



# BRAWL™

## real time card game

### Print-and-Play Rulebook

#### Introduction:

**BRAWL** is a real-time card game about quick reflexes and quick thinking, played with different character decks. Each deck represents all the tricks, strengths, and flaws of one character, and each player needs one deck to play.

Because BRAWL is played in real time, it's got all the action and flavor of a real fight!

Your cards will be mixed together during the game, but it is easy to separate them because each deck has a different back. We don't recommend playing BRAWL with more than one copy of the same character, because separating your decks will be much harder!

The rules below are for two players. Multi-player rules are at the end of this rules sheet.

#### Two Levels of Play:

There are two game modes in BRAWL. The first is "Training Mode," in which the players take turns. Training Mode is great for learning how all the cards work, or bringing a new player up to speed. After a little bit of training, you should move on to Tournament Mode.

"Tournament Mode" is more like a real brawl, because it happens in real time. Both players simply play the game at their own pace, not taking turns. This can get pretty fast! Experienced players in Tournament Mode will usually play a game in less than a minute.



#### How to Play:

Before you start, remove your three **Freeze** cards and one of your **Base** cards. The Base isn't labeled "Base," but it has a full-frame portrait of your character, with the character's name across the top, as shown in the figure below. Set these four cards aside, and shuffle the rest of your deck.

After shuffling, place your Freezes at the bottom of the deck, so that they will be dealt last.

Hold your deck face down in one hand, so that you can deal cards off the top with the other hand. The cards you deal will go into play, or on top of a discard pile in front of you.

Put your Base cards in the middle of the table, as shown below. Now you're ready to play!



#### The Object of the Game:

The object of the game is to win more Bases than your opponent, through strategic play of all the other cards. Note that your Base cards don't really represent "you," any more than your other cards do. They are just the foundations on which all other cards are played.

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Some players like to announce the significant cards that they play, so that their opponent is aware of the changes being made to the board. This is especially useful in expansion sets that use cards like **Reverse** and **Double**. This is purely optional, but can make for a more enjoyable game.

By the end of the game, the table might look something like the example below, with **Hits**, **Blocks**, and other cards played on both ends of every Base.

To score the game, count the number of Hit cards on both ends of every Base. Whoever has more Hits on their end of each Base (regardless of who played them) wins that Base. Whoever wins more Bases wins the game. Player 1 is winning all three Bases in the example below.

If a Base has the same number of Hits on both sides, or none at all, then that Base is won by the player who owns the Base card. This tie-break is the only time when ownership of cards matters in scoring.

*Draw Game:* If both players win the same number of Bases, the game is a draw. This happens only when there are exactly two Bases in play, each won by one player.



### Training Mode:

In Training Mode, players take turns, playing one card at a time. Decide randomly who will go first, then alternate turns for the rest of the game.

On your turn, you may do one of two things.

- 1: Deal the next card off your deck, and either play that card, or put it on top of your discard pile.
- 2: Play the top card of your discard pile.

The rules for playing each card are described later, under "The Cards." The game continues until every Base in play has been frozen (with a Freeze card), and then the game is scored as described above.

### Tournament Mode:

Tournament Mode is like Training Mode, except that players do not take turns. Instead, both players play their cards at the same time, and may go as fast or as slow as they like. This game is set up and scored the same as Training Mode, and you are allowed to make the same plays. You can also:

- 3: Pick up a card from the discard pile, and set it back down. This sometimes happens in the fast-paced Tournament Mode, when the card you want to play becomes unplayable after you pick it up!

Tournament mode is also called "Real-Time" mode. As in Training Mode, this game ends when every Base is frozen. Then, players take score exactly as described above.

### The Cards:

Every character's deck is composed of a unique assortment of cards, representing the strengths and weaknesses of that character. Most decks do not have all of the cards listed below. However, it still helps to learn them all, as you will soon encounter someone who has them!

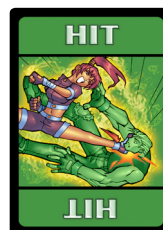
**Numbers:** Cards in most BRAWL decks are numbered. The number tells you how many copies of that card are in the deck. This system helps you get a feel for a new deck, and also tells your opponent a little about your deck when he meets it for the first time.

**Base:** Base cards are not labeled "Base," but have a portrait of the character, and the character's name across the top.



*How to Play:* Each player starts with one Base in play. You can play a new Base on either side of the Base(s) that are in play. However, there can never be more than three Bases on the table at once, so you are not allowed to play a fourth. (Due to the rules of Clear, there also can be no fewer than one Base in play.)

