

From the book
“Playing Fibonacci Games”
by Robin Andrews

Chapter Seven

Playing Canasta 21[©]
or
Bigollo![©]

This chapter describes how *Canasta 21[©]* is played together with the rules and the scoring. The description is for a game between two to four individual players. Playing with four people, each with a partner, is covered at the end of this chapter.

Canasta 21[©] is based on the canasta games played with a classic card deck. There are several conventional canasta games. *Canasta 21[©]* differs from them all by virtue of the use of the Fibonacci numbered deck and the dynamic nature of the melding.

Since many people are familiar with one or other of the conventional canasta games we will make comparisons in describing *Canasta 21*[©].

The eighty-nine card Deck 21 is used for *Canasta 21*[©] with two players. The object of the game is to score points by melding cards and going out - just as in conventional canasta. However, the new game differs in the composition of the melds, the way cards are melded and the requirements for going out.

The *Canasta 21*[©] game starts with players drawing a card from the deck to determine who should deal. The player drawing the highest number deals ten cards to each player, one at a time.

The remainder of the deck is placed face down on the table as the stock pile. The top card is placed face up alongside as the beginning of the discard pile. If the top card is wild a second card is drawn and placed on top of the first. The wild card is placed at right angles to indicate that the pile is *frozen*. (The impact of having a frozen discard pile will be explained later.) Should that second card

also be wild, another card is drawn and possibly more until a non-wild card is on the top of the discard pile.

Each player must then place in front of them any card 21 that was dealt to them and take a card from the stock as a replacement.

Melds and Canastas

In *conventional canasta*, melds consist of sets of cards having the same number, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, or 10 and sets each of which consists of only Aces, Kings, Queens and Jacks. Twos and jokers are wild cards and can substitute for any other card in a meld. Players attempt to build melds of at least seven cards. A meld of seven cards is called a canasta. If one or more cards in the canasta is a wild card the canasta is said to be a *mixed canasta* as compared to a *pure canasta* with no wild cards. Players start building a canasta by laying down a minimum of three cards.

In *Canasta 21*[©] the melds consist of sets of numbered cards starting with a 2, 3, 5, 8 and 13. However, the numbered cards in a meld are not all

the same. Cards are melded with the object of creating five canastas, a canasta defined as any set of numbered cards that add to 21. The canastas may contain any number of cards as long as the total is exactly 21.

The melds for each player are assembled in a line, in the order of the Fibonacci series, in front of the player with card 21 placed on the end. This is called the *line-up*. Cards are added to each starting card, face up in the line-up, melding in the direction away from the player. A player can only have one meld or canasta for each number in the line-up but can collect as many of card 21 as he or she wishes.

A meld cannot contain more than one base card. Surplus base cards must be discarded.

At least two of the required five canastas must start with a base card before a player can go out. The others can start with a base card or a standard card. Canastas with a base card earn a higher score. A wild card can substitute for any base card or standard card in filling the

requirement. The bonus base card for number 2 fills the requirement for one of the base cards.

In *Canasta 21*[©] the score for each canasta depends on whether it incorporates a wild card (*mixed* with a wild card and *pure* without) and whether or not it starts with a base card (*base* with a base card and *standard* without). There are four possible canastas. The highest score is for a *pure-base canasta*. The lowest score is for a *mixed-standard canasta*.

A Players Turn and Initial Melds

A player's basic turn consist of drawing two cards from the stock, or one from the stock and the top card of the discard pile, possibly melding cards, then discarding one card. Under certain conditions a player may start a turn by taking more cards from the discard pile.

We will first explain the requirements for the initial meld. No cards can be melded until the initial meld is in place.

The requirements for a player's initial meld are dependent on the player's cumulative score from prior rounds.

Cumulative Score	Base Cards Required
negative	1
0 – 1,495	2
1,500 – 2,995	3
3,000 Or more	4

The initial meld for a player with a negative cumulative score must consist of two melds one of which can be a standard card. Each meld must have at least two cards.

Card 21 does not count as a base card.

(With conventional canasta the requirement is for the initial meld to have a certain number of "points" where the points for each card are predefined.)

