

World Unified Mahjong Terminology

(Version 060722)

This document is initiated with a goal of establishing a world unified set of terminology for the games of mahjong, and is published and maintained via the Mahjong Newsgroup (rec.games.mahjong) as a general reference for the public, and may be cited the "World Unified Mahjong Terminology", or "WUMT" (世界统一麻将术语 "shijie tongyi majiang shuyu"). This document consists of two sections:

- World Unified Mahjong Terminology Table ("WUMT Table"), which lists all proposed unified mahjong terminology in both English and Chinese.
- Convention of expression of mahjong terms and phrases.

Discussions, suggestions and recommendations are welcome and the document may then be updated accordingly.

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World Unified Mahjong Terminology Table ("WUMT Table")

Sort	Category	English	Chinese	Description	Comments	Changes
0.0.01	Overall	mahjong	麻将 "ma jiang"	How people call the game in general	For simplicity, mahjong is the obvious choice for the English term. For Chinese, although 麻雀 ("ma que") seems to be the only term used for many decades, 麻将 "ma jiang" seems to be able to uniquely identify the game and is thus recommended.	
0.1.01	Overall	event	牌局 "pai ju"	An occasion or the whole period of playing in which no change of players has occurred	"Event", "meeting", "gathering" etc can all be used to refer to casual gatherings. "Session" is normally used to represent various portions in formal contests or tournaments.	060610
0.1.02	Overall	game	盘 "pan"	A complete process of a short playing period that is ended in a result involving the paying and receiving of scores	See also description for "hand" (sort # 5.2.05) - Note the fundamental difference between the two. Some variants end a game when there is no more pais to be drawn.	
0.1.03	Overall	round	圈 "quan"	A completion of several games in which all players have tried and retired to be a jonga		
0.1.04	Overall	four rounds	四圈 "si quan"	A term representing an ideal period of a complete playing process	A complete playing process shall ideally consist of four rounds, or its multiple. A multiple of four rounds may be used to indicate a period of game play expected to be lasted by participating players.	060610

Sort	Category	English	Chinese	Description	Comments	Changes
0.2.01	Overall	wall	牌墙 "pai qiang"	The source of concealed pails from where pails are dealt to players		
0.2.02	Overall	head	牌头 "pai tou"	The beginning of the wall		
0.2.03	Overall	tail	牌尾 "pai wei"	The end of the wall		
0.2.04	Overall	floor	牌池 "pai chi"	The middle of the game table where all discarded pails are placed		
1.0.02	Overall	pai	牌 "pai"	The playing pieces of the game in general	Pai (same in Chinese 牌 "pai") can refer to playing pieces regardless of the material or shape of the pieces.	
1.1.10	Playing pieces	Serials	序数牌 "xu su pai"	Suits of playing pieces that are named from 1 through 9	"Serials" is a general term for the playing pieces which covers three suits each has its own name. The terms for the 3 Serial suits shall ideally be names that are short and in just one vocal sound and therefore "Tan", "Sok" and "Wan" are recommended. Besides, it is obviously very beneficial if the names of these three suits in both Chinese and English have similar vocalizations. Pails of the same kind may be called a Serial suit, or the Tan suit, or simply the Tans (or Soks, Wans, respectively).	060703
1.1.11	Playing pieces	Tans	筒子 "tong zi"	Name of one of three Serial suits [Code: TX for the Tans in general; Tx (where x is digits 1 - 9) for individual pails.]	"Tan" is used because it is close to the historic origin: 铜 ("tong", as in "tong qian", Copper Coins). CMCR calls this suit 饼子 "bing zi", which is also seen in some ancient Chinese literature. However, "Tan" gives a louder and clearer voice when called and therefore is more preferable (also true for "Sok" and "Wan"). Examples of use: 1 Tan, 6 Tan, 789 Tan.	060704, 060703
1.1.12	Playing pieces	Soks	索子 "suo zi"	Name of one of three Serial suits [Code: SX for the Soks in general; Sx (where x is digits 1 - 9) for individual pails.]	"Sok" is used because it is close to the historic origin: 索 ("suo", means String). Note that CMCR calls this suit 条子 "tiao zi". Examples of use: I have two chows of 345 Sok and two pungs of 6 and 7 Sok.	060704, 060703

