



3-1-2019

Budget Magic: The Gathering for Beginners

Todd W. Neller
Gettysburg College

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Neller, Todd W. "Budget Magic: The Gathering for Beginners." Presentation given for the Gettysburg College Games Club, Gettysburg, PA, March 2019.

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Budget Magic: The Gathering for Beginners

Abstract

In this talk, Neller overviewed budget-friendly entry points to playing Magic: The Gathering (M:TG) after its first quarter-century of success. Noting the ways in which M:TG players have applied head-designer Mark Rosewater's "restrictions breed creativity" lesson, he celebrated their creative formats that push back against expensive "pay to win" dynamics.

Keywords

magic the gathering; budgets; game club

Disciplines

Computer Sciences | Economics | Game Design

Comments

This presentation was given for the Gettysburg College Games Club at Gettysburg College in Gettysburg, PA on March 1, 2019.



Budget



MAGIC

THE GATHERING

for Beginners



Todd W. Neller











Central Questions

- I personally avoided Magic: The Gathering (and all trading card games) for its first 25 years as a perceived “money pit” with a “pay to win” aspect. Two focus questions:
 - What changed my **perceptions** of M:TG?
 - Through my learning experiences, what do I recommend as the **highest value purchases** and **best resources for the beginner**?









The Perception: Standard Format

Standard Metagame

 <p>Sultai Midrange ♣️♣️♣️♣️♣️ Hyroid Krasis Jadelight Ranger Vivien Reid</p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Decks</th><th>Meta %</th><th>Price</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>44</td><td>14.97%</td><td>\$ 507</td></tr></tbody></table>	Decks	Meta %	Price	44	14.97%	\$ 507	 <p>Esper Control ♣️♣️♣️♣️♣️ Teferi, Hero of Dominaria Kaya's Wrath Absorb</p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Decks</th><th>Meta %</th><th>Price</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>31</td><td>10.54%</td><td>\$ 505</td></tr></tbody></table>	Decks	Meta %	Price	31	10.54%	\$ 505	 <p>Mono-Red Aggro ♣️ Viashino Pyromancer Ghitu Lavarunner Lightning Strike</p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Decks</th><th>Meta %</th><th>Price</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>30</td><td>10.20%</td><td>\$ 116</td></tr></tbody></table>	Decks	Meta %	Price	30	10.20%	\$ 116	 <p>Mono-Blue Tempo ♣️ Siren Stormtamer Curious Obsession Tempest Djinn</p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Decks</th><th>Meta %</th><th>Price</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>15</td><td>5.10%</td><td>\$ 57</td></tr></tbody></table>	Decks	Meta %	Price	15	5.10%	\$ 57
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The Perception: Modern Format

Modern Metagame

 <p>Izzet Phoenix Arclight Phoenix Manamorphose Thing in the Ice</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Decks</th> <th>Meta %</th> <th>Price</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>60</td> <td>7.23%</td> <td>\$ 873</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Decks	Meta %	Price	60	7.23%	\$ 873	 <p>Grixix Death's Sh... Thoughtseize Death's Shadow Street Wraith</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Decks</th> <th>Meta %</th> <th>Price</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>48</td> <td>5.78%</td> <td>\$ 1,067</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Decks	Meta %	Price	48	5.78%	\$ 1,067	 <p>Burn Goblin Guide Eidolon of the Great Revel Lightning Bolt</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Decks</th> <th>Meta %</th> <th>Price</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>44</td> <td>5.30%</td> <td>\$ 585</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Decks	Meta %	Price	44	5.30%	\$ 585	 <p>Dredge Bloodghast Life from the Loam Prized Amalgam</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Decks</th> <th>Meta %</th> <th>Price</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>31</td> <td>3.73%</td> <td>\$ 628</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Decks	Meta %	Price	31	3.73%	\$ 628
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The Perception: Legacy Format

Legacy Metagame

 <p>Grixix Delver ⚡⚡⚡ Lightning Bolt Ponder Daze</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Decks</th> <th>Meta %</th> <th>Price</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>25</td> <td>7.42%</td> <td>\$ 4,185</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Decks	Meta %	Price	25	7.42%	\$ 4,185	 <p>Grixix Control ⚡⚡⚡⚡ Baleful Strix Ponder Brainstorm</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Decks</th> <th>Meta %</th> <th>Price</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>22</td> <td>6.53%</td> <td>\$ 4,905</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Decks	Meta %	Price	22	6.53%	\$ 4,905	 <p>Azorius Stoneblade ⚡⚡ Ponder Swords to Plowshares Brainstorm</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Decks</th> <th>Meta %</th> <th>Price</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>17</td> <td>5.04%</td> <td>\$ 2,397</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Decks	Meta %	Price	17	5.04%	\$ 2,397	 <p>mono red prison ⚡⚡ Ponder Chalice of the Void Chrome Mox Blood Moon</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Decks</th> <th>Meta %</th> <th>Price</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>14</td> <td>4.15%</td> <td>\$ 1,779</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Decks	Meta %	Price	14	4.15%	\$ 1,779
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The Perception: Commander Format

