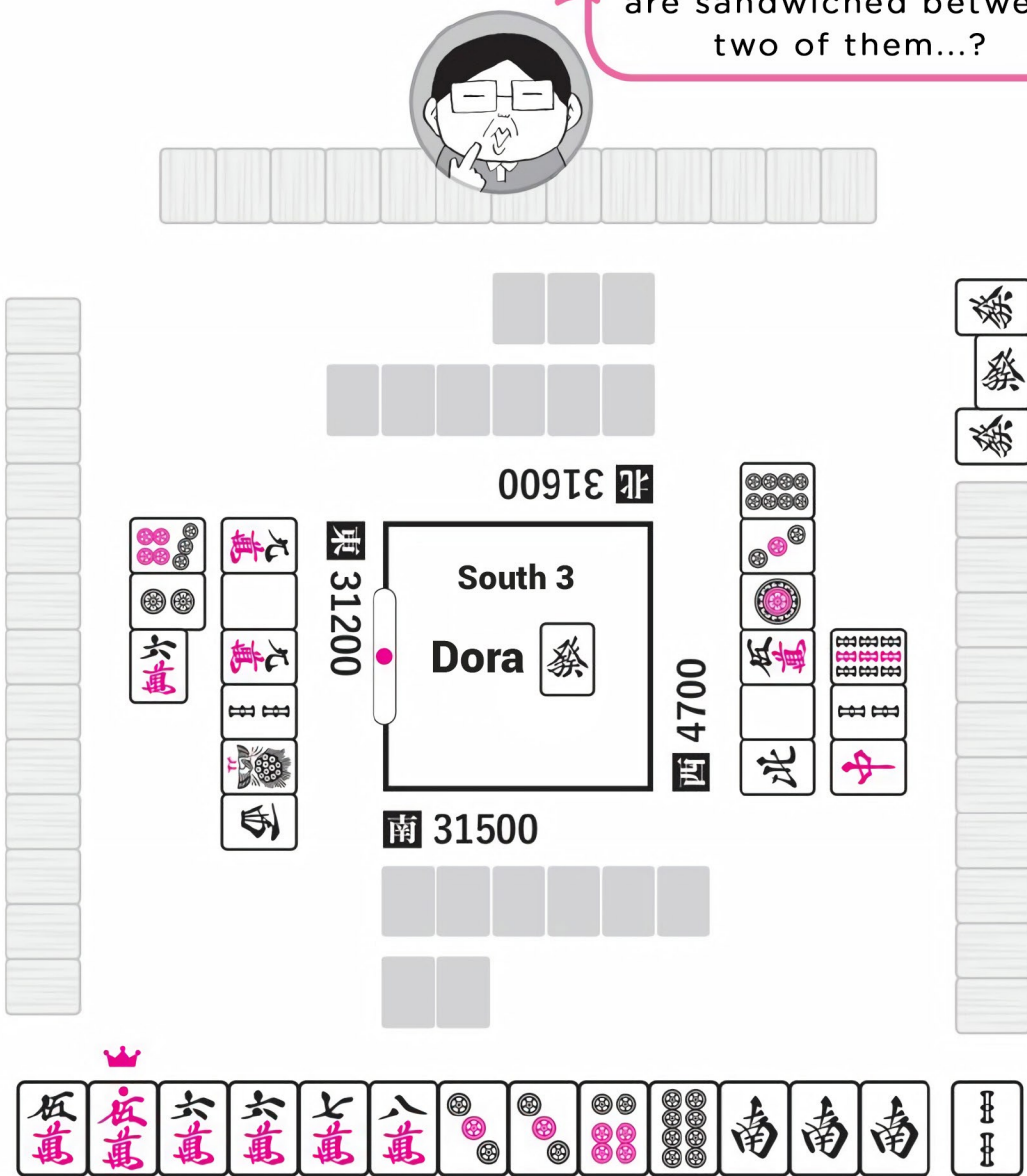
099

**When you lack point sticks,
forced Yaku building is also
necessary.**

Q Three-person Melee (1)
100

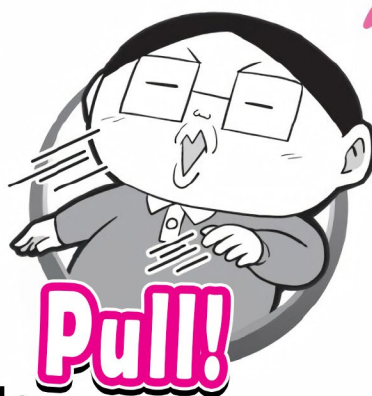
There is one player in dead last, and the remaining three are competing closely. your kamicha dealer has called Riichi, and the dead-last player at your shimocha has a Dora pon. What do you do?

In a situation where you are sandwiched between two of them...?



A Discard

The  you just drew is a genbutsu for both your kamicha and your shimocha, but that is not the tile to discard. This is a situation where you should assist the dead-last player to crush the dealer's Riichi. Discard the  that the dealer just threw to match it. You want to induce your shimocha to chi it. They likely need it, and it's a depleting suji. The best development is for your kamicha to deal into your shimocha. In situations with massive leads or dead-last players, the three players in competition should try to utilize those outliers. That is the technique of placement control.



If you over-rely on this way of thinking, your own willpower to win on your own strength will weaken, so be careful.

Push-Pull Rule

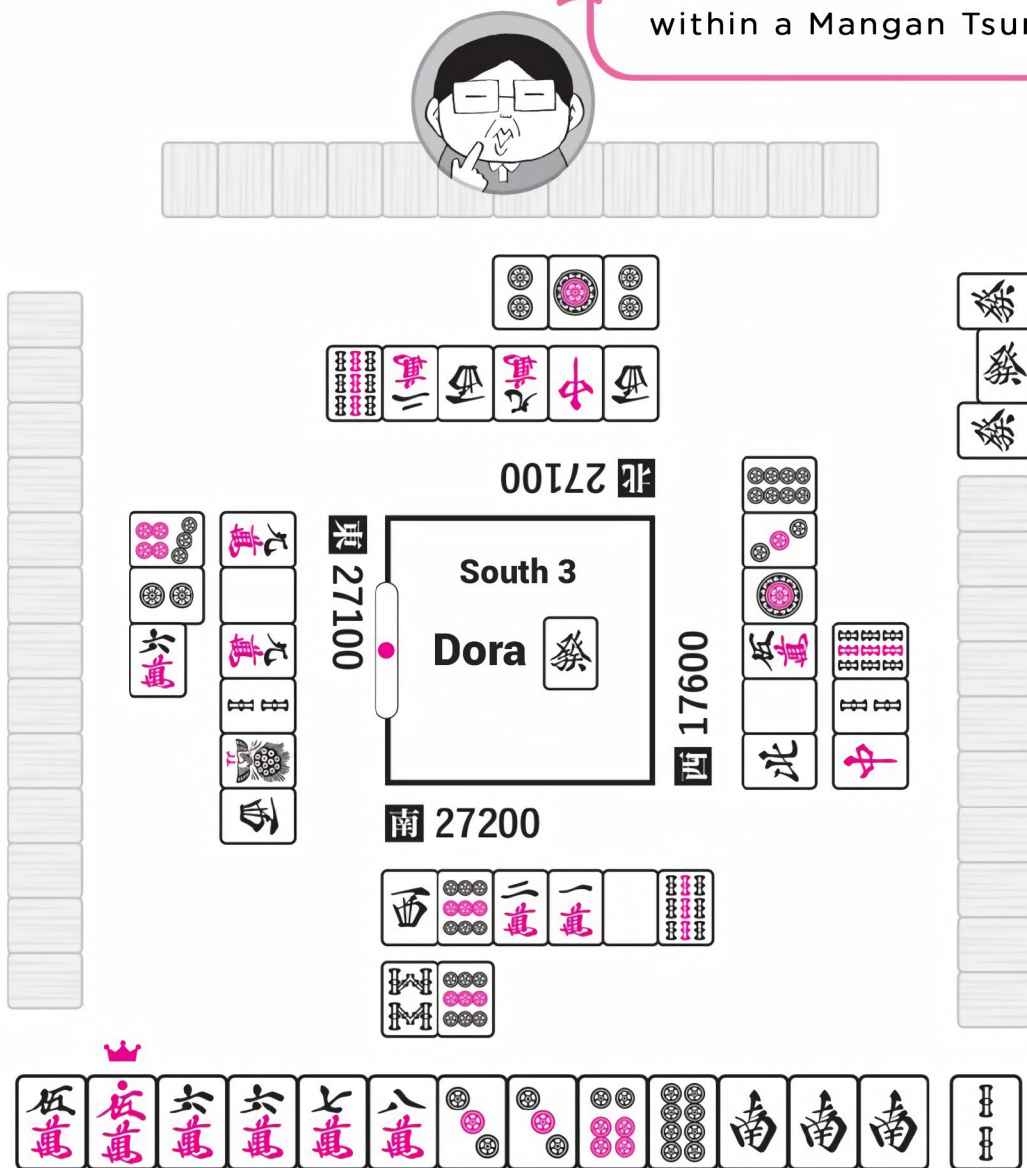
100

Assist the player in dead last to strike your rivals.

Q 101 Three-person Melee (2)

The same situation as before. However, the point sticks are different; the distance to last place is much closer than before. What policy do you take and what do you discard?

What if the person in last place is within a Mangan Tsumo gap...?



A
101

Discard



With this point gap, if your shimocha wins via a Mangan tsumo, they will take first place. In a three-way battle, your expected placement is 2.0, but if it becomes a four-way battle, it worsens to 2.5. While you wouldn't mind your kamicha dealing into your shimocha, assisting your shimocha provides no net benefit under these conditions. Here, you should tsumogiri the , which is safe against both, and keep your hand intact for now. From the next turn on, you might even fold by dropping your ankou of .



While I don't mind your kamicha and your shimocha dealing into each other, getting tsumo'd on is what I really hate.

Push-Pull Rule

101

**When the point gap is small,
do not resort to petty tricks.**

**Lesson
25****Open the Door to
Placement Manipulation****Target the people close to you in points**

Placement-conscious play mainly revolves around being in first place, but it remains a factor whether you are in 2nd, 3rd, or 4th as well.

The fundamental rule is to treat the people close to you in points as your primary targets. You must consider the gain and loss in relation to those targets for every move. For example, if someone else calls Riichi, think about the consequences of an oya-kaburi (dealer penalty) and how that would affect your relative standing if they win by tsumo.

However, if you become too conscious of small point differences, your playstyle will become "small," and you will fall into a pattern of only seeing what is right in front of you. This prevents you from landing monster hands.

Experts utilize placement-conscious play like a finely tuned tool. Once the game ends, conversations like "I suppressed the dealer in that round" or "I played sweet to the shimocha in that round" are common during post-game drinks. By all means, open the door and step into that world.

Push-Pull Rule so far

- 092 Step aside for a last-place dealer's Riichi.
- 093 Only join a head-to-head drawing battle with a last-place dealer once you have a comeback hand ready.
- 094 Once you enter the South round, look at the point gaps above and below you and understand your position.
- 095 Do not fold if even a noten payment will flip your placement.
- 096 Reckless pushing is equivalent to self-destruction.
- 097 Do not force a comeback that a Mangan Tsumo cannot resolve.
- 098 Even in last place, do not wait for a transformation if only one specific tile type makes it happen.
- 099 When you lack point sticks, forced Yaku building is also necessary.
- 100 Assist the player in dead last to strike your rivals.
- 101 When the point gap is small, do not resort to petty tricks.



Chapter 3

Q069

Nemata	Agree	Even if your toimen wins by tsumo, you maintain first place. If you are noten, definitely fold.
Murakami	Agree	In top placement, you should respond to an early Riichi by holding onto genbutsu that are safe against all three players as much as possible. Especially the dealer's genbutsu is vital.

Q070

Nemata	Agree	Since you haven't necessarily secured top placement just by avoiding a deal-in, the default stance is to push with a good-shape tenpai.
Murakami	Agree	How many musuji tiles to push is a close call, but the desire to solidify first place with this chance hand is important. Push for another few types of tiles.

Q071

Nemata	Agree	If it's not a situation where you secure first place as long as you don't deal-in, then even a no-yaku headstart Riichi is fine in top placement.
Murakami	Agree	If it's a ryanmen wait that's not dissatisfactory at this turn count then steel yourself and call Riichi.

Q072

Nemata	Slightly Riichi	Comparing it to staying in dama with a yakuless hand, with such few transormation tiles the standard is to just call Riichi.
Murakami	Generally Riichi	The rest depends on the specific ruleset or by the pointstanding. You

should take some risk to solidify your top, but if it's a pointstanding where you would fall to last place if you would deal-in to the dealer then it's borderline.

Q073

Nemata	Objection	If it's a huge gap between second that you won't be overtaken with them winning a mangan then I stay in dama. If not then I call Riichi.
Murakami	Objection	Although it says you are in first place, the point gap between you and second place is the key. If you winning with a 1,000-point practically secures you with first place then dama. If you're still competing with the person in second then it's a Riichi.

Q074

Nemata	Agree	This is similar to the judgment of whether to call Riichi on a genbutsu wait. For Pinfu Dora 1, the standard play is Riichi even if staying in dama makes it easier to win.
Murakami	Agree	During the East round, play honestly rather than being overly conscious of placement.

Q075

Nemata	Agree	Since a dealer tenpai is highly likely and has high-value potential, you should consider folding midway. In top placement, dama makes it easier to win, and the conditions for it are all met here.
Murakami	Agree	I'd reluctantly push the  , but stay in dama. If you draw one more dangerous tile before winning on the  , drop the genbutsu  . Dealing into an obvious 5,800 or higher here is a crime.

Q076

Nemata	Agree	Tenpai is one thing, but in this score situation, you shouldn't push musuji tiles from noten. Since discarding the  still keeps you at 1-shanten, it's even more of a reason not to push.
Murakami	Agree	If you have plenty of safe tiles, you absolutely play this way.

Q077

Nemata	Agree	In this point situation, I would push even if I draw another musuji. I wouldn't narrow my acceptance; I'd aim for the win with maximum efficiency.
Murakami	Objection	I agree with the basic strategy, but since discarding the  leaves you with a 1-shanten that isn't half-bad, I'd discard the  .

Q078

Nemata	Borderline	You are in top place facing a dealer Riichi on ippatsu with a “double musuji”  . You still have the potential to win by sticking a tile to the  , and many conditions for folding are met. However, you don't have so much of a lead that you can say “anything but a deal-in is fine.” In a parlor ruleset where the raw points from a win are high, it might still be better to push.
Murakami	Agree, of course	There are 4 manzu suji, 4 pinzu suji, and 2 souzu suji remaining, making  one of the most dangerous tiles. With plenty of safe tiles and a chance to recover later, discarding  is the only move.

Q079

Nemata	Agree	If a higher placement is achievable, a high-value tenpai is an automatic push, even with poor shape.
Murakami	Borderline	If it's a ruleset where getting first matters the most then it's  , but I don't have confidence in the wait so in a ruleset like Saikouisen where there is no oka bonus, I'd discard the  . You should prioritize avoiding a drop from 2nd place to 3rd or last.

Q080

Nemata	Borderline	Middle tiles of suits other than manzu were also discarded before the  , so an early sakigiri cannot be ruled out. If you treat it being as dangerous as any other musuji, then whether to push or not is a bit borderline.
Murakami	Agree	The  is a very easy tile to discard here.

Q081

Nemata	Borderline	Same as the previous problem.
Murakami	Agree	The  is not a tile you should fold on.

Q082

Nemata **Objection**

If the Riichi caller has a 2-Han hand without Pinfu or a 3-Han hand with Pinfu, a direct hit on ippatsu would cause a reversal. However, besides these specific cases, you either stay in top if you deal in, or you get overtaken if you fold and they tsumo. I would assume that this scenario would much more often be closer to the latter: “you would still be overtaken if you end up folding” rather than the “ is the exact winning tile and won't get reversed in placement otherwise.” Therefore, I would say pushing the  is better at this turn count. Even if you chose to discard the , I would still push for a while.

Murakami **Objection**

The other two players' scores aren't listed, but assuming a deal-in to a Mangan keeps you in 2nd place, I'd pick a fight with the . With 12 suji remaining (3 in manzu, 5 in pinzu, 4 in souzu), the  isn't that dangerous, and in a ruleset playing with red fives, a Mangan tsumo is easy to make. Since the  is a very good wait, I'll go for the win myself.

Q083

Nemata **Borderline**

This is a hand where pushing is clearly advantageous.

Murakami **Agree,
of course**

Q084

Nemata **Agree**

Dealing in or being tsumo'd on doesn't change the point gap significantly for the dealer. Even with a massive lead, call Riichi on a headstart tenpai.

Murakami **Strongly
Agree**

Q085

Nemata **Depends on
the ruleset**

In Tenhou rules where you don't need raw points, I'd stay in dama. In parlor rules where raw points do matter and they give shuugi for ippatsu and ura-dora, I'd call Riichi.

Murakami **I Agree
but Riichi
is also fine.**

If you would still be far ahead in first place even after dealing in to a dealer Mangan, then I'd Riichi.

Q086

Nemata **Agree**

Since you have enough block candidates for a Sanshoku, discarding 4-pin is best as it allows you to progress building the hand while holding on to safe tiles.

Murakami **Agree**

Q087

Nemata **Agree** If the win probability doesn't change much, discard tiles that the dealer is unlikely to call.

Murakami **Agree**

Q088

Nemata **Agree** Reaching a good-shape tenpai as dealer doesn't necessarily mean you have secured top, but conversely, dealing in often keeps you in the lead. Actually, folding isn't that advantageous. However, since the toimen discarded a relatively safe  to call Riichi, the probability of them having a high-value good-shape hand is higher than usual. Folding is the safer bet.

Murakami **Objection** This is a Riichi. I have no complaints about the wait. With Dora 1 as dealer, a simple chase Riichi is powerful. Even if I deal into a Mangan, I'm still the top player heading into the all-last.

Q089

Nemata **Agree** Unless it's the all-last or round before all-last, push a hand that is clearly advantageous even if you have a bit of a lead.

Murakami **Naturally Agree** I called Riichi on the previous problem, after all.

Q090

Nemata **Agree** A win by the East player is clearly better than a win by the South player, so if your own win looks difficult, assist the East player.

Murakami **Agree** This is a situation where avoiding a deal-in to your toimen is the only priority.

Q091

Nemata **Agree** The point gap isn't that wide, so prioritize the tenpai payment. However, this judgment assumes you can reach tenpai safely.

Murakami **Agree** But if the gap were wider, it would be a close call.

Q092

Nemata **Agree** Winning here rarely puts you in first place, and even if you fold and the dealer repeats their turn, you still have a shot at top. Even from the perspective of aiming for first, you don't push.

Murakami **Agree** Take them on in the next round.

Q093

Nemata	Agree	Since there are plenty of transformation tiles for the hand to make it winnable without relying on ura-dora to overtake, it's better to take a detour to aim for top.
Murakami	Agree	Since the  is not a safe tile, it's a borderline situation, but it's a chance hand, so I'd discard the  .

Q094

Nemata	Agree	In the round before all-last, winning won't easily raise your placement, but dealing in carries the risk of dropping. Even with high-value good shape, don't push.
Murakami	Agree	Even if you discard the genbutsu  , there's still a high-value path to recovery.

