How To Play

In 1950, after sweeping north from South America, Canasta became the biggest card game craze ever. “Canasta” means basket in Spanish and the game was named for the little wicker baskets that the first players used to hold their cards. This edition features custom cards that not only celebrate the heritage of the original game, but also make the game easier to learn and more fun to play!

Read This First…

Rules for 4 Players:

Four players are teamed in partnerships. Partners sit opposite each other. The rules are only slightly different when 2, 3, 5 or 6 play. You’ll find these variations following the main rules.

How To Win:

Score points by laying down and adding to sets of cards of equal rank. 5,000 points wins and it usually takes a few hands to do so.

How To Play:

You are dealt a hand of 11 cards before each round of play. On each turn, you first draw a new card or—if you can—take the entire Prize Pile (the discard). You place, face up on the table (meld from your hand), sets of cards to score points. Sets are three or more cards of the same rank, such as four Kings, six Fives or seven Sevens. Sequences, like 5-6-7, are NOT permitted in Canasta. You may add to your sets during play. This is important because you’ll need at least one set of seven or more cards (called a Canasta) in order to go out. Wild cards can be substituted for cards you need in a meld and they can also be used to freeze the Prize pile (very important!). Bonus cards and Stop cards have special purposes. To end your turn, you always discard one card to the Prize Pile. You end the hand (go out) by playing your last card. Your team will score points for each card melded during the hand. The leading player score points for a +3000 or more points 120 points negative score (zero) any 3 card set Bonus cards and Stop cards have special purposes. Bonus cards are melded immediately upon being drawn. Stop cards are melded immediately upon being drawn. Stop cards have special purposes. To end your turn, you always discard one card to the Prize Pile. You end the hand (go out) by playing your last card. Your team will score points for each card melded during the hand. The leading player score points for a +3000 or more points 120 points negative score (zero) any 3 card set

First Meld Requirement:
The first meld laid down by either member of a partnership must be worth at least a certain number of points. This depends on your team’s score at the beginning of the hand:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 to 1495 points (start of game)</td>
<td>50 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1500 to 2995 points</td>
<td>90 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3000 or more points</td>
<td>120 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>negative score (zero)</td>
<td>any 3 card set</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Bonus cards do not count towards your initial meld requirement.

Start To Play, Read As You Go…

The Deal:

Choose a dealer at random. After each hand, the deal passes to the player on the left. The dealer shuffles the deck thoroughly, offers a cut, and then deals each player 11 cards. Players hold their cards in hand. Bonus cards must be played immediately after they are drawn (see Playing Bonus Cards). Place the remaining deck face down to form the Draw Pile. Turn over the top card of the Draw Pile and place it face up in the adjoining compartment. This card, called the up card, is the start of the Prize Pile (discards). If the up card happens to be a wild card or a Bonus card, turn it sideways in the compartment (to indicate the Prize Pile is frozen), then turn over the next card of the Draw Pile and place it on top of the Prize Pile (until a natural card tops the Prize Pile).

The Play:

The player to the left of the dealer plays first. Then, play passes to the left. Play continues until one player plays the last card in hand and goes out. Play is as easy as 1-2-3:

1. To begin your turn, draw the top card from the Draw Pile or take the entire Prize Pile (see Taking The Prize Pile).
2. Next, you may meld cards (required if you took the Prize Pile).
3. To end your turn, discard one card face-up onto the Prize Pile.

Drawing Cards:

After drawing the top card from the Draw Pile, if you are able—and you want to—you may meld cards from your hand, forming new sets or adding one more cards to your team’s existing sets. If your team has not yet melded, your first meld must meet the “first meld requirement” (see First Meld Requirement above).

...Before Your Partnership Makes It’s First Meld: You may take the up card!” ONLY IF:• you use it in a meld of 3 cards by combining it with two other natural cards of its rank from your hand, and…• you meld enough other cards to meet the first meld requirement.

...After Your Partnership Makes It’s First Meld: 1. If the Prize Pile is not frozen you may take the up card if:• you can use it in a meld of 3 cards by combining it with two cards of its rank from your hand (one can be a wild), or• you add it to your partnership’s existing meld of the same rank.
2. If the Prize Pile is frozen you may take the up card (“unfreeze” the Prize pile) only if you combine it with two natural cards from your hand and make a new 3 card meld. (Wild cards cannot be used to form a new meld with the up card when the pile is frozen, nor may you add the up card to an existing meld like you can with the pile is not frozen.)

Remember: You must properly take the up card and meld, then you take the entire Prize Pile in one move.

Discarding To End Your Turn:

End your turn by discarding one card from your hand onto the Prize Pile.

