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# Searching For Bubbe Fischer: The Path To Mah Jongg Wisdom



## Synopsis

Playing mah jongg is simple. Excelling at it is another matter entirely. Author Karen Gooen had a plan: if she could find the right mentor, the quintessential mah jongg maven, then perhaps she could master the game. Searching for Bubbe Fischer is the story of her quest to become an expert, and the unexpected wisdom she learned along the way. The book includes instruction for intermediate and advanced mah jongg players, as well as information about running tournaments, playing three-handed games, etiquette, and more. Karen Gooen is a writer and mah jongg instructor in Randolph, New Jersey. She has spent years analyzing a ten-minute activity that is fortified by popcorn and M&M's<sup>™</sup>s. "This is an easy read, clearly written in a way that can engage experienced players and enlighten novice players. All players can easily see themselves in the pages." —Tom Sloper, author of *The Red Dragon & The West Wind: The Winning Guide to Official Chinese & American Mah-Jongg*

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is a wonderful read. It is well written and fast paced. It is equally appropriate for the novice as it is for the advanced player. As Karen takes the reader on a wonderful ride through her own experience learning the game she also teaches the important aspects of Mah Jongg, making what

could be a dry subject into an irresistible story. The beginning is more memoir, but still it is chocked full of tips and strategies. The later chapters are organized by subject matter with even more tips, strategies and resources. By way of example she includes easier ways to memorize the yearly cards, how to be flexible in your play, how to play solitaire Mah Jongg to improve your game, and a full chapter on tournament play. A must read for anyone who enjoys the game, no matter their current level of play.

While reading Karen's book I thought perhaps she had been sitting in on my life! Her experiences are universal (to the Mah Jongg player, that is), a delight to read, and a walk down memory lane as I was reminded what it was like in the beginning as a novice player or learning how to be a part of tournament play. Karen's writing is sharp, focused, witty, and insightful. I read the entire book in two sittings and jotted down many quotes that I will use when teaching new Mah Jongg players. There is no other Mah Jongg book like this out there and I know every Mah Jongg player - young, old, new, or experienced - will see her/himself in Karen's words.

I really loved this book. I so enjoyed her story as it unfolded and I could definitely relate to her immediate enchantment with the game of mah jongg. The touching mention of her Dad and the way she presented the close relationship with her mah jongg friends was priceless. This book not only was easy to read, but also had wonderful tips for teaching. I also love the way Karen approached and explained etiquette which is so important for new players to understand. I highly recommend this book as an excellent read and wonderful gift!

As Ann Israel said, when I read this book I thought Karen had been following me around noticing my playing experience! Well written, amusing, and very informative. What one finds as a beginner to Mah Jongg is that people usually don't tell you too much about strategy: certain things, yes, but eventually you need to figure out your own strategy such as when to give up on a hand and play defensively. Karen shared some strategy tips that I have not seen elsewhere. And I thought I was a bad player until I read that the game is 70% luck and that you can expect to win about 20% of the time, so you must practice patience! I relaxed then about my play. Right after I finished the book, I signed up for my first tournament, which I had been reluctant to do. I had lots fun, won 3 games out of 12, and won a nice Mah Jongg table! If you are truly a Beginner, perhaps taking lessons, you may want to start with Elaine Sandberg's "Beginner's Guide" and then when you are released from lessons and have become a Novice, get Karen's book to improve your play and learn new tricks. In

fact, buy them both together so you have Karen's book on your shelf. I love this book!

This is a wonderful book for beginners and experienced players alike. I read it when I was first learning to play and it helped me so much! Now that I have been playing for a few months I am ready to read it again. I know I will pick up new tips/strategies this time. Karen writes in a very friendly, easy to follow manner, but she is a warehouse of knowledge. Buy this book. You will be glad you did.(Keep in mind that if you read it as an eBook on a black and white device like the Kindle Paperwhite you won't see the different colors as they appear on the NMJL card. I have both a Paperwhite and an iPad Mini and I read "Bubbe Fischer" on my iPad for this reason.)

I just finished reading Karen's book and I have to say, it felt like "family". All of us who play Mah Jongg can relate to Karen's wisdom. We sought mentor's and learn from each other every time we play. It is a wonderful book for both the novice and the "maven" (experienced). I would highly recommend this book to all who want to learn and for those of us who have a long history playing. Karen combines the tales of community AND the instruction for the skills needed to play. We who play all know that the WARMTH of Mah Jongg is just as important as our win! So, make a glass of tea, take a seat in your comfy chair and let yourself enjoy this book!

If you are into Mah Jongg, and are at the beginner, advanced beginner or early intermediate stage in your play, you will find this book entertaining. It is one of the few books on Mah Jongg I've seen that goes into more than cursory detail on actual game play, with tile diagrams showing the actual positions of the author's hands in games - very interesting to the more advanced beginning player trying to learn some of the basic & more sophisticated hand strategies. I found the descriptions of the author's experiences in tournament play very interesting and humorous. The last third of the book drifts a bit, dragging out the "mystery" of the author's search for a game mentor, but that doesn't really detract from the overall fun of hearing about the author's experiences meeting and developing friendships with other fans of the "clicking of the tiles".

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