Q095

Nemata	Agree	I'd consider pushing this 1-shanten even in a flat point standing and since getting won on in the round before all-last would drop you to last place from 3rd, you must push.
Murakami	Of Course Agree	

Q096

Nemata	Agree	If you are at a bad-shape 2-shanten, you don't push even in a painful situation. Pushing from a messy hand just because you are losing almost never results in a gain.
Murakami	Agree	From 2-shanten? No way...

Q097

Nemata	Agree	Cases where you can overtake somebody while staying concealed are limited, so you should take the tenpai even if it won't change your placement.
Murakami	Agree	Even as a menzen-style player, this is an iron chi. No, a "diamond chi"!

Q098

Nemata	Agree	Since it isn't strictly necessary to make a Mangan, calling Riichi for a win is better than waiting for a transformation that has fewer tiles than the current winning tiles. Aim for the ippatsu and ura-dora.
Murakami	Objection	At Turn 5, I want stay in damaten. If I end up drawing   , I'll discard the  and call a furiten Riichi to aim for a Haneman tsumo. However, calling a tsumogiri Riichi after a few turns is also an opt-

-tion. Whether to win for 1,000-point if it gets discarded in the meantime or ignore it to call a tsumogiri Riichi right after depends on the situation and turn count. If it's a rule where ippatsu, red tiles, or ura-dora come with "premium" value to them(shuugi), I would call immediate Riichi.

Q099

Nemata	Agree	Drawing more manzu would provide an explosive number of improvements, making a Men-Hon change quite realistic.
Murakami	Borderline	I'd love to stretch this hand to a ryanmen Honitsu, but who knows how many turns it would take to reach tenpai again... immediate Riichi is also a strong option.

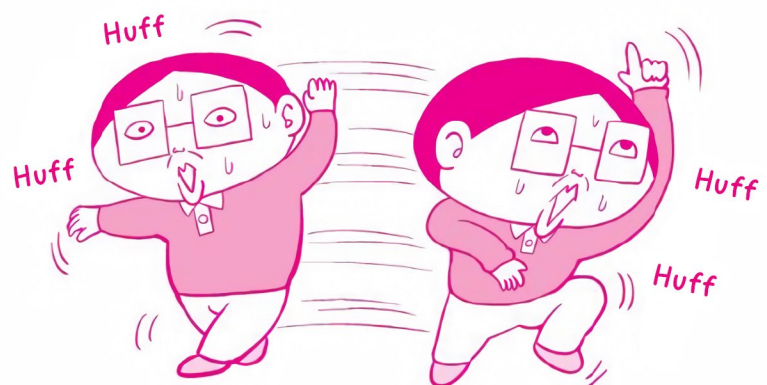
Q100

Nemata	Agree	The probability of winning by discarding  is incredibly low. If you are discarding a genbutsu, discard the one that assists the shimocha player you want to win.
Murakami	Agree	At all costs, avoid dealing into the Dora pon.

Q101

Nemata	Agree	This time, you don't want your shimocha to win either, so do not assist in order to maximize the probability of an exhaustive draw.
Murakami	Agree	Fully fold and if the dealer wins, aim for 2nd place in the next round.

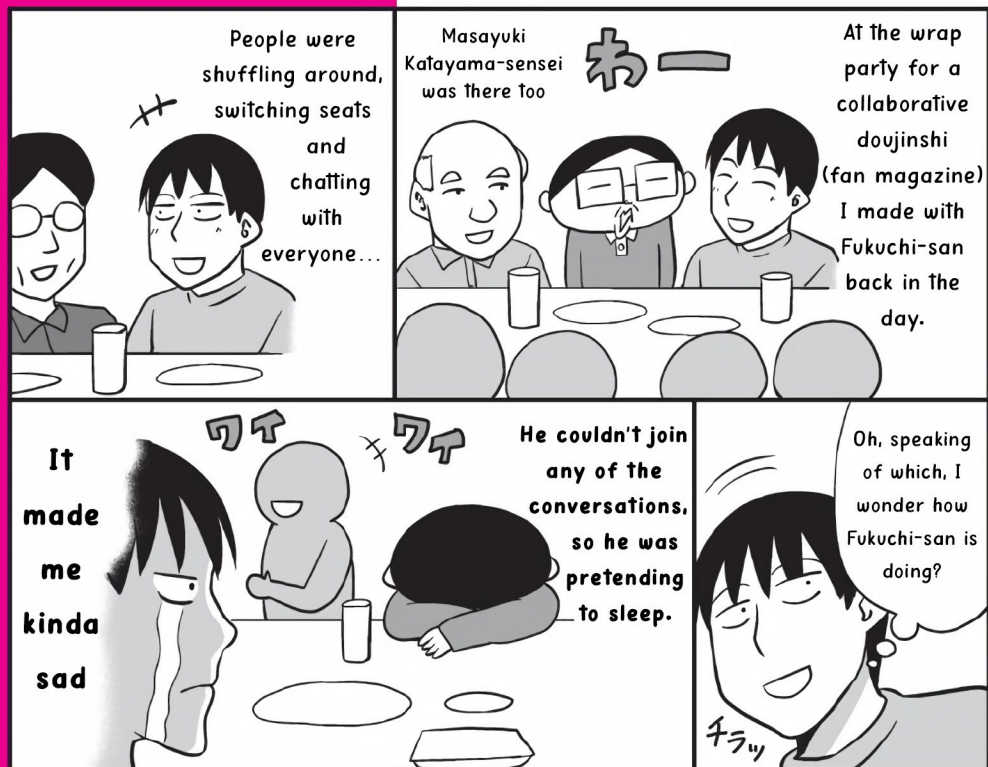
A short dance break ♡



This is How I've Played!

chapter >>> 4





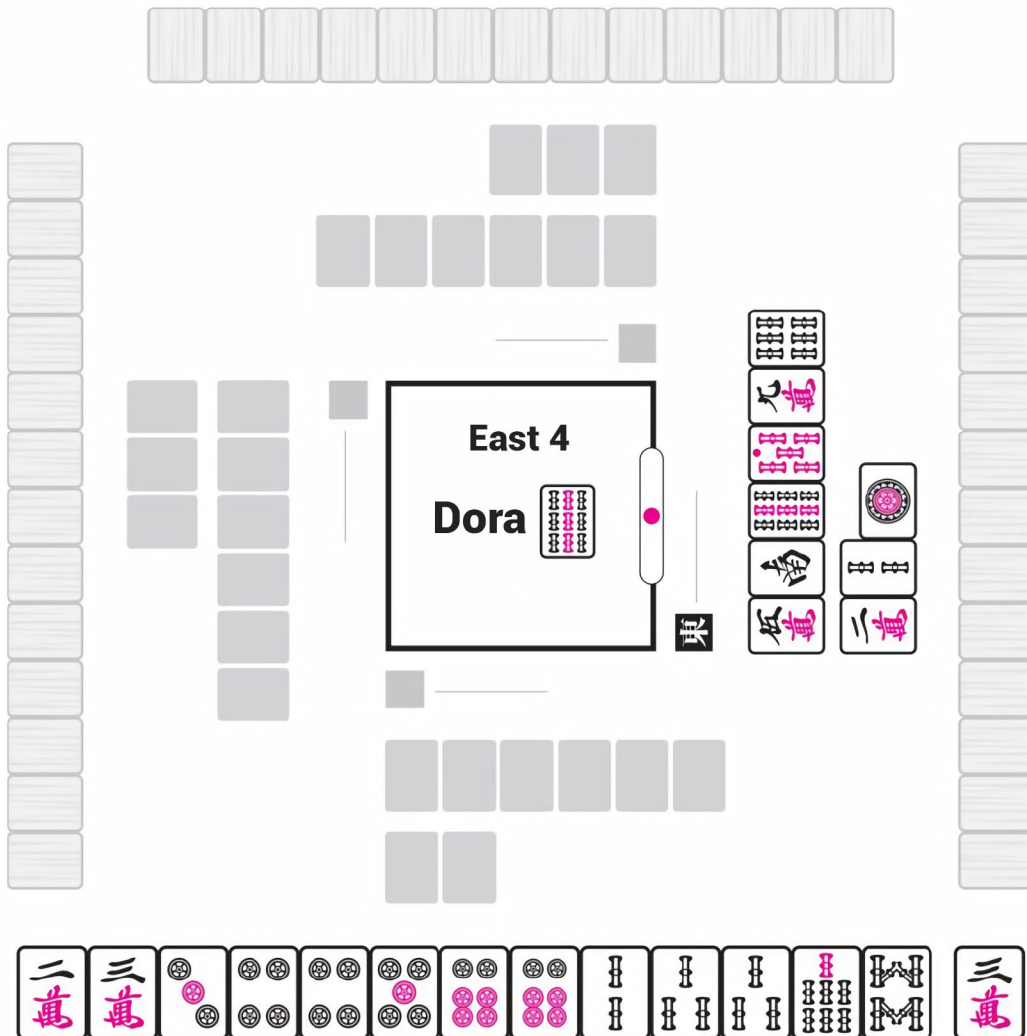
Q Discard Reading (1)

102

A Riichi from the dealer. With what policy do you discard?



Doesn't it look like a high-spirited discard pile?

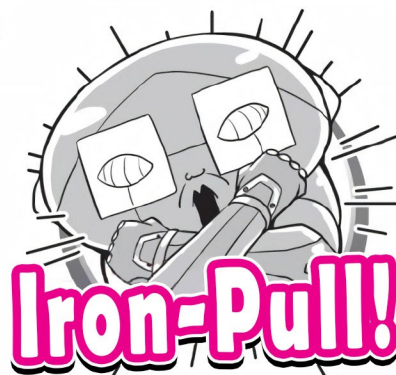


A Discard

102



The archetype of a discard pile you must never deal into. From the very first discard, it shows that either the hand was well-structured or they were hunting for a specific Yaku. Setting aside the difficult-to-use Dora, the fact that they discarded the early suggests that the shape for a Yaku was already completed at that point. Pinzu Honitsu, Chinitsu, or Ittsu are the main possibilities, but a penchan or kanchan wait for another Yaku is also possible, so discard your genbutsu seriously. In the real match, it was a Sanshoku on a penchan wait.



Dealing into a Yaku-focused Riichi like this makes you fodder.

Push-Pull Rule

102

An early Red Five discard signifies a Yaku.

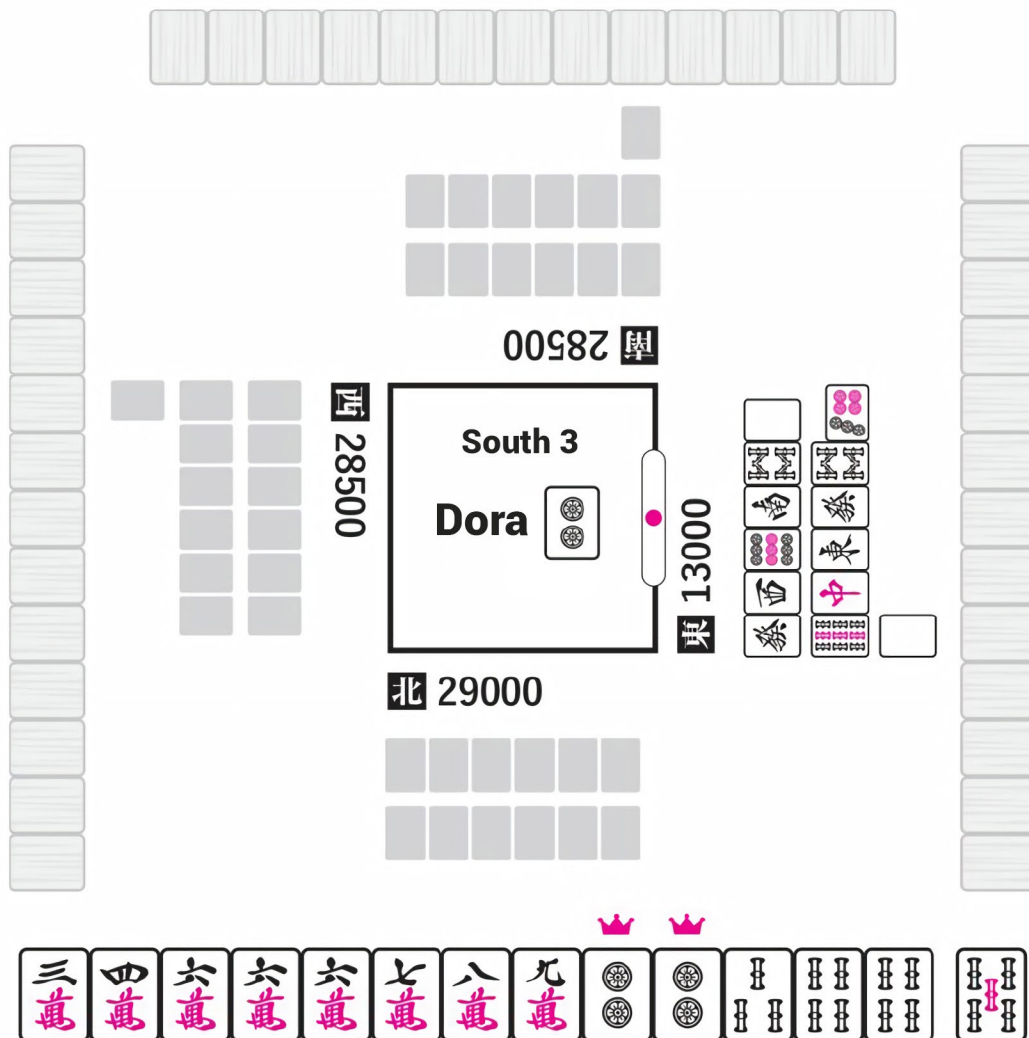
Q Discard Reading (2)

103

A Riichi came from the dealer, who is in dead last. You have reached tenpai as well; is this a spot where you can push?



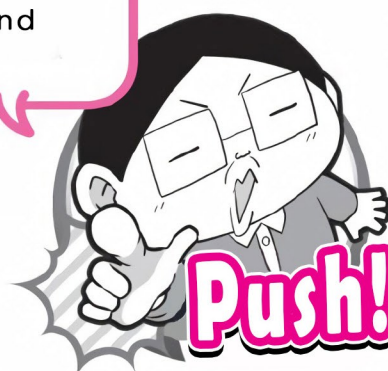
Based on the score situation, it's quite hard to push.



A 103 Riichi discarding

Since it is a Riichi from a dead-last dealer, push-pull theory suggests they are an opponent you shouldn't pick a fight with. Dealing in and falling from your lead only benefits the other two. However, the dealer's discard pond shows no trace of them selecting what sets to keep, suggesting they reached tenpai with whatever scrap materials they had. These kinds of Riichis often have poor shape waits. Judging that the winning probability with this wait is high, this is a spot where you want to push. In the real match, the dealer's wait was a Riichi-only on a  kanchan.

Whisper "Heh, small-time player" to yourself and call a chase Riichi.



Push-Pull Rule

103

See through Riichis that were forced due to desperate hand materials.

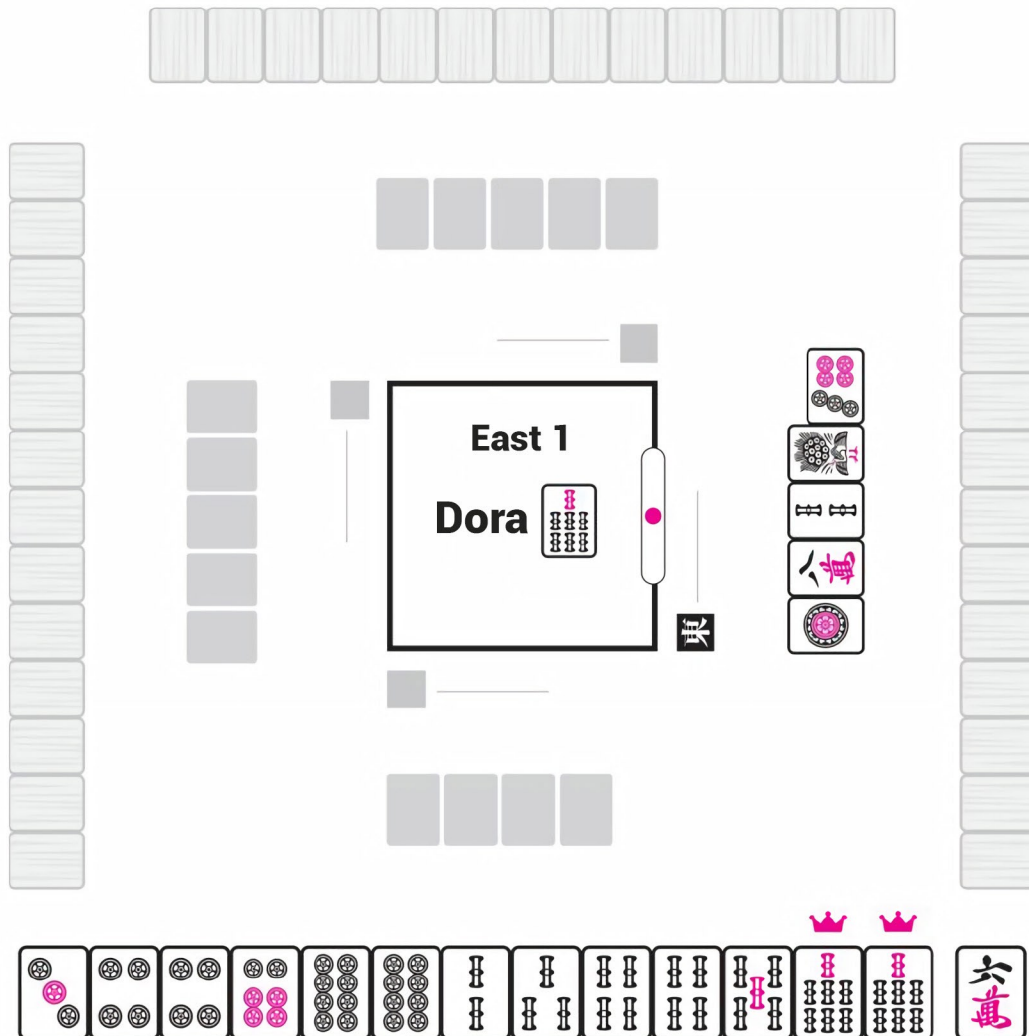
Q Discard Reading (3)

104

An early Riichi from the dealer. What policy do you follow for your discards?



This is a fairly basic discard reading.



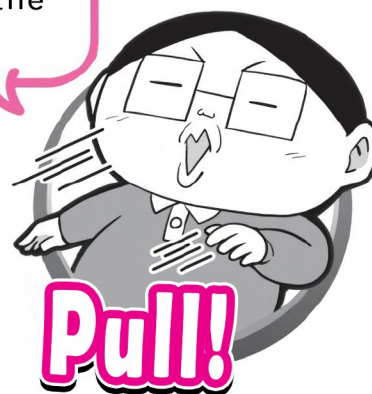
A
104

Discard genbutsu



On Turn 3, they discarded a  penchan set and immediately called Riichi with . The value is unknown, but the probability of a good-shape wait is high. Considering that the Dora tile is  that is easy to use, it is quite dangerous. Even though your hand has 2 Dora, you should refrain from pushing against this Riichi. Note that against Riichis with a high good-shape probability, suji tiles are more likely to pass, so if it look like you can advance, discarding a suji would be okay. In the real match, it was a Men-Pin-Dora 2 on a  wait.

I brought along a discard pond from a round where I was the one calling Riichi.



