

# Canasta

2-6 players

108 cards

Difficulty: Medium

Duration: Long

## Score points by forming melds and canastas (7 cards of same rank).

### SETUP

- Use two standard 52-card decks plus 4 Jokers (108 cards total).
- Deal 11 cards to each player.
- Place remaining cards face-down; flip top card to start discard pile.

### SCORING

- Natural Canasta (no wilds): 500 bonus points.
- Mixed Canasta (with wilds): 300 bonus points.
- Going out bonus: 100 points (200 for concealed going out).
- First team to 5,000 points wins.

*Tip: Freeze the discard pile with a wild card to prevent opponents from picking it up.*

### ON YOUR TURN

- Draw one card from the draw pile or pick up the entire discard pile.
- Lay down melds (3+ cards of same rank) or add to existing melds.
- Discard one card at the end of your turn.
- Go out by playing all your cards in melds.

Canasta is an engaging card game that involves forming melds of cards and strategically playing them to score points.

## Objective

The primary goal of Canasta is to score points by forming melds of cards, especially Canastas (melds of seven cards of the same rank), and ultimately going out by playing all your cards.

## Setup

1. **Players:** Canasta is typically played with four players in two partnerships. Players sit across from their partners.
2. **Card Deck:** Use two standard 52-card decks shuffled together. Include Jokers as wild cards (two Jokers per deck).
3. **Dealing:** Deal 11 cards to each player. The player with the lowest-cut card becomes the dealer.

## Basic Rules

1. **Starting the Game:** The player to the right of the dealer cuts the deck, and the dealer reveals the top card. If this card is a Red Three or a Joker, another card is cut. The dealer deals 11 cards to each player.
2. **Forming Melds:** A meld is a set of three or more cards of the same rank. You can also create a meld by adding cards to existing melds on the table. Wild cards (Jokers and 2s) have special roles in melds. A Canasta is a meld of seven cards of the same rank.
3. **Drawing and Discarding:** On your turn, draw one card from the draw pile or pick up the entire discard pile (if you can meld the top card). Discard one card at the end of your turn.
4. **Going Out:** A player can go out by playing all their cards in melds or by adding to existing melds. Going out earns your team bonus points.
5. **Red Threes:** Red Threes are special cards worth bonus points. If you have Red Threes in your hand, place them face-up on the table.
6. **Freezing the Discard Pile:** The discard pile can be frozen if it contains a wild card (Joker or 2). To pick up a frozen discard pile, you must hold two natural (non-wild) cards of the same rank as the top card of the pile to meld with it.
7. **Ending a Round:** A round ends when a player goes out or when the draw pile is empty. Teams score points based on their melds, Canastas, Red Threes, and bonuses.

## Scoring

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1. **Meld Points - Natural Cards:** 3 to 7: 5 points each, 8 to King: 10 points each, Ace: 20 points each.
2. **Meld Points - Wild Cards:** Joker: 50 points each, 2: 20 points each.
3. **Natural Canasta:** A natural Canasta (seven cards of the same rank with no wild cards) earns a bonus of **500 points**.
4. **Mixed Canasta:** A mixed Canasta (seven cards including wild cards) earns a bonus of **300 points**.
5. **Red Three Bonus:** 100 points for each Red Three laid down. 100 penalty points for each Red Three remaining in hand.
6. **Going Out Bonus:** 100 points for going out normally, 200 points for a concealed going out (going out without having previously melded).
7. **Penalties for Unmelded Cards:** 3 to 7: 5 points each, 8 to King: 10 points each, Aces and 2s: 20 points each, Jokers: 50 points each.

## Winning

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- The game typically consists of multiple rounds.
- The team that first reaches **5,000 points** wins the game.

## Additional Tips

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- Communication with your partner is essential. Plan your melds and strategy together.
- Pay attention to the discard pile to gauge your opponents' strategies.
- Forming Canastas significantly boosts your team's score.

## Glossary of Terms

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- **Meld:** A set of cards played together on the table.
- **Canasta:** A meld of seven cards of the same rank.
- **Red Threes:** Special cards worth bonus points.

## Variations

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Numerous regional variations exist, each with its specific rules and scoring nuances.

### Tips & Strategy

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Plan your melds carefully and pay attention to the cards in the discard pile. Be strategic in forming canastas and controlling the discard pile.

Canasta involves strategic play, especially in forming canastas and controlling the discard pile. Pay attention to your opponents' strategies and adapt accordingly.