

Playing Mah Jong with Standard Playing Cards

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Sometime during 2000 an interesting thread began on the Mah Jong newsgroup (rec.games.mahjong) about how you might be able to play Mah Jong with Standard Playing Cards. This is my interpretation of the discussion.

Challenge

Here's the challenge: how do you match the 144 Mah Jong cards (of 3 suits, 3 dragons and 4 winds) with only 52 cards of 4 suits?

Assigning Suits and Dragons

We can immediately see that we will need four (4) packs of identically-backed playing cards, and that from it we will be using three suits (cards 1-9 only) to match the Mah Jong suits of Dots, Bamboos and Characters, and the Kings (for Winds), Queens (for Dragons) and Jacks (for Seasons). This means that one whole suit will go largely unused (save Jacks and Kings), as will the 10s of all suits.



The starting point is to examine the relationship between the Mah Jong cards and see if that will help us assign standard playing cards to Mah Jong denominations.

Suits

In the Western and American game the dragons match the suits as follows:







	Dots		White Dragon (Pearl)
	Bamboos		Green Dragon (Jade)
	Characters		Red Dragon (Ruby)

So we might begin by assigning suits as follows (with thanks to Tom Sloper):

	Dots	=		Clubs	(a club has 3 dots on it!)
	Bamboos	=		Spades	(a spade can dig up bamboo!)
	Characters	=		Diamonds	(rubies - diamonds both gems)

Dragons









and obviously we can now assign the dragons, using Queens:

	White Dragon	=		Queen of Clubs
	Green Dragon	=		Queen of Spades
	Red Dragons	=		Queen of Diamonds

Winds and Seasons

Winds









Since there is no connection between suits and winds (one more wind than suits!) we'll have to reassign suits, using Kings.

	East Wind	=		King of Spades
	South Wind	=		King of Hearts
	West Wind	=		King of Clubs
	North Wind	=		King of Diamonds

I have chosen this order because East is the chief wind in Mah Jong and Spades often regarded as the chief suit in cards, and so to maintain a pattern of black-red-black-red I have chosen the order Spades, Hearts, Clubs, Diamonds.

Seasons

Since there *is* a connection between seasons / flowers and winds we can assign Jacks as follows:

	Season 1 (East)	=		Jack of Spades
	Season 2 (South)	=		Jack of Hearts
	Season 3 (West)	=		Jack of Clubs
	Season 4 (North)	=		Jack of Diamonds

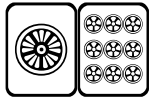
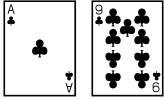



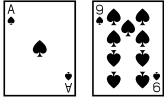



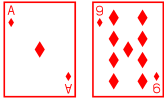




















Optional

Should you be playing a version of Mah Jong which requires Jokers / Wild cards then you can use the Jokers from the Standard Pack (and even the Bridge Scoring card - or 10s - should you need either more, or to differentiate between certain wild cards).

The advantage of using Jokers is that since Seasons and Flowers are optional this means that all optional cards begin with J: Jacks for Seasons and Flowers and Jokers for Jokers / Wild cards.

Complete Set

This means that our complete re-assignment looks like this:

DOTS			WHITE DRAGON		
BAMBOO			GREEN DRAGON		
CHARACTERS			RED DRAGON		
EAST WIND			SEASON / FLOYER 1		
SOUTH			SEASON / FLOYER 2		
WEST			SEASON / FLOYER 3		
NORTH			SEASON / FLOYER 4		
			LOKER / WILD CARD		

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http://www.gareth-and-jane-saunders.co.uk/mj_stdcards.htm

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