

Competitive Karuta Manners Guide

This is the English translation of [the original Japanese version of the guide \(競技かるたマナーブック\)](#).
None of the illustrations in the Japanese version appear in this version and the page numbers correspond to the Japanese version.

General Incorporated Association All Japan Karuta Association

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Basics ~Manners for Everyday Practice~

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1) Starting and Ending a Match with Grace

- ❖ Properly greeting people is a fundamental part of Competitive Karuta.
- ❖ At the beginning of each match, we greet our opponent and the reciter. Greet others when you enter the practice site. To greet, say: “**Yoroshiku onegaishimasu**” (よろしくお願ひします)

To conclude the match and when leaving, thank others by saying: “**Arigatō gozaimashita**” (ありがとうございました)

- ❖ Follow other basic Japanese manners such as taking off your shoes or slippers in the correct location and arranging them neatly (shoes should either be put away in a shelf or shoe locker or otherwise arranged side-by-side with the toes pointed towards the entrance of the venue.) ***Never wear/place shoes directly on the tatami mats.**

Manga:

“Yoroshiku onegaishimasu.”

2) When to be Quiet

- ❖ There should be no chatting in the practice hall during play.
- ❖ Once the reciter begins reading, everyone in the practice room should focus on listening to the poem. Take care not to make any noise that might interfere with others' ability to hear the reciter.
- ❖ Between the *shimo-no-ku* (下の句 ; second half of the poem) and the *kami-no-ku* (上の句 ; first half of the poem), the reciter will hold the last note for approximately 3 seconds and pause for about one second. It is critical that players do not make any noise during this part of the reading. This includes avoiding movements that might cause your clothes to rustle, as well as refraining from inhaling/exhaling audibly.

- ❖ Make sure your devices are either powered down or set to not make any noise or vibrations.
-

These guidelines apply to everyone including spectators and facilitators!

Manga:

“You’re not supposed to move once they begin reading the card!”

“What!?”

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3) Handling the Cards with Care

- ❖ Before laying out the cards, make sure you have 25 cards by creating 5 piles of 5 cards each. Check to see that the cards all belong to your set by checking the symbol or number written on the back of the card.
 - ❖ The width of your field should be within 87cm and 3 rows high.
 - ❖ When sending a card, place the card directly in front of your opponent facing them. Do not push the card towards them.
 - ❖ Place the cards you take neatly in a pile facing down behind your non-dominant hand. It is okay to place a card your opponent took in your pile.
 - ❖ If cards from other matches land near you, pass them to the other player with care.
 - ❖ After the match, work with your opponent to confirm that you have 50 cards belonging to your set.
-

Never throw cards!

Manga:

“Each player takes 25 cards and places them in 3 rows”

“You also have to account for the width of the playing field, 87 centimeters. Most players use their arms to measure the width of the field.”

“Approximately 87cm”

4) Mind the Tatami

- ❖ Until 2 minutes before play begins, practice swings, large hand movements, and slapping the tatami are not allowed.
- ❖ You may begin taking practice swings once the 2-minute mark is announced. While it's understood that some sound and contact with the tatami is inevitable, it is not acceptable to slap the tatami.
- ❖ The same is true during the match. Do your best to swing quietly.

Manga:

“Yah! The next one’s mine!”

“Ah!”

“Bam Bam”

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5) Arranging and Sending Cards Promptly

- ❖ Once you swipe the card, stand up and go get it.
- ❖ When you go to retrieve your card, do not walk through other players’ fields.
- ❖ Use two hands to reorganize your cards swiftly and neatly.
- ❖ It is not permissible to reorganize your cards or send cards with your knees in the air or while squatting. Avoid pointing your toes in the direction of your opponent or cards.
- ❖ When your opponent is rearranging their cards, raise your hand straight in the air so as to be visible to the reciter. This is to ensure the reciter waits before reading the next poem.
- ❖ Send cards to your opponent promptly. It is not okay to hold up the game so you can choose a card to send.
- ❖ It is your responsibility to let your opponent know when you change the layout of your cards. When your opponent indicates they are making a change, acknowledge their communication by saying: “**Ha!**” (はい ; okay).
- ❖ Incessantly changing the layout of your cards is not courteous.
- ❖ Debate regarding who took a card is to be settled in conversation with your opponent. It is important that you listen to and respect what your opponent has to say and act in a mature manner. You are responsible for resolving the dispute with speed.