Push-Pull Rule

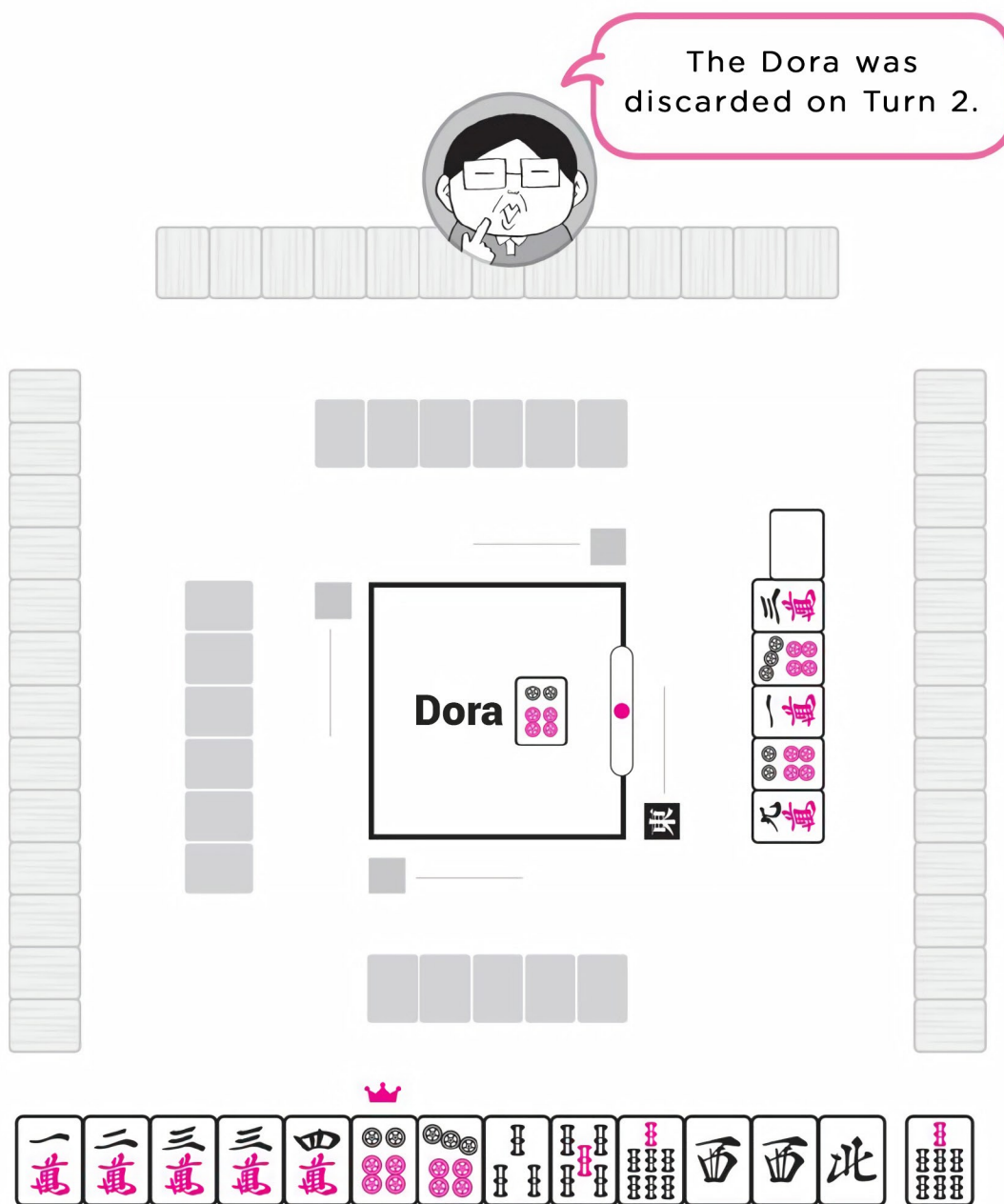
104

A Riichi involving a set discard has a high probability of good shape.

Q Discard Reading (4)

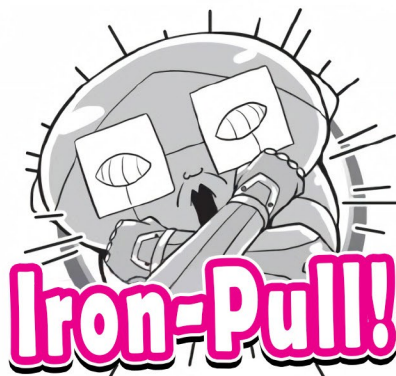
105

An early Riichi from the dealer. The Dora was discarded on Turn 2. What to discard?



A Discard

At the point of discarding the Dora on Turn 2, it's likely they already had an ideal shape for some Yaku. We don't know exactly which Yaku, but you must not deal into such a Riichi. If you have no genbutsu, dealing in might be unavoidable, but carelessly throwing honor tiles or suji is a mistake. The discards from this example was arranged from a real hand by the late Mitsuru Ando Pro: a Men-Hon Chiitoe win on an honor tile tanki. For a monster hand riichi that's this fast, even  or  becomes dangerous. Against a Riichi that reeks of a Monster hand, you should discard genbutsu and run away.



With cheap hands, the Dora is usually discarded right at the moment the Riichi is called.

Push-Pull Rule

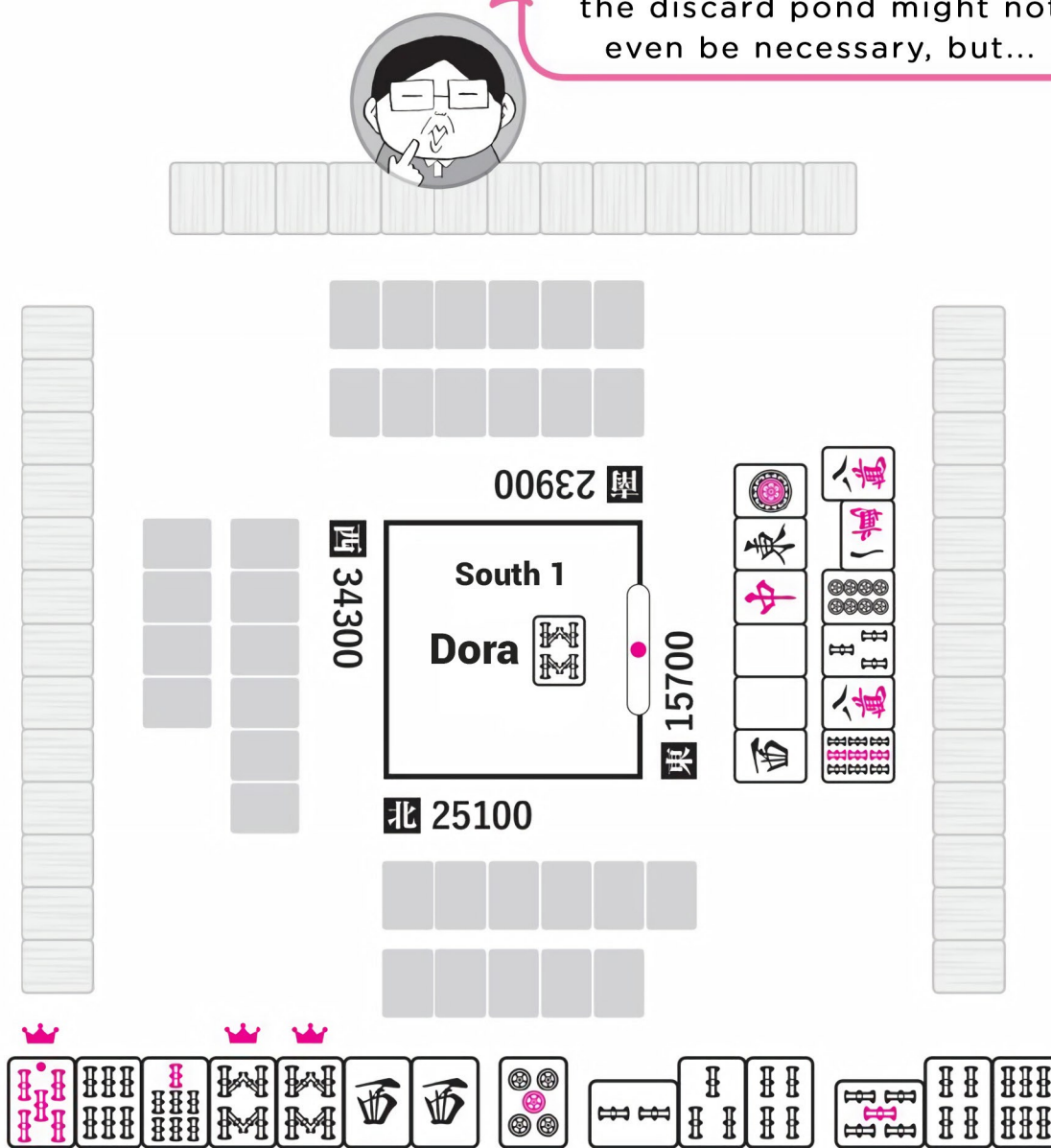
105

An early Dora discard signifies a Yaku.

Q Discard Reading (5)
106

A Riichi came from the dealer in last place. Your hand is tenpai for a takame Haneman; is this a spot where it's okay to push?

With a hand like this, reading the discard pond might not even be necessary, but...

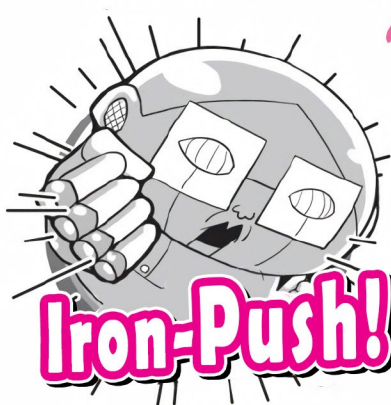


A Discard

106



This is a typical Riichi that is easy to push back against. There isn't even a trace of set selection, and almost no middle tiles have been discarded, giving the impression that they just barely reached tenpai using whatever scrap materials they had. Because very few suji waits have passed, the relative danger level of any individual new suji is low. Since your hand is a takame Haneman, this is a spot where you want to push. Go for a full zentsu.



In the real match, this Riichi was Chiitoitsu waiting on . In fact, you will likely deal-in more if you try to fold from here instead.

Push-Pull Rule

106

In a Riichi where few suji have passed, the danger level of any one specific dangerous tile is low.

Lesson
26**Master**
"Hand-value Reading"

Reading the value of the hand

You can read the scoring power of a Riichi to a certain extent.

First, a discard pond that doesn't show any set selection (discarding two tiles that formed a partial set) increases the probability of a kanchan or penchan wait. This usually means the win probability is lower, and the average point value decreases. Of course, this is just a general trend, but it is reliable enough to use in a real match.

If you look more broadly, the number of middle tiles discarded is proportional to the height of the Riichi's value (excluding irregular hands like Chiitoitsu).

Let's look back at the discard ponds of the previous problems.

Q106 was a typical cheap-looking Riichi pond. If your own hand is at least decent, it's a Riichi you want to push back against.

Q102 and Q105 are archetypes of high-value Riichi ponds. Especially in Q102, you can feel a clear intent behind the discards. Unless you have a Monster hand, your priority is to run away from these.

Q104 looks standard at first glance, but for a 5-turn Riichi, it shows very little "wasted" draws, suggesting a hand that is tightly packed

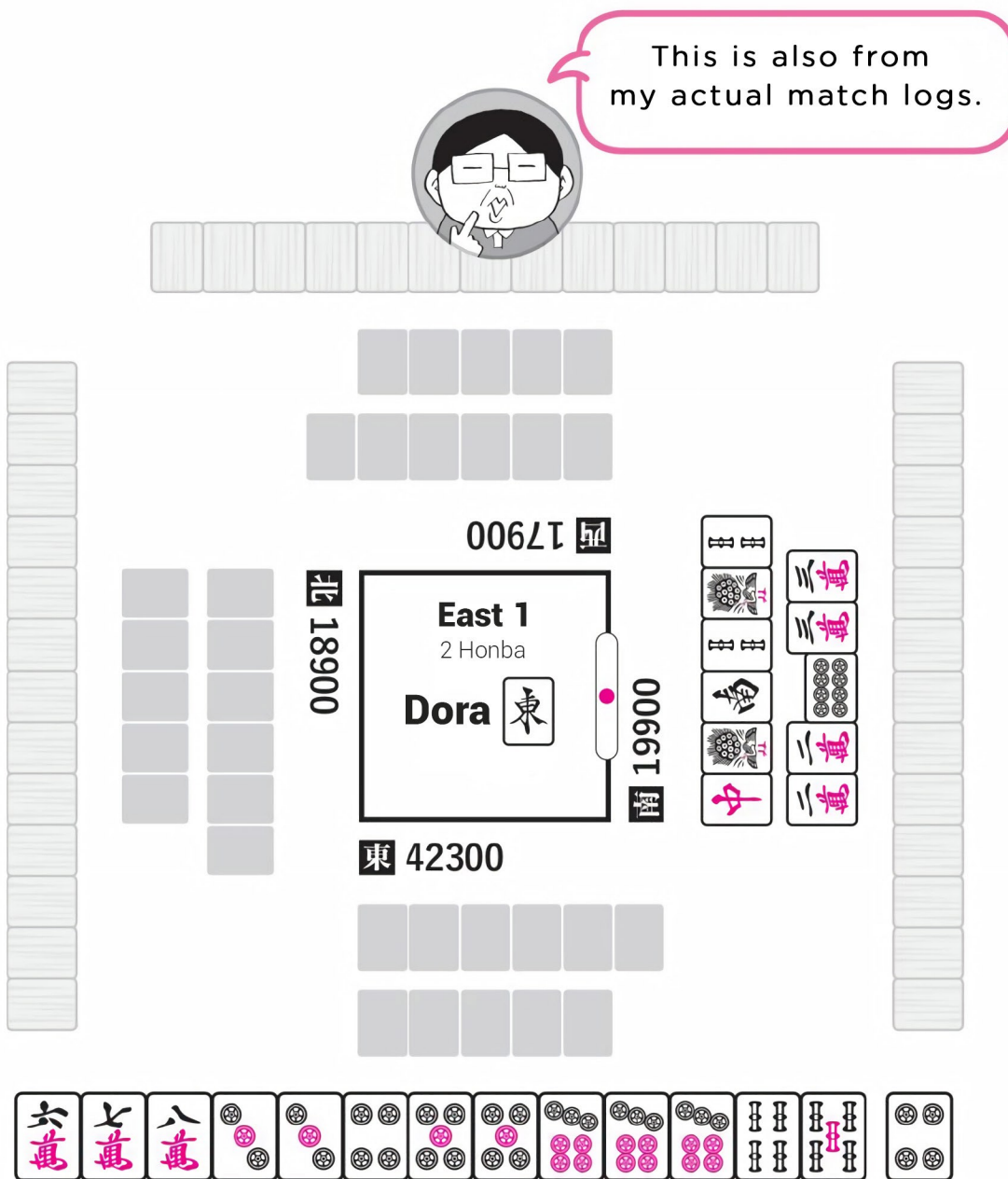
and dangerous. These discard ponds clearly show the potential for high value despite the early turn count.

Push-Pull Rule so far

- 102 An early red five discard signifies a Yaku.
- 103 See through Riichis that were forced due to desperate hand materials.
- 104 A Riichi involving a set selection discard has a high probability of good shape.
- 105 An early Dora discard signifies a Yaku.
- 106 In a Riichi where few suji have passed, the danger level of individual dangerous tiles is low.

Q Chase Riichi

Dealer in East 1. You have a massive lead. While another player is in Riichi, you also reach tenpai. Do you call a chase Riichi?



A
107

Riichi discarding



In a massive lead situation, an ankou of  is hard to discard... however, since there are no other safe tiles, you have no choice but to discard the  and call Riichi. This answer is so obvious that the amount of time you spend hesitating here serves as a measurement for how poorly defined your push-pull criteria are. Call a chase Riichi with no time delay.



The Riichi's wait was a kanchan wait on .

Push-Pull Rule

107

**As a dealer with a massive lead,
push even further.**

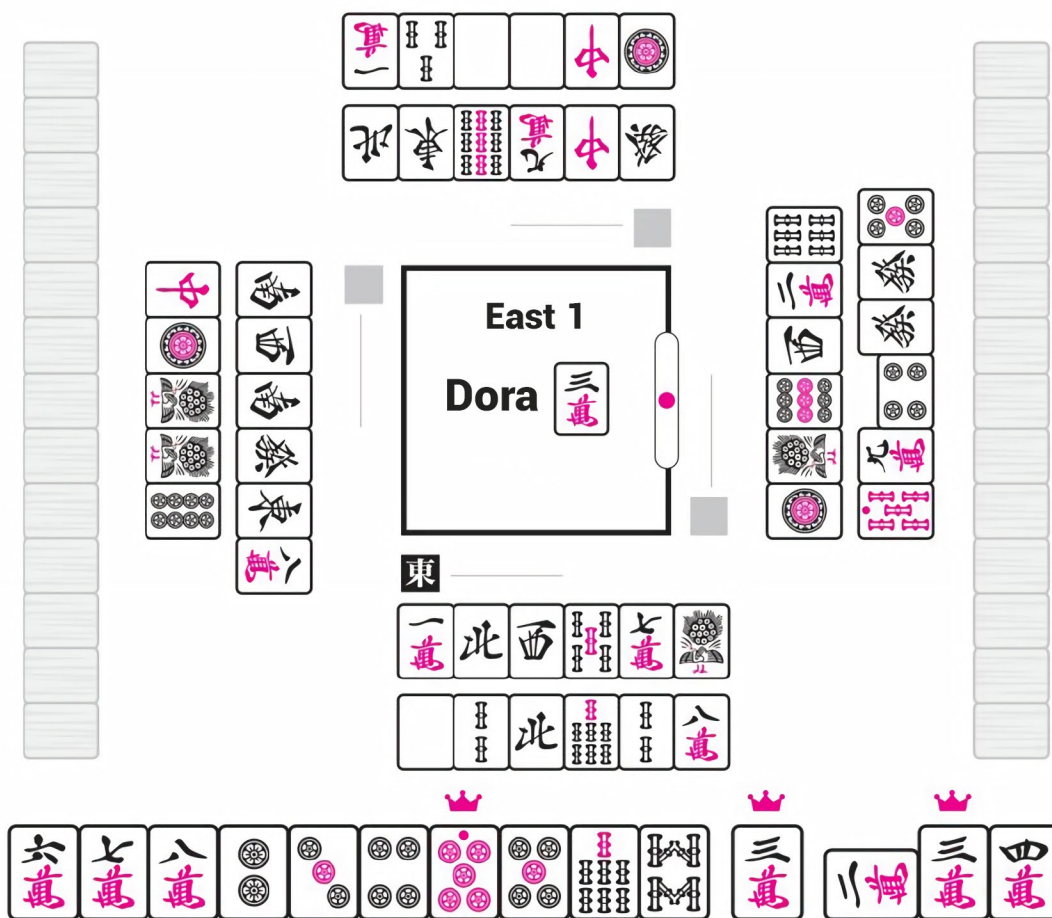
Q Drawing battle (1)

108

In a situation where your shimocha has called Riichi, you are in tenpai as the dealer waiting on their genbutsu. You draw the Dora . Do you push?

