

# HAND & FOOT CARD GAME RULES

**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 that will be used by the SCE Community Ed Hand & Foot Card Club.

## 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. described below.

## Players, Cards, Deal

One more deck of cards than players are used to play Hand & Foot. If there are 4 players 5 decks are used, etc. 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.

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 the individual player. After a meld of three or more cards has been started, the player 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 laid down faceup vertically (like in solitaire), 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. Adding wildcards to a book is not allowed but a natural card may be added to a completed book or three naturals may be melded to begin a new book. (or a wild and 2 naturals). You must always have at least one card in your hand at all times, until you go out.

### **Red Threes**

Red threes may be laid down on a separate pile but only after your initial meld is played. The red 3 cannot be used for count to reach the required 50, 90, 120 or 150 initial meld. The red 3 counts as 100 points if laid down and minus 500 points if in your hand or foot when someone goes out.

### **End of Hand**

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". You must have at least two red (clean) books and two black (dirty) books to be eligible to go out. 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.

### **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 .....	100 points each

## Bonus Points

There are also the following Bonus Points. 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 (or more) .....	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;
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 need to wait until there are seven cards in the pile. 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 you have 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 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 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 on the pile, you may pick up your "foot" and begin playing with it at the start of your next turn.

### **Red & Black threes**

Red and black threes cannot be used in melds. The black card can only be used as a discard. The red three can be laid down on a separate pile, face up and counts as 100 each at the end of the game.

## **End of the play**

The play ends when either

- A player goes out by melding all of his or her remaining foot cards, or by melding all but one card and discarding the last card

As already explained you cannot go out until you have completed the required books (two red and two black)

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 pick up 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.