

MAGIC
The Gathering®

THE OFFICIAL
CLASSIC™
SIXTH EDITION
GAME STRATEGY GUIDE



Practical Playing Tips & Tactics

RANDY BUEHLER

CONTRIBUTOR TO

THE
DUELIST®



The background of the page features a woman in a white and blue outfit with a feathered headpiece, looking out over a cityscape at sunset. The scene is bathed in a warm, golden light from a large sun or moon in the sky. The woman is positioned on the left side of the page, and her gaze is directed towards the right. The cityscape in the background consists of tall, dark buildings with spires, silhouetted against the bright light of the sun. The overall mood is serene and majestic.

chapter 1

THE RULES

The “rules” of Magic® are really just a small collection of timing rules. I’ll spend most of this chapter explaining the rules that dictate what you can do and when you can do it. Keep in mind that the cards themselves will sometimes override these rules. For example, one of the first things you learn is that you get to draw one card during the beginning of each of your turns. However, if someone puts a Howling Mine into play, that changes the rules. Now you draw two cards per turn instead of one. Cards that change the rules are what make the game more difficult, but they are also what make **Classic™** so much fun.

Examples of cards that change the rules of the game.



Examples of artifacts.



The last time a new edition of the basic set was printed, **Magic's** design team devoted a lot of energy to evening out the power-level of the cards included. That meant that the most powerful *Fourth Edition*TM cards weren't included in *Fifth Edition*TM and neither were the least powerful. Having more or less completed the task of evening out the power level of the basic set and with a firmly established rotation schedule for the basic set in place, the designers changed their focus when deciding what to do with *Classic Sixth Edition*. Their main emphasis was placed on cleaning up the rules of the game. They did take some important cards out and put some interesting cards in, but the majority of their attention was directed toward removing unnecessarily confusing rules, consolidating rules that didn't need to be different, etc. In this chapter, I'll explain how the rules of the game work now. For an analysis of what changed and why it might be important, check out chapter 7.



WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE OWNER OF A CARD AND THE CONTROLLER OF A CARD?

If a card started the match in your deck, you own it. That means if the card ever goes to a graveyard, even if your opponent stole it from you first, it goes to your graveyard. Similarly, if the card is returned to a player's hand, you are that player. There is no way for a card that you own to get into your opponent's hand, library, or graveyard.

If you play a card, you control it until some other card explicitly causes you to lose control of it. *Abduction*, *Conquer*, and *Ashen Powder* all allow you to "steal" one of your opponent's resources. *Juxtapose* causes you to exchange control of a creature and an artifact. *Illicit Auction* might cause a creature's controller to change. All occurrences of the word "you" on a card refer to the current controller. If you gain control of a permanent that has a local enchantment on it, you do not gain control of the enchantment—whenever played the enchantment will still control it (unless, of course, you play another spell to steal the enchantment as well).

EXAPMLES:

GLOBAL ENCHANTMENTS
CoP: *Red Dread of Night*
Kismet

LOCAL ENCHANTMENTS
Abduction
Psychic Venom

THE TIMING RULES

The timing rules used in *Classic* are the same timing rules used in expert-level **Magic**. Once you understand these, you don't need to worry about any of them changing as you move on to expert-level expansions. You'll find additional rules and more creature abilities in the expansion sets, but these rules will remain the backbone of the game.

THE STACK

The most fundamental piece of **Magic's** timing rules is *the stack*. The stack is not a physical stack of cards but a way to determine which cards' actions are resolved first. First of all, spells and abilities in **Magic** are divided into two groups. The first group—instants and abilities—may be played whenever there either is a stack or a stack is allowed to be started. The second group are cards that you may play only when it's your main phase and there's currently no stack. There are six of them: playing a land, playing an enchantment, playing an artifact, playing a creature, playing a sorcery, and using an ability of a permanent that requires you to play the ability "as a sorcery."

Here's how the stack works: the *active player*—that's the technical term for whoever's turn it is—has *priority*, which means they get the first opportunity to add something to the stack. Whenever the active player declines to add something to the stack, then his opponent gets the chance to play instants and abilities of her own (in a multiplayer game, each opponent in turn gets this chance, with the order rotating to the left). If anyone does choose to add a response to the stack then the active player regains priority, and more instants and abilities can be added. After each player declines the opportunity to add actions, then the top action on the stack will resolve. At this point the active player has priority again and can add another item to the stack. Everyone else gets a chance too, and as soon as no one wants to add another action, the current top action on the stack resolves. This may sound overly complex and it's true that there's usually only one or two things piled up in any one stack, but sometimes things get confused, so it's important to have timing rules that can handle any situation that comes up. In actual game play, most people don't announce each small step in this process—once everyone is comfortable with the rules, it's usually obvious what's going on. If something isn't obvious then by all means stop your opponent and make sure you understand what he thinks is happening and when. I just want to assure new players that the game isn't as tedious as this paragraph might make it sound.

For example, suppose you have a Grizzly Bears, and you attempt to play Giant Strength on it. Your opponent responds by playing Shock and targeting the Bears. The last spell added to the stack was Shock, so the Shock resolves first. Since the Bears are only a 2/2, the Shock kills the Bears. The Giant Strength goes off next, but the Bears are already dead, so the Giant Strength looks around in confusion and then goes to the graveyard. Your opponent saw how all this would wind up, and so she was able to pick the perfect time to play her Shock.

Things would have been different if you had had a Giant Growth or a Healing Salve in your hand. Then when you played Giant Strength and your opponent played Shock, you could have responded to the Shock by adding a Giant Growth (targeting the Bears) to the stack. Now Giant Growth is the last spell added to the stack so it will resolve first, making the Bears 5/5. The 5/5 Bears then take two damage from the Shock, but they have no trouble living through it, and so they are still there when the initial Giant Strength resolves. Now you've got a 7/7 Grizzly Bears (+2/+2 from the Giant Strength) which has taken two points of damage. The 2 points of damage from the Shock will wear off at the end of the turn at the same time as the +3/+3 from the Giant Growth wears off.

If one of you has countermagic the situation could get a little bit more complex. Countermagic spells are a subset of instants which can target other spells and stop them from happening. Countermagic spells are known collectively as *permission* because when you play against an opponent who has a lot of countermagic in his deck, you wind up asking permission to play each of your spells.



Bye, bye Grizzly.



The Bears live!

There is no scoring effect here and the Bears live.



“Can I play a Maro?”
“No.” (Plays Counterspell.)
“How about a Grizzly Bears? Please?”
“OK, that’s fine.”

Permission spells used to be a separate category of spell, called *interrupts*, but under *Classic* rules there are no longer any interrupts—everything that used to be an interrupt is now just an instant which can target a spell (or ability).

We’ll use the same example as before. Say you’re still trying to play Giant Strength on those Bears, and your opponent still wants to play Shock as a response. You decide you’d rather use a permission spell instead of a Giant Growth, so you play Spell Blast targeting the Shock. If your opponent doesn’t do something about your Spell Blast, her Shock will never happen. She does, however, still have the opportunity to add another action to the stack. Or she can also allow the Spell Blast to resolve and then add a new response. Let’s say she tries to play Counterspell to stop your Spell Blast. Now you once again have priority, and you still have the opportunity to play a Giant Growth and save your Grizzly Bears. If neither of you adds anything else to the stack, your Giant Growth will resolve (since it’s the top action on the stack). Then her Counterspell will resolve, countering your Spell Blast. Since your Spell Blast has been countered, it goes to the graveyard, and Shock becomes the top spell on the stack. Assuming no one wants to add any new responses at this point, the Shock resolves, dealing 2 points of damage to the 5/5 Grizzly Bears, and then the initial Giant Strength that started this whole mess attaches itself to the Bears.



After a bit of a “permission war,” the Bears still live.



You actually had a couple choices about when to play your Giant Growth in the previous paragraph. If you wanted to, you could allow your opponent's Counterspell to resolve, thus countering your Spell Blast and making Shock the top action on the stack. After each action resolves, both players get an opportunity to add new actions to the stack, so you could choose that moment to play your Giant Growth. Things work out the same way in this example



and so it doesn't make much difference when you play it. However, in some situations this trick might come in handy. For example, if your opponent had used a Power Sink instead of a Counterspell, you would need to Giant Growth before the Power Sink resolved because otherwise you might not have the mana available to play the Giant Growth. There could also be situations where it's advantageous to wait, perhaps because you want a Power Sink of your own to resolve so your opponent will be tapped out (and thus unable to play any more spells of her own) before you reveal that you have a Giant Growth.

Take a deep breath. Here's the rules lawyer version of how the stack works: Once a stack has been started, first the active player and then the opponent have the opportunity to add a spell or ability to the stack. As soon as anyone adds anything to the stack, there's a new chance for the active player to add something, and so on. Once both players declare that they are done adding actions to the stack, the top action in the stack resolves. Anytime an action resolves but the stack isn't empty, there is another opportunity for both players to add more instants and abilities to the stack.

All we need to know now is how these stacks get started in the first place. To a first approximation, anytime someone plays a spell or ability, that starts a stack. Playing a land does not start a stack and playing a mana ability (like tapping a Llanowar Elves for green mana) does not start a stack, but playing sorceries, creatures, artifacts, and enchantments will always start a stack. In addition, if the stack is currently empty, playing an instant or ability will also start a stack. There is, of course, a priority system to dictate when each player has the opportunity to play instants and abilities and start stacks. I'll explain that after I explain the phases of each turn.

AN OUTLINE OF THE PHASES FOR EASY REFERENCE

- I. Beginning of Turn
 - A. Untap
 - B. Upkeep
 - C. Draw
- II. First Main Phase
- III. Combat Phase
 - A. Beginning of Combat
 - B. Declare Attackers
 - C. Declare Blockers
 - D. Combat Damage
 - E. End of Combat
- IV. Second Main Phase
- V. End Phase
 - A. End of Turn
 - B. Cleanup

THE PHASES OF THE TURN

Your turn progresses through each of the following five phases: beginning, first main, combat, second main, and end.

The beginning of turn phase is further subdivided into three steps: untap, upkeep, and draw. During your untap step, you untap all of your permanents (that is, land, creatures, and artifacts).

Next comes your upkeep step, but few Classic cards refer to this step. Some expert-level cards require you to pay certain costs (*upkeep costs*) at this time. The cards will always specify what those costs are.

During your draw step, draw one card.

Then you're in your main phase, which is where most of the action happens. Your main phase is the only time you can play sorceries, creatures, artifacts, and enchantments. You may also put one land into play. Playing land is, of course, optional, but your main phase is the only time you're allowed to play a land.

After your first main phase is your combat phase, which is also divided into a series of steps: beginning of combat, declare attackers, declare blockers, combat damage, and end of combat. During each of these steps, players must first deal with the mandatory part of the step and then they can create or add to stacks as discussed earlier. Let's step through the combat phase:

First, announce that you want to start your combat phase—the beginning of combat step; you have the option to play any instants and abilities and then your opponent does. If either of you chooses to do anything, a stack begins and you both get to respond as described before in “The Stack” section.

When the stack is empty and no one wants to start a new stack, you can declare your attackers. You do this by tapping them and

saying that you're attacking with them. (If you don't declare any attackers, you skip straight to the end of combat step. This situation can occur when either your opponent's actions during the beginning of combat made you change your



Damage prevention effects.

mind about attacking, or you didn't really want to attack anyway. Note that you don't have to control any creatures for there to be a combat phase!) Then there's another chance for to play instants and abilities.

Once the stack is again empty and both players decline to start a new one, the defending player declares blockers. After that, there is yet another opportunity for to play instants and abilities.

When the stack is empty again, it's time for combat damage. The attacking player decides how his creatures deal their damage and then the defending player has her creatures deal their damage. All the damage occurs at the same time, and that combat damage starts a stack. Now you might want to play damage prevention, redirection, or regeneration effects. This too uses the stack. The combat damage dealt by all the creatures involved in the attack is considered the bottom action on the stack. Once that resolves, creatures that have received lethal damage go to their owners' graveyards and players whose life total has been reduced to zero scoop up their cards and start shuffling.

After damage has been assigned, but before it resolves is the time to use a Circle of Protection, for example. Pay 1 and choose a source of the appropriate color. Then once that damage resolves, the circle will prevent it. Similarly, I can tap my Samite Healer to prevent one point of damage to itself, another of my creatures, or me. The Healer's ability creates a 1-point damage prevention *shield* that is used up as soon as the targeted creature or player takes a point of damage.

