

MELDING SNOW

Classic Edition

a game for 2-4 players
by Jonathan Chaffer

Overview

Melding Snow is a climbing-style trick-taking game. Over the course of four hands, players attempt to play **melds** (particular combinations) of cards in order to win tricks worth points while also trying to shed all of their cards as quickly as possible. After four hands, the player with the most points wins!

Setup

Grab a standard deck of cards (52 cards plus 2 jokers). With fewer than 4 players, remove the 2s and 3s from the game.

Write player names in the clouds above the snowmen on the score card (the postcard or a printout from this PDF). Dry erase markers work well on the postcard!

Choose a player to lead the first trick.

A Game Round

Set aside the jokers, and shuffle the rest of the cards. Make face-down **gift piles** of 8 cards, 4 cards, and the jokers and place them where indicated below the score card. Deal each player 10 cards and set any remainders aside.

Playing a Hand

Each hand consists of a number of **tricks** of cards played to the table. A trick comprises a series of increasing **melds** from each player. The lead player may play any meld they like; subsequent players must either pass or play a higher meld. It is allowed to pass and then play a meld later in the same trick.

Once all players pass in sequence, the trick is over and the last player to play a meld wins all the cards in the trick, and leads the next trick. If the player who wins the trick is out of cards, then the lead passes clockwise to the next player who still has cards.

Melds

A meld is either any **single card**, a **set** of more than one card of the same value, or a **run** of more than one card of sequential values.

A meld is considered to be higher than another one if:

- It contains *more* cards, or
- It contains the *same number* of cards but they are of *higher* value.

A run is never higher than a set, nor vice versa. Both runs and sets are always higher than single cards.

Going Out

As soon as you play the final card in your hand, you have gone out and must claim a **gift pile**. Put these cards with the tricks you collected. The trick continues as normal (you may or may not win that trick).

When all players but one have gone out, the hand is immediately over. Award a gift pile (if any) to the player who remains. Any cards played to the final, incomplete trick or still in a player's hand are discarded and not scored.

Scoring

Your hand score is determined by the **snowballs** you collected. Each 6, 9, 10, Q, and Joker card is worth one snowball; each 8 card is worth two. Write your number of snowballs in any of the four score spaces on your portion of the score sheet.

At the end of the game, you receive 5 bonus points for each pair of adjacent score spaces where the top score is less than the bottom one. For this reason, while entering your score, you should predict whether that score is a high or low one, choosing a score space accordingly.

Game End

After four hands, add up all hand scores on your score sheet, plus bonuses for adjacent ascending scores. The player with the most points wins. In the event of a tie, the player with the highest score in the final hand wins. If the tie persists, the tied players share the victory.

Why "Classic Edition?"

This is a simplified version of **Melding Snow** you can play with a standard deck. The full version is for up to 6 players, has a custom deck, includes fun bonus cards, with more surprises! Watch out for it in 2025.

