

2026 Big Card Analysis

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Introduction

This report gives statistical analysis of The MAHJONG Line's 2026 BIG CARD. I include a general American Mah Jongg card format summary in [Appendix A](#). The win percentage statistics show hands that tend to be easiest. Our JLMahJongg app is used to evaluate all hands by playing four bots against each other for 12,000 games. The hands are ranked in order of those that win most.

Easiest 2026 Big Card Hands

Table 1 shows the 2026 Big Card lines ranked in order of easiest to hardest.

Caveats:

1. Based on four bots playing using calculations of each potential hand's win probability. Bots are not trying to make any particular hand, just the hand calculated to be most likely to win at the time. Calculations are simplified, but fairly accurate, to make implementation practical. **Your results may vary.**
2. You still need to evaluate the tiles you have in a game and determine what you think is best. Easier hands here are only easier in a statistical sense, and some other hands may be better for your tiles.
3. These results are from a random sample of 12,000 games. A different set of samples will produce somewhat different results. These results are not exact.

Table 1. Easiest 2026 Big Card Category/Line Ranked by Win Percentage

Rank	Category	Line	X/C	Value	Win % of 12,000 Games
1	Consecutive Numbers	1	X	10	22.55
2	Consecutive Numbers	6	X	35	7.88
3	13579	6	X	35	5.07
4	Any Matching Numbers	1	X	15	4.77
5	2468	2	X	25	3.82
6	2468	1	X	15	3.66
7	Consecutive Numbers	2	X	15	3.57
8	Any Matching Numbers	4	X	40	3.26
9	369	1	X	25	3.24
10	2468	5	X	35	3.01
11	369	2	X	30	2.81
12	Mad Math	2	X	30	2.61
13	2026	2	X	30	2.35
14	2468	4	X	30	2.32
15	Big Brain	2	X	40	2.29
16	13579	1	X	20	2.06
17	Big Brain	1	X	30	2.00
18	13579	7	X	40	1.97
19	13579	2	X	20	1.89
20	Mad Math	1	X	20	1.44
21	2026	3	X	40	1.41
22	Any Matching Numbers	3	X	30	1.39
23	Mad Math	3	X	30	1.35
24	Consecutive Numbers	3	X	20	1.35
25	13579	3	X	25	1.33
26	13579	4	X	30	1.27
27	2468	3	X	30	1.21
28	Consecutive Numbers	4	X	30	1.09
29	Consecutive Numbers	5	X	30	1.01
30	Any Matching Numbers	2	X	25	0.90
31	Consecutive Numbers	7	X	45	0.81
32	Winds-Dragons	1	X	25	0.81
33	369	3	X	35	0.76
34	2468	6	X	40	0.55
35	2026	4	X	40	0.41
36	Big Brain	3	X	50	0.40
37	2026	1	X	25	0.29
38	13579	5	X	30	0.28
39	2026	5	X	55	0.24
40	Winds-Dragons	2	X	50	0.21
41	369	4	X	45	0.09

Rank	Category	Line	X/C	Value	Win % of 12,000 Games
42	2468	7	C	50	0.08
43	Mad Math	4a	C	70	0.07
44	Mad Math	4b	C	70	0.06
45	369	5	C	70	0.05
46	Winds-Dragons	3	X	55	0.01
47	Consecutive Numbers	8	C	70	0.01
48	Big Brain	4	C	70	0.01
49	Big Brain	5	C	85	0.00

The win percentages for all 2026 Big Card lines are shown in Table 2 in the order on the card. Expander codes for each line are shown in case anyone wants to use the JLMahJongg card editor. The JLMahJongg card editor manual is included in [Appendix C](#) for convenience. If an expander code is not shown, the default of T = "These Numbers Only" is used. You don't need to enter the default code of T in the editor. The expander code along with the number of colors defines all the different hands represented by a given line. If anyone is brave (or crazy) enough to try this, I would like to know.

The number of unique hands is also listed for each line. See [here](#) for a definition of unique hands. A line representing more unique hands will tend to be easier. The number of unique hands for each category is shown in parentheses under the category name.

