

HAND and FOOT RULES

Georgia Mountaineers Version

WebMaster Note: There are many versions of Hand & Foot Rules published on the Internet and other sources. Along with basic rules, there are also many optional rules that may be adopted for play. The below rules have been modified in an effort to reflect those rules mostly used by the Georgia Mountaineers.

Introduction

Hand and Foot is a North American game related to Canasta, in which each player is dealt two sets of cards - the **Hand**, which is played first, and the **Foot**, which is played when the hand has been used up. There are numerous variations of this game and no standard rules. The most usual version is for four or six players in partnership, and this is described below.

Partnership Hand and Foot for Four or Six Players

Players, Cards, Deal

Partners sit opposite each other. Four decks of cards are used for four players and six decks are used for six players.

After the cards have been thoroughly shuffled, choose which player will play first by high card selection. Then each player will deal two face-down stacks of 11 cards each. On the first round of play, the players will then pass their dealt cards to the player to their left. On the second round of play, they will pass them to the right. On the third round of play, they will pass them to their partner(s), and on the last round of play each player will hold their own cards. Of the two stacks of cards, one will become the **Hand** and the other the **Foot**. Each player, without looking at the cards, will select which stack will be their Hand and which will be their Foot.

The remainder of the undealt cards are put in a face-down pile in the middle of the table to form a **stock**. Unlike Canasta, the top card of the stock is not turned face-up and placed next to it to start a discard pile. The players' "foot" stacks are set aside face down and the players are not allowed to look at them until they have played all the cards in their hands. Each player picks up their "hand" stack, and the first round of play begins with the player who won the high card selection. That player will draw two cards from the stock and complete their turn by discarding one card on the discard stack. After the first complete round of play, the turn to play first passes to the left. A complete game consists of four deals.

The Object of the Game: Melds

The aim is to get rid of cards from your hand, and then from your foot, by **melding** them. A meld is a set of from three to seven cards of equal rank placed face up on the table. A meld cannot have fewer than three cards. Melds belong to a partnership, not to an individual player. After a meld of three or more cards has been started, either player of the partnership can add further cards to it until there are seven to make a book. You can make a meld of cards of any rank from A, K, Q, ... down to 4. The Three (3) cards have special uses and cannot be melded. Twos and jokers are "wild cards" and can be used as substitutes in melds, as long as there at least one more real (or natural) cards of the rank of the meld as wild cards. Thus a meld of two natural cards can contain at most one wild card and a meld of three can contain at most two wild cards. Melds consisting **entirely** of wild cards or Threes are not allowed. There are two types of meld:

- a **natural, clean, or red meld** has no wild cards
- an **unnatural, dirty, or black meld** has one to three wild cards

A meld of seven cards is complete and is called a **Book**. While melds are fanned out face up, complete books are squared up and the cards placed on top shows the type - a red card for a clean book and a black card for a dirty book. A partnership is not allowed to have two incomplete melds of the same rank. However, cards of already completed books can be melded by individually burning them (placed them face down with the other melded cards) or melding three or more cards to begin a new book. The decision of adding wildcards to a melt rests with the current player and cannot be influenced by the other partners. Usually the melded cards and books are kept in front of one member of a partnership.

You score points for cards you have melded, and lose points for any cards left in your hand and foot at the end of the play. The play ends when someone gets rid of all the cards in their "hand" and "foot", by melding or discarding them; this is known as "going out". In order to be allowed to go out, you must satisfy all of the following conditions:

1. Your partnership must have completed at least two red (clean) books and three black (dirty) dirty books to be eligible to go out;
2. The partner going out must have played their hand and be playing from their foot, and;
3. You must ask your partner's permission to go out. If your partner agrees you must meld all of your remaining cards, or meld all but one of your remaining cards and discard your last card. If partner says no, you are not allowed to go out on that turn.

See also the section End of the Play..

