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What is Canasta ?

Canasta is a card game, which has been played for many centuries. It developed in Argentina, and has become popular all over the world.

Canasta is played with two decks of cards, with 54 cards each (52 standard cards, plus two Jokers). There are two players, and in this Windows version that means 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 <u>melding</u> cards, and making as many <u>canastas</u> 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 <u>fresh deck</u>, and discarding one card on the <u>old deck</u> (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 <u>Undo option</u>).

 *   When a player has melded his cards, he finishes his turn by <u>discarding</u> a card. At that point, it is checked that his melded cards conform to the <u>canasta rules</u>.

 *   Instead of taking a card from the fresh deck, a player may take the entire old deck. However, this is only allowed if he can directly meld the top card from the old deck.

 *   One round is finished when one of the players has no cards left in his hand at the end of his turn, or when there are no cards left on the fresh deck. The <u>scores</u> 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 <u>Rule Options</u>).

 *   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 old deck. 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 *American Canasta Laws Commission*. The options mentioned below all refer to the <u>Options | Rules</u> 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 <u>joker</u> to a row of cards of any kind on the table. The joker is then seen as a card of that kind (but the value remains unchanged). However, the restriction is that there may never be more jokers 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 old deck. If this card is a <u>Red Three</u> or a joker, the procedure is repeated until the top card of the old deck is neither a Red Three nor a joker.

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. <u>Black Threes</u> 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 joker. These Black Threes must then be the last cards to be melded.

6. The <u>old deck</u> can be *blocked* by discarding a joker or a Red Three. A block is indicated by an asterisk (*) and means that both players are only allowed to take the old deck if they can meld the top card using only the cards in their hand, as if they had no cards of the same kind on the table. For example, if the old deck is blocked and the top card is a Seven, the deck may only be taken if the player has two Sevens in his hand (but not one Seven and a joker).

7. Blocking the old deck with a Red Three is only possible if the option *Block old deck with Red Three* is set.

8. It is never allowed to take the old deck when the top card is a Black Three, a Red Three or a joker. Thus, Black Threes can be used as a block for a single turn.

9. If the option *Draw extra card for Red Three* is set, the player who draws a Red Three from the fresh deck may draw another one.

10. The first time a player melds cards in a round, their total score must be at least the required <u>minimum</u>. When a player finishes a round in one turn (goes out blind), this requirement does not apply.

11. A player can only finish a round when he has at least one or two canastas, depending on the *Number of Canastas needed to finish* option. If a player does not have 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.

Registering

New Users

Canasta is a shareware program. This means that **it is not free**, but you can use it without paying for a limited amount of time, in this case three weeks. If you decide that you want to continue playing Canasta, you are required to pay the small amount 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 REGISTER.TXT file.

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 difficulty levels Advanced and Expert for the computer opponent become available.

   * The annoying opening screen reminding you to register disappears.

   * 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.

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).

If you find a bug in Canasta (or have useful comments for further enhancement), *please* write to the address above. Include the version of Canasta you have, and the rule options that were active when the problem occurred. This makes it easier to determine the cause of the bug.

How to Play

When you start the game, the Canasta screen looks like this:
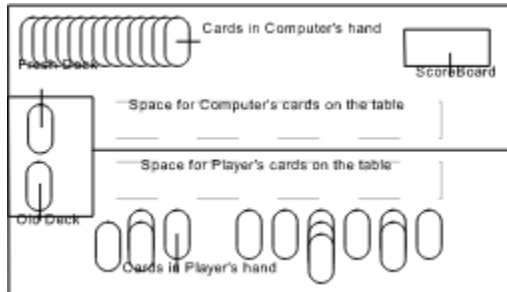
The meaning of the various parts of the screen is as follows:

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.

Old Deck: 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 old deck is a number that indicates how many cards there are on it. An asterisk (*) before this number means that the old deck is *blocked*, i.e., there is a joker or a Red Three in the old deck.

At the beginning of your turn, you can take the entire deck by *left*-clicking on it.
If the old deck is blocked, or if you have no cards on the table of the same kind as the top card of the old deck (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 old deck. However, if you had zero points on the table before taking the old deck, you must have at least the minimum amount of points.