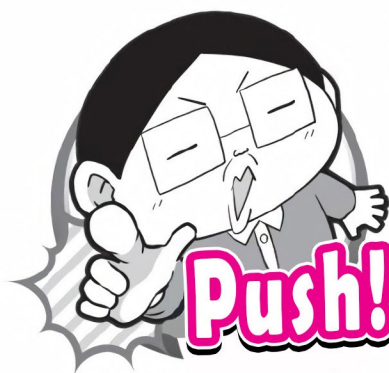


This is a pretty dangerous tile.



A 108 Push the

Looking at your shimocha's Riichi, they aren't waiting on souzu. Furthermore, because  passed one turn ago, the danger level of other suji lines has jumped significantly. The remaining "live" lines are basically  ,  ,   and  . Therefore, the Dora  is extremely dangerous. However, against the shimocha's Riichi, one of the other two players will eventually discard a Souzu tile. If they try to play a maneuvering game in this board state, they will likely drop their souzu tiles. This is a test of endurance to see if you can hold on until then. Don't look up from the basin; grit your teeth and push even the Dora.



I have a mountain of experience with pushing and then dealing in, but...

Push-Pull Rule

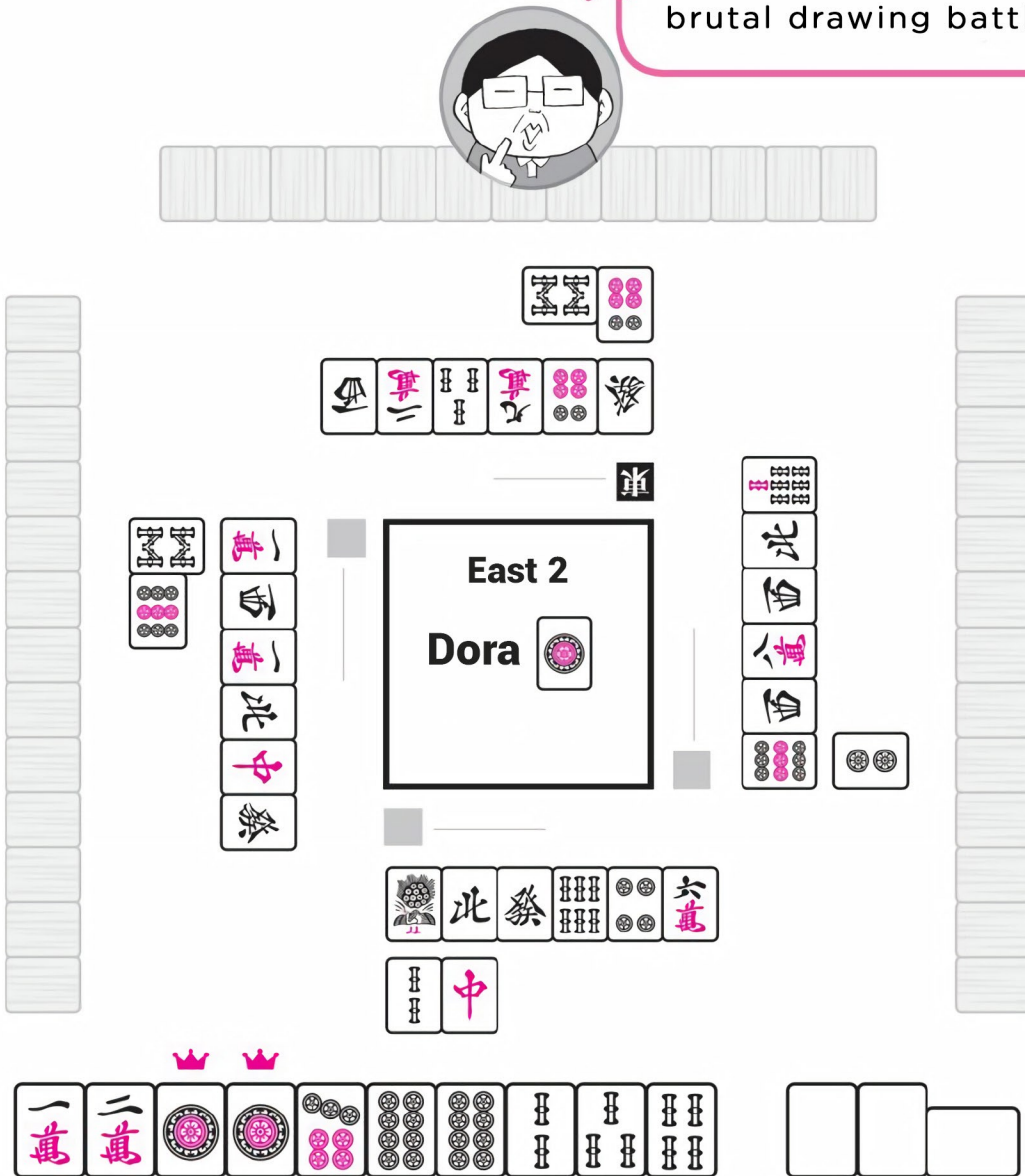
108

If it's a tile that is guaranteed to come out, you should wait for it regardless of what you have to discard.

Q Drawing battle (2)

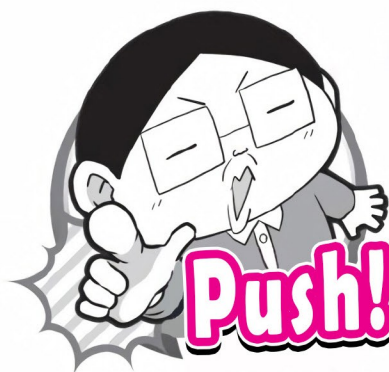
Your toimen and your kamicha have called Riichi in succession. If you chi the latest Riichi declaration tile, you will also reach tenpai, but on a penchan wait. Do you chi and join the head-to-head drawing battle?

This looks like a fairly brutal drawing battle.



A 109 Chi and join the drawing battle

Facing two Riichis with a penchan wait is painful, but since both opponents discarded low Manzu tiles early, a  wait isn't without hope. With 2 Dora and a 3,900-point hand, you have no choice but to dive in. Even if you tried to fold, there aren't many truly safe tiles. In the actual match, the shimocha was also in damaten for a Mangan, resulting in a 4-person tenpai situation, but luckily, this hand managed to win.



There are situations like this where pushing is your only real option.

Push-Pull Rule

109

**In a situation where you have
no choice but to push,
do not hesitate.**

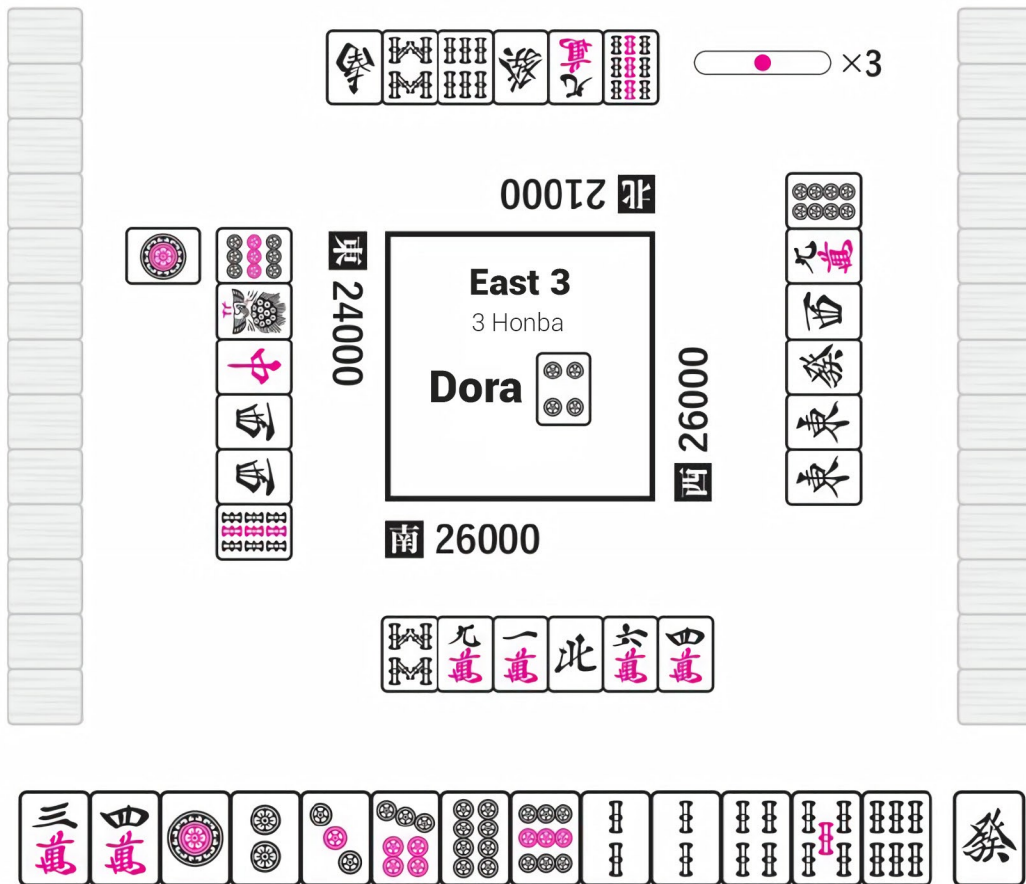
Q
110

A board with many Riichi sticks

East 3, 3-honba. There are three Riichi sticks on the table. You reach tenpai with Pinfu only. Do you call Riichi?

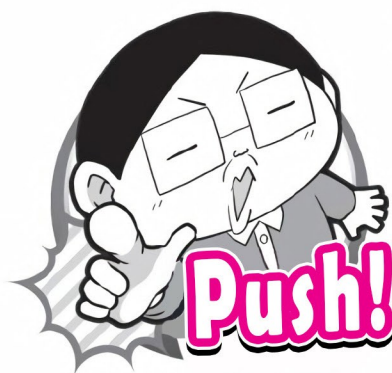


To pick up the 3,900 points lying on the table...?



A 110 Riichi

Generally speaking, dama yields a higher win rate. However, with this discard pond and a Manzu wait, your win rate might not even drop if you call Riichi. When the profit/loss balance is unclear, you should go with an aggressive style: call Riichi to corner your opponents and prevent them from playing easily. In the actual match, calling Riichi led to a  tsumo and a lucky ura-dora.



Because this is a game with many invisible elements, it's vital to corner your opponents and force them into mistakes.

Push-Pull Rule

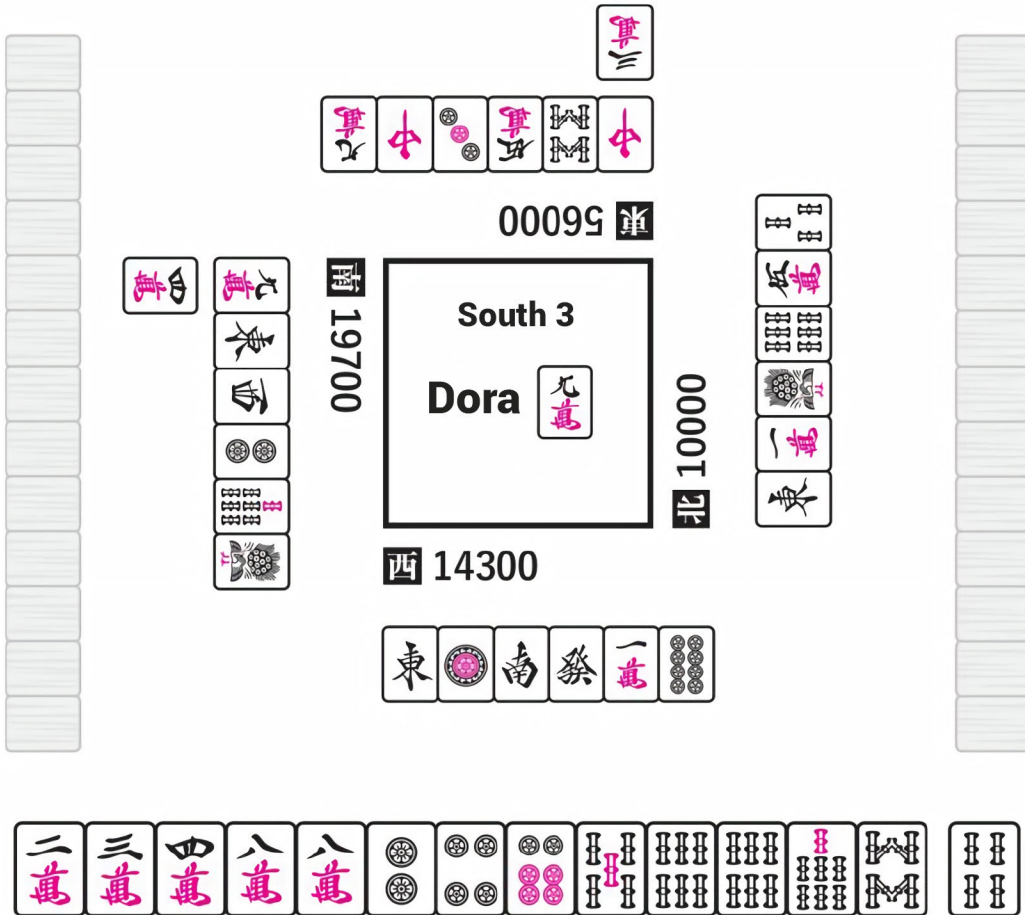
110

Even if you want the pot, do not let your opponents off easy.

Fighting in a Close Race

The bottom three players are in a relatively close race. You reached tenpai with Tanyao only. Regardless of which tile you discard, you end up with a suji-trap tenpai, but how do you take it? Do you call Riichi or stay in dama?

It's a lonely hand without any red fives, but...

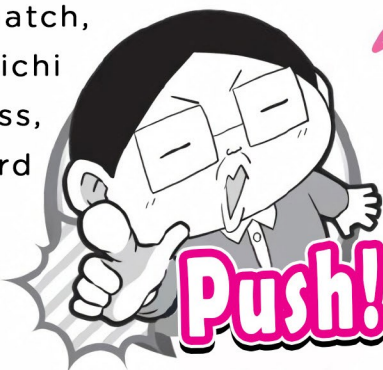


A
111

Riichi discarding



In a close race, a headstart Riichi is powerful. Conversely, in the East round or a "wild game" (points-heavy chaotic game), hand value is more important. Since this is a close race in the round before All-Last, you want to call a sharp Riichi. By doing so, your kamicha in 2nd place will find it hard to push, and the dealer won't feel the need to push either unless they have a chance hand. You take the wait on , which your toimen and your kamicha aren't likely to be using and would be hard for them to keep if they draw it. In the real match, I received a chase Riichi from the dealer across, but I won off a discard and hit two ura-dora to make it a Mangan.



This is a level where there is no clear right or wrong answer.

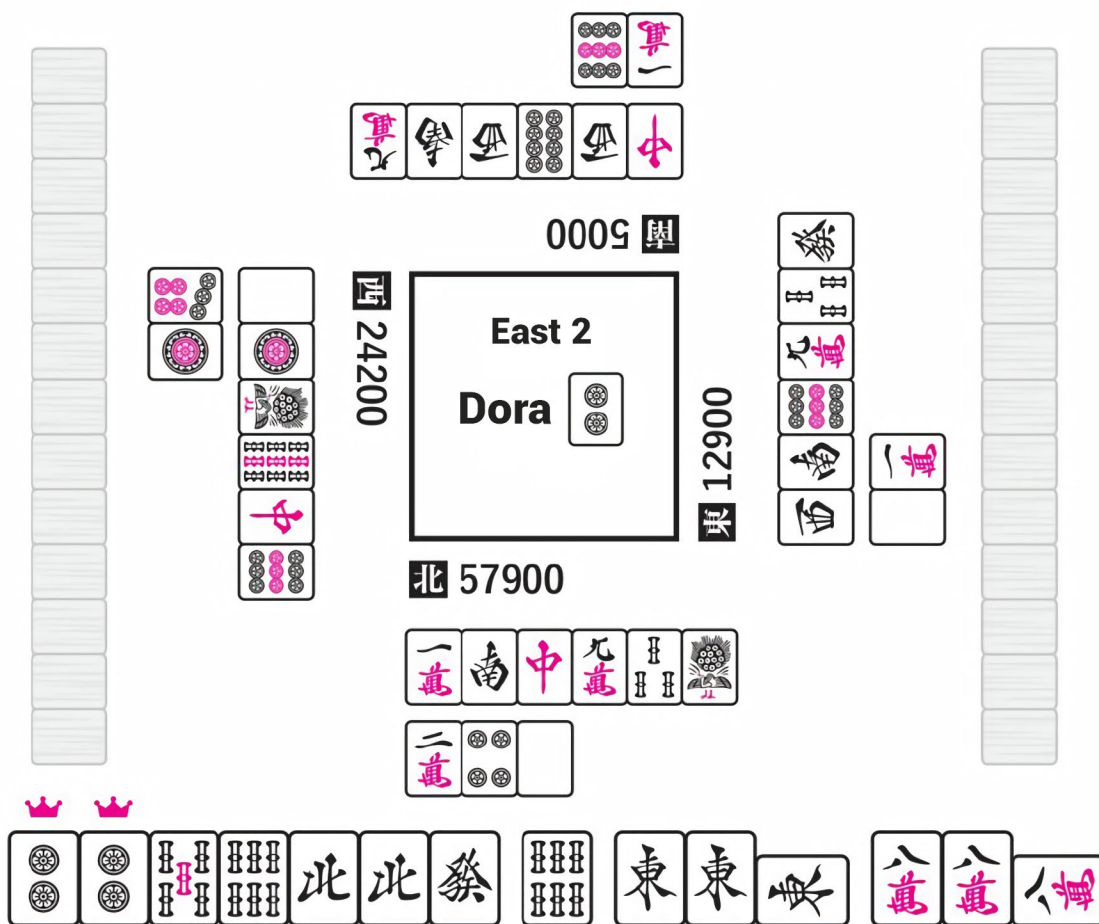
Push-Pull Rule

111

In a close race, the leading Riichi is strong; in a wild game, hand value is strong.

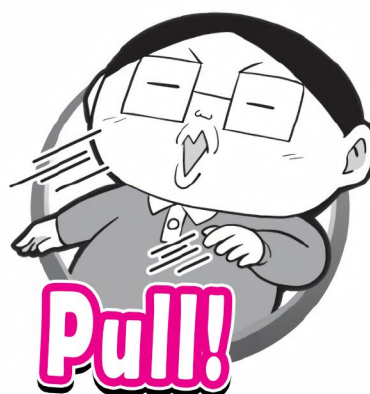
Massive Lead Non-dealer

East 2. You have a massive lead as a non-dealer. What is your policy here and what do you discard?



A 112 Tsumogiri the

You drew a , and the possibility of Toitoi appeared. However, you already have plenty of point sticks, and since you have a Mangan with   and Dora 2, prioritizing safety and win rate is more important than increasing value via Toitoi. There's no rule saying that keeping the  is absolutely wrong, but here you want to tsumogiri and keep your hand "slim." In a board state where everyone is discarding from the outside to inwards, don't overextend for a middle-tile Toitoi.



As a result,
I won the
hand and
busted
toimen.