Table 2. Win Percentage by 2026 Big Card Category/Line

Category	Line	X/C	Value	Expander Code (EC)	Number of Unique Hands	Win % (of 45,000)
2026 (27)	1	X	25		3	0.29
	2	X	30	P26	12	2.35
	3	X	40		3	1.41
	4	X	40	K26	6	0.41
	5	X	55		3	0.24
2468 (117)	1	X	15		9	3.66
	2	X	25	~ Le	24	3.82
	3	X	30	PNEWS	12	1.21
	4	X	30		9	2.32
	5	X	35	UK28e	39	3.01
	6	X	40		9	0.55
	7	C	50		3	0.08
	8	C	70	Ye	12	0.00
Any Matching Numbers (111)	1	X	15	L	30	4.77
	2	X	25	*3 L	27	0.90
	3	X	30	*3 L	27	1.39
	4	X	40	L	27	3.26
Consecutive Numbers (279)	1	X	10	Va	54	22.55
	2	X	15	Va	24	3.57
	3	X	20	Va ANEWS	24	1.35
	4	X	30	Va	15	1.09
	5	X	30	Va	36	1.01
	6	X	35	Va	63	7.88
	7	X	45	Va	54	0.81
	8	C	70		9	0.01
13579 (129)	1	X	20		9	2.06
	2	X	20		9	1.89
	3	X	25		9	1.33
	4	X	30		9	1.27
	5	X	30		3	0.28
	6	X	35	UK19o	63	5.07
	7	X	40		12	1.97
	8	C	70	Yo	15	0.00
Winds-Dragons (9)	1	X	25		3	0.81
	2	X	50		3	0.21
	3	X	55		3	0.01
369 (43)	1	X	25		9	3.24
	2	X	30		9	2.81
	3	X	35	Q369	18	0.76
	4	X	45		6	0.09
	5	C	70		1	0.05

Mad Math (30)	1	X	20		3	1.44
	2	X	30		9	2.61
	3	X	30		9	1.35
	4a	C	70		3	0.07
	4b	C	70		6	0.06
Big Brain (31)	1	X	30		9	2.00
	2	X	40		9	2.29
	3	X	50		9	0.40
	4	C	70		3	0.01
	5	C	85		1	0.00

Table 3 compares some statistics between the 2026 Big Card, the 2026 NMJL card, and the 2025 NMJL card.

Table 3. Additional Winning Hand Statistics with Comparison with NMJL 2025 and 2026

	BIG 2026	NMJL 2026	NMJL 2025
Average Tiles Left	40.1	35.4	38.1
Jokerless %	4.8	2.0	2.6
Concealed (Closed) %	0.3	3.1	1.3
Drew Own %	53.2	54.7	55.2
Higher than 25 value %	48.3	12.8	14.9
Wall Games %	8.1	11.4	9.7
East Win %	26.6	27.0	27.8
Number of Closed Lines	8	12	13
Number of >25 Value Lines	36	24	22
Total Unique Hands	776	1077	1002
Easiest Hand/Win %	Cons. Nos. Line 1/22.6	Cons. Run Line 2/23.4	Cons. Run Line 4/11.0

Comments on Big Card 2026 Hands

General Comments: I like the improvements on the big card: 1) line numbers are shown in each category, 2) text for number of suits is not shown unless necessary, 2) Only C is shown, not X for concealed hands and the line is highlighted, gives summary of tiles and key rules on the back, 3) quints and “single and pairs” are mixed in with other categories, 4) wind-dragons are mixed in with other categories, if possible (not only winds and dragons). There is also a wider range of hand values that generally relate to how easy the hand is to make. The card says that any hand made without exposure earns a bonus of 10 unless the hand is concealed. The concealed hands are all very difficult to make and high value.

The following are my comments on each category.

2026: No closed line this year. Remember, as always, that zero in year hands (white dragon) has no suit. It can be used with any other suit. Line 2 has some interesting dragon combinations.

2468: Two hard closed lines.

ANY MATCHING NUMBERS: Line 4 has 2 sets of 3 flowers – always a challenge.

