

# WAHHI Rules for CLASSIC CANASTA

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## The Players

- Classic Canasta is played with four players in two fixed partnerships, with partners sitting opposite each other, or
- Six players in two teams of three players each, with one player per team alternating their turn, or
- Two, three or five players who play on their own, individually.

## The Cards

- Classic Canasta is played with two 52-card packs plus four jokers (two from each pack), making 108 cards in all.
- Cards have standard point values, as follows:

Jokers	50 points each
A, 2	20 points each
K, Q, J, 10, 9, 8	10 points each
7, 6, 5, 4	5 points each
- A, K, Q, J, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4 are called **natural cards**.
- All of the deuces (twos) and jokers are **wild cards**.
- Red and black threes have special functions and values.

## The Deal and Play

- The face-down pile of cards is called the **stock**.
- The face-up pile of cards is called the **discard pile**.
- The first dealer is chosen at random.
- The player to the left of the dealer plays first, and then play passes clockwise.
- Each player is dealt 11 cards.
- If the dealer deals out the exact number of cards to players, with or without the turn card for the discard pile, she earns a 100-point bonus.
- If the first face-up card is wild or a red three, another card is turned and placed on top of it, continuing until a card which is not a wild card or a red three is turned up. The wild card or red three

should be stacked at a right angle to the rest of the pile, to indicate that it is frozen.

- Each player must immediately place face-up in front of her any red threes she was dealt and draw an equal number of cards from the top of the face-down pile to replace those threes.
- In a basic turn, players draw the top card of the stock, add it to their hand without showing it, and discard one card from their hand face up.
- Each turn is begun by **either** drawing the top card from the face-down stock **or** taking the whole of the discard pile.
- Each turn must be ended by discarding one card face-up on top of the discard pile.
- After drawing a card from the stock, you may also play cards to the table ("**melding**"); these sets of cards are **melds**.
- Melds are placed face up on the table.
- You can only take the discard pile if you can meld its top card, combined with cards from your hand if necessary. There are additional restrictions on taking the discard pile if it is **frozen** against your partnership.
- The play ends when a player **goes out**, i.e. disposes of all the cards in her hand.
- To go out, you must complete at least one seven-card meld known as a "**canasta**."
- You can go out by melding all but one of the cards in your hand and discarding this last card or by melding your whole hand, leaving no discard.
- The game can also end if the stock runs out of cards.
- If your side does not yet have a canasta, you are **not allowed** to leave yourself without any cards at the end of your turn.
- You must always have at least one card in your hand while the game is still in play.
- Instead of drawing from the stock, you can take the entire discard pile. You must be able to meld the top discard, without needing any of the other cards in the discard pile to make your meld valid. In this case:

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1. Place the necessary cards from your hand face up on the table and add the top card of the discard pile to form a valid meld.
2. Take all the remaining cards of the discard pile and add them to your hand. You cannot use the cards in the discard pile to meet your required minimum count for making an initial meld.
3. If you wish, make further melds from the cards you now have in your hand.
4. Discard one card face up on the discard pile to end your turn.

## Melds and Canastas

- The object of the game is to score points by **melding** cards.
- The smallest valid meld consists of three cards, which could be three natural cards (such as **8-8-8**) or two natural cards and a wild card (such as **Q-Q-2**).
- A **meld of seven cards** is called a "**canasta**."
- When playing with partners, melds belong to a partnership, not to an individual player.
- Melds are kept face up in front of one of the partners.
- You can **never** add cards to an opponent's meld.
- Wild cards (**jokers** and **twos**) can be used in melds as substitutes for cards of the appropriate rank, but there cannot be more wild cards than natural cards in a meld and no more than 3 wild cards are allowed in a canasta.
- Threes cannot be melded in the normal way. Threes have special functions.
- A canasta of all natural cards is a **natural** or **red canasta**; the cards are squared up and a natural red card is placed on top.
- A canasta with one or more wild cards is a **mixed** or **black canasta**; it is squared up with a natural black card on top.
- A meld can have more than seven cards by adding more cards of the same rank to an already complete canasta.

- Every meld must contain at least two natural cards.
- Once a canasta contains three wild cards, no further wild cards can be added.
- A wild card added to a red canasta causes it to become a mixed canasta.
- You are allowed to have a meld of the same rank as one of your opponents' melds.

## Initial Melds and Minimum Count

- For each partnership, the first turn during a hand is called their **initial meld**, which requires a certain **minimum count**:

<u>Cumulative score</u>	<u>Minimum count of initial meld</u>
negative	15 points (i.e., no minimum)
0 - 1495	50 points
1500 - 2995	90 points
3000 or more	120 points

- The minimum count applies to a partnership, not to an individual player.
- Use the top card of the discard pile along with cards from your hand to meet the minimum count, before picking up the remainder of the discard pile.
- If your team has a negative score, any meld you make will meet the minimum count (e.g., **4-4-4** or **5-5-5** equals 15 points).
- To meet the minimum count, you may count several separate melds from your hand, and lay them down at the same time.
- You cannot count any other cards in the discard pile, which you may intend to add in the same turn, in order to achieve your minimum count.
- Bonuses for red threes, canastas and so on cannot be counted towards meeting the minimum.

