

# 1,2,3,4... HOW TO DECLARE A PROPER THUMB WAR.

*Brought to you by the World Wide Thumb Wrestling Federation.*

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## ORIGINS OF THUMB WRESTLING.

To trace the beginnings of Thumb Wrestling one needs to explore the evolution of the opposable, or prehensile, thumb itself.



Most often associated with *Homo habilis*, the forerunner of *Homo sapiens*, the thumb is suggested to have evolved from *Homo erectus* via a series of intermediate anthropoid stages. This is a much more complicated link which is why we've explored it more in our companion text, "The Thumb Wrestlers's Guide to Human Evolution."

In short, the most important factor leading to the habile hand (and its thumb) is the freeing of the hands from their walking requirements, giving the opposable thumb the opportunity to develop the more accurate, fine motor skills we enjoy today and have employed for thousands in years in what the Romans referred to as "Pollex Pugna" or Thumb Wrestling.

## CHANTING OPTIONS

When two opponents wish to engage in a Thumb Wrestle, a prologue is customarily recited. The reason for this ritual is two fold. First, it helps mentally prepare both players. And secondly, it acts as a cue to begin the fight.

The lyrics to these chants can be changed, but the structure is always the same. It includes a melody in 4/4 time, a verbal count down and a sprinkling of intimidating words. We encourage you to use any of the examples below before your next Thumb Wrestle, or try making your own.

“ One, two, three, four, I declare a thumb war. ”

“ One, two, three, four, I declare a thumb war. Five, six, seven, eight, try to keep your thumb straight. ”

“ One two three four, let's have a thumb war. Five, six, seven, eight, nine, first to three — the loser can't whine. Ten, eleven, twelve and more, if you win you'll settle the score. Cause thumb war starts this minute right now, and if you lose don't have a cow. ”

## HOW TO PLAY

**1** Players hook the four fingers of their right (or left) hand to the matching fingers of their partner, ensuring all digits are clasped tightly.

**2** To begin the match both players recite a ceremonious chant or mantra. Variations on this script are possible. For alternatives, please refer to the "Chanting Options" section in this handbook. After the preparatory mantra has been proclaimed, the match is ready to commence.

**3** The objective is to pin down the opponent's thumb for three seconds, all the while avoiding the same outcome. The first player to successfully pin their challenger is declared the winner.

**4** Although there is no time limit, forfeiture will be called if any opponent should break the handhold.

## THREE-WAY THUMB WRESTLE AKA "THREES"



In this variation players still use the traditional two-way thumb wrestle grip. However, instead of trying to pin just one challenger, they must pin both thumbs in order to be declared the winner.

## PLEASE NOTE:

Albeit an unfair advantage, opponents CANNOT be discriminated based on thumb length or hand dexterity.

Historically, opponents with unusually long thumbs have a disproportionate number of wins. Players with a propensity to "left handedness" are also at a disadvantage, seeing as the majority of games are played with a wrestler's right hand.

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## BEST PRACTICES

The following are not necessarily hard and fast rules, but some policies that members of the Thumb Wrestling community encourage new members to follow whenever possible.



**1** Nails should be kept well maintained and preferably short.

**2** Sweaty palms should be whipped dry before each match.

**3** Games are played in close proximity. With that in mind, breath mints, gum or any other halitosis fighting agent is strongly recommended.

**4** While not officially a board-sanctioned rule, it is strongly suggested that any double-jointed player profess their special skill before engaging in a wrestle.

## CHEATING

This is the dirty underbelly (or under-palm in this case) of Thumb Wrestling. A common trick is to use one's index finger, which is typically set aside with the other fingers during a match, and move it horizontally, sweeping over the opponent's thumb in a sneak attack. This tactic is referred to as a "snake," "buddy," or more commonly as a "tag team." Moves such as these are strictly prohibited, unless otherwise agreed upon by both parties at the beginning of the fight.



Twisting an opponent's arm to gain leverage or introducing the player's other, unused hand, into battle has also been employed. The Thumb Wrestling community frowns upon both these moves.

Finally, fast counts along with a general misunderstanding of the game's rules (i.e. whether the match begins after the abbreviated "1,2,3,4" chant or the extended "5,6,7,8" chant, or whether the pin count is to 3 or 4) also complicate the game's fairness.

As a general rule of...thumb, wrestlers must follow the credo taught by mothers around the globe - honesty is the best policy and to always play nice with others.

## STRATEGIES

Practice does make perfect. Thumb wrestling is no exception. With time you'll hone your skills and be able to engage in demanding, more challenging battles. Below are just a handful of the tactics you can attempt in your next battle.

**The Quick Strike** - where an opponent's thumb is pined the moment the match begins. Cat like reflexes may be necessary.

**The Rope-a-dope** - best achieved by taking a more relaxed approach. The theory behind this move is that your thumb "hangs back," out of reach of your opponent, thus making the challenger thumb dance about madly. Once you've successfully tired out your adversary you strike, pinning him/her down for victory.