Push-Pull Rule

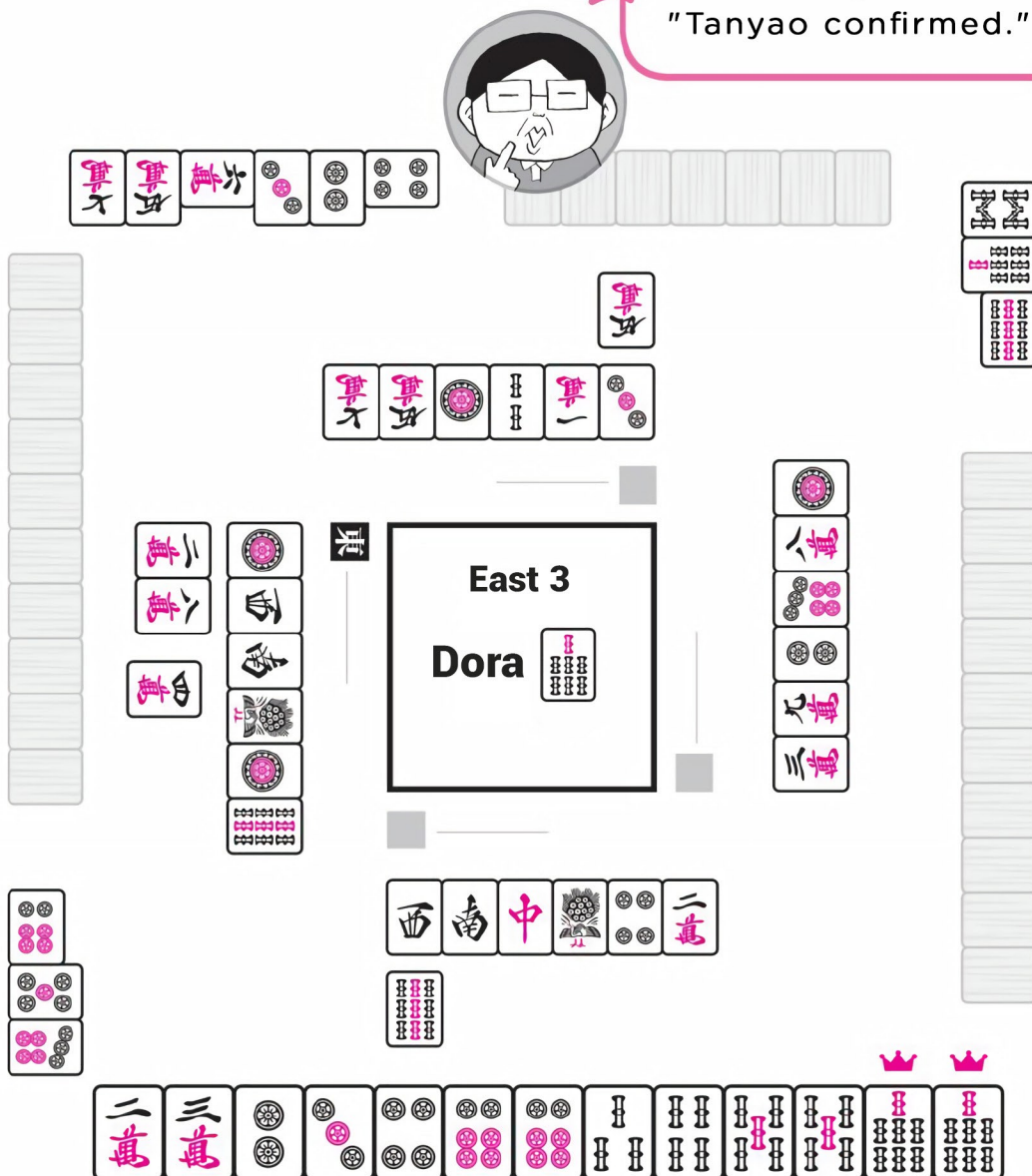
112

**Do not over-pursue a Toitoi
with middle tiles.**

Q To Call or Not? 113

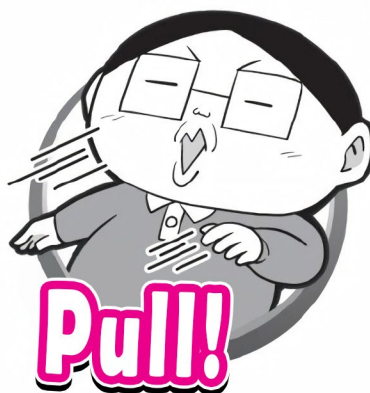
Your kamicha discarded a . If you chi this, Tanyao is confirmed and you reach tenpai on a shanpon wait for the Dora and . Do you chi?

The alluring sound of
"Tanyao confirmed."



A 113 Pass

While the confirmed Tanyao is appealing, the  acceptance is the strongest part of this hand. If those tiles remain, it becomes an ideal wait. If you call here, the  shanpon already has one of each discarded, making your winning chances very thin. You should pass and aim for a Riichi on the  wait. In a pinch, the  is highly safe and easy to drop to fold the hand.



The fact our shimocha is going for a Souzu Honitsu, is also a reason why it's harder to call.

Push-Pull Rule

113

Do not Chi away your ideal drawing acceptance.

**Lesson
27****Speed in Close Games,
Value in Wild Games****The importance of speed changes based on the point standing**

When you enter the South round, if the point gaps are wide, it is a wild game; then the value takes predominance. When the point gaps are wide then there aren't much point in going for cheap hands. This makes sense right.

In a “close game”, speed takes priority. Even a cheap win has massive value because it advances the round and protects your relative standing. You can imagine a scenario like an all-last round, where people can win with any hand to finish the game in top, that continues on for multiple rounds. Even a hand you'd normally want to call Riichi with is better off as a quick win via calling to cross the finish line first.

Mahjong isn't a game about winning expensive hands; it's a game about taking the top placement. The ideal way to fight is to take first place by a 100-point margin every single time. A high-value win is merely a means to achieve that placement.

Winning even a cheap hand increases your first-place rate

Even if the point gaps aren't wide in the East round, it functions like

a wild game. Because there are many rounds remaining, being able to rack up points early gives you a significant advantage. That said, just by winning a 1,000-point hand in East 1 your average final placement statistically improves from 2.50 to 2.42. It is a mistake to think that cheap wins are meaningless.

As a general rule, keep this in the back of your mind: Speed in close games, value in wild games.

Push-Pull Rule so far

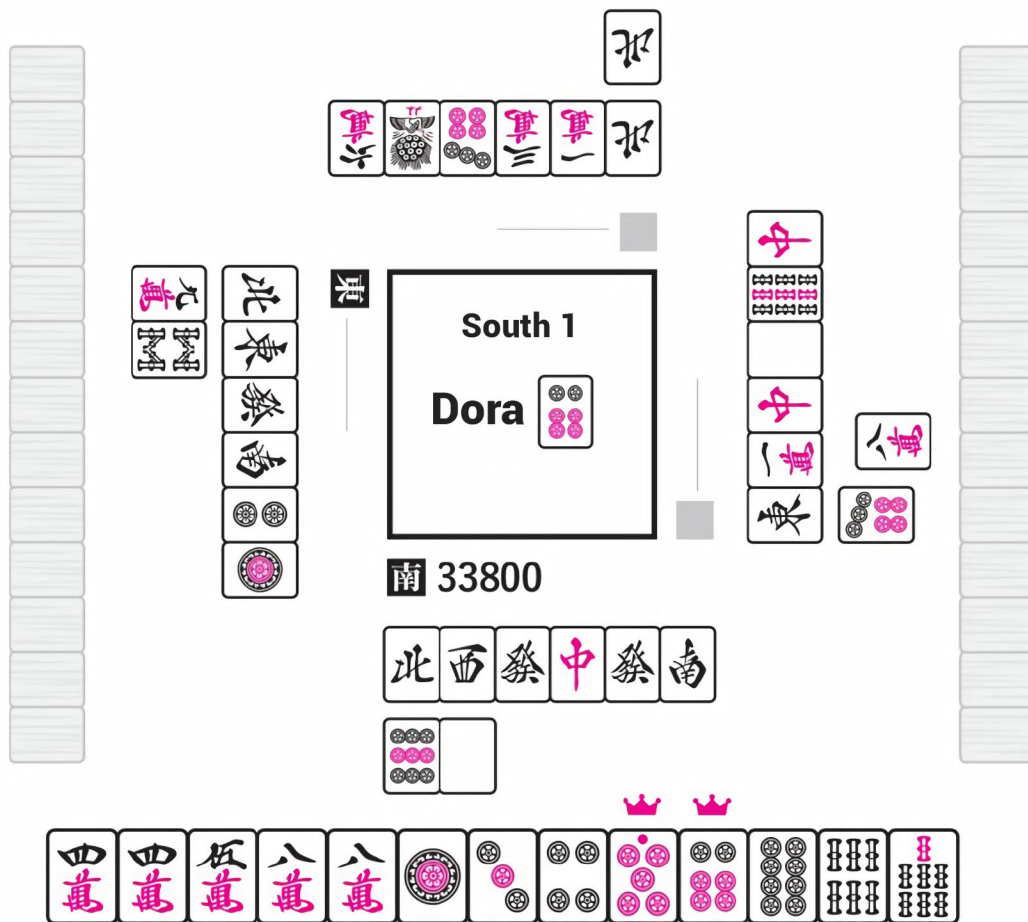
- 107 As a dealer with a massive lead, push even further.
- 108 If it's a tile that is guaranteed to come out, you should wait for it regardless of what you have to discard.
- 109 In a situation where you have no choice but to push, do not hesitate.
- 110 Even if you want the pot, do not let your opponents off easy.
- 111 In a close race, the leading Riichi is strong; in a wild game, hand value is strong.
- 112 Do not over-pursue a Toitōi with middle tiles.
- 113 Do not Chi away your ideal drawing acceptance.

Q Relative Speed 114

You are in first place in South 1. Do you pon the  just discarded by your shimocha?

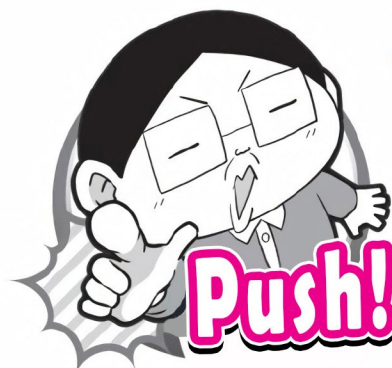


This is a question of what kind of style you want to fight with.



A 114 Pon the

At this turn count, being at 2-shanten means you won't make it in time and can't contest the round. Your toimen especially looks fast (actually, they were already in tenpai on a penchan  for Junchan). You are forced to choose between two paths right now: pon the  and fight with Tanyao, or drop the  while playing safely. In the real match, I ponned the . After a dealer Riichi came from kamicha, I chi'd a  and won on a  shan-pon. If you aren't comfortable with this kind of on-the-edge fighting, you should pass the 8-man and secure safe tiles instead.



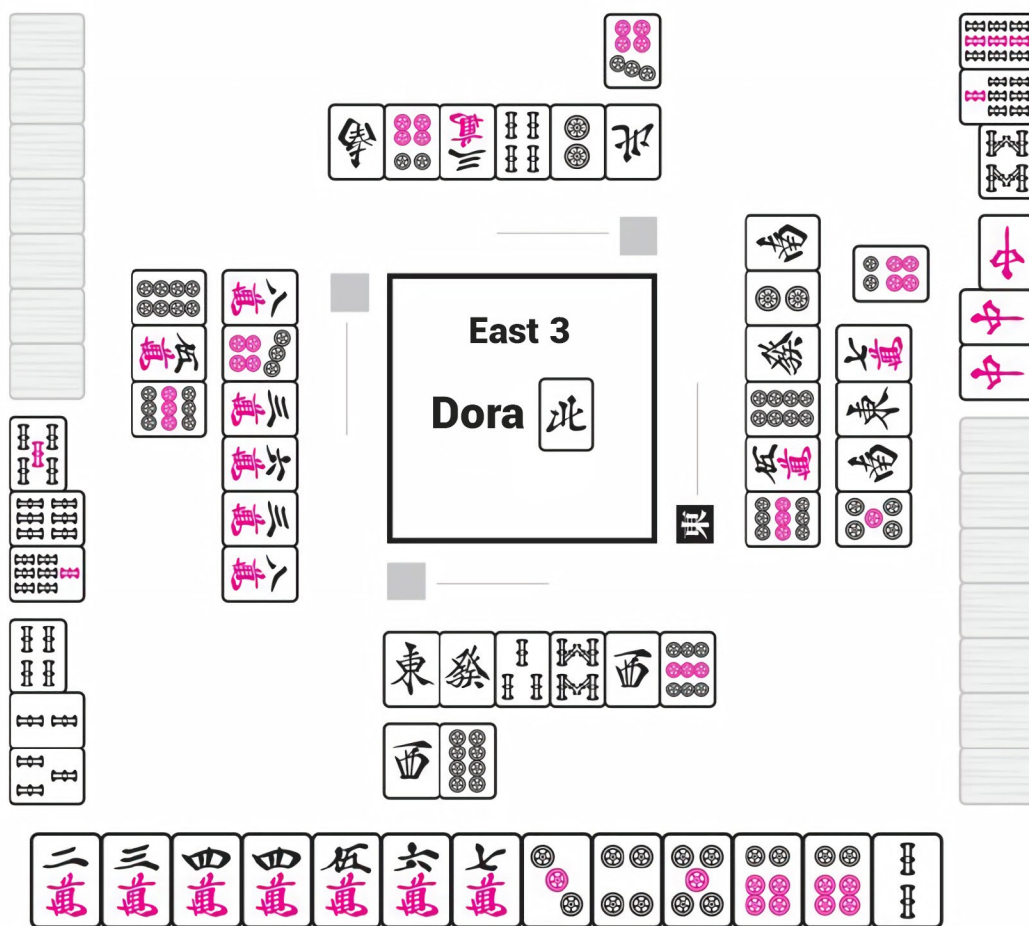
This  pon is a very Tonpuu-style move. People who aren't used to that might find it difficult.

Push-Pull Rule

114

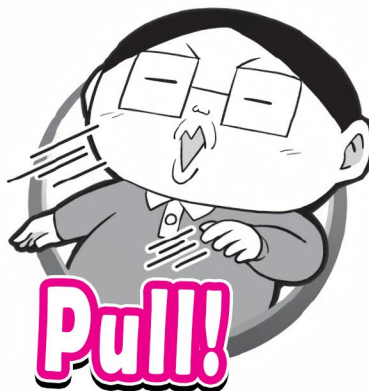
Around Turn 8, make sure to visualize a realistic path to a winning hand.

Q
115



A 115 Pon the

Normally, you wouldn't want to pon an  like this. However, your kamicha and your shimocha are both coloring their hands in souzu, with only one  dora discarded on turn 1. Even if you draw a manzu to reach tenpai, without any red fives, your scoring power is at a disadvantage. Manzu tiles are the ideal wait, so if it were a few turns earlier, you'd want to push while concealed. But in this mature situation, you should actually avoid a drawing battle and just wash away the round quickly with a manzu wait. In the real match, after the  pon, I drew two  in a row I could not tsumo, but eventually drew  and won.



You don't hear the term "relative hand value" often, but I think it fits perfectly.

Push-Pull Rule

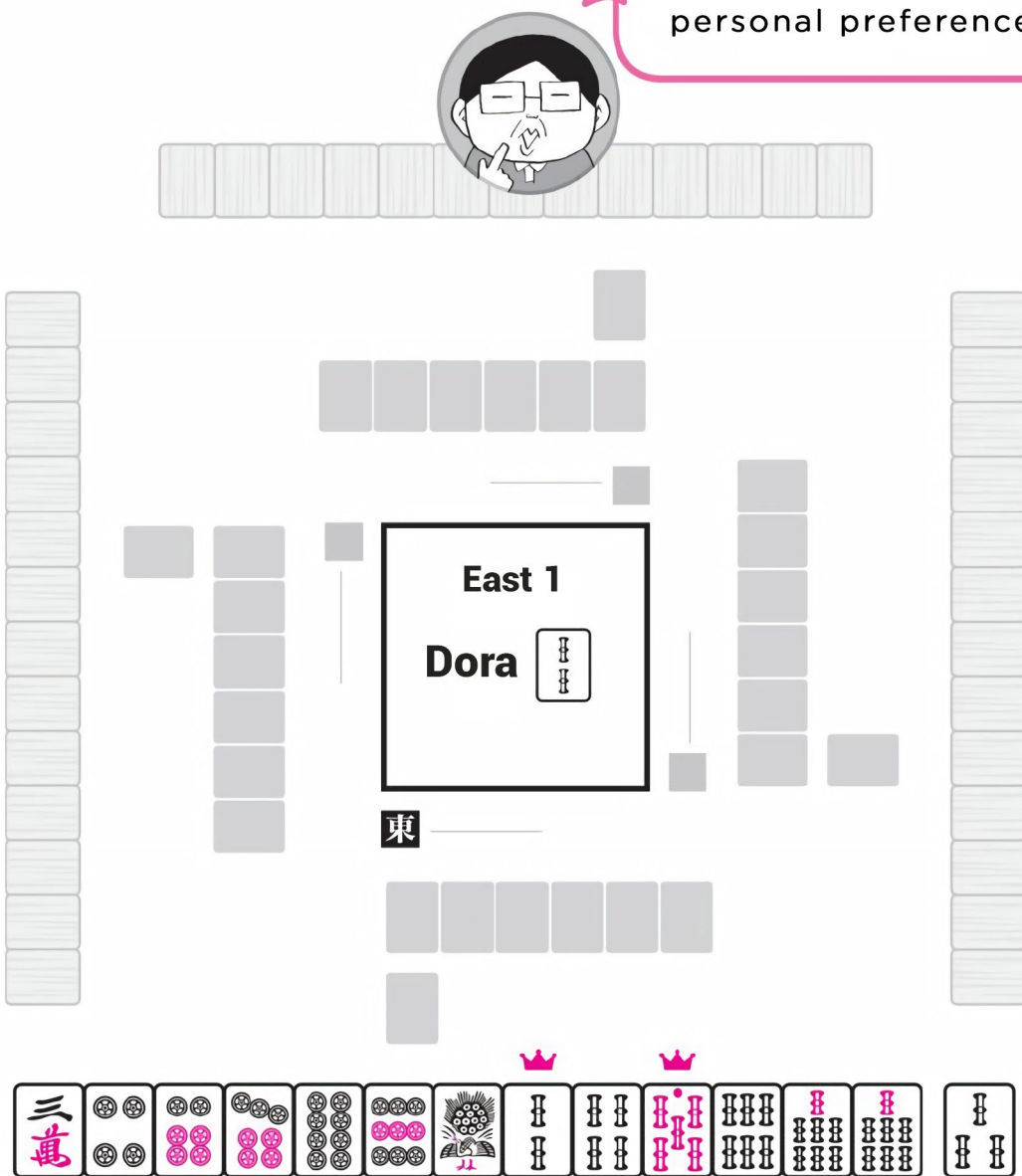
115

If flush-makers have a mature hand, do not aim for a drawing battle with a hand that has inferior value.

Q

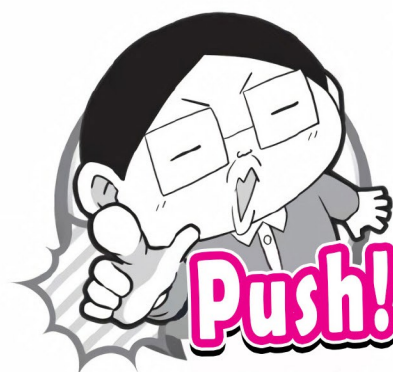
As the dealer in East 1, you reached tenpai with a red five and a Dora. However, a  kanchan wait is subpar. Do you take the tenpai? Do you call Riichi or stay in dama?

