

❖ This strategy book is an adaptation of Gentaro's course:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wRNjYfaRgec&list=PLqz94ZeNRcKbs6NCc6ERAlilI6PUqaDiI>

Created with the author's permission. Thank you, Gentaro-san!

❖ If you aren't familiar with Japanese Mahjong terminology, go here:

<http://mahjong-ny.com/features/terminology/>

Krabman

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# 1. TILE USEFULNESS

Legend:

X – not possible

△ – decent

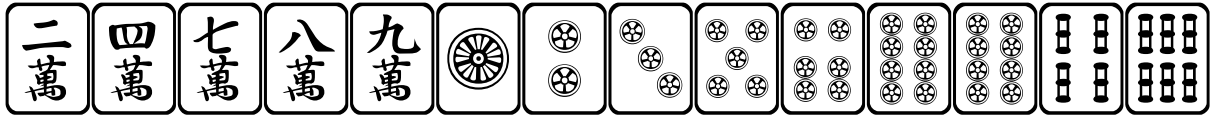
○ – good

◎ - superb

	CREATING RUNS	CREATING RYANMEN
guest winds	X	X
Yakuhei	X	X
terminals (1 & 9)	△	X
2 & 8	○	△
3~7	◎	○

Important: the most flexible tiles tend to get increasingly dangerous to discard as your hand progresses.

### QUESTION 1-1<sup>1</sup>



What would you discard?

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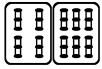
<sup>1</sup> Answer to each WWYD is on a following page.

# TILE USEFULNESS

You should consider the possibility of improving to ryanmen:



Can only improve to ryanmen with 5m.

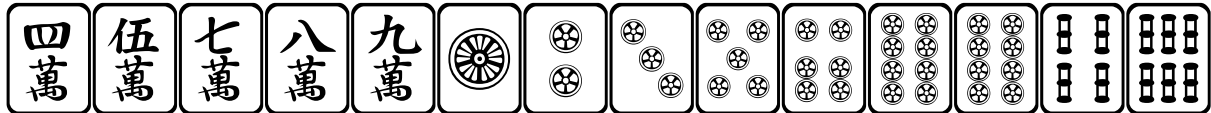


Can improve to ryanmen with both 3s and 6s.

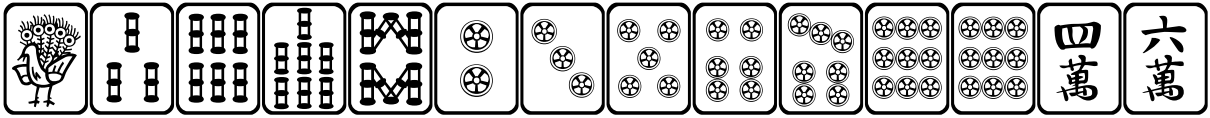
Discard 2m!

Why not 4m?

You can draw 5m later and keep the block in Manzu:



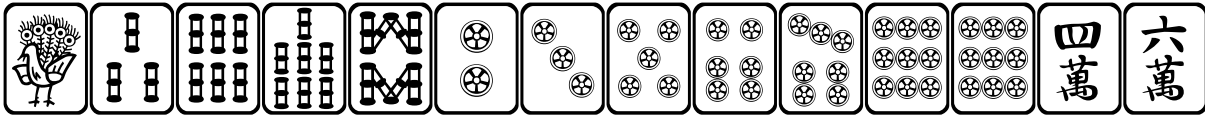
### QUESTION 1-2



Dora: 

What would you discard?

## TILE USEFULNESS



You can consider this situation from two perspectives:

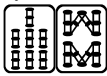
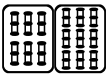




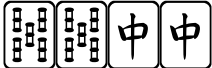
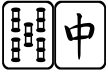
- 13s is the weakest block and 1s is the least useful tile. You may want to discard 1s for maximum efficiency
- 13s waits on a 2 and 46m waits on a 5. From your opponents' standpoint, 2's are more likely to be discarded than 5's. That's why 13s may be more effective as the final wait. For example, it's easier for a 2 to become a suji trap.

Opinions on this matter vary among high level players. It is important that you internalize both methods and use either judgement each time you are in a similar situation.



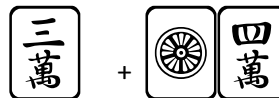
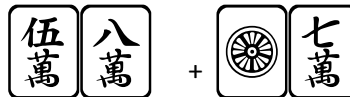
## 2. SHANPON COMBINATIONS

Let's review the basic waits:

WAIT TYPE	OUTS	NO OF OUTS
ryanmen 		2 kinds; 8 tiles
kanchan 		1 kind; 4 tiles
penchan 		1 kind; 4 tiles
shanpon 		2 kinds; 4 tiles

Three types of waits can be completed with only 4 tiles.

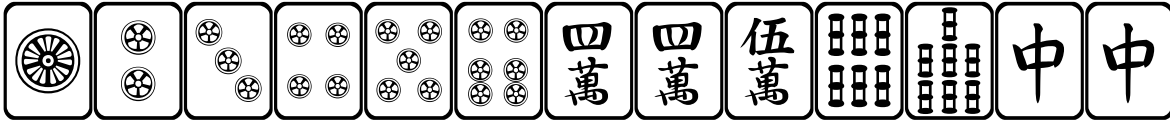
Consider ukeire of the following shapes:



Shanpon increases ukeire. Combined with ryanmen, it gives 12 tiles in total; with kanchan – 8 tiles (the same applies to penchan).

Now let's look at some hand examples.

## SHANPON COMBINATIONS



This is an example of a perfect iishanten. Calling Chun gives ryanmen tenpai. You get ryanmen tenpai with a closed hand as well.



This is not a perfect iishanten but it's still a good shape. You get a good tenpai with Chun and 34m.

### QUESTION 2-1



What would you discard?

## SHANPON COMBINATIONS



Ryanmen is the strongest block so you should discard 6s for a perfect iishanten:



## BEWARE OF A COMMON MISTAKE:



If you focus on calling Chun and prematurely discard 2m to fix your 4m pair, you will miss out on ryanmen tenpai after drawing 3m!

### KEY POINT:

- ❖ When you have three pairs in your hand, you should break off the pair from the strongest block.

## QUESTION 2-2



What would you discard?

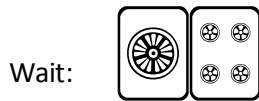
SHANPON COMBINATIONS



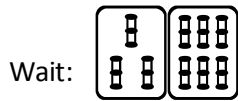
You should fix one of the ryanmen. Choose 3p or 4s!

Which ryanmen will be better as the final wait? Consider completing shanpon first.

If you discard 3p and draw 9s:



If you discard 4s and draw 9s:



If you consider the likelihood of each tile getting discarded by your opponents, you'll realize that 14p wait should be easier to win on because it includes a terminal tile which isn't very useful, generally speaking.

### QUESTION 2-3



What would you discard?

# SHANPON COMBINATIONS



Again, it all boils down to picking the wait you want to end up with. Consider completing the shanpon first.

If you discard 3p and draw 4s or 9s:



You lose the red dora in both cases. You can't allow that to happen!

You should fix the dora ryanmen by discarding 4s:



You keep the red dora in both cases.



### QUESTION 2-4



What would you discard?

SHANPON COMBINATIONS



You should look for a way to maximize the chance for Tanyao. Consider completing the shanpon first.

If you discard 3p and draw 8s:



Tanyao is not guaranteed because your final wait includes a terminal tile.

If you discard 4s and draw 8s:



Tanyao is guaranteed.

Discard 4s to maximize the chance for Tanyao!

## QUESTION 2-5



What would you discard?

SHANPON COMBINATIONS



You should look for a way to maximize the chance for 123 Sanshoku. Consider completing the shanpon first.

If you discard 6m:



No Sanshoku.

If you discard 2m:

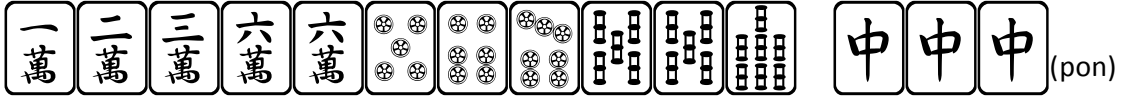


You can get Sanshoku.

Discard 2m to get Sanshoku!

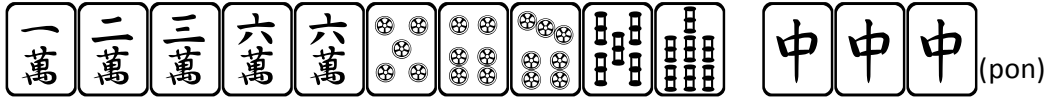
### 3. SHANPON & KANCHAN

Consider the following tenpai shape:



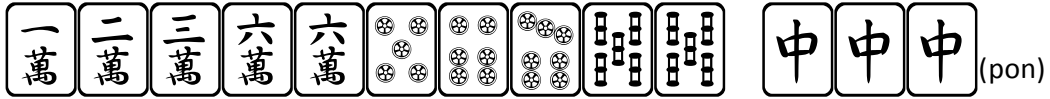
How can you improve it to ryanmen?

If you discard 5s:



4s and 8s give ryanmen.

If you discard 7s:



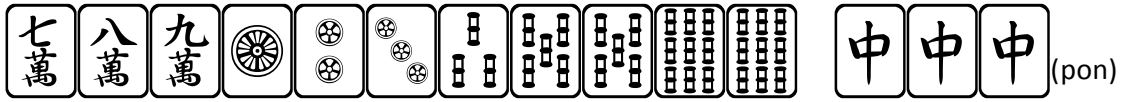
4s and 57m give ryanmen.

In cases like this, it's better to keep shanpon over kanchan.

### WATCH OUT FOR FURITEN!

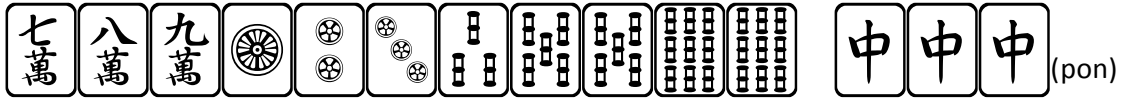
In the above example, after discarding 7s, 6s is no longer an effective tile.

### QUESTION 3-1

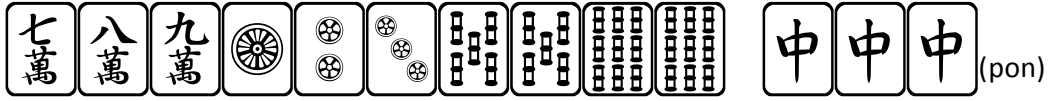


What would you discard?

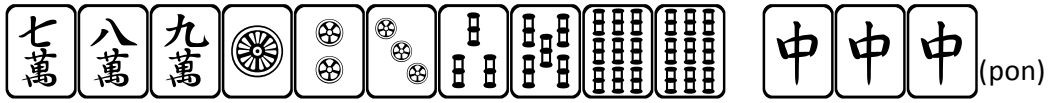
SHANPON & KANCHAN



In this case, if you keep the shanpon, the only tile that improves the wait to ryanmen is 6s:

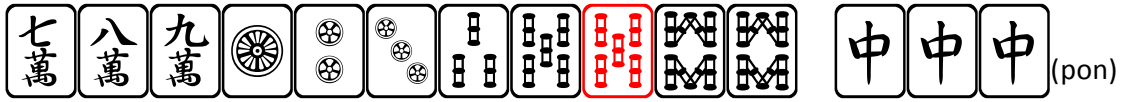


If you keep the kanchan, you can improve the wait with 2s and 6s. 2s gives a chance for more value with Chanta:



Exception: you can keep the shanpon if you think that 9s is easy to win on.

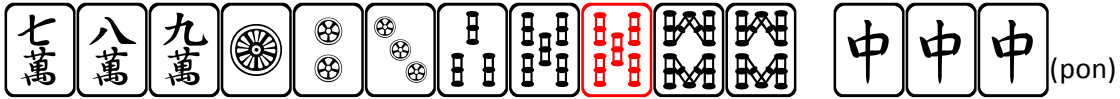
### QUESTION 3-2



What would you discard?



SHANPON & KANCHAN



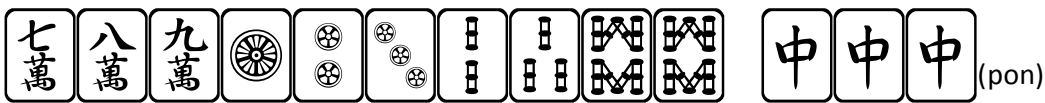
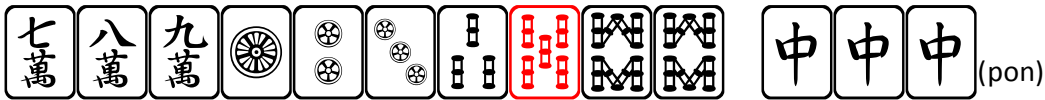
Discarding 3s gives 6s and 7s for ryanmen.

Discarding 5s gives 2s and 6s for ryanmen.

The number of improvements is the same. Which one should you choose?

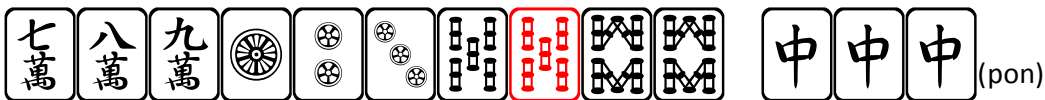
Let's compare!

5s discard:

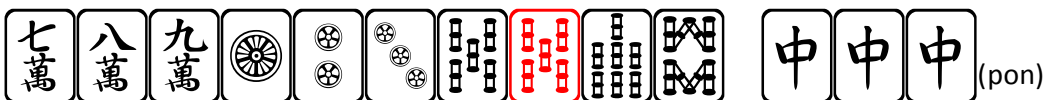
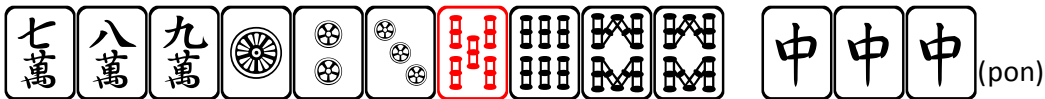


You lose the red dora when you get ryanmen with 2s...

3s discard:



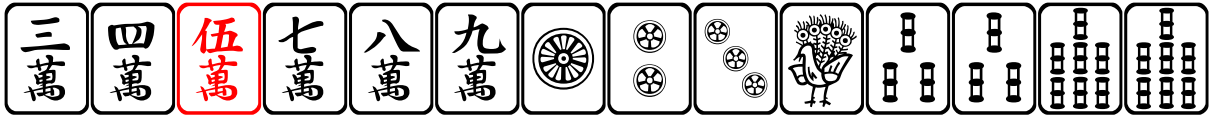
You keep the dora in both cases.



KEY POINTS:

- ❖ Shanpon waits made of tiles 3-7 improve to ryanmen with 2 types of tiles (both sides)
- ❖ Shanpon shapes of 2's & 8's improve to ryanmen with only 1 type of tile.
- ❖ Terminal and honor shanpon can't be improved but they usually make for good waits on their own.
- ❖ When your shanpon includes a red dora, make sure you can use it.

