The Beginner’s Guide to Power Struggle

The ping pong game for everyone
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Introduction

The game of Power Struggle is precisely as it’s named; a battle for ping pong power! In this game, all players form a circle around the table with two players at each end designated to start the game. The game can be played with as many players who can fit comfortably around one table. Only one player triumphs in this game.

The game begins with one person serving the ball live. From there, the circle rotates counterclockwise around the table with each person returning the ball as their turn presents itself on each side of the table.

This is a continuous game where the ball is hit back and forth much like typical ping pong. But this game gets anything but typical.

The main principle is that each player gets four (4) strikes. A strike constitutes not successfully getting the ball back to the opposite side of the table. As we’ll explore in a moment, you as the ball returner are not the only one who can return your own hit. Each player keeps track of his strikes. When your strikes are up, you’re out of the Struggle.
Rules

The following rules and gameplay variables are what make this game unique. So read carefully and follow the illustrations.

The basic rule of ping pong always applies in this game – the ball cannot strike one side of the table twice (x2) before returned successfully to the other side.

Assisting
What makes this game unique is the ability for all players to assist in the action. The rules for assisting are easy but very important.

Over The Table
This rule pertains mainly to assisting. We must first establish your understanding of ‘over the table’ so you know when assisting conditions are legal. ‘Over the table’ is an invisible zone which starts at the surface of the table and stretches straight up to the ceiling. The returner has first rights to anything over the table.

If a ball has left, or is anticipated to leave the ‘over the table’ zone, it is then legal for other players to assist [see illustrations below]. If it's deemed another player has made an illegal assist ‘over the table’, resulting in a strike for the returner, then the ball is dead and the guilty player takes a strike. If the illegal assist happens to keep the ball alive, then it can be frowned upon, but no strikes are handed out because no strikes were incurred. This rule puts responsibility on the group to determine if a player has made an illegal assist.
cont. - Rules

Players can “assist” returners when conditions are met. Assisting can be the act of hitting a return volley, hitting the ball back in a playable area for the current returner, keeping the ball alive for another assist to happen, or killing the ball dead. Assists are not counted toward the designated returner’s hit, and there is no assist limit as long as the ball returns to the other side of the table successfully. Assisters bear no responsibility for the act of assisting, and only the responsible returner can gain a strike.

Think of assisting as a ‘mode’ that switches on and back off again once conditions are met.

Once a ball has been assisted, ‘over the table’ rule does not apply again until that ball has successfully returned to the other side of the table. Assisters can do as they’d like with the ball until it returns to the opposite side (i.e. helping or hurting). It’s solely the returner’s responsibility to get the ball back across, no matter its location or direction around the table.

It’s important to note here that the responsible returner IS allowed to hit the ball again once another player has assisted.

Wall

* The ball has successfully made it back to the other side of the table. Play resumes normally with this side’s returner hitting the ball.

* Assisting turns ‘off.’
**Surfaces**

You might think when the ball hits the floor it’s dead – think again! Hits and assists can be made off the wall, floor, ceiling or even a fellow player.

An easier way to remember is that a ball is never dead until it has:
1. struck the floor in succession (x2) without hitting another surface or paddle in between [see illustrations]
2. struck one side of the table twice (x2) before being returned successfully to the other side [see illustrations]
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**New Ball**

When a player makes a strike, the ball is officially dead. Once a ball is dead, the player who made the strike is free to serve a new ball as quickly as he'd like as long as he vocally declares "new ball" at a reasonable level. He may locate a new ball, or more often use one he's carrying himself. If the player does not declare "new ball," any resulting point on the returner is null and void.

**Quick Rules**

1. Group rotates counterclockwise
2. Four (4) strikes per player
3. The returner has first rights to anything over the table -- except during an active assist
4. Anyone can assist once the ball moves away from the table
5. There's no limit to the amount of assist hits to return a ball
6. Ball is not dead until it hits table or floor twice in succession
7. Ball is dead if the same player hits it two (2) times in a row
8. The champion of the Struggle is honored with pride and praise (and often gets to choose lunch)!
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Alternate Version - A.K.A. Double Struggle

If your crew of players is too large for a standard game of Struggle, we’ve developed a modified version for larger groups. It’s called Double Struggle. It’s played with all the same rules and standards as typical Struggle. The only difference is instead of one big circle around the table, you play with two rotating circles at each end of the table. There is no rotating around the table, but rather within your circle.

Each circle can rotate in the direction it feels most comfortable. If one of the circles commits three (3) consecutive strikes, then an eliminated player from the opposing circle is allowed to re-enter the game with one strike remaining. A player can only re-enter the game a single time.

When one of the groups gets down to a single person, you can stop the game, and reconvene in typical Struggle fashion with all remaining players rotating around the table in a single circle. Play on normally until one player is victorious.
Variables

Modifiers
Mix up this game by using a “modifier.” A modifier is anything that introduces a new challenge to the game or playing surface. Common modifiers are objects, such as paddles or cups, placed on the table. These give an added dimension to the gameplay, and can change the trajectory of the ball for an exciting game. Other modifiers include hitting with your non-dominant hand and reversing the rotation direction during a game.

Assisting Back In
Eliminated players remain around the perimeter of the game. Any eliminated player (or players) who helps guide a successful assist across to the other side of the table is allowed back into the game with one strike remaining. A player can only assist back into the game a single time. Choose your assisting moment wisely.

Helpful Tips

1. Do NOT attempt to play this game with more than one ball. We’ve tried. It’s a disaster.
2. As players are eliminated from the game, it is often necessary to realign the circle with even numbers of players around the table.
3. After committing a point, take a deep breath before serving the ball live again. Servin’ angry leads to missed serves and sad points. That’s not how you want to exit the game is it?
4. Karma is a central theme of this game. Be careful. It WILL bite you in the a**.
5. Be on your toes. This game can get moving quickly, and it’s important to know when it’s your hit.
6. Make sure you play with a sturdy table. Lunging on the table (although discouraged) does sometimes happen. Just be careful and make good decisions.
7. It’s fun to incentivise this game by letting the winner pick the lunch spot or some other prize.
8. You can raise or lower the amount of strikes you get in a game. If you’re playing with a small group, you can extend the game by playing with six (6) strikes. We like four (4) as we’ve noticed going higher can sometimes be harder to keep track.
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