Sort	Category	English	Chinese	Description	Comments	Changes
1.1.13	Playing pieces	Wans	万子 "wan zi"	Name of one of three Serial suits [Code: WX for the Wans in general; Wx (where x is digits 1 - 9) for individual pais.]	"Wan" is used because it is close to the historic origin: 文钱 ("wen qian" means Money Notes). Note that CMCR also calls this suit 万子 "wan zi", probably the only "universal term" of the Serials in Chinese! Examples of use: I have three Sok pais and four 4 Wan. Note: Tan, Sok and Wan shall not be in the plural form when called with its numeric titles (e.g., 9 Tan, 678 Sok are not to be called 9 Tans, 678 Soks. However, <i>the</i> Tans, <i>the</i> Soks are correct - See comments for "Serials").	060704, 060703
1.1.20	Playing pieces	Dragons	三元牌 "san yuan pai"	Collective term covering Red, Green, and White	Although most Chinese literature do not use Dragons to represent these three titles as 三元 "san yuan" (Three Scholars) or 箭牌 "jian pai" (The Arrows) are more frequently used, the use of Dragons (including relative terms Red, Green, and White) could denote the fact that games of mahjong have also been well evolved in the Western world and the term Dragons shall record this historical fact.	
1.1.21	Playing pieces	Red Dragon	红中 "hong zhong"	Name of one of the three Dragons; may also be called Red Centre [Code: CC or C]	Chinese players normally call this title in two words (two vocal sounds). To match the Chinese pronunciation this title may ideally be also called Red Joy. See also comments for "Dragons".	060704, 060703
1.1.22	Playing pieces	Green Dragon	发财 "fa cai"	Name of one of the three Dragons; may also be called Green Fortune [Code: FF or F]	Chinese players normally call this title in two words (two vocal sounds). To match the Chinese pronunciation this title may ideally be also called Green Fortune. See also comments for "Dragons".	060704, 060703
1.1.23	Playing pieces	White Dragon	白板 "bai ban"	Name of one of the three Dragons; may also be called White Board [Code: BB or B]	Chinese players normally call this title in two words (two vocal sounds). To match the Chinese pronunciation this title may ideally be also called White Board. See also comments for "Dragons".	060704, 060703
1.1.30	Playing pieces	Winds	风牌 "feng pai"	Collective term for East, South, West and North		
1.1.31	Playing pieces	East	东 "dong"	Name of one of the four Winds [Code: EE or E]		060704, 060703

Sort	Category	English	Chinese	Description	Comments	Changes
1.1.32	Playing pieces	South	南 "nan"	Name of one of the four Winds [Code: SS or S]		060704, 060703
1.1.33	Playing pieces	West	西 "xi"	Name of one of the four Winds [Code: WW or W]		060704, 060703
1.1.34	Playing pieces	North	北 "bei"	Name of one of the four Winds [Code: NN or N]		060704, 060703
1.1.40	Playing pieces	Flowers	花牌 "hua pai"	Collective term for Blue Flowers and Red Flowers		
1.1.41	Playing pieces	Blue Flowers	蓝花 "lan hua": 梅 "mei", 兰 "lan", 竹 "zhu", 菊 "ju"	Blue Flowers: Blue 1, Blue 2, Blue 3 and Blue 4 [may also be named: Plum (1), Orchid (2), Bamboo (3) and Chrysanthemum (4)] [Code: Bx (where x is digits 1 - 4)]	Some writers may use this sequence for Blue Flowers: Plum (1), Orchid (2), Chrysanthemum (3) and Bamboo (4). The difference may have very little effect to the game play as Flowers are normally called by its numeric titles (e.g., Blue 1, Red 4).	
1.1.42	Playing pieces	Red Flowers	红花 "hong hua": 春 "chun", 夏 "xia", 秋 "qiu", 冬 "dong"	Red Flowers: Red 1, Red 2, Red 3 and Red 4 [may also be named: Spring (1), Summer (2), Autumn (2) and Winter (4)] [Code: Rx (where x is digits 1 - 4)]	Although Red Flowers contain names of the four seasons and are therefore also called the Seasons, use of the term Red Flowers only is recommended.	
1.1.51	Playing pieces	Honours	番子 "fan zi"	Collective term covering Dragons and Winds		
1.1.52	Playing pieces	Terminals	纯幺九 "chun yao jiu"	Collective term covering 1 and 9 of the Serials	In Chinese 幺 "yao" means 1s and 九 "jiu" means 9s. Obviously, therefore, 幺九 "yao jiu" shall mean 1s and 9s only and thus matches the English term "Terminals". However, 幺九 "yao jiu" can also include Honours (see description for "Unios"). To avoid confusion and uncertainty, the term "Terminals" shall be translated as 纯幺九 "chun yao jiu" in Chinese to specifically indicate that it covers 1s and 9s only.	
1.1.53	Playing pieces	Unios	幺九 "yao jiu"	Collective term covering Terminals and Honours	幺九 "yao jiu" is a term used very often in Chinese but almost not used among the Western players (don't know why). The term "Unio" initiated by IMJ is combined from the words "unique" and "odd".	

