

# Canasta for Windows

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# What is Canasta ?

Canasta is a card game, which has been played for many decades. It developed in Argentina, and has become popular all over the world. The word 'canasta' is Spanish and means 'basket'.

Canasta is played with two decks of cards, with 54 cards each (52 standard cards, plus two Jokers). Canasta can be played with two to four players, but in this Windows version there are always two players: you and your computer.

## A quick overview of the game:

- \* Your goal is to beat the computer by scoring more points than it does. You score points by melding cards, and making as many canastas as possible.
- \* Each player starts with 15 cards in hand. Yours are visible at the bottom of the window.
- \* Both players take turns in taking one card from the fresh deck, and discarding one card on the discard pile (in that order). The human player always has the first turn.
- \* After taking a fresh card, a player may meld cards (melding is not obligatory). Once a card has been melded, it cannot be taken back into the hand (except with the Undo Move option).
- \* When a player has melded his cards, he finishes his turn by discarding a card. At that point, his melded cards are checked to see if they conform to the canasta rules. Discarding a card is not necessary if a player can go out by melding all of his cards.
- \* Instead of taking a card from the fresh deck, a player may take the entire discard pile. However, this is only allowed if he can directly meld the top card.
- \* One round is finished when one of the players has no cards left in his hand, or when there are no cards left on the fresh deck. The scores of both players are then computed, and a new round is dealt.  
A player can only finish a round when he has at least one or two canastas (see Rule Options).
- \* A game of canasta is finished when either one of the players reaches 5,000 points.

**Melding** a card means playing it from the hand to the table, so that it becomes visible to the other player. It is done by left-clicking on the card.

**Discarding** a card means playing it from the hand to the discard pile. This ends the turn, and is done by right-double clicking on the card (or by right-clicking, depending on the Options|Customize|Discarding a card setting).

# The Rules

The rules as they are used in Canasta for Windows have been set by the *National Canasta Laws Commission*. The options mentioned below all refer to the Options | Rules dialog box. The rules are defined as follows:

1. If a certain kind of card is melded, there must be **at least three** cards of that kind on the table at the end of the turn.
2. It is possible to add a wildcard to a row of cards of any kind on the table. The wildcard is then seen as a card of that kind (but the value remains unchanged). However, the restriction is that there may never be more wildcards than other cards within one row.
3. At the beginning of a round, the top card of the fresh deck is automatically turned around and placed on the discard pile. If this card is a Red Three or a wildcard, the procedure is repeated until the top card of the discard pile is neither a Red Three nor a wildcard.
4. When a new round is dealt, the hands of both players are checked to see if they contain a Red Three. If there is one, that Three is then automatically melded, and an extra card is dealt to the hand out of which the Red Three came. This procedure is repeated until neither player has any Red Threes left in his hand.
5. Black Threes may not be melded, except when the player can go out by melding a row of three or four Black Threes, or two Black Threes and a wildcard. These Black Threes must then be the last cards to be melded.
6. The discard pile can be **blocked** by discarding a wildcard or a Red Three. A block is indicated by an asterisk ( \* ) and means that both players are only allowed to take the discard pile if they can meld the top card using **only** the cards in their hand, as if they had no cards on the table. For example, if the discard pile is blocked and the top card is a Seven, the pile may only be taken if the player has two Sevens in his hand (but not one Seven and a wildcard).
7. If you have taken the discard pile but discover that you cannot use the top card, you can restore the pile by clicking on it. This carries a penalty of 50 points.
8. It is never allowed to take the discard pile when the top card is a Black Three, a Red Three or a wildcard. Thus, Black Threes can be used as a block for a single turn.
9. The first time a player melds cards in a round, their total value must be at least a certain minimum. When a player finishes a round in one turn ( 'goes out blind' ), this requirement does not apply.
10. A player can only go out when he has at least one or two canastas, depending on the *Canastas needed to go out* setting. If a player has less than this number of canastas, and only has one card left that he should discard, he has to 'pass the discard', i.e., he does not discard that last card.
11. When there are no more cards on the fresh deck, the player may choose to stop playing, or to turn the discard pile upside down and use it as the new fresh deck.

# Registering

## New Users

Canasta is a shareware program. This means that **it is not free**, but you can use it without paying for a period of three weeks. If you decide that you want to continue playing Canasta, you are required to pay the sum of \$ 20 (US), or f 25,- in Dutch guilders.