It feels like this is a situation where personal preference plays a role.



A Riichi 116

Creating a ryanmen from here would take far too much time. Even if you have a 4-tile sequence, an immediate Riichi is usually better; you'd need two such shapes before breaking tenpai becomes profitable. An early Riichi is just that powerful. Winning Mahjong is about immediate Riichi; using up 5 or 6 more turns trying to make a ryanmen is a way of playing that wastes a hand with good point potential.



This is a characteristically "modern Mahjong" Riichi.

Push-Pull Rule

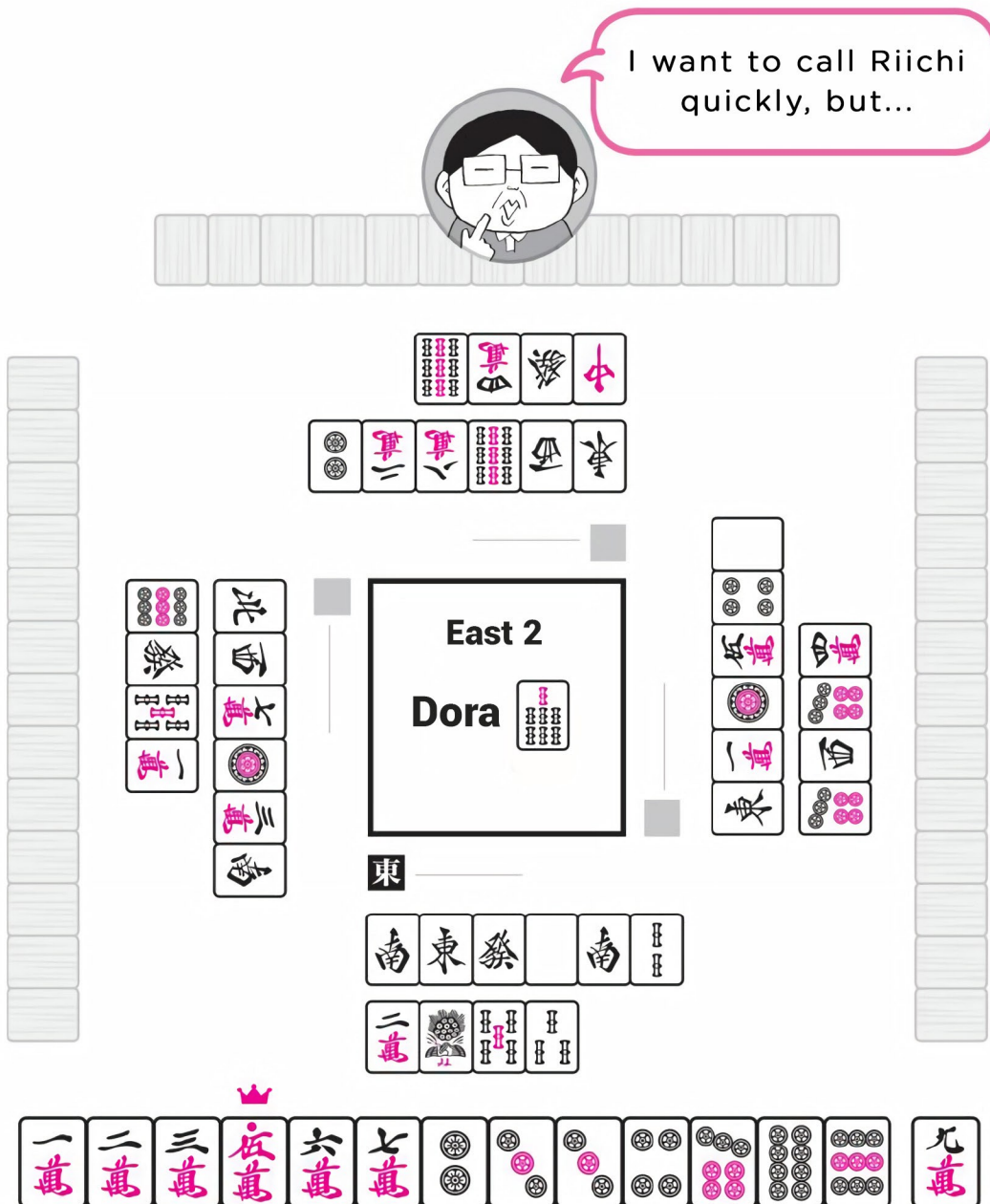
116

For a dealer, reaching tenpai is the time to go on the offensive.

Q Choosing a Wait

117

You are the dealer and currently in a temporary tenpai. You draw a . Do you call Riichi on a tanki wait?



A 117 Riichi tanki wait on

The win rate for a Riichi on a musuji terminal tanki wait is 35% even on Turn 11. Since a ryanmen Riichi's win rate doesn't drop below that number until after Turn 14, unless you attach a tile to a sequence and form a ayanmen or nobetan within the next 2 turns, an immediate Riichi on the  tanki is the better play. Looking at the board, a  tanki is a good wait, and the tiles that would improve your sequences into a good wait are limited to just  or . You should call Riichi immediately. In the actual match, this was the hand that Fukuchi dealt into—the  was an ura-dora, resulting in a dealer Mangan.



This is the hateful hand that I actually dealt into.

Push-Pull Rule

117

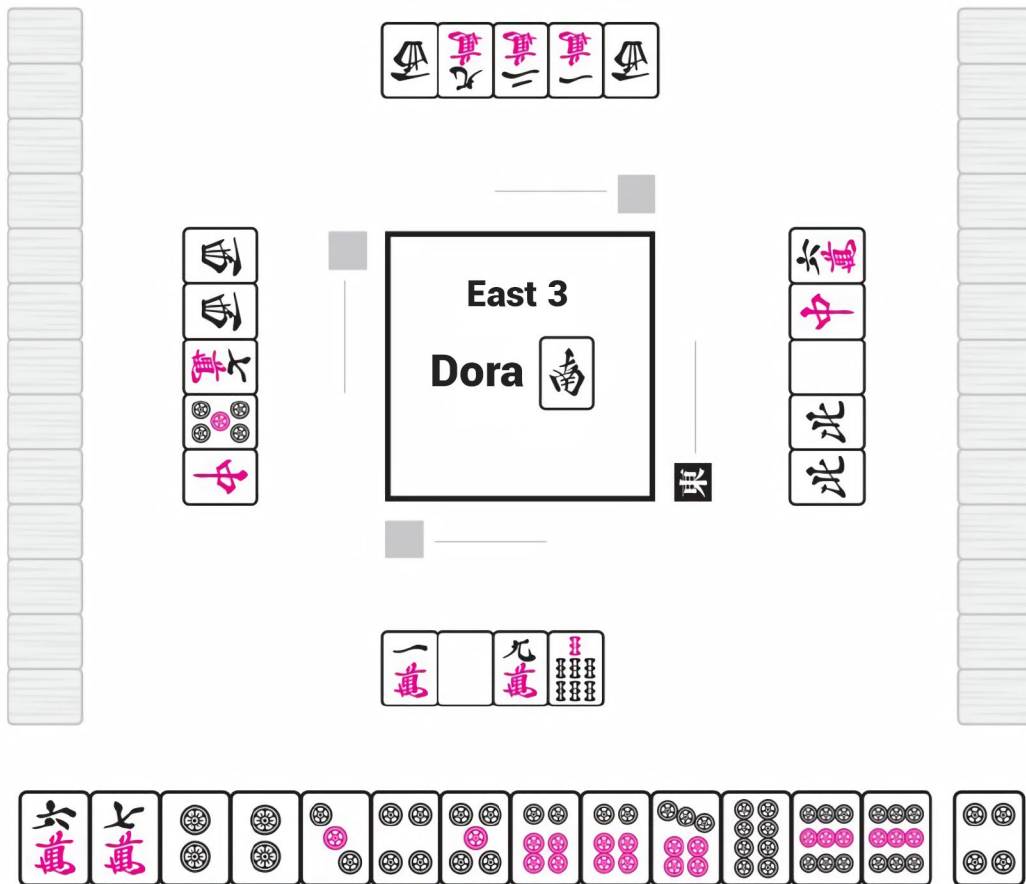
A Riichi on a musuji numbered tile tanki is also perfectly viable.

Q Should I Flush the Hand? 118

Three players have been discarding high manzu tiles. You reached tenpai early with an ideal wait. However, Chinitsu is also a possibility. What do you do?



This is also from my actual match logs.



A
118

Discard



A   wait is quite good, but no matter how good the wait is, the difference between Pinfu and Chinitsu is massive. Here, you should naturally aim for Chinitsu. It is a mistake to settle for a small win with a chance hand like this. For a hand that has the potential to become a Mangan, it is vital to make the effort to stretch it to that value. In the real match, I poned the  and reached tenpai on a   wait. I immediately chi-ed a  as a kanchan, changing the wait to   , and won off a  discard.



Is this too obvious?

Push-Pull Rule

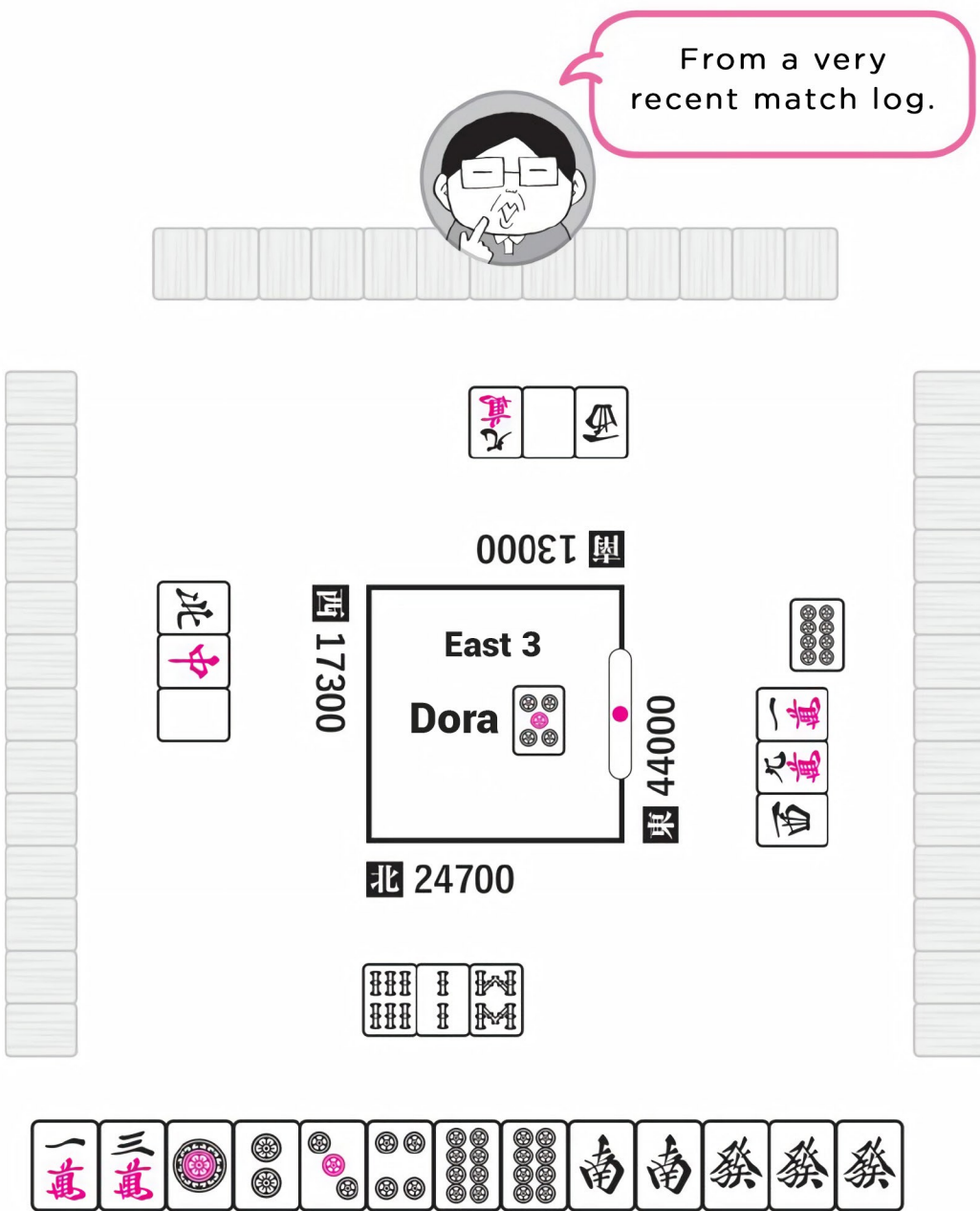
118

If a hand can be stretched to Chinitsu, stretch it to Chinitsu.

Q Can You Push?
119

A Riichi has come from the dealer, who has a massive lead. Do you pon the  Riichi declaration tile?

From a very recent match log.

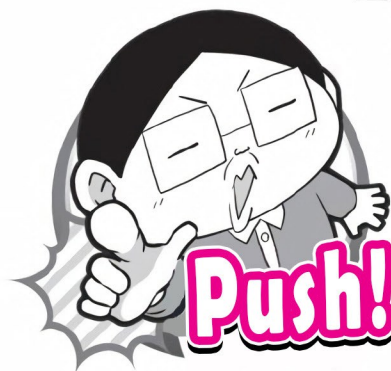


A
119

Pon and discard



Based on the point standing, this is a difficult situation to push. The opponent is a dealer with a massive lead. Even if you win, you are far from first place, and if you deal in, you risk dropping from second place. However, it is still the East round. Do not over-focus on the point situation; this is an early Mangan chance, so you should pon and move forward. If you have a chance hand, you shouldn't submit even to an early Riichi. Against a Riichi with very few passed suji, even a musuji tile is statistically unlikely to hit. In the real match, the dealer's hand was a Riichi-only on a  penchan wait.



Just move forward with the feeling that you have plenty of tiles to fold with later.

Push-Pull Rule

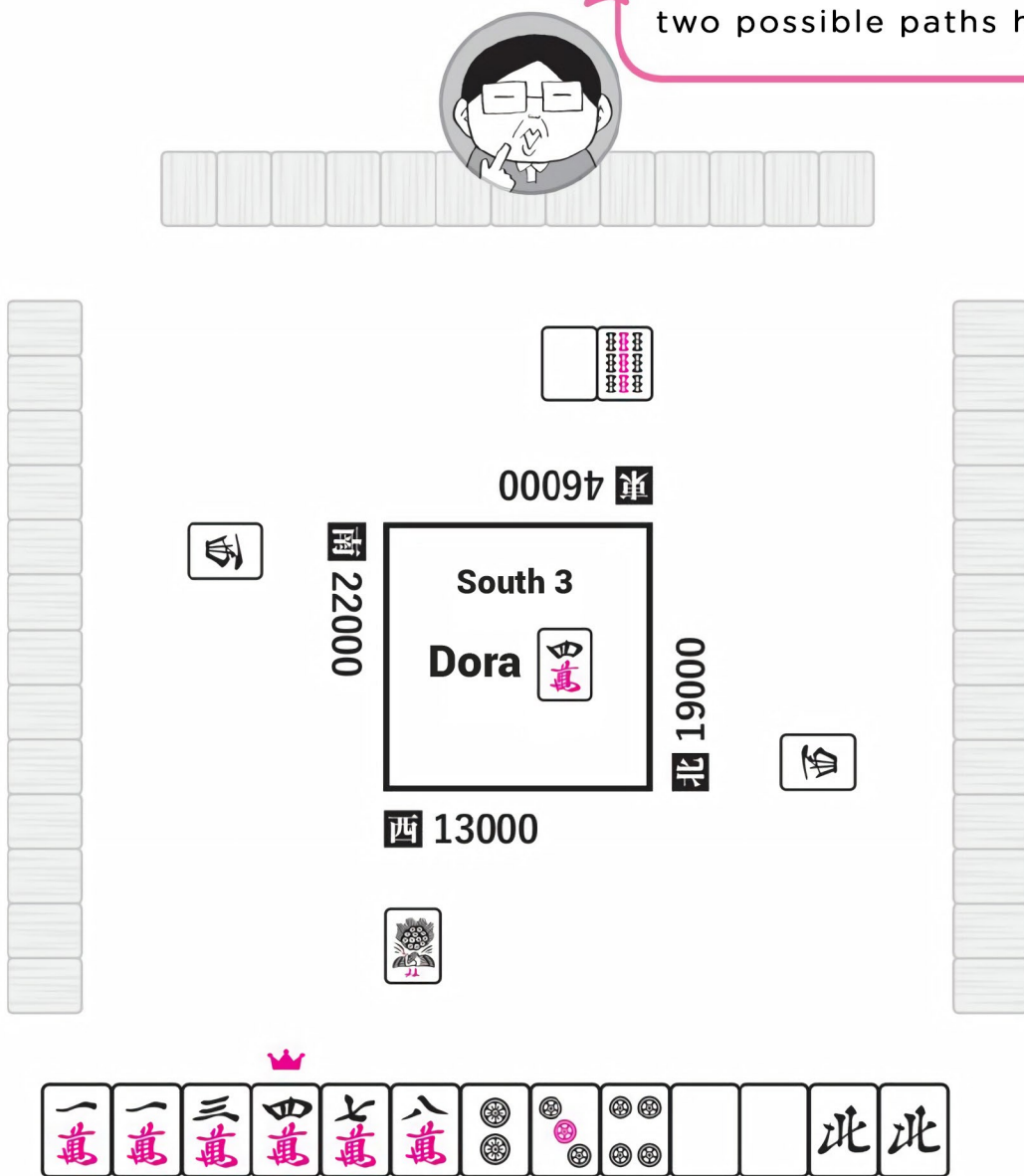
119

If you have a good hand, do not submit to an early Riichi.

Q

You are West and in last place in the round before all-last. A white dragon was discarded on Turn 2. Do you pon?

It looks like there are
two possible paths here.

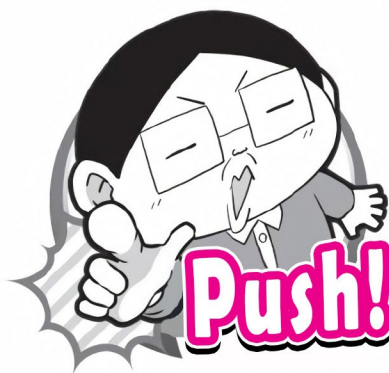
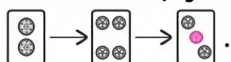


A
120

Pon and discard



You have no upcoming dealership, and given the score situation, there is little meaning in winning unless it's a Mangan-class hand. You are faced with two choices: pass and aim for a concealed Riichi, or pon and aim for Honitsu. The recommended path is Honitsu. You will be able to call freely afterward to reach a Mangan. To avoid letting opponents know you are dropping a meld to dye the hand, you should discard the tiles in the order of



Let's
memorize the
hand-building
sequence of
dropping a
meld for
Honitsu.

Push-Pull Rule

120

**If you have the materials for
Honitsu, dye the hand by
dropping a completed meld.**

Lesson
28**How Much Speed Can You
Sacrifice to Improve Your Wait?****Speed is life**

Everyone wants to call Riichi with a good-shape tenpai, but it doesn't always work out that way. The real question is what to do when you reach tenpai with a subpar shape.

