

# 72 Pieces of Mahjong Wisdom

By Unimaru Channel

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Hi there! I saw these 72 pieces of advice in an Unimaru video on Youtube. I liked them enough to translate them all into English with the help of the wonderful Butane. These ideas and principles fall somewhere in the intermediate and advanced skill range, but if you are a newer player don't hesitate to take a look and apply them later down the road when you feel more confident. This document is heavy with Mahjong jargon and since I didn't want to add notations or a glossary you can look up the Mahjong terms here: <http://mahjong-ny.com/features/terminology/>

If you want to see more videos by Unimaru, go here:

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZgbJCH9iq\\_lee\\_21KyZ8fQ](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZgbJCH9iq_lee_21KyZ8fQ)

Special thanks to Butane who was a huge help in translating this when things got complicated and who pointed out mistakes I made. Also a thank you to the people who read this in advance to make sure it's readable: Dingo, Flan and Zel, Light Pink Yoshi and Craft. Note some points have been expanded on for context and readability. If you find a mistake, or something that should be expanded on hit me up on Discord. I can be found at the usual Mahjong servers like Mahjong Soul or plain old Mahjong Discord.

I hope you find this useful!

1. The 1 in a 1345 shape and a 13468 shape is better than a floating 2.
2. Keep unfinished complicated taatsu in tile groups of 3 or 5.
3. When cutting a pair and redrawing the cut tile – karagiri from your hand. This increases the range of possible hand reads for your opponents.
4. Karagiri the 1 if you can. Let them assume you performed a wait slide. For example: 12356s – karagiri 1s.
5. When building honitsu, cut the tiles of the suit you have most of, but are not used in your honitsu. This is also known as the Moriyama-style honitsu.
6. Keep furiten ryanmen. Furiten ryanmen are not bad, especially at 1-shanten or higher.
7. Floating tiles near shuntsu are strong. Floating tiles near taatsu are weak.
8. When you have a pair of yakuhai and a follow up shape with 2 or 8 it is okay to lock it in even if the shape itself is bad. A follow up shape is an incomplete block of three that can be completed as a toitsu or shuntsu. Example: cutting the 1 in a 1122 shape.
9. When building honitsu, keep live yakuhai in your hand as not to allow others to narrow down the tiles you need.
10. When tenpai waiting on a safe tile against an existing riichi, it is better to oikake riichi than to dama in terms of expected value.
11. When facing two riichi at the same time your shape is more important than your value. A good wait 2000 hand beats a bad wait 8000 hand.
12. When in tenpai with a 23344556 shape, cut 6 for a closed hand and 3 if you want to call. In the closed variant iipeikou is available. In the calling variant we can chii the red 5.
13. In a 23345678 1-4 wait, you can switch up your wait by calling: chii on 25, chii on 69, chii on 7, or pon on 3.
14. In a 3345667 wait for 5-8, you can call 6 for 657 to change to a 2-5 wait by discarding 3, making it look like you called a ryankan.
15. When you have too many blocks only calling the bad shapes is wrong. Call whichever comes first.
16. When calling for mangan and above, do not reveal red dora. Showing the red dora might incentivize folding which is a loss for hands of mangan value and above.
17. After someone calls 3 from a 24 shape and drops the 1 the 4 of that suit will certainly pass.
18. After a ryanmen chii, all non-matagi tiles in that suit will pass. This holds true only for the turn it was discarded or until the next tedashi discard.
19. Early pons of middle tiles indicate an atozuke of yakuhai. These pons take the middle tiles out of the game which reduces the chance of opponents building blocks around those tiles.
20. After a second call, particularly a chii, if an obvious safe tile comes out the chance of yakuhai atozuke increases. On the other hand, if a non-safe tile comes out the chance of a yakuhai triplet increases.
21. The matagi suji of the discarded tile after a pon, when a bad follow-up shape has already been cut, will not deal into a ryanmen wait.
22. An honor tile drop after a chii indicates the call was not kuinobashi.

