

# BOYS' LIFE

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Robert Litton Is Yo-Yo Boy.  
His Brother, Mark, is  
King of String.  
Together, They're the

**YO BROS.**







# THE YO BROS.

How did  
Mark and  
Robert  
Litton get so  
good at  
yo-ing?  
Yo-practice,  
yo-practice,  
yo-practice.

WELCOME to Yo.

To play this sport, you won't need muscles like Hulk Hogan. You won't need tons of money for gear. You can do it just about anywhere, anytime with anybody—or all alone.

If you have good timing and hand coordination, that will help. But with enough practice, almost anyone can become a Yo-lympian.

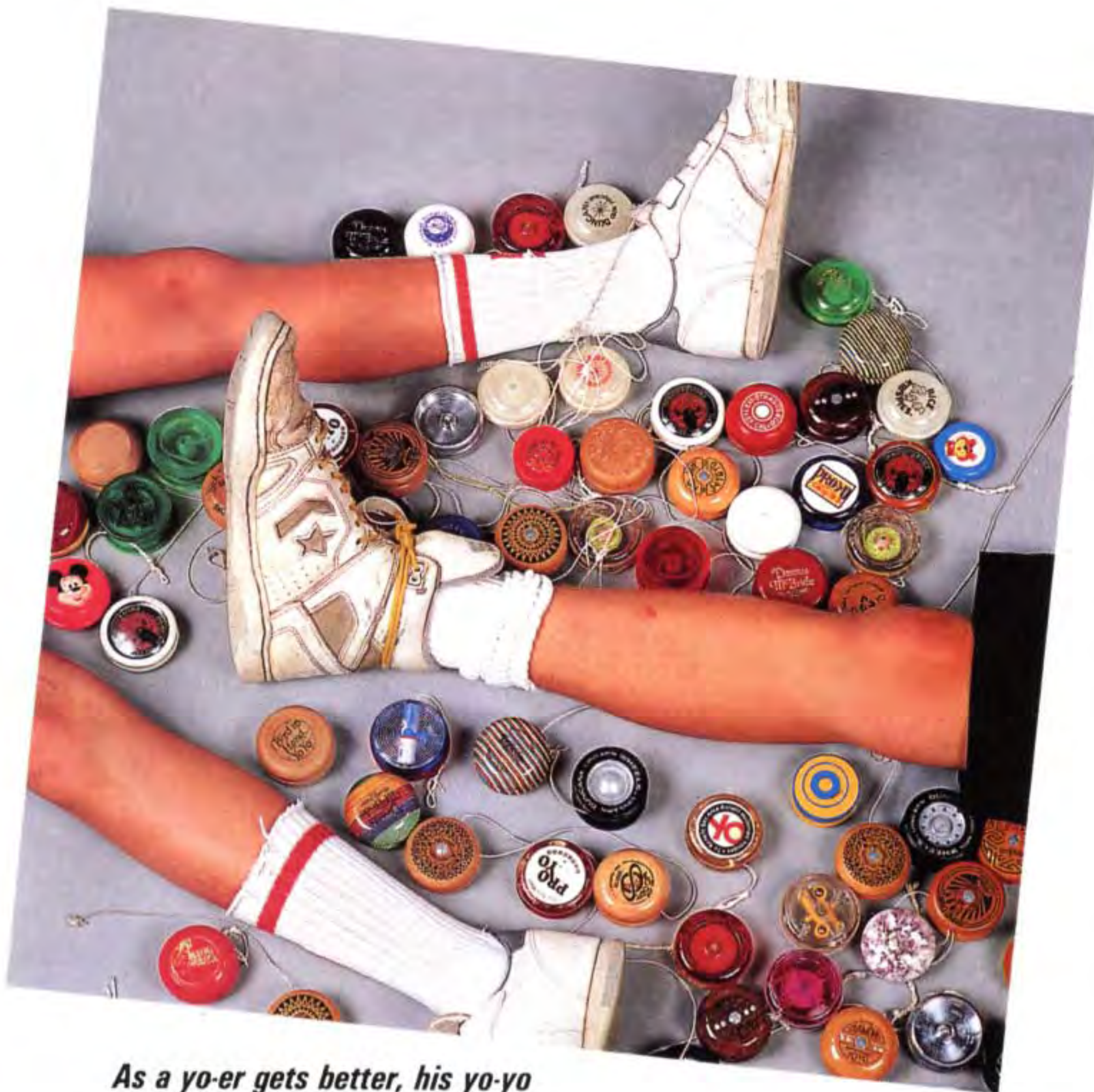
Just ask brothers Mark and Robert Litton of Walnut Creek, Calif. They are the "Yo Bros."

They started yo-ing in spring 1988 with inexpensive dime-store Duncans. By year's end, they were yo-ing as well as yo-pros who had been pulling strings for 30 years.

Since then, the Yo Bros. have appeared on TV and in videos, and they get better all the time.

