

Players

4, in 2 teams of 2

You need

2 standard decks and 4 jokers, 108 cards in all, plus paper and a pencil for the score

Goal

Meld cards of the same rank, build canastas of 7 or more cards, and outscore the other team

Game ends

The first team to reach 5,000 points wins

Setup

- Shuffle 2 standard decks and 4 jokers together, 108 cards in all.
- Each player draws a card. The two highest team up against the two lowest, and partners sit facing each other. The player to the right of the highest card deals first. The deal then passes left.
- Deal 11 cards each, one at a time. Stack the rest face down as the stock and turn its top card face up beside it to start the discard pile.
- If that card is a joker, a 2 or a red three, set it crosswise and turn the next card onto it until another card shows. The pile is then frozen.

How to play

- Draw, meld, discard.** Draw the top card of the stock or take the whole discard pile. Lay down melds if you want. Then discard 1 card face up.
- Lay out red threes.** Red threes are never kept in a hand. Lay each one face up and draw a replacement from the stock, on your first turn for any you were dealt. Each is worth 100.
- Make melds.** A meld is 3 or more cards of one rank, 4s up to aces, with at least 2 natural cards and no more than 3 wild cards. Partners share their melds.
- Meet the first meld minimum.** Your team's first meld must reach the minimum in the table below, which rises with your team's score. Only card values count, never bonuses.
- Build canastas.** A meld of 7 or more cards, with at least 4 natural cards, is a canasta. It is worth 500 with no wild cards, or 300 with some.
- Take the discard pile.** To take the pile, meld its top card with a natural pair from your hand, a natural and a wild card, or your team's meld of that rank. Then take the rest. A wild card or black three on top blocks it.
- Know when the pile is frozen.** The pile is frozen against a team that has not melded, and against everyone while it holds a wild card or a red three. Then you need a natural pair of the top card's rank from your hand to take it.
- Go out.** Once your team has a canasta, you may go out by melding or discarding your last card. You may ask your partner first, and the answer binds you. Going out scores 100.
- When the stock runs out.** With no stock left, play goes on while each player takes the discard. You must take it if it fits your team's meld and the pile is not frozen. The hand ends when someone cannot or will not.

First meld minimum

Your team's score before the deal	Your team's first meld must be worth
Below 0	15 or more
0 to 1,495	50 or more
1,500 to 2,995	90 or more
3,000 or more	120 or more

What counts as a meld

Cards	Meld	Why
K♠ K♥ K♦	Yes	3 natural cards of one rank
9♣ 9♦ 2♠	Yes	2 natural cards and 1 wild card
5♥ 5♣ 2♦ 2♥ JK	Yes	2 natural cards and 3 wild cards, the most allowed
A♠ 2♣ JK	No	Only 1 natural card
J♥ J♣ 2♦ 2♠ JK JK	No	4 wild cards is too many
4♥ 5♥ 6♥	No	Runs do not count in canasta. A meld is one rank
3♠ 3♣ 3♠	Only when going out	Black threes, with no wild cards

What you need to take the discard pile

The pile is	You can take it with
Not frozen	A natural pair of the top card's rank, or one natural and one wild card, or a meld of that rank your team already has
Frozen	A natural pair of the top card's rank from your hand. Nothing else works.
Topped by a wild card or a black three	Nothing. Wait until a natural card is discarded on top.

Scoring

Bonuses

Bonus	Points
Natural canasta (no wild cards)	500 each
Mixed canasta (1 to 3 wild cards)	300 each
Red three	100 each
All four red threes on one team	800 in all
Going out	100
Going out concealed	200 in all (100 plus an extra 100)

What each card is worth

Card	Points
Joker	50
2 or ace	20
King, queen, jack, 10, 9 or 8	10
7, 6, 5 or 4	5
Black three	5
Red three	Bonus only, 100

The first team to 5,000 points at the end of a hand wins. If both teams pass 5,000 in that hand, the higher total wins.

