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Game Prototyping
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Bluff, Paper, Scissors

ABSTRACT

Bluff, Paper, Scissors is a mutation of the classic *Rock, Paper, Scissors* game, but with a twist of wits. Two players start by informing their opponent of which hand they are (presumably) going to play: Rock, Paper, or Scissors. A battle of mindgames ensues, in which the players try to figure out whether or not their opponent is telling the truth about their next move. The players throw out their hands, and points are awarded to the winning player. But know this: Players are rewarded for being truthful!

MATERIALS

- You
- Someone else
- Your voices
- Your hands

- Piece of Paper (Optional)

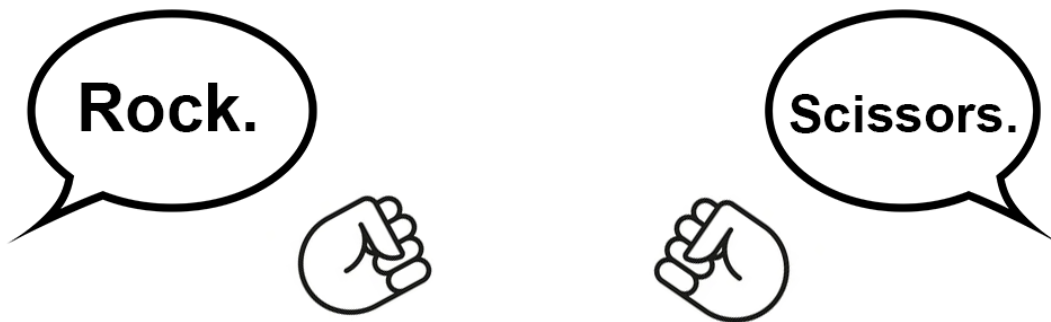
RULES

Bluff, Paper, Scissors is a two-player game.

The game follows the same basic rules of *Rock, Paper, Scissors*:

- Rock beats Scissors.
- Scissors beats Paper.
- Paper beats Rock.

Before each turn, the players will inform their opponent of what hand they “plan” to play. Players are allowed to lie.

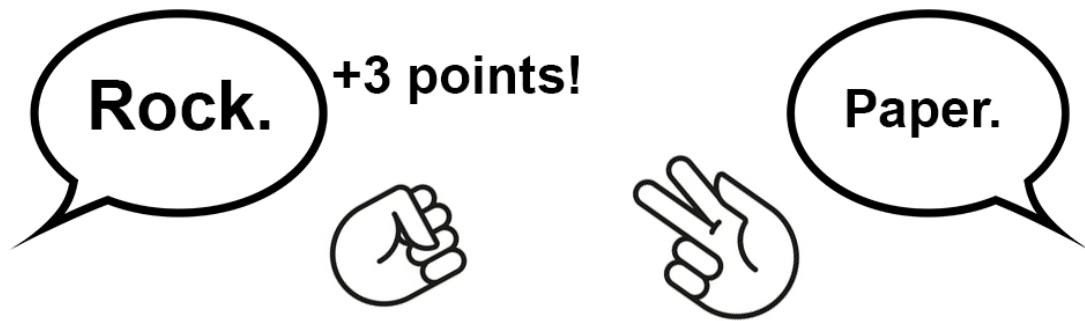


From there, players will play *Rock, Paper, Scissors* as normal. The person who throws out the winning hand gets **1 point**.

+1 point



However, in the event that a player wins a round **with the hand that they called before the round started**, they are awarded **3 points instead**. For example:



Remember, truthfulness is rewarded!

Rounds are played until someone obtains 10 points and wins the game. For shorter games, play to 5 points.

In the event of a tie, no points are gained.

DESIGN PROCESS - Modified Rock, Paper, Scissors

Game Modified: Rock, Paper, Scissors

The classic hand gesture folk game

When tasked with thinking about how to successfully modify *Rock, Paper, Scissors*, my first idea was to figure out the foundations the game stood on, and what makes the game so appealing to the players. *Rock, Paper, Scissors*, at its core, is a very simple game. It has a small, easy-to-explain ruleset, and rounds are often very short. But the appeal is not entirely its simplicity, rather its “fairness.” *Rock, Paper, Scissors* is an entirely chance-based game. No skill is required to play. When the only factor in play is luck and chance, players perceive the game to be fair to all parties involved. So much so that people will often use *Rock, Paper, Scissors* to settle simple disputes or arguments.

I had discovered the core values of the game. Chance, and simplicity. I asked myself, “How would I modify this game to keep these values intact?” I couldn’t simply add more options or hands to play, because that would lead to overcomplication. The same issue came with adding any other means of skill-based play. Not only would adding a skill factor into the game overcomplicate the game itself, but it would disrupt the balance between chance/skill-based play. To brainstorm ideas, I looked to other chance-based games.

The first game that I looked to was *Poker*. *Poker*, by all means, is a chance-based game. While the player is able to determine how they use the cards dealt to them, the cards are given entirely based on chance. Sometimes a hand could be horrible, sometimes it could be the best one on the table. So what is the factor that keeps the game interesting, and can potentially turn the worst cards into winning hands? Bluffing.

Bluffing was the perfect tool to modify *Rock, Paper, Scissors* with. While incorporating bluffing would lead to more player interaction and slightly longer games, it would not sacrifice simplicity or the chance-based gameplay. I would keep the exact same rotational “rock beats scissors” ruleset, to ensure the simplicity of the game remains the same. Plus, while bluffing would give players the “illusion” of strategy, the outcome of the game ultimately continues to remain up to chance. Just like in the original game, none of the players could know how the round would end until the hands were thrown.

I experimented with playing with this new ruleset, and I discovered that, almost every single time, players would lie about the hand they would play, and no one would even be remotely trusted about the nature of their hand. At that point, what was the point of incorporating bluffing? To combat this, I modified the rules to give the players incentive to be truthful about their next move. I added a point system, taking inspiration from the common “Best two out of three” house rule, and rewarded players more points for giving truthful hands. This fixed the problem perfectly, and truthful hands were being thrown out much more often. As a result, bluffing was successfully incorporated into the original game without sacrificing its foundational pillars of chance and simplicity.