CONSECUTIVE NUMBERS: This category always has many of the easiest lines because the runs represent many unique hands. Line 1 is especially easy because it also has mostly pungs and the pair is flowers (relatively easy for a pair).

13579: Nothing unusual.

WINDS-DRAGONS: Note that most wind-dragons hands are distributed in the other groups. Only hands with just winds and dragons are included under this category.

369: Nothing unusual.

MAD MATH: Line 1 is unusual because a single white dragon is followed by potentially three white dragons. Note that this breaks my Mah Jongg Card Language, so you need to move the dragon pungs (3) to the start of the line (if you enter the card manually). If you enter the card manually so you can view it during the game. I recommend splitting line 4 into 2 lines so it fits on the display. JLMahJongg will list line 4 as lines 4 and 5.

BIG BRAIN: I'm not sure I know what this category is for. I think it might be hands suggested by people.

Unique Hands Definition and Example

Each card line is an example pattern that shows specific sets of 14 tiles giving you Mah Jongg. The category (Any Like Numbers, for example) and/or text next to the pattern give alternate ways the pattern can be used – typically saying “Any This” or “Any That.” If you take the text and the pattern(s) on the line and generate all the specific sets of 14 tiles that satisfy the requirements, the resulting number of ways to get Mah Jongg for that line is the number of “Unique Hands.” An example may make this clearer. Consider 2026, ANY LIKE NUMBERS line 1: g1111 FFFFFFFF r1111, where g means green and r means red, or in color, 1111 FFFFFFFF 1111. The form with colors specified with letters r, g, and b before the set is used by the JLMahJongg card editor. Flowers and winds don't have a suit (ideally, they should be black not green, red, or blue). Two or three different colors mean two or three different suits must be used for the number sets. Since this is a “Like Number” category (MJCL expander code L), the 1's can be any number from 1 to 9. To simplify, just count hands for the number 1 and multiply the result by 9. It is important to note that the colors don't mean a particular suit, just which sets need to be either the same or different suits. Writing out all the possibilities for 2 suits at a time:

1. 1111 (bams) FFFFFFFF 1111 (craks)
2. 1111 (craks) FFFFFFFF 1111 (bams)
3. 1111(bams) FFFFFFFF 1111 (dots)
4. 1111(dots) FFFFFFFF 1111 (bams)
5. 1111 (craks) FFFFFFFF 1111 (dots)
6. 1111(dots) FFFFFFFF 1111 (craks)

Above, I intentionally picked a line that has hands that are not “Unique” to indicate what “Unique” means. Hands 1 and 2 are the same except the order of bams and craks is swapped. These two hands are really the same (not unique) because they are just the same tiles in a different order. This is also true for each pair of hands above, 3&4 and 5&6. Eliminating the “Non-Unique” or redundant hands and rewriting all the unique hands:

1. 1111 (bams) FFFFFFFF 1111 (craks)
2. 1111(bams) FFFFFFFF 1111 (dots)
3. 1111 (craks) FFFFFFFF 1111 (dots)

So, for ANY LIKE NUMBERS line 1, there are 3 “Unique Hands” per like number. The total number of unique hands is then 3 per like number x 9 possible like numbers = 27.

Remember the tile order does not make a difference to if it’s Mah Jongg or not (but if you put them in a different order than on the card (6202 instead of 2026, for example, other players will complain). Lines with more unique hands tend to be easier because there are more ways to make Mah Jongg. But the difficulty level also depends on the set sizes and values.

Notes: The JLMahJongg card editor shows the number of unique hands in a category and line by selecting a line in the edit mode.

There is an easy hidden way in JLMahJongg to see a card’s total number of unique hands. When a game is first started select the “Def” button to show the Defense display. This shows information you can know about your opponent’s hands based on what is eXposed, discarded, and in your hand. A number at the top of each opponent’s data column gives the total number hands they can still make based on what you can know. At the beginning of the game before any exposures or discards, this will be equal to the total number of unique hands.

