



CRAB FRAGMENT LABS

6-26-2022

Welcome!

BRAWL is a fighting game of strategy and reflexes, played in real time (without turns).

Each deck represents all the tricks, strengths, and flaws of one character, and each player needs a deck.

The characters in this set are juniors and seniors at Jackson Park High School. They love the challenge and discipline of mixed martial arts.

The basic rules are designed for two players. Multi-player variants are found at the end.

Two Modes of Play

There are two playing styles in **BRAWL**. The first is *Training Mode*, in which the players take turns, more like a normal card game. Training Mode is good for learning how all the cards work, or for learning the strengths of a new deck. But after training, you should move on to *Tournament Mode*.

Tournament Mode feels more like a real fight. Players play their cards as fast as they want, without taking turns. Experienced players in Tournament Mode can play a game in less than 30 seconds!

Speed isn't the only factor in Tournament Mode. The more complex your deck is, the more strategy you will need to play it well. To become an expert player, you must learn all your deck's tricks, and be quick enough to use them at full speed.

In Tournament Mode, it's possible for the table to get quite messy. If you play your cards as cleanly as you can, the game will go better for both players.

Also, if someone makes a mistake and needs time to correct it (for example, dropping a card on the floor), it's polite to stop until both players are ready to proceed.

Knocking to Begin: To establish that both players are ready to start the game, it is customary to knock on the table. Once both players have knocked, they each know that the other is ready to begin.

Calling Cards: Some players *announce* the significant cards they play, so that their opponent is aware of big changes to the board. This is optional, but it can make for a more enjoyable game.

Setting Up

Before you shuffle, separate out your three **Freeze** cards and one of your **Base** cards. Set these four cards aside, and shuffle the rest of your deck.

After shuffling, place your Freezes at the bottom. They will be dealt last.

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

Put each player's Base card in the middle of the table, side by side, as shown below. Now you're ready to play!



Figure 1: The opening setup.

Object of the Game

The object is to win more Bases than your opponent, by playing more Hit cards on your side.

In the middle of a game, the table might look something like Figure 2, below, with strings of cards building off the ends of every Base.

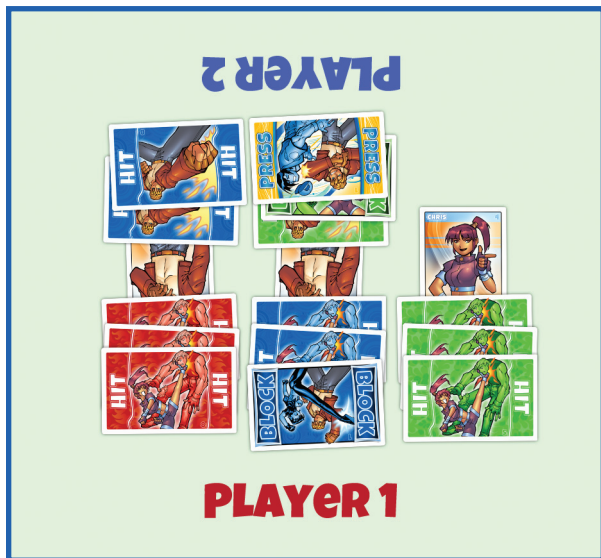


Figure 2: A game in progress.

When the game is over, you will count Hit cards. Whoever has more Hits on their side of each Base wins that Base, and whoever wins more Bases wins the game. For example, Player 1 is winning all three of the Bases in Figure 2.

Tied Bases: If a Base has the same number of Hits on both sides, or if it has no Hits at all, then that Base is won by the player who owns it.

Draw: If both players win the same number of Bases, the game is a draw. This happens when exactly two Bases are left, and each player wins one.

How to Play

Training Mode: In Training Mode, players take turns playing one card at a time. Decide randomly who will go first, then take turns.

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

1: Draw the next card off your deck, and either play that card or put it on top of your discard pile (on the table in front of you), OR

2: Play the top card of your discard pile.

The rules for playing each card are described below. The game continues until every Base in play has been *frozen*, and then the game is scored as described above.

