

# Beyond the Green Book

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## 1 Introduction

Even though it has become a lot clearer, there is still some confusion about the Mahjong Competition Rules, and some rules have been interpreted in different ways. Here I go through that which may cause problems, focusing on the scoring of hands, although I also mention some of the other rules as well. I have taken the liberty to state what my opinion is on some of the rules, even when it's clear that the rules don't agree with my opinion. Comments are welcome!

The following texts are referred to:

**[OIRE02]** *Competition Mahjong Official International Rulebook* (Takeshobo, 2002).<sup>1</sup> This is a translation into English of the official Chinese rules of 1998. It is supplanted by **[MCR06]** below, so therefore I don't refer much to it.

**[MCR06]** The official rules of the game are in *Mahjong Competition Rules* from 2006 by The World Mahjong Organization, also called 'The Green Book'.<sup>2</sup>

This is in Chinese and English, but I have only used the English text, even though the Chinese text is the original. If anything I quote here is clearer in the original than in the English translation I would be happy to hear about that.

**[OEMC07]** *Regulations OEMC 2007* (final version May 17, 2007)<sup>3</sup>, published by the European Mahjong Association. It contains some rule

<sup>1</sup><http://www.daimi.au.dk/~mahjong/OIRE.pdf>

<sup>2</sup><http://www.chinamajiang.com/adobe%20reader/mje0906.pdf>

<sup>3</sup><http://mahjong-europe.org/filer/regulationOEMC2007.pdf>

clarifications, showing what the actual practice is when the rules are unclear.

**[Paris08]** *Regulation 2008 Paris International Tournament*<sup>4</sup> – a one-page text by Jérôme Bonifas & Nathalie Mahé, written for the 4th French Championship of Mahjong, and being the latest text in English with rule clarifications that I have seen.

When I just mention 'Rule 3.5.7' etc. below that refers to **[MCR06]**. I use 'element' for what **[MCR06]** calls 'fan'.

## 2 The beginning of a hand

Rule 3.5.7:6 says

After Flower replacements, if the dealer cannot declare 'hu' he will discard one unwanted tile.

Even though it doesn't say so, it is also possible for East to make concealed kongs before declaring 'hu' or making the first discard.

(I haven't seen this mentioned elsewhere, but it would surprise me if anyone interprets it otherwise.)

## 3 Implications

Note that the implication rule is only for cases where *one* element implies another. If two or more elements together imply something, you can still score it. If you for instance have *All Green* and *Seven Pairs* you must have a *Tile Hog* as well since there are only six different green tiles, but you can still score all these three elements together.

<sup>4</sup><http://mahjong.paris.free.fr/docs/Regulation.pdf>

### 3.1 Exclusionary and non-exclusionary descriptions

A very clear example of the implication rule is *All Even Pungs* and *All Pungs*. Every *All Even Pungs* is also an *All Pungs*, but can't score that as well, because of the implication rule.

Unfortunately it is not always that easy, since the names and descriptions of some elements can be interpreted as if they exclude elements that otherwise would imply them. Then it's like there was a more specific rather unnatural definition of *All Pungs*, like 'a hand with four pungs that has at least one non-even tile'. If that was the case every pung hand would be *All Pungs* or *All Even Pungs*, but never both, so the implication rule wouldn't be needed for that.

Some other elements behave like that, and I use the term *exclusionary* for such descriptions of elements that exclude more specific versions. The normal ones (like the actual one for *All Pungs*) I call *non-exclusionary*.

In most cases it wouldn't matter in practice if *All Pungs* had such a strange definition, but in two cases it would. Then *Four Concealed Pungs* and *Four Kongs* wouldn't imply *All Pungs* since they could be all even instead! That is the reason why definitions that on first reading might seem to give the same result sometimes actually matter for the implication rules.

For some elements the names and/or descriptions have exclusionary formulations (in cases where those don't sound as awkward as in my example above). Sometimes the names and descriptions don't agree, but generally a non-exclusionary interpretation should be used anyway.

That is the case for concealedness in the next section, and melded and concealed kongs in chapter 5. Suit-based elements are unfortunately treated otherwise though, as seen in section 3.3.

