



Canasta



History of Canasta

In Montevideo, Uruguay - two bridge partners; Segundo Santos and Alberto Serrato invented Canasta.

A game less complex than bridge and less dependent on chance than rummy. They held test games at a local restaurant and borrowed a little basket from the waiter to put the cards in - Canestillo.

After a while the game became known as a shorthand form of this = Canasta. It became a great success across South America and eventually North America and by the 1950s Canasta was one of the most well known games in the world.

How the game is played

1. The game is played with two packs of cards, plus Jokers, shuffled together together to make one pack of 108.
2. The points value of the cards is:
 - Joker 50
 - Two 20
 - Ace 20
 - King to Eight 10
 - Seven to Black Three 5

The Jokers and Twos are 'wild' and may be used to represent any other card.

3. The game can be played by:
 - Two players, each being dealt 15 cards
 - Three players, each being dealt 13 cards
 - Four players, each being dealt 11 cards
 - Six players, each being dealt 11 cards.

The last two are partnerships of two and three respectively. The game is most popular for four, two a side, and these instructions are applied to this form.

4. Players cut for partners, the two high cards playing together. Ace is high, Joker does not count in cutting. The Deal is made by the player on the right of the one who has cut the highest card.
5. Cards are dealt to each player. The remaining cards are placed face downwards and are known as the Stock. The top card of the stock is placed face up alongside, to begin a Discard pack. If this card, or the following card, is a wild card, or a red or black three, it must be covered with another from the stock. If more than one red three and one wild card is turned up, such cards are shuffled into the stock until a natural card is turned up. A wild card or red three 'stops' the discard (see point 12/for

black three, see point 11). The discard should be kept square so that only the top card can be seen.

6. The purpose of the game is to build up 'Melds' and 'Canastas'. A Meld is three or more cards of the same value ie: 444 or 8888. Wild cards may be used to form melds, but not more than one in a first meld of three ie: 44Joker or 882, not more than two in a meld of four, three in a meld of five or more. (Sequences ie: 789 etc., do not count in Canasta). Canastas are melds of seven of a kind, ie: seven 4s or four 9s plus two 2s and a Joker.

The former is known as a Natural Canasta, counting its points value plus a bonus of 500; the later is a Mixed Canasta counting its points value plus a bonus of 300. A natural Canasta is usually indicated by a red card on top, a mixed by a black card. You must not use more than three wild cards in making a Canasta. Wild cards may be added to completed Canastas providing the total does not become more than three. If wild cards are added to a Natural Canasta it becomes Mixed.

7. Until your score is 1500 the opening meld or melds in each deal or hand must count at least 50; at 1500 the necessary score is 90; at 3000 it is 120.

A player may meld a complete Canasta as an opening meld. The top card of the discard may be used to complete the Canasta. If a complete Canasta is initially melded, no minimum count is required. If a side has a minus score no minimum count is required for a first meld.

The play

8. Play commences at the left of the dealer; each turn comprising a) a draw, b) a meld - optional, c) a discard. Each player in turn must take the top card of the stock or discard. The latter can only be taken if a player has two matching cards in hand and sufficient cards to make a first meld of 50 or more points ie: if the top card is a King you must have two Kings and enough additional meld to make 50 points. The cards to be melded must be exposed before taking from the discard, and this card must be included in the meld, and may be counted towards minimum points.
9. To enable a player to take the discard, at least two natural cards are necessary for a first meld; also if the discard is 'stopped' by a wild card (see point 12). Otherwise the discard can be taken by one natural card and a wild card, also the top card may be added to a meld previously made, but not to a completed Canasta.

If a player takes the top card of the discard he must take the whole pile. If is not compulsory to meld except when taking the discard. You can add both natural and wild cards to your own or partner's melds. You cannot add to an opponent's meld. Wild cards cannot make melds by themselves. You complete your turn by making a

discard of your own, face up.

Red Threes

10. If a player is dealt one or more red threes he must place them on the table face up at his first turn to play and draw an equal number of cards from the stock. Should another red three be drawn it must be exposed and replaced from the stock. If a red three is drawn from the Discard pile it is not replaced from the stock. Red threes cannot be used in melds, but they have a bonus value, 100 for each card or 800 if all four are held by one side. If a side fails to meld before a hand is ended, the red threes count against in the same amounts. There is a penalty of 500 points if a player holding a red three fails to expose them.

Black Threes

11. Black threes are stopping cards; if discarded this stops your left-hand opponent from using the discard pile. The pile is unstopped when the Black three is covered by another discard. Black threes can only be melded to finish a hand and may not be melded with wild cards.

Stopped discard

12. The Discard pile is stopped if after the cards are dealt a wild card or a red three is turned over from the stock (see point 5). The Discard pile can also be stopped by a player discarding a wild card, and cannot be taken by the next player but only by a following player who has a pair in hand matching the next top card ie: if this card is a 9 he must have two 9s in hand. A discarded wild card can never be taken with matching wild cards. When the discard is stopped, the top card may not be used to add to melds on the table.

Going out

13. The Hand is complete when a player melds all his cards, or all but one and discards that. It is necessary for his side to have at least one Canasta. He receives a bonus of 100 points. The hand is complete if the Stock is finished and he cannot take the Discard. The hand is complete if a player takes the last card of the stock and discards without going out, also if the next player does not take the discard. If he takes the discard, play ends with his discard. In these cases there is no going out bonus. If a player has only one card in hand, and the Stock is not finished, he cannot take a Discard pile consisting of one card. If the last card of the Stock is a Red Three the player drawing it exposes it, makes any meld he wishes, but may not discard. The hand is then finished.

14. The game is normally concluded when either side reaches 5000 or more, the hand always being played out. There is no bonus for winning game. (Some players agree on a bonus of 500).
15. In scoring, all cards in Melds and Canastas count their points value ie: Kings 10, Twos 20, Joker 50. All cards in hand count against you. Scores are made up at the end of each hand.

It is usual to write down the score for each deal or hand in two parts: first, basic score ie: bonuses for Canastas, Red Threes etc.; second, points score for Canastas and Melds, minus points for any cards left in hand.

Concealed hand

16. If you can meld with a concealed hand ie: one from which you have not already melded and which contains a Canasta, you obtain an additional bonus of 100. You cannot add to your partner's melds. You need not have any minimum count.

It is convenient for the partner who melds first to keep all the Melds and Red Threes for his side in front of him, his partner keeping the score.