World Unified Mahjong Terminology (Version 060722)

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2.1.01	Player	jonga	庄家 "zhuang jia"	The player who casts the dice and is the first player to receive pais in a game	It is common to call the dealer the East in many variants or rulebooks, however, calling a player East could cause confusions, especially when other players are thus called South, West or North, respectively. Use of the terms "jonga", "lefta", "nexta" and "opposa" can clearly identify a player without creating uncertainty or confusion.	
2.1.02	Player		旁家 "pang jia"	Players other than the jonga		060722
2.1.03	Player	lefta	上家 "shang jia"	The player on the left (upper seat) of a specified player	See comments for "jonga". Example: The jonga was my lefta so I had a very good chance to claim his first discard to win my calling hand!	
2.1.04	Player	nexta	下家 "xia jia"	The player on the right (lower seat) of a specified player	See comments for "jonga". Example: I was about to pung jonga's discard but my nexta declared win! (Hint: lefta is your upper seat and nexta is your lower seat!)	
2.1.05	Player	opposa	对家 "dui jia"	The player on the opposite side of a specified player	See comments for "jonga". Example: I'm Mary's opposa and her nexta is my lefta.	
3.1.01	Move	chuck	出铤 "chu chong"	The act of exposing a pai to allow other player to win the game	Used as verb: to chuck, chucked, chucked.	
3.1.02	Move	chucker	炮手 "pao shou"	One who chucks (who exposes a pai to allow other player to win the game)	Chucker is always used as a noun.	
3.1.03	Move	selfmake	自摸 "zi mo"	The act of winning a hand by and immediately after drawing a pai from the wall	Used as verb: to selfmake, selfmade, selfmade.	
3.1.04	Move	win	胡 "hu"		In Chinese, the use of 胡 ("hu"), not 和 ("he" or "hu"), is highly recommended. 和 ("he") is not normally pronounced as "hu" in regular use. Besides, 和 ("he") also means a tie, a draw, thus could create confusion.	
4.1.01	Set	pair	对 "dui"	Two identical pais of any kind	One should note that the terms "pair" and "eye" are not the same. "Eye" can be "one eye" or "two eyes".	
4.1.02	Set	chow	顺子 "shun zi"; 吃 "chi"	A set of three consecutive pais of the Serials of the same kind	Used as noun: a chow of 123 Tan; two chows of 123 Sok. Used as verb: to chow, chowed, chowed.	

