

ToSS- Trials of Staff and Sword
or “Cooperative Fantasy Beer Pong”
by Jeremy and Justin Warren
[Work in Progress]

In ToSS you play a hero questing to save villages, kill monsters, get loot, and other typical things heroes do. You do this by tossing ping pong balls into cups. A cup might represent a monster, an ally, or an object you need to interact with. If you're good at tossing a ball into a plastic cup, you'll become a warrior who can tear through targets with your dazzling martial prowess. If you're NOT good at this arbitrary party game skill, you'll become a wizard who can destroy enemies with spells instead.

This game requires no drinking or liquid whatsoever. Some groups enjoy weighting cups with liquid and drinking them when they are sunk; other groups use stones or coins to weigh down the cups so they won't be knocked over by players' tosses but keep the game entirely dry.

Materials Required

(2-4 Players, ~15 minutes for 1 scenario, or 1 hour for a campaign)

- 14 or more 16-ounce plastic cups (such as Solo cups)
- A table at least five feet in length
- At least two ping-pong balls
- A coin
- A 6-sided die
- Some sort of tokens (or more coins!)
- Something to weigh down your cups (stones, coins, marbles, liquids, etc)
- the game itself! (player mats, game mat, rules and scenario book)

Setup

Roll a die to determine which scenario you begin with: on a 1 or 2, begin on 1A. 3 or 4 begins on 1B, and 5 or 6 is 1C. Set up the cups according to the diagram on the scenario sheet.

Each player draws two cards and keeps one (or, in party mode, draws three and keeps two), and chooses to become either a Wizard 1 or Warrior 1 (their choice). Each player takes a token or coin to mark their level on the play mat.

Put a token or coin on “Round 1” of the scenario tracker, read the scenario’s Gameplay, and begin.

Gameplay

Most scenarios must be completed within four rounds. A round is made up of four turns. In a four player game, each player gets one turn; in a two player game, players alternate turns, each getting two per round.

In a three player game, each player takes one turn per round, then there is a Mercenary Turn in which the players make two tosses (players decide who actually makes the tosses). The Mercenary Turn does not affect anyone's level, and the mercenaries do not get items or abilities.

After all four turns have been taken, the round ends. Move the scenario tracker token to the next round.

Each player turn has two phases. First, you **Use Abilities**. Afterwards, you **Adjust Level**.

1. Use Abilities:

- You must use your class ability, and can use any number of item abilities. You can choose the order that you use your abilities.
- Abilities come in several types:
 - **Active**: can only be used on your turn
 - **Passive**: are always in effect
 - **Consumable**: can be used any time. Discard the item as part of using this ability.
 - **Triggered**: can be used any time the condition is met.
 - Triggered and Active abilities can be used once per turn unless otherwise stated.
 - If an item lets you use a class ability, you can still use your normal class ability as part of your turn.

2. Adjust Level:

- If you **sank** at least one cup, “level up as a Warrior”: increase your warrior level by one, or if you are a Wizard, become a level 1 Warrior.
- If you **did not sink** any cups, “level up as a Wizard”: increase your wizard level by one, or if you are a Warrior, become a level 1 Wizard.
- If you used an ability that makes you Change Level, do that instead of leveling up normally. If more than one thing would make you Change Level, you can pick which one takes effect.

Terminology and General Rules

- A “**toss**” means throwing one ball while standing behind the table. Drawing a line straight down from your elbow should hit the floor, not the table (aka “the elbow rule”)
- A “**hit**” happens when a ball touches a cup before touching the table.
- A “**sink**” happens when a ball lands *in* a cup before touching the table. **NOTE**: Sinking a toss also counts as a “hit” for purposes of items and abilities.
- In most cases, a toss is considered to have “**missed**” if it does not sink. This means that you can count a “hit” as a miss when it is beneficial for you to do so.

Scenarios, Items, and Medals

If the players defeat an encounter, they advance to the next level. Players advance through the scenarios in increasing number (from “1” to “4”). To determine the next scenario, once again roll a die and find the corresponding sheet (1-2 = A, 3-4 = B, 5-6 = C).

[PLAYTEST RULE: If the players lose an encounter, go ahead and continue on. For the sake of playtesting, go ahead and draw an item anyway...And don't forget to note what happened and let us know how it went.]

After the next scenario is determined, each player draws an **Item** card. Players can immediately trade items freely, but a player cannot start a scenario with more than two items, and cannot trade items during a scenario.

Level, items, and even turn order carry over between scenarios, so if a scenario ends on player 2's turn, the next scenario will start on player 3's turn. In a 3 player game, the Mercenary Turn always happens last, after all 3 players have taken their turns.

Each scenario has a “**Medal**” that can be earned for completing it in an especially competent or challenging way. If the players earned a medal, draw one item card, which can be given to any player (this still doesn't let a player start a scenario with more than two items).

After scenario four, if the players have earned at least one medal, they can attempt a Heroic Challenge. These are especially difficult scenarios intended only for heroes who have a good understanding of ToSS game mechanics and a lot of confidence in their own ability.

Alternatively, in “party mode” players simply attempt any scenario they choose, drawing three items and discarding down to two, with no trading before the scenario starts.

Appendix

Setting Up Your Table

Everyone's table is different, and the distance between players and cups affects the game's difficulty. Each scenario diagram indicates a play area divided into four quadrants: cups at the back of the play area should be about six feet from the toss line. The first quarter of the table should never have cups in it: that area is meant for level trackers, the scenario book, and player items.

If your table is shorter than six feet, put the backboard at the far end and measure six feet from there to find your toss line. If your table is longer than six feet, measure six feet from the near side and set up the backboard there.

Adjust your table and spacing to find the difficulty that feels right for your group.

Scoring?

For this playtest copy, you'll notice there is no scoring system in place. **Please share your thoughts on how you'd like to see this implemented - or if it should be at all!**