Let's say I have an Armored Pegasus which blocks my opponent's Wind Drake. The Pegasus has 2 toughness and the Drake has 2 power, so the Pegasus will die if I don't do something. If I use the Healer's ability before the damage resolves, my Pegasus will live to fight another day. Interestingly, if I play Healing Salve to prevent 3 damage to my Pegasus, I will still have a 1-point damage shield left around my Pegasus until the end of the turn. When the Healing Salve resolves there is a 3-point shield around the Pegasus. After the Wind Drake's damage resolves, 2 points are used up, but the last 1 will remain in place. Leftover damage prevention wears off at the end of the turn just like leftover damage does.

You aren't limited to damage prevention and redirection effects in the stack that starts with combat damage. Let's say my opponent



FIRST STRIKE DAMAGE

Creatures with first strike make combat a little more complicated. If any creatures with first strike are dealing damage in combat, you'll have two combat damage steps. First, all creatures with first strike deal damage.

When the stack that started with the first strike damage resolves, you then start a second stack so all other creatures can deal their damage. Note that if a creature without first strike dies from first strike damage, it never gets to deal its own damage!

Adding or removing first strike from a creature after the first combat damage step won't prevent a creature from dealing combat damage or allow it to deal combat damage twice.

The Pegasus needs some help if it is to survive this combat.






The Griffin can take out both the Wind Drake and the Zombie!



attacked me with a Wind Drake and a Scathe Zombie. I can block his Drake with my Daraja Griffin and let the Zombie through. After damage is dealt (but before it resolves and kills

my Griffin) I can sacrifice the Griffin to destroy a target black creature—like the Zombie. Let's see what happens when this stack resolves. (Assume no one else adds anything to the stack.) First my Griffin's ability resolves, destroying the Zombies, then the combat damage resolves. I take 2 damage (the Zombie's damage is still there waiting to resolve even though the Zombie itself is dead), and the Wind Drake dies from the 2 points dealt by my Griffin (same principle). Since the Griffin isn't around anymore, the 2 points dealt to it by the Wind Drake don't do anything.

Don't forget to add regeneration to a stack before lethal damage is dealt to any of your creatures. Whenever I pay  (and activate the creatures' ability), I erect a regeneration shield around my River Boa, and the next time the Boa receives lethal damage, it winds up tapped instead of dead.

Damage prevention and regeneration effects work the same way whether the damage in question is combat damage or damage from some other source. I can add Healing Salve to a stack that was begun by my opponent's 3-point Earthquake to erect a 3-point shield around myself or one of my creatures. I can also activate my CoP: Red as a response to my opponent's Volcanic Geyser. The timing rules don't make any distinctions on these issues.

Once your combat phase ends, you're back in your main phase (well, technically, you're in a second main phase), and you can continue playing creatures, artifacts, and enchantments. Usually, it makes more strategic sense to declare your combat phase early on in your main phase, before you play any creatures. That way your opponent will be forced to make any blocking decisions without access to information about what you plan to do with all of your untapped mana, plus you'll have mana untapped to react to any surprises he might throw at you during your attack. Of course, if you're planning to play a Talruum Minotaur or a Soul Net, you'll

want to do that before the attack phase, but most of the time it's better to play spells (especially creatures) afterward. Even if you don't have anything you could do with your mana during combat, your opponent doesn't know that. Sometimes just the threat that



Make sure you summon creatures with Haste before you start your combat phase.

you might have something up your sleeve will cause him to be cautious. Note that you may play only one land during your turn. If you've played a land during your first main phase, you can't play one during your second main phase.

Once you're done with your main phase, you advance to the end of turn phase. The main purpose of this phase is to do some routine housekeeping chores, including discarding down to seven cards in your hand. However, it's also the last point before your opponent's untap step when he can play spells and abilities. Perhaps he has a Jayemdae Tome in play and 4 mana untapped. Most players will wait until the end of their opponent's turn to tap those four mana and draw a card with "the Book." This makes strategic sense because they might have needed that 4 mana during your main phase to do something else, like counter one of your spells perhaps. Even if they don't have anything else they could possibly do with that 4 mana, they probably don't want you to know that, so they'll leave mana untapped just as a bluff. Then, once you've declared that you're done with your turn (by going into your end of turn phase), it's time to draw that card. Jayemdae Tome isn't the only card he

might use during your end of turn phase. He might decide that now is the best time to use Boomerang on one of your creatures so it will be unable to block next turn. (You'll be unable to re-play it this turn since you've already ended your main phase.)

The end of turn phase is divided into two steps: end of turn and cleanup. The end of turn works pretty much like the upkeep step in that nothing happens unless some card specifically tells you to do something. Anything that triggers "at the end of the turn" is added to the stack as soon as this step begins. Once that stack begins, both players have the right to play any instants or abilities they want. After they're resolved, you proceed into the cleanup step. The first thing that happens during cleanup is that the active player must discard down to 7 cards. (Note that any older cards that direct you to skip your discard step now have errata to just remove

the maximum-hand-size restriction instead. The discard step is still there, you simply don't have to discard.) Then all "until end of turn" effects wear off, all damage done to

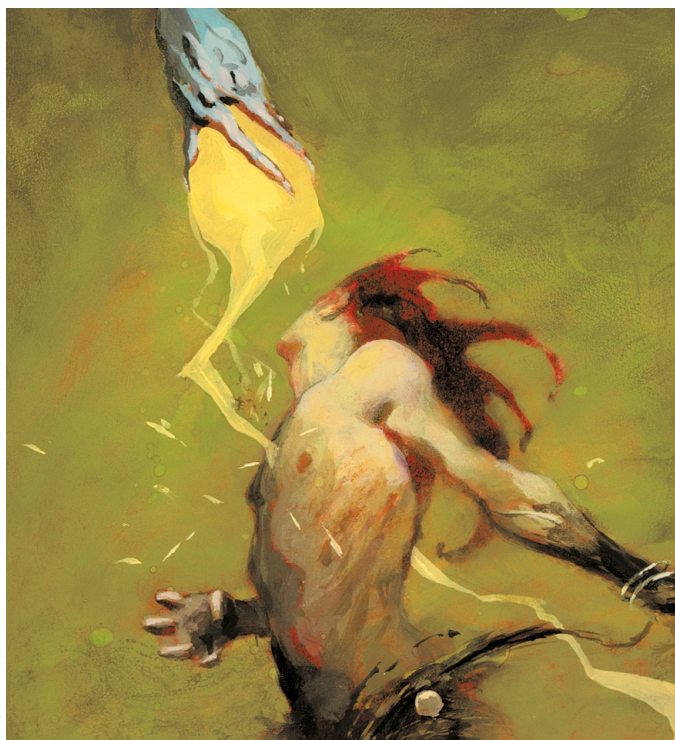


Some fast actions that your opponent might want to use at the end of your turn.



creatures is removed, and all damage prevention shields fall off. If this generates any stacks, the normal priority rules apply. After all stacks resolve, repeat the cleanup step again. Keep repeating it until nothing happens. The vast majority of the time no instants or abilities may be played during cleanup. Now it's time for the next player's turn.

Now that you know the phases of the turn, I can clarify how to determine who can start a stack and when. At the beginning of the upkeep step, anything which is waiting to happen "at the beginning of upkeep" or "during your upkeep" is automatically added to the stack. Once that's all dealt with, the active player has the right to play instants and abilities. (Artifact, creature, enchantment, and sorcery spells are not legal to play during upkeep.) If the active player does anything, that starts a stack, and so it's time to deal with that stack. After the stack resolves, the active player still has priority. Once the



active player decides not to start a stack she surrenders priority, and now the opponent has an opportunity to start a stack by playing a fast action. If he doesn't, go to the next phase. Upkeep, draw, and end of turn each work this way. All this really means is that the active player has the priority to play instants and abilities, and the inactive player can't start a stack until the active player is finished starting her stacks.

The main phases work pretty much the same way. The only difference is that the active player has more options—in addition to playing instants and abilities, she can play sorceries, creatures, enchantments, and artifacts. Once again, her opponent must wait until she is done starting and adding to the stack before he gets the opportunity to add to the stack or start one. Of course, since you can't do anything on your opponent's turn except play instants and abilities anyway, this isn't usually a big limitation. You can either just add your instants and abilities to a stack started by your opponent or wait to start your own.

STATE-BASED EFFECTS

State-based effects are a separate category of effects from the effects that go on the stack. State-based effects aren't controlled by any of the players and happen as soon as certain conditions apply. We check the conditions whenever someone could play a spell or ability. (That means that we don't check during the middle of the resolution of a spell, but we do check at almost every other time.)

WHAT SORTS OF THINGS COUNT AS STATE-BASED EFFECTS?

If a local enchantment can no longer legally target the thing it is attached to, it falls off (and goes to the graveyard).

If a creature has zero-toughness for any reason, it dies and goes to the graveyard.

If a creature receives lethal damage (Note that this includes having its toughness reduced to such a level that previous damage is now lethal), it dies and goes to the graveyard.

If a player's life total is reduced to zero or he fails to draw a required card, that player loses the game. (If both players wind up in that predicament at the same time, the game is a tie.)

If a token creature is removed from play, it disappears.

MISCELLANEOUS RULES

1. Flip a coin at the beginning of any match. Whoever wins the flip gets to decide whether he or she wants to play first or draw first. This is called the “Play/Draw” rule, and it’s designed to eliminate the advantage of getting to go first. Whoever goes first has to skip his or her first draw phase.
2. When you draw your opening hand, you have the option to take a *mulligan* if you don’t like what you see. You reshuffle your hand back into your deck and draw a new hand with one less card. There’s no limit to the number of times you can do this. Don’t like your 6 card hand? Reshuffle and draw 5. This mulligan rule is sometimes called the “Paris mulligan” because it was first introduced at Pro Tour: Paris. Sometimes, people still call this the “optional mulligan rule,” but this is now the only officially recognized mulligan rule. (The old rule was that if you drew all land or no land you could reshuffle and draw 7 new cards, but your opponent had the option of taking a free reshuffle when you took advantage of this rule.)
3. When constructing a deck you are not allowed to put in more than 4 copies of any cards except basic lands. Constructed decks also have to have a minimum of 60 cards in them. Sometimes, when a card turns out to be too good it may be restricted or banned, limiting you to one or zero copies of it respectively. The DCI™ players’ organization is in charge of making these decisions. You can read more about the DCI in chapter 8. In Limited (that is, sealed-deck or draft) formats, there is no limit to the number of copies of a card you can use (except, of course, that you can only play with the cards you draft from someone else or in the packs that you open), and you build a minimum 40 card deck.
4. There are two basic ways to win the game—either you reduce your opponent’s life total to zero or you run your opponent out of cards (known as *decking* your opponent). Sometimes, cards will introduce new, alternative winning conditions (Final Fortune is a good example of this, and there are several others in expert-level sets). As soon as someone’s life total becomes zero or he fails to draw a required card, he loses.

*Hidden Horror by Clint Langley*

That's it. Those are all the rules you need to know in order to play the game. Lots of new situations and scenarios will come up as you play, and it will take some practice before you fully understand how best to use your cards, but these timing rules should cover everything that comes up. If you aren't sure about something, just try your best to figure it out. If you and your friends can't agree, flip a coin to decide what to do. Then, when you get the chance, get on the Internet to find out the right answer, ask a judge the next time you go to a tournament, or call Wizards of the Coast Customer Service at 800-324-6496.







chapter 2

WHAT DO THE CARDS DO?

Now that you know how to play, it's time to talk about the tools of the game—the cards. The balance and tension of the five colors is a major dynamic of Magic. Each color has a theme and its own characteristic strengths and weaknesses

BLACK

Black is the color of death. Its themes include hand destruction, creature removal, and graveyard manipulation. Many black cards allow you to trade life for some resource and typical black creatures include Zombies, Rats and Thrulls. Black has no way to deal with artifacts or enchantments.

Classic contains a number of cards that force your opponent to discard—"hand destruction" spells. You typically use these spells

to disrupt your opponent's strategy so much that she can't hurt you. Painful Memories has a very mild impact on the game, but only costs two mana. For three mana, you can either force her to discard her best card with Coercion or make her lose two cards (with Stupor). With four mana, you can really start to stunt your opponent's game, either by taking away her next two draw phases with Agonizing Memories or making her discard every turn plus take damage with Abyssal Specter. The drawback is that she may already be killing you with whatever she played before you could build up your four mana.

Several black cards in *Classic* exploit your graveyard as a resource. When you play with these cards, your graveyard is no longer just a just a pile of used spells. With cards like Necrosavant, Gravedigger and Strands of Night in your deck, death in Magic is only

"Hand destruction" spells.



Death in Magic is only temporary.

temporary. In a similar vein, black is also one of only two colors (along with green) that has regenerating creatures; the undead can be hard to kill.