Commander Metagame









 <p>Atraxa, Praetors' ... Atraxa, Praetors' Voice Sol Ring Astral Cornucopia</p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Decks</th><th>Meta %</th><th>Price</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>1615</td><td>1.82%</td><td>\$ 266</td></tr></tbody></table>	Decks	Meta %	Price	1615	1.82%	\$ 266	 <p>Muldrotha, the Gr... Muldrotha, the Gravetide Sol Ring Sakura-Tribe Elder</p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Decks</th><th>Meta %</th><th>Price</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>1117</td><td>1.26%</td><td>\$ 158</td></tr></tbody></table>	Decks	Meta %	Price	1117	1.26%	\$ 158	 <p>Edgar Markov Edgar Markov Stromkirk Captain Captivating Vampire</p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Decks</th><th>Meta %</th><th>Price</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>1042</td><td>1.17%</td><td>\$ 167</td></tr></tbody></table>	Decks	Meta %	Price	1042	1.17%	\$ 167	 <p>Meren of Clan Nel... Meren of Clan Nel Toth Sakura-Tribe Elder Sol Ring</p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Decks</th><th>Meta %</th><th>Price</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>952</td><td>1.07%</td><td>\$ 180</td></tr></tbody></table>	Decks	Meta %	Price	952	1.07%	\$ 180
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The Perception: *Expensive!!!*

- Average cost of top 8 popular decks on 2/8/2019 by format:
 - Standard: \$310
 - Modern: \$1031
 - Legacy: \$2927
 - Commander: \$194
- “[Magic: The Gathering: Twenty Years, Twenty Lessons Learned](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QHHg99hwQGY)” (head designer Mark Rosewater, GDC 2016; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QHHg99hwQGY>)
 - Lesson 18: **Restrictions Breed Creativity**
 - So what’s an easy, restrictive M:TG game format that is **low-budget** and “breeds creativity?”

One Solution: Pauper Format

Pauper Metagame

 <p>Kuldotha Boros *🔥 Lightning Bolt Thraben Inspector Galvanic Blast</p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Decks</th><th>Meta %</th><th>Price</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>23</td><td>14.47%</td><td>\$ 80</td></tr></tbody></table>	Decks	Meta %	Price	23	14.47%	\$ 80	 <p>Red-White Weenie *☯ Battle Screech Prismatic Strands Journey to Nowhere</p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Decks</th><th>Meta %</th><th>Price</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>19</td><td>11.95%</td><td>\$ 73</td></tr></tbody></table>	Decks	Meta %	Price	19	11.95%	\$ 73	 <p>Blue-Black Delver 🔵🖤 Preordain Daze Brainstorm</p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Decks</th><th>Meta %</th><th>Price</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>18</td><td>11.32%</td><td>\$ 81</td></tr></tbody></table>	Decks	Meta %	Price	18	11.32%	\$ 81	 <p>Burn 🔥 Lightning Bolt Lava Spike Searing Blaze</p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Decks</th><th>Meta %</th><th>Price</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>11</td><td>6.92%</td><td>\$ 64</td></tr></tbody></table>	Decks	Meta %	Price	11	6.92%	\$ 64
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One Solution: Pauper Format

- Average cost of top 8 popular decks on 2/8/2019 by format:
 - Standard: \$310
 - Modern: \$1031
 - Legacy: \$2927
 - Commander: \$194
 - **Pauper: \$78**
- So there's a common format that isn't super expensive, but it's still a lot to pay for a beginner that doesn't know whether or not they'll like the game. (i.e. "barrier to entry")
- Let's start at the beginning... **how to start learning MT:G for free.**



Wizards of the Coast Videos

- Wizards of the Coast (WotC), the company that creates M:TG, has simple introductory videos:
 - [What is Magic: The Gathering?](#)
 - [How to Play Magic: The Gathering](#)
 - [How to Build Your First Magic Deck](#)
 - [Ways to Play Magic: The Gathering](#)



MAGIC THE GATHERING ARENA BETA

