



ANGIE'S PRODUCTS

Canasta: Rules

Rules Summary

On your turn, you either draw a card from the draw pile or take the entire discard pile (there are special rules for picking up the discard pile; see "Picking Up the Discard Pile" later in this chapter). You can then play melds and canastas. At the end of your turn, you must discard a card to the discard pile.

Either you or your partner must make an initial meld for your team. Once your team has made its initial meld, both of you can play as many melds and canastas as you want on your turns.

If your team has made at least one canasta, either you or your partner can go out if you can play all the cards in your hand

Making Melds and Canastas

Teams score points by making melds and canastas.

A meld is three or more cards of the same rank such as 4-4-4, 6-6-6-6-6, or Q-Q-Q-Q-Q. Wild cards (2s and jokers) can substitute for any card, if needed (the only exception is a meld of black 3s, which can't include any wild cards). For instance, you could have a meld of 8-8-2. A meld must contain at least two natural cards, and cannot contain more than three wild cards.

Black 3s can only be melded as your very last play of a hand before going out.

A canasta is a meld which has seven or more cards of the same rank such as 8-8-8-8-8-8-8. Your team must make at least one canasta to win a hand. A canasta can contain up to three wild cards. If the canasta contains only natural cards, it is worth more points.

Making the Initial Meld

The first play your team must make to the table is your initial meld. Either you or your partner must play to the table, in one turn, one or more melds whose point value is equal to or greater than the initial meld value.

Your game score at the end of a hand dictates how many points you need for the initial meld in the next hand. At the beginning of a game, both teams always have an initial meld requirement of 50.



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Score	Meld Requirement
0-1495	50
1501-2995	90
3000 or more	120
Negative score	15

This system gives the losing team a better chance of a comeback, since they can potentially play to the table earlier and "go out" earlier. A team with 1600 points must make an initial meld of 90, while the second-place team, with a score of 1250 points, only needs an initial meld of 50.

To figure out whether you can make an initial meld, add up the point values of any cards that you meld:

Card	Point Value
4, 5, 6, 7, and black 3	5 points
8, 9, 10, J, Q, K	10 points
A and 2	20 points
Joker	50 points

Picking Up the Discard Pile

At the beginning of your turn, you can pick up the entire discard pile in certain situations. To pick up the discard pile, you must be able to immediately use the upcard (the top card of the pile) in a meld (either adding it to an existing meld or making a new meld with it using cards already in your hand). You do not get to take the other cards in the pile until you use the upcard in a meld.

Normally, you can pick up the discard pile if you can use the upcard in an existing meld or in a new meld; to use the upcard in a new meld you must combine it with at least two natural cards from your hand or with at least one natural card and one wild card from your hand.

However, if someone has discarded a 2 or joker to the pile, the pile is considered frozen. When the discard pile is frozen, you can only pick it up if you can use the upcard in a meld using at least two natural cards in your hand. A pile stays frozen until someone picks it up.

Important: Before your team has made your initial meld, the pile is not shown as frozen, but you can only pick it up with two natural cards. You can never pick up a pile if the top card is a joker, 2, or black 3. Your game score at the end of a hand dictates how many points you need for the initial meld in the next hand. At the beginning of a game, both teams always have an initial meld requirement of 50.



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Going Out

Your team is qualified to go out (ending the current hand) if you have at least one canasta on the table. To go out, either you or your partner must play all of the cards in your hand to the table. The last card in your hand can either be melded or discarded; this is the only time in the game you are not required to discard at the end of your turn.

When you are ready to go out, you may, if you wish, ask your partner permission to go out. This gives you a way to find out whether your partner wants you to go out, or whether your partner still has a lot of points in his or her hand (that might be used to make canastas) and wants to continue to play. Asking for permission is optional, but your partner's answer is binding; you can only go out on that turn if your partner gives you permission.

Note: It is possible to go out without previously having placed any melds on the table. This is known as going out concealed and is worth extra points. You must be able to immediately play all of the cards in your hand to the table, making your initial meld and at least one canasta. You can discard one card to the discard pile if necessary. Going out concealed is very difficult to do, because you don't get any help from your partner.

How the Game Is Played

At the beginning of the game, one card is flipped to the discard pile. If that card is a 2, joker, or red 3, another card is flipped on top of it and the pile is frozen. Before play begins, any red 3s in players' hands are automatically played to the 3 pile on the board and replaced with new cards.

On your turn, you either draw a card from the draw pile or pick up the discard pile. See "Picking Up the Discard Pile" earlier in this chapter. If you pick up the discard pile, the top card of the pile is automatically played to the appropriate card pile. If the pile was frozen, you must then also play two natural cards to that pile; if you don't, you won't be able to take the pile.

Next, meld cards to the table, if you want to. (The first play your team can make is the initial meld.) You may be able to undo melds, if you need to; see the in-game help for details. At the end of your turn, discard a card by dragging it to the discard pile. You must always keep at least one card in your hand at the end of a turn, unless you are going out.