This amount should be sent to:

Bank: PostBank, Amsterdam, The Netherlands  
Account Number: 4375889

Name: Mark-Jan Harte  
Address: St. Servaasweg 16  
5614 CB  
Eindhoven  
The Netherlands

Add \$10 if you pay with a check or money order, or if you transfer the money by bank from a foreign account. The costs of international transfers are quite high, unfortunately. If you want to avoid these extra costs, you can also simply put \$20 in cash in an envelope and mail it to the address above.

Remember to make sure that your own address is included !

For easy registration, print and fill out the [Registration Form](#) topic in this Help file or the REGISTER.TXT file.

Note: CompuServe members can register with GO SWREG. The id for Canasta is 3124.

## Benefits of Registering

When I receive your payment, you will be sent a registration key for Canasta. You can use this key to register your copy. Registering has the following advantages:

- \* It is the right thing to do.
- \* The annoying opening and closing screens reminding you to register disappear.
- \* You receive the cheat key combination that lets you view the computer's hand during play!
- \* New interim releases can also be registered with the key. For example, if you register version 2.0, you can also use your key to register version 2.1 when it is released.
- \* You will get unlimited product support. Regular mail and E-mail will always be answered.

Users of versions 1.x who register get a registration key for version 2.0.

## Registered Users

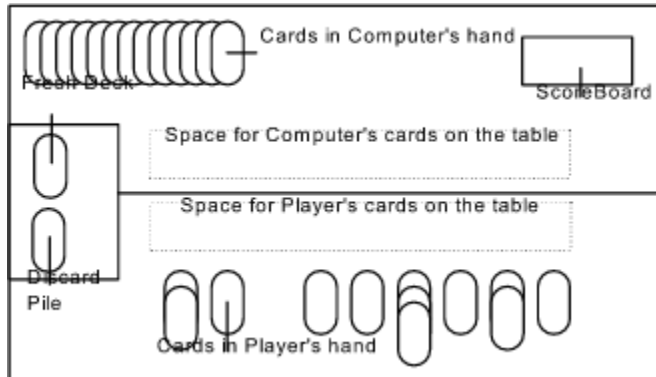
Future major version upgrades, like 2.x to 3.0, will require registered users to get a new key.

They can upgrade for \$10 or f 12,50 (Dutch).

See also: [Contacting the Author  
Registration Form](#)

# How to Play

When you start the game, the Canasta screen looks like this:



The meaning of the various parts of the screen is as follows:

**Fresh Deck:** The cards which have not been used yet.

At the beginning of your turn, you can take a card from the fresh deck by *left*-clicking on it with the mouse.

To the right of the fresh deck is a number that indicates how many cards there are on it.

**Discard pile:** The cards which have been discarded.

At the end of your turn, you must add a card to this deck by *right*-double clicking on the card you want to discard (or by right-clicking, see [Options | Customize](#)).

To the right of the discard pile is a number that indicates how many cards there are on it. An asterisk ( \* ) before this number means that the discard pile is blocked, i.e., there is a wildcard or a Red Three in the discard pile.

At the beginning of your turn, you can take the entire pile by *left*-clicking on it.

If it is blocked, or if you have no cards on the table of the same kind as the top card (e.g., the top card is an Eight, but you have not played any Eights to the table yet), you will first only receive the top card.

When you have added two cards from your hand to the top card (so that there is a row of at least three cards), you receive the rest of the discard pile. However, if you had zero points on the table before taking the discard pile, you must have melded at least the minimum amount of points.

If you left-clicked on the discard pile by mistake, you can put the top card back by left-clicking on the discard pile again. However, this is only possible if you have not yet received the rest of the pile in your hand, and it carries a penalty of 50 points.

**Cards in Player's hand:** The cards you have in your hand.

These cards are not visible to the computer (it does not cheat).

Melding a card is done by *left*-clicking on it. If you want to undo your last move, use the Undo Move option in the [Game menu](#).



Discarding a card is done by *right*-double clicking on the card. This ends your turn. Adding a wildcard to a row of cards on the table is done in the following way:

1. Press the left mouse button on the wildcard you want to add. In a row with multiple wildcards you must select the lowest one.
2. Keeping the left mouse button pressed, drag the wildcard to the row you want it to be added to.
3. Release the left mouse button.

