

Tứ Sắc – Four Colors

Tứ Sắc is a popular game in Vietnam, especially in the regions south of the former capital Huế. For decades if not centuries, it has been a favourite past-time for the ladies and gentlemen of the high society as well as the common men and women, who have a bit of time... and money. Like a marriage between the Chinese chess and the game mahjong, Tứ Sắc is structurally sophisticated, but at the same time, easy to play and to become addicted.

THE CARDS

Tứ Sắc is played with four players who take the role of king or queen commanding their army of four battalions of the color green, red, white and yellow, hence the name Tứ Sắc which means four colors. **Each battalion consists of seven ranks :**



General, herein marked with the letter A for easy identification to those not yet familiar with the Chinese characters,



Lieutenant, B,



Sergeant (or Elephant), C,



Chariot, X,



Cannon, Y,



Horse, Z,

and



Foot soldier, marked with E (East), W (West), N (North), S (South).

There are four identical cards for each of these ranks and colors, hence the whole deck has $4 \times 7 \times 4 = 112$ cards.

The four players are seated counter-clockwise from south, east, north then west. The whole deck of 112 cards is shuffled then distributed in turn, 20 cards to each player, then one extra card to the starting player, which is decided by the throwing of 2 or 4 dices to ensure fairness. After distribution, there will be 31 cards remained in the deck. The players arrange their cards in the best formation possible.

THE WINNING COMBINATIONS

In order to win, the cards in hand of each player should be arranged to form combinations of the following **winning sets** :



Kong : four identical cards of any color or rank, worth 6 points melded, or 8 points initially. ie. does not need to meld.



Pong : three identical cards of any color or rank, worth 3 points in hand or melded.



Pair : two identical cards of any color or rank, no points, but are not trashes that need to be rid of.



(ABC) Chow : a set of General, Lieutenant and Sergeant (or Elephant, C), ABC of the same color.



(XYZ) Chow : a set of Chariot, Cannon and Horse, XYZ of the same color.



(NEW) Chow : a set of Foot soldiers of three different colors.



(NSW), or  (SEW), etc.

These kinds of Chow earn one point each.



(NEWS) Quad : a set of Foot soldiers of four different colors, earning two points.



General of any color is considered a winning set, earning one point.

Any card in hand that cannot combine with any other card in hand to form the above winning sets, is a trash.

THE SPECIAL RULES

Some **special cases of trashes** are as follows:

(1) Pong (three identical cards of any color or rank) cannot also be used to form any

Chow with any other card, for example, in the case of  and  in

hand, the combination cannot be made as a Pair  and a Chow , ie.

no trashes; but it has to be a Pong  waiting for the 4th card to make a Kong

(four identical cards of any color or rank) , therefore the two cards  and  are considered trashes.

(2) When a Pair (two identical cards of any color or rank) is in hand together with 2 associated different cards that can make a Chow, the Pair cannot meld into a Pong (and be exposed), because doing that will leave those 2 associated cards as trashes,

when the better option is to see the 4 cards as a Chow with only one trash, for example, in the case of

 : a Pair of  is in hand with  , this set is considered as a Chow of  (XYZ) with only one trash  , therefore the pair  cannot meld to make a Pong when another  is discarded or picked from the deck.

THE PROCESS

The aim of the game is to get rid of the trashes as soon as possible, then wait for a trigger (final melding) to claim a win.

(1) The starting player selects one of his trashes and discards it to start the game. Any card can be discarded, except the Generals. The discard is shown to the other players. The other players take turn in counter-clockwise order to consider and meld the discard, ie. combine it with their own cards in hand to form one of the above winning sets. Kong or Pong or Win can be claimed by any player except the current player who has just discarded. In case no one claims Kong, Pong, or Win, then Chow, Quad or Pair can be claimed only by the player next to the current one.

The player who has melded the card then becomes the current player, after exposing the melded set, has to choose a card in hand to discard.