Play proceeds with the player on your left. Continue playing until one team goes out or the deck runs out. If you're ready to go out, you can go out by laying down all your cards (one card can be discarded, if desired.) If you wish, you can ask your partner for permission before you go out. You can ask for permission after you draw cards but before you play them.



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If a player draws the last card in the deck, special conditions apply. If the next player cannot take the discard pile, the hand ends immediately. However, if that player can play the top card of the discard pile to one of his or her team's melds, the player must take the discard pile and play that card. If the player can take the discard pile with a card in his or her hand, he or she can choose to either take the pile or end the hand. In any of these cases, the hand ends, and neither team gets points for going out.

Scoring

Each card you play to the table is worth a certain number of points. These points count towards your initial meld requirement, and are scored at the end of the game. (Note: Any red 3s on the table don't count towards the initial meld points.)

Scoring occurs at the end of a hand, after one team has gone out, or if the deck runs out of cards and someone ends the hand. The team that went out gets points for going out, and each team scores points for all the cards they've melded to the table (including the cards in canastas) and any bonus points (points for any red 3s and any mixed or natural canastas). Then, any cards remaining in team members' hands (including the partner of the person who went out) are subtracted from each team's score.

Card	Point Value
4, 5, 6, 7, and black 3	5 points
8, 9, 10, J, Q, K	10 points
A and 2	20 points
Joker	50 points
Red 3*	100 points each

Other Scoring	
Mixed canasta	300 points each
Natural canasta**	500 points each
Going out	100 points
Going out concealed***	200 points
Going out before the other team has melded:	varies, see below

The other team loses 100 points per red 3 owned by the team, or 800 points if the team owns all four red 3s.

* A canasta made with all natural cards (no wild cards)** (800 if your team has all 4 red 3s)** Going out without having made an initial meld on a previous turn.



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Strategies

The main reason for making melds is to work with your partner to make canastas. Canastas are worth a lot more points, so focus on making them instead of a number of small melds.

Be careful not to meld too many cards. Having a small hand is a big disadvantage, because you are less likely to be able to pick up the discard pile. However, if your partner has already laid down a meld, it is usually a good idea to play any cards you can to it, so that you can get closer to having a canasta. If you can make a canasta, you should always do it.

Except when making the initial meld and taking the discard pile, avoid adding wild cards to piles (unless you want to finish a canasta). Wild cards are stronger in your hand, since they can be used to make canastas and freeze the pile.

If you have more than three cards you can meld, try just melding three of the cards, holding the others back. This gives your partner a chance to play cards to that meld, but leaves cards in your hand that can potentially pick up the discard pile. It also may let you make a surprise canasta!

Keep track of the discarded cards. If the other team takes the pile, you will want to remember what cards were in it so you can discard safely. Keeping track of discards also gives you an indication which cards the other team are short of.

If you have no choice but to discard a card that lets the other team take the discard pile, stick to low cards (4, 5, 6, 7) whenever possible, since these give the other team less points, and leave more points in your hand for melds.

Strategies for Taking the Discard Pile

A key strategy to Canasta is getting the discard pile and preventing your opponents from getting it, whenever possible. But consider how many cards are in the pile. It is often not worth showing the other team what cards you want by taking a small pile with four or less cards.

Black 3s are valuable discards, since they protect the discard pile. Hold on to them until the discard pile is large or something you particularly want to defend.

When the discard pile is not frozen and is full of cards the other team wants, try making safe discards, such as cards that your team already has a large meld of (since you know the other team probably can't meld them). Or discard cards you've already seen the other team discard, or discards they have passed up before.

If the other team has more melds on the table, consider freezing the discard pile, so that you can safely discard cards that your opponents have large melds of.



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If the discard pile gets really big, restrain yourself from melding, so that you have more chances to get the pile.

If you're holding cards that the opponents can meld (and you can't), try to discard them when the discard pile is frozen, or when it is small.

Strategies for Going Out

If you're in a weak position—the other team has melded most of the card ranks, so there are no safe discards, for example—consider going out to minimize your losses.

Asking your partner to go out is sometimes a good way to find out whether your partner can make more canastas. But don't forget that your partner's answer is binding!

If you ask your partner to go out and your partner tells you no, play as many naturals on your turn as possible, holding on to wild cards and at least one safe discard. This gives your partner more opportunities to play cards and make canastas. Holding on to the wild cards means that you are more likely to be able to go out next turn.

If your partner asks you to go out, and you say no (because you have cards left to play), be sure to play as many wild cards as you can on your next turn, and any natural cards that you can use to make canastas (or large melds which your partner could potentially make into canastas). Be sure to keep one card that you can discard safely on your next turn (so that the player to your left can't go out before your partner)!

If all other things are equal, and the other team has three red 3s and the fourth red 3 hasn't been drawn, consider going out as soon as possible. If that team gets the last red 3, they'll get 500 more points! Likewise, if your team has three red 3s, and the fourth red 3 hasn't been drawn, consider postponing going out until you get that last red 3.