Nothing special occurs when you discard a natural card (which you’ll typically do).

Discarding a Stop card prevents the next player from taking the Prize Pile.

Discarding a wild card freezes the entire Prize Pile. To show that the pile is frozen, remember to place discarded wild cards at right angles in the pile, so they will be visible after subsequent discards.

Tip: Freezing the Prize Pile limits any player’s ability to take the pile. This is an important strategy in this exciting game.
Playing Bonus Cards:
- If you draw a Bonus card, place it face-up near your team’s melds, and immediately draw a replacement card. If you forget to play a Bonus card, you may do so on the subsequent turn and draw a replacement card at that time. If you forget to play a Bonus card when the hand ends, you are penalized 100 points for each Bonus card in hand.
- You may never discard a Bonus card. The only way a Bonus card can get into the Prize pile is if it was turned up at the beginning of the hand.
- If you take the initial Prize pile and it contains a Bonus card, play it immediately. Do not draw a replacement card.
- Bonus cards do not count towards your initial meld requirement.

Playing Stop Cards:
- Discarding a Stop card prevents the next player from taking the Prize pile. (They are not turned sideways in the pile.)
- You cannot meld Stop cards except when going out, and then you must meld three or four of them. Wild cards cannot be added to a meld of Stop cards. (If you have just one or two Stop cards, you’ll need to discard them on separate turns before going out.)

Going Out–End The Hand:
Once your team has at least one Canasta, either you or your partner may go out (and end the hand) by melding the remaining cards in hand or by melding all but one and discarding your last card. If your team does not have a Canasta, you must keep one card in hand after you discard. You may not go out.
Tiptip: It may not be an advantage to go out just because you can. You may be able to score more points by keeping the game going, or avoid big penalties should your partner still have many cards in hand.
- Before melding, you may ask your partner “May I go out?” Your partner must answer yes or no, and the answer is binding. If the answer is no, you can’t go out. If yes, you may go out.
- If you don’t choose to ask, you may go out at will.
Tiptip: It’s a good idea to ask if you think your partner may be holding many high value cards (which will reduce your score).
- The hand ends immediately after a player goes out. Points are then totaled.

What Happens if the Draw Pile Is Exhausted?
If you do not go out after drawing the last card in the Draw pile, play continues as long as each successive up card is properly taken. The hand ends the moment a Bonus card (end the hand) by melding the remaining cards in hand or by melding all but one and discarding your last card. If your team did not have a Canasta, you must keep one card in hand after you discard. You may not go out.
Tiptip: It may not be an advantage to go out just because you can. You may be able to score more points by keeping the game going, or avoid big penalties should your partner still have many cards in hand.
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- The hand ends immediately after a player goes out. Points are then totaled.

Scoring:
Your partnership’s points are now totaled:
1. First, add the point values of all cards melded and subtract the value of cards left in the hands of your partner and yourself. (Point values are found on the backs of the cards.)
2. Next, add any special bonuses that apply:
   a) 100 points if your team was the one to go out first.
   b) 100 extra points for going out “concealed” - that is, either you or your partner melded his/her entire hand in one turn, including one Canasta, and had not previously melded or added any cards to partner’s melds. This rarely happens.
   c) 500 points for each natural Canasta
   d) 300 points for each mixed Canasta
   e) 100 points for each Bonus card, but only if your team has made an initial meld.
   f) 400 extra points if your partnership has played all four Bonus cards and has made its initial meld.
3. PENALTY: If your partnership did not make its initial meld, any Bonus card melded counts minus 100 points (a total of minus 800 points if all 4 Bonus cards were melded).

Scoring Example:
You go out after melding three 7’s, a mixed set of Jacks (two Jacks and one Big Wild) and four 4’s, wilds. Here’s your score:
- 15 points for the three 7’s.
- 20 points for the two Jacks.
- 50 points for the Big Wild.
- 80 points for the eight 4’s.
- 30 points for the six 5’s.
- 20 points for the Little Wild.
- 100 bonus points for Going Out first.
- 100 bonus points for a Bonus card.
- 300 bonus points for a Mixed Canasta (of 5’s).
- 500 bonus points for a Natural Canasta (of 10’s). $215
- Subtract the value of the cards left in your partner’s hand:
  a) 5 points for the 5
  b) 10 points for the 8
  c) 10 points for the King
  d) 1190 Total Points

Next Deal:
The new dealer collects all cards and shuffles thoroughly before offering a cut and dealing as usual.

End of the Game:
When at least one team has scored 5,000 or more points at the end of a hand, the game ends. The higher score wins.