Another essential characteristic of black is its ability to kill creatures. Terror is one of the most efficient removal spells in the game. (That is, as long as your opponent isn't also playing black.) Pestilence enables black mages to damage every creature in play at once, while Enfeeblement and Abyssal Hunter provide more targeted removal.

Throughout the history of **Magic**, three black mana has netted some very powerful effects. In keeping with black's theme, this power has always come at a price. Doomsday and Infernal Contract keep to this pattern. The three mana isn't that hard to come by, but you better have good plans for those extra cards if you think they're worth half your life total! Greed and Vampiric Tutor similarly allow you to trade life (and black mana) for either extra cards or card selectivity.

Enemy creatures don't live very long if you're playing black.



This card started the trend of really powerful spells that cost 3 black mana but was rotated out of Classic.



You didn't really need those life points, did you?



RED

Red is the color of fire and direct damage. Many red spells deal damage directly to creatures or opponents. Red is also really good at blowing up artifacts and land, but it can't do a thing about enchantments. Red creatures tend to be a

bit smaller than other creatures, but some make up for this by being able to attack the turn they come into play. Goblins, Dwarves, and Orcs are typical red creatures.

Red has 15 different cards in *Classic* that deal damage directly to a player or creature, 6 cards that can blow up a land, and 4 ways to blow up artifacts. Black does have 4 direct damage cards, but no other color has more than 2 cards that fit any of these categories.

The red creature set includes the only 3 creatures in *Classic* with Haste: Talruum Minotaur, Volcanic Dragon, and Raging Goblin can each attack the turn they come into play. Other than that, the only truly distinguishing feature of red's creatures are all the goblins. Especially when led by a Goblin King, a swarm of Goblins can be quite intimidating.

Burn, baby, burn.

Goblins and barbarians
and orcs, oh my!



GREEN

Green is the color of nature and in *Magic* that means lots of strong creatures. Big creatures. Green also specializes in mana acceleration, anti-flying cards, and anti-enchantment cards. Green mages play Elves, Wurms, Elephants, and the like.

The most powerful 1-mana creatures in the game are those that allow you to skip the 2-mana level and play a 3-mana cost creature on turn 2. Llanowar Elves and Birds of Paradise are the only two creatures in *Classic* capable of doing this, and they're both green.

How good are green's creatures? Let's look at 2-mana, 2-power creatures in *Classic*. Green gives you three: Grizzly Bears, Elvish Archers, and River Boa. Each of those critters has only one colored mana in the mana cost, and two have added abilities. The rest of the set combined has only three of these 2-mana, 2-power creatures, and each of them has a significant drawback. (Goblin Elite Infantry shrinks if it blocks or is blocked while Longbow Archers and Lord of Atlantis each require 2 colored mana.) At 3 mana, Trained Armodon is bigger than every 3-mana creature in the set except Fog Elemental and Hidden Horror. The trend continues as you increase the mana cost—green's creatures give you more power and toughness for your mana. Scaled Wurm is the fattest “fatty” in the set while Maro is one of the most efficient.

Green does have multiple ways to remove artifacts (Uktabi Orangutan, Creeping Mold) and enchantments (Tranquillity, Tranquil Grove, Creeping Mold), but it can't do much about ground-pounding creatures. (Except beat them up in combat, of course.) Enemy fliers have to watch out for Hurricane, green's only direct damage spell, and Femeref Archers, but non-fliers are fairly safe from green's wrath.



Mana acceleration can be quite powerful.



Green has the best creatures in the game.

WHITE

White is the color of healing and defense. There are a number of large white Walls and a bunch of white life gaining and damage prevention spells. In addition, Wrath of God and Armageddon are two of the most powerful spells in the game. White has the second best fliers in the game, behind blue, and white has the best utility spell in the game—Disenchant. For just 1 and a generic mana,

Disenchant removes an artifact *or* an enchantment and does it at instant speed. Because white does so many other things well, its creatures aren't very exciting.

Another drawback to white is that all of its creature “kill” spells are somewhat limited and expensive (when compared to red and black cards that do similar things). Exile can't remove a white creature. Pacifism doesn't help against creatures with annoying special abilities. Reprisal can only kill large creatures. Even Wrath of God has the drawback that it kills all of your creatures, too.

Because white is a defensive color, some white creatures don't tap when they attack and are thus available to defend you even after they have already attacked. The three creatures in *Classic* with that ability are Standing Troops, Ardent Militia, and Archangel. In addition, the white enchantment Serra's Blessing gives this ability to all of your creatures.

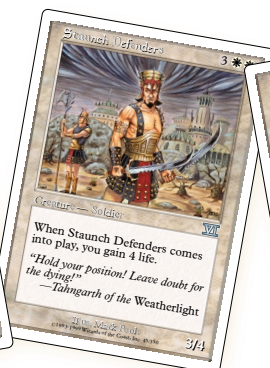
The biggest themes of white are life gaining and damage prevention. The Circles of Protection prevent damage of a particular color to you while Remedy, Healing Salve, Samite Healer, and Reverse Damage can protect either your life total or your creatures from damage. Two white creatures (Venerable Monk and Staunch Defenders) give you life when they come into play. Spirit Link serves double duty either as a way to gain life (if you put it on one of your own creatures) or prevent damage (if you put it on one of your opponent's creatures).



Three of the best spells in the game.



White's specialty.



BLUE

Blue is the color of countermagic and card drawing. Blue gives you the ability to “say no” to any spell as it is being played, but it has almost no way to deal with any threats once they hit the table. Blue has the best fliers in the game, but the worst low mana cost creatures. Typical blue creatures are Merfolk, Wizards, and Spirits.

Classic provides blue mages with 8 different ways to counter a spell: Counterspell, Memory Lapse, Remove Soul, Spell Blast, Power Sink, and Daring Apprentice each have their strengths and their weaknesses as ways to stop your opponent’s spells. Deflection and Desertion are more expensive but allow you to use your opponent’s own magic against him. Along with all these ways to counter spells, blue also has a “bounce” theme. Didn’t have enough mana untapped to counter that threat the first time? Use your Boomerang or Unsummon cards and try again next turn. The flip side is that bouncing a permanent is basically the only way for blue to ever deal with anything in play.

Blue has more flying creatures than any other color in *Classic*. Ranging from Storm Crow at 2 mana up to Sibilant Spirit at 6, blue fliers exist in many permutations of mana cost and power. Sage Owl even combines two of blue’s themes by giving you a flying creature and the ability to manipulate the top of your library. Other ways to draw extra cards or manipulate which cards you draw include Browse, Mystical Tutor, Ancestral Memories, Recall, Library of Lat-Nam, Dream Cache, Inspiration, Prosperity, Soldevi Sage, Diminishing Returns, and Forget.



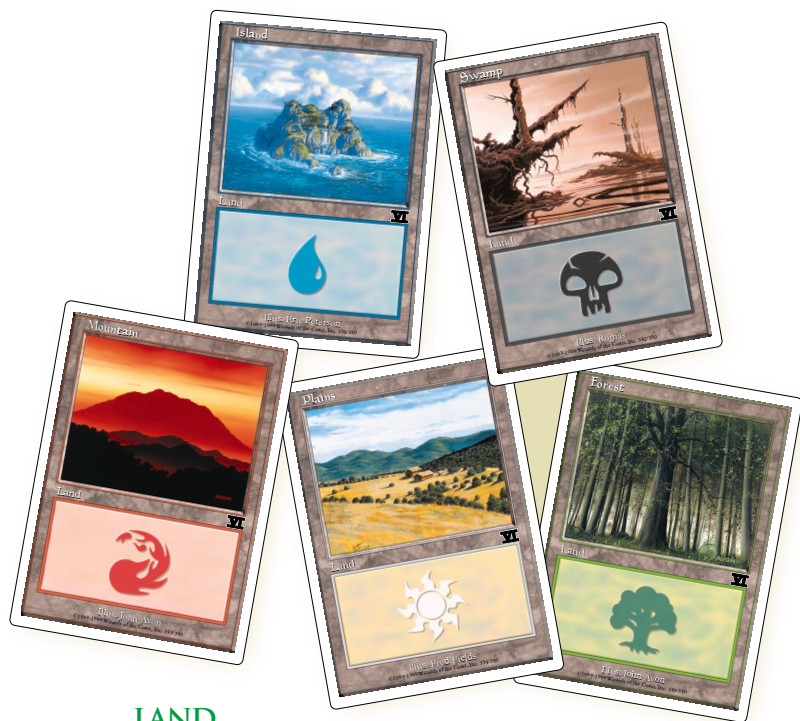
“Pretty please?”



If at first you don't succeed...



If you want to draw extra cards,
nothing beats the blue goblin!



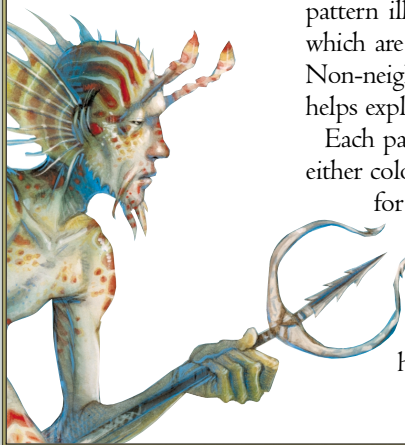
Basic lands.

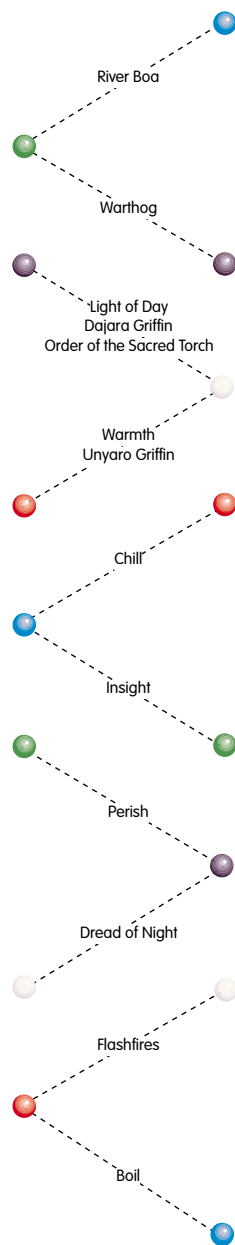
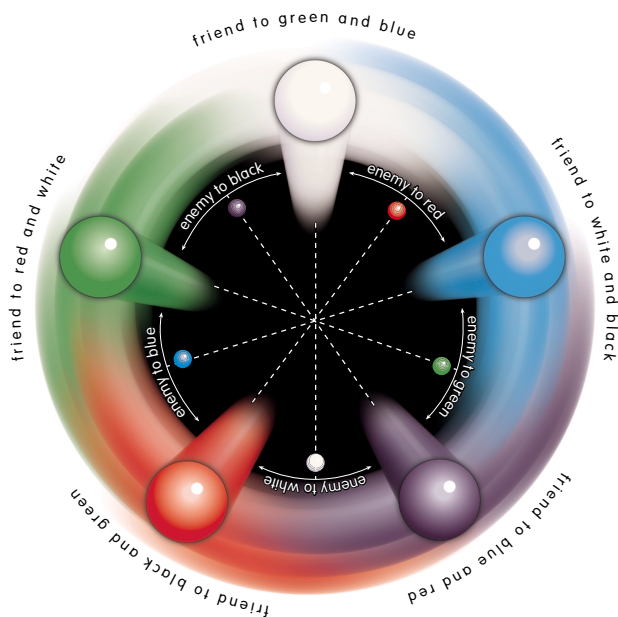
LAND

There are five basic land types in **Magic**: island, forest, plains, mountain, and swamp. There are also a lot of other lands with various special abilities and drawbacks. If it isn't one of the basic five, then it is considered a *nonbasic land*. This distinction doesn't mean anything if you're only playing with *Classic* cards, but several of the expert-level expansions include cards that punish you for playing with non-basic lands.

There's more to the color-structure of **Magic** than just the five distinct colors. The colors are all connected to each other in the pattern illustrated on the back of every **Magic** card. The colors which are next to each other in this design are "friendly" colors. Non-neighbors are considered "enemy" colors. This relationship helps explain the non-basic lands in the set.

Each pair of friendly colors has a "painland" that can produce either color of mana but does damage to you whenever you tap it for colored mana. (Note that you can tap a painland for generic mana without taking damage.) Painlands make it easier to build a blue/white deck than it would be to build, say, a blue/green deck because the blue/white deck can use *Adarkar Wastes* to increase your chance of having the right color of mana to play your spells.





Color Hosers in Classic broken down to specific cards and targets.