Card Values

Individual cards have values as follows. They count for you if you have melded them, but against you if they are left in your hand or foot at the end of the play:

Jokers	.....	50 points each
Twos & Aces	.....	20 points each
Eight through King	.....	10 points each
Four through Seven	.....	5 points each
Black Threes	.....	5 points each
Red Threes	.....	500 points each

Bonus Points

There are also the following Bonus Points. Both teams score points for any complete books they have made, in addition to the scores for the cards within the book. Only the team that goes out scores the bonus for going out, obviously. Any red three counts a minus 500 points each, if a player is caught with them in their hand or foot when any player goes out.

Each complete "Red or Clean" Book of 7 cards	.....	500 points
Each complete "Black or Dirty" Book of 7 cards	.....	300 points
For "Going Out"	.....	100 Points

Minimum Initial Meld Requirements

In each deal, there is a minimum requirement for the total value of the cards making up the first meld put down by each partnership.

Round 1	.....	50 points
Round 2	.....	90 points
Round 3	.....	120 points
Round 4	.....	150 points

The bonus for a seven card book does not count toward a meld. For example, seven sixes count only 35 points and are not sufficient for an initial meld.

The Play

The player who won the high card draw begins the play, and the turn to play passes clockwise around the table until someone goes out. A turn normally consists of:

1. Taking the top two cards from the stock, (or picking up from the discard pile, see below);
2. Optionally melding some cards or adding to your partnership's melds;
3. Discarding one card on top of the discard pile.

As an alternative to drawing two cards from the stock, you may take the top **seven** cards from the discard pile. If the pile contains fewer than seven cards, you may take the whole pile, but you may never take more than seven cards from the pile at one time. In order to pick up from the discard pile you must fulfill all of the following conditions:

1. The top card of the discard pile must **not** be a three or a wildcard;
2. You must hold two cards which are the same rank as this top card;
3. You must immediately meld these three cards (the two you are holding and the top discard), possibly along with other cards that you are holding.

After picking up from the discard pile and melding, you complete your turn by discarding one card as usual.

If your side has not yet melded, then the first time that you meld you must put down cards whose individual values add up to at least the minimum meld requirement. You can put down several melds at once to achieve this if you wish. If you are picking up the pile, you can meld additional cards from your hand along with the top discard and the two that match it to help make up your minimum count, and some of these additional cards could be wild. However, you cannot count any of the other 6 cards you are about to pick up from the discard pile towards this minimum.

Example: It is the first round (minimum 50 points). A nine is discarded by the player to your right and in your hand you hold two nines and a two. You can use your two nines to take the top 7 cards of the discard pile and make a dirty meld of three nines and a two for 50 points. You would **not** be allowed to do this if the two was buried in the discard pile rather than held in your hand.

If you discard a wildcard, a red three, or a black three, this blocks the next player from picking up from the discard pile.

Picking up the Foot

When you get rid of all the cards in your "hand", you then pick up your "foot" and continue to play from that. There are two slightly different ways this can happen. If you manage to meld **all** the cards from your "hand", you declare ***I am still playing*** and immediately pick up your "foot" and continue your turn, discarding one card from it at the end. Alternatively, if you meld all the cards from your "hand" but one, and then discard this last card, you declare ***I am looking*** and then pick up your "foot" and begin playing with it at the start of your next turn.

The red and black threes

Red and black threes cannot be used in melds. Their only use is as a discard card.

End of the play

The play ends when either

- A player goes out, having asked and received permission, by melding all of his or her remaining foot cards, or by melding all but one card and discarding the last card, or
- When the stockpile is depleted and a player wishes to draw from it.

As already explained you cannot go out until your team has completed the required books (two red and three black), and the partner going out has picked up their foot and are playing from it. If you have not satisfied these conditions, or if you have satisfied them but your partner refuses permission for you to go out, then you are not allowed to leave yourself without any cards. That means that if you are playing from your foot, you must keep at least two cards in your hand after melding - one to discard and at least one to hold in your hand so that the game can continue.

If the stock is depleted, the play will end as soon as someone wishes to draw from the stock and there are insufficient cards there. Both sides score for the melds they have put down, less the points for the cards remaining in their hands and feet, and no one gets the bonus for going out. It may be possible to continue playing for a few turns without a stock pile, as long as each player is able and willing to pickup and meld the previous player's discard plus the next six cards, but as soon as someone wants to draw and is unable to, the hand is over.