



Jokers in Play

What you'll get from this lesson: Use jokers legally, swap for them, and understand why they're worth watching.

Jokers are the friendliest tiles in the American game. A wild card can complete a big group you'd otherwise wait ages for — as long as you place it where it's allowed.

Where a Joker Can (and Can't) Go

Pung of 5-Dot

✓ joker OK in a group of 3+

Kong of 3-Bam

✓ jokers OK

A pair

✗ no joker in a pair

A single

✗ no joker as a single

Original illustration. Jokers stand in for a tile inside any group of three or more. They may never be used in a pair or as a single tile.

Redeeming a joker

If a joker is sitting in someone's exposed group and you hold the real tile it's standing in for, you can **redeem** it on your turn — trade them the genuine tile and take the joker for your own hand. You can only do this from a face-up exposure, never from a joker hidden on a rack.

Watch out. A discarded joker is dead for the rest of the hand — no one may pick it up. Late in a hand, players sometimes discard a joker on purpose to keep it away from a rival who's close to winning.