Note: Even in Training Mode, one player may reach her Freeze cards long before the other. This is simply because her opponent played more cards from his discard pile.

Tournament Mode: Tournament Mode is different from Training Mode, because players *do not take turns*. Instead, both players start at the same time, and they may play their cards as quickly as they like.

This game is set up the same as Training Mode, and you are allowed to make the same plays. You can also:

3: Pick up a card from your discard pile and set it back down. This never happens in Training Mode, but it sometimes happens in Tournament Mode when you grab a card and then realize that it is no longer playable!

Tournament Mode is also called “Real-Time” Mode. As in Training Mode, this game ends when every Base is frozen.

The Cards

Every **BRAWL** deck contains a unique assortment of cards, representing the strengths and weaknesses of the character. Your deck might not have all of the card types listed below. However, it still helps to know them all, because you will encounter them soon enough!

Every card in the deck has a small number in the artwork. This number tells you how many *copies of that card* are in your deck. Each deck also comes with a recipe card, showing the character’s complete deck list. This information will help you get a feel for a new deck, and it can also help you learn about your opponent’s deck before the game begins.



BASE: Base cards are the foundations upon which all other cards are played. The object is to win more Bases than your opponent. You can play a new Base on either side of the Base(s) already 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.

Note: Your Base cards don’t really represent “you,” any more than your other cards do. That is, you’re not hitting yourself. They are just the foundations upon which all other cards are played.

HIT: Hit is the most common card, and every character has plenty of them. The game will be scored by how many Hits are played on each Base.

Hits come in three colors: red, blue, and green. You can play a Hit on either end of any Base, or on another Hit of the *same color*. Strings of Hits must always be only one color.



FREEZE: Freeze is a Base Modifier, which means it is played directly on a Base. Freezes will always be the last cards in your deck.

Once frozen, the Base and all cards can on that Base have *no more cards played on them*, and can't be affected by any other cards, including Clears, Presses, etc. When every Base in play is frozen, the game is over.



HIT-2: A Hit-2 is like a Hit, but it can *not be played* on a Base, only on a Hit (or Hit-2) of the same color. A Hit-2 counts as two Hits in scoring. Cards that can be played on Hits can also be played on Hit-2s.

BLOCK: Blocks stop Hits. They come in the same colors as Hits: red, blue, and green. A Block can be played only on a Hit of the *same color*. It prevents more Hits from being played in the string, because you can't play a Hit on a Block.



DODGE: A Dodge is played on a Hit (or Hit-2), and nullifies *all cards below it*. When scoring the stack, ignore everything below the Dodge. (If the Dodge wasn't played on a Hit or Hit-2, then it was not played legally and you can ignore it.)



Hits on a Dodge: Because the Dodge erases all the cards below it, you can play anything on the Dodge that you could play on a Base, which includes a Hit of any color.

Press on a Dodge: You can play a Press directly on a Dodge, and it will erase the Dodge and reinstate all the cards below it. (This works only if the Press is played directly on the Dodge.)

Dodging Your Own Hits: Nothing stops you from playing a Dodge on your side. Which is good because...



CLEAR: This card removes a Base from play, along with every card played on that Base.

When you play a Clear, sweep all the cards to the side, along with the Clear itself, to make room for new Bases.

Restrictions on Clear:

- 1: If there are three Bases in play, you can not clear the *middle* one.
- 2: If there is only one Base on the table, it cannot be cleared.
- 3: You can't clear a frozen base. (See Freeze.)

PRESS: A Press nullifies Block, Dodge, and Reverse cards.

Press on a Block: You can play a Press on a Block, and then treat the stack as though both the Press and Block were not there.

This means you can play any card on the Press that you could play on the card below the Block. Since that card is a Hit, that list includes Hits, Hit-2's, and Blocks of the same color.

Press on Other Cards: Press can also nullfy Dodge and Reverse cards, described below.



REVERSE: A Reverse is another Base Modifier, like Freeze, which is played directly on a Base.