Appendix A – Card Format Summary

American Mah Jongg Cards

There are many American Mah Jongg card alternatives. Players can use any card they agree on. The most-used cards are the yearly National Mah Jongg League (NMJL) Cards. The new “THE BIG CARD” from The MAHJONG Line is also popular.

National Mah Jongg League Cards. NMJL Cards may be ordered online at www.nationalmahjonggleague.org or on Amazon (but be careful not to order fake NMJL cards on Amazon or elsewhere). NMJL has both regular-sized and larger print cards for slightly more. You can usually start ordering new cards near the beginning of the year. However, the new NMJL cards don't start being distributed until late March to April.

The hardest thing to learn is how to read a new Mah Jongg card. Here's an explanation of how to read a card. Each card defines all the different 14-tile hands achieving Mah Jongg (winning).

American Mah Jongg cards have several hand **categories, typically 9 or 10 (also called groups or sections)**. Common categories are: 2025, 2468, ANY LIKE NUMBERS, QUINTS, CONSECUTIVE RUN, 13579, WINDS-DRAGONS, 369, and SINGLES AND PAIRS. The categories can change from year to year. Usually, most of the specific hand patterns in each category DO change from year to year.

Under each category name are lines (also called hands) that define the specific Mah Jongg hands for that category. Each line contains 4 things from left to right:

- 1) 1 or 2 **EXAMPLES** of 14-tile patterns indicating 14-tile hands achieving Mah Jongg
- 2) In parentheses, instructions on how the above example pattern(s) can be expanded with alternate sets of 14 tiles that also represent Mah Jongg
- 3) An X (eXposed) or C (Concealed or Closed) indication for hands from that line
- 4) The base value for hands defined by the line. Harder hands typically have higher values.

Example Hand Pattern(s)

The example pattern(s), along with the instructions define what specific 14-tile hands qualify for Mah Jongg. A pattern can represent anywhere from one to hundreds of specific hands. Each pattern is made up of sets that are usually separated by spaces. Sets **ALWAYS** have multiples of the same exact tile. **If the values are different, it's different sets**. Often a run, year category, or wind category are not separated by spaces, but are still all singles (or pairs). For example, 123 is a run of three singles, 1, 2, and 3. More examples of all singles: NEWS, 2026, 2468, 369, EW. This example is 3 pairs: 336699.

Depending on the specific category, line, and instructions, each set may also take on different values from the example(s) shown (possibly different values, suits, winds, or dragons). Each set has a color. NMJL cards use 3 colors: Dark Blue (or Black), Green, and Red. The colors indicate if the sets need to be the same or different suits. Unless indicated otherwise in the instructions, sets with the same color must be the same suit and sets with different colors must be different suits. Note that the color does NOT indicate the specific suit (green is not necessarily bams). If all the tiles are the same suit on NMJL cards and the Big Card, the sets are all dark blue or black. If there must be 3 different suits, one set

will be dark blue, one set will be red, and one set will be green. Sets in the same color must generally be the same suit. Note that Flowers and Winds do not have a suit, so they are always dark blue (or may look black). Sometimes the instructions say a particular run or dragon (usually in dark blue) can be any suit. Dragon suits are usually indicated by color. One exception is the white dragon (usually called “soap”) when used as a zero. Number zero does not have a suit (if grouped with other numbers, the other numbers don’t need to be dots, the white dragon suit). Another exception is if it says the dragon(s) or other set can be any suit (then color doesn’t matter).

Instructions

To the right of the example pattern(s) are instructions in parentheses that hopefully clarify what is meant by the preceding pattern(s). Sometimes you need to ask for clarification from the creator of the card. Most NMJL instructions start with “Any Y suits” where Y is 1, 2 or 3. I have never seen a case where the number of suits part of the instruction is needed and is not redundant with the number of colors. The instruction of “Any Suit” is needed, if that is what is intended. Often showing a set that can be any suit in one of the suit colors (green, red & blue for NMJL) is confusing and you do need to read the instructions in this case. The rest of the instruction is usually needed to understand how the example pattern(s) can (or can’t) be expanded.

