

Now, what do I do?

Stand up your tiles on your rack leaning them on the sloped surface facing you. The tiles should face you only -- you don't want the other players to see what you have.

Organize your tiles by suit and by number value. Do not make gaps between groupings. Neat, straight line.

CHARLESTON

The Charleston was a dance popular during the Roaring Twenties (when mah-jongg first became a craze). Imagine that you have a dance card with two names on it, and you're going to dance twice: first Charleston with **RAL**ph (Right-Across-Left), and the second Charleston with **LAR**ry (Left-Across-Right). The first dance is compulsory and the second dance is optional. If after you dance with **RAL**ph you decide that you've met "Mister Right," you don't have to dance with no stinking **LAR**ry! But if you start to dance with **LAR**ry, you have to do the whole dance. So there's just one brief moment during which you can stop the passing: after completing the first dance, and before beginning the second dance. The Charleston is a group dance (four people all participate). Anybody can choose to stop the dance, but only during that very brief interval between the first left and the second left.

First right - you must pass 3 tiles right.

First across - you must pass 3 tiles.

First left - you may blind pass* up to 3 tiles, and now you have danced with **RAL**ph.

Do you want to stop the Charleston now? You or anybody else may stop the Charleston, for any reason whatsoever (and does not have to state a reason), before anybody picks up and racks her second left. If nobody stops the dance after the first Charleston, you are going to dance with **LAR**ry. Once somebody has picked up and looked at her second left pass, it's too late to stop the Charleston.*

- Second left - If nobody stopped the Charleston after the first left, everybody must pass 3 tiles left (this means you, too).
- Second across - you must pass 3 tiles across. *This is often the sticky pass!*
- Last right - you may blind pass *up to 3 tiles. Now the dance with **LAR**ry has ended.
- Courtesy - In the courtesy, opposite players may exchange up to 3 tiles --the person who wants the least amount rules

Many players use the word "steal" to refer to the blind pass, an optional Charleston maneuver. And it doesn't even make sense to call it that! You take tiles from the player at one side, and do *not* take them yourself (as you normally do). Rather, you *give* them to the player at your other side. Rather than calling it "stealing," maybe those people ought to call it "Robin Hooding!" The proper name for the maneuver is "blind pass," and that nomenclature clarifies the rule.

Note: If you stop the Charleston after the first dance, other players will probably get mad; it's a fact of life. But you don't owe them an explanation, even if they do get angry. The rules say you can stop the Charleston after the first dance, *for any reason at all, or for no reason at all*, and you do not have to say why. But I recommend that you do not stop the Charleston too often. It's up to you to draw a fine line between adhering to the rules and being reasonable and a fun playing companion.

NOTE: This is the property of Donna Miller-Small and can only be used by her and her students.