If you left-clicked on the old deck by mistake, you can put the top card back by left-clicking on the old deck again. However, this is only possible if you have not yet received the rest of the old deck 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 option in the Game menu.
Discarding a card is done by *right*-double clicking on the card. This ends your turn.
Adding a joker to a row of cards on the table is done in the following way:

1. Press the left mouse button on the joker you want to add.

2. Keeping the left mouse button pressed, move the joker to the row you want it to be

added to.

3. Release the left mouse button.

Note that adding a joker 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 <u>score</u> 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.

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

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

Scoring

The scoring in Canasta is rather complicated.

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 <u>canasta</u> is worth 500 points, and a mixed canasta 300 points.

* The player who finishes a round, 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 <u>Red Threes</u> on the table, their score (400 points) is doubled to 800 points.

* If a player finishes, and his opponent has melded nothing except Red Threes, the value of those Red Threes is *deducted* from the score of his opponent.

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, finishing 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 <u>Options | Rules</u> dialog box, this calculation is only valid if there is *at least one canasta* ! 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 finishes the round.
If you have selected No, the above does not apply.

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 <u>ScoreBoard</u>, in the following way:

Score	Minimum
Less than 0	15
Between 0 and 1495	50

Between 1500 and 2995   90
3000 or More   120

Note that the values of any Red Threes on the table do *not* contribute to the required minimum score.
If you want to know the minimum you need with your current score, click on the ScoreBoard.

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

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

Deal Again

This item deals a new hand of cards. The scores on the ScoreBoard are unaffected.

Undo Move

This item undoes the last movement of a card. It is only available immediately after a card has been melded. It is not possible to undo discarding a card.

Exit

This item exits from Canasta.

The Options Menu

The Options Menu has the following items:

Customize

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

Rules

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

Customize Dialog Box

Players 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. This is only possible if you have registered Canasta. In the shareware version, only the Beginner level is available.
The default setting is *Beginner*.

The settings are kept in a file called *canasta.ini* which is placed in the Windows directory.

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 a Canasta is 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 a Canasta, otherwise their value will be deducted from the score.
The default setting is *No*.
The strategy of the computer in the shareware version of Canasta is not affected by this setting. The registered version however, changes its strategy according to whichever setting is in use.

Number of Canastas needed to finish

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*.

Number of cards drawn each turn

Here you can indicate how many cards each player is allowed to draw in each turn.
The default setting is *One*.

Draw extra card for Red Three

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 *unchecked*.

Block old deck with Red Three

Here your can indicate whether or not it is allowed to use a Red Three to block the old deck as with a joker. Discarding a Red Three is done by right-clicking on it, as with an ordinary discard.
The default setting is *unchecked*.

Top card may be added to Canasta

Here you can indicate whether or not it is allowed to take the old deck by adding the top

card to a canasta you have made on the table.
The default setting is *checked*.

The settings are kept in a file called *canasta.ini* which is placed in the Windows directory.

The Help Menu

The Help Menu has the following items:

Index
This item brings up the <u>index</u> of the Canasta help system.

Rules
This item brings up the help topic about the <u>rules</u> of Canasta.

How to Play
This item brings up the help topic about the screen layout and mouse control in <u>playing</u> the game.

Scoring
This item brings up the help topic about the <u>scoring rules</u> used in Canasta.

Registering
This item brings up the help topic explaining how to <u>register</u> 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 <u>game menu</u> and <u>help menu</u>:

Key	Menu Equivalent
F1	Help | Index
F2	Game | Deal Again
Shift + F2	Game | New
Del	Game | Undo Move

Credits

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

Thank you for :

Wim Bax	Introducing me to Canasta & Testing
Eva Bendix	Testing & Design
Arjan de Gast	Testing
Ger & Mieke Harte	Financial and moral support
Paul Johannsen	Suggestions & Distribution
Silvia de Kloe	Testing
Sacha Prins	Technical advice
SDN	Distribution on a students budget

Mark-Jan Harte

April 19, 1994

Register Menu Item

This item allows you to enter your User Name and Registration Key that you receive when you register Canasta (see <u>Registering</u>). When you type in the name and key, Canasta checks to see if the key fits the name. If this is the case, your copy of Canasta is automatically upgraded to the registered version. The key only has to be entered once, unless you accidentally modify or delete the *canasta.ini* file.

The Register menu item is removed after a succesful registration.