Freezing and Taking the Discard Pile

The discard pile is frozen if it contains a wild card. The pile might be frozen from the start of

the game or by a wild card being discarded by a player as a strategic move.

Let us first consider the situation where the discard pile is not frozen. A player normally takes one card from the stock and one card from the discard pile to start a turn. However, if the top card of the discard pile can be used to complete a canasta the player can choose from the options of:

- (i) taking the entire discard pile,
- (ii) taking the top five cards of the discard pile
- (iii) simply taking the top card, as usual

The player must show that the top card of the discard pile plus *at least one card* from the player's hand will make up a canasta, before proceeding to exercise options (i) or (ii).

There are restrictions on taking more than one card from the discard pile if it is frozen. The top card on the discard pile can only be used to complete a canasta that starts with a *base card* and *at least two cards* from the player's hand.

A player that has picked up all or part of the discard pile, in addition to the top card on the stock, can meld all or some of these cards together with cards in the hand during his or her turn.

Between Turns

Canasta 21[©] requires significantly more thought in assembling canastas than the conventional game because there are many combinations of different cards that can make a canasta. Players are therefore allowed to move standard cards and wild cards from meld to meld between turns.

Players are not allowed to meld cards from the hand to the table between turns or return cards from the table to the hand (at any time). However, cards on the table can be rearranged with the cards in hand under consideration. When the players turn comes around the player is then prepared to make the pre-planned melds.

Open and Closed Canastas

As the game progresses some melds in front of each player will add to 21 and make a

canasta. The player can choose to gather up the cards and *close* the canasta, placing the start card face up on top.

Alternatively, the player can leave the canasta *open* so that its cards can be exchanged with other cards on the table or with cards from the player's hand. This may be advantageous in that wild cards can be replaced. Single high numbered cards in the players hand to reduce the number of cards to be discarded. Closed canastas cannot be reopened for these purposes.

Only closed canastas score at the end of the game. If another player goes out before a canasta is closed the cards on the table will count against the players score.

Canastas can only be closed during a player's turn, not between turns.

Going Out

To go out a player must have:

- (i) created and closed all five canastas, and

- (ii) collected at least one card 21, and
- (iii) discarded all surplus cards in hand.

A player that has accomplished (i) and (ii) and has only one surplus card can discard that card during the turn and the game is over. That is called *going-out concealed*. If the player has more than one surplus card he or she can announce "I am preparing to go out" and then discard one card on each successive turn while picking up no more cards.

If a player announces that they are preparing to go out the other players can start closing sets working to maximize their scores while attempting to go out first. The game stops when the first player goes out. Scores are then tallied.

The first player to go out first gets the bonus points.

A player who goes out with five canastas each starting with a base card has achieved a *Bigollo!*

The player may shout *Bigollo!* before going out. Self-effacing players may simply ask for the 200 point bonus.

Scoring

		Points
Standard Cards	2 ,3 ,5 ,8 ,13, 21	#
Base Cards	<u>2</u> , <u>3</u> , <u>5</u> , <u>8</u> , <u>13</u>	2 x #
Wild card		50
Bonus base card	<u>2B</u>	8
Closed Canastas:		
Pure with base card	each	200
Mixed with base card	each	150
Pure with standard card	each	100
Mixed with standard card	each	50
Going Out		100
Going Out Concealed	bonus	200
Going Out Bigollo!	bonus	200

Cards that are on the table in open sets and cards in a players hand count *against* a players score. An open canasta is negative only to the extent of the numbers on the cards. Negative scores are carried over to the next round.

The game is over when any one player reaches a cumulative score of 5,000.

Playing in Partnership

There are four players in a fixed partnership for the game. Each player plays from their own hand. Partners sit opposite each other and share the line-up and melding. Partners can not disclose the contents of their hand to their partner nor can they discuss prospective melds. Each partner is free to rearrange the melds between turns but not while their partner is having their turn.

Either player in a partnership can go out. A player is allowed to ask the partner "Can I go out?". A player can ignore or accept the response. The score is kept for each partnership, not the individual players.