Note that adding a wildcard to a row of cards is only possible if this row is non-empty.

**Cards in Computer's hand:** The cards the computer keeps in his hand.

**Space for Player's cards on the table:** The area of the screen where your melded cards are placed.

**Space for Computer's cards on the table:** The area of the screen where the melded cards of the computer are placed.

**ScoreBoard:** Here the current score for the player and the computer is recorded. It may be negative.

Left-clicking on the ScoreBoard shows the minimum amount of points you need for your first meld, and the amount of points you currently have on the table.

Right-clicking on the ScoreBoard shows the 'Detailed Scoring' dialog box as it is shown at the end of a round. The information about the computer is partially hidden with a question mark.

A **Canasta** is a set of at least seven cards of the same kind (e.g., seven Kings or four Kings and three wildcards). If all cards are non-wildcards, the canasta is called *natural*, otherwise it is called *mixed*.

A **Black Three** is a Three of Spades or a Three of Clubs.

# Scoring

## Card Values and Bonuses

The cards have the following values:

Card	Value
Four, Five, Six, Seven, Black Three	5 points
Eight, Nine, Ten, Jack, Queen, King	10 points
Two, Ace	20 points
Joker	50 points
Red Three	100 points

The following bonuses are awarded:

- \* A natural canasta is worth 500 points, and a mixed canasta 300 points.
- \* The player who goes out first gets a bonus of 100 points. If this player had no cards (except Red Threes) on the table directly before finishing (‘goes out blind’), this bonus is doubled to 200 points.
- \* If a player has all four Red Threes on the table, their score (400 points) is doubled to 800 points.
- \* If a player goes out and his opponent has melded nothing but Red Threes, the value of those Red Threes is *deducted* from his opponent’s score.

## Total Score

At the end of a round, the total score is calculated as follows:

1. The sum of the values of the cards on the table forms the initial score value.
2. Bonuses for canastas, going out and Red Threes are added to the score.
3. The values of the cards in hand are deducted from the score.

However, if you have selected Yes in the ‘Canasta required for positive score’ option in the Options | Rules dialog box, this calculation is only valid if you have *at least* the number of canastas as it is shown in the ‘Canastas needed to go out’ setting ! If not, a negative score results consisting of the sum of the values of the cards in your hand *and on the table*. It is therefore always wise to get a canasta quickly, so that you don’t run the risk of holding a large collection of cards if the computer goes out.

If you have selected No, the above does not apply.

## Minimum

The first time in a round that a player melds cards the sum of their values must be at least a

certain minimum. This minimum depends on the score in the ScoreBoard, in the following way:

<b>Score</b>	<b>Minimum</b>
Less than 0	15
Between 0 and 1495	50
Between 1500 and 2995	90
3000 or More	120

Note 1: The values of any Red Threes on the table do **not** contribute to the required minimum score.

Note 2: If you turn off the option Top card counts for initial meld, you must add the value of the top card to the minimum needed. E.g., if the minimum is 50 and you took an Ace from the pile, you must have  $50 + 20 = 70$  points on the table to get the rest of the pile.

Note 3: If you took the top card of the discard pile but you discover that you cannot use it, you can put it back by clicking on the pile again. This carries a penalty of 50 points.

If you want to know the minimum you need with your current score, left-click on the ScoreBoard.

A **Red Three** is a Three of Diamonds or a Three of Hearts.

A **wildcard** is either a Joker or a Two of any suit. There are four Jokers and eight Twos in the game, so there are twelve wildcards in total.

# The Game Menu

The Game Menu has the following items:

## **New**

This item starts a new game; the scores on the [ScoreBoard](#) are set to 0, and a new round is dealt.

## **Load...**

This item lets you resume a game of Canasta that you saved earlier. Your current game will be lost.

## **Save...**

This item lets you save your current game of Canasta. The suggested name is the first eight characters of the name of the player taken from the [Options | Customize](#) dialog box plus the extension .can.

Canasta games have a default extension of .can. The default directory is your canasta directory.

## **HiScores...**

This item shows you separate top ten highscores for each difficulty level (Beginner, Advanced and Expert). The scores recorded are for **one** round of play, and are the **difference** between the scores of the player and the computer. So, in your quest for the highest score, don't let the computer get too many points!