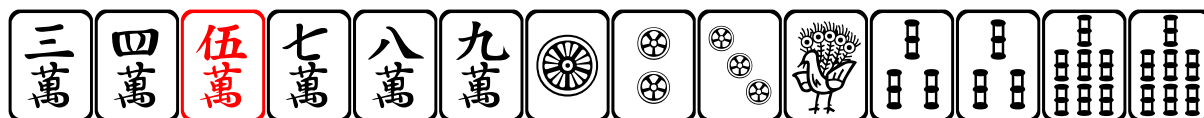
### QUESTION 3-3



Dora: 

What would you discard?

SHANPON & KANCHAN

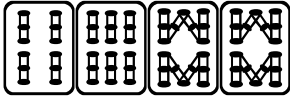


Dora: 

It is true that if you cut 1s, you'll be able to improve the shape to ryanmen with 468s. However, since you already have a decent value (two dora), it's better to simply riichi with 2s kanchan wait! Remember, 2's aren't very useful to your opponents and they easily become suji traps.

## 4. COMBINED RYANKAN

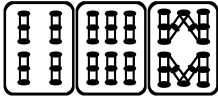
Consider this shape:



One of the most important rules of the 5-block theory is that every block should have at most 3 tiles. That is why you usually have to discard one of the tiles from such shapes.

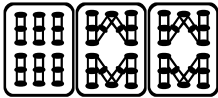
Which tile to cut? It depends...

- ❖ If you're aiming for Pinfu, discard 8s:



You're more likely to make a set and ryankan can improve to ryanmen.

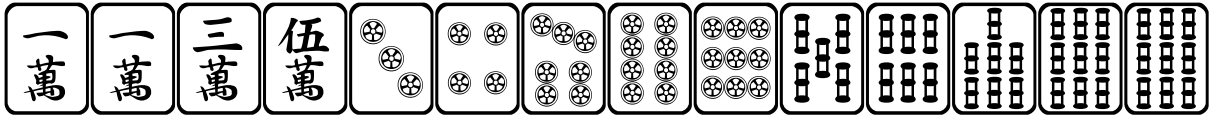
- ❖ If you're planning to open your hand, discard 4s:



Now it's a combined kanchan. 8 is easy to pon, generally speaking.

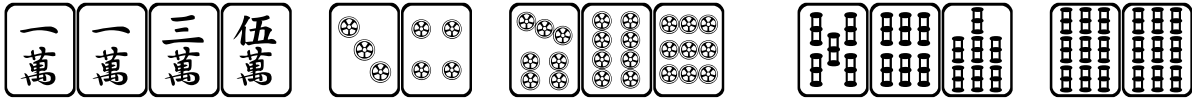
Let's practice!

### QUESTION 4-1



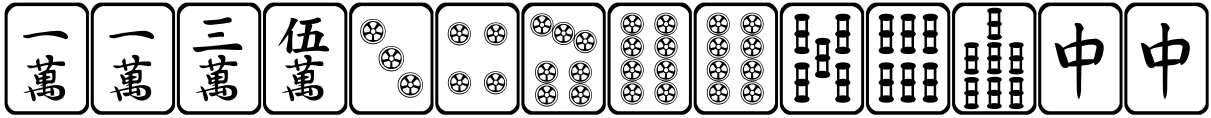
What would you discard?

COMBINED RYANKAN



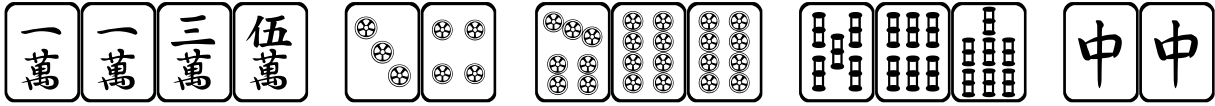
The block in manzu has four tiles. You should reduce it into a three-tile block. You're aiming for Pinfu so discard 1m!

### QUESTION 4-2



What would you discard?

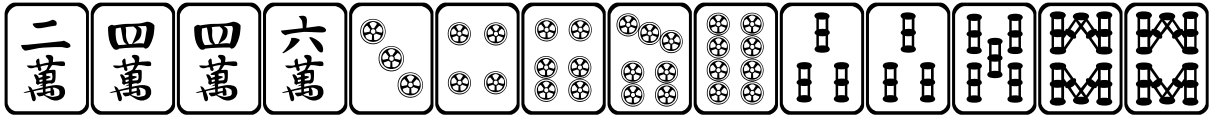
COMBINED RYANKAN



You want to open your hand with Chun. Again, you need to slim down the block in Manzu. Since you're going to call, discard 5m. 1m is a great pon candidate.

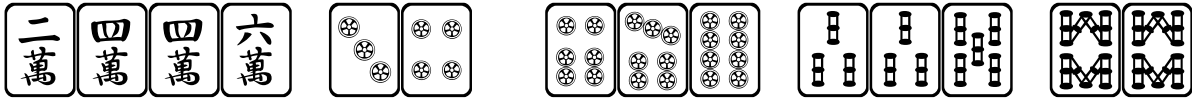


### QUESTION 4-3



What would you discard?

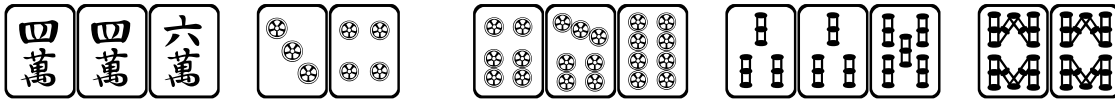
COMBINED RYANKAN



You should slim down the block in manzu because it has four tiles. No matter what you discard, ukeire will be similar.

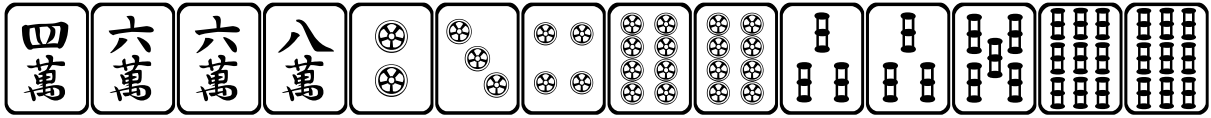
But!

If you are going to open the hand, you should keep three pairs.



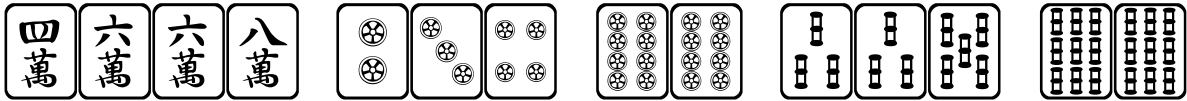
Now you can pon any of the pairs and there's a chance to get ryanmen in manzu with 7m.

### QUESTION 4-4



What would you discard?

## COMBINED RYANKAN



Even though the block in manzu has too many tiles, you should aim for Tanyao and discard 9s!

Remember that you can draw more tiles in manzu and reconfigure them!



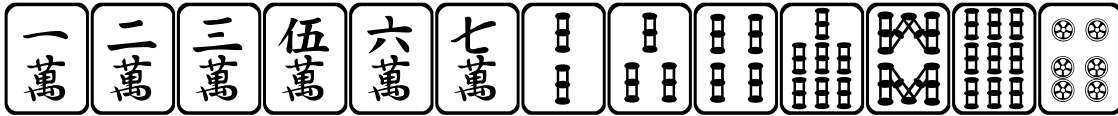
2345678m help you make two blocks.

### KEY POINTS:

- ❖ With shapes like 5799 or 4668, it's usually best to reduce the number of tiles to three. When going for Pinfu, break off the pair; when planning to call, discard a single tile!
- ❖ When choosing your discards, consider the chance of making ryanmen with the remaining shape!

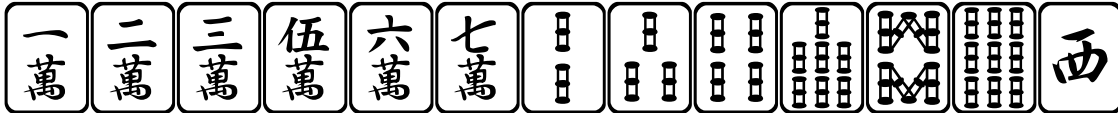
## 5. AVOIDING TANKI WAITS

Have you ever had tenpai like this:



Tanki is the weakest basic wait. Since one of the winning tiles is already used, there are only three outs.

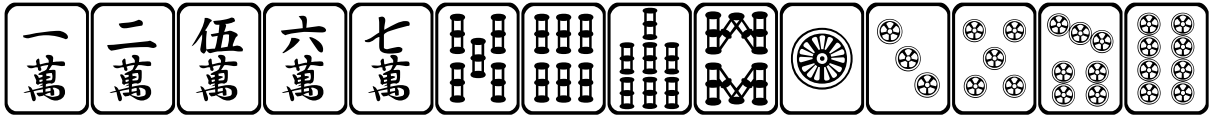
On the other hand, tanki waits can easily improve:



West wind is much better as a tanki wait than 6p because your opponents are more likely to get rid of West than 6p.

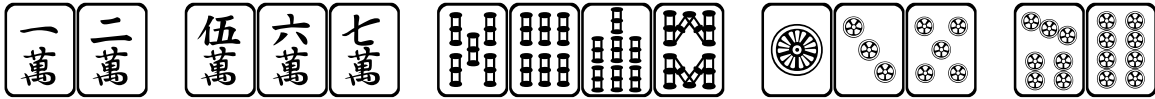
There are ways to avoid such scenarios altogether.

### QUESTION 5-1



What would you discard?

## AVOIDING TANKI WAITS



58s seem redundant, especially to beginners. You should not follow this “instinct” which in fact is a lack of knowledge!

5678s is a very strong block - yonrenkei. You can make two ryanmen out of it or it may become a pair + set.

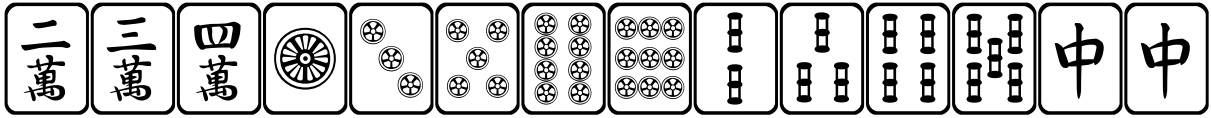
In this case it is much better to discard the weakest block – 12m.

Even if all your other sets complete before your draw souzu, your wait is going to be pretty good:



Your wait is nobetan - a double sided tanki wait – 58s. Almost as good as ryanmen.

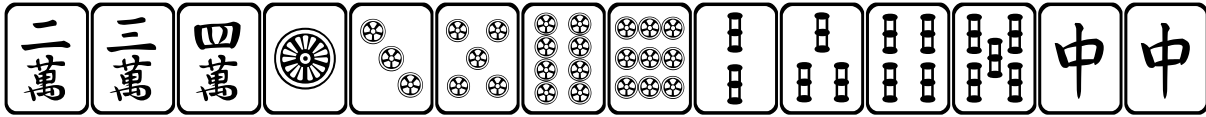
### QUESTION 5-2



What would you discard?



## AVOIDING TANKI WAITS



It is obvious that you want to call Chun. What to discard afterwards?

2 or 5s? You guessed that right!

**WAIT, WAIT, WAIT!**

Just like in the previous example – don't break up yonrenkei in souzu! The weakest block is 89p!

Aiming for nobetan tenpai is the way to go!

### KEY POINTS:

- ❖ Learn and memorize four-tile shapes:

2246 (combined ryankan)

3456 (yonrenkei)

5677 (aryanmen)

- ❖ Remember that combined ryankan is the weakest one. You can often keep yonrenkei and aryanmen all the way to iishanten or even tenpai. They both make for good waits.

## 6. 6-BLOCK METHOD – COMPARING BLOCKS

Hierarchy of blocks:

	combined ryanmen
	ryanmen
	combined penchan/kanchan
	ryankan
	Yakuhei pair
	3-7 pair
	penchan/kanchan
	terminal/non-Yakuhei pair

- green zone – best blocks

- yellow zone – moderate blocks

- red zone – weak blocks

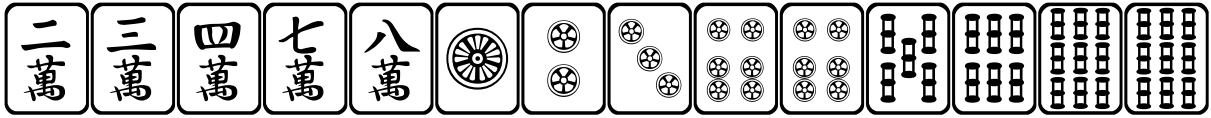
Tips:

- consider Chiitoitsu/Toitōi when you have at least 4 pairs

- terminals and non-Yakuhei pairs are excellent pon material

Let's look at some hand examples!

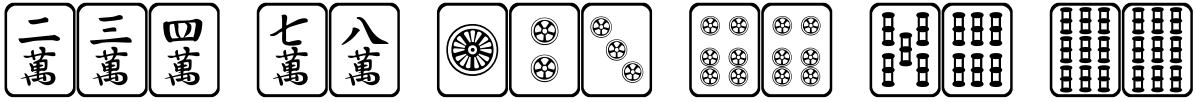
### QUESTION 6-1



What would you discard?

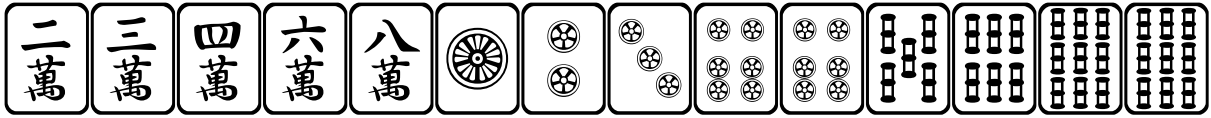
## 6-BLOCK METHOD – COMPARING BLOCKS

This hand has six blocks:



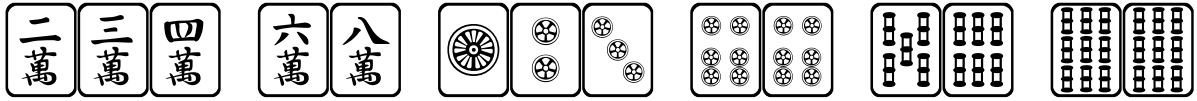
We need to discard the weakest block. It's 9s!

### QUESTION 6-2



What would you discard?

## 6-BLOCK METHOD – COMPARING BLOCKS

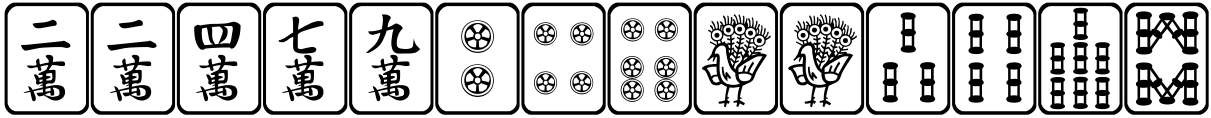


Again, 9s is the weakest link. It's ok to discard it.