*Note:* You can play cards on both sides of *any* player's Base. Ownership of Bases only matters if you are breaking a tie, as described in scoring.



**Hit:** This is the most common card, and every character has plenty of them. Hits come in three colors: red, blue, and green. The game will be decided by how many Hits are played on each end of every Base.

*How to Play:* You can play a Hit on either end of a Base, or on another Hit or Hit-2 of the same color. You can also play a Hit on a Press, as long as the Hit matches the color of the Hits below it.

**Block:** Blocks come in the same colors as Hits: red, blue, and green.

*How to Play:* A Block can only be played on a Hit or Hit-2 of the same color. It prevents more Hits from being played in this string, because you can't play a Hit on a Block.



**Clear:** This card removes a Base, and every card played on it, from the game.

*How to Play:* Play the Clear on the Base that you wish to get rid of. Sweep all these cards to the side (the Base and all cards that have been played on it), completely out of the play area, to make room for new Bases.

*Restrictions:* If there are three Bases in play, you can not clear the middle one, because there is no direction to sweep it. If there is only one Base on the table, it cannot be cleared.

**Hit-2:** This card is similar to a Hit, with a few differences.

*How to Play:* You can only play a Hit-2 on another Hit or Hit-2 of the same color, but not on a Base or a Press! When scoring, this card counts as two Hits.

*Note:* In the iOS version of BRAWL, Hit-2 is called "SMASH."



**Press:** This card is an anti-Block. It removes the effect of a Block card in a string of Hits.

*How to Play:* You can play a Press on a Block of any color, and this allows you to play more Hits on that Press. The Hits you play on the Press must be the same color as the Hits below it.

*Note:* It is not legal to play a Block directly on a Press! This means you must Hit that string at least one more time before it can be Blocked again.

*Computer Game Note:* In the iOS version of BRAWL, a Press physically removes a Block. This makes the card less powerful, because the remaining Hit stack can be immediately re-blocked.

**Freeze:** Freezes will always be the last cards in your deck. They signify the end of the game.

*How to Play:* A Freeze is played directly on a Base card, but affects every card attached to that Base. Once frozen, a Base can have no more cards played on it, and can't be affected by any other cards, including Clears.

When every Base in play is Frozen, the game is over.



## Expansion Cards:

**BRAWL: Club Foglio** introduced a new category of card called the "Base Modifier," with **Hold**, **Null**, and **Reverse**.

**BRAWL: Catfight** added another one, **Double**. Like Freeze, which also technically belongs in the Base Modifier category, these cards are played directly on a Base.

While Hits and Blocks build up as strings on both sides, Base Modifiers are stacked directly on the Base. The order of the pile is significant, and the Modifiers are all considered to be played "on" the Base.



**Double:** This card makes a Base worth Double points.

Think of each Base as worth one point for scoring. If the Base has a Double, it is worth 2 points. If there are two Doubles on the same base, it is worth  $2 \times 2$  or 4 points, and so on.

**Null:** This card makes a Base worth Zero points.

Like a Double, this is like a multiplier on the Base value. So if a Base has a Double and a Null, it is worth  $2 \times 0$  or 0 points.



**Reverse:** This card changes the rules on this Base. The object is now to have *fewer* hits on your side. Ties are still broken in favor of the owner. So, if a tied Base is Reversed, it is still won by the owner of the Base.

Two Reverses will flip the rules back to normal, and so on.

**Hold:** As long as Hold is the topmost Base Modifier, this Base can't be Cleared. If the Hold is covered by any other Base Modifier (or by a Press, see below) then it no longer functions.



**More About Press:** The existence of Base Modifiers also gives new value to Press cards. Presses can not only cancel Blocks; they can also cancel all Base Modifiers.

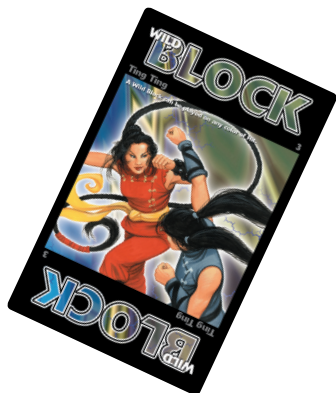
If you play a Press on a Base that has been modified, all Base Modifiers below the Press are canceled. Base Modifiers that are played after the Press function normally.

Note that Freeze can't be canceled like this because you specifically can't play any new cards on a Frozen Base.

