

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 players in partnership, and this will be described first; these rules were contributed by Bill Whitnack. A number of variations are then given - I would like to thank Barbara Bain, Dave Petrie, Brian Brouillette and Steve Simpson for providing information about these.

Although most people say that Hand and Foot is best played by four people in partnerships, it can also be played by six in two teams of three, or by any number of people playing as individuals.

Partnership Hand and Foot for Four Players

(based on a contribution from Bill Whitnack)

Players, Cards, Deal

Partners sit opposite each other. Five decks of cards are used, including two jokers per deck (270 cards in all).

Choose which partnership will deal first. After the cards have been thoroughly mixed, one partner takes part of the deck, deals four face-down stacks of 13 cards and passes them around the table in a clockwise direction until each player has a stack - the **hand**. Meanwhile the partner of the hand dealer takes another part of the deck and deals another four stacks of 13 cards each and passes them also in a clockwise direction until each player has a second stack - the **foot**.

The remainder of the undealt cards are put in a face-down pile in the middle of the table to form a **stock**. The top card of the stock is turned face-up and placed next to it to start a discard pile. If this card is a red three or wild card (two or joker) it is buried in the stock and a new card turned up.

The players' "foot" stacks are placed face down around the stock and discard piles - 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 play begins with the player to the left of the one who dealt the hands.

After the end of the play, the turn to deal 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 or more than seven. 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. You can make a meld of cards of any rank from A, K, Q, ... down to 4. [Threes have special uses](#) and cannot be melded in the normal way. Twos and jokers are "wild cards" and can be used as substitutes in melds, as long as there at least twice as many real cards of the rank of the meld as wild cards. Thus a meld of 3, 4 or 5 cards can contain at most one wild card and a meld of 6 or 7 can contain at most two. You can also make a meld consisting **entirely** of wild cards - twos and jokers. In fact you **must** make such a meld to be allowed to go out and win the deal. There are three types of meld:

- a **clean meld** has no wild cards
- a **dirty meld** has one or two wild cards (but not more than one unless there are at least 6 cards in the meld)
- a **wild meld** consists entirely of wild cards.

A meld of seven cards is complete and is called a **pile**. While melds are fanned out face up, complete piles are squared up and the cards placed on top shows the type - a red card for a clean pile, a black card for a dirty pile, and a joker for a wild pile (or a two if it contains no joker). Usually the complete piles of seven cards are kept in front of one member of a partnership (along with red threes), while the other partner keeps the incomplete melds of three to six cards.

You score points for cards you have melded, and lose points for any cards left in your hand 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 dirty piles, two clean piles and one wild pile (exactly seven cards in each);
2. your partner must have picked up their "foot" and played at least part of one turn from it;
3. you must ask partner's permission to go out. If 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

Bonus Points

There are also the following Bonus Points. Both teams score points for any complete piles they have made, in addition to the scores for the cards within the pile. Only the team that goes out scores the bonus for going out, obviously. The red threes count plus 100 points if they have been placed face up on the table with your melds, but minus 100 points if not (for example if you do not manage to pick up your foot before an opponent goes out, any red threes in it will score minus 100 points).

Each complete "Clean" Pile of 7 cards 500 points
Each complete "Dirty" Pile of 7 cards 300 points
Each complete "Wild" Pile of 7 cards 1500 points
For "Going Out" 100 Points
Each Red Three 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

Red threes do not count towards this minimum; nor does the bonus for a seven card pile, so for example seven sixes count only 35 points and are not sufficient for an initial meld.

The Play

The player to the left of the person who dealt the "hands" then starts the play, and the turn to play passes clockwise around the table until someone goes out. Each player, immediately before taking their first turn, must place any red threes they hold face up on the table and draw an equal number of cards from the stock pile to replace them. They then proceed to draw cards for their first turn. A turn normally consists of:

1. taking the top two cards from the stock;
2. optionally melding some cards or adding to your partnership's melds;
3. discarding one card on top of the discard pile.

If you draw a red three from the stock you should immediately place it face up on the table with your melds and draw a new card from the stock to replace it.

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;
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 (putting down red threes does not count as melding), 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 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.

A meld cannot contain more than seven cards, and a partnership is not allowed to have two incomplete melds of the same rank, but if you complete a pile, you can then start another meld of the same rank. Therefore if you have an incomplete meld of five or six cards on the table, you will not be able to pick up a card of that rank from the discard pile unless you have enough cards of that rank to finish the first seven card pile and make a new three card meld of the same rank. These cards must all come from your holding and the top card of the pile - again you are not allowed to make use of other cards you are about to pick up from the discard pile to satisfy the requirement.

Example: The top card of the discard pile is an eight, and there is another eight buried three cards deep. You have two eights and a two in your hand and a meld of five eights on the table. You are **not** allowed to pick up from the discard pile, because having completed your pile of eights, you will only have two cards with which to start your new meld of eights (the buried eight cannot be included until you have made a legal meld). If you had three eights and a two in your hand, you could use the top eight from the discard pile and one of your eights to complete

your eight pile, and start a new meld with two eights and a two. You could then pick up the next 6 cards of the discard pile and add the buried eight to your new meld as well.

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

You may discard a wild card (though in practice it is unusual to do so). In this case the next player could only pick up the pile with two matching wild cards (two twos to pick up a two, or two jokers to pick up a joker).

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 can 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 can 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.

Red threes count **for** the players if they are laid down on the table with their melds and **against** if not. Whenever you find that you are holding a red three you should immediately place it face up on the table with your melds and draw a replacement card from the stock. This can happen because you find it in your hand, or pick it up in your foot, or draw it from the stock, or (very exceptionally) pick it up from the discard pile (this could only happen if the original turned up card happened to be a red three). If your opponents "go out" before you have picked up your "foot" cards, any red threes in your "foot" will count against you, along with all the other cards it contains.

Black threes have no use except to block the next player from picking up from the discard pile when you discard them. Any black threes that you are left with at the end count 5 points against you. There is no way to get rid of them other than by discarding them one at a time onto the discard pile.

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 piles (two dirty, two clean and one wild), and your partner has picked up their foot and played at least part

of one turn 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, as long as each player is able and willing to take and meld the previous player's discard, but as soon as someone wants to draw and is unable to, the hand is over.