The “color hoser” cards included in *Classic* are also evidence of the friend/enemy structure of **Magic’s** colors. White’s enemies are red and black, so white has Warmth, Light of Day, Daraja Griffin, Unyaro Griffin, and Order of the Sacred Torch. There aren’t any white spells that specifically hurt blue or green, since those are white’s friends. Green, on the other hand, has River Boa and Warthog as its color hosers. They fit into green’s creature-heavy theme and can punish opponents who are playing with Islands or Swamps respectively. Blue uses Chill to slow down red decks and Insight to draw more cards against green. Black has Dread of Night, Perish, and Stromgald Cabal. Red destroys land of the enemy colors with the very thematic Boil and Flashfires.

It isn’t necessary to have an intimate understanding of all the themes of all the colors and how they interact with each other in order to play **Magic** well. However, it can be useful when trying to understand the strengths and weaknesses of a deck you’ve built, to realize that those strengths and weaknesses are inherent to the colors you’re playing. Sometimes it’s worth adding another color in order to plug a hole in your deck’s design, so you should know which colors might be useful or easy to add.







chapter 4

PLAYING WELL

People play **Magic** for a variety of reasons. Some people like the challenge of cooking up an original strategy and constructing a new deck. Others enjoy the camaraderie found at most tournaments or the context of competing against national and international competition. However, for most people, nothing beats the sheer joy of shuffling up a deck and just playing the game. The game itself is full of interesting puzzles and all kinds of strategic decisions that have to be made. In addition, some completely new situations will often come up that you hadn't anticipated. In this chapter I'll tell you what you should be thinking about in order to handle all these issues.

ATTACKING AND BLOCKING

Creature combat is one of the most basic elements of **Magic**. Creatures are the most efficient way to damage your opponent (because they can deal damage again and again), and they are also a good way to defend yourself from enemy creatures. Therefore, if you want to win at **Magic**, you need to be able to make good decisions about when to attack and how to block. Here's a short list of things to think about when trying to figure out whether or not to attack your opponent:

1. How will he block if you do attack him?
2. Will your attack make you vulnerable to a counter-attack?
3. What are everyone's life totals?

The first point is probably the most difficult skill to learn. You have to put yourself into your opponent's shoes and figure out how you would block if you were he. You also have to worry about what instants your opponent might have and, more importantly, how likely he is to have them. To a first approximation, all of this analysis can be done completely in terms of card advantage. For example, if you attack, can your opponent kill any of your creatures? If the answer is yes, will it require him to lose some of his own creatures as well? Whenever your opponent can kill more of your creatures than his own creatures, you probably don't want to attack. (The one exception is when so many other creatures get through and damage your opponent that time advantage becomes important.) However, if your opponent can't kill your creatures without losing more of his, then you probably do want to attack. Sometimes your attack will give your opponent the option of having two creatures "mutual"—that is, they'll both die. In those situations you have to ask yourself whether or not you want that to happen.

There's more to think about than just how your opponent will block. Ask yourself what the situation will look like after you tap your attacking creatures and imagine that your opponent either doesn't block or doesn't lose any of her creatures when she blocks. Can she attack you now that the creatures that attacked her are tapped and unable to block? If you have other creatures available to defend yourself with, she might not be able to hurt you. If you're making an all-out assault then you should make sure your attacks accomplish more than hers will. Basically, you need to do some "look-ahead" reasoning. Look ahead to imagine what the game state will be after your attack. Then try to guess how your oppo-



ment will attack on her turn and figure out what the game-state will be after that. If you can do this sort of look-ahead thinking in your head, then you'll have a much better idea when to attack and when to play defense.

Life totals are very relevant to how you should attack and block. When your opponent is low on life, you might make attacks that wouldn't be a good idea under other circumstances. Who cares whether two of your creatures die if the other two will reduce your opponent's life to zero! On the other hand, if your own life total is low, you should be very cautious about attacking because you don't want to open yourself up to a counter-attack.



ATTACKING AND BLOCKING

Your opponent has a Wall of Swords and you have two Trained Armodons. Should you attack? If you do, he'll block and kill one of your Armodons, and he'll take three damage. That's not worth it for you unless he's so low on life that the 3 damage will make a difference.



opponent's cards

your cards



(Left) Your opponent has a Goblin Elite Infantry to your Trained Armodon. Should you attack? Yes (probably) — he won't block and he'll attack back with the Goblin, but trading 3 damage for 2 damage almost definitely works to your advantage (unless you're significantly lower on life than your opponent).



(Right) You're on 3 life with a Drudge Skeleton in play. Your opponent is on 14, playing red, and has no creatures in play. He's already cast one Talruum Minotaur earlier in the game. I wouldn't attack — I'd hold back the Skeleton for defense (unless I had a Terror or some other Minotaur answer in my hand).





Your opponent has out 2 Wall of Air and a Hulking Cyclops while you have 3 Nightmares and 3 Swamps (and at least 3 other land) in play. If you attack with all 3, one will get through and deal 3 points of damage, but the Cyclops will hit you for 5. That's a bad trade. You should just play defense (threatening to double-block and trade one Nightmare for the Cyclops if it attacks) until you draw more Swamps.

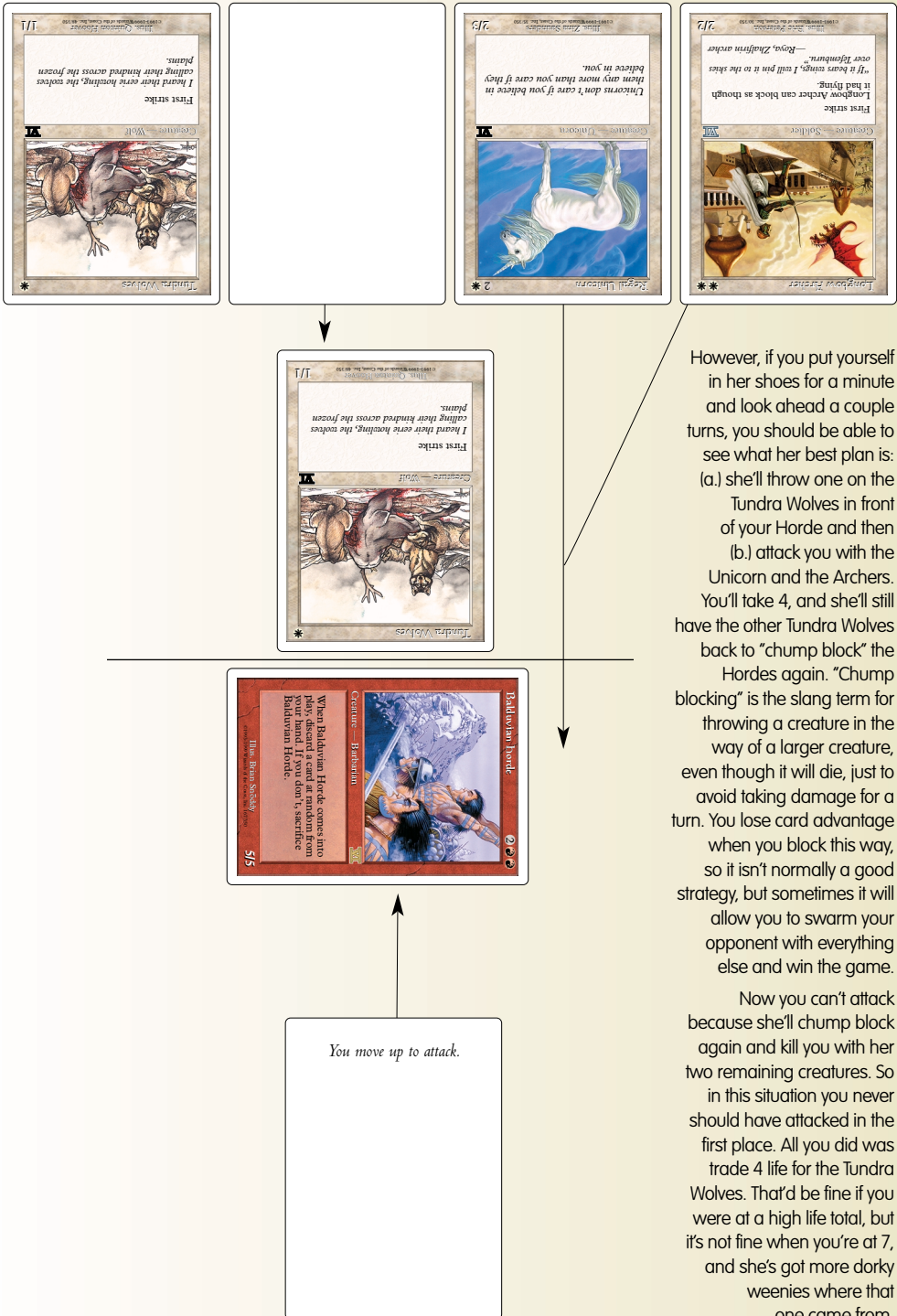




opponent's cards
your cards

You have 7 life and a Balduvian Horde in play. Your opponent is at just 2 life, but has out 2 Tundra Wolves, a Regal Unicorn, and a Longbow Archers. Should you attack? Your opponent must block the Horde or die and there's no way she can block the Horde without losing card advantage, so this would normally be a good attack.





However, if you put yourself in her shoes for a minute and look ahead a couple turns, you should be able to see what her best plan is:

- she'll throw one on the Tundra Wolves in front of your Horde and then
- attack you with the Unicorn and the Archers.

You'll take 4, and she'll still have the other Tundra Wolves back to "chump block" the Hordes again. "Chump blocking" is the slang term for throwing a creature in the way of a larger creature, even though it will die, just to avoid taking damage for a turn. You lose card advantage when you block this way, so it isn't normally a good strategy, but sometimes it will allow you to swarm your opponent with everything else and win the game.

Now you can't attack because she'll chump block again and kill you with her two remaining creatures. So in this situation you never should have attacked in the first place. All you did was trade 4 life for the Tundra Wolves. That'd be fine if you were at a high life total, but it's not fine when you're at 7, and she's got more dorky weenies where that one came from.

FIGURE OUT WHAT YOUR OPPONENT IS PLANNING

Perhaps the most important skill you need to develop in order to play well is an ability to figure out what your opponent is up to. You should always make an effort to understand why your opponent is doing whatever she's doing. Look at the permanents that your opponent has in play and try to figure out how you would use them. If your opponent doesn't make a play that seems obvious to you, then it's probably because of some card in her hand. Try to figure out what card she could have which would make whatever she did (as opposed to what you thought she'd do) the right play.

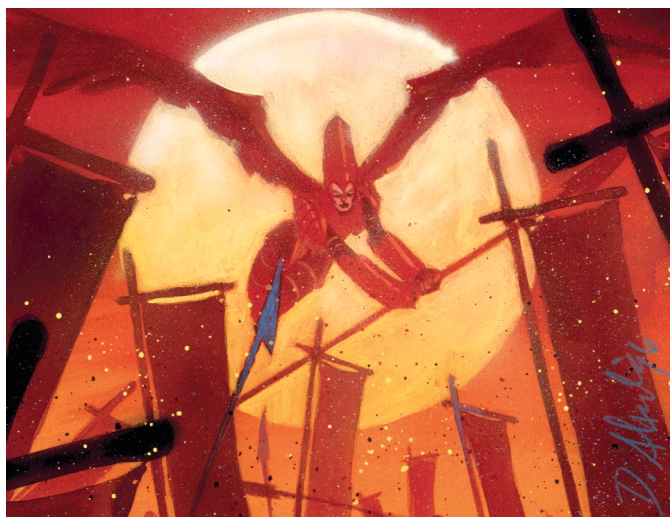
For example, let's say you're playing a sealed deck game and you've played a couple early creatures, but your opponent hasn't played any. Why not? Maybe she hasn't drawn enough land. This certainly happens sometimes, and you can look at the lands she's played to figure out whether or not that's true. If she's only played 2 lands over the first four turns of the game then you want to try to finish her off quickly before she draws the land she needs. However, let's say she's got 2 Plains, 1 Mountain, and 1 Swamp in play. She's probably not having mana problems. So why hasn't she played any creatures to block with? It's unlikely that she has no creatures she can play for 4 mana or less, so there must be something else going on. I'd be worried about some sort of creature sweeper effect like *Wrath of God*, *Earthquake*, or *Pestilence*. That means I'd just keep attacking with the two creatures I already have in play and I wouldn't play any more until I had to (because she played a blocker or removed one of my creatures or whatever).