The Clear button in each highscore table will delete all entries in that table, so be careful using it.

## **Undo Move**

This item moves the last card you melded back into your hand.

The number of moves undo 'remembers' is limited only by memory size, however due to the rules of Canasta you cannot undo the following things:

- 1) Discarding a card.
- 2) Melding cards that you were obliged to meld to get the discard pile.

You can undo taking the discard pile by clicking on it again (see [How to Play](#)).

## **Exit**

This item exits from Canasta. You will lose your current game, so if you want to keep it, press F4 before exiting to save the game to disk.



# The Options Menu

The Options Menu has the following items:

## **Customize**

This item brings up the Customize dialog box in which you can personalize your copy of Canasta.

## **Rules**

This item brings up the Rule Options dialog box in which you can set and view the rules for Canasta.

# Customize dialog box

## Player's Name

Here you can enter your name as you want it to appear in the ScoreBoard. The name may be truncated if it does not fit in the space available.  
The default name is *Player*.

## Discarding a card

Here you can indicate whether discarding a card should be done by a single or a double right click.

If you are having problems with the mouse buttons, and sometimes press the right mouse button when it should be the left one, you should select double right click.

If you never press the wrong button, you can select single right click to speed up the game.  
The default setting is *Double Click*.

## Level of computer opponent

Here you can set the intelligence level of the computer to Beginner, Advanced or Expert. The level cannot be changed during the game.

The default setting is *Beginner*.

## Card Color

Here you can select your favorite color for the cards on the fresh deck and in the computer's hand. The default color is *Dark Red*.

## Background Color

Here you can select your favorite color for the background of the Canasta window. The default color is *Dark Green*.

## Delay

Here you can set the amount of time delay used when the computer melds cards. After every card melded, the computer waits  $x$  milliseconds, where  $x$  is the value you specify.  $x$  may be between 0 (no delay) and 10,000 (ten seconds).

The default delay is 0.

## Use Sound

Here you can choose whether or not you want to hear the sound effects of Canasta. The default is Yes.

# Rule Options dialog box

Rule changes can only take place immediately after the cards have been dealt in a new round. During the game it is not possible to change the rules, and all items in this dialog box are disabled to prevent an 'on-the-fly' rule change.

The Rule Options dialog box contains the following items:

## **Canasta required for positive score**

Here you can indicate whether Canastas are needed to make the value of the cards on the table count positively, when a round is finished.

If you select No, the cards on the table will always add to the score, regardless of whether you have made a Canasta or not.

If you select Yes, the cards on the table will only add to your score if you have made at least the number of Canastas indicated by the 'Canastas needed to go out' setting, otherwise their value will be deducted from the score.

The default setting is *No*.

## **Canastas needed to go out**

Here you can indicate whether one or two canastas are needed before a player is allowed to finish a round.

The default setting is *One*.

## **Cards drawn each turn**

Here you can indicate how many cards each player must draw in each turn.

The default setting is *One*.

## **Red Three options - Draw extra card**

Here you can indicate whether or not it is allowed to draw a second card from the fresh deck, when the first drawn card is a Red Three.

The default setting is *No*.

## **Red Three options - Block discard pile**

Here you can indicate whether or not it is allowed to use a Red Three to block the discard pile as with a wildcard. Discarding a Red Three is done by right-clicking on it, as with an ordinary discard.

The default setting is *No*.

## **Discard Pile options - Add top card to canasta**

Here you can indicate whether or not it is allowed to take the discard pile by adding the top card to a canasta you have made on the table.

The default setting is *Yes*.

## **Discard Pile options - Top card counts for initial meld**

Here you can indicate whether or not the value of the top card of the discard pile counts for

the required minimum, when you use the pile to create your first meld in a round (see Scoring).  
The default setting is Yes.

# The Help Menu

The Help Menu has the following items:

## **Index**

This item brings up the index of the Canasta help system.

## **Rules**

This item brings up the help topic about the rules of Canasta.

## **How to Play**

This item brings up the help topic about the screen layout and mouse control in playing the game.

## **Scoring**

This item brings up the help topic about the scoring rules used in Canasta.

## **Registering**

This item brings up the help topic explaining how to register your copy of Canasta.