Sort	Category	English	Chinese	Description	Comments	Changes
4.1.03	Set	pung	刻子 "ke zi"; 碰 "peng"	A set of three identical pairs of any kind	Used as noun: a pung of 3 Sok; two pungs of Red Dragon and East. Used as verb: to pung, pungen, pungen. Although "pong" is also a commonly accepted term, it's easier to call "pung" than "pong", hence "pung" is selected.	
4.1.04	Set	kong	杆 "gang"	A set of four identical pairs of any kind	Used as noun: a kong; two kongs. Used as verb: to kong, konged, konged.	
4.1.05	Set	eye	眼 "yan"	A set of two identical pairs of any kind in a winning hand that are independent of other combination of pairs in the hand	One should note that the terms "pair" and "eye" are not the same. "Eye" can be "one eye" or "two eyes". In the winning patterns of Seven Pairs and some special winning hands, eyes may not exist in the hand.	
5.1.01	Scoring	The Coward	鸡胡 "ji hu"	One of four standard winning hand structures	Although "Chicken Hand" is also a common term, the use of "The Coward" could eliminate the confusion of the term "hand" to represent an "element" of a hand.	060610
5.1.02	Scoring	All Chows	平胡 "ping hu"	One of four standard winning hand structures		060610
5.1.03	Scoring	All Pungs	碰碰胡 "peng peng hu"	One of four standard winning hand structures		060610
5.1.04	Scoring	Seven Pairs	七对胡 "qi dui hu"	One of four standard winning hand structures		060610
5.2.01	Scoring	grade element; score element	番种 "fan zhong"; 分种 "fen zhong"	Element of a winning hand that carries ranking values ("fan") or score values ("points")	Use of the term "element", not "hand", is recommended. Grade element (番种 "fan zhong"): used in the fan-to-point system; score element (分种 "fen zhong"): used in the point-only system	
5.2.02	Scoring	fan	番 "fan"	Unit used to measure the ranking values of a winning hand		060610
5.2.03	Scoring	score; point	分 "fen"	Score or point awarded to a winning hand	In a fan-to-point system: use "score" to represent the value of a winning hand. In point-only system: use "point" to represent the value of a winning hand.	
5.2.04	Scoring	maximum score	最高分值 "zui gao fen zhi"	Maximum score that may be claimed by a player		
5.2.05	Scoring	hand	手牌 "shou pai"	Collective term of all pairs dealt to and maintained by a player	Hand, winning hand, hand of pairs. See also comments for "grade element".	

World Unified Mahjong Terminology (Version 060722)

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5.2.06	Scoring	special winning hands	例牌 "li pai"	Winning hand that has its specified or unique characteristics	There is no need to call any hand a "special hand" unless it is a winning hand. Hence "special winning hand" is a specific term.	
5.2.07	Scoring	too few	小相公 "xiao xiang gong"	A hand that has not enough pais	Note that "too few" (or "too many") describes the condition of a hand only; such condition does not determine whether the player holding such a hand can win the game or not.	
5.2.08	Scoring	too many	大相公 "da xiang gong"	A hand that has too many pais	See comments for "too few".	
5.3.01	Scoring	Concealed	暗 "an"	The concealed portion of a hand	Generally referred to pais not disclosed to others (can be on the walls or in a player's own hand).	
5.3.02	Scoring	Exposed	明 "ming"; 露 "lu"	The displayed portion of a hand or the act to discard, disclose or display a pai	Used as adjective: means exposed, displayed, or melded. Used as verb: includes discarding a pai, displaying a 4th pai to set up a melded kong.	
5.3.03	Scoring	Chance	正 "zheng"	The relation between a player's seating sequence and the serial sequence of the pais of Winds and Flowers in the player's possession	"Chance" (正 "zheng") may be related to pais of the Winds and the Flowers, the sequence of the round of games, as well as the seating sequence of a player with respect to that of the jonga (jonga's sequence being 1).	
5.3.04	Scoring	Pure, Mixed	清 "qing"; 混 "hun"	Words used in the definitions of grade or score elements	"Pure" and "Mixed" refer to the overall contents of a hand.	
5.3.05	Scoring	Big, Little	大 "da"; 小 "xiao"	Words used in the definitions of grade or score elements	"Big" and "Little" refer to the completeness of a specific group of pais named in a statement.	060722
5.3.06	Scoring	Identical (Chows)	同 "tong"	Words used in the definitions of grade or score elements	"Identical" is used where all aspects of two or more sets are the same.	
5.3.07	Scoring	Matching (Chows or Pungs)	(序数相同 花色不同)	Words used in the definitions of grade or score elements	"Matching" is used where only the "serial numbers" of sets of different Serial suits are matched.	
5.3.08	Scoring	Jumping (Pungs)	节 "jie"	Words used in the definitions of grade or score elements	"Jumping" is used where the serial numbers of pungs of the Serial suit(s) are in consecutive order.	
5.3.09	Scoring	Stepping (Chows)	步 "bu"	Words used in the definitions of grade or score elements	"Stepping" is used where the serial numbers of chows of the Serial suit(s) are in consecutive order.	

