

How To Play Sakura (Hawaiian Hanafuda)



A Hanafuda deck is similar to a standard poker deck in that, like poker cards, it can be used to play a variety of games, each with different rules and objectives. While a standard poker deck is made up of 52 cards divided into four suits (hearts, diamonds, clubs, and spades), A Hanafuda deck has 48 cards divided into 12 suits, with each suit representing a month of the year and containing various cards with different points or abilities.

Just as with a poker deck, where you can play games like Texas Hold'em, Rummy or even Go Fish, A Hanafuda card deck can be used for different games. **Hanafuda Hawaii Grinds** focuses on the Hanafuda game called **Sakura**, also known as **Hawaiian Hanafuda**.

Sakura is a Hanafuda card game popular in Hawaii, best suited for 2-4 players but can accommodate up to 7 players. Unlike many Hanafuda games with a 3-player limit, Sakura supports larger groups and even team play, making it a versatile and social option.

Setup

Determine the number of players and whether to play individually or in teams. Teams sit alternately. Agree on house rules, scoring, and game duration. Decide the first dealer by drawing cards (earliest month deals first).

The Deal

1. Player to the dealer's left shuffles
2. Player to the dealer's right cuts the cards.
3. Dealer then deals the cards face down to the players and face up on the table (field).
4. Remaining cards create the draw pile.

***If during the initial deal, four cards of the same suit appear face up on the field (This is called a Hiki), the dealer gets to keep them. See section on Hiki Rules.**

# of Players	Cards in Hand	Cards in Field
2	8	8
3	7	6
4	5	8
5	4	8
6	3	12
7	3	6
Remaining Cards create a Draw Pile		

Gameplay

The dealer goes first.

1. Player chooses one card from their own hand, trying to make a match with a card on the field.
 - A) If there is a match, the player must lay that card on top of the card on the field to show everyone a match was made.
 - B) If no match is possible the player must still choose a card from their hand and leave it face up on the field.
2. That same player then draws a card from the draw pile and tries to match that card to an existing card on the field. If no matches are made with the draw card, the player leaves that card face up on the field.
3. The player collects all the matches made during their turn, keeping the point cards and discarding the non-point cards in a discard pile.
4. Point cards are organized face up in front of each player.
5. The next player on the right starts their turn. Play proceeds counterclockwise.
6. The round ends once all the players run out of cards and the draw pile has been exhausted.
7. Due to the usage of a wild card, The Gaji Card, most rounds will end with two or more remaining cards on the field, See Gaji Card Section for specifics.

Gameplay for Teams

Same rules as above, however, teams share points, they cannot reveal their hands to teammates & they don't sit next to each other.

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Playing for Points Only - Strategy and Scoring

If you choose to play only for points and skip the yaku combinations, players count their total point cards at the end of each round. This simplified gameplay focuses on card point values, making it an ideal starting point for beginners or those familiarizing themselves with the Hanafuda Hawaii Grinds deck.

The player with the highest score becomes the dealer for the next round. The game ends after the agreed number of rounds or until the agreed time limit expires. The highest total score of all the rounds combined wins.

Playing for Points & Yaku - Strategy and Scoring

If you're playing for both points and yaku, the strategy shifts to creating yakus while collecting points throughout the round. Key elements include knowing which cards can form multiple yakus, blocking your opponent's opportunities, and balancing your own strategy with awareness of your opponent's moves.

There are 8 yaku in Sakura (Hawaiian Hanafuda), each consisting of 3 cards. For each yaku a player has at the end of a round, 50 points are subtracted from each opponent's score rather than being added to one's own score.

The player with the highest score becomes the dealer for the next round. The game ends after the agreed number of rounds or until the agreed time limit expires. The highest total score of all the rounds combined wins.

End of Round Points/Yaku Scoring Example:

Player 1 has 170 points but NO Yakus

170 - 100 points = 70 points

Player 1's final end of round score is 70 points

Player 2 has 110 points and 2 Yakus

Player 2's final end of round score is 110 points

50 points are subtracted from each opponent's score rather than being added to one's own score.

Breaking A Tie Score

If there is a tie with the dealer, the dealer wins. In all other ties, the player closest to the dealer's right wins. This applies to all game play variations.

Scoring Variation called "Victory Scoring"

Whenever a player wins a round, it is counted as a single (1) victory point, and once the agreed-upon number of rounds has been played, the player with the most victories wins the game.