## **About**

This item brings up a dialog box which gives information about the author of Canasta and shows the name of the registered user of Canasta, if there is one.

# Shortcut Keys

The following keys can be used as shortcuts for items in the game menu and help menu:

Key	Menu Equivalent
<b>F1</b>	Help   Index
<b>F2</b>	Game   New
<b>F3</b>	Game   Load
<b>F4</b>	Game   Save
<b>Del</b>	Game   Undo Move

## Credits

I would like to thank the following people, who have helped me in various ways with the development of Canasta:

### ***Thank you for :***

<i>Raymond Arts</i>	Testing
<i>Wim Bax</i>	Introducing me to Canasta, Testing & Sound
<i>Eva Bendix</i>	Testing & Design
<i>Arjan de Gast</i>	Testing
<i>Ger &amp; Mieke Harte</i>	Financial and moral support
<i>Paul Johannsen</i>	Suggestions, Distribution & Hardware Supply
<i>Silvia de Kloe</i>	Testing
<i>Sacha Prins</i>	Technical advice

Of the numerous people who made suggestions, I want to mention the following:

*Lee Deuell*, who did his best to get me some .wavs (but failed miserably);  
*Michelle Hébert*, who teaches me French (but will fail miserably);  
*Paul Johannsen*, my American godfather (but who won't get an Oscar);  
*Tim Jordan*, whose nickname indicates his mental stability (huh?);  
*Ken Mignosa*, who cannot finish a game in one sitting (buy a better chair).

To you, and to all the others who made a contribution: Thanks, people!

Mark-Jan Harte

August 8, 1994

## Register menu item

This item allows you to enter your User Name and Registration Key that you receive when you register Canasta (see [Registering](#)). If the key fits the name, your copy of Canasta is automatically upgraded to the registered version. The key only has to be entered once.

The Register menu item is removed after a succesful registration.

# Contacting the Author

If you:

- \* Have a question about Canasta;
- \* Want to report a bug;
- \* Have a comment or suggestion;
- \* Want to convince yourself of the existence of product support;
- \* Want to send me a birthday card (September 26);

You can contact me in the following ways:

My name: Mark-Jan Harte

Regular mail: St. Servaasweg 16  
5614 CB Eindhoven  
The Netherlands

CompuServe: 100407,2632

Internet: 100406.2632@compuserve.com

If you report a bug, please include the version of Canasta you are using and all options that were enabled when the problem occurred. This makes it easier to find the error in the program.



=====  
Canasta for Windows 2.2  
Registration Form  
August 1994  
=====

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State/Country \_\_\_\_\_

Zip/Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_ [Phone] \_\_\_\_\_

[E-mail address] \_\_\_\_\_

[Your age] \_\_\_\_\_

Where did you get Canasta ? \_\_\_\_\_

Registration at \$20 \_\_\_\_\_

Add \$10 if payment by check or money order \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL AMOUNT \_\_\_\_\_

Please write any suggestions or comments on the other side.

9408-01  
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Send to: Mark-Jan Harte  
St. Servaasweg 16  
5614 CB Eindhoven  
The Netherlands

# Frequently Asked Questions

*Q1: Why are the cards so small?*

A: Canasta needs to put a lot of cards on the screen. There are 14 rows of cards, and since Canasta is designed for use with a standard VGA screen of 640 pixels wide, this leaves a maximum width for each card of 45 pixels. Suggestions about a more economical lay-out, or a SuperVGA implementation are welcome.

*Q2: When will there be a version for more (4) players? Playing in pairs is fun!*

A: I know, but once again the answer is lack of space. There's already a problem fitting two hands on the screen, let alone four.

*Q3: When I play with two Canastas needed to go out and Canasta needed for positive score, my cards on the table count negative when I have one Canasta on the table. How come?*

A: You need both Canastas on the table for your cards to count positive.

*Q4: Why do I have to pay \$10 extra when I pay with a check?*

A: My Dutch bank charges me \$11 for each American check I cash. My complaints haven't helped so I'm afraid those costs must be added to the price of Canasta. Pay with cash or via CompuServe to avoid the premium.

*Q5: Are you an American living in Europe?*

A: Nope, I'm Dutch born and raised. My language has downgraded from Dutch to English after watching too many American movies and reading Stephen King novels :-).