(2) If no one claims to meld the discard, the next player takes turn to become the current player, picks the top card of the deck, and shows it to all players. **In case of a card picked from the deck, the current player can meld the card as the first in the order anti-clockwise.** First, Kong or Pong or Win can be claimed by any player. If no one claims Kong, Pong, or Win, then Chow, Quad or Pair can be claimed by the current player (who has picked the card), and if the current player cannot meld the card, then by the player next to the current one.

Special case is if a General is picked, only a Win or a Kong can be claimed, not a Pong (to form three identical cards). If no one claims Kong, or Win on a General, then the current player can take the General and meld the card as his single card exposed set; or combine with his Lieutenant and Sergeant of the same color in hand, to form a Chow (ABC set).

(3) Again, the player who has melded the card then becomes the current player, after exposing the melded set, has to choose a card in hand to discard, repeating the process (1) above.

(4) If no one claims to meld the discard, the next player takes turn to become the current player, picks the top card of the deck, and shows it to all players, ie. repeating the process (2) above.

And the game continues until one player wins, or **until only 6 cards remain in the deck** and the game ends up with no winner. The winner starts the next game. In case of no winner, the player next to the current starter becomes the starter.

THE WINNING SCENARIOS

A player can win when his cards in hand have no more trashes after the final melding, in which, **any player sitting anywhere can claim a Win if cards in hand have only 0, 1 or 2 trashes as follows :**

(1-1) In case of only 2 trashes remained in hand : the player is waiting to form a Chow, for example

can win if the shown card is ie. forming a Chow XYZ

or:

(1-2)
 can win if the shown card is ie. forming a Chow SEW

or the shown card is ie. forming a Chow SEN

or:

(1-3)
 can win if a is picked and shown by any player, ie. forming a Chow

ABC

(2-1) In case of only a single trash remained in hand : the player is waiting to form a Pair, for example

can win if the shown card is ie. forming a Pair

or :

(2-2) the player is waiting to form a Chow, for example

can win if the shown card is ie. forming a Chow ABC

similarly :

can win if the shown card is ie. forming a Chow ABC

or:

(2-3)
 with 2 pairs and can win if the shown card is ie. forming 2
 Chows SEW and NEW

(3-1) In case of no more trashes remained in hand : the player is waiting for a

General picked up by any of the players, ie. can win if the shown card is  or other General of any color,

or :

(3-2) having a Pong in hand melded into a Kong, for example



wins if another  is discarded or picked from the deck by any player.

(3-3) Special case is an exposed Pong (not in hand) of the current player, for example,

an already exposed Pong  can win if the current player picks another  from the deck to form an exposed Kong.

or :

(3-4) having a Pair in hand melded into a Pong, for example



wins if another  is discarded or picked from the deck by any player.

or:

(3-5) a Chow in hand of three Foot soldiers can win if the 4th Foot soldier is shown, ie. to form a Quad , for example



(NEWS) wins if a  (S -> NEWS) is discarded or picked from the deck by any player.

or:

(3-6) a Quad in hand of 4 Foot soldiers can win if any Foot soldier is shown, for example



(NEWS) wins if a  or  or  or  is discarded or picked from the deck by any player.

With the above melding types, any player can claim a Win from any position. In case of more than one player claiming a Win, the order counter-clockwise applies, starting from the player who has just picked the card up from the deck, or in case of a discard, starting from the player next to the one who has just discarded.

When the game ends up with a winner, the winning points are calculated based on the in hand and exposed cards of the winner. Each of the other players has to pay the winner the same amount usually a multiplication of the winning points, minus the points of their own earned by exposing their Kong(s).