Convention of expression of mahjong terms and phrases

Along with the World Unified Mahjong Terminology is the following convention of expression of the written form of terms and phrases in mahjong:

1. Terms and phrases that are specific shall be capitalized, these shall include all titles of the playing pieces and all grade or score elements. Examples: The Serials, the Tans (1 Tan, 2 Tan, etc.), the Honours, the Winds, East, North, White Dragon, Great Four Winds, Eight Flowers, Seven Pairs (as a grade or score element) etc.
2. Terms and phrases that are referring to players or things generally and are not specific shall be expressed in regular form. Examples include jonga, nexta, chucker, grade element, score element, special winning hand, the wall, the head (or tail), a pai on the floor, a chow, two pungs, three kongs, seven pairs (as an expression of quantity in general), etc.
3. Terms and phrases that are used as verb or adjective shall be expressed in regular form. Examples include pung, selfmake, chuck, win, special winning hands, etc.
4. Distinctive "codes" are assigned to all individual mahjong playing pieces - Refer to the column "Category" and look for "Playing pieces" of the WUMT Table. These codes are provided for convenience of use in written communications such as in email or other messages. Convention of use of these codes shall be as follows:
 - (a) When quoted, the prefix letters (T, S, W, B and R) of the Tans, Soks, Wans, Blue and Red Flowers must come with a digit or a series of digits. Examples: T1 means 1 Tan. T123456 means six pieces of Tans as noted. B12R3 means the Flowers Blue 1, Blue 2 and Red 3. Avoid quoting these prefix letters without the necessary digit (e.g., "S", "W" or "B" alone could mean something else - refer to the next paragraph).
 - (b) Codes of the Honours (Dragons and Winds collectively) shall be quoted single-lettered in expression of quantity of pais. In such expression, each letter shall mean one piece of the quoted pai. Examples: SSS WWW EE means a pung of South, a kong of West and two East; ESWNCFB means one piece each of East, South, West, North, Red Centre (Red Dragon), Green Fortune (Green Dragon) and White Board (White Dragon).

Remarks:

1. Terminology contained in the WUMT Table is assumed to be property of the public domain, unless anyone would claim and prove otherwise. Therefore terms and phrases listed in the Table are intended for use by the general public and the use is unrestricted. Individuals or organizations acknowledging or adopting the WUMT may be included in a Supporters Name List when established - Details at iMahjong.com.
2. The posting of this document via the Mahjong Newsgroup is also the writer's another attempt to initiate discussions towards the goal of establishing a world unified set of terminology for mahjong. Unlike very few people's narrow-minded thoughts, the intent of the discussion does not, and shall not, mean to benefit only any particular variants of games, or any particular brand names or organizations for that matter. By bringing this topic up to those who are interested in mahjong, the writer means to contribute his efforts towards achieving the specified goal of establishing a world unified set of terminology for the games of mahjong in general, as at this point there doesn't seem to have any other persons or organizations in the world that plan to do the job or have the same type of vision.
3. Chinese speaking players and mahjong organizations around the world are encouraged to participate in sending any feedback related to this WUMT Table. Mahjong is a game originated in China and the writer believes the Chinese speaking population should have a say about the terminology in languages other than Chinese. Tell all Chinese speaking friends and relatives you know about this document and encourage them to participate in the discussions (visit <http://groups.google.ca/group/rec.games.mahjong> and look for topics "World Unified Mahjong Terminology" or "WUMT").
4. English speaking mahjong players are definitely also encouraged to participate in the discussions! As mahjong is now getting more and more popular worldwide, it would be beneficial if mahjong players, as well as writers and developers of mahjong related literature, products and services could communicate based on a standardized set of terminology. In addition, a world unified set of terminology for mahjong would definitely help promote the games of mahjong to many new comers.