## HOWEVER!

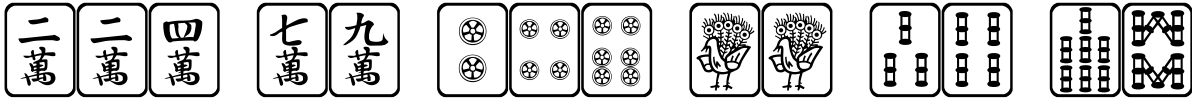
Notice that 6p can turn into ryanmen with 5p or 7p. Considering this kind of shape evolution is important. In some situations you may want to discard 8m (the second weakest block).

### QUESTION 6-3



What would you discard?

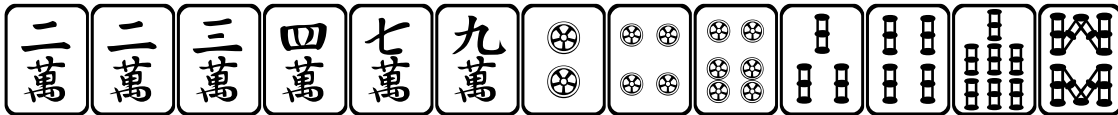
6-BLOCK METHOD – COMPARING BLOCKS



Hmmm... the weakest block seems to be 1s, right?

**Watch out!**

If you discard 1s, you will have a pairless hand after drawing 3m:



You should keep the block that is most likely to become the pair. In this case it's 1s because it's an isolated pair.

Discard 9m!



### QUESTION 6-4



What would you discard?



What's the weakest block?

Normally, terminals and non-Yakuhai honors make the weakest blocks. There are five pairs, though. That means that this hand is 1-away from ready to Chiitoitsu. Regular hand is 3-away from ready. You may not want to discard any of the pairs. That leaves 56s as the weakest block.

## DON'T BE AFRAID TO DISCARD RYANMEN!

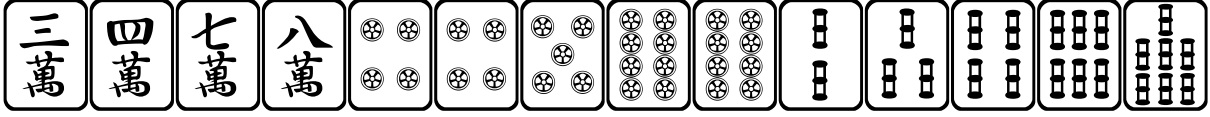
If you manage to call Chun, you can aim for Toitai as well, because all your pairs should be easy to pon (refer to the table at the beginning of the chapter).

### KEY POINTS:

- ❖ When you're going for a regular hand (4 groups, one pair) you can keep 6 strong blocks. Just remember to secure the pair!
- ❖ When you're going for a pair based hand (Chiitoitsu, Toitai), keep the pairs which are easy to pon and don't hesitate to drop ryanmen blocks if you have to!

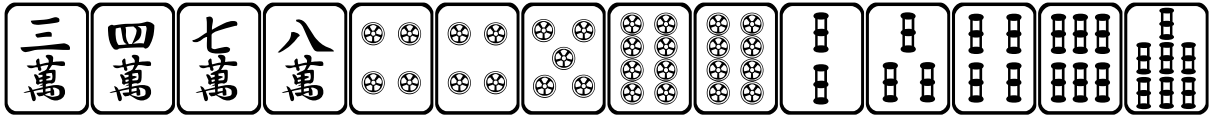
## 7. TENPAI SPEED

Let's start with an example:

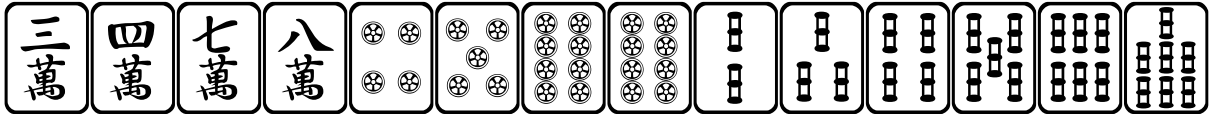


What would you discard?

TENPAI SPEED



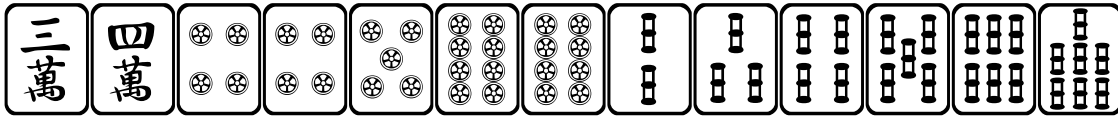
Fixing ryanmen in pinzu seems like a good idea, doesn't it? Let's do it!



You have to drop 78m now because it doesn't guarantee Tanyao...

Can we do better?

Try discarding 78m first!

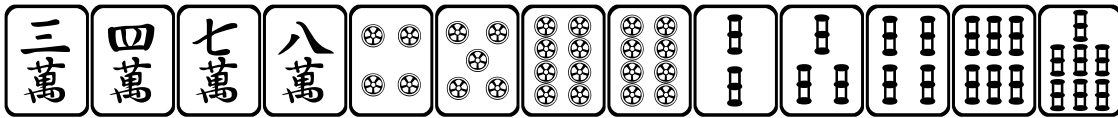


That's more like it! You have a perfect iishanten. Moreover, Tanyao is guaranteed so you can call if need be.

Let's do some math!

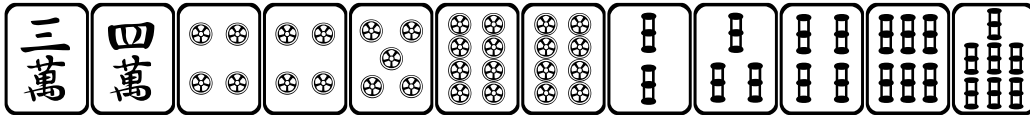
## TENPAI SPEED

Breaking shanpon gives more ukeire at 2-shanten -> 1-shanten stage.



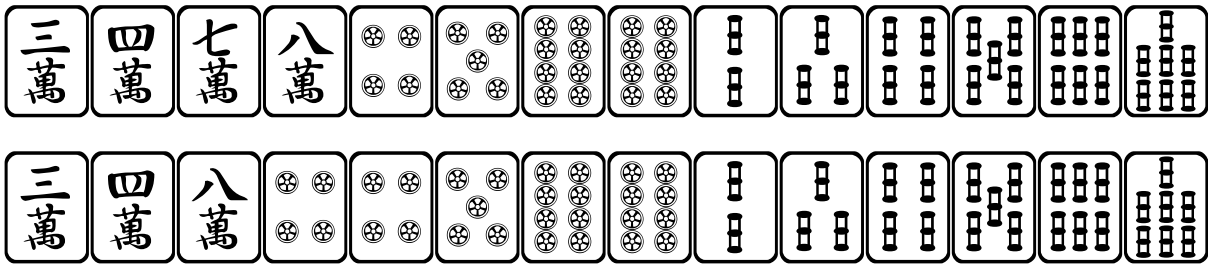
Ukeire: 2569m, 36p, 58s – 8 kinds; **32 tiles**

Compare that to dropping 78m:



Ukeire: 25m 3468p 58s – 8 kinds; **28 tiles**

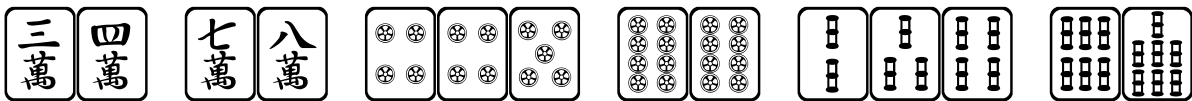
However, when you consider iishanten -> tenpai stage, the situation is reversed!



The first hand – you have to drop one ryanmen so your tenpai ukeire includes two ryanmen – **16 tiles**.

The second hand – your ukeire includes two ryanmen and shanpon – **20 tiles!**

To sum up:



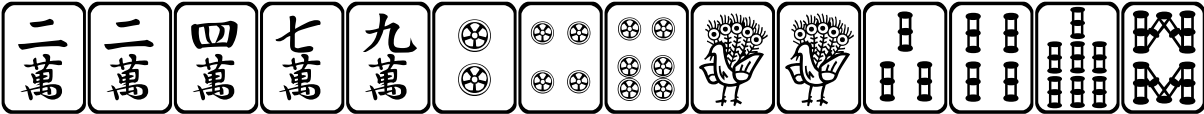
As you may have realized, this hand has 6 blocks. Since a standard Mahjong hand consists of 5 blocks (4 sets + a pair), you don't actually need 6 blocks. The weakest block should normally be discarded to aim for the fastest tenpai.

In some situations you may decide to keep 6 blocks in the above hand, for example:

- if 4p or 8p is dead
- if 6-9m is dora
- if you desperately need Pinfu
- if manzu are too dangerous to discard

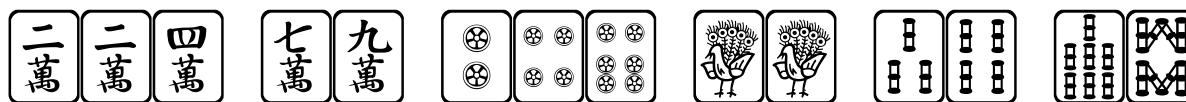
Having said that, you should always be aware of the ukeire trade-off you're making.

QUESTION 7-1



What would you discard?

## TENPAI SPEED



Again, there are six blocks so you should remove the weakest one. In situations like this, you should normally discard a regular kanchan. 224 and 246 are stronger.

Discard 9m!

### KEY POINTS:

- ❖ There are advantages and disadvantages to both 5-block and 6-block methods. Modern Mahjong strategy favors locking in 5 blocks.
- ❖ From 3-shanten on, you should keep track of the blocks in your hand. It's crucial to plan in advance whether you will keep 6 blocks or lock in 5 blocks!

## 8. 5-BLOCK METHOD vs 6-BLOCK METHOD

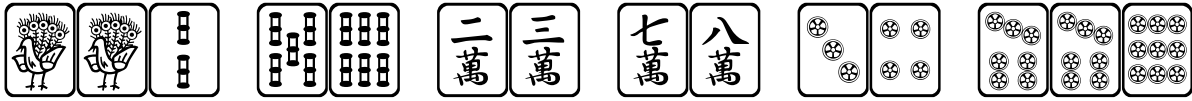
### QUESTION 8-1



What would you discard?



### 5-BLOCK METHOD vs 6-BLOCK METHOD



There are four strong ryanmen blocks. It goes without saying that you should keep all of them. Since you are not going to call with this hand, it's ok to discard either 2s or 9p.

### QUESTION 8-2



What would you discard?

5-BLOCK METHOD vs 6-BLOCK METHOD

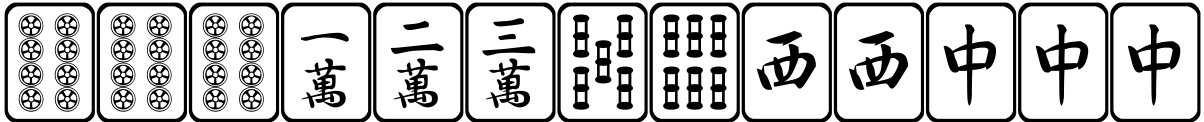


Remember this one? I hope you do!

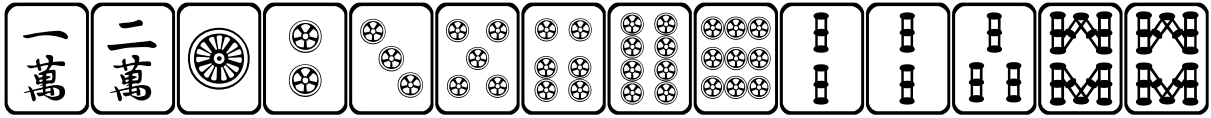
Last time I recommended using the 5-block method and discarding 56s for the fastest tenpai.

However, you can also use the 6-block method. Discard 9p to balance a regular hand and Chiitoitsu!

That way you may get to ryanmen tenpai:

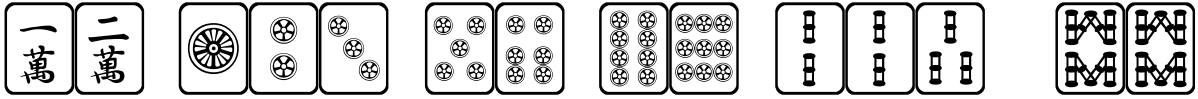


### QUESTION 8-3



What would you discard?

## 5-BLOCK METHOD vs 6-BLOCK METHOD



This hand can aim for Sanshoku/Ittsu. If you use the 5-block method and simply discard the weakest block, you are going to lose one of the potential Yaku.

Discarding 12p loses Sanshoku. Discarding 89p loses Ittsu.

Thanks to the 6-block method, there is a better discard to balance your potential Yaku.

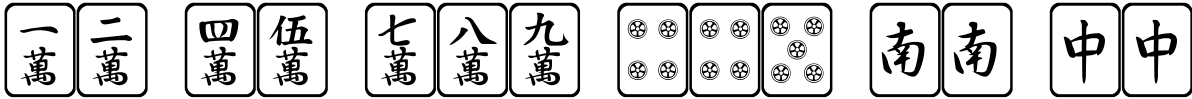
Discard 2s to keep both Sanshoku and Ittsu!

### QUESTION 8-4



What would you discard?

## 5-BLOCK METHOD vs 6-BLOCK METHOD



The answer is... it depends!

If you're aiming for Honitsu, you can use the 6-block method and discard 4p.

If you need a quick hand, you should maximize efficiency (5-block method) and discard the weakest block – 12m.

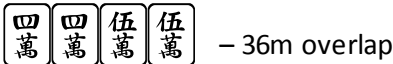
### KEY POINT:

- ❖ If you are aiming for the fastest tenpai, use the 5-block method and simply get rid of the weakest block. If you want your hand to be more flexible, use the 6-block method!

# 9. OVERLAPPING UKEIRE

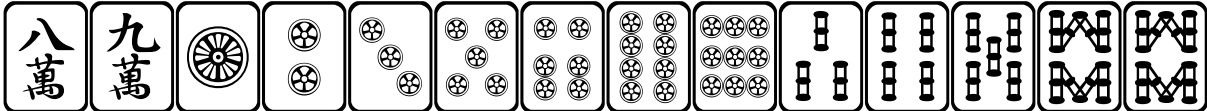
You may already know to beware of overlapping ukeire, right?

Examples:



**HOWEVER!**

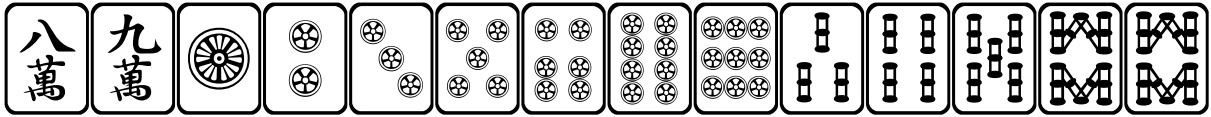
## QUESTION 9-1



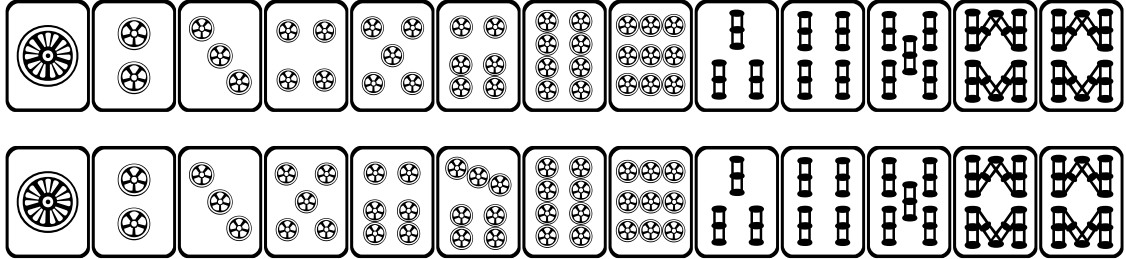
What would you discard?