### 3.2 Concealedness and implications

In Rule 3.8.1 *Concealed Hand* is described as having a concealed hand 'and winning by discard'. That description sounds like it would exclude *Fully Concealed Hand*, but it isn't interpreted like that, but instead it is as if the 'true' description of *Concealed Hand* doesn't mention the winning tile. So

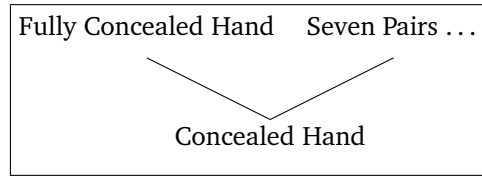


Figure 1: Implications for some elements with concealedness.

*Concealed Hand* is implied by *Fully Concealed Hand* and all the hands that always are *Concealed Hand* or *Fully Concealed Hand* imply *Concealed Hand* as well, as in Figure 1 with *Seven Pairs* as an example of those elements, and they can only score *Fully Concealed Hand* when applicable.

### 3.3 Suits and implications

Some suit elements are also described in an exclusionary way. *Half Flush* is for example described as a hand with 'tiles from any one of the three suits, in combination with Honor tiles', where the last part seems to exclude *Full Flush*. Still suit-based implication could work non-exclusionary like concealedness implication. Then the 'true' meaning of *Half Flush* would only be that at least two suits are voided, and thus *Full Flush* would imply *Half Flush* and an element like *All Green* that always is combined with *Half Flush* or *Full Flush* would imply *Half Flush* and would only score extra points for *Full Flush* when applicable.

Then there would be implications like in Figure 2, where *All Green* is an example of those elements that would imply *Half Flush*, and *Reversible*

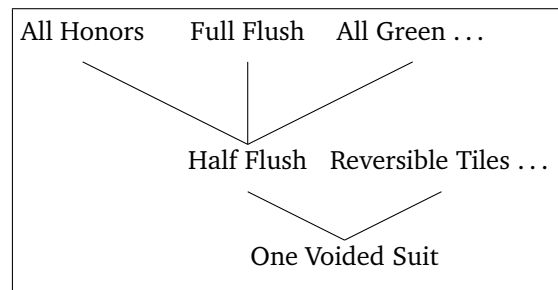


Figure 2: Implications for some suit elements if they were defined non-exclusionary. All of these lines are *not* official implications!

Table 1: What suit-based implications there *could* have been for some hands. Some elements have abbreviated names here: ‘Half’ = *Half Flush*, ‘Full’ = *Full Flush*, ‘Voided’ = *One Voided Suit*, ‘Honors’ = *All Honors*, ‘Chows’ = *All Chows*. The element inside [] isn’t scored according to the rules. There are no examples for the elements in *italics*.

Element	Together with one of	Common
All Green	Half / Full+All Simple	Half
Big Four Winds	Half / Honors	Half
Little Four Winds	Half / Honors	Half
Big Three Dragons	Voided / Half / Honors	Voided
Little Three Dragons	Voided / Half / Honors	Voided
Big Three Winds	Voided / Half / Honors	Voided
Quadruple Chow	<i>Voided+Chows</i> / Half / Full+Chows	Voided
Four Pure Shifted Chows	Voided+Chows / Half / Full+Chows	Voided
Four Pure Shifted Pungs	Voided+ <i>No Honors</i> / Half / Full	Voided
Reversible Tiles	[Voided] / Half / Full	Voided

*Tiles* is an example of those elements that would imply *One Voided Suit*. All the relevant elements are listed in Table 1, with the alternatives that they always are combined with, and what the least common element of those is according to Figure 2.

But that is not how it is done! The rules as such don’t make this clear, but it is explicitly made clear with examples for *All Green* on [MCR06, p. 33] that *All Green* can combine with *Half Flush* or *Full Flush* (so it is always combined with one of those).<sup>5</sup>

There are similar examples for most of the elements in Table 1 where *any* alternative in the table is fully scored, including the element in the ‘Common’ column there. The few remaining ones that have no examples in [MCR06, pp. 32–38] are in *italics*, but one might assume that the same principle is used for them as well.

There is one exception though. For *Reversible Tiles* it is said in the examples on [MCR06 pp. 47–48] that it doesn’t combine with *One Voided Suit*. I see no reason why this case is handled differently, but it is.

### My opinion

I would prefer it if all these elements were defined non-exclusionary, with implications as in Figure 2 so that the elements in Table 1 implied the element in the ‘Common’ column there. That would be easier, more in line with how other elements are in-

terpreted, and not give out as many ‘unnecessary’ points.