When playing with Constructed decks, you can often figure out most of the contents of your opponent's deck by turn three. Especially at tournaments, very few people play truly original decks. If you are familiar with all of the popular strategies and deck-types, you can deduce your opponent's deck through a process of elimination. Once you understand what their basic game plan is, you should know how your deck can best deal with that game plan.

a. On her turn she blocks your attacking Horde with Wolves that die.

b. For her next turn, she attacks with Unicorn and Archer; 4 of your life points are taken.





GENERAL ADVICE

So many different sorts of situations can come up in game play that no short list of things to think about could possibly cover it all. That's one of the things that makes **Magic** so challenging and so rewarding. However, I think I can give you a little bit more general advice. Whenever I make decisions I am thinking about two basic things: card advantage and time advantage. In order to figure out whether to take action A or action B, I attempt to look ahead and compare what the game will be like in both cases. If either decision looks like it will win me the game in short order, then I'll do that—I'll go for time advantage. Otherwise I make whichever decision leads to card advantage.

I almost always make the decision that leads to card advantage, though that is partially a personal, stylistic choice. Some players prefer to play a more aggressive, more time-advantage oriented strategy that forces their opponent to make decisions correctly and come up with answers immediately. In Limited environments, I think you have to concentrate on whichever route to victory your cards can best achieve. If all you have are a bunch of cheap, efficient creatures then "go beatdown," and try to win the game quickly. On the other hand, if you have cards that allow you to control the game, play for card advantage and a slower victory. In Constructed you can actually choose a deck that implements the style you prefer. Neither style is necessarily better than the other (although I think some card sets do favor one or the other). Mostly it's a question of personal taste, and you should choose a deck that you enjoy playing.



BUILDING A CONSTRUCTED DECK

When people ask me what **Magic** is, I describe the game to them as Chess where you get to decide how your pieces move. I think the deck-building aspect of **Magic** is the most interesting part of the game and also the most challenging. In this chapter I'll explain some of the time-tested strategies that have evolved and proved effective over the years, and I'll show you how to implement them using only *Classic* cards. I think the best way to learn how to build good **Magic** decks is to start by studying well-established decks. Once you understand why they work as well as they do, you'll be much better prepared to build your own decks. After that, I'll talk about some common mistakes beginning players make when they first start building their own decks.

**DOWN, DOWN,
TO GOBLIN TOWN!**CREATURES

- 4 Raging Goblin
- 4 Goblin Digging Team
- 4 Goblin Elite Infantry
- 4 Goblin King
- 3 Orcish Artillery
- 3 Talruum Minotaur
- 1 Balduvian Horde

SPELLS

- 4 Giant Strength
- 4 Shock
- 4 Hammer of Bogardan
- 3 Pillage

LANDS

- 22 Mountains



Why is this guy smiling so much?

SLIGH

Named after Paul Sligh, one of the first players to have success with this strategy, a Sligh deck is mono-red with cheap creatures plus a large amount of direct damage. The idea is to play creatures on the first few turns of the game and then use burn spells (spells that target a creature or opponent) to remove any blockers that your opponent might play so you can keep attacking with your weaker creatures. Once your opponent gets low on life, or if he plays too many blockers that you can't kill, you start aiming the burn directly at him to finish him off. Sligh is one of the more straightforward deck strategies in **Magic**, but it does take some skill to play it perfectly.

In *Classic*, the best cheap red creatures are all Goblins, so this deck uses 12 Goblins and 4 Goblin Kings. Some of the expert-level expansions include 2-power red creatures for just 1 mana, and this strategy works even better when they are included in the deck.

When building a Sligh deck, it's very important to take a close look at your mana curve. Your goal is to use all of your mana on every turn of the game. That means you want to play enough 1 mana-cost creatures that you will almost always have one on the first turn. I've used 8, and 7-12 is a good target. You also want a healthy number of 2-drops (2 mana creatures), so you'll typically follow up your first turn 1-mana creature with a second turn 2-mana creature. I've used 4 Elite Infantries and 4 Giant Strengths as my second turn plays. That's probably not enough, but there just aren't any more options within *Classic*. Seven 3-mana creatures might be a little high, but it's pretty close to what a Sligh deck wants. I have 4 creatures that cost more than 3 mana, which is the most this type of deck would ever want. Once you get 4 land into play, you hope your opponent is already dead, but if not you can spend all your mana playing Hammer of Bogardan and returning it to your hand.

The biggest flaw of the Sligh strategy is that everybody knows about it and thus everyone will usually both practice against it and include cards in their sideboard specifically designed to stop it. The bane of this deck is Circle of Protection: Red. There's no real way to deal with this card. If your opponent plays it, you have to somehow get more creatures into play than she has land. Many red mages will splash an additional color into their deck just so they can have a CoP: Red answer. (Splashing white for Disenchant is a popular choice.) Others will include artifact sources of damage like Snake Basket or Skull Catapult, which can't be stopped by CoP: Red.

WHITE WEENIE

“White Weenie” is a fairly similar strategy to Sligh in that it too is a mono-color swarm of cheap creatures. White Weenie differs in that white has better cheap creatures but doesn't have any direct damage. The lack of direct damage or creatures with Haste means that White Weenie decks are slower than Red Weenie decks. However, that works out because white spells like Armageddon and Disenchant give white a controlling aspect that lends it more staying power. Some players use Howling Mines, so that they'll never run out of creatures to play. However, I don't recommend this strategy since Howling Mine helps both players, yet you've used up one of your resources to put this symmetrical card into play. Since you're down a card when you play it, and your opponent gets to draw the extra card first, it usually helps your opponent more than you.



SIDEBOARDING

When you take a deck to a tournament you get to use a sideboard in addition to your main deck. A sideboard consists of exactly fifteen cards, and tournament matches are almost always best two out of three games. Between games of a match, you can swap cards between your main deck and sideboard on a one for one basis. You always have to return your deck to its starting configuration for the first game of a match, but after the first game (once you know what your opponent is playing) your sideboard allows you to customize your deck against his. If your deck is vulnerable to a certain kind of deck, put some cards in your sideboard that will allow you to plug this hole for games two and three.

At limited tournaments, all of the cards you don't put into your main deck count as your sideboard, and you are not obligated to swap on a one for one basis. You still have to return your deck to its initial configuration for the first game of any match, though.

Most players don't use sideboards when they are playing just for fun, but sideboards add an interesting element of strategy and flexibility to tournament decks.



WHITE WEENIE

CREATURES

- 4 Infantry Veteran
- 4 Tundra Wolves
- 3 Resistance Fighter
- 4 Armored Pegasus
- 4 Longbow Archers
- 3 Mesa Falcon
- 3 Staunch Defenders

SPELLS

- 4 Crusade
- 2 Disenchant
- 2 Pacifism
- 2 Exile
- 3 Armageddon

LANDS

- 22 Plains

BLUE/WHITE CONTROL

Blue/White Control decks usually include no creatures and 4 copies of Wrath of God. That can present a serious problem for a lot of decks. First of all, most decks include a number of spells specifically designed to deal with their opponent's creatures. If you don't have any creatures, then your opponent will eventually accumulate a hand full of useless cards also known as "dead" cards. Secondly, many decks attempt to swarm their opponent with a horde of cheap creatures. One Wrath of God can wipe out an entire horde and gain tremendous card advantage. If your opponent played most or all of her creatures before you play your Wrath, she may not be able to apply much more pressure to you after the Wrath. Even if she held back several creatures, very few creature-based decks can survive multiple Wrath of God cards. Some Blue/White Control decks will include a couple of big creatures to attack and win with or perhaps some sort of token-creature generator that can produce blockers in the early or mid-game plus attackers in the late game. However, the classic creatureless victory condition is Millstone. By Milling your opponent for two cards at the end of each of her turns (keeping your mana untapped so you can use your counter magic during her main phase, of course) you'll eventually run her out of cards.



MOTHER MAY I?

SPELLS

- 4 Counterspell
- 4 Power Sink
- 2 Desertion
- 2 Abduction
- 2 Recall
- 4 Wrath of God
- 3 Exile
- 3 Pacifism
- 3 Disenchant

ARTIFACTS

- 3 Amber Prison
- 2 Jayemdae Tome
- 2 Millstone
- 2 Sky Diamond
- 2 Marble Diamond

LANDS

- 10 Island
- 8 Plains
- 4 Adarkar Wastes

Blue/white control decks are all about card advantage. Early in the game your goal is just to stay alive. You trade cards (1-for-1) with your opponent in order to neutralize as much of his offense as possible and survive into the mid-game. That's what Pacifism, Exile, Disenchant and permission (a countermagic spells that is a subset of instants and that can stop them from happening) are for. Once you've developed a decent base of mana, you try to gain card advantage through the use of Wrath of God and Jayemdae Tome. You play 4 sources of artifact-mana in order to accelerate yourself and get into this mid-game situation more quickly. Amber Prison forces your opponent to play more than one creature at a time so your Wrath will always generate at least 2-for-1 card advantage. That way you can save your permission for non-creature threats that are harder for you to deal with. If any of your spells turn out to be worthless against one particular opponent, save them in your hand to discard to a Recall and get back the spells that do matter. This is also a good use for excess land though usually you'll want to play a lot of land, so you can counter and use Jayemdae Tome and Amber Prison all on the same turn. (Just make sure you can

counter any Armageddons that your opponent might play!) Eventually, you play a Millstone and use it to deck your opponent. It takes a while to win with this deck, but if you survive the early game and “gain control”, you almost always will.

BLUE/RED CONTROL

Blue/Red Control, otherwise known as “Counter-Hammer,” operates using very similar principles as the Blue/White Control decks. It doesn’t have Wrath of God, but it does have Earthquake. Blue and red are not “friendly” colors, and so there is no blue/red land. That makes it hard to set up a reliable manabase so blue/red is notorious for having mana problems. On the other hand, it does have the advantage that its route to victory—Hammer of Bogardan—is useful early in the game. Unlike Millstone, which is worthless when you draw it in your first 10-15 cards, Hammer of Bogardan is a great way to kill an enemy creature. Since Blue/Red decks tend to play a decent number of creatures, they can win faster than Blue/White decks, and this allows them to replace the somewhat slow Jayemdae Tome with the more powerful Browse as a source of raw card advantage. Like its blue/white cousin, blue/red decks want to trade cards early and just stay alive long enough to start gaining card advantage, and that should be enough to win. Wall of Air plays the part of Amber Prison while Pillage attempts to replace Disenchant.

Gaseous Form by Roger Knapp



COUNTER-HAMMER

CREATURES

- 3 Air Elemental
- 3 Wall of Air

SPELLS

- 4 Shock
- 4 Hammer of Bogardan
- 3 Earthquake
- 3 Pillage
- 2 Abduction
- 3 Browse
- 2 Desertion
- 4 Counterspell
- 4 Power Sink

LANDS

- 12 Mountain
- 13 Island

NO TWO SEE THE SAME MARO

CREATURES

- 4 Birds of Paradise
- 4 Llanowar Elves
- 4 River Boas
- 2 Elvish Archers
- 4 Trained Armodon
- 2 Uktabi Orangutan
- 4 Maro

SPELLS

- 4 Giant Growth
- 2 Hurricane
- 3 Armageddon
- 3 Disenchant
- 4 Pacifism

LANDS

- 11 Forest
- 5 Plains
- 4 Brushland



MARO-GEDDON

Maro-Geddon decks use green mana creatures to quickly play large green creatures like Maro, and then they try to lock the game up by playing Armageddon before the opponent can deal with whatever big green creatures are in play. Maro-Geddon decks were popular long before Maro was even printed—they used to be called Ernha-Geddon decks and used the *Arabian Nights*[®] (and later *Chornicles*[™]) Ernham Djinn as the 4-mana-cost star of the deck. The rest of the deck consists of white utility spells that can efficiently neutralize most permanents that your opponent might play and other good green creatures that will be difficult for your opponent to deal with.

The 4 Elves and 4 Birds of Paradise allow this deck to get away with only using 20 lands. The mana creatures also have great synergy with Armageddon since you'll still have the ability to play spells even after you've blown up all of your own land. It might seem odd that the deck only uses 3 Armageddons even though it's a pretty important card. That's because Armageddon is only really good if you're winning the game. If you have a creature advantage, Armageddon will seal that advantage for at least the next several turns. However, if you're behind, Armageddon doesn't help at all—it would just cement your opponent's lead. In addition, the more Armageddons you have in your hand, the harder it's going to be to get ahead in the first place. Thus I've chosen not to max out on 'Geddons, and instead I included one more card which requires less work to make a good play Giant Growth. When playing this deck, remember to hold extra lands in your hand even if you haven't yet drawn an Armageddon because you'll want to be able to recover quickly if you ever do successfully play one. (The same logic applies when playing against an opponent who might have Armageddon in her deck.)