Mark, a 14-year-old Star Scout with Troop 202, is called "The King of String." His 12-year-old brother, Robert, a former Webelos Scout in Pack 43, is called "Yo-Yo Boy." He got that name when he appeared on TV with famous comedian and "Yo-Yo Man" Tommy Smothers. They did a sketch together on the "Smothers Brothers Comedy





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Hour.” After the show, the Smo Bros. signed off on Robert’s Showman achievement badge.

Tom Smothers’s alter ego, Yo-Yo Man, was so impressed with the Yo Bros., he broke his usual vow of silence:

“It’s terrific that these kids are helping to spread Yo all over the land!”

Spreading Yo is easy, says Robert. “The only equipment you need fits in your pants pocket!”

Or, in Robert’s case—eight pants pockets. He flips the flaps on two of them, digs out two wooden yo-yo’s, and yos two-handed. His left yo-yo *Loops-the-Loop* while his right *Reaches-for-the-Moon*.

Over and over, without missing a beat, his hands work together in

## YO-ING TIPS

- **Learn to sleep your yo-yo at least 5 to 9 seconds; that much time is needed for most string tricks.**

- **Your yo-yo won’t sleep long enough? Try tightening the string. Let the yo-yo dangle at the end of its string and spin it a few revolutions.**

- **A yo-yo with an over-tightened string, however, will tend to pop up rather than sleep. To loosen it, spin the yo-yo in the opposite direction.**

- **A one-piece yo-yo cannot be taken apart; a modular yo-yo can—a feature that is handy for untangling and unknitting the string.**

- **Novelty yo-yo’s shaped like planets, basketballs, and so forth, are fun to collect. But when it comes to performance—forget it.**

- **Wood yo-yo’s are better balanced than plastic ones, but also more expensive.**

perfect harmony. Yo-Yo Boy is one with the game. He is a true Yo-lympian!

How did the Yo Bros. get so good? Yo-practice, yo-practice, yo-practice.

First they learned the simple *Up-and-Down*: Roll the yo-yo off your fingertips with your palm facing up; then flip your hand over to catch the yo-yo on the return.

Next they mastered *Sleeper* (more on that later). “Once you know how to sleep a yo-yo, you’re ready to learn string tricks,” Mark says. “And that’s when yoking gets fun.”

As a yo-er gets better, his yo-yo collection gets bigger. That’s because different types of yo-yo’s are used for different types of tricks. The Yo Bros.’ collection fills several deep briefcases.

Mark opens one to reveal 20 yo-yo’s of various shapes and colors tucked in foam padding. And this is only the top layer. All totaled, each Yo Bro. owns more than 100 yo-yo’s.

Mark picks up a plastic Duncan Imperial and launches it into repeated *Loop-the-Loops*. The Imperial is a good looper, Mark says, because it has a narrow groove. That helps keep the string from getting tangled.

A wide-groove yo-yo, however, is better for performing *Man-on-the-Flying-Trapeze*.

To demonstrate, Mark selects a butterfly-shaped model from his collection. This maple yo-yo is called the “Flying Camel” because of the winged camel laser-carved on its side.

To perform the “trapeze,” he first sends the Camel *Around-the-World*. As it enters a second orbit, he extends the index finger of his free hand for the yo-yo to come under and over. In a flash, Mark forms a trapeze between his hands.



The Camel plunks down on the trapeze. Mark flicks the trapeze. The yo-yo shoots overhead, then recoils to Mark's hand.

"The drawback to a butterfly yo-yo, though, is slow spin," Mark says. "And a slow-spinning yo-yo does not sleep long."

A yo-yo is said to be sleeping when it pauses to spin at the end of the string before climbing back to the hand.

Most string tricks, such as *Eifel Tower*, *Rock-the-Baby*, and *Brain*

## YO INFO

- *Yo-Yo Times* is a bi-monthly newsletter featuring new tricks and yo-yo news: P.O. Box 1519, Herndon, VA 22070. \$12 per year.

- "World on a String" by Helane Zeiger is the book of yo.

- "Yo-Yo Man Video" (in stores) and Dennis McBride's "Know Yo, Yo-Yo Video" are how-to videos for beginners through intermediate yo-ers.

- "Gallery of Unbelievable Two-Handed Yo-Yo Tricks" is another McBride video. It's geared to advanced yo-ers and features Yo-Yo Boy, Robert Litton.



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*Twister*, are built around this sleeping technique.

The Yo Bros. enjoy performing tricks at yo-yo competitions, festivals, and other special events throughout northern California.

But most of all, they like the many friends they have made among amateur yo-ers and yo-pros alike.

Anyone can yo. It just takes desire and practice. Mark beams and says, "There's no feeling like getting a trick right for the first time."

He tosses his Silver Bullet downward and catches it on the vertically stretched string in front of him. It rides the string like a roller coaster through flips, turns and loops. This is the *Atom Smasher*. Mark grins and adds, "Doing a trick that seems impossible feels the nicest."

What seemingly impossible, mind-boggling trick does the younger Yo Bro. do? Robert can yo two-handed while riding a unicycle. Awesome!♣

—Katherine Templeton



**Making music at home: Even the Yo Bros. don't yo all the time.**