A Base with a Reverse is scored backwards: the winner is the player who has the *fewest* Hits on their side.

Ties: If a Reversed Base is tied, it is still won by the *owner* of the Base.

Reversing a Reverse: If two Reverses are played on the same Base, the second one cancels the first, and the Base is scored normally. A third one reverses it again, and so on.

Pressing a Reverse: Presses can cancel Reverses. If you play a Press directly on a Reverse, it cancels *all* the Reverses below it. (Similar to how a Dodge cancels all cards below it.)

Other Cards: Over time, BRAWL has introduced other special cards including **Hold**, **Null**, and **Wild Block**. The rules for those cards are explained in the decks that contain them.

Strategy and Notes

Playing on Both Sides: You will notice that it is legal to play cards on *either side*. You can Block your own Hits if you want, or play Hits on your opponent's side of the table. This may seem odd, but sometimes it's the right way to play.

For example, if the top card in your discard pile is a Block, you can play a matching Hit on your opponent's side, and then block it immediately. Or, you could start every stack on your opponent's side with a color she is weak in, to make it harder for her to play Hits.

And of course, the Reverse cards mean sometimes you want to have more Hits on the opposite side!

Research: Learn the strengths and weaknesses of your opponent's deck. Some characters rely heavily on specific cards, while others are more balanced. Some characters have plenty of Hits in every color, while others might be short in a specific color (or two).

Practice! Learn the strengths and weaknesses of your own deck. Some decks play slowly, and some play very fast. Some rely on simple moves, some have clever combinations, and still others require you to improvise in every game.

Burning: If you are in a winning position in Tournament Mode, start discarding quickly! You want to reach your Freeze cards and finish the game before you lose your advantage.

Note that you are still required to turn over your cards one at a time, but a good player can do this quickly when they are in a good position to win.

When you are losing, you may notice your opponent start to burn cards. When you do, take a good look at the situation: you may be able to turn the game around with a single play. In this case, you can start burning cards as well, looking for the card you need.

Mistakes: In Tournament Mode, you might sometimes make an illegal play, simply because of the chaos of the game. If you do, you can usually pick up the card you misplayed, and (if necessary) step the game back to the point where you made the mistake.

If you notice a foul during scoring, such as a Hit played on a Block, the player who played that card forfeits that Base.

If you make a foul play that is impossible to correct, you may forfeit the game. For example, if you clear the only Base in play, and can't rebuild it, you have made a foul that you can't correct. It is up to your opponent whether to let this foul stand, or to win by forfeit.

Multiplayer BRAWL

Here are two ways to play **BRAWL** with more than two players: **Round Robin** and **Tag Team**.

Round Robin: Round Robin is like several connected games. Three or more players sit in a circle as shown below. Put two Bases between each pair of neighbors.

You play only against people on your immediate left and right. The maximum of three Bases applies to each zone. The winner is the player who wins the most Bases overall.

If the first round is tied, which happens often, then the tied players play another round. This slowly reduce the field of competitors until a single player wins.



Figure 3: A Five-Player Round Robin Setup.

Tag Team: Tag Team is a raucous variant played by two teams of two or more players. It is set up like a normal game, except for the following rules:

- 1: Each player uses only two Freeze cards.
- 2: There can be as many as four Bases in play.
- 3: Only one player from each team is active at any given time. Players "tag in" their teammates by touching them on the shoulder.

Players may trade off as often as they wish, and are welcome to coach each other on the play of the game.

BRAWL™ was designed by James Ernest and published by Cheapass Games in 1999. Illustrations by Ryan Kinnaid. Edited by Carol Monahan, Cathy Saxton and Mike Selinker. Playtesters included Dave Howell, Rick Fish, Joshua Howard, Jeff Vogel, Kathy Ice, Paul Peterson, E. Jordan Bojar, Toivo Rovainen, Dan Tibbles, Carol Monahan, and Owen Jungemann. This edition was crowdfunded on Kickstarter in July 2015. Special thanks to Elizabeth Fulda, the wicked stepmother of BRAWL!

This edition by Crab Fragment Labs, 2022