I put 2 Hurricanes into the deck because it's a quality card on its own that also provides a way to finish off an opponent if you get him down to a low life total but can't manage to get through with any creatures. Also, most people don't expect direct damage cards to come out of green/white decks, and they feel safe allowing themselves to get knocked down to just a couple life points. Giant Growth is the other trick you've got up your sleeve. Don't use it to deal 3 extra points of damage to your opponent unless this will kill them. Instead, save it so you can win a creature combat after your opponent has committed himself to block or use it to rescue one of your creatures from a direct damage spell like Shock or Blaze.

DISRUPTION

The goal of a Disruption deck is to prevent your opponent from ever implementing his strategy. Many of the cards in a Disruption deck knock cards out of the opponent's hand. When playing such a deck you have to try to play these as quickly as possible, before your opponent can actually play his spells. He will inevitably get something into play, and you're going to have to deal with it eventually, but that can wait a few turns.

This deck includes 12 spells that do nothing but "hand destruction" and only 13 creatures. The idea is that you won't need many creatures since you'll knock all of your opponent's creature-removal spells into the graveyard before he can use them. You have Terror and Pestilence (along with some cheap creatures of your own) to deal with whatever creatures your opponent does manage to play, and you have a couple copies of Greed to use to draw more cards and get even further ahead once your opponent is helpless. There isn't any life gaining in the deck right now, but between Pestilence and Greed it would be nice to have some. Fountain of Youth is the best option in *Classic* unless you add a color, but neither is a great solution.



THE DEAD NEVER FORGET

CREATURES

- 2 Blood Pet
- 3 Dudge Skeletons
- 4 Abyssal Specter
- 4 Nightmare

SPELLS

- 4 Terror
- 4 Pestilence
- 2 Greed
- 4 Stupor
- 4 Painful Memories
- 4 Agonizing Memories

ARTIFACTS

- 4 Charcoal Diamond

LANDS

- 21 Swamp

TRICK DECKS

There is one large class of decks that isn't really represented in *Classic*. Many of the expert-level expansions include cards that allow for the creation of infinite or nearly infinite loops. These “combo decks” or “trick decks” rely on getting the right combination of cards, usually enchantments, into play to allow them to immediately win the game. The decks usually don't have any creatures (unless the combo requires them) and instead plan to win the game before their opponent's creatures can kill them. They tend to be vulnerable to permission and enchantment removal, but if you don't have much of either then they can present a troublesome challenge.

There are some interesting combo-cards within *Classic*, but none of them are really worth building an entire deck around. It's actually quite useful to look at why these combos aren't good foundations for decks. One thing that all the decks included in this chapter have in common is that almost every card in every one of the decks is good on its own. None of them require that you have another specific card in your hand or in play in order for them to be useful. I believe this to be a very important principle of deck building that players should follow.

For example, you might be tempted to put Hecatomb and Sengir Autocrat into a mono-black deck. Hecatomb is really powerful once you get it into play, but you have to find 4 creatures to sacrifice in order to play it. That's where Sengir Autocrat comes in—he brings 3 Serf Tokens into play with him, which are just perfect for sacrificing to Hecatomb. That's a pretty good combo. However, look what happens if you get just one but not the other of these cards. Without Sengir Autocrat, Hecatomb requires you to throw away 4 cards worth of card advantage. That just isn't worth it. And without Hecatomb, Sengir Autocrat requires you to spend 4 mana for a 2/2 ground creature along with three fairly worthless 0/1 creatures—that's just not a good buy.

Another classic combination is Lure and Thicket Basilisk. Thicket Basilisk kills everything it touches, so if you drop Lure onto it and attack, all your opponent's untapped creatures will be immediately killed. Pretty powerful stuff, but if you draw just the Basilisk and not the Lure, you'll be stuck with a 2/4 creature for 5 mana. Admittedly, your opponent is unlikely to block it and



KILLER COMBOS

These combinations are great fun and really good if you draw both halves, but they are a little too unreliable to build tournament-level Constructed decks around.



unlikely to attack with ground creatures while you have it on defense, but that's still not really worth 5 mana. If you draw just the Lure and not the Basilisk, you might be able to send one of your creatures in as a Kamikaze to allow the rest to get through unblocked, but that's unlikely to win you the game. You wouldn't put Lure in your deck just for that purpose. (In Limited, by the way, you might. Many powerful combos, which are too unreliable to build Constructed decks around, are just fine in Limited play because the games last longer, and the spells your opponent has access to aren't as powerful.)

I'm not saying to avoid putting cards in your deck that go well together. I'm just saying that you should try to stick to cards that are also good on their own. Otherwise you'll lose a lot of games when you draw just half (or one third) of your killer combo.



*1998 World Champion
Brian Seldon used this
combination as the basis
for his championship deck.*

PLAY WITH EXACTLY 60 CARDS

Some of the cards in your deck will naturally be more powerful or more important than others. If you play with more than the minimum 60 cards, that means you'll draw those more important, more powerful cards less often. This is the same basic logic I used when I explained why to play the minimum 40 cards in Limited. It applies here too.

There's one other factor influencing this decision in Constructed: you want your deck to perform consistently. That is, you want it to do the same thing game after game after game. That way you'll know what to expect whenever you play. If you understand your deck's strengths and weaknesses, you'll know how best to allocate your resources during a game. Let's say you have one Counterspell in your hand and your opponent plays a Trained Armodon that your hand doesn't have a way to deal with. Should you use your Counterspell? It really depends on how good the rest of your deck is when dealing with vanilla 3/3 creatures. By playing with only 60 cards, you reduce the number of different sets of cards that your deck might give you over the course of a game. You'll have a much better understanding of the chances of drawing that Wall of Swords or Terror or whatever, and you'll know whether you can afford to hold onto this Counterspell.

WHY GET A LIFE?!

There are a lot of **Magic** cards that allow you to gain life. However, very few of them are actually worth putting into your deck. At first, it seems like gaining 10 life should stop that Wind Drake from killing you. However, gaining 10 life won't actually remove the Wind Drake from the board, and five turns from now it will have done 10 damage and you'll be right back where you started. If you had played a Shock or a Longbow Archer instead of that Stream of Life, then the Wind Drake would have stopped damaging you and you'd probably be better off. The flaw with life gaining spells is that they almost all involve a loss of card advantage. You've used up one of your cards without having any impact on the permanents that are in play. Sure, your life total went up, but that's usually only a temporary solution to a troublesome permanent.

Cards like Staunch Defenders and Venerable Monk get around this problem—these two creatures allow you to gain some life without losing any card advantage because you also get a creature in play. Spirit Link is also a playable life-gaining card because normally you play it on your opponent's creature so it won't do your opponent any good to attack with that creature.

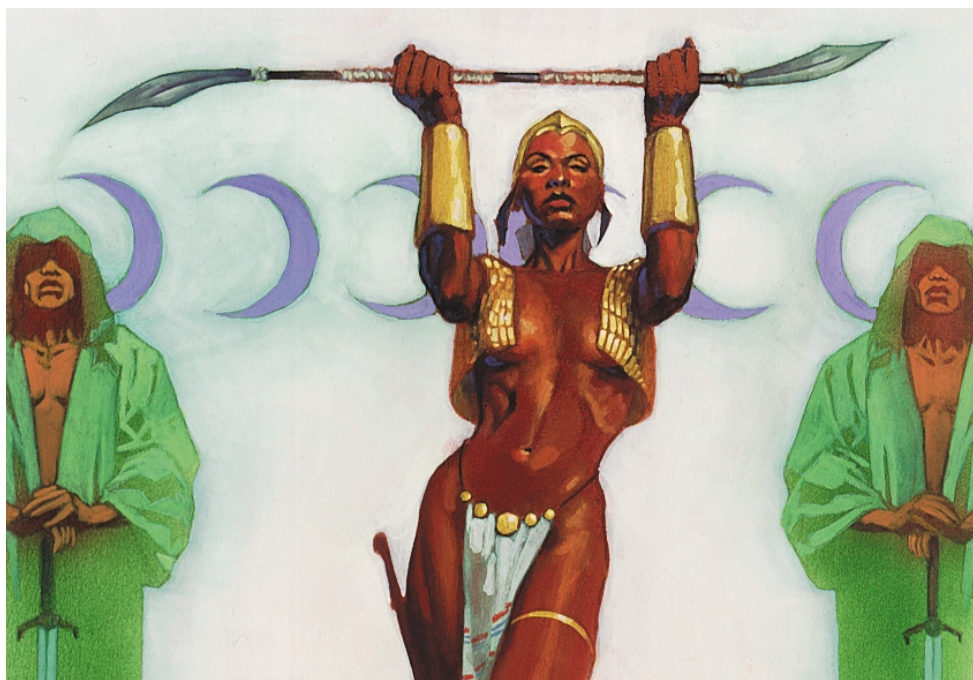
Life gaining does have a place in **Magic**. If a card gave you enough life for a cheap enough cost it would be worth playing. Some cards from **Magic's** past meet this condition. In addition, if your opponent is trying to kill you with direct damage spells then you might actually gain card advantage by playing a life-gaining spell. Of course, (if your opponent can't blow it up) Circle of Protection: Red is better because it will *permanently* prevent them from burning you to death, but Stream of Life does cancel out a couple of Shocks and Lightning Blasts.

Many players make the same mistakes when they start constructing their own decks. In addition to relying heavily on bad combos, many inexperienced players also:

1. Put too many cards in their deck,
2. Worry too much about life gaining, and
3. Obsess about big creatures.

I think it's useful to look at each of these common errors and try to understand why they're bad things.





SIZE ISN'T EVERYTHING

Crimson Hellkite sure looks scary, doesn't it? It's 6/6, it flies, and it can kill just about any other creature in play. However, it costs 9 mana to put into play. That means he's going to sit in your hand for a number of turns while the game progresses. Smaller creatures will already be in play and dealing damage. Compare him to Longbow Archers. The Archers usually come out on turn 2, and they can attack your opponent at least seven times before you can get 9 mana into play. If you need them to, they can even defend you against small fliers. Small creatures like the Longbow Archers have the advantage that they can be played even in games where you don't draw a lot of land cards. Large creatures like Crimson Hellkite will sometimes sit in your hand for ten to fifteen turns, and you could easily die to a swarm of small creatures before you ever draw that ninth land. Big creatures can be quite effective, but you have to consider how difficult they are to play. Five mana is a lot to pay for one spell. Six mana spells are typically the most expensive spells that you should expect to play in a competitive deck. A couple large creatures are fine, but you should also make sure you have something to do on the first few turns of the game and include a healthy selection of small creatures in your deck as well.



chapter 8

THE TOURNAMENT SCENE



COMPETITIVE MAGIC VERSUS FUN MAGIC

I want to be very straightforward about a fundamental distinction in my mind. I believe there are two basic ways to play **Magic**: you can play just for fun, or you can play to win. I know that these aren't mutually exclusive. After all, everyone enjoys winning more than losing, and even top tournament players find some strategies more fun than others. However, I do think there's a difference and you should know what motivates you.

Why do you play? If you just think it's fun to try to cook up wacky combos or to build a theme deck based around 7-mana cost artifacts, then you basically play for fun. If you spend most of your hours tuning your deck so it can win the next tournament at your local store, then you play primarily to win. Neither approach is better than the other; they're just different. Sometimes, more recreational players get mad at tournament players for "ruining" **Magic** by making it cutthroat and competitive. Tournament players sometimes scoff at fun players and consider them unworthy opponents. I think both attitudes are unhealthy. It seems to me that there's plenty of room for both kinds of players. To avoid these conflicts,

you should try to find a circle of friends to play with who have the same outlook you do. You'll enjoy the game more if you do.

With that distinction in mind, I want to point out that the strategies I've been explaining and the advice I'm giving is aimed mostly at people whose primary goal is to win. Basically all that means is that I've defined "better" cards and strategies

as whichever are more likely to help you win a game. I recognize that there are plenty of players who think the "cooler" ones or the ones that lead to bizarre situations and weird combos. I like to dabble in fun decks too sometimes.

This chapter is aimed at people who like to play to win, but aren't very familiar with what tournaments are out there. Even if you consider yourself a "just for fun" player, you might enjoy the Arena league, local tournaments, or especially pre-releases tournaments.



*Peter Adkison awards
Brian Seldon
with the top prize.*

THE DCI

The DCI was established by Wizards of the Coast to officially sanction **Magic** tournaments, keep track of official ratings of **Magic** players, and maintain banned and restricted lists for all tournament environments. You can read more about the DCI and read a copy of the official that govern all sanctioned matches at (www.wizards.com/DCI/). Perhaps the most popular part of the Wizards of the Coast web site is the official rankings and ratings page where you can see both what your own rating is and see who the top ranked players in the world are. Ratings are updated every two weeks.