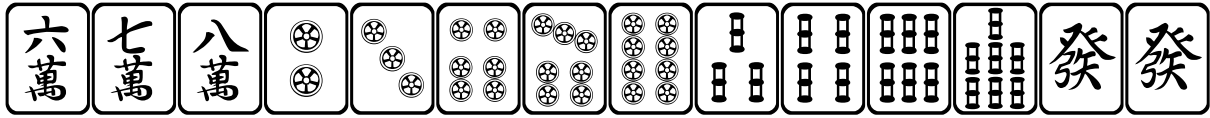
### OVERLAPPING UKEIRE



You should avoid the risk of Yaku-less tenpai. Despite the overlapping ukeire in Pinzu, you should discard 79m. 47p will give you Ittsu tenpai!

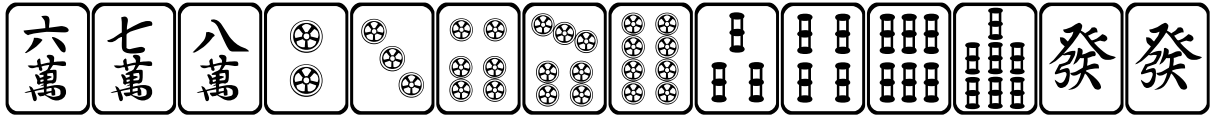


### Question 9-2



What would you discard?

OVERLAPPING UKEIRE

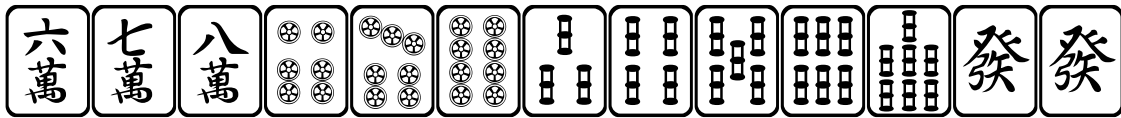


Ask yourself the following question:

*Am I playing for speed or value?*

If you're aiming for value, 67s has to stay because there's a chance for 678 Sanshoku. Despite 23p being more efficient to keep, you should discard it. That is because if you keep 23p and draw 5s, you'll get yaku-less tenpai.

After discarding 23p, drawing 5s won't be bad at all:



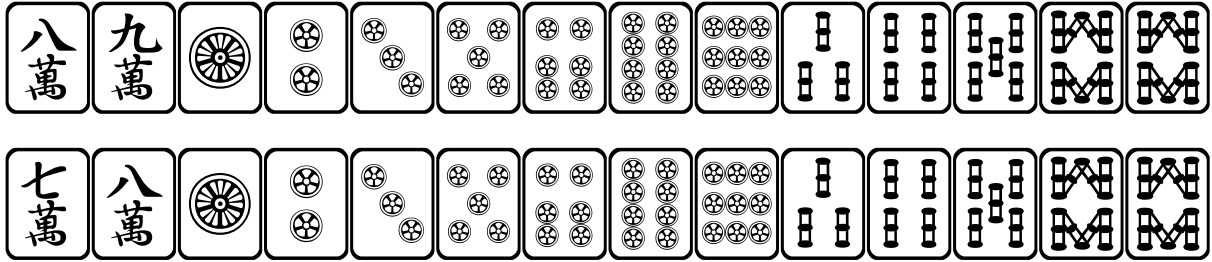
You have a three-sided wait with 8s giving you Sanshoku!

If you're going for speed, you should keep 23p and discard 34s to eliminate the overlapping ukeire.

It's important to always ask yourself the above question and make appropriate judgment.

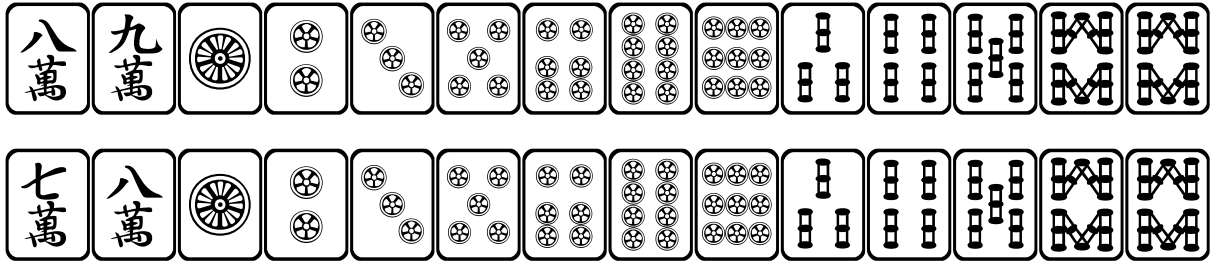
### QUESTION 9-3

As you know, Pinfu is worth 1 Han and Ittsu is worth 2 Han. With that in mind, compare these examples:



What would you discard?

## OVERLAPPING UKEIRE



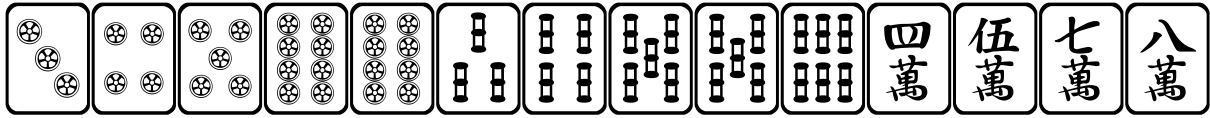
In the first hand you should discard 89m to keep the chance for Ittsu.

It's ok to give up Ittsu in the second example because you confirm Pinfu.

### KEY POINT:

- ❖ If your hand can only score one Yaku, you should aim for that Yaku. If there are more options, you should settle for whichever is easier to get, keeping balance between speed and value. Securing ryanmen should be the priority.

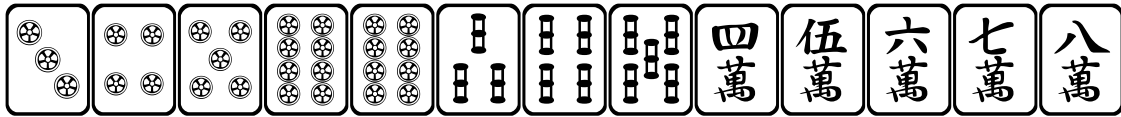
### QUESTION 9-4



What would you discard?

## OVERLAPPING UKEIRE

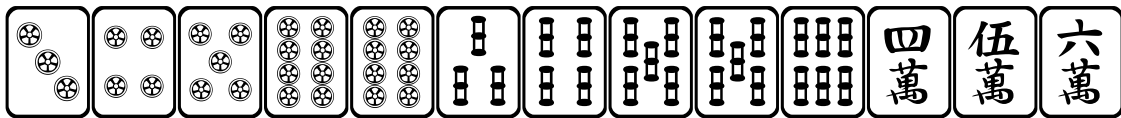
If you discard 56s:



There's a big difference between your winning tiles:

- 3m gives Tanyao, Pinfu and Sanshoku
- 6m gives Tanyao and Pinfu
- 9m gives only Pinfu

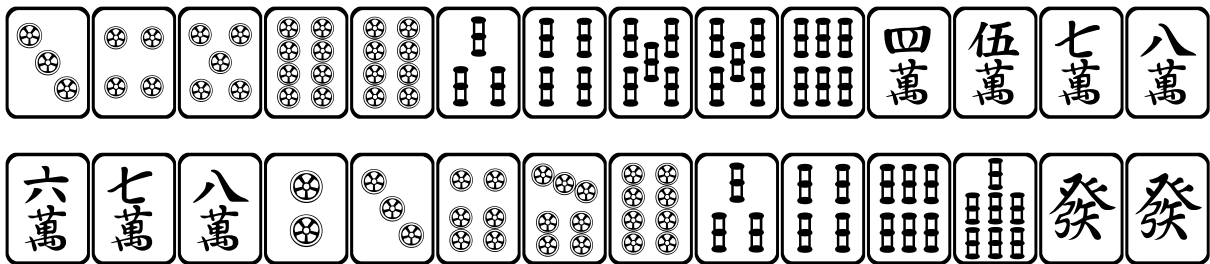
If you discard 78m:



Your winning options are more balanced. Even if you miss out on Sanshoku, you always get Tanyao and Pinfu!

## OVERLAPPING UKEIRE

Let's compare these two hands:

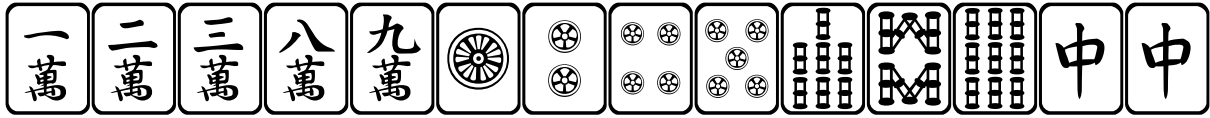


First example – you can confirm Tanyao and Pinfu so you should focus on efficiency. 4578m has overlapping ukeire of 6m, so you should discard 78m.

Second example – there's no Tanyao-Pinfu so you should aim for Sanshoku. To maximize Sanshoku potential, ignore the overlapping ukeire in Souzu and discard 23p.

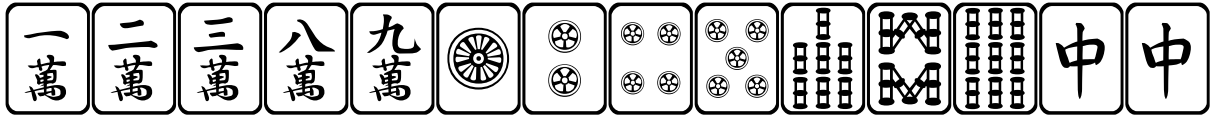


### QUESTION 9-5



What would you discard?

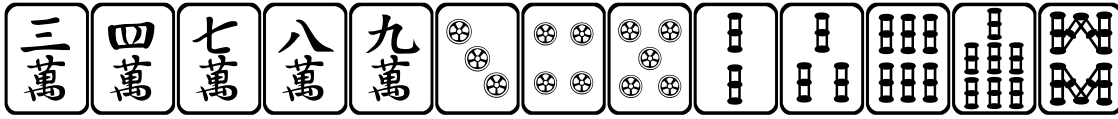
# OVERLAPPING UKEIRE



Even though keeping 45p is slightly more efficient (6p ukeire), in most situations you should aim for a higher score. Keeping 12p confirms Chanta. Discard 45p!

## 10. FIXING THE PAIR

First off, I'd like to introduce a new term: *tenpai potential*. Tenpai potential stands for all your possible tenpai waits and the number of winning tiles. For example:

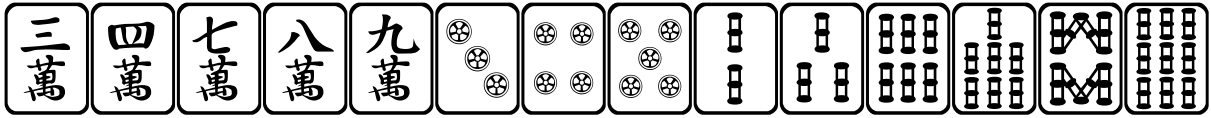


Tenpai potential of this hand is:

25m14s – those tiles give a bad tanki wait

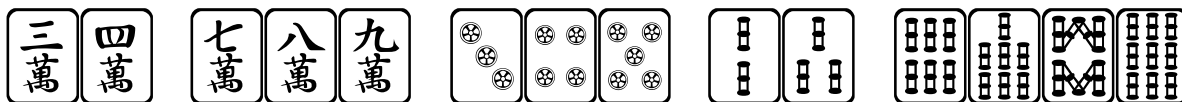
34m23s – these tiles fix a ryanmen wait

### QUESTION 10-1

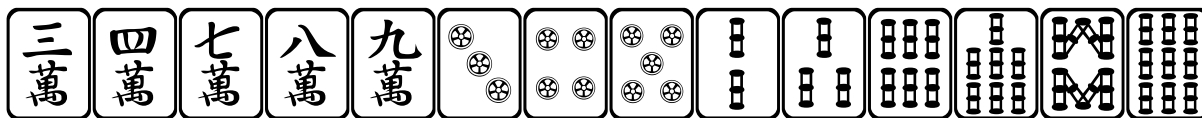


What would you discard?

FIXING THE PAIR



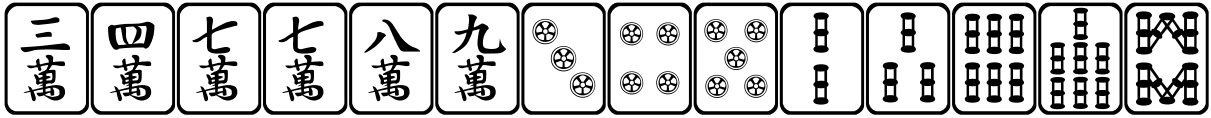
The crux of this question is whether to keep both ryanmen or ryanmen + yonrenkei. In this case you should discard 9s.



As I explained earlier, good tenpai is not guaranteed but it's ok.

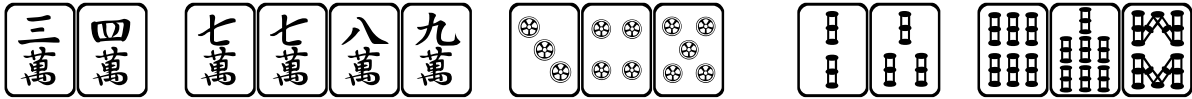
You should only keep yonrenkei when there is a bad shape in your hand (kanchan or penchan).

### QUESTION 10-2



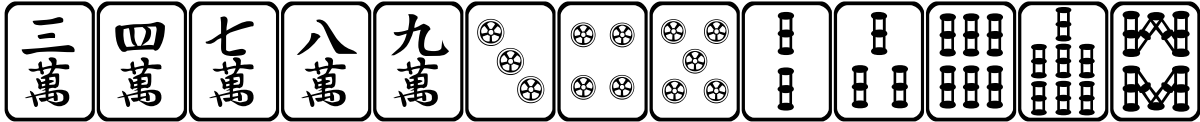
What would you discard?

## FIXING THE PAIR



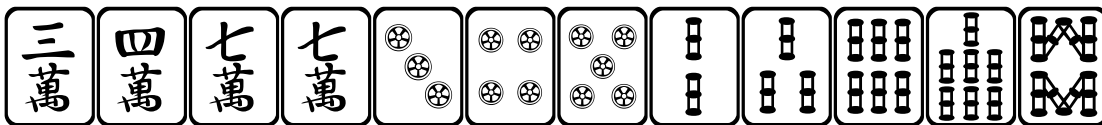
You can either fix the set 789m or fix the pair of 7m. Which one is better?