Most of these are rare hands, and the most common case, *Reversible Tiles*, is already handled like that. That means that players face this inconsistency rather seldom, and that the change I would like wouldn’t affect normal play much at all, except for the rules becoming a lot clearer.

I can’t see any reason why *Reversible Tiles* is handled differently. Maybe it is just because it is more common, and therefore more thought has gone into that case?

## 3.4 Some exceptions

### *Four Pure Shifted Chows*

*Four Pure Shifted Chows* can be done in two ways; one gives a *Short Straight* and one gives *Two Terminal Chows*, so none of these elements are strictly implicit. [MCR06 p. 38] says only that it doesn’t combine with *Short Straight*, but in the example with 123 345 567 789 *Two Terminal Chows* isn’t mentioned. Evidently they are handled the same, so that none of them can be combined.

### All Terminals / Honors

*All Terminals*, *All Honors* and *All Terminals and Honors* don’t combine with *All Pungs* or *Pung of Terminal or Honor* even though that is not strictly implied. The reason it is not strictly implied is because these hands can be made as *Seven Pairs*. (On the

<sup>5</sup>This is a change from [OIRE02] for *All Green*, but most of the other similar elements were treated the same then already.

other hand *All Types* isn't a similar exception, so you can score every *Pung of Terminal* or *Honor* you have, even though one of them would be implied if it wasn't for *Seven Pairs*.<sup>6</sup>)

If you have pungs instead of *Seven Pairs* with *All Terminals* you will have *Double Pung* twice or *Triple Pung*, but *Double Pung* is not implied.<sup>7</sup>

That means that the least-scoring *All Terminals* is 68 points for a hand like



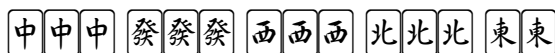
(*All Terminals* (64) + *Double Pung* (2) twice).

The least-scoring *All Terminals* and *Honors* is only 32 points, not combined with anything, for a hand like



where and are 'lesser' winds.

The least-scoring *All Honors* is worth 70 points for a hand like



(*All Honors* (64) + *Two Dragons Pungs* (6)), where and are 'lesser' winds.

### Seven (Shifted) Pairs

*Single Wait* is implied for *Seven Pairs* and *Seven Shifted Pairs* even though it actually isn't strictly implied. (With a hand like



you will get *Seven Pairs* with the last , but you will also get mahjong with or .)

(Even though it is explicitly said also that *Seven Shifted Pairs* doesn't combine with *Single Wait*, in most cases it wouldn't be a *Single Wait* anyway – only when waiting with 1122344556677 or 3344556678899 in a suit.)

<sup>6</sup>The description of *All Types* in rule 3.8.1 (p. 21) speaks of a 'hand in which each of the five sets ...' and in the examples on pp. 50–51 it is similar, but that it actually also applies for special hands is made clear on p. 39 for *Seven Pairs* and on p. 45–46 for *Knitted Straight*. (*All Types* is implied by *Greater/Lesser Knitted Honors* and *Knitted Tiles* and by *Thirteen Orphans*.)

<sup>7</sup>In [OIRE02] *Double Pung* was implied.

### Knitted Straight

*Knitted Straight* can be scored for a *Lesser Honors* and *Knitted Tiles* that only includes five honors. According to the rules as written it shouldn't be possible since it breaks the Non-Separation Principle [MCR06 p. 25], and there is nothing in the description about these hands in Rule 3.8.1 that gives an exception.

Still that is the practice and there is an example in [MCR06 p. 45] where that element is scored without any comment.

(My opinion: That shouldn't be allowed. It is a totally unnecessary exception to the rule.)

### Nine Gates

*Nine Gates* will always imply *Concealed Hand* and *Full Flush*, but there are some things that depend on what particular tile the winning tile is, as seen in Table 2. Strictly only one *Pung of Terminal* is implied, but maybe the Non-Repeat Principle should be interpreted such that an element that is implied can't be scored even if it occurs more times than necessary. This is the only case where that could happen, so there are no other cases to compare with. The examples for *Nine Gates* in [MCR06, p. 34] say that it doesn't combine with 'Full Flush, Concealed hand, and Pung of Terminals or Honors.' I think that has been interpreted not as *one* but as *any number of Pung of Terminals or Honors*, so that is my understanding of the rules, even though I think it would be more natural if you could score the other pung when making mahjong with a 2, 5 or 8.

