

# How To Build A *Magic: The Gathering* Deck

Welcome to one of the most fun aspects of *Magic: The Gathering*, deckbuilding!

Deckbuilding is the process of constructing the deck you'll play your games with, and it can be as exciting and strategic as the games themselves. Let's go through some basic questions to get your first deck built.

## **Step 1: Deciding how many cards to put in your deck.**

The number of cards depends on the game format you're playing. A game format defines the rules of the game. The most common are:

**Limited:** 40-card decks with a 15 card sideboard

**Constructed:** 60-card decks with a 15 card sideboard

A sideboard is a list of cards that you don't want to have in your main deck, but that you can use to swap cards from between games if you need them against your opponent.

## **Step 2: Choosing a color or colors for your deck.**

Each of the five colours in *Magic: The Gathering* has a specific meaning and play style. Here's a quick summary:

- **Red** - pushing players towards aggressive decks.
- **Blue** - pushes players more towards controlling decks.
- **Black** - pushes players towards cards which affect sacrificing their own life points or creatures for personal gain.
- **Green** - pushes players towards big monsters and crashing spells.
- **White** - pushes players towards gaining life and restricting what other players can do.

A beginner deck is good to start with just one color, but eventually you might want to choose two or even three. One colour makes it easier to cast the spells you have, but two colours widely increases the cards you have access to and the ability to play different styles.

## **Step 3: Deciding which cards to put into your deck**

Depending on your color your play style will be very different and so will be the content of your deck. This step has a lot to do with your personal preferences and learning more about the game as you go.

How do you enjoy playing games? Do you like to win quickly? Do you like to be the attacker and follow a strict gameplan, or do you like to be reactive and flexible? Do you like big nasty creatures, or do you like flashy and expressive spells? Once you figure out these over time, you can figure out what cards to put into your deck.

## **Step 4: Deciding how many lands you need in your deck**

Lands are key for the game, as they are the resource that let you cast spells each turn. You can usually only play one per turn, unless you have cards that let you play more, so it's important to get the balance of lands right when building a deck. You don't want to be stuck with only lands at the beginning of a game, but drawing none will leave you with no fuel. More details on the right balance to achieve a competitive deck from the first turn can be found in the how to play document attached!

As a general rule, fast decks usually rely on lower-cost cards, so you can be safe having fewer lands, whereas slower decks usually use higher-cost cards. We recommend always having between 20-26 lands in a 60 card deck (14-17 in a 40 card deck) and adapting from there.

## **Step 5: Deciding how many creatures/spells you should have in your deck**

The easy answer to this is: they will make up the rest of the deck once you have decided how many lands you have. That said, it's important to think about the quantity of each card you add.

You can have up to four copies of any card in your deck (minus lands, and some other exceptions). To start, the best way to think of this is that if you want a copy of a card every time you play the deck, you want to get all four copies of it into your deck. For cards that can be more flexible but aren't a core part of the game, we suggest using three copies or less. Two for powerful cards that are expensive and can affect the game, and then probably one copy for game winners that you don't need to draw, but will win you the game if you do.

Once you've sorted all of these questions, you'll have a deck to play *Magic: The Gathering* with. Best of luck!

# *Magic: The Gathering* - Quick glossary and key terms

## **HOW TO READ A MAGIC CARD**

- **Name:** This is the card's name. Some cards affect cards of specific names, and only one copy of legendary cards can be on the battlefield
- **Card Type / Creature Type:** This is the type of the card. Some cards affect only cards of specific types, and the type of card effects when the card can be played.
- **Mana Cost:** Mana is the resource used to cast spells in Magic. Each card lists the amount of Mana required to cast it in the top right.

- **Rarity / Set:** This icon will represent which collection or set the card comes from. The color of the icon also shows the rarity of the cards from the different rarities (black for common cards, silver for uncommon cards, gold for rare cards and bronze for mythic rare cards).
- **Power/Toughness:** A creature's power and toughness are shown in the bottom right of the card. The first number (Power) is the amount of damage it deals in combat. The second number (Toughness) is the amount of damage that must be dealt to it in a single turn to destroy it.
- **Text Box:** The text below the image can contain rule text with the creature abilities and flavor text as well. Here, players can read any additional details about how the card functions, as well as details about the card that add artistic appeal to the game.



## TYPES OF CARD

- **Lands** generate mana, which is used to cast spells and activate abilities. Each basic land makes one mana of a particular color. **Plains** are White, **Islands** are Blue, **Swamps** are Black, **Mountains** are Red, **Forests** are Green.
- **Creatures** fight for you: they can attack during the combat phase of your turn and block during the combat phase of an opponent's turn. Creatures cannot attack on the

turn they are summoned unless they have the *Haste* ability.