Discard 7m:



You may recognize this situation from the previous page. Ryanmen tenpai is n't guaranteed. If you draw 25m or 14s first, your wait will be tanki.

Compare that to fixing the pair, discard 89m:

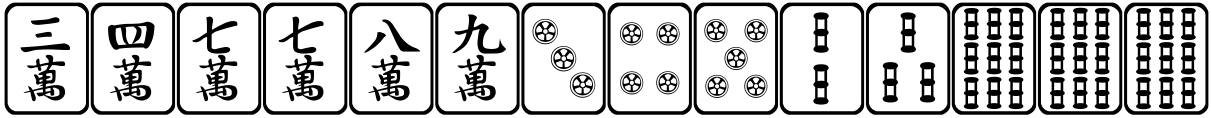


You have fewer effective tiles for tenpai but ryanmen wait is guaranteed! This is much better.

When you have ryanmen-ryanmen iishanten, you should break a set to fix the pair!

Discarding 7m may not be horrible but fixing the pair has become a standard strategy in modern Mahjong.

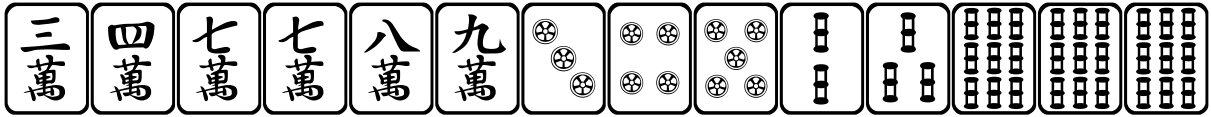
### QUESTION 10-3



What would you discard?

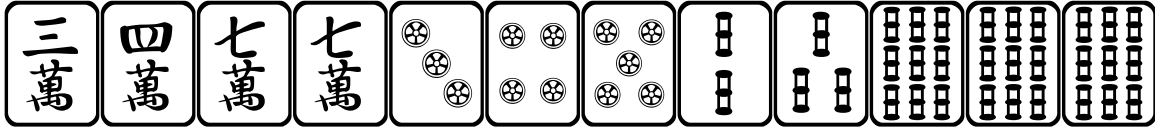


FIXING THE PAIR



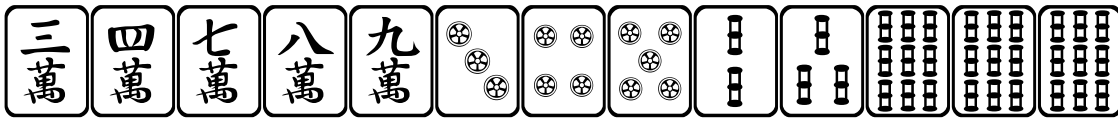
When you have iishanten with ankou, you should not fix the pair.

To illustrate, let's discard 89m to fix the pair in manzu:



You get tenpai with 25m14s.

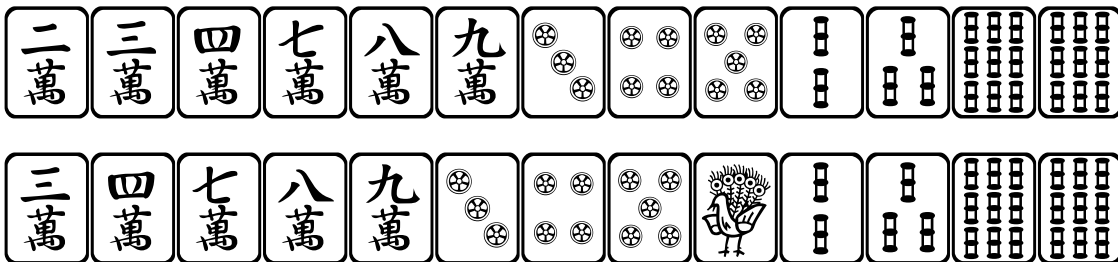
Not bad, but let's discard 7m to fix the set in Manzu:



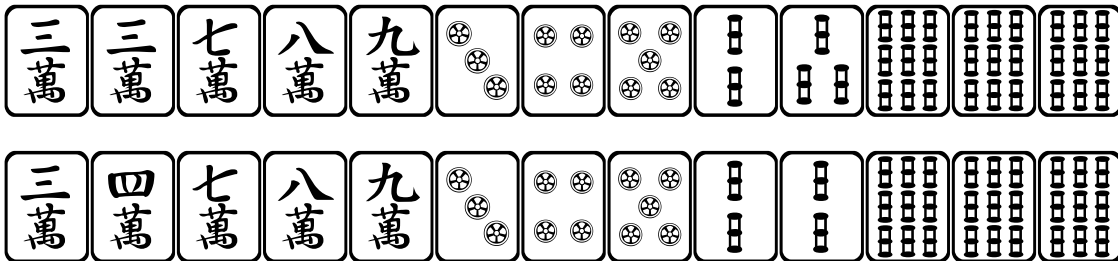
You get tenpai with 2345m1234s. Much better, isn't it?

This is called *headless ankou iishanten*. It's very flexible. The ankou can either serve as a set or as a pair.

When any of the ryanmen completes, you discard one of the ankou tiles for ryanmen tenpai:

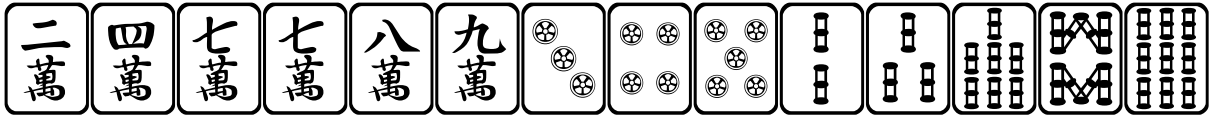


If you draw a pair first, you keep 9s as ankou:



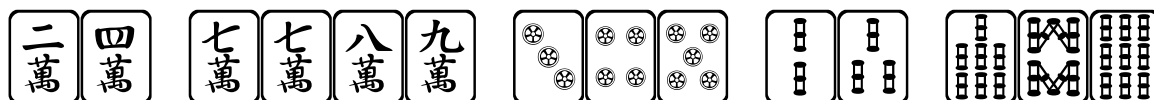
Let's move on!

### QUESTION 10-4

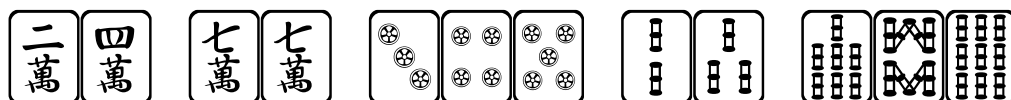


What would you discard?

## FIXING THE PAIR

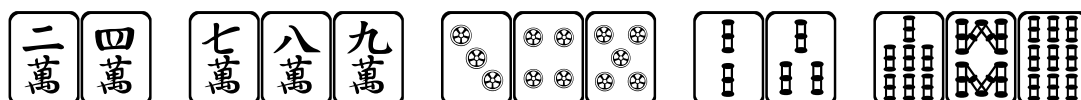


There is one bad shape – 24m. If you fix the pair in manzu:



Your tenpai ukeire is: 3m14s. Only 3m gives good tenpai.

What if you fix the set in manzu?



Your tenpai ukeire is 234m1234s. 24m give good tenpai. That's better!

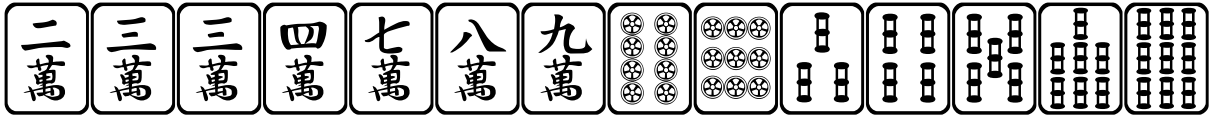
**You should only fix the pair when you have  
ryanmen-ryanmen iishaten!**

### QUESTION 10-5



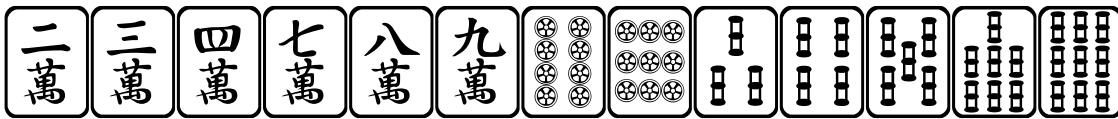
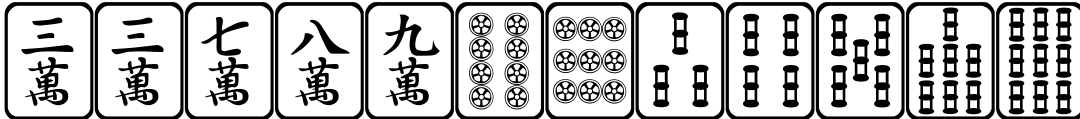
What would you discard?

FIXING THE PAIR

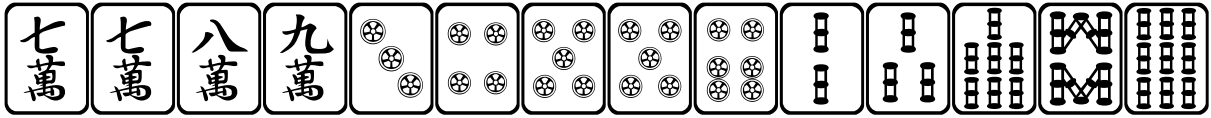


There are two bad shapes so normally you wouldn't fix the pair, but in this case you are aiming for Sanshoku 789 so you should fix the pair of 3m!

Compare:

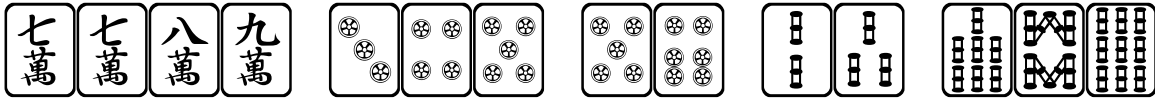


### QUESTION 10-6



What would you discard?

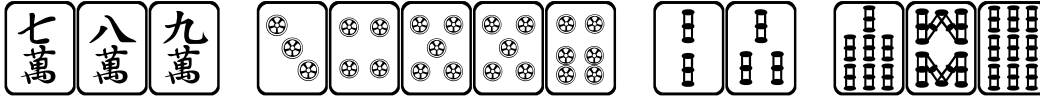
## FIXING THE PAIR



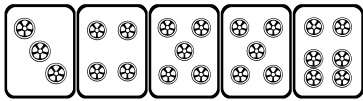
Perhaps you are tempted to fix the pair in manzu since it seems like ryanmen-ryanmen iishanten...

Think again!

It's better to fix the pair in pinzu.



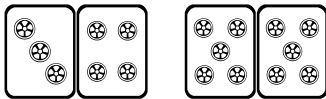
Take a closer look at the complex pinzu shape:



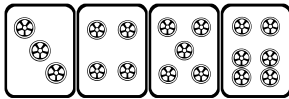
This is a 5-tile combination of a ryanmen and a nobetan.

It can give you a set + a pair with 2356. It can also give you two sets with 47.

If you cut 6p from this block, you fix a ryanmen:



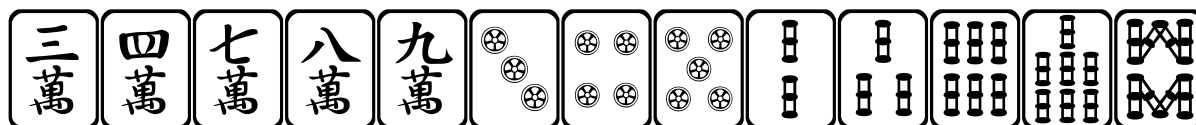
If you cut 5p, you fix a nobetan:



Make sure to memorize this powerful shape!

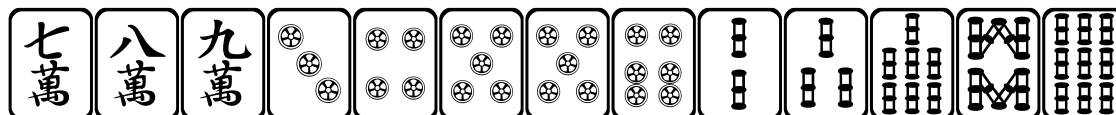
## FIXING THE PAIR

Let's compare a hand with such a shape to one of the previous ones:



Good tenpai – 34m23s

Bad tenpai – 25m14s



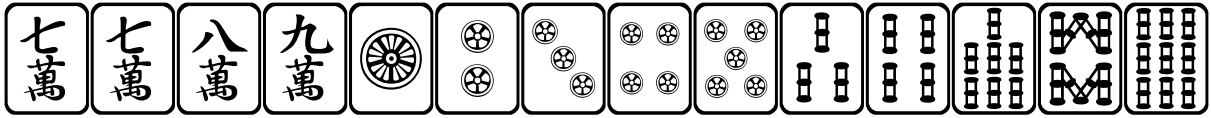
Bad tenpai ukeire – 47p

**Good tenpai ukeire: 2356p14s**

Tenpai chance is by far better when iishanten contains a complex shape.

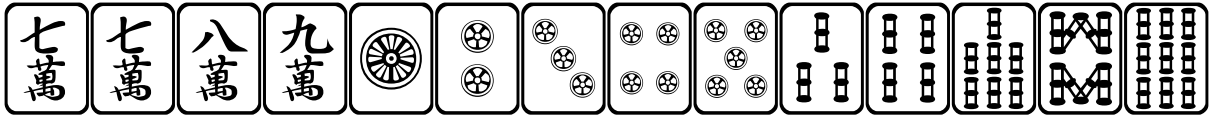


### QUESTION 10-7

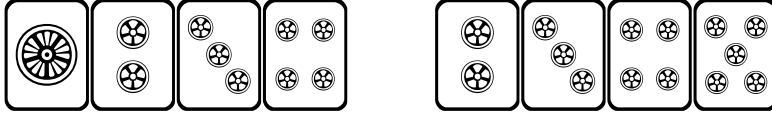


What would you discard?

## FIXING THE PAIR



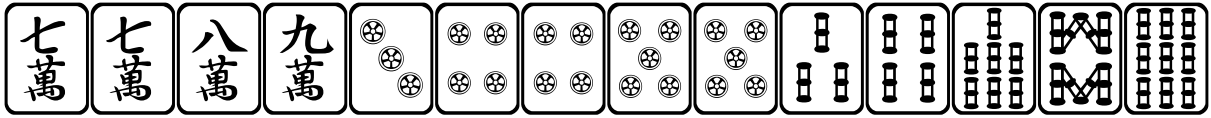
Again, pay close attention to the shape in pinzu. It does contain ryanmen but it's also a 5-tile nobetan combination:



There are numerous ways to create a pair: 1245p. If you draw 25s first, you'll have nobetan tenpai which is pretty good.