TOURNAMENT FORMATS

Most cities have a couple stores that run tournaments from time to time. Some stores in major cities even run tournaments every day in a variety of different formats. Ask around at game stores, and someone should be able to point you in the right direction. The DCI has established a list of officially sanctioned tournament formats, so you'll know what to expect when you hear about a tournament. Here's a rundown of the seven most popular tournament types:

STANDARD

Sometimes known by its old name "Type II", this is by far the most common tournament type. Standard tournaments are Constructed tournaments where you can build your deck using cards from the most recent edition of the basic set plus cards from the two most recent stand-alone blocks. As of November 1, 1999, that means you could play cards from *Classic*, *Urza's* and *Mercadian*. Occasionally, the DCI concludes that a card is too powerful and needs to be banned from the Standard environment.

In early 1999, the DCI realized that the domination of lightning fast combo decks was unhealthy for the game and banned several cards in an attempt to make the environment more enjoyable.

EXTENDED

Extended is a Constructed format similar to Standard, but there are more legal card sets. For Extended tournaments, you can use cards from any edition of the basic set beginning with *Revised Edition™*, any expansion set or stand-alone block starting with *The*



THE EXTENDED BANNED LIST

(as of October 1, 1999)

Dream Halls
 Earthcraft
 Lotus Petal
 Mind Jar
 Mind Over Matter
 Time Spiral
 Tolarian Academy
 Windfall
 Yawgmoth's Bargain
 Yawgmoth's Will
 Zuran Orb
 all ante cards

THE STANDARD BANNED LIST

(as of October 1, 1999)

Channel
 Chaos Orb
 Divine Intervention
 Falling Star
 Mind Twist
 Shahrazad
 all ante cards

Dark®, and any official promotional card not on the banned list. That means there are currently eighteen legal sets: *Revised*, *Fourth Edition*, *Fifth Edition*, *Classic (Sixth Edition)*, *The Dark*, *Fallen Empires™*, *Ice Age™*, *Chronicles*, *Homelands™*, *Alliances™*, *Mirage™*, *Visions™*, *Weatherlight™*, *Tempest*, *Stronghold*, *Exodus*, *Urza's Saga*, and *Urza's Legacy*.

BLOCK CONSTRUCTED

Block constructed tournaments provide an opportunity to try out a stand-alone block and its expansions all by themselves. For example, only cards which appeared in *Tempest*, *Stronghold*, and *Exodus* cards are legal cards for Rath Cycle™ block constructed tournaments. The card designers always work some interesting themes into each block, and it's fun to see how decks and strategies change under these more restrictive deck-building constraints. There are currently four blocks that can be used for block constructed tournaments: *Ice Age* Block consists of *Ice Age*, *Alliances*, and *Homelands* (with *Zuran Orb* and *Thawing Glaciers* banned); *Mirage* Block consists of *Mirage*, *Visions*, and *Weatherlight* (with *Squandered Resources* banned); *Rath-Block* is *Tempest*, *Stronghold*, and *Exodus* (with *Cursed Scroll* banned); and *Urza* Block is *Urza's Saga*, *Urza's Legacy*, and *Urza's Destiny* (with *Time Spiral* and *Windfall* banned). Usually, tournaments are only held using the most recent block, but that block constructed format sees a lot of play at the Pro Tour and in Pro Tour Qualifier tournaments.

CLASSIC

Otherwise known as “*Classic*”. *Type I* tournaments allow you to use cards from all editions of **Magic: The Gathering**®. *Type I* tournaments have fallen somewhat out of favor in recent years since it is hard to acquire all of the cards necessary to compete with the best *Type I* decks. *Type I* is the one format with a restricted list—you are only allowed to play with 1 copy of any card on the restricted list. Some stores occasionally hold *Type I.5-Restricted* tournaments (otherwise known as *Classic-Restricted*). *Type I.5* decks can use cards from all **Magic** sets, but all the cards on the *Type I.5* restricted list are banned. Check the DCI Floor Rules on the internet or ask a judge before the tournament starts if you aren't sure whether a card you want to play with is legal.

Magic Pro Tour finals are televised on ESPN2.



SEALED DECK

Sealed deck is one of the most common forms of Limited tournament. You receive an unopened tournament pack and (usually) two booster packs from which to build a minimum 40-card deck. Sealed deck tournaments usually cost more to enter than other tournaments, but that's because you get to keep the cards you play with after the tournament.

BOOSTER DRAFT

Booster Draft is another form of Limited tournament. Instead of just opening a bunch of cards and hoping you get some good ones, you have to draft your deck. The draft system is really simple. The participants sit in a circle. Everyone opens a booster pack, takes one card, and then passes the rest of the pack to the person on her left. Continue the process, selecting one card and passing the remainder of the pack until the pack is empty. Then everyone opens another pack, selects a card, and this time passes to the person on her right. After that second pack is empty, open the third and final pack, draft a card, and pass to the left. You'll end up with 45 cards plus an unlimited amount of basic land from which to build a minimum 40-card deck.



ROCHESTER DRAFT

Rochester Draft tournaments aren't as common at the local tournament level as Booster Drafts, but Rochester is used just as much on the Pro Tour. The draft itself is more complicated than a Booster Draft, but many professionals feel Rochester draft is more fair because all the cards are drafted face up and you get to know what everyone else is drafting.

You have to have seven or eight people to do a Rochester draft properly. First one person opens a booster pack and spreads the cards out, face up, on the table. That person drafts a card, then the person on his left drafts a card, etc. until everyone has taken one pick from the pack. At that point the last person to draft a card from the pack takes a second card, and the draft order switches direction until everyone has a second card and the pack is empty. (At eight person tables, the person who picked first won't get a second card. At seven person tables there will be one card left over unused.) Now the person to the left of the guy who opened the first pack opens his first pack. Draft that pack just like the first one. Take turns opening a pack until everyone has opened one pack. Then the last person to open a pack opens a second one, but the

LIFE WITHOUT THE INTERNET

Throughout this chapter, I point to a number of website addresses as a way to find out more information about tournaments, rules, and Magic in general. If you don't have access to the internet, don't worry. You can still find all of the information you need—it's just going to take a little more work.

The easiest thing you can do is pick up a copy of *TopDeck™* magazine. It always contains locations and times for any upcoming Pro Tour Qualifier tournaments, Pre-Releases, Grand Prix, or Pro Tours. In the back, you can even find a list—complete with full card texts—of all in-print Magic cards.

You can also acquire a DCI Legend Membership by calling 1-800-324-6496. Legend members receive home delivery of *Sideboard* magazine, which covers all major tournaments, lists DCI rankings, and tells you what stores near you are hosting Arena tournaments.

Finally, if you can just find out where in your city there are local tournaments, go to one of them and make some friends. Fellow players are often the best source for information about what's going on and the judge will certainly be able to answer any of your questions.

drafting order reverses such that the guy on her right drafts second (and also opens the next pack). By the time the draft is over, everyone will have opened three booster packs. Once again, you get unlimited basic lands and build a minimum 40-card deck.

ARENA

Many stores run Arena™ leagues, which offer players a fun play environment. You sign up at your local retailer and play against other league members as often as you like on league night. Prizes are given out at the end of each league season to the top store players and prizes are awarded on a nationwide basis to the top ranked players as well. One great thing about the Arena league is the variety of formats that are used. One season could be Standard, the next *Vanguard™*, and the next Extended. These often include interesting deck construction guidelines, using special cards and external effects, or even team formats. You can find out more information about the Arena league by visiting the Wizards of the Coast web site: (www.wizards.com/arena/magic.asp).

PRE-RELEASES

A couple weekends before the release of any new set of Magic cards, a series of pre-release tournaments are held all around the world. Dozens of cities host these events where participants get to play a Sealed Deck tournament with cards that no one (except the designers) has ever seen before. These tournaments are more about seeing the new cards and trying them out than about winning, and they are among the largest Magic events any given city will see.

JUNIOR SUPER SERIES

The Junior Super Series (JSS) provides a way for anyone under 18 and living in the United States to compete for a share of \$250,000 per year in scholarship money. A number of local tournaments (called Junior Challenges) are held in the two age groups “fourteen and under” and “fifteen to seventeen” and the top two in each age group are invited to their area's Divisional Championship. In addition, the winner of each age group receives a \$200 travel award.

Divisional Championships are always held in conjunction with a Pro Tour event (see below). To compete, you can qualify either through a Junior Challenge or by finishing in the top 8 for your age group at the Divisional Open Tournament on the day before. The top 8 competitors in each age group at each Divisional Championship win invitations to the Super Series Championship in Orlando, along with airfare and hotel accommodations for two.

Super Series Championship invitations go to the top finishers at the (three) Division Championships, the twenty five top finishers in the Junior World Open in each age group, plus fifteen people from each age group based on DCI rating. Everyone who competes in the Championship itself is guaranteed a minimum of \$1,000 in scholarship money while each champion receives a \$10,000 scholarship.

You can read more about the Junior Super Series and find a schedule of events on the Wizards of the Coast web page at (www.wizards.com/jss/Welcome.asp).



THE PRO TOUR

The Pro Tour is the highest level of competitive **Magic**. Each year, Wizards of the Coast gives away over \$1,000,000 in cash spread across five tournament stops plus national and regional championships. Four times each year there is a tournament with a \$150,000 total purse and a first prize of \$25,000. The annual World Championships typically draws players from over forty countries who compete for the \$250,000 purse which includes a \$34,000 first prize.

In order to compete at these tournaments you must either win a special qualifying tournament or else do so well at other tournaments that your DCI ranking is among the best in the world. In addition, if you do well on the Pro Tour, you don't have to requalify. Pro Tour Qualifier tournaments are held somewhere in the world just about every weekend of the year. You can find a schedule on the web at (www.wizards.com/protour/Welcome.asp) along with a lot of other information about the Pro Tour.

There are also a number of "Super Qualifiers" for the Pro Tour known as Grand Prix which award \$15,000 each, including a first prize of \$2,400. Grand Prix are typically held once or twice each month somewhere in the world. For more info check out (www.wizards.com/grandprix/Welcome.asp).

Pro Tours and Grand Prix are big events with lots of **Magic** players and spectators in attendance. Even if you aren't playing in the main event, they are a lot fun. You can watch the best players in the world compete, you can get your cards signed by artists or players, and there are always a bunch of side tournaments that anyone can enter.

I'll see you there!

appendix B

ADVANCED GAME MECHANICS

The timing rules that apply to *Classic* cards also apply to all expert-level expansion sets. However, there are a lot of rules, game mechanics, and creature abilities that aren't in *Classic*. I'll try to explain each of these so that whenever you run into cards that seem to involve rules you don't know, you can just turn to this appendix and read about how they work.

Ante cards

When **Magic** first started, some people played for “ante.” This meant that before your game began, one card would be removed from each player's deck, and the winner of the duel would get to keep both of those cards—the ante. Wizards of the Coast used to print “ante cards” that could effect the ante. These cards were never legal in tournaments and are no longer printed.

Banding

Banding is a creature ability that changes who gets to assign combat damage. It's really two different abilities that share a name. On offense, you can form a unit (or band) consisting of as many creatures with banding as you like plus up to one nonbanding creature. Your opponent can then block the whole group, or not block any of them (she can't block just one of the creatures in the band). Then, when combat damage is assigned, you get to decide how damage from any creature(s) that block your band is divided among the creatures in the band. On defense, banding works a little bit differently. Whenever you block one of your opponent's attackers with any number of creatures that includes at least one bander, you get to decide how the damage from that attacking creature is distributed among your blocking creatures.





Bury

This term used on some older **Magic** cards has now been replaced by “destroy,” without the added restriction that the thing destroyed “can’t be regenerated.”

Buyback

You can play a buyback card just like a normal spell for a one-time effect. If you pay the buyback cost in addition to the normal mana cost, you get to put the spell back into your hand instead of into the graveyard when it resolves. So far, buyback spells are found exclusively in the Rath Cycle™ card sets (Tempest, Stronghold, and Exodus).

Cantrips

A cantrip is a spell that lets you draw a card as part of its effect. Thus, these spells effectively replace themselves when you play them.

Cumulative upkeep

If a permanent has cumulative upkeep that means that during the first upkeep after it comes into play, you have to pay the upkeep cost once. Then on your next upkeep, you must pay the upkeep cost twice, etc. Whenever you fail to pay the upkeep, the permanent goes to your graveyard.