23. A taatsu drop after a chii indicates the call was not kuinobashi, if the tile dropped after chii was the second of a pair.
24. If the tile discard on reaching tenpai was a safe tile, dealing in on the matagi suji of number tiles is likely to be cheap, since if the hand was expensive the player would have taken the perfect iishanten, higher efficiency, no-safe-tile route instead of keeping the safe tile by discarding sakigiri to ensure a ryanmen.
25. A discarded 1 after a 5 has been chii'd for a 34 shape indicates a 4-7 wait. This pattern can be seen in the kuinobashi of a kanchan waiting on 2 (such as the 13456 shape).
26. A discarded 9 after a 3 or 6 chii'd for a 45 shape indicates a 58 wait. This is also a kuinobashi pattern (such as a 45679 shape waiting on 8).
27. If a player drops a pair against a riichi and then calls chii on something, it suggests he is on a tanki wait for a dangerous tile. He likely dropped his pair to mawashi, drew a tile he couldn't discard, and after calling chii, is now waiting on that tile as his pair.
28. Aida Yon Ken tiles are not particularly dangerous. It is as hard to deal into a bad Aida Yon Ken shape vs. any other bad shape, making it as dangerous as any other suji wait.
29. The ura suji of the riichi declaration tile is safe if you see two tiles that are 2 away in that sequence. For example, with a 3 being cut, indicating a 4-7 wait, if you see two of the 5 tiles in the same suit, this indicates that the shape was not 334556 or 34556.
30. Players that drop yakuhai as their first discard, when not a sakigiri of east, tend to have a good hand.
31. While the tiles right next to the riichi declaration tile are dangerous, the ones 2 away in the sequence tends to be more dangerous. The tile two away usually is involved in a choice between a kanchan and a shanpon wait, and generally the shanpon is preferable.
32. If someone seems to be going for kokushi musou, the edge tiles of whatever was cut earlier become more dangerous. For example, if they cut a 3p early, they probably didn't have a 1p as they would have been more likely to have kept it longer as a backup for junchan or chanta. Therefore, it's more likely they are waiting on the 1p now.
33. When a yakuhai is the dora, the chance of an obvious honitsu with a pair of dora increases.
34. Cutting 3 and 1 in exactly that order makes the chance of a wait for 2 unlikely. Few would cut 3 first from a 1334 shape.
35. Cutting a 1 and then a 3 makes a wait for 2-5 more likely later - or a shanpon wait for the 5.
36. If you see someone bouncing around tanki waits they're likely to end up settling for an aryanmen or nobetan around a shuntsu they have, since it's likely they picked something up close to it and decided to go with it.
37. Uchigiri discards indicate a hand is completing its blocks. Example: 3-1 cut and 4-2 cut.
38. If the dora is a 2, and middle tiles in that suit are being cut, or the first call was not a yakuhai, and the second call was a yakuhai pon throwing the 1 next to the dora, it will not be a kanchan wait with a pair of the dora. This is because if it were a kanchan wait in the dora suit with a yakuhai atozuke, one would leave the middle tiles rather than the 1.

39. After a pair has been dropped twice as tedashi, the chance of chii-toi decreases. There are rare cases where a tile is cut twice as karagiri from a triplet upon drawing the same tile again.
40. If a 1 is discarded in the early stages of the game before a word tile, there is a good chance that player does not have a 2 and 3 in that suit.
41. If a 1 is cut before honor or wind tiles, the chances of there being middle tiles somewhere between 4 to 8 are all similarly increased. While an early 1 cut increases the chances of 4 being in the hand, the same holds true for 5 through 8 as well.
42. A riichi without hesitation means it's an average hand. Hesitation can indicate that the hand could be really good, or really bad. Pinfu dora 1 is a fast riichi, but tanyao only with a bad wait for 1300 or dama for a good shape mangan will likely induce more hesitation.
43. High-level players rarely tsumogiri riichi average hands – they'd probably have insta-riichi'd already. It's more likely to be one of two extremes; good wait high value hands, or bad wait low value hands.
44. When a high-level player tsumogiri oikake riichis, it is usually a mangan or higher.
45. When a closed-hand style player ryanmen chiis early, the hand is very likely expensive.
46. If there was hesitation before cutting a wind tile, the player is not yet tenpai. It's common knowledge that ariyanmen and nobetan are stronger tanki waits than a word tile tanki, so there should be no hesitation in deciding if the player got to tenpai.
47. If a player makes an ankan with all tiles that were already in their hand, it's probably not too scary. If the hand were potent, they wouldn't have waited to kan. This is particularly true with more valuable yaochuu-hai-tile kans.
48. If a person throws away a tile they could have kanned, it indicates that they are either at 1 han or mangan and above. This is because hands that are at 2 or 3 han benefit the most from a potential kan.
49. The point value range of the player in 1<sup>st</sup> place is wide. The point value range of players in 4<sup>th</sup> place is narrow. First place might be going for any range of hands, from cheap hands to move the rounds to expensive hands if the opportunity arises. On the other hand, last place is only hampered by going for cheap hands, so it's safe to assume their hands will be expensive.
50. For live play: in rulesets where pon calls override chii calls, even if made slightly later, it is helpful to call while reaching your hand out as if to draw a tile.
51. For live play: when someone calls and frantically checks the pond they are likely on a tanki wait, checking for the best tanki wait.
52. Keep the tiles you want to call not perfectly arranged in hand to make reads harder and to mask potential kuinobashi.
53. For live play: players with chii-toi hands tend to move their tiles around less – there's less to rearrange. Similarly: if a player is furiously rearranging their tiles into order after they riichi (since it is bad manners to show an unordered hand calling ron), the chances of chii-toi drop even further.
54. For live play: if someone is calling, it appears to be yakuhai atozuke, and after a call they throw a tile that is the third tile from either edge of their hand, the chance of