- ❖ If you take a card from your opponent to win the match, send the last card on your side of the field, bow, and thank your opponent to end the game.

Manga:

“Oh...um...uh...the demonstration board-”
(What? Which card?)

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6) Don't Interrupt the Reciter

- ❖ Even if you notice a card is missing or the order of the cards is incorrect, players are not to interrupt the reciter. Wait until after the next card is read.
- ❖ It is inexcusable to confront the reciter regarding their reading or hold up the game regardless of whether a mistake is made or you disagree with the reading.

7) Appropriate Attire for Playing Karuta

- ❖ The official attire for Competitive Karuta is *kimono* with *hakama*. There are tournaments where it is required to wear *kimono*.
- ❖ At the majority of practice sessions and tournaments, easy-to-move clothing such as t-shirts and gym wear is worn.
- ❖ Clothing and accessories that make noise or could easily distract your opponent are prohibited.

There are specific items that are banned by competition rules. Be sure to check the full list.

Inappropriate examples:

- Shorts
 - Mini-skirts
 - Sleeveless shirts
 - Deep-cut shirts that show cleavage
 - Items that visibly sway in front of your opponent such as ribbons, lace, and necklaces
-

- ❖ To prevent injury, cut your nails and remove rings, watches, and bracelets from your dominant hand.

Manga:

“Clip” “Clip”

Participating in Tournaments

~Manners When Taking Part in a Tournament~

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1) In Preparation for a Tournament

- ❖ Before participating in a tournament, you must be able to recognize all 100 poems and be able to memorize the positions of your own cards accurately in order to correctly reset the field during a match. It is also crucial that players have read through and understand the manners introduced in the “basic manners” guide.

Players must also have a clear and complete understanding of the rules of Competitive Karuta. The detailed rules can be found on the All Japan Karuta Association’s website:

Japanese: <https://www.karuta.or.jp/>

- ❖ Competitive Karuta players are divided up based on their experience and rank. The ranks range from *A-kyū* (A-rank), which is the highest rank, to *E-kyū* which is for beginners. In order to join a tournament for higher ranked players, players must first join a tournament and place high enough to apply for the next *dan* degree (there is a fee associated with applying for a degree).

~ Karuta Ranks and Degrees ~

Starting April 2022, the ranks and degrees will be designated as follows:

<u>Ranks (<i>kyū</i>)</u>	<u>Degrees (<i>dan</i>)</u>
A- <i>kyū</i>	4th- <i>dan</i> and higher
B- <i>kyū</i>	3rd- <i>dan</i> (may include 2nd- <i>dan</i> prior to April 2022)
C- <i>kyū</i>	2nd- <i>dan</i> (may include 1st- <i>dan</i> prior to April 2022)
D- <i>kyū</i>	1st- <i>dan</i> (may include No- <i>dan</i> prior to April 2022)
E- <i>kyū</i>	No- <i>dan</i> (players with no tournament experience start off as E- <i>kyū</i>)

~ Tournament Types ~

- 主催大会 (*shusai taikai*; Sponsored tournaments)
Tournaments sponsored and hosted by the All Japan Karuta Association.
(Includes the Meijin and Queen matches)
- 公認大会 (*kōnin taikai*; Authorized tournaments)
Tournaments that are authorized by the All Japan Karuta Association. Players are eligible to go up in rank if they perform well in this type of tournament.
- 後援大会 (*kōen taikai*; Supported tournaments)
Tournaments hosted by regional Karuta associations. Even if a player performs well in this type of tournament, they are not guaranteed promotion to a higher rank.

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2) Applying to Join a Tournament

- ❖ Apply for a tournament after carefully checking:
 - How to apply
 - Application deadlines
 - How to pay the entry fee
 - Tournament location
 - Starting times
- ❖ Before the day of the tournament, if you know you will be unable to attend, immediately inform the tournament organizers. There are often waitlists to join tournaments, so if the organizers know that a player plans to cancel their entry, this may potentially allow another player to join the tournament.
- ❖ On the day of the tournament, if you are suddenly unable to attend due to illness, or are running late, refer to the tournament guide and contact the correct person.