Table 2: Elements that you make together with *Nine Gates*, depending on what you winning tile is. Those in parentheses won't be scored.

Tile	Elements
1/9	(Pung of Terminal), Pure Straight, Tile Hog
2/8	(2×Pung of Terminal), Short Straight
3/7	(Pung of Terminal), Short Straight
4/6	(Pung of Terminal), Short Straight
5	(2×Pung of Terminal)



score it twice. If you have three concealed kongs you score *Two Concealed Kongs* and *Concealed Kong*.

*Two Concealed Kongs* of course implies *Two Concealed Pungs*, but *Three Concealed Pungs* and *Four Concealed Pungs* can be scored with any number of the ‘pungs’ being concealed kongs.

This is how I think the kong rules are supposed to work, even though it is a bit strange. Table 3 shows what is scored for different elements of kongs and concealed pungs, according to this.

## 6 The winning tile

There are several elements where it matters which tile in the winning hand was the winning tile.

### 6.1 Waits

#### Only one winning tile

You can only score a Wait element if you actually have only one winning tile. Waiting with you don't get *Closed Wait* with , and you don't get *Single Wait* with , since you have two winning tiles.

But with you *do* get *Closed Wait* with since there is no fifth .<sup>8</sup> Only your standing tiles are looked at when excluding any possibilities because a fifth identical tile would be needed, not your melded tiles or tiles in concealed kongs. So even if you have melded or have a kong you can't score a Wait with .

Even though you don't get *Single Wait* with *Seven Pairs*, you still don't get a Wait if you only have one winning tile that makes a non-Seven Pair hand. So with you don't get *Closed Wait* with since also completes the hand.

<sup>8</sup>I think this is the best way to handle this, and I know that I'm not alone, but I haven't seen this confirmed.

#### Only one wait

If several of the Wait elements apply for that single tile you can still score only one of them. So with you can score *Single Wait* or *Closed Wait* with , but not both, etc.

As long as you only have one kind of winning tile, and you arrange your hand so that one of the Wait elements apply, you can score the Wait even if there is a way to arrange the hand where the winning tile completes some other set. So with

your

only winning tile is and you will get *Closed Wait* by arranging your hand as

and

not as

.

Sometimes there can be different ways to combine the tiles into sets even though you have just one winning tile, and then you have to arrange the hand so that a Wait element apply if you want to score it. So with

you

will only get *Single Wait* with if you make an *All Chows* hand, and not for the more valuable *Seven Pairs* (since *Seven Pairs* never can be combined with *Single Wait* – see 3.4).

Finally the trickiest example. With

the

only winning tile is . If you self-draw you will always get *Voided Suit* (1) + *Self-Drawn* (1) + *Tile Hog* (2) + *No Honors* (1). If you arrange your tiles as you will also get *Short Straight* (1) and *Single Wait* (1) for a total of 7 points. If you instead arrange your tiles as you will get *Double Pung* (2) but will lose *Single Wait*, so then it's still only 7 points.

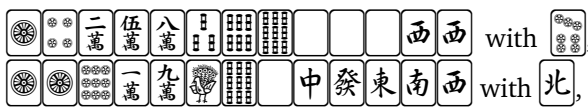
Table 3: Elements of kongs and concealed pung. 4K = *Four Kongs*, 3K = *Three Kongs*, 2K = *Two (Melded) Kongs*, K = *(Melded) Kong*, 2CK = *Two Concealed Kongs*, CK = *Concealed Kong*, 4CP = *Four Concealed Pungs*, 3CP = *Three Concealed Pungs*, 2CP = *Two Concealed Pungs*, AP = *All Pungs*. Also the first line will always be combined with *Melded Hand* or *Self-Drawn*.

