

Bolivia Rules

Bolivia is a three pack card game that can be played with 2, 3, 4, 5 or even 6 players! When you're playing with 2, 3 or 5 players, everyone plays his or her own game; when you're playing with 4 or 6 players, you play with a partner. When there are four players you and your partner are placed opposite at the table. In the event of 6 players, all partners are always separated by two other players. Three decks and six Jokers are required, making a total of 162 cards.

When there are 2, 3, 4, or 5 players, 15 cards are dealt to each player. When there are 6 players, everyone receives 13 cards.

Each player draws 2 cards at a time from the Stock but discards only one.

Melds and Canastas can be made up of both matching cards and sequences. There are two types of meld: groups and sequences. A group of seven or more equal cards is a **canasta**, and a sequence of seven cards is called a **samba**.

A sequence is a set of at least three natural cards of the same suit which are consecutive in rank. Sequences can be extended to a maximum of seven cards; a complete sequence of seven cards is called a **samba**. No further cards can be added to a samba. They may NOT contain Threes or Wild Cards. A sequence of seven cards makes a Sequence Canasta (Samba Canasta), scoring a bonus of 1,500 points. A Sequence Meld may only be made from the hand and NOT from the Discard Pile. Only five different sambas are possible in a suit, consisting of the ranks: 4-10; 5-jack; 6-queen; 7-king; 8-ace.

****No more than two Wild Cards** are allowed in a Mixed Canasta. A wild card may not be added to an existing Canasta.

****The Discard pile may NOT** be taken with one Natural and one Wild Card, nor by adding the top card of the Discard Pile to an existing Canasta. **When the top card of the discard pile is a wildcard, it may not be taken.**

Wild cards may be melded as a set of their own (three or more). There is no distinction between jokers and twos; both are wild, and may be mixed freely. A canasta of seven wildcards is a "Bolivia", and earns a 2500-point bonus. No additional cards may be added to a Bolivia.

The minimum points required for the first Meld are

- Up to a score of 1,495 must have a value of 50 points
- From 1,500 to 2,995 must have a value of 90 points
- From 3,000 to 6,995 must have a value of 120 points
- From 7,000 to 15,000 must have a value of 150 points

A game-winning score is 15000 points in Bolivia.

Canasta players should note that in this game there is no concept of freezing the discard pile. In fact, **the pile is effectively frozen all the time.**

You may never take the pile to add the top card to an existing group, unless you can produce two more natural cards of that rank from your hand.

Also note that you cannot take the pile or its top card to make a new sequence meld. The top card can only be taken if it fits onto the end of a sequence that is already on the table.

For example:

- if I have ♠6-♠7-♠8-♠9 melded and ♠10 is discarded by the player before me, I can take the discard;
- if I have ♠6-♠7-♠8-♠9 in my hand and ♠10 is discarded by the player before me, I **cannot** take the discard;
- if I have ♠6-♠7-♠8 melded and ♠9 in my hand ♠10 is discarded by the player before me, I **cannot** take the discard.

Two sequences of three cards already on the table **cannot** be merged into a samba when you meld the connecting card. However, you are allowed to merge two group melds of the same rank on your turn if you wish.

Going Out

At least one of the two canastas required to go out must be a sequence canasta (in Bolivia this is referred to as an *escalera*). If you do not yet have the required sambas or canastas, you must play in such a way as to retain at least one card in your hand. This means that you are not allowed to meld all the cards in your hand. If you meld all your cards except one, then instead of discarding it you must end your turn by saying **pass**, and keep the card. This is the only case in which you are allowed to pass instead of discarding.

If you are able to go out, you may if you wish first ask your partner for permission to end the game, by saying "partner, may I go out?" Partner says "yes" or "no" and you must abide by the answer. Alternatively, you are allowed to go out without consulting your partner. **If a player only has one card left but cannot go out, he may not take the Discard Pile.**

If no one goes out, eventually the stock will run out of cards. If there is just one card left in the stock, the next player who draws from the stock takes just that one card rather than the usual two, and completes his turn, melding and discarding in the usual way. When the stock is empty, play continues until the next time someone wants to draw cards from the stock (this will generally be at the beginning of the next player's turn, unless that player prefers to take the discard pile). As soon as a player wishes to draw from the stock but no cards are available, the play ends and the hand is scored, with no one getting the bonus for going out.

Red Threes

You **may** meld a red three as a single card, to be eligible for a bonus, but you don't have to. Every melded red three is worth 100 bonus points, but only when you have the required two sambas or canastas necessary to end the game. When you are lucky enough to have melded all 6 red threes, you receive a bonus of 1000 points instead of 600 points.

If you do not have the necessary sambas or canastas to end the game, for every melded red three you receive 100 penalty points.

If the round is finished and you have one or more red threes in your hand, you will be penalized with 750 points, regardless of the number of red threes that you hold.

You may also use the red threes to block the discard pile, in the same manner as you would do with the black threes or the wild cards.

Scoring

- any special bonuses or penalties for [red threes](#);
- each samba is worth 1500 bonus points;
- each pure canasta (without wild cards) is worth 500 bonus points;

- each mixed canasta (with a maximum of two wild cards) is worth 300 bonus points;
- the side that goes out scores 200 bonus points.
- If you're caught with any black threes in your hand when someone goes out, they each count 100 points against you.
- The object of the game is to reach a score of 15,000 points
- In order to go out a team must have at least 2 Canastas, one of which must be a Sequence Canasta

Strategy hints

It is wise to keep in mind that every Samba always contains an 8, 9 or 10. If you're trying to reach a Samba of spades for example, and a player has a Canasta with 2 eights, nines or tens of spades, the chance that you will succeed in forming a samba is small. Perhaps you would do better to rearrange your hand to form true Canastas.

When you have a sequence consisting of 8, 9, and 10, it is wise to meld them. Your partner may have the missing cards.

Remember, red threes are only bonus points when you have the two required sets to go out.

In Bolivia wild cards are not so important as in Canasta. Since they also block the discard pile, you may use them to stop the opponents obtaining the discard pile, especially if the discard pile contains cards you need to form your own Samba(s).