

How to play Mahjong Solitaire

Mahjong Solitaire is a tile-matching puzzle for one player. Remove all the tiles from the board by tapping two matching tiles that are both free. A tile is free when nothing lies on top of it and its left or right side is open. Clear every tile to win.

Goal

Take all the tiles off the table, two at a time, by matching free pairs. You win when the table is empty.

Setup

- The tiles are stacked in a shape called a layout, sometimes in several layers. A full set has 144 tiles, and smaller layouts use fewer.
- The tiles show dots, bamboo, characters, winds, dragons, flowers and seasons.
- Free tiles stand out as brighter, and blocked tiles look darker and slightly greyed.
- A counter shows how many tiles are left and how many free pairs are open.

How to play

1. Look at the board and find the free tiles. A free tile has nothing on top of it and an open left or right side.
2. Find two free tiles with the same picture.
3. Tap the first tile, then tap the second. If they match, both tiles leave the board.
4. Look for new free tiles that appeared when the pair left, especially on the layer below.
5. Flowers match any other flower, and seasons match any other season, even if the pictures differ.
6. Plan ahead. Choose pairs that open the most tiles underneath, and leave tiles that are not blocking anything for later.
7. If no free pair is left, use Undo to take back a move, or Shuffle to deal the tiles that are left again.
8. Keep matching until the last pair leaves the table.

Key rules

What are the rules of Mahjong Solitaire?

You clear the table by removing pairs of matching tiles. Only free tiles can be taken, and a tile is free when nothing lies on top of it and its left or right side is open. Flowers match any flower and seasons match any season. All other tiles pair with their identical twin.

Which tiles are free in Mahjong Solitaire?

A tile is free when no tile lies on top of it and at least one of its long sides, left or right, has no tile touching it. A tile that has a neighbour on both sides is blocked, even if nothing is on top. Tiles at the ends of rows are usually free.

Which tiles match in Mahjong Solitaire?

Two tiles match when they show the same picture, such as two 5 of dots or two red dragons. The exception is flowers and seasons: any flower matches any other flower, and any season matches any other season. The four winds each match only the same wind.

How many tiles are in Mahjong Solitaire?

A full Mahjong set has 144 tiles: four copies of 34 different faces, plus four flowers and four seasons. A full 144-tile board is the biggest layout. Pairtide also has smaller layouts with fewer tiles, for example 72 or 88, so a game can be shorter.

What if there are no moves left in Mahjong Solitaire?

If no two free tiles match, you can undo and try a different pair, or shuffle. In Pairtide, Shuffle deals the tiles that are left again into a board you can still clear, and may put the last pairs back first. The first hint and the first shuffle on each board are free.

Is Mahjong Solitaire the same as Mahjong?

No. Mahjong is a game for four players that uses the same tiles but is played with sets, hands and scoring. Mahjong Solitaire is a one-player matching game that only borrows the tiles. You do not need to know how to play Mahjong to enjoy it.

Winning and scoring

A cleared board in Pairtide gives a score based on the number of tiles, plus a bonus if you win without a hint or shuffle and a bonus for beating the target time. Each hint and each shuffle takes points away. In the Journey, you earn up to three stars per level: one for clearing the board, one for beating the target time, and one for using no hint and no shuffle. Undo is free and never costs stars.

Tips

- Start with tiles in the tallest stacks and the longest rows. Opening them frees many tiles at once.
- When there are four copies of a tile, take the free pairs from the stack that blocks the others first.
- Look at the Open counter. If only one or two pairs are free, take the one that opens the most new tiles.
- Keep an eye on tiles at the edges. They are free early, so use them when they help and not just because they are easy.
- Do not remove the only tile that can make a pair with a buried tile if you have a choice.
- Think two moves ahead. Before you tap, ask what becomes free after the pair leaves.
- Use Undo as often as you like. In Pairtide it is always free.
- If you are stuck, use Hint to see a matching pair.

Avoid these mistakes

- Matching the first pair you see without checking which tiles it unlocks.
- Taking tiles from the top layer only, which can leave tiles stuck underneath with no partners.
- Forgetting that any flower matches any flower, and any season matches any season.
- Leaving the last copy of a tile blocked under a stack. Check where the other copies are before you remove one.
- Using Shuffle too early, when Undo would let you try a better pair.

Words to know

Layout: The shape in which the tiles are stacked at the start of a game.

Free tile: A tile with nothing on top and an open left or right side. Only free tiles can be taken.

Blocked tile: A tile that is covered, or that has a tile on both its left and right sides.

Pair: Two matching free tiles that you remove together.

Flowers and seasons: Special tiles. Any flower matches any flower, and any season matches any season.

Shuffle: A way to deal the remaining tiles again when no moves are left.