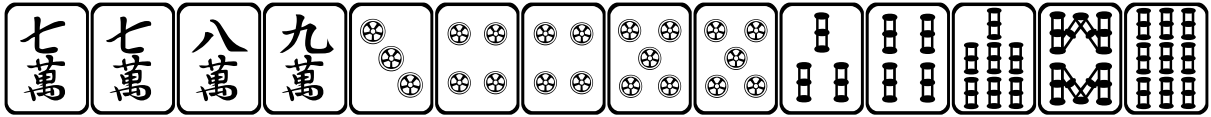
Discard 7m and fix the set in manzu!

### QUESTION 10-8

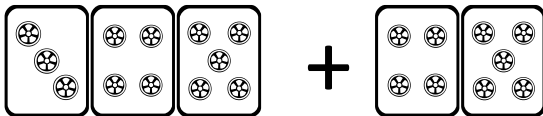
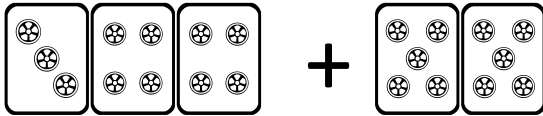
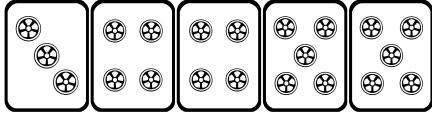


What would you discard?

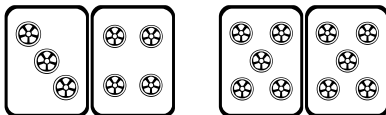
## FIXING THE PAIR



Let's break down the shape in pinzu:



It can make a pair + set with 245p. If you draw 25s first, you leave pinzu as aryanmen:



Discard 7m to fix the set in manzu!

There's an exception: if you need more value with lipeiko, it's ok to fix the pair in manzu.

### KEY POINT:

- ❖ Deciding whether to fix a pair or a set in iishanten isn't a particularly complex issue. Just remember that you should fix a set in three cases:
  - Ankou iishanten
  - Good shape + bad shape iishanten
  - Iishanten with a strong 5-tile combination.

## 11. BUILDING A GOOD SHAPE

There are four-tile shapes which can serve as springboards towards strong five-tile combinations. You may be familiar with them if you've read Riichi Book 1. One of them is nakabukure. It consists of a set with a pair in the middle:



You should be aware of the ways these blocks evolve into strong 5-block combinations:



Nakabukure in different positions are valued differently:



Drawing 4m creates penchan:

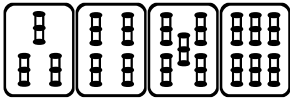


Nakabukure hierarchy:

3-7 nakabukure > 28 nakabukure > 19 nakabukure

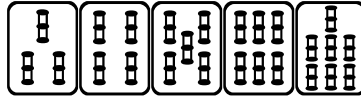
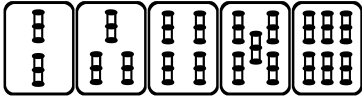
## BUILDING A GOOD SHAPE

The other important 4-tile combination is yonrenkei. It consists of four consecutive tiles, for example:

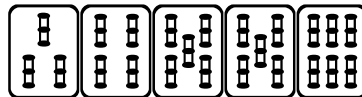
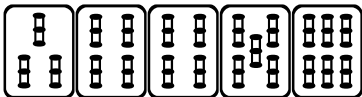


Possible developments into 5-tile combinations:

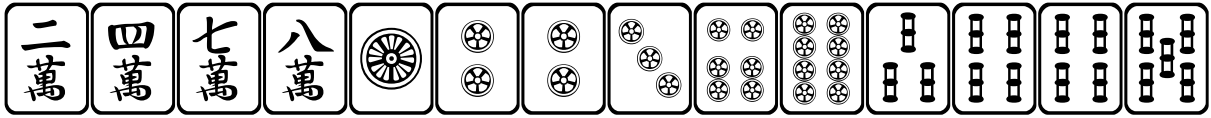
- sanmenchan (3-sided wait)



- aryanmen + nobetan (depends on the rest of the hand)

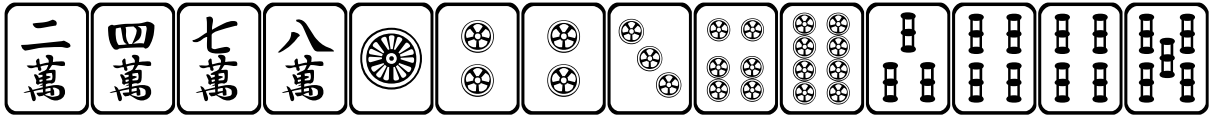


### QUESTION 11-1



What would you discard?

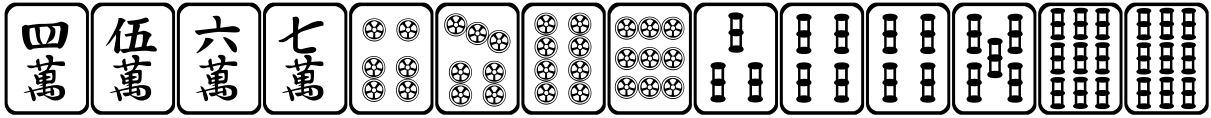
## BUILDING A GOOD SHAPE



There are two four-block combinations. Nakabukure in souzu is stronger than the one in pinzu because it contains flexible middle tiles. It's more likely that you'll make two strong blocks in souzu. Discard 2p!

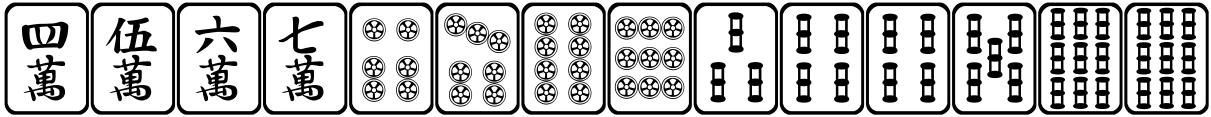


### QUESTION 11-2



What would you discard?

## BUILDING A GOOD SHAPE



There are three four-tile combinations to discard from. The weakest form is the terminal yonrenkei in pinzu. Discard 9p!

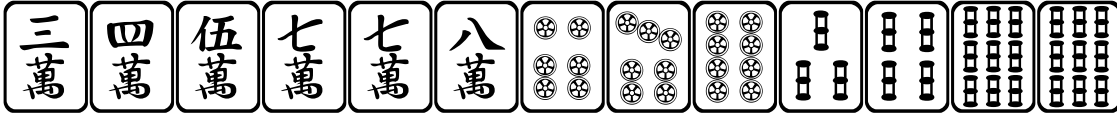
### KEY POINTS:

- ❖ Four-tile combinations are very useful for creating strong hand shapes.
- ❖ Middle four-tile combinations are more flexible than those containing 2's, 8's and terminals.

## 12. IISHANTEN TYPES

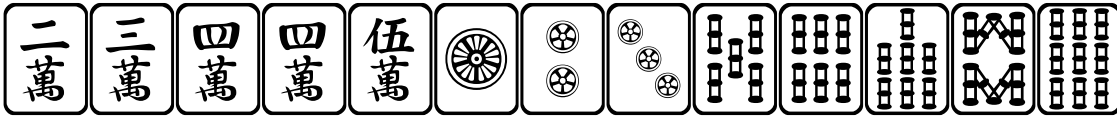
There are three main types of iishanten:

1. Confirmed pair iishanten



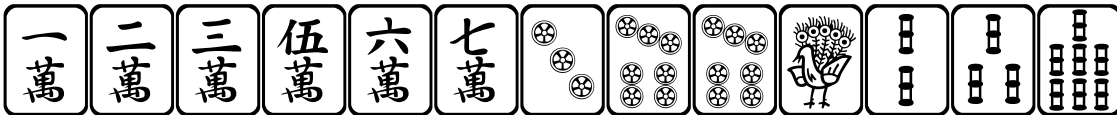
Tenpai ukeire is moderate.

2. Pairless iishanten



This iishanten includes five-block combinations. Tenpai ukeire is wide.

3. Kuttsuki iishanten

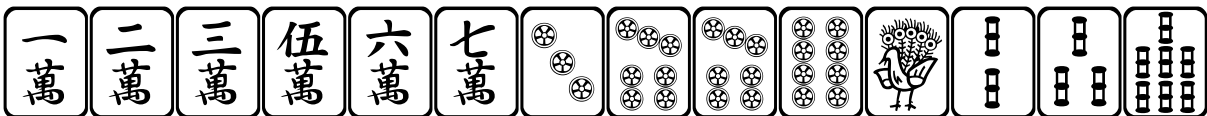


This iishanten includes two floating tiles two form the final block with. Tenpai ukeire is super wide.

Kuttsuki iishanten is super wide!

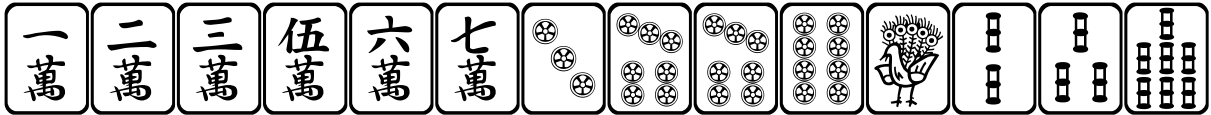
There are other types of iishanten but they are going to be discussed in the next chapter.

Let's do a quick warm-up!



What would you discard?

## IISHANTEN TYPES



Consider all possible discards and tenpai ukeire they give:

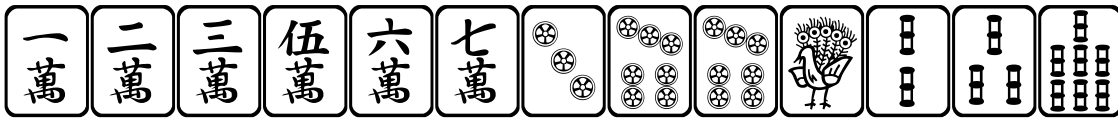
3p – 6789p 56789s; 9 kinds of tiles

7p – 369p 7s; 4 kinds of tiles

8p – 123457p 56789s; 11 kinds of tiles

7s - 123456789p; 9 kinds of tiles

You should discard 8p. Now let's examine the type of iishanten you get afterwards:



Four blocks are complete (3 sets and a pair) and there are two floating tiles. Any tiles around the floating tiles (including themselves) can form the fifth block:



- 12345p

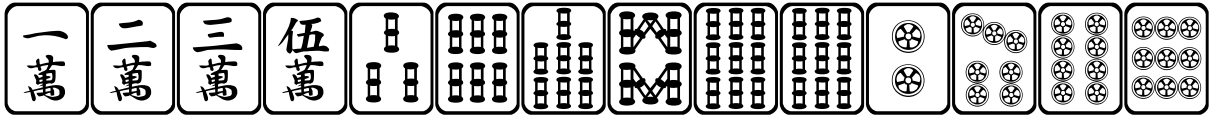


- 56789s

You can also draw the third 7p to get tanki tenpai although that's the least desirable.

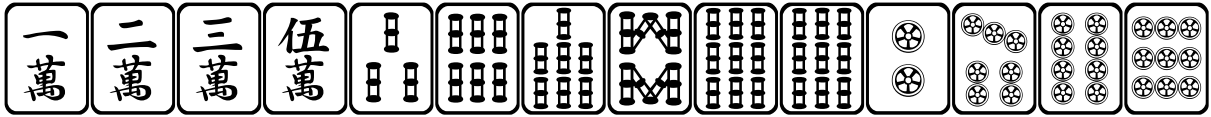
That's a lot of ukeire, eh? Let's do some kutttsuki exercises!

### QUESTION 12-1



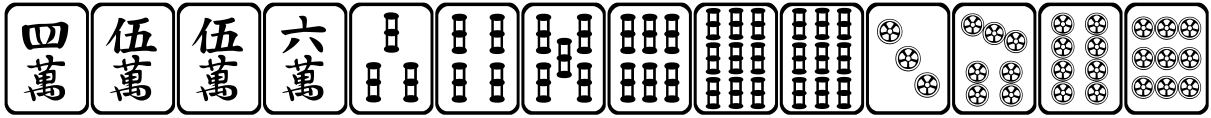
What would you discard?

IISHANTEN TYPES



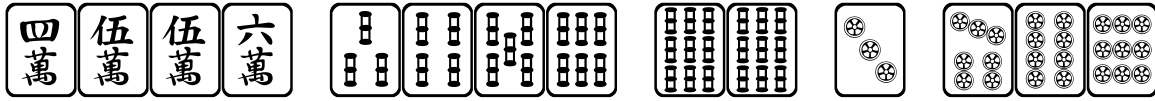
Comparing floating tiles isn't difficult if you remember the general principles of tile usefulness. You have to decide between 5, 3 and 2. Tiles 3-7 are more versatile than 2. Discard 2p!

### QUESTION 12-2



What would you discard?

## IISHANTEN TYPES



If you recall the two previous chapters, you'll quickly notice two strong four-tile blocks: nakabukure in manzu and yonrenkei in pinzu. These shapes are particularly strong when you have kuttsuki iishanten because they're very likely to produce ryanmen tenpai (or better). Discard 3p!



### QUESTION 12-3



What would you discard?

## IISHANTEN TYPES



It's not always about pure efficiency. 1m is by far the least versatile floating tile. You may be quick to discard it. Before you do so, notice that it allows you to get Ittsu. Drawing either 2 or 3m gives Ittsu iishanten!

Make sure not to miss such opportunities, especially when you don't have any doras.

Ok, so should it be 4 or 7? They are somewhat similar, right?

Consider once more your potential Yaku(s). With this hand you may aim not just for Ittsu. You can also hope to get Sanshoku 789!

That's why the final answer to this question is 4p. If you only need speed, you should follow pure tile efficiency.

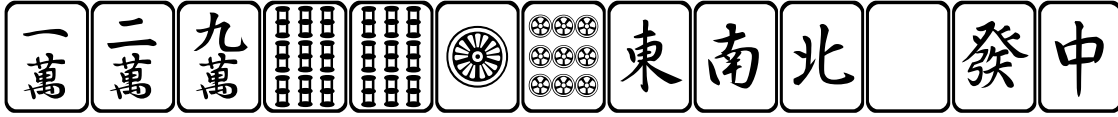
### KEY POINTS:

- ❖ Kuttsuki iishanten is the best iishanten (widest ukeire).
- ❖ Floating tiles 3-7 are the most flexible for kuttsuki iishanten.
- ❖ Yonrenkei and nakabukure are stronger than floating tiles.
- ❖ You may want to deviate from pure tile efficiency to aim for extra Yaku.