Cycling

Anytime when you could legally play a fast action, you may pay the cycling cost of a cycling card (usually two mana), discard the card, and draw a card. So far, cycling is found only in the Urza-Block.

Echo

Whenever a permanent with echo comes into play under your control, you must pay the permanent’s mana cost during your next upkeep. If you choose not to pay the echo cost, the permanent goes to your graveyard. You only have to pay the echo once, but you do have to pay the echo cost even if all you did was take control of an echo creature that your opponent played. So far, echo is found only on cards from the Urza block.

Enchant world

Enchant world cards are a special subset of global enchantments. There can only be one enchant world in play at a time. Whenever an enchant world comes into play, bury any other enchant worlds that were already in play.

Flanking

Any creature without flanking that blocks a flanking creature gets -1/-1 until the end of the turn. Thus flanking creatures are harder to block than normal creatures (unless you have a flanker of your own to block with). So far, flanking is found only in the *Mirage* block.

Interrupts

Interrupts were a special class of spell that resolved “faster” than instants. All interrupts now have errata making them instants.


Legendary cards

There can only be one copy of a legendary permanent in play at any given time. Whenever a second copy comes into play, bury it. For example, let’s say you have an Ihsan’s Shade (a legendary creature) and a Gaea’s Cradle (a legendary land) in play. If I attempt to play a second copy of either of these cards, mine will just get destroyed. (If some effect causes multiple copies of a legend to come into play at the same time, all the copies coming into play are destroyed.) However, there’s no problem if I just want to play a different legendary creature.

Loss of life

Loss of life is different from damage. You can use damage prevention abilities like CoPs to stop damage, but you cannot prevent loss of life in any way.

Mono artifacts

Mono artifacts are artifacts that can only be used once per turn. Nowadays these all just tap when you use them, but for the first few sets of **Magic** cards, they didn’t have a  (tap symbol) and were called “mono artifacts.” You were just supposed to know that that meant you couldn’t use them more than once on the same turn. (See also “Poly artifact.”) If you play with one of these older cards, just remember that you need to tap it as part of the cost of using it.



Goblin King is not only a leader in the game; we made him our mascot. Sculpted by Kim Graham.

Phasing

At the beginning of your turn, all permanents (usually creatures) with phasing leave play—they “phase out”—and anything that is phased out returns to play. Phasing in does not trigger any “comes into play” abilities. However, phasing out does trigger all “leaves play” effects. So far, phasing is found only in *Mirage* block sets.


Pitch spells

Pitch spells are spells that can be played either by paying the normal mana cost or by discarding a card of the appropriate color from your hand (as explained on the cards themselves). There are only 5 of these and they were all printed in *Alliances*.

Poison counters

A number of creatures have been printed that give poison counters if and when they deal damage to a player. This is an alternative way to win a game of **Magic**. Anyone with 10 poison counters immediately loses the game.

Poly artifact

Poly artifact is the old name for artifacts that can be used more than once per turn. Nowadays you can recognize this ability by the absence of a  (tap symbol) from the activation cost of the artifact's ability. (See also “Mono artifact”.)

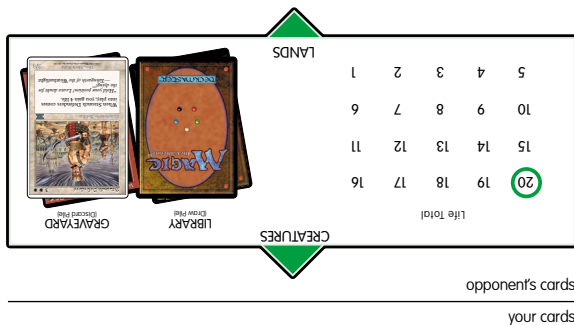
Protection from [color]

Protection from color is a creature ability that means three things: all damage of that color dealt to the creature is reduced to zero, no spells of that color can target the creature, and the creature cannot be blocked by creatures of that color. A few creatures have protection from something other than a color, but it should be obvious in those cases how to translate these three rules.

Rampage

Rampage is a creature ability that makes it harder to block a creature with multiple defenders. Rampaging creatures have a number listed after the word rampage in their text box (e.g. “Rampage X”). For every creature beyond the first that blocks it, the rampaging creature gets +X/+X. So if you block my Teeka's Dragon (a 5/5 flier with Rampage 4) with three creatures, it becomes 13/13.





This play mat sample indicates the location of the players cards during the game.



Remove from the game

This mechanic does appear in *Sixth Edition*. For example, *Exile* removes a creature from the game. Cards that have been removed from the game aren't in play or in the graveyard and there's no way to access them for the rest of the game. I usually have a removed from game pile next to my graveyard (but rotated 90 degrees).

Shadow

Creatures with shadow can only block and can only be blocked by other creatures with shadow. They're off in their own little world. So far, creatures with shadow have only appeared in Rath Cycle expansion sets.





Snow-covered lands

In *Ice Age*, each basic land also came in a snow-covered variety. These still counted as basic lands, but several cards in the *Ice Age* block look to see how many snow-covered lands of various types you have in play.

Trample

Creatures with trample can deal damage to an opponent even if they are blocked. First, the trampling creature must deal (at least) lethal damage to each blocking creature. Then any leftover damage tramples over and damages the opponent.

Upkeep costs

You must pay the upkeep cost of a permanent with upkeep at the beginning of your upkeep or else suffer the consequences. If the consequences aren't stated explicitly on the card, then the consequence for not paying the upkeep is that you must destroy the creature.

appendix C

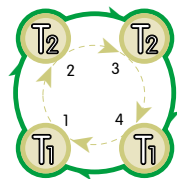
ALTERNATIVE PLAY FORMATS

Almost all tournament matches are played one on one, but a lot of people enjoying trying different ways to play **Magic** when they're just playing for fun. Here is an explanation of some of the more popular multi-player variants. Keep in mind that there are no official rules for multi-player **Magic**, and many people have their own twists on the same basic ideas. Just make sure you clearly specify all the rules you want to use before starting one of these games, and everything should work out fine.

Multi-player **Magic** is usually played using constructed decks, but it works just as well as a Limited format. One fun way to open new cards is to buy 75-card tournament packs and use those to build your deck. My personal favorite is to shuffle them up without even looking to see what you got and just play with a five-color deck who knows what is going to come out of.

FREE FOR ALL

The easiest way to play **Magic** with more than two people is just to sit everyone around in a circle, take turns going clockwise around the table, allow anyone to attack anyone else, and just play. The last person left alive wins. The only drawback to this format is that anytime multiple people gang up to obliterate someone, it's probably going to work. That makes politics more important than strategy. Of course, if you understand this aspect of free for all, you can take advantage of it. Build a deck that is defensive in nature and try not to upset any of the other players. What normally happens is that everyone gangs up on whoever looks like they're winning and beats him or her up. So if you can build a deck that doesn't look threatening until it's too late, you're in good shape. Some games will still end up in a "kingmaker" situation where someone with no chance to actually win the game can determine which of two other people does win. There's no reliable way to avoid that aspect of free for all, but most people who play free for all are playing just for fun anyway, so it isn't really important who actually wins the game.





PENTAGON (AKA CIRCLE OF DEATH)

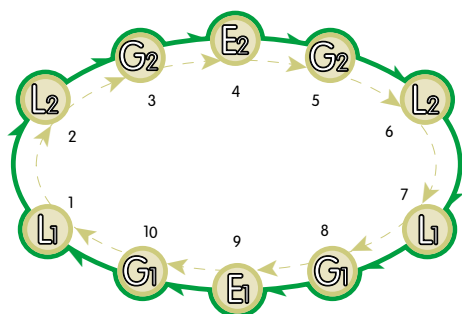
Pentagon is a variant of free for all where you have exactly five players, and each player plays a mono-color deck. You can play this in Limited by opening some packs and assigning each person all the cards of a color (and giving artifacts to the weaker decks or just leaving them out) and then building decks. You sit in the familiar friendly color pattern on the back of **Magic** cards, and you win the game as soon as both of your enemy colors (the two people sitting across from you) are eliminated. The players sitting next to you are your friends, and you'll notice that each of them shares one common enemy with you. Of course, if you're about to win the game then your friends might turn on you! If two people wind up in a winning situation simultaneously (usually because their shared enemy is the third player eliminated) then the game is a draw. Draws are not cool in Pentagon, so it's considered bad manners to cause this to happen. Fight each other and then have the winner finish off that weakling shared enemy. All "color hosers" are banned in Pentagon.

TWO-HEADED GIANT

In Two-Headed Giant, you and a teammate sit next to each other, share a 40 (or 30) point life total, and compete against another two-person team. You each have your own decks and your own creatures, but whenever either one of you takes damage it's subtracted from your shared life total. You can attack either of the heads of the opposing giant, and you win when the other giant's life is reduced to zero. (If you prefer, you can limit attacks to the enemy that's adjacent to you. You can also allow movement of creatures from one partner's play zone to the other's.)

EMPEROR

Sometimes called "Generals", Emperor games pit teams of three (or five) against each other. Your team sits in a row across from the other team and the person in the middle is the Emperor. Combat only occurs on the two flanks, so in order to actually attack an Emperor you must first take out his lieutenants. Teammates can pass creatures to each other. To pass a creature you tap it and move it into the playing field of the person you're passing it to. When you pass a creature, you no longer control it—your teammate does. It untaps during her untap phase, etc. Note that since play rotates clockwise, it works out to be a lot faster to pass creatures "downstream"—to the left.

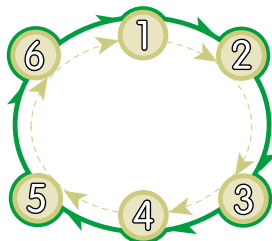


E = Emperor
G = General
L = Lieutenant

Opinions differ on what each player's "sphere of influence" should be. Some people allow everyone to target everyone else with spells and abilities while others think you should only be able to affect the people sitting next to you. Still others think the lieutenants should only affect whichever enemy lieutenant they can attack while Emperors can influence anyone. Whatever sphere of influence you decide on also determines what happens when a spell refers to "all creatures" or "all players." For example, if you play with a sphere of influence of 1, then Wrath of God only kills creatures controlled by you and your neighbors.

GRAND MELEE

Grand Melee games can be played with absolutely any number of players. I think it's the only variant that still works once you get more than 6 people involved (though Emperor can work with 10). Everyone has a sphere of influence of one, and you can only attack the person on your left. (Note that this means you'll be defending against the person on your right.) You get 1 point whenever the person you are attacking dies, and you get 2 points if you are the last person alive at the end of the game. Whenever someone dies, remove all the permanents they own or control from the game and whoever winds up with the most points wins. If you wind up with a really big circle, it probably makes sense to let different parts of the circle take their turns simultaneously, so you don't spend all day watching everyone else play. Use "active player" markers and don't let anyone start a turn if the next active player marker is less than 3 players away. It might take all day, but Grand Melee games with 80 or 90 players are not unheard of!



Gain the Upper Hand...



DECK DECONSTRUCTION COMPANION

Beth Moursund

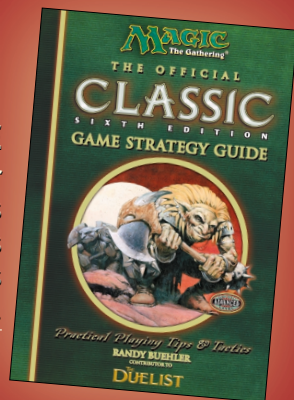
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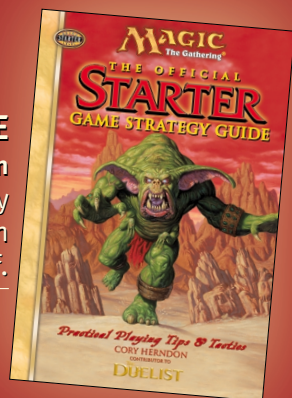
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Randy Buehler is 27, married, and lives in Pittsburgh, PA. His wife plays **Magic** too because, she says, “It’s the only way I get to see him on weekends.” He has a BS in Physics from Vanderbilt University (class of ’94) and an MA in Philosophy from Minnesota (class of ’96). He’s been working on a Ph.D. in Philosophy of Quantum Mechanics at the University of Pittsburgh, but will be eight months into a two-year leave of absence in April. He took his leave so he could play **Magic** full-time and so he could travel the world to pursue the opportunities **Magic** was presenting to him. He supplements his **Magic** winnings by writing strategy articles for *The Duelist* magazine and now books.

Well, a book anyway.

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TSR 21375

Printed in the U.S.A.

ISBN 0-7869-1375-4



U.S. \$16.99

CAN \$22.95

UPC