Number of Kongs	MK	CK	CP	SCORE	Elements
4	4	0	0	88	4K
	3	1	0	90	4K, CK
	2	2	0	96	4K, 2CK
	1	3	0	114	4K, 3CP, 2CK, CK
	0	4	0	168	4K, 4CP, 2×2CK
3	3	0	0	32	3K
	3	0	1	40	3K, AP
	2	1	0	34	3K, CK
	2	1	1	42	3K, 2CP, CK, AP
	1	2	0	40	3K, 2CK
	1	2	1	62	3K, 3CP, 2CK, AP
	0	3	0	58	3K, 3CP, 2CK, CK
	0	3	1	106	3K, 4CP, 2CK, CK
2	2	0	0	4	2K
	2	0	1	4	2K
	2	0	2	12	2K, 2CP, AP
	1	1	0	6	2K, CK
	1	1	1	8	2K, 2CP, CK
	1	1	2	28	2K, 3CP, CK, AP
	0	2	0	8	2CK
	0	2	1	24	2CK, 3CP
	0	2	2	72	2CK, 4CP
1	1	0	0	1	K
	1	0	1	1	K
	1	0	2	3	K, 2CP
	1	0	3	23	K, 3CP, AP
	0	1	0	2	CK
	0	1	1	4	CK, 2CP
	0	1	2	18	CK, 3CP
	0	1	3	66	CK, 4CP

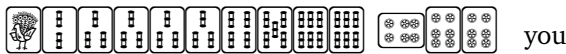
## My opinion


The rules for the wait elements are too complicated. I would prefer if there would simply be one element ‘Single Wait’ meaning that looking at the tiles still in the waiting hand (not melded or in a concealed kong) there is only one kind of tile that completes it.

That would be easier and more intuitive, and the differences are reasonable. That would score ‘Single Wait’ for instance for



and in the example with




would be able to complete your hand with a self-drawn , since you could score *Double Pung* and *Single Wait*.

## 6.2 Heavenly Win

I haven’t seen it discussed if East can score any of the Wait elements or *Nine Gates* when having mahjong before the first discard, but that shouldn’t be possible from the first fourteen tiles, since the last two of them are drawn together. I assume a replacement tile from a flower can score these elements, though. (If having such a hand East should be careful to draw replacement tiles one at a time.)

When East makes concealed kongs before the first discard (see Chapter 2) it is possible to score a Wait element with the replacement tile (as well as *Replacement from Kong*, of course).

## 6.3 Last Tile

For *Last Tile* only discarded and melded tiles count. Erroneously exposed tiles don’t count, since they still may be discarded. Tiles in erroneous melds do count, like a  erroneously melded as a flower or

a    ‘chow’.

(This is made explicit by [Paris08].)

## 7 Timing

### 7.1 Different priorities

[MCR06 3.6.6] says about making a chow that you ‘should allow a brief moment before speaking your claim, to be sure that nobody else claims it for Pung or Kong’.

It has been unclear what happens when that ‘brief moment’ becomes longer and how long time a player has to chow. One interpretation that I first saw in print in [Paris08] says: ‘Playing time is 10 seconds between discards, including calling a chow, but 3 seconds only for pung, kong or hu. If a player calls chow without waiting 3 seconds, other calls have priority’, implying that it is possible for the player whose turn it is to wait more than 3 seconds and then be able to chow safely.

That is a problem, because then it is in the player’s interest to always wait more than three seconds before chowing, and by extension to wait more than three seconds before picking a tile even otherwise, so as to not give someone who may want to pung the tile any information. If that interpretation of the rules becomes the norm then I think that gradually more and more players will play like that, and it might become a real problem. Noone wants that, so the rules shouldn’t encourage it! Another interpretation I’ve heard is that 3 seconds is the time limit for chows as well, so when it is too late to pung it is too late to chow as well. That encourages players to wait with calling until it’s almost too late instead, which isn’t much better.

With strict timing rules one has to decide. Slow pace with sure chows or faster pace with unsure chows that can be ‘stolen’.

### My opinion

I think that it always should be possible to overrule a previous call within a short time, even if the 3 second limit is over. That short time might be 1 second or probably better 0.5 seconds, and is meant for implementing decisions. So the decision you make could be ‘pung only if there is a chow call’, and then you have a little time to actually say pung if that happens.

So even if a player takes a long time to Chow (> 3 seconds) it would still be possible for another player to announce pung (or kong or hu) immedi-

ately after that.

There is still a small incentive for a player to wait. It may be case that someone will pung the tile only if it is chowed, and it may be the case that someone will pung the tile regardless. A player declaring chow in < 3 seconds being overruled by a pung will not know which of these situations it is, but by waiting that would be known. I don't think that incentive is big enough to be a problem.