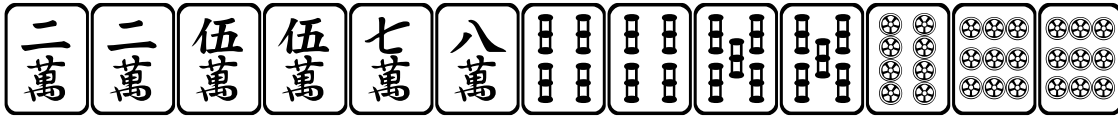
### 13. MORE IISHANTEN TYPES

Non-standard iishanten include:

Kokushimusou iishanten

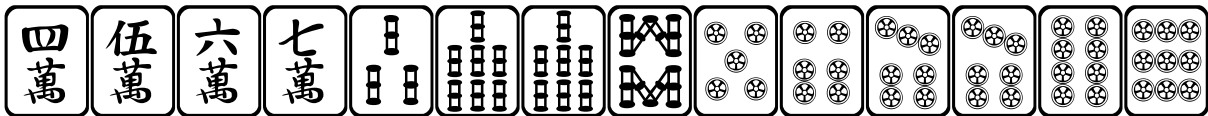


Chiitoitsu iishanten



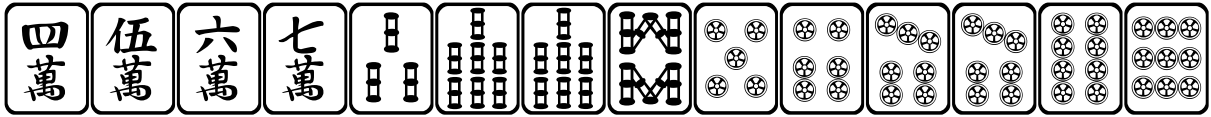
Let's do more iishanten exercises!

#### QUESTION 13-1

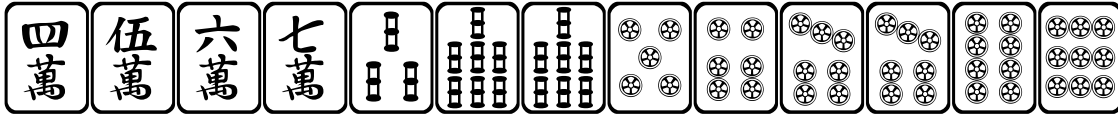


What would you discard?

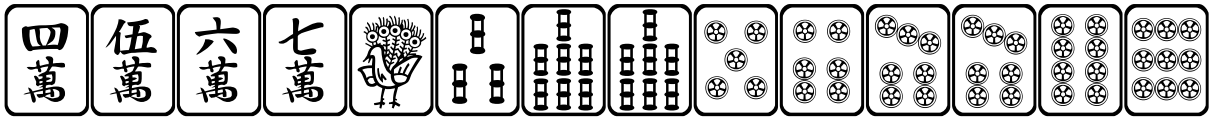
MORE IISHANTEN TYPES



You may be tempted to keep the floating tile by fixing the pair in souzu.

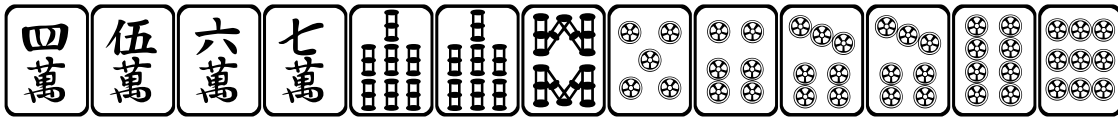


With one floating tile, good tenpai isn't guaranteed. 3568m and 24s result in ryanmen. Let's say you draw 1s instead...



Is there a better solution then? Of course!

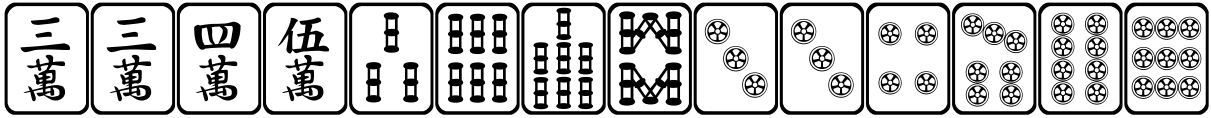
Try discarding 3s:



Now your tenpai potential is better. 345678m and 7s give ryanmen tenpai.

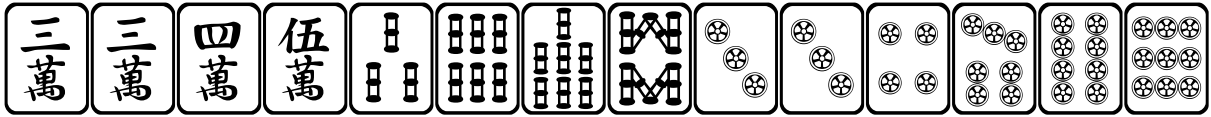
Yonrenkei combined with a ryanmen + pair block ensure a strong tenpai.

### QUESTION 13-2



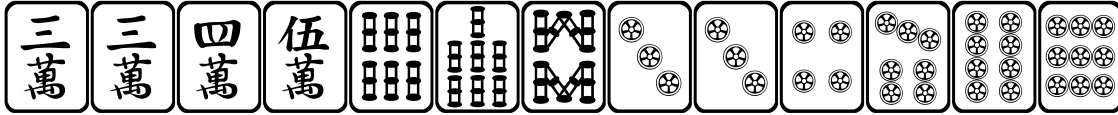
What would you discard?

MORE IISHANTEN TYPES



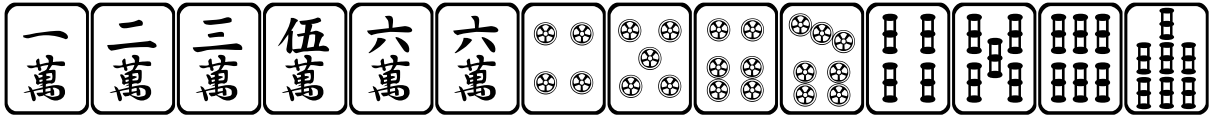
You may want to fix the pair in pinzu by discarding 4p. With the last example in mind, you'll know it's not optimal if you want to maximize your tenpai potential...

Discard the floating tile to keep the best chances for ryanmen tenpai.



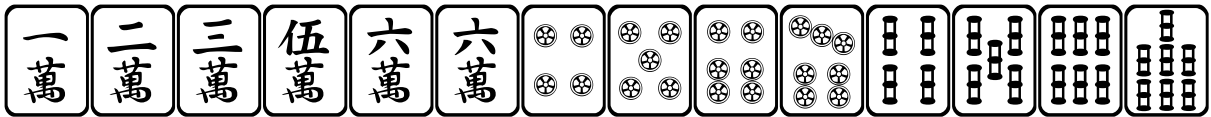
There's a ryanmen in manzu and a combined ryanmen in pinzu. Tenpai potential is super high!

### QUESTION 13-3



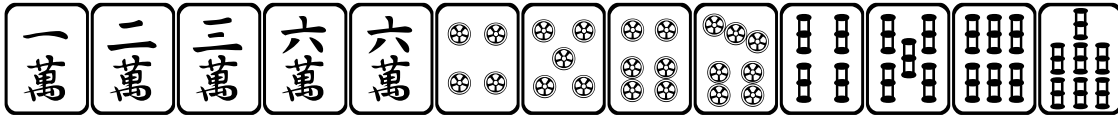
What would you discard?

## MORE IISHANTEN TYPES



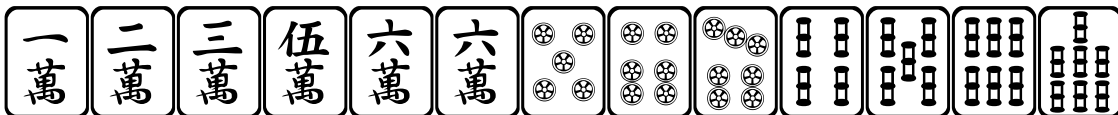
This example is a grey area. A trade-off between tenpai potential and value (Sanshoku). Compare all discard candidates:

❖ 5m



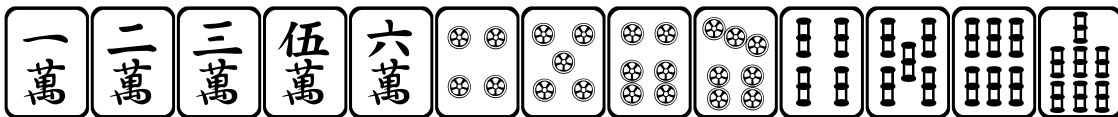
Kuttsuki iishanten. It gives widest tenpai ukeire but Sanshoku is impossible.

❖ 47p or 47s



Combined ryanmen + yonrenkei. Good tenpai potential and decent Sanshoku potential.

❖ 6m



Headless iishanten. Weakest tenpai potential but the best chance for Sanshoku.

Decisions may vary among high level players. The correct answer may depend on situational factors such as tile availability, scores etc.

## KEY POINTS:

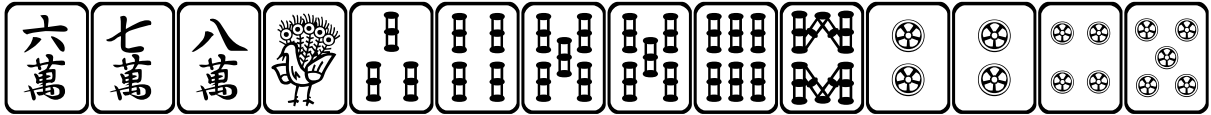
- ❖ If you want to maximize the chance for ryanmen tenpai, be on the lookout for iishanten consisting of combined shapes such as yonrenkei + combined ryanmen or aryanmen + combined ryanmen.
- ❖ If you're after a specific Yaku, you usually have to sacrifice some efficiency. Judge wisely and don't overdo it!



## 14. RYANMEN-KANCHAN CROSSOVERS

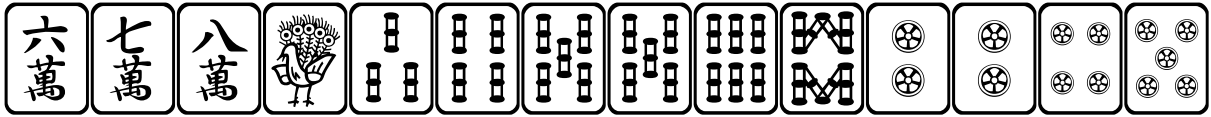
Have you ever heard of "hidden ryankan"?

### QUESTION 14-1



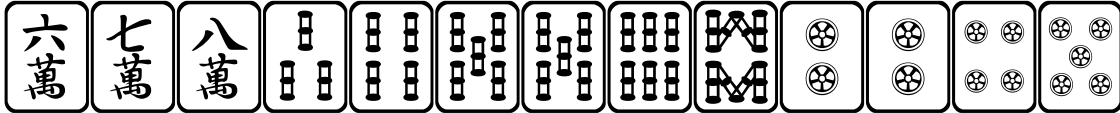
What would you discard?

RYANMEN-KANCHAN CROSSOVERS



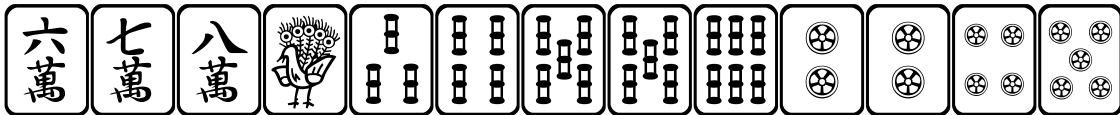
It may seem like there's no difference between discarding 1s and 8s because you get ryanmen-ryanmen iishanten after either. Think again!

1s discard:



Tenpai ukeire: 47s, 36p.

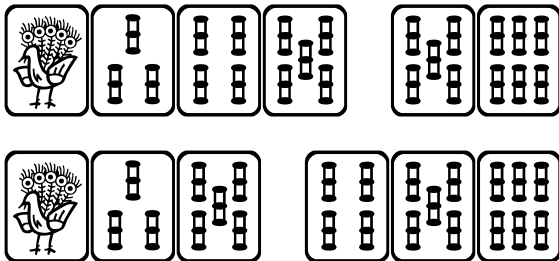
8s discard:



Tenpai ukeire: 247s, 36p

Discarding 8s is more efficient!

The shape in souzu is sometimes referred to as "a hidden ryankan" because it's easily overlooked:



The first configuration is easy to detect. The other one is a tad trickier.

That's a ryanmen-kanchan crossover.

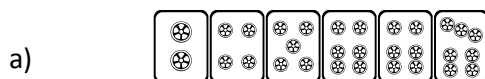
There are several ryanmen-kanchan variations:

COMBINATION	WAIT									
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>一萬</td> <td>三萬</td> <td>四萬</td> <td>伍萬</td> <td>伍萬</td> <td>六萬</td> </tr> </table>	一萬	三萬	四萬	伍萬	伍萬	六萬	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>二萬</td> <td>四萬</td> <td>七萬</td> </tr> </table>	二萬	四萬	七萬
一萬	三萬	四萬	伍萬	伍萬	六萬					
二萬	四萬	七萬								
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>二萬</td> <td>四萬</td> <td>伍萬</td> <td>六萬</td> <td>六萬</td> <td>七萬</td> </tr> </table>	二萬	四萬	伍萬	六萬	六萬	七萬	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>三萬</td> <td>伍萬</td> <td>八萬</td> </tr> </table>	三萬	伍萬	八萬
二萬	四萬	伍萬	六萬	六萬	七萬					
三萬	伍萬	八萬								
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>三萬</td> <td>伍萬</td> <td>六萬</td> <td>七萬</td> <td>七萬</td> <td>八萬</td> </tr> </table>	三萬	伍萬	六萬	七萬	七萬	八萬	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>四萬</td> <td>六萬</td> <td>九萬</td> </tr> </table>	四萬	六萬	九萬
三萬	伍萬	六萬	七萬	七萬	八萬					
四萬	六萬	九萬								
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二萬	三萬	三萬	四萬	伍萬	七萬					
一萬	四萬	六萬								
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>三萬</td> <td>四萬</td> <td>四萬</td> <td>伍萬</td> <td>六萬</td> <td>八萬</td> </tr> </table>	三萬	四萬	四萬	伍萬	六萬	八萬	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>二萬</td> <td>伍萬</td> <td>七萬</td> </tr> </table>	二萬	伍萬	七萬
三萬	四萬	四萬	伍萬	六萬	八萬					
二萬	伍萬	七萬								
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>四萬</td> <td>伍萬</td> <td>伍萬</td> <td>六萬</td> <td>七萬</td> <td>九萬</td> </tr> </table>	四萬	伍萬	伍萬	六萬	七萬	九萬	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>三萬</td> <td>六萬</td> <td>八萬</td> </tr> </table>	三萬	六萬	八萬
四萬	伍萬	伍萬	六萬	七萬	九萬					
三萬	六萬	八萬								

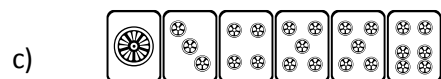
All of them consist of six tiles. Let me give you a tip on how to memorize these combinations:

**Floating tile and ryanmen ukeire always follow suji sequences.**

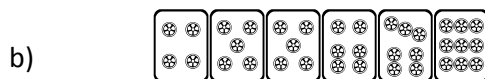
Examples:



Floating tile: 2  
 Ryanmen ukeire: 58  
 2-58 (suji sequence)



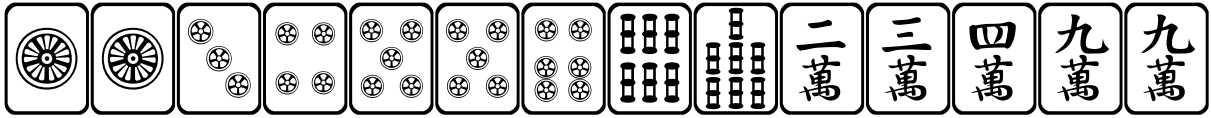
Floating tile: 1  
 Ryanmen ukeire: 47  
 1-47 (suji sequence)



Ryanmen ukeire: 36  
 Floating tile: 9  
 3-69 (suji sequence)

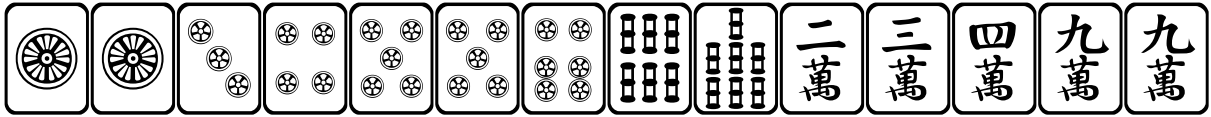
Time to put this knowledge to practice!