Sometimes the instructions start in the category name and apply to all category hands unless the instructions say otherwise (“These Nos. Only,” for example). This is true for “ANY LIKE NUMBERS” and “CONSECUTIVE RUN.” In these two categories you can think of the instructions as starting with the category name. In “ANY LIKE NUMBERS” the “1”s can ALL be replaced by any other single (alike) number (All 2’s, all 3’s, ... all 9’s). In “CONSECUTIVE RUN” a set sequence with increasing values starting at 1 can be replaced by sets starting at other numbers. For example, the three sets, 111 222 333, can be replaced by any three sets starting with any other number from 2 to 7. You can’t start at 8 or 9 in this case because you would run out of numbers. You also can’t start or end with zero (You just can’t). Because set order doesn’t matter until you claim Mah Jongg, technically you can order the sets going either up or down in your hand before you have called Mah Jongg. But you should put them in the expected order when claiming Mah Jongg.

Values of Hands

Each hand listed on the card has an assigned base value, most often 25. The value determines how many points or money a winner gets with that hand. The values are doubled for all players if the winning tile is picked from the wall rather than called. If a tile is called for Mah Jongg, only the person discarding the winning tile pays double. Except singles and pairs hands on NMJL cards, values are also doubled for winning hands that are jokerless. The value is four times the base value from all players if both jokerless and picked on your own tile for Mah Jongg.

Appendix B – Terminology and Common Mistakes

This appendix explains some of my terminology and the top 3 mistakes I see made and asked about.

Terminology:

I make a distinction between “lines” and “hands.” The “lines” are the example patterns on the card (1 or 2 on each card line). A hand is a specific set of 14 tiles that qualifies for Mah Jongg. Each line on the card can possibly represent many hands. The example pattern(s) on the line can be expanded according to what is written next to the pattern(s) in parentheses. The instructions in parentheses correspond to what I call “expander codes.” The expander codes determine what additional hands qualify for Mah Jongg in addition to the example pattern(s) shown on the line. The Mah Jong Card Language (MJCL) used by the JLMahJongg card editor uses the lines as written on the card and the expander codes to automatically generate all the possible hands.

Each pattern and hand is made up of some number of sets; all sets always add to 14 tiles total. A set is one or more tiles that are exactly the same (can’t be different suits if they are the same number). Names for different set sizes: 1=Single, 2=Pair, 3=Pung, 4= Kong, 5=Quint, 6=Sextet? (not sure about name for 6, first time I’ve seen is on the 2026 card).

Common Mistakes:

1. Thinking you can use a joker in a single or a pair set. You can’t, ever. Even for Mah Jongg. Runs of singles are all singles, **can’t** use joker(s). SINGLES and PAIRS category hands are **ALL** singles and pairs, **can’t** use joker(s). 2026 is all singles, **can’t** use joker(s). NEWS is all singles, **can’t** use jokers.
2. Thinking you can call a tile for a single or pair set that is not for Mah Jongg. See 1 above for examples of single and/or pair sets. You **can’t** call a tile for any of these unless for Mah Jongg. Note: JLMahJongg intentionally lets beginner-level players try to call any tile, even if for a single or pair and not Mah Jongg. If you try to call a tile you can’t call, JLMahJongg will explain why you can’t and let you cancel the call. In a real game, you would have to be able to use any called tile correctly in some hand or your hand would be dead. At levels above beginner, JLMahJongg does not let you call tiles that you can’t call to speed up the game. American Mah Jongg is set based. A set is one or more of the same exact tile. You can NEVER call a tile (eXpose) for a run unless it is for Mah Jongg. A run always has more than 1 different tile. To help avoid confusion, American Mah Jongg does not use a term for run of 3 singles. In other Mah Jongg variants, a run of 3 singles in the same suit is called a “Chow.” If American Mah Jongg gave it a name you would be more likely to think you can call and expose it (other than for Mah Jongg).
3. Forgetting that you are playing a concealed (closed) hand and calling a tile that is not for Mah Jongg. I’ve seen many cases where people ask why they didn’t have Mah Jongg and they had eXposed a set and later tried to call Mah Jongg for a Concealed hand.