If you can change a penchan, kanchan, tanki, or shanpon into a ryanmen within 2 to 3 turns, waiting is an option. 3 turns is roughly the junction point. If it takes any longer than that, calling an immediate Riichi becomes more advantageous.

The conditions to transform into a good-shape tenpai (or a higher-value hand) within 3 turns are actually quite strict. Unless you have an exceptionally good set of seeds for a good shape, it won't transform that easily.

You must be tight-fisted with your tenpai speed. To put it another way: be a total "cheapskate" when it comes to speed. Don't spend your turns trying to buy a better wait if it costs you your speed advantage. They say the early bird catches the worm... except an early tenpai catches something way better: about 3,000 points.

Push-Pull Rule so far

- 114 Around Turn 8, make sure to visualize a realistic path to a winning hand.
- 115 If "flush-makers" have a mature hand, do not aim for a drawing battle with a hand that has inferior value.
- 116 For a dealer, reaching tenpai is the time to go on the offensive.
- 117 A Riichi on a non-suji numbered tile tanki is also perfectly viable.
- 118 If a hand can be stretched to Chinitsu, stretch it to Chinitsu.
- 119 If you have a good hand, do not submit to an early Riichi.
- 120 If you have the materials for Honitsu, dye the hand by dropping a completed meld.

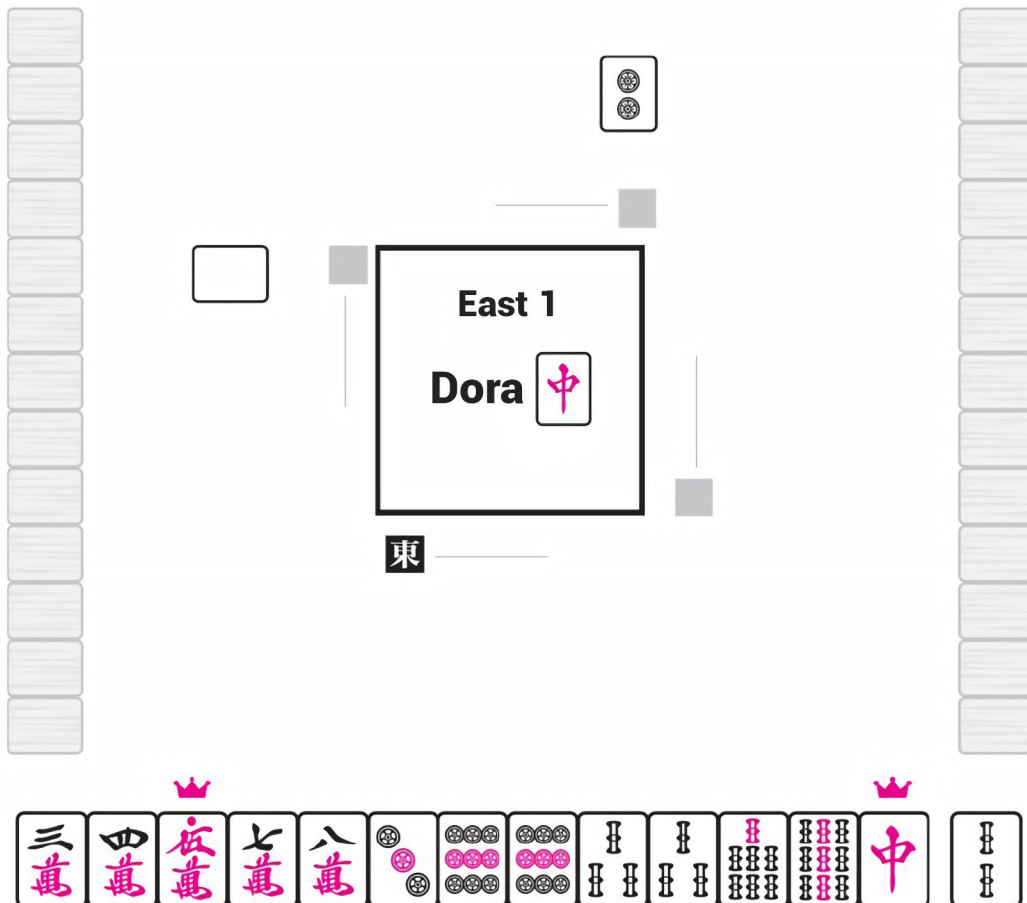
Q
121

Handling a Yakuhai Dora (1)

Dealer in East 1, Turn 2. You have a Pinfu-style hand with a floating Chun Dora. What do you discard?



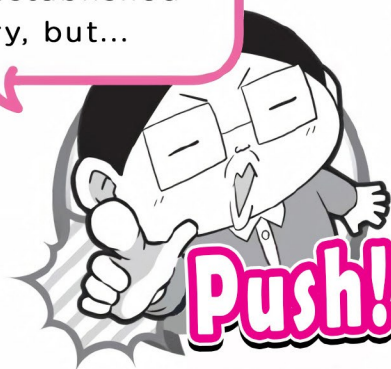
There isn't a single definitive answer, but...



A Discard

In the past, the mainstream style was to cling to a Yakuhai Dora until the last possible moment. Nowadays, however, the dominant view is that "it is better for the dealer to aim for the fastest Riichi rather than unnecessarily holding onto a Yakuhai Dora." This trend has proven more effective for winning. Since a dealer's Riichi-Pinfu-Dora 1 is a sufficient decisive hand, you should maximize the potential of those materials.

It may be some time before this becomes an established standard theory, but...



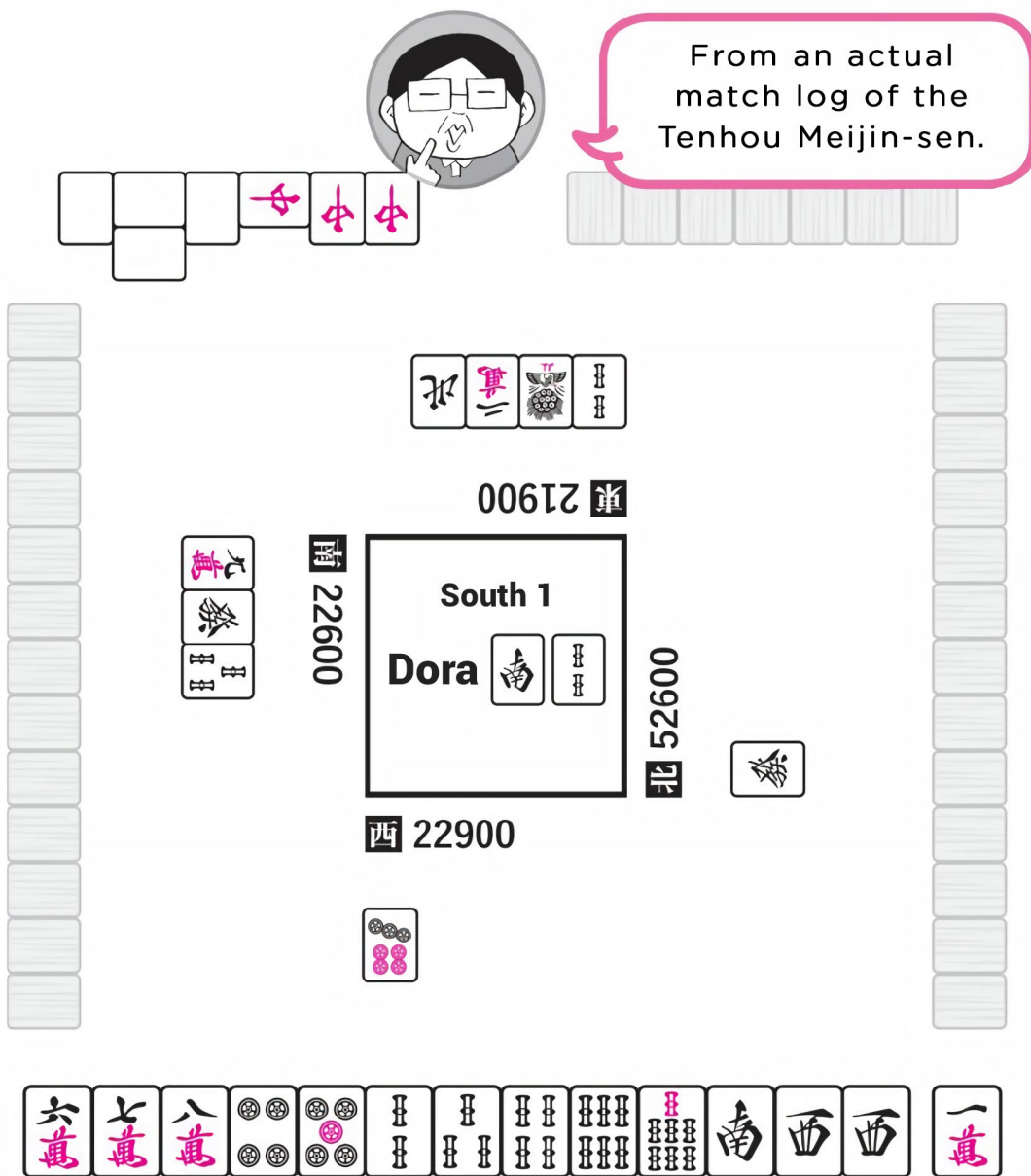
Push-Pull Rule

121

Rather than clinging to a Yakuhai Dora, maximize your hand's potential.

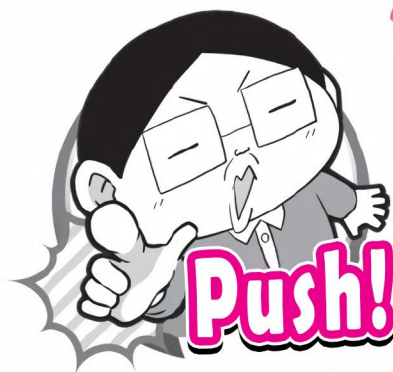
Q
122

South 1. Three players are in a close race. The dealer has called aggressively, and you are about to reach tenpai. Do you discard the dangerous  Dora or the relatively safe ?



A Discard 南

Right now, the 南 Dora might be poned, but it is unlikely to be a winning tile yet. You have a hand that looks very winnable. In a competitive situation like this, kicking a rival's dealer turn is vital. You want to aim for the fastest win by discarding the Dora. As the turns progress, the probability of the Dora becoming a winning tile increases, eventually making it impossible to discard it carelessly.



This isn't a case of a clear right-or-wrong answer, but rather a small tip.

Push-Pull Rule

122

**If your hand looks winnable,
discard the Yakuhai Dora before it
becomes a winning tile for
someone else.**

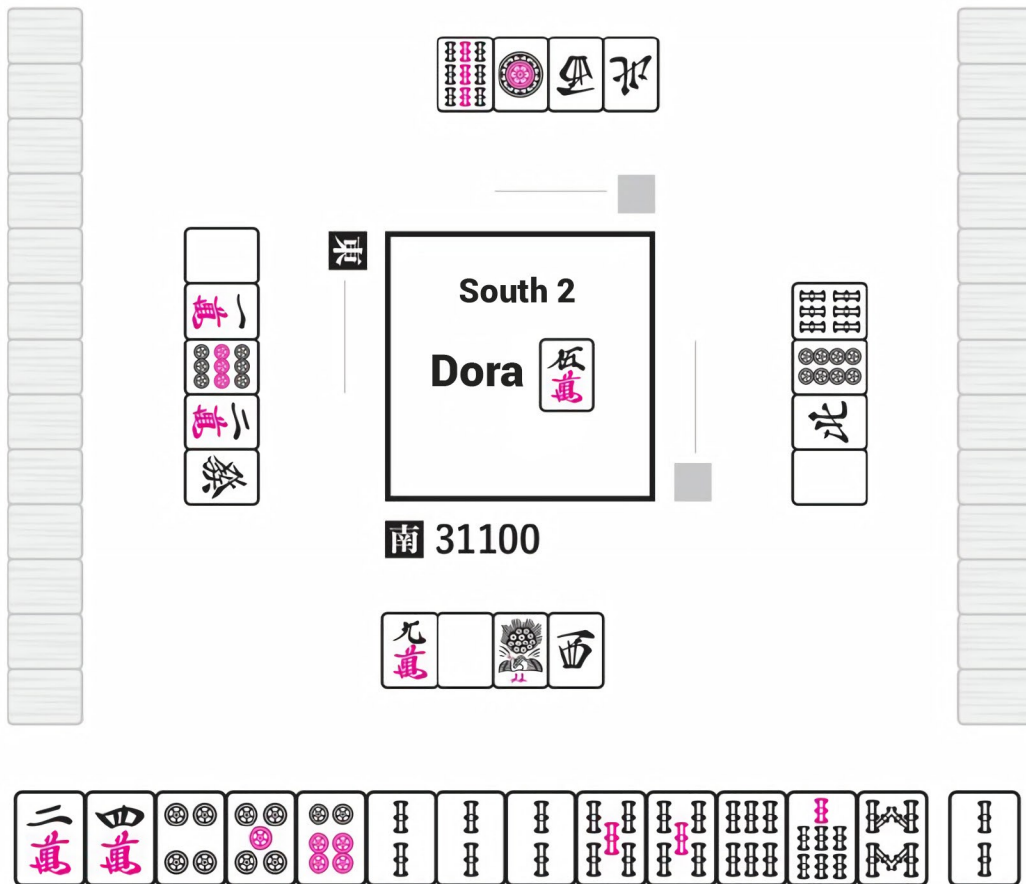
Q Declaring Kan in First Place

123

South 2. You are in first place by a small margin. You reached tenpai early on a kanchan  wait. You just drew your fourth . Do you declare kan?

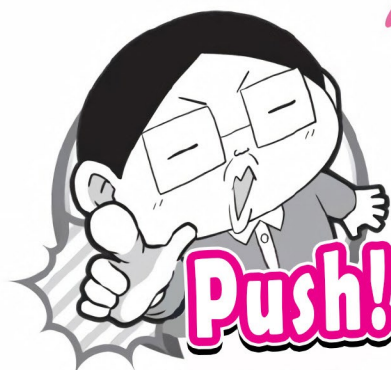


Either choice is viable here.



A 123 Call Kan and Riichi

The choices are between kan and Riichi, or tsumogiri and stay in dama. Declaring kan and staying in dama is the worst possible choice, as it only increases risk for no return. Even if the  becomes a new Dora, you should call Riichi. A kan into Riichi is a top-class offensive move. Even the second place dealer won't be able to take you on easily. Both a kan into Riichi and a Dora pon are representative "offensive defenses" that seal off an opponent's ability to counter-attack.



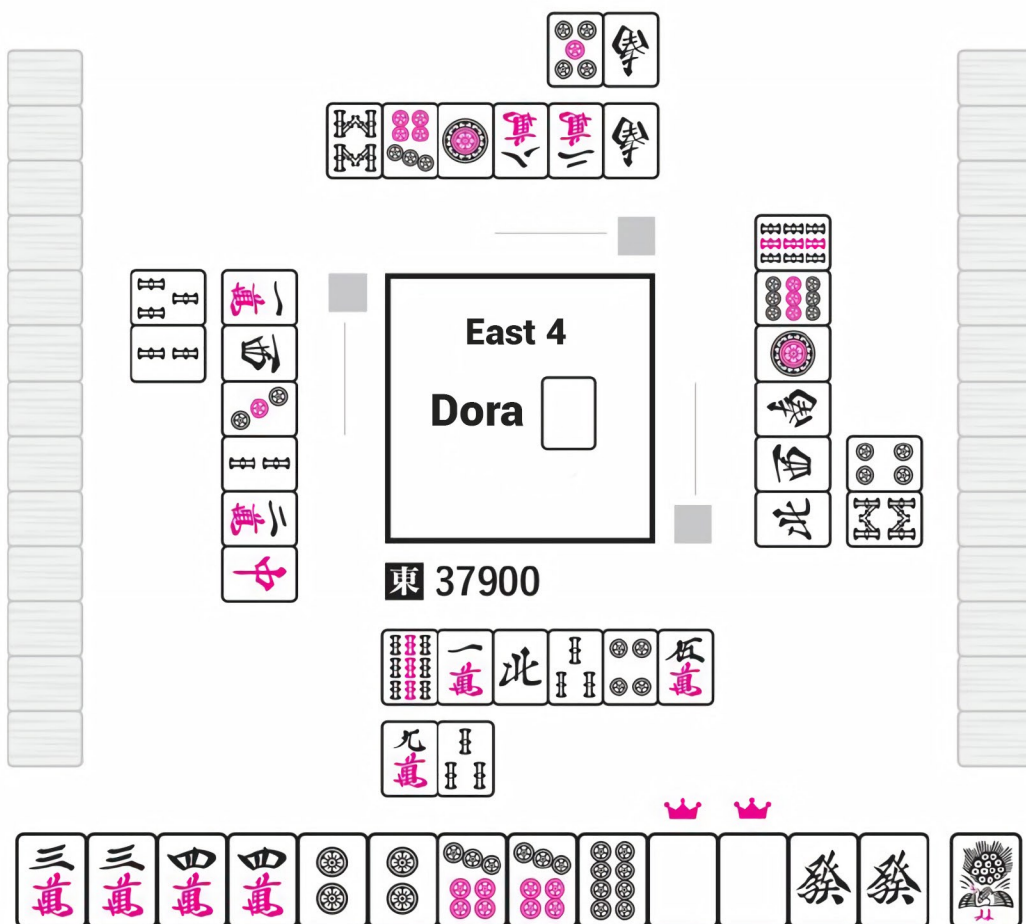
Personally, I am the type to use these "intimidation Riichis" quite often.

Push-Pull Rule

123

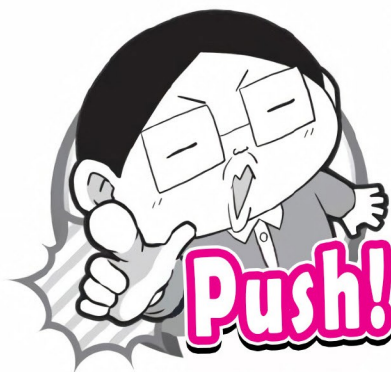
Even in first place, a strong attack can serve as a defense.

Chiitoitsu Wait Selection



A 124 Riichi waiting on

Either wait is viable. However, if you wait on , you should stay in damaten; if you wait on , you should call Riichi. The  is a good wait, but there is a possibility that someone else is holding it as a pair or a triplet, and simply waiting might not result in a win. Therefore, you want to use a tactic to "lure" it out. In the real match, I chose the  wait and called Riichi; it turned out my toimen was waiting on the  in a shanpon wait. All the  tiles were still in the wall.



The stronger your opponents are, the less effective these small "luring" techniques become, but the tendency still remains.

