

Canastra

4 players

108 cards

Difficulty: Medium

Duration: Long

Build canastras (7+ same-rank melds) and score the most points with your partner.

SETUP

- 4 players in partnerships use two decks plus jokers (108 cards).
- Deal 11 cards to each player.
- Remaining cards form the stock; one card starts the discard pile.

SCORING

- Clean canastra (no wilds): 200 points.
- Dirty canastra (with wilds): 100 points.
- Going out: 100 bonus points.
- Card values: Jokers 50, Aces/2s 20, 8-K 10, 3-7 are 5 points.

Tip: Control the discard pile by discarding cards unlikely to help opponents and freezing it with wilds defensively.

ON YOUR TURN

- Draw 2 cards from stock, or take the entire discard pile if you can meld the top card.
- Lay down groups of 3+ same-rank cards; wilds (jokers, 2s) can substitute.
- Extend melds to 7+ cards to form canastras.
- Go out by playing all cards; team needs at least one canastra.

Canastra is the Brazilian adaptation of Canasta, a rummy-style card game focused on forming melds and building canastras (groups of seven or more cards). Played in partnerships, it combines strategic melding with discard pile management for a deeply engaging experience.

Objective

Score points by forming melds of three or more cards of the same rank. Building canastras (seven or more cards) earns large bonuses. The first team to reach the target score wins.

Setup

1. **Players:** 4 players in two partnerships.
2. **Deck:** Two standard 52-card decks plus four jokers (108 cards total).
3. **Deal:** Each player receives 11 cards.
4. **Stock and discard:** Remaining cards form the stock. One card starts the discard pile.

Gameplay

1. **Drawing:** Draw two cards from the stock, or pick up the entire discard pile if you can meld its top card immediately.
2. **Melding:** Lay down groups of three or more cards of the same rank. Wild cards (jokers and 2s) can substitute for natural cards.
3. **Building canastras:** Extend melds to seven or more cards to form canastras. A clean canastra has no wild cards; a dirty one includes wilds.
4. **Going out:** End the round by playing or discarding all remaining cards. Your team must have at least one canastra to go out.

Scoring

- **Clean canastra:** 200 points.
- **Dirty canastra:** 100 points.
- **Going out:** 100 bonus points.
- **Card values:** Jokers 50 points, Aces and 2s 20 points, 8-King 10 points, 3-7 are 5 points.

Variations

- **Canastra Real:** A real canastra is a natural seven-card sequence in the same suit, worth even more points.
- **Canastra with three decks:** For larger groups, adding a third deck increases game complexity.

Tips and Strategies

- Control the discard pile by discarding cards that are unlikely to help opponents. Freezing the pile with wild cards can be a powerful defensive move.
- Balance offensive melding with holding back cards to prevent opponents from picking up a rich discard pile.

Tips & Strategy

The discard pile is the most contested resource. Learn when to freeze it with wild cards and when to grab it for a melding bonanza. Always coordinate going-out timing with your partner.

Early melds establish your team's scoring engine, but melding too aggressively reveals your hand. Find the balance between showing strength and maintaining flexibility.