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PAI GOW
TILES



PAI GOW TILES

The game of Pai Gow is a game of Chinese tiles, which is generally believed to have originated in China around the 12th century A.D. The name Pai Gow literally translated means "to make nine," which is the object of the game. Pai Gow is played on a table and setting similar to blackjack: there is a dealer and seats for up to six players. However, instead of cards, the dealer distributes tiles to the players. There are 32 tiles referred to as "tiles" which are mixed or shuffled by the dealer. The tiles are placed in eight stacks of four each. These are dealt to each position on the table (including any vacant positions) so that each player receives four tiles. Unlike the American game of tiles, in Pai Gow the individual value of a tile is NOT based on the number of dots on it. Its value is based upon a symbolic Chinese meaning, which you do not need to know to play the game. Each player uses his four tiles to form two separate hands. The best hand is referred to as the "high hand" and the other hand is called the "low hand." If the player's high hand is higher than the banker's high hand, and the player's low hand is also higher than the banker's low hand, the player is a winner. If both his hands rank lower than both the banker's hands, he loses his bet. If only one of his hands is higher, and the other is lower, it is a "standoff" or "push" and no money changes hands. If the player and the banker have two hands totaling the same number, the hand with the higher "single ranking" tile is the winner. The banker always wins if the two hands are exactly identical. The highest hand would be a pair (called a "Bo" in Chinese); however, not all of the combinations called "pairs" are actually pairs of identical tiles. Ranking charts are available at the table. Please ask your dealer for assistance. The next highest would be what is called a "Wong," which is the nine tile together with a 2 or a 12 tile. After the Wong comes the "Gong," which is an eight tile together with a 2 or a 12. If you cannot make any of these combinations, you must arrange your two tiles to get as close to a total of nine as possible. At this point, the game is similar to playing two hands of baccarat, with nine being the highest possible total. As in baccarat, only the last digit of the total is counted: two tiles which total 11 will only count as 1, a total of 15 will count as 5, etc. The following are four basic rules to guide you in setting your hands:

1. Play the pairs: the Gee Joon, 11 identical pairs, and four mixed pairs. Look for these pairs and play them as your "high hand."
2. Play a 12 or a 2 with a 7, 8 or 9 to produce either a high 9, a Gong or a Wong. These are the most common "high hands" and are very powerful.
3. Play two small tiles that add up to 7, 8 or 9.
4. Average the hands by playing the biggest tile with the smallest.

There are two "wild" tiles in Pai Gow: the 3 tile, which is formed by a red one and a white two and the 6 tile, which is formed by a red four and a white two. BOTH can be counted as either 3 or 6, and together they form the highest hand, called "Gee Joon." It is considered a pair, even though these tiles obviously do not match. Watch for these "wild" tiles and use them in figuring your totals. On the table, there is also a dice cup with three dice inside. The purpose of the dice cup is only to determine which position on the table will receive the first hand. The counting always starts from the banker (who is not always the dealer), and proceeds around the table in a counter-clockwise manner. If the dice total 9 or 17, the banker will receive the first stack of tiles. If the total is 10 or 18, the player to the banker's immediate right will receive the first stack, and so on. Pai Gow is a rotating bank game. Each player has the opportunity to bank the bets against all other players, including the house. The dealer will offer the bank to each player in turn, moving counter-clockwise. The player has the option of either accepting the bank or passing it on to the next player. If no one accepts the bank, it goes back to the dealer. To be the banker, a player must have played the previous hand against the house and must be able to cover all bets. He may also choose to co-bank with the house, in which case he must cover half the bets. If he chooses to co-bank, his hand must be set by the dealer according to the standard "house way." The house collects 5% commission on each winning hand. The dealers or supervisors will be glad to answer your questions about Pai Gow or to set your hand for you if you are unsure of how to proceed.

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