- **Sorceries** are spells that you can cast only during a main phase of your turn. They have a one-time effect.
- **Enchantments** are spells that affect you permanently, lasting the entire game or until removed.
- **Artifacts** are colourless cards that can be played by any deck, but that are usually weaker than coloured similar cards.
- **Instant**s are spells that can be cast at any time, even during your opponent's turn or during combat.

## **THE PLAY AREA**

- **Library** - Your library (or deck) is your draw pile, which remains face down throughout the game.
- **Hand** - You start the game by drawing a hand of seven cards. If you have more than seven cards in your hand as your turn ends, you must discard down to seven.
- **Battlefield** - You and your opponents share the battlefield. You can arrange your cards however you want after playing, but your opponent must be able to see all of them, and tell which is in which zone.
- **Graveyard** - Your graveyard is your discard pile and where creatures that die, artifacts and enchantments that are destroyed, and cards you discard from your hand go. The cards in your graveyard should always be face up, and anyone can look at them at any time.

## **THE COLOURS OF MAGIC**

**White:** Peace, law, structured, selflessness, equality

**Blue:** Knowledge, deceit, cautious, deliberate, perfecting

**Black:** Power, self-interest, death, sacrifice, uninhibited

**Red:** Freedom, emotion, active, impulsive, destructive

**Green:** Nature, wildlife, connected, spiritual, tradition

## *Magic: The Gathering* - What it is and how to play

*Magic: The Gathering* is a collectible card game first released in 1993 by *Wizards of the Coast*. It was the first-ever card trading game and has been running ever since its first card set was launched. It receives periodical card set launches adding new themes, settings, Planeswalker and cards into the game.

To play, two or more players take the roles of Planeswalkers, powerful wizards battling each other by summoning creatures, casting spells and using artifacts. Each card represents one concept, ability, spell, creature and players take turns to cast them and fight each other in alternating turns. There are multiple modes to play and variations to accommodate more than two players, but usually this is the regular setup for a normal game.

The game is available in physical cards and also digitally for PC / Mac and mobile devices via [Magic: The Gathering Arena](#). Both tabletop and Arena versions of Magic: The Gathering share the same rules, so if you learn them once you're set for digital or physical play. Here are the basics:

## WINNING THE GAME

Each player starts the game with 20 life. A player wins the game when their opponent's life total is 0 or lower after damage has been calculated.

## GAME MECHANICS

**Tapping and Untapping** - To tap a card is to turn it sideways to show that it has been used for the turn. You do this when you use a land to make mana or when you attack with a creature, as well as other situations within the game.

**Casting Spells** - To cast a spell, you must pay its mana cost by tapping lands. If the spell is an instant or a sorcery, you follow the instructions on the card, and then you put the card into your graveyard. If the spell is a creature, artifact, or enchantment, you put the card on the table in front of you. Each player has an opportunity to cast an instant spell in response to any spell or ability that goes on the stack. If a player does decide to respond, their spell or ability goes on the stack on top of what was already waiting there. An enchantment, creature or artifact that remains on the table is called a **permanent** after being cast, as opposed to a **spell**, which is put in your graveyard after casting.

**Turns** - The game is played in alternating turns, and on each of the turns a player can perform a certain number of actions. The turn order and phases are as follows:

### BEGINNING PHASE

- **Upkeep step** - You must pay any costs that cards indicate.
- **Untap step** - You untap all your tapped permanents.
- **Draw step** - You must draw a card from your library. The player who goes first in a two-player game skips the draw step on their first turn. If you cannot draw a card here, you lose the game.

### FIRST MAIN PHASE

You can cast any number of sorceries, instants, creatures, artifacts, enchantments, and planeswalkers that you have the mana to cast, and you can activate abilities. You can play a land during this phase, but remember that you can play only one land during your turn.

### COMBAT PHASE

- **Beginning of combat step**

- **Declare attackers step** - You decide which of your untapped creatures will attack. This taps the attacking creatures.
- **Declare blockers step** - Your opponent decides which, if any, of their untapped creatures will block your attacking creatures. If multiple creatures block an attacker, you order the blockers to show which will be first to receive damage, which will be second, and so on.
- **Combat damage step** - Each attacking or blocking creature that's still on the battlefield assigns its combat damage to the defending player/planeswalker (if it wasn't blocked,) to the creature or creatures blocking it, or to the creature it's blocking.
- **End of combat step**

## SECOND MAIN PHASE

Your **second main phase** is just like your first main phase. You can play a land during this phase if you didn't play one during your first main phase.

## ENDING PHASE

### End step

**Cleanup step** - If you have more than seven cards in your hand, choose and discard cards until you have only seven. Next, all damage on creatures is removed and all "until end of turn" effects end.