4sac IMPLEMENTATION

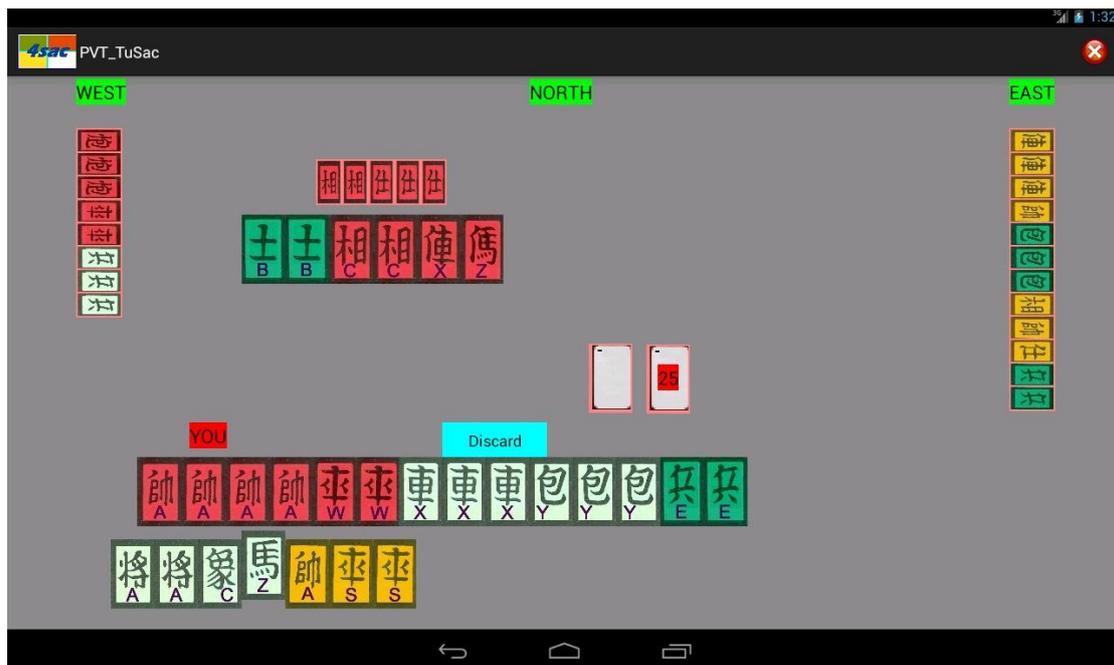


4sac by pvtgames is an implementation of the above rules of the game Túr Sǎc. You, as the player, take the South seat, and play against East, North, West in that counter-clockwise order. The current player is indicated by the red background.

DISCARD

In the following example, you are about to discard a card. Select a card by clicking on it, if you change your mind, just select another card. Any card can be discarded, except the Generals. In this example you have just selected the card White Horse (marked with Z).

To discard, click the button Discard.