Chu Victory - If a player wins and their score is 50 (or more) points higher than their opponent(s), then it is counted as a double victory. Therefore instead of gaining 1 victory point, the winner gets 2 victory points.

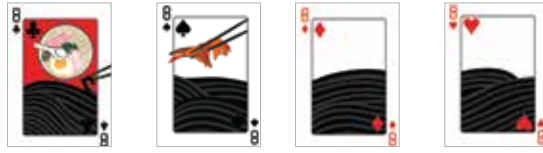
Basa Victory - If a player wins and their score is 100 (or more) points higher than their opponent(s), then it is counted as a triple victory. Therefore instead of gaining 1 victory point, the winner gets 3 victory points.

Author Side Note: Our family just used a Basa Victory really just for bragging rights and had no effect on scoring. Therefore, players can opt just to declare loudly and proudly "Basa!" to celebrate your win and really emphasize your opponent's defeat. If the defeat was really significant, say "O-Basa!!!!!"

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Hiki Definition: If a player is **initially dealt** all four cards of a suit (any combo of hand + field)



Example of a Hiki

Hiki Rules

(Pronounced He-Key) If a player is initially dealt all four cards of a suit (any combo of hand + field), they are guaranteed to that player.

- The player must declare before play starts that they have a Hiki, BUT they do not specify which cards on the field are a part of the Hiki. They simply state they have one... "I've got a Hiki."
- The player can not show their teammates which Hiki they have.
- During the player's turn, they can play their Hiki card from their hand to collect all the cards of that suit. Then they draw a card from the draw pile as normal.
- The player can choose any time during the game to play their Hiki cards, as long as it's their turn.
- The Gaji card from another opponent cannot claim any cards that belong to the Hiki.
- If four cards of the same suit appear face up on the field when the dealer initially deals out the cards at the beginning of the round, the dealer gets to keep them.

*** Having a Hiki will often cause the person claiming the Hiki to run out of cards in hand faster than the other players. Therefore once that player runs out of cards, their remaining turns consist only of drawing a card on the draw pile and playing it.

Gaji (Wild Card)



The Gaji (pronounced God-Gee), also known as the Lightning card in other Hanafuda games.

If initially dealt to you in your hand, it's a wild card. It can match with and take any field card (but cannot take a Hiki). The player can use the Gaji card at any point in the game, as long as it's their turn.

If a player draws the Gaji card, it is a wild card and they must play it right away on the field. If no match is made, the Gaji card remains face up on the field and this means it is not a wild card anymore and must be treated like any other card. Now, only other cards within its own suit can match with it.

Gaji & Hiki Because a Hiki is secret, another player may attempt to use the Gaji card to capture a Hiki card on the field. A Gaji cannot capture any cards belonging to a Hiki. In this circumstance, the owner of the Hiki must announce it when the Gaji's user tries to capture one of their cards. At this point, the owner of the Gaji must target a different card or simply leave the Gaji on the field.

Pro Tip: When used as a wild card to capture a card from a different suit, leave the Gaji on top of the card in your point section. This reminds everyone that at the end of the game any point cards left over from this captured suit goes to the player that used the Gaji card. Additionally, any left over cards from the Gaji suit goes to the player that used the Gaji.



Trivia: The name "**Sakura**" comes from one of its most powerful cards, the "Curtain Card". In traditional Hanafuda decks it's the card featuring red and pink cherry blossoms with a curtain. In the HanaFooda Hawaii Deck it's the card with Poke and Rice bowl blended with traditional elements. It's worth 20 points & included in two Yaku sets. Some players consider it a very powerful card when playing for Points and Yaku.

Sakura (Hawaiian Hanafuda)

Card Suits



January Sushi February ChiChi Dango March Poke April Mango May Sugarcane June Shaved Ice July Luau Boar August Saimin September Mixed Plate October Pineapple November Fishes & Spam December Poi



20 Points



10 Points



5 Points



YAKU 1
Poke,
Sushi,
Chi Chi
Dango



YAKU 4
Pineapple,
Luau Boar,
Saimin



YAKU 7
Purple
Banners



YAKU 2
Poke,
Saimin,
Mixed Plate



YAKU 5
Red
Banners



YAKU 8
Pineapple,
Shaved Ice,
Mixed Plate



YAKU 3
Red
Banner
with
words



YAKU 6
Sugarcane,
Luau Boar,
Mango



The King and Joker cards are not used in Sakura (Hawaiian Hanafuda). These cards complete a standard poker deck and can be used for other card games.