- yakuhai atozuke increases. This is because it is likely they keep their yakuhai pairs at the edges of their hands. At the same time, they could also have an ankou of yakuhai.
55. For live play: if a player calls and throws a tile that is the fourth tile from either edge of their hand, that block is probably set and does not need much, at least for the time being.
  56. For live play: if someone calls riichi cutting a tile on the right edge of their hand (from their perspective), it's probably not a headless shape. People tend to keep their least useful tile there. This may be the inverse for a left-handed individual.
  57. For live play: if you keep edge pairs at the edges of your hand, it helps camouflage the range and areas of your hand's blocks.
  58. For live play: a good strategy to camouflage the shapes in your hand -especially when people might be paying attention to your flush-style hand- is to keep everything jumbled but the 1 of that suit which can be left at the edge of your hand.
  59. For online play: when the game lags on a 2 discard it is for a 1-3 chii unless the game has fake lag.
  60. For online play: when you are the person who wants to receive assistance from your kamicha, hold the lag even on tiles that you don't need. It helps show that you are willing to receive tiles.
  61. When trying to sashikomi, start with tiles that aren't the dealer's genbutsu. You can always try the dealer genbutsu later when the dealer is closer to tenpai.
  62. If you are trying to assist someone, start with the tiles you have most of.
  63. If South 4 and the rules allow you to choose tenpai renchan and noten bumps the dealer into second while you have a considerable lead – take noten during ryuukyoku. This forces the dealer to choose between continuing to push for first at the cost of having a high risk of going back to third, or just bowing out in second place and letting you have your first.
  64. Half suji of 456 are as safe as live 1 or 9 tiles.
  65. When attempting to fold against riichi, and you are out of absolutely safe tiles, the order of safety goes: live suji 3/7 > live honor tile > live suji 2/8. This ordering takes into account not only chance of deal in, but also the average value of hand dealt into.
  66. Non-riichi-tile 2/8 suji is the same level of safety as live otakaze tiles as well as outer suji 2/8. Outer suji refers to the outer tiles of something cut early, like 1 or 2 when a 3 is cut early.
  67. Online play: drawing out the pon lag on an iipeikou hand makes the live tile you need come out easier. A common tactic seen in Ho Ou sanma.
  68. Riichi sanshoku dora with a bad wait and pinfu dora have about the same expected value.
  69. In S4 as dealer and in first place, don't renchan with cheap hands. You are giving the other players a chance to come back. Immediately go for bigger value to ensure your placement.
  70. A quick pon of 1 or a word tile from first place in S4 decreases the likelihood of atozuke. Since first doesn't want to take risks such plays are rare.
  71. When the non-dealer players (including yourself) are all incentivized to move on from the current dealership, and they are going for fast-seeming open hands, it is best to

play with restraint. For example, going for dama. This is because if you riichi, the other non-dealers may back down and fold, overall increasing the prospect of an unwanted dealer continuation.

72. Against a dealer whose dealership you don't want to repeat, hold your lone yakuhai and cut them as late as you can. This makes them easier to call for other players, and even if the dealer calls them, it at least eliminates the prospect of a scary dealer riichi.