### QUESTION 14-2



What would you discard?

RYANMEN-KANCHAN CROSSOVERS



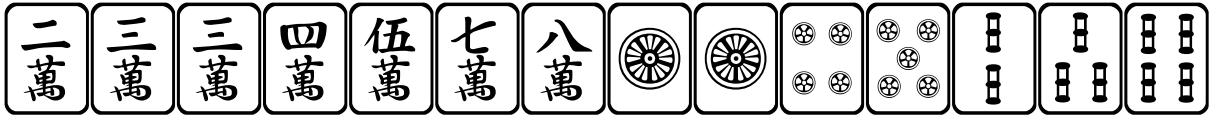
To an untrained eye both 1p and 9m seem equally efficient. They're just pairs, right?

Of course not!

Now you know that 1p is part of the ryanmen-kanchan crossover and allows you to use 2p. You should fix the 9m pair.

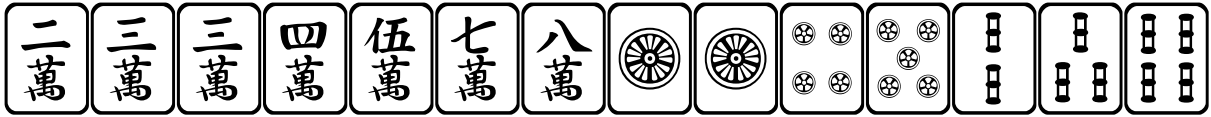
Discard 1p!

### QUESTION 14-3



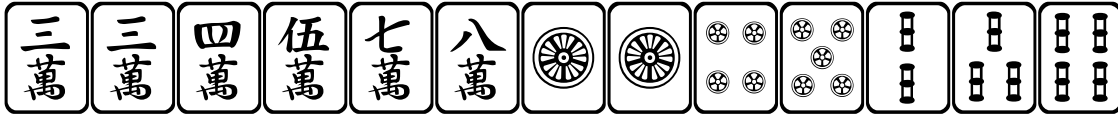
What would you discard?

RYANMEN-KANCHAN CROSSOVERS



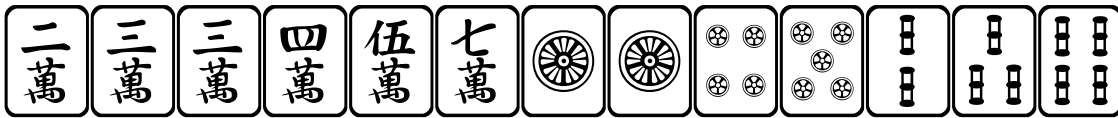
On the surface it looks like dropping either manzu ryanmen is equally efficient. We know it's not!

2m discard:



Tenpai ukeire: 69m, 36p

8m discard:

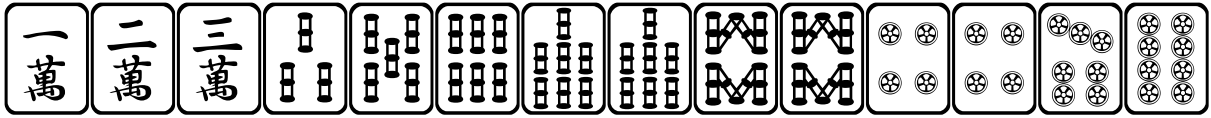


Tenpai ukeire: 146m, 36p

Discard 8m to keep the ryanmen-kanchan crossover:



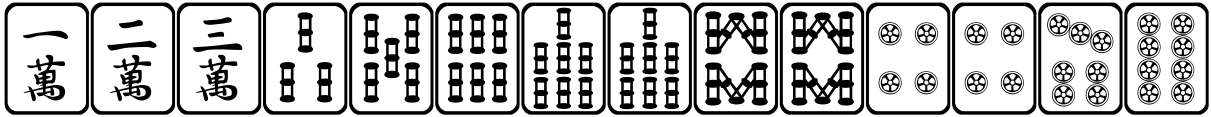
### QUESTION 14-4



What would you discard?

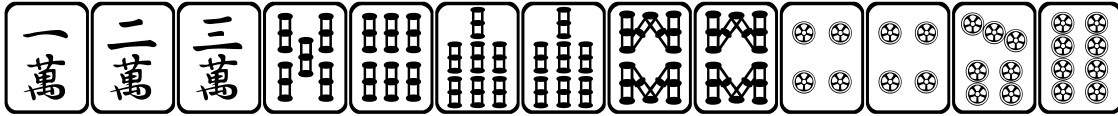


RYANMEN-KANCHAN CROSSOVERS



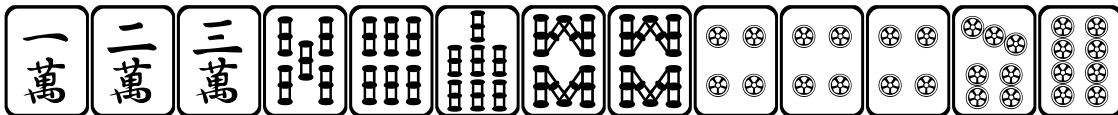
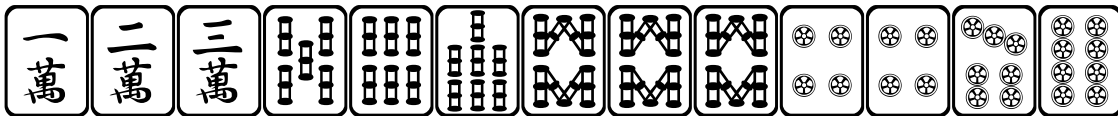
Here's where the fun begins! The options are:

3s

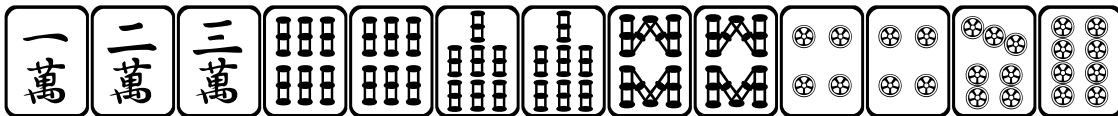


Perfect iishanten. Tenpai ukeire: 689s, 469p.

There's a catch, though! If you complete shanpon first, you'll have Yaku-less tenpai:

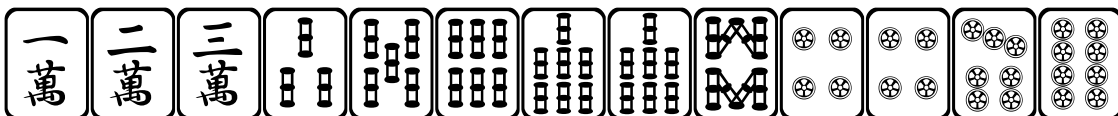


Best scenario is drawing 6s:



Pinfu-lipeiko tenpai.

Let's consider 8s discard:



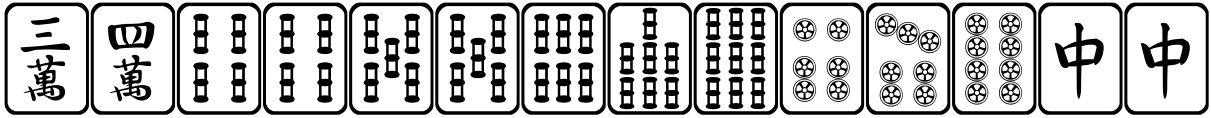
Tenpai ukeire: 469s, 469p.

Every tile except 4p gives you Pinfu tenpai.

Which option is better?

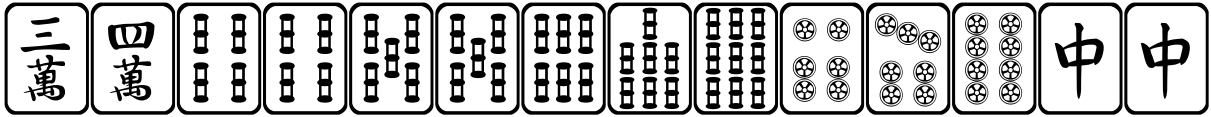
Expert opinions on this matter vary.

### QUESTION 14-5



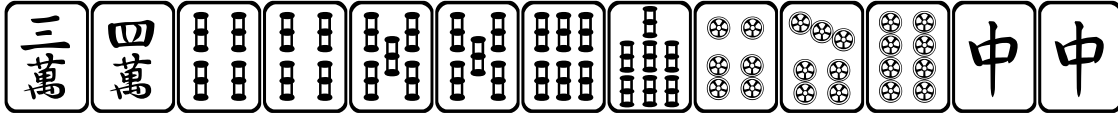
What would you discard?

RYANMEN-KANCHAN CROSSOVERS



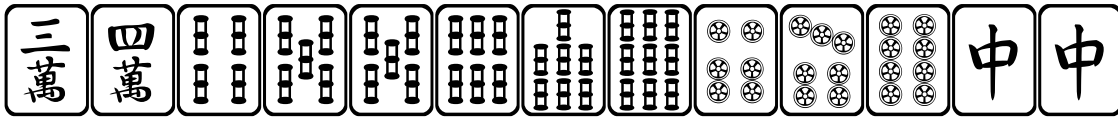
You want to call chun. What should you discard with that in mind? The choice is between 4s and 9s. 4s keeps the 6-tile the crossover, 9s gives perfect iishanten.

Discard 9s!

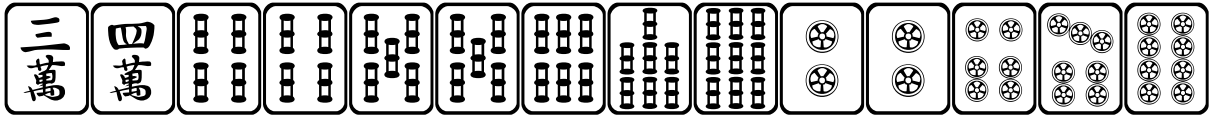


Now you can pon chun for tenpai.

It's not possible if you drop 4s because chun becomes the only pair candidate:

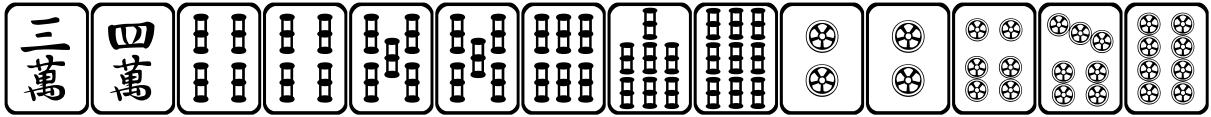


### QUESTION 14-6



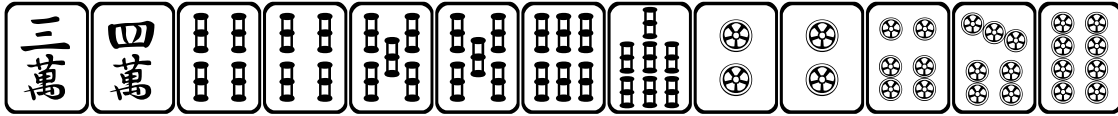
What would you discard?

RYANMEN-KANCHAN CROSSOVERS



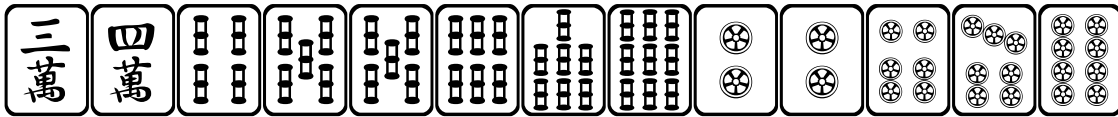
Another choice between a 6-tile crossover and perfect iishanten.

Discard 9s to keep the perfect iishanten!



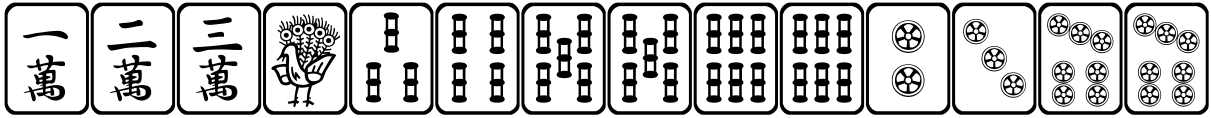
Pinfu isn't guaranteed but Tanyao is secured and you get Iipeiko with 6s. On top of that, you can call if need be.

Keeping the crossover is less flexible:



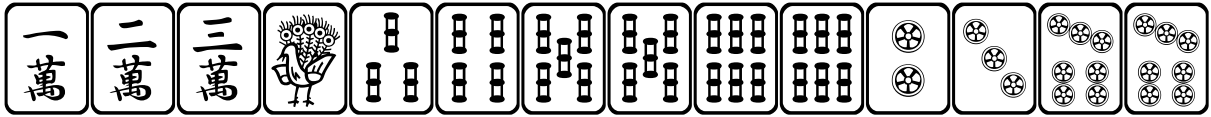
Pinfu is guaranteed but there's a risk of losing Tanyao and Iipeiko is dead.

### QUESTION 14-7



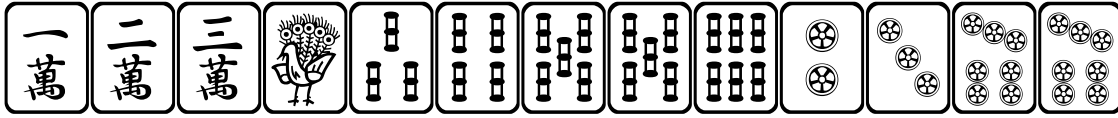
What would you discard?

RYANMEN-KANCHAN CROSSOVERS



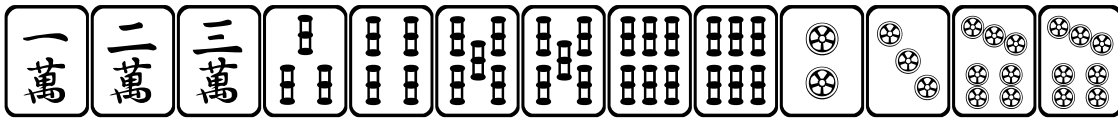
This time choosing the crossover is better. Discard 6s!

Why?



You can aim for Sanshoku 123. Pinfu is guaranteed.

Compare that to choosing perfect iishanten:



You lose Sanshoku. Neither Pinfu nor lipeiko is guaranteed.

KEY POINTS:

- ❖ Learn to recognize six-tile ryanmen-kanchan crossovers.
- ❖ Learn to choose properly between crossover iishanten and perfect iishanten.

**END**