

# CANASTA – According to Hoyle

Culmination of Five Hundred Rummy  
Originated in Uruguay and developed in Argentina

## Four players in two partnerships.

**Cards:** Two regular packs of 52, plus 4 jokers.

**Deal:** 11 cards to each player. The rest of the cards placed in middle of table becomes the stock.

**The Play:** Each player in turn to the left must ...

**First:** Draw a card from the top of the stock or the top of the discard pile (certain conditions apply)

**Second:** Meld if you can

**Third:** Discard one card face up on the discard pile-except the discard may be omitted if going out.

General object is to score by melding. The play ends when any player gets rid of the last card in his hand by discarding or not, having melded and having at least one canasta. In order to obtain high points, however, most players try to get as many canastas as possible per game.

**Wild Cards:** All jokers and 2's are wild and can be used with any 2 naturals

**Melds:** A meld comprises 3 or more cards of the same rank, including at least 2 naturals and never more than 3 wild cards. 3's cannot be used to meld.

**Black 3's:** A black 3 freezes the discard pile for the next player.

Three 3's can only be played on table when going out.

**Red 3's:** Bonus cards, not meldable, but declared immediately when drawn or dealt and placed on table.

Count 100 pts. each or 800 pts. when all four are drawn by the one partnership.

**Failure to declare immediately is a 500-point penalty.**

Upon placing the red 3 on table a replacement card is then drawn from stock.

<b>POINT VALUES:</b> Joker	50
2	20
Ace	20
K, Q, J, 10, 9, 8	10
7, 6, 5, 4, black 3	5

**INITIAL MELD:** To meld you must meet certain minimum points according to your score at the time:

PREVIOUS SCORE	REQUIREMENTS
Minus	15
0 – 1,495	50
1,500 – 2,995	90
3,000 or more	120

If a player takes the discard pile in making an initial meld, he is entitled to count only the top card toward the requirement along with the 2 or more natural cards plus any wild cards he's using to make the requirement as long as the natural cards outnumber the wild cards. An initial meld unfreezes the pack for both partners.

**TAKING THE DISCARD PILE AFTER INITIAL MELDING:** When a player takes the top card from the discard pile, he must have two natural cards of same rank in hand or that card previously played. He must then play them. He then takes the rest of the discard pile and can play any of them as usual or later as he sees fit.

**EXCEPTION:** If the discard pile is frozen by a wild card, he cannot pick up from the discard pile unless he has two of the cards in hand. This holds true for each subsequent player until the discard pile is unfrozen. It is frozen for only the next player by a black 3.

**CANASTAS:** a CANASTA IS A MELDED SET OF 7 OR MORE CARDS. It is natural when it is wholly formed of all natural cards. A mixed canasta consists of any canasta containing wild cards, which cannot exceed 3 wild cards.

The object of the game is to make the most canastas possible thereby scoring the highest points.

**GOING OUT:** A player goes out when he gets rid of the last card in his hand, ending the play. He may at this time meld 3 or 4 black threes, and he may or may not make a final discard. If no one goes out by the time the stock is exhausted, play continues so long as any hand in order can take the top card on the discard pile (if unfrozen) and add it to a previous meld on his side or to create a new meld. No one, however, can ever take the discard pile unless he has 2 naturals of same card if it is frozen. Only when going out can a player play 3 or more black 3's. **CONCEALED:** A player goes out concealed when he melds his entire hand making a canasta with or without a discard not having previously melded. His partner cannot have previously melded.

## SCORING:

Going out unconcealed - **100 points**

Going out concealed - **200 points**

Each red 3 - **100 points ea.** or if you have all four red 3's – **800 points**

If opponents go out before you meld, your red 3's count against you.

Natural Canastas – **500 points**

Mixed Canastas – **300 points** All accumulated cards played are counted according to point value listed above.

**Two Players:**

Each player receives 15 cards. In drawing from the stock, a player takes two cards but discards only one. A player may not go out unless he has completed two canastas.

**Three Players:**

Each player receives 15 cards. In drawing from the stock, a player takes two cards but discards only one. A player may not go out unless he has completed two canastas.

If no one goes out, play ends when the last player to draw from the stock has discarded.

**STRATEGY of CANASTA**

A hand reduced to less than its original eleven cards early in the play is thereby crippled. Usually avoid early melding except to obtain the discard pile. Try to make the initial meld as economically as possible. Unless you can take the discard pile in the same turn, do not use more than three cards for 50 (as, A, A, 2), four cards for 90, or six cards for 120.

Above all else in early play, strive to increase the size of your hand. The most likely way to obtain the discard pile is to keep pairs of as many different ranks as possible, plus only as many wild cards as you need to meet initial meld requirement. Do not hesitate to discard a wild card to freeze the discard pile if your opponents have melded and your side has not. Such play is often imperative to prevent them from obtaining the pile repeatedly. If you are stuck with cards useless to you but probably wanted by the opponents, discard these cards when the discard pile is small or worthless saving your safe discards (black 3's) for later rounds when the discard pile is large and valuable. You probably do not want to discard their needed cards if they are near obtaining 7 for a canasta.

It is especially important to complete the first canasta of the deal; the side that does that, puts added pressure on the opponents.

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