*Rules Correction:* Contrary to the statement in the Club Foglio rulebook, it is no longer considered legal to play a Press on an unmodified Base.



**Wild Block:** The Shadowfist BRAWL deck (Ting Ting) contained a new card called a Wild Block. This is simply a Block that can be played on any color of Hit.



### Strategies and Other Notes:

*Playing on Both Sides:* Remember, it **is** legal to play cards on either side of any Base. You can Block your side if you want, or you can play Hits on your opponent's side. This may seem strange, but sometimes it's a good strategic move.

For example, if the top card in your discard pile is a Block, you can play a Hit of the same color on your opponent's side, because you know that you can immediately Block it! Or, you could use your Hits to start every string on your opponent's side with a color that she is weak in, to make it impossible for her to build a long string of Hits.

*Practice:* Learn the strengths and weaknesses of each deck. Some decks play slowly, some play very fast. Some rely on simple card sorting, while others require a good deal of strategy. Many of the tricks of your deck will only become apparent after you play several games.

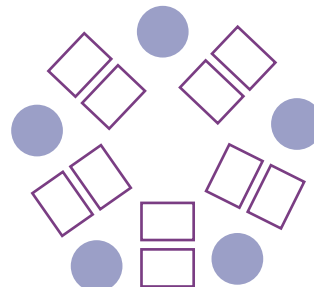
*Burning Cards:* If you are in a winning position, you can speed up the game by dealing quickly! As long as you are still ahead, don't play more cards, just discard. You want to reach your Freeze cards fast, so you can end the game before you lose your advantage. Conversely, when you are losing, you might hear your opponent start burning his deck. Figure out what card will turn the tables quickly, and burn to that card!

*Foul Plays:* In Tournament Mode, you might sometimes make a play which is illegal, simply because of the high speed of play. If so, simply pick up the card you mis-played, and (if necessary) reverse the game back to the point where you made the mistake.

If you ever make a foul play which is impossible to correct, you may forfeit the game. For example, you might play a Hit on top of a Block, but not notice the mistake until you take score. It is up to your opponent whether to let this mistake stand, or to claim victory by forfeit.

*Multi-Player BRAWL:* Players sit in a circle. Start the game with a pair of Bases between each pair of neighbors. The maximum of three Bases applies to each area.

You are playing only against the people on your immediate left and right. If the first game is tied, only those players who were tied for high score remain in the game, and they play another round.



*Tag Team:* In Tag Team BRAWL, players play in two teams of two or more players. The game is played like normal BRAWL, except:

- 1: The starting players' Bases are the first in play;
- 2: Each player has only two Freezes;
- 3: There can be as many as four Bases in play (and no Base can be cleared if it is blocked in); and
- 4: Only one player from each team is active at any given time.

Players "tag in" their teammates by touching them. They may trade off as often as they wish, and they are welcome to coach each other on the play of the game.

*Other Cards:* New cards with new functions may be added to this game, and these will be explained in the expansions that contain them.

*Final Thought:* Go slowly when you play against a beginner, and have patience when your opponent makes a mistake. Remember, you will never enjoy beating an opponent who has not played at his best!

**BRAWL™** was designed and produced by James Ernest, published by Cheapass Games, [www.cheapass.com](http://www.cheapass.com). Illustrations by Ryan Kinnaird. Playtesters included Dave Howell, Rick Fish, Joshua Howard, Jeff Vogel, Kathy Ice, Paul Peterson, E. Jordan Bojar, and Toivo Rovainen. *Special thanks to Elizabeth Fulda, the wicked stepmother of BRAWL!*

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The rest of your money would go to printers, distributors, retail stores, and freight companies. And most of those guys don't know anything about what makes a great game.

Mass-producing entertainment is a gamble. It's a convoluted way for creators to protect their intellectual property, by selling it in a way that is prohibitively expensive to counterfeit. And it's getting a little old.

Why do you pay \$30 for a board game? The story goes like this: the retail price of a game covers the cost of manufacturing it, and there is no way you could make your own copy for that price, to say nothing of the hassle of finding little wooden men in six colors. So, it's worth \$30 because it costs \$30, *QED*.

But the value in a board game isn't the manufacturing cost. It's the play value. Unfortunately, this means that some games are priced way out of whack with what they are worth. And because the big gamble doesn't always work out, some of your money helps pay for the stuff that goes straight to the dump.

I've decided to try a different gamble. I'm giving my games away for free. This way, you can read the rules, make a copy, and even play the thing, before you decide what it's worth.