Push-Pull Rule

124

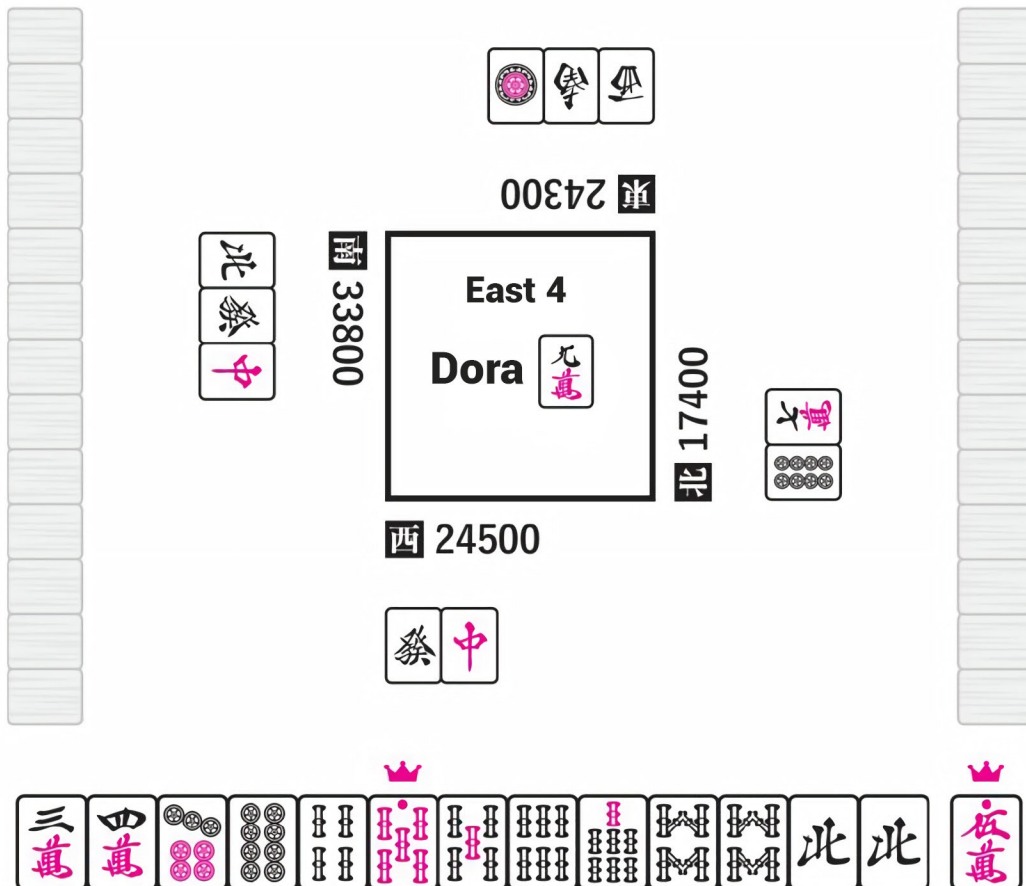
With Chiitoitsu, if it's a wait you're targeting, call Riichi to lure it out.

Q Discard Order 125

Non-dealer on turn 3. You reach an ideal 1-shanten early on. What do you discard?



It's a difficult question that asks what the true intent is.



A Discard

125

Instead of discarding  to prioritize Tanyao, you should honestly aim for the three-sided wait in Souzu. Normally, one might discard in the order of  →  based on danger levels, but doing so creates a discard pond where the   looks extremely dangerous. If you discard in the order of  → , the pond looks like one where the  might pass. It's a tiny difference, but in the real match, this beautifully snared the  on an ippatsu win. This was from a match log of Hiroshi Kihara Pro, and the person who dealt in was actually Fukuchi.



It's a truly hateful discard order, isn't it?

Push-Pull Rule

125

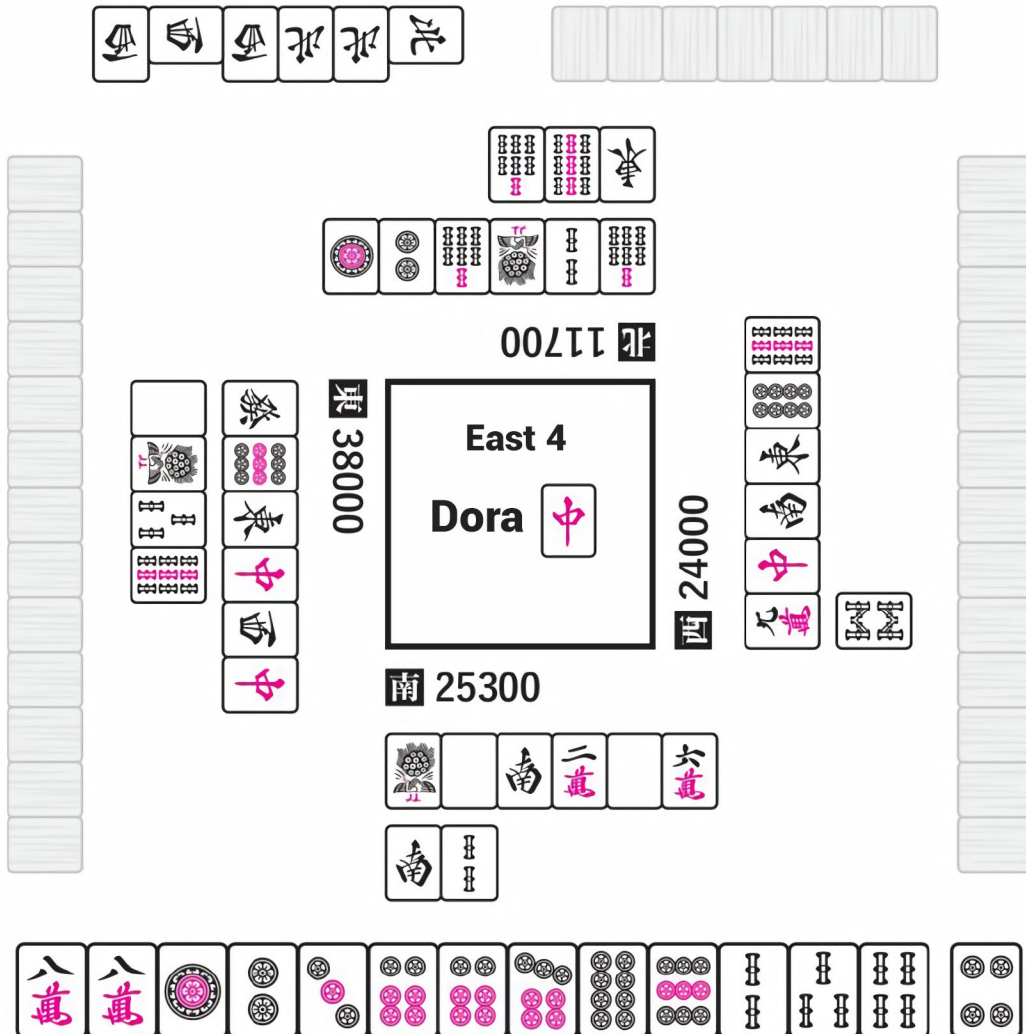
For fast, ideal hands, be conscious of how your discard pond looks to others.

Q Riichi Judgment for a 2,600-point Damaten

Non-dealer in East 4. You reached tenpai for Ittsu only, waiting on a  kanchan. Riichi or dama?



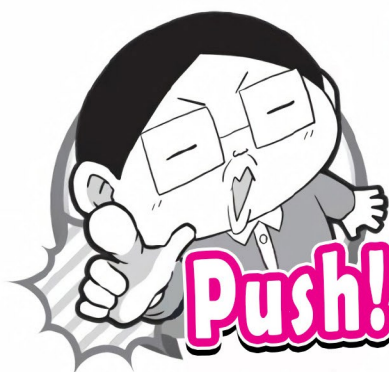
From my actual match logs.



A Riichi 126

A review question. Turning a 2,600-point damaten into 5,200 points via Riichi is the standard play.

In the real match, I had just escaped last place and felt a momentary relief, which caused my aggressive mindset to thin out, and I stayed in dama. Had I called Riichi, I would have won a Mangan. You want to avoid carrying over emotions like that.



Being able to do this consistently every time is what defines true skill. I say this as a self-admonition.

Push-Pull Rule

126

**Don't carry over emotions
from previous rounds.**

**Lesson
29****Who Does the Yakuhai
Dora Actually Favor?****Do not cling to them unnecessarily**

A Yakuhai Dora is a special tile that confirms a Mangan just by calling it. Because of this massive scoring power, the standard play in the past was to never discard it until you were in tenpai or had a high-quality 1-shanten, specifically to avoid letting someone else pon it easily.

However, the modern mainstream view has changed. It is now common to discard it at a moderate stage based on the needs of your own hand. The probability of it being pon-ed is actually lower than most people think, and by clinging to it, your own win rate drops—which is a much larger statistical loss.

The logic is that if it gets ponned, you simply deal with the situation then; there is no need to play under the assumption that a pon is a guaranteed certainty. Recently, even in professional matches, you frequently see players discarding a Yakuhai Dora from a 2-shanten state.

Yakuhei Dora is a Revolutionary Chance

A Yakuhai Dora is like a lottery that only benefits the one or two people at the table who manage to turn it into a pair or a triplet.

A Yakuhai Dora can completely blow away the advantage of anyone holding a high-quality hand. Therefore, for someone holding a high-quality hand like Tan-Pin-Iipeiko, the best move is to discard the Yakuhai Dora quickly so that no one else can use it. On the other hand, those holding "trash hands" are the ones who pray for a "revolution" to occur by keeping it in the game as long as possible.

Your attitude toward the Yakuhai Dora changes completely depending on whether you have a good hand or a bad one. This is the "class struggle" revolving around the Yakuhai Dora.

Push-Pull Rule so far

- 121 Rather than clinging to a Yakuhai Dora, maximize your hand's potential.
- 122 If your hand looks winnable, discard the Yakuhai Dora before it becomes a winning tile for someone else.
- 123 Even in first place, a strong attack can serve as a defense.
- 124 With Chiitoitsu, if it's a wait you're targeting, call Riichi to lure it out.
- 125 For fast, ideal hands, be conscious of how your discard pond looks to others.
- 126 Don't carry over emotions from previous rounds.



Chapter 4

Q102

Nemata	Agree	You want to make sure not to overlook a discard pond this obvious.
Murakami	Agree	If your genbutsu run out, discard high-numbered souzu.

Q103

Nemata	Agree	Since there is no information suggests a high-value hand, pushing with a dora-dora good-shape hand is fine.
Murakami	Agree	Given the dealer's discards, this is an easy spot to push.

Q104

Nemata	Agree	Even if ryanmen sets aren't complete, players still often discard penchan sets early. While it is borderline whether this implies a high probability of a good-shape wait, you shouldn't be pushing with this hand regardless.
Murakami	Agree	Discarding a penchan set like the  increases the probability of a good shape. More importantly, regardless of Dora 2, you can't push from a poor-shape 2-shanten.

Q105

Nemata	Agree	These discards strongly suggest a souzu Honitsu. This isn't a hand to push, and you must be especially careful not to carelessly discard honor tiles.
Murakami	Agree	Don't try to maneuver for a win; just go straight to beta-ori.

Q 106

Nemata **Agree**

This discard pond makes pushing even more attractive.

Murakami **Agree**

A total of 12 suji remain unpassed (4 manzu, 4 pinzu, 4 souzu), making a  contest worthwhile.

Q 107

Nemata **Agree**

Even if you have plenty of safe tiles, pushing is fine.

Murakami **Of course**
Agree

An Iron Riichi!

Q 108

Nemata **Agree**

Even with a subpar wait, the default play is to push a 3-Han hand as dealer.

Murakami **Borderline**

5,800 points is great, but pushing the Dora  doesn't guarantee your shimocha or your kamicha would discard . Even if  passed in your own pond, if your last tedashi was , a penchan  wait falls in range for what others could suspect what you could be waiting on. Based on the board, the other two will likely not struggle too hard to find safe tiles to fold with.  looks to be left in the wall as well so there's high risk you end up drawing that yourself instead.

Q 109

Nemata **Agree**

Discarding musuji tiles against two Riichis is tough even with 3,900 points bad wait tenpai, but the  is likely safe against the dealer, and there's not many tiles that have passed against South player. You'll likely have a hard time to fold safely even if you don't end up call so I would rather take the tenpai.

Murakami **Agree**

The feeling that pushing is the lesser of two evils.

Q 110

Nemata **Agree**

Unless the wait is easy to win on in dama, you should call Riichi with Pinfu only even when there are three 1,000-point sticks on the table.

Murakami **Agree**

Calling Riichi doesn't significantly drop your win rate. Increase your value and pick up those sticks too in the process.

Q111

Nemata **Agree**

Regardless of your choice, you'll be left with a suji trap wait. Given the point standings, the extra payout from a  win is non-negligible, making this a borderline decision. That said, judging by the pond, targeting a  wait—which others seem unlikely to hold—might just be the better way to go.

Murakami **Agree**

A Riichi on a  kanchan wait focusing on visible tile counts is also fine.

Q112

Nemata **Agree**

Even without Toitōi, the hand is expensive. And by discarding  early it increases the win rate if you end up waiting on . Given the scores, sakigiri  while holding safety is a strong move.

Murakami **Objection**

With such a massive lead already, I don't want to miss a Haneman by drawing .  is not a complete safe tile either, so I would discard .

Q113

Nemata **Agree**

If calling a two-sided sequence leaves you with a poor-shape tenpai, it is often better to advance the hand concealed until surprisingly late in the round—even for a hand with good value. Considering that the  shanpon has only 2 tiles remaining and is a notably hard wait to win with, pass here.

Murakami **Agree**

With two  already visible, a transformation into a better wait after reaching tenpai would be difficult.

Q114

Nemata **Agree**

Passing makes winning very difficult, but drawing just one more useful tile to reach tenpai turns this into a hand you can decently push. Despite defensive concerns, you should call. Having two  already visible makes it a close call, but the pinzu shape is quite flexible for shape improvements.

Murakami **Objection**

Pass. Calling only puts you at 1-shanten, and with two  out, getting to a winnable tenpai feels like it'll take at least another two moves. Looking at the three opponents' discards, discarding  after a call would leave you in a tough spot against any incoming riichi. If you're the one sitting in first place, passing on this  and sakigiri  once you draw a safe tile is the better line.

Q115

Nemata	Agree	So many of the tiles needed to reach tenpai are already visible, so it's hard to make a case for passing here.
Murakami	Objection	Pass here. The dealer is already getting rid off a once-discarded  and a once-discarded double-  —discarding such good tiles means it wouldn't be surprising if they are already in tenpai by this point. Pushing a  for a 1,000-point hand with a kataagari   wait just isn't worth a showdown for.

Q116

Nemata	Agree	For hands with few transformations, Riichi even on a subpar wait.
Murakami	Agree	Reaching a headstart Riichi as dealer with an akadora is lucky enough. Don't get greedy.

Q117

Nemata	Agree	Declare riichi since there are few better transformations available.
Murakami	Agree	There are actually very few waits better than this  tanki. Compromise is necessary.

Q118

Nemata	Agree	Many transformations are available and the value increases significantly. Since you have a Mangan even after calling, I would call everything that puts us in tenpai.
Murakami	Agree	The sequence of pinzu is too good.

Q119

Nemata	Agree	Pushing a  against a dealer Riichi for a  -only  kanchan wait is a bad deal, but if it becomes a Honitsu-  tenpai, pushing a  is justifiable.
Murakami	Agree	Ironclad pon.

Q120

Nemata	Agree	A 2-shanten mangan that can quickly shift to 1-shanten is better than staying at a 2,000-point 1-shanten. Discard  first just in case we draw the  .
Murakami	Agree	If a Mangan is possible, pon!!

Q121

Nemata**Agree**

Drawing a pair of the dora  after discarding  leads to a stronger hand than discarding the  to draw a  or , though the difference isn't massive. Therefore, it's better to dump the single  now before an opponent pairs it up.

Murakami**Borderline**

Drawing the  would make the hand reach its maximum value, so there's an argument for being greedy and keeping it.

Q122

Nemata**Agree**

You're far more likely to reach tenpai before pairing the dora . As turns progress, the risk of dealing in with  only goes up, so better to dump it now and keep the  that looks easy to pass against the called hand from the person across.

Murakami**Agree**

If a hand looks winnable, sakigiri the dangerous tiles.

Q123

Nemata**Agree**

Even though we have a lead, the gap is small, so prioritize widening the gap with a headstart tenpai.

Murakami**Agree**

Staying damaten doesn't guarantee opponents will drop key tiles from 3~7 tiles, and letting the other three play freely to catch up to tenpai is far scarier. Declare kan and call Riichi. If someone has a good hand that pushes straight back, just accept it and think it can't be helped. We have a decisive hand with sufficient value ourselves worth fighting for.

Q124

Nemata**Agree**

It's a tile that's hard to hold back even against a Riichi, so call Riichi to maximize value.

Murakami**Agree**

As a rule of thumb, when you can wait on a shonpai (a live unplayed tile) terminal or honor tile, declare riichi even with Dora 2. We have naturally created camouflage for our wait this time which can force opponents to misread and deal in while folding. Plus, Tsumo-Ura-2 makes it a Baiman, more than double a 6,400-point win. For Chiitoitsu, the point increase from Riichi-Tsumo is massive, so I think value-oriented players should definitely go for Riichi.

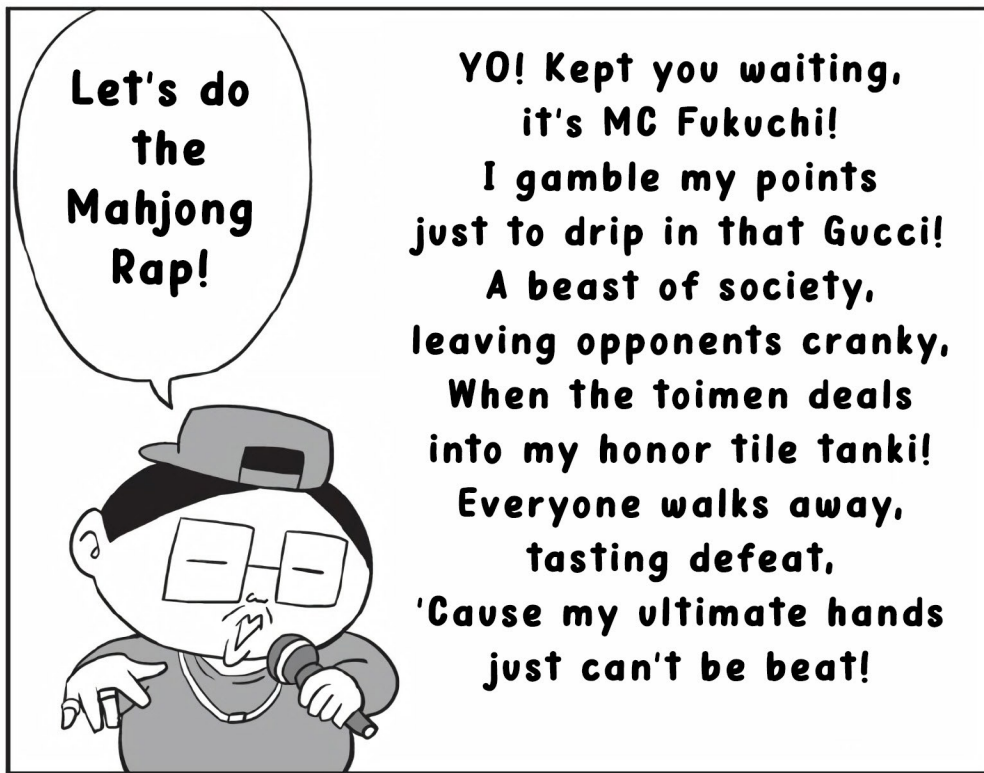
Q125

Nemata **Agree**

We already have two red fives in hand. Even if we draw  first, keeping a    wait is better than adding Tanyao, so don't discard  even early on. Also, discarding  then  vs.  then  makes a noticeable difference in how easily  comes out, so cut  first.

Murakami **Borderline**

If you ask whether I care about boosting the win rate on discard for                               





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