3) Signing In on the Day of the Tournament

- ❖ Allow yourself plenty of time to get to the tournament by the time written in the tournament guide. Take care to arrive at the tournament venue before the end of the check-in time (受付時間 ; *uketsuke jikan*) and with enough time to check-in.

At check-in, greet the people working and tell them:

- Your name
 - (if applicable) the name of the Karuta group you're affiliated with, or your school name
- ❖ Change into the clothes you will wear during the tournament before the opening ceremony. Be sure to attend the opening ceremony.

At the ceremony, listen carefully for any important announcements, especially ones concerning where you will be playing and what time the matches will start. Take care not to mistake the time or location of your matches.

If you happen to mistake the time or location of your match, the match will likely begin without you. If you do not arrive at your designated location within the first 5 minutes of the memorization period, you will forfeit your match.

- ❖ If there is a roll call, be sure to respond to your name by saying "**Hai**" loudly and clearly.
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4) Differences Between Practice and Tournaments

- ❖ Tournament officials will have cards with the player's name and their win/loss records. They will place these cards on a board to decide the match-ups for each round. Check your "seat" number and opponent's name before each match. Once you have checked this, immediately go to the correct playing area.
- ❖ When both players find their spots, they should confirm their opponent's name to make sure there is no mistake. If a player happens to mistakenly play against the wrong opponent, both players may be disqualified. Consult a tournament official if you are unsure.

Manga:

“Flip”

- ❖ Typically, individual Karuta matches are not presided over by a referee. However, there may be some cases where a referee will watch over a particular individual match.

If a referee says they will watch your match, both players should bow and say “**Onegaishimasu**” to the referee.

After finishing the match, bow and say “**Arigatō gozaimashita**” in the following order:

1) opponent, 2) referee, 3) reciter.

- ❖ When there is a dispute over who took the card first, players typically resolve it between themselves. However, if a referee is watching and you cannot resolve the dispute on your own, ask the referee to make a judgment. **The referee will not interject unless you ask them to.** The referee’s decision is final and cannot be disputed.
- ❖ When the match has finished, both players should work together to check that they have all 50 cards from the same set by checking the back of the cards. Players should do this without making any sound that could disrupt other matches. Do not move or make noise if the reciter is reading.
- ❖ The person who won the match must return the cards and report the score at the “*Kiroku-seki*” (記録席 ; score table). At that time, say the name of your Karuta group, your name, and the number of cards you won by.
「○○会の△△です。□枚で勝ちました」
“(name of karuta group) *kai no* (your name) *desu.*
(# of cards) *mai de kachimashita*”

Manga:

“Now we’ll begin the 4th match”

Bow to each other

Bow to the referee

5) If You Win and Advance in a Tournament

- ❖ Players who continue to advance in the tournament and place high enough can get an award certificate. If you are unsure whether you placed high enough to receive a certificate, check with a tournament official.
- ❖ Winning players receive their certificates at the closing ceremony. If you are to receive a certificate, don't be late to the closing ceremony.
- ❖ In the case that you are eligible for a certificate but must leave before the closing ceremony, let the tournament officials know and arrange to pick up your certificate before leaving.
- ❖ Be prepared to leave promptly after the closing ceremony. Thank the tournament officials when you leave by saying "***Kyō wa arigatō gozaimashita.***" (今日はありがとうございました。 ; "Thank you for today").

6) Tournaments Are Not Only About Competition

- ❖ Take care not to dirty or break any equipment or furnishings at the tournament venue. If by chance, something gets broken or dirtied, report it to the tournament officials.
 - ❖ After your own match has finished, it is fine if you want to watch other players' matches, so long as you are not causing any trouble for other players or tournament officials.
 - ❖ Take your trash with you when you leave the tournament.
 - ❖ Be sure not to take the wrong shoes when you leave. You may want to label your shoes just in case.
 - ❖ Take care not to disturb anyone living near the tournament venue by gathering in large groups or speaking loudly outside the venue.
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Afterword

Manners and rules are somewhat different; however, both are important.

Good manners are something that anyone can cultivate.
You won't be penalized if you fail to use proper manners.

However, when everyone conducts themselves with good manners, it makes Karuta enjoyable for everyone.

If you play Karuta with good manners, the Karuta gods will surely be on your side.

With that said, we sincerely hope that this manners guide will be useful for all players.

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