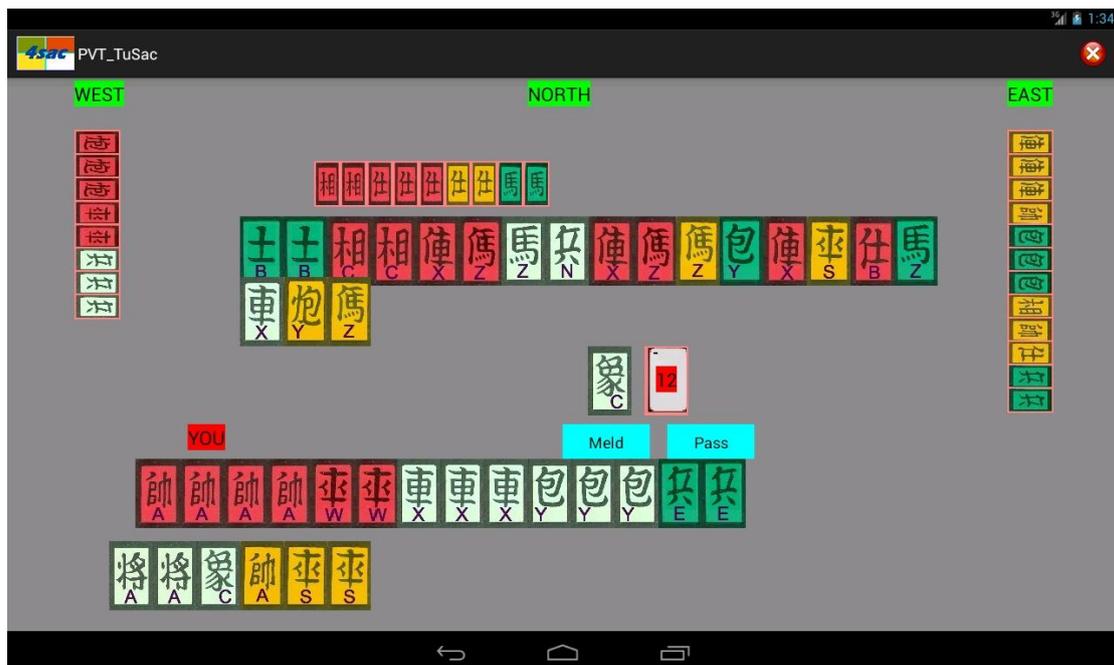


MELD OR PASS

In the next example, you have just picked a White Sergeant (or Elephant, marked with C) from the deck. Click on the button Meld to meld (and win the game, in this case). If you do not want to meld this card, click on the button Pass, and let the next player, which is East, to consider to meld this card into a Pair or a Chow (White ABC).

Sometimes you may want to Pass to avoid decreasing your chance to win, for

example, in the case (1-2) above, when there are only 2 trashes  in hand, waiting for a  to form a Chow  SEW, or a  to form a Chow  SEN to win, ... and then you pick a  from the deck. If you meld this into a pair, then you can only wait for  to win, ie. less chance.



In case you became the current player to claim a Kong or Pong on a card just picked up, for example, by North, and you decided to Pass, then the next player to have the right to consider that card is going back to North then West, to meld the card into a Pair or a Chow, as mentioned above, or pick a new card from the deck to continue.

The number in the center indicates the number of cards remained in the deck. The discarded or picked up card is shown next to the deck for all to consider. There are animations to indicate from which player a card is discarded or picked then shown.

Exposed cards of all players are displayed, as well as all the discards not melded by anyone. You can check these displayed cards to judge and choose which of your in hand cards to discard. Discarding is one of the most important act in this game. Your

discard can change the course of the game and its outcome, at least your points or damages.

Currently, **4sac can run on Windows or Android platform.** **4sac** has been tested successfully on Windows XP and Windows 8.1, as well as 10" Android tablets (around 1280 x 800) running Jelly Bean 4.2 and KitKat 4.4.

4sac is available in JAR to run on Windows XP to 8.1 with Java Runtime 8. If not already installed, Java Runtime 8 can be downloaded/installed to Windows PCs from: <https://java.com/en/download/>

Remember to **remove older versions** of Java Runtime (5, 6 or 7) by Control Panel – Add/Remove Software **before installing** Java Runtime 8 to avoid problems with Java Runtime.

For Android 10" tablets (around 1280 x 800), 4sac can be installed from APK file.

Both versions can be downloaded virus-free from this webpage: <http://www.saigonocan.com/trangPhamVuThinh/gamePVT.htm>

Also, you can install via Mobango :

4sac.jar for Windows from this Webpage: <http://www.mobango.com/4sac/?search=advsearch&ck=search&q=4sac&type=search>

or FourColors.apk for Android from this Webpage: <http://www.mobango.com/fourcolors/?search=advsearch&ck=search&q=fourcolors&type=search>

At the 4sac opening screen, you have the honour to **start the game. Select a card in hand by clicking on it (if you change your mind, just click-select another card, except a General) then click the button Discard.**

Enjoy the game !

Constructive comments are welcome.

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