## Threes in Classic Canasta

- **Red threes are bonus cards.**
  - If you draw a red three, immediately place it face-up on the table where your partnership's melds are or will be, then draw a replacement card from the face-down stock.

- Red threes do not count as melds, and do not help you to satisfy the minimum count requirement for your initial meld.
- Red threes do not prevent you from subsequently scoring the bonus for going out with a concealed hand.
- If a red three is turned up at the end of the deal as a start card for the discard pile, this freezes the discard pile. When the discard pile is eventually taken, the player puts the red three face-up with the partnership's melds (entitling them to its bonus point value) but does not draw a replacement card.
- **Black threes are stop cards.**
  - By discarding a black three you prevent the next player from taking the discard pile. However, black threes **do not freeze** the pile.
  - Black threes cannot be melded, except when a player is going out, she may meld a group of three or four black threes as part of that last turn. Such a meld of black threes cannot contain wild cards.

## *When the Discard Pile Is Not Frozen*

- When the discard pile is not frozen against you, if the top card of the pile is a natural card (from four up to ace), you can take the pile **if either**:
  1. you play two cards from your hand that make a valid meld with the top discard: these could be either two natural cards of the same rank as the top discard, or one such natural card and one wild card, **or**
  2. the top discard matches the rank of one of your partnership's existing melds, and you add it to that meld.
- You must show that you can use the top card in a valid meld before you are allowed to pick up the rest of the pile.
- After picking up the pile, you can then make further melds using the cards you picked up and/or the cards in your hand.
- You can **never** take the discard pile if its top card is a **wild card** or a **black three**.

## *When the Discard Pile Is Frozen*

- There are three ways that the discard pile can be **frozen**:
  1. The discard pile is frozen against all players if it contains a wild card. To show that it is frozen, the wild card is placed at a right angle in the discard pile.
  2. If a red three is turned up to start the discard pile after the deal, the discard pile is frozen against all players, and the red three is placed at a right angle to show this.
  3. If your partnership has not yet melded, the discard pile is frozen against you, unless you can and do lay down your initial meld using the top card on the discard pile.
- When the discard pile is frozen against you, you can only take it if you hold in your hand **two natural cards** of the same rank as the top card of the discard pile, and you use these with the top discard to make a meld. This meld can either be a new one or could be the same rank as an existing meld belonging to your partnership, in which case the melds are then merged.
- The only exception to the minimum count requirement is, provided your team has not yet melded, after drawing a card from the stock you are able to meld your entire hand as a canasta and, in doing so, you go out, with or without a final discard (called a **concealed canasta**).

## *End of the Hand: Going Out*

- The play ends as soon as a player goes out.
- You can only go out if your partnership has melded **at least one canasta**.
- Once your side has a canasta, you may **go out** if you can and wish to, by melding all of your cards, or by melding all but one and discarding your last card.
- If you are able to go out but unsure whether to do so, you may, if you wish, ask your partner "may I go out?" This question can only be asked immediately after drawing from the stock or taking the discard pile, before making any further melds other than

the one involving the top card of the pile if it was taken. Your partner must answer "yes" or "no" and the answer is binding. If the answer is "yes", you must go out; if the answer is "no" you are not allowed to go out. You are under no obligation to ask your partner's permission before going out. If you wish, you can simply go out without consulting your partner.

- Play can also end when there are no more cards left in the face-down stock. Play can continue with no stock as long as each player takes the previous player's discard and melds it.
- If a player draws a red three as the last card of the stock, the red three is placed face up as usual and then, since there is no replacement card that can be drawn from the stock, the play immediately ends. The player who drew the red three is not allowed to meld nor discard.

### Classic Canasta Scoring

- Each partnership's score for the hand consists of the total value of any **bonus points** they are entitled to *plus* the **total count** of all the cards they have melded, *minus* the total value of any **cards remaining** in their hands.
- The cards remaining in the hands of the players are also counted using their standard point values, but these points count against the team and are subtracted from their score.
- A cumulative total score is kept for each partnership.
- It is possible to have a negative score.
- When one or both partnerships have a total of 5,000 or more points at the end of a hand, the game ends and the side with the higher total score wins. The margin of victory is the difference between the scores of the two sides.

Scoring Bonus Points	
For dealing the exact number of cards to players, with or without the turn card for the discard pile	100 points
For going out	100 points
*For going out concealed (i.e., the player's whole hand is melded in one turn, and includes at least one canasta)	an extra 100 points, making it 200 points for going out
For each natural (red) canasta	500 points
For each mixed (black) canasta	300 points
**For each red three laid out, if the team has at least one meld	100 points
**For all four red threes	an extra 400 points, or 800 points total
<p><b>*Note.</b> To score the bonus for going out concealed, the player must not have previously melded, must not add any cards to her partner's melds, and must put down a complete canasta. The player going out concealed may take the discard pile in her final turn and still score the concealed bonus; if she takes the discard pile and her partner has not yet melded, her hidden canasta must satisfy the initial meld minimum count requirement.</p>	
<p><b>**Note.</b> If a partnership did not manage to meld at all, then each of their red threes counts as minus 100 points instead of plus 100. If they are unlucky enough to have all four red threes and have not melded, they score minus 800 points for those four red threes.</p>	



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