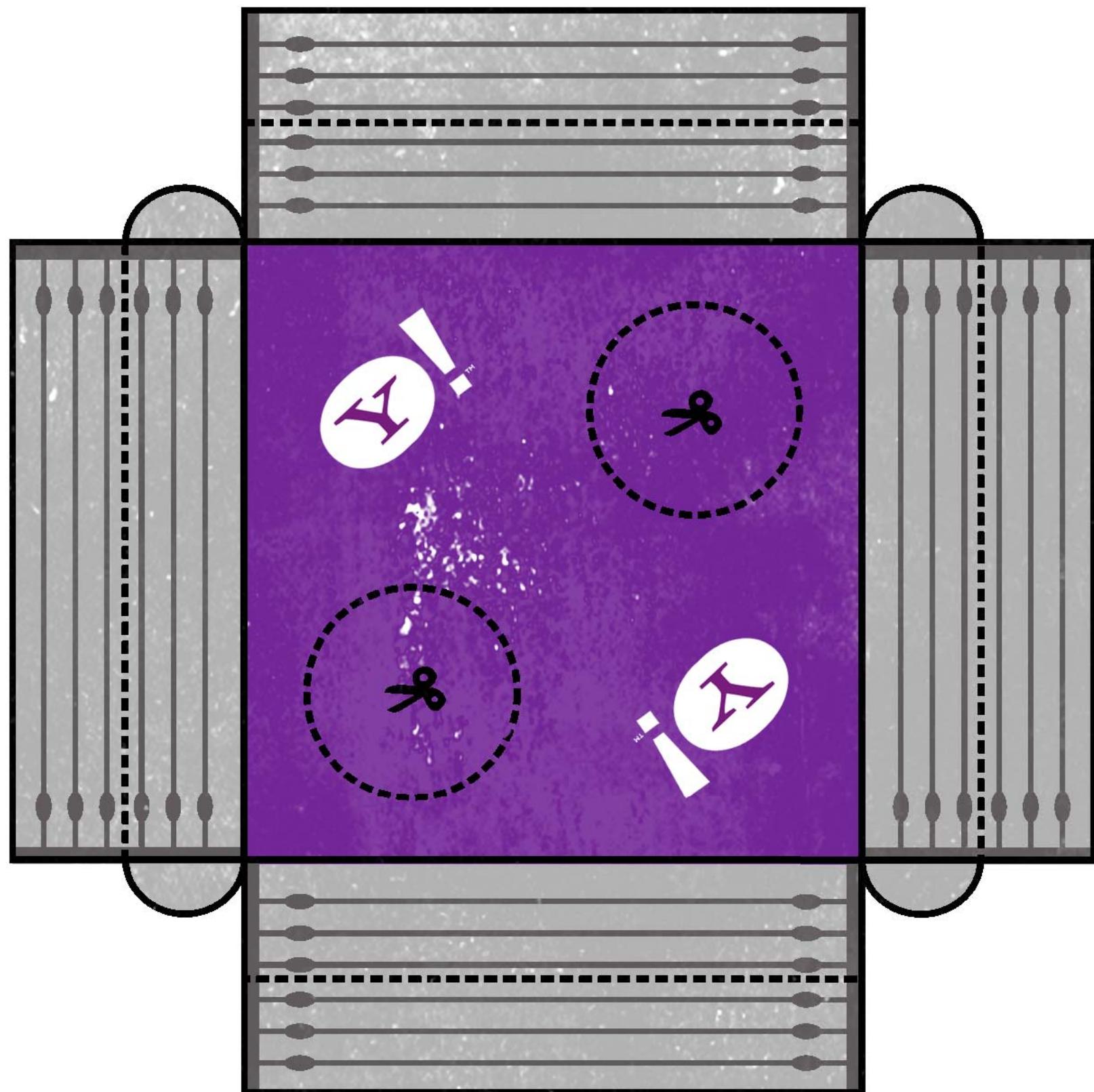
**The Fakeout** - you must allow your thumb to waver into your opponent's reachable territory. This might include such dangerous moves as lying flat altogether. When your challenger takes the bait and makes a move you must react quickly, pulling a swift reversal and pinning his/her thumb before they can pin yours. A dangerous move that should only be attempted by a seasoned wrestler.

## THE THUMB WRESTLER OATH

This is our credo and the principals by which all Thumb Wrestlers must hold themselves up to.

**“** In the spirit of competition, I promise that I shall take part in this Thumb Wrestle by respecting and abiding by the rules that govern it, in the true spirit of sportsmanship, for the glory of the game and for the honor of thumbs everywhere. **”**





- 1 Cut-out this wrestling mat and the two circles on the mat.
- 2 Fold the ropes up and back down along the dotted line.
- 3 Glue, tape or staple the tabs into the folded ropes.