With these timing rules an extreme very rare case might be this: East discards a tile. South takes a long time to think and then says chow. Within half a second North says pung and then within half a second of that West says hu. (Presumably West didn't declare hu before because he hoped for a self-draw, but the pung made him change his mind.)

Within the same short time limit it should also be possible to overrule a 'hu' with a 'hu' from a nearer player.

## 8 Miscellaneous

### 8.1 Flowers

Flowers can be discarded.

I think that is a strange rule and that it originally wasn't actually meant in the rules, but that has become the custom. The last part about flowers in Rule 3.8.1, p. 23 is unfortunately a bit strange in the English translation:

Flower replacement to be Hu, the point of Self-Drawn can add. It can't add the points of Out with Replacement Tile, it not Flower replacement can discard.

The first two parts mean that a flower replacement tile counts as *Self-Drawn* but not as *Out with Replacement Tile*. The last part seems to me to say that you can't discard Flower tiles, but I would like to know what the original says.

Since you can keep flowers on the hand there is a question about when you are allowed to meld kept flowers. [OEMC07 4.2] says that flowers can be melded in the same circumstances as when making a kong, that is after drawing a tile from the wall or a replacement tile.

## 8.2 Obligatory discards

Sometimes you have exposed tiles that you are obliged to discard before you discard any other tiles.<sup>9</sup> If you only have a very dangerous tile left there it shouldn't be possible to avoid that danger by 'accidentally' exposing some safer tiles that enter into your to-be-discarded group. Therefore there ought to be an order so that tiles exposed later only are to be discarded after the first exposed group.

## 9 The end of a hand

### 9.1 Mixing the winning tile

If you self-pick a mahjong but have mixed tiles so that it isn't possible for the other players to know which your winning tile was, you can't score *Edge Wait*, *Closed Wait*, *Single Wait*, *Last Tile* or *Nine Gates*, but apart from that you aren't penalized any further as long as the hand still is worth enough points.

(This is according to [OEMC07 5.1]. [MCR06 3.4.28] says that it is 'forbidden to put the final tile among your other tiles prior to exposure of the complete hand', but doesn't mention any penalty.)

### 9.2 Last Tile Draw

*Last Tile Draw* is scored regardless of whether the tile was drawn normally, as a kong replacement tile, or as a flower replacement tile.

### 9.3 Making kongs at the end

The player who took the last tile from the wall can make a kong. Then the hand ends when the player can't draw a replacement tile, and the player doesn't have to discard a tile.

If it's a melded kong there are three seconds for anyone to rob the kong, as usual, before the hand ends. In that case, does *Last Tile Claim* apply? It is described as going out with 'the discard which is the last tile in the game'. This isn't really a discard, but Rule 3.7.2.3 says that there are two ways to

<sup>9</sup>The rules about what tiles have to be treated this way are not always the same, but I don't go into that here.

make mahjong – self-drawn and by discard, and makes it clear that robbing the kong is counted as ‘by discard’.

I assume therefore that *Last Tile Claim* can be scored in that situation, (and thus, it is better to just discard that tile instead). (If on the other hand *Last Tile Claim* can’t be scored, then it would actually be preferable to make a kong with the tile when possible. If anyone makes mahjong with the tile they will get 8 points for *Last Discarded Tile* in the first case and *Robbing the Kong* in the second case, but in the first case also 4 points for *Last Tile* which is implied by *Robbing the Kong*.)

#### 9.4 Revealing concealed kongs

After the hand concealed kongs should be revealed. What is the penalty for having made a false concealed kong? Whatever it is, in the situation in the previous section it shouldn’t be better to take the penalty than to make a risky discard, so in that case the player should have to make a discard.

#### 9.5 Interrupted hand

Rule 3.9.1:2 says that penalty points ‘must be subtracted after the hand has been finished’, and Rule 3.5.6 says that when a time limit for the session is over play ‘ends immediately, with no players earning points for that hand’.

That might be interpreted as is there are no penalty points awarded for that unfinished hand, but that I think would be unreasonable. Penalty points should be awarded for that hand as well. Also, any concealed kongs should be revealed even after an interrupted hand, and false concealed kongs should be penalized as usual (however that should be).

#### 9.6 Four dead hands

If all four hands are dead the players should immediately terminate the hand, display any concealed kongs, pay any penalty points, and then start with the next hand (if more hands should be played).

(This isn’t in the rules, but is common sense.)