If you do like my games, I hope you will send me some money. But I'm also hoping you will share this experiment with your friends. You are my sales force, my marketing department, my demo team.

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## How to Make BRAWL Cards:

*Each BRAWL deck contains 35 cards. You need at least two characters to play.*

*Below are a few methods for making your own cards.*

### Method 1: Labels on Playing Cards

*Print the cards on full-sheet labels, then cut the labels and affix them to a deck of playing cards.*

Full-sheet mailing labels are great. Get white ones, not clear, suitable for your type of printer. You can get them at any office supply store for about 25¢ each (in bulk) and they will be very handy for making cards and game boards.

Print the card sheets on full-sheet labels. Print the file at 95% so that the labels will fit easily on the cards.

You will be applying these labels to playing cards. The better the cards, the happier you will be. Good playing cards have rounded corners, laminated card stock, and a textured finish that keeps them from sticking together.

You can buy a new poker deck for around \$3, or you can find canceled casino decks for around \$1. Some casinos and card rooms give away their canceled decks for free, so keep your eyes open. The cards in the BRAWL PDFs are poker sized (2.5" x 3.5"), not bridge sized (2.25" wide).

Trading card games are usually printed on poker-sized cards, and sometimes your game store will have a blowout price on these cards. Sometimes they are even free. Compare the price of 54 junk common cards to the \$3 you'd pay for a new poker deck, and decide accordingly.

Cut the labels and apply them to the blank cards. These cards will be a little thick, but still fairly easy to shuffle and deal. Card backs are often an unnecessary step in the process, but in BRAWL they are very useful because they help you separate the cards quickly after each fight.

### Method 2: Card Sleeves

*Print the cards on plain paper and insert the paper, along with a stiffening card, into trading card sleeves.*

Sleeves made specifically for trading card games can be found online and at most hobby stores. To build this deck, print the cards at 100% on plain white paper. Thicker paper helps keep the images bright.

Cut them down to 2.5 x 3.5, keeping the white borders. Card backs probably won't help you, since most card sleeves have opaque backs. Instead, get sleeves with a different color or design for each deck.

Strengthen each card with a stiffener: a playing card or trading card behind the printed paper. This deck may be slightly more durable than the label deck described above, depending on the quality of your card sleeves.

BRAWL can be hard on cards, and it may be tough to keep your card sleeves in good fighting shape. This method may not produce the most durable results.

### Method 3: 110-lb Index

*Print the artwork directly on heavy cardstock, and then trim the sheets down to card size.*

A word of warning: regular card stock almost certainly isn't durable enough for BRAWL. This method is probably the worst technique for this particular game.

I have experimented with a few different card stocks for printing playable cards. Most of the Cheapass Games were printed on 110-lb Index, which is a grade that you can find at your local office supply store.

Aligning the backs with the fronts can be a challenge, depending on your printer. Hold the printed pages up to the light to make sure that your registration isn't too far off.

The challenge with this method is cutting the cards. You need a decent paper cutter, or access to one (at your job or the local copy shop).

Although it is tempting, do not begin by trimming off the outside of each page. Instead, make a single vertical and a single horizontal cut through the interior of the pages, creating four sub-sheets with multiple cards and raw edges.

Then, set the cutter depth (using the backstop that your cutter hopefully has) to 2.5," and trim each card or strip of cards to exactly this width. Next, set the back stop at 3.5" and finish the cards the other way.

If you have a corner rounding punch, you can make these cards much more shufflable by rounding each corner. These punches can be found in scrapbooking supply stores.

### Method 4, Print on Demand:

We have made the original set of BRAWL decks available as print-on-demand decks from artscow.com. Artscow's poker decks are not bad, though (generally) the prices are pretty steep. Each custom deck from Artscow costs \$9.99, minus a ubiquitous 25% discount, plus about another \$5 for shipping. Once you're on their mailing list, they will sometimes send you discount coupons.

Each BRAWL deck at Artscow has 52 cards. Because we couldn't make multiple decks in one package, we added some optional extra cards to each deck for the "heavyweight" versions of each character.

You can find links to the Artscow BRAWL decks on the BRAWL product page at [www.cheapass.com](http://www.cheapass.com).

To be clear, we don't get any of the money that Artscow collects, so if you use this method to make your own BRAWL decks, please remember that we'd still like a donation for our part in bringing you the game. Your help keeps us in business and making more awesome new free games.

### Method 5: Buy Them!

The **Catfight** and **Club Foglio** expansions are still in print, and BRAWL is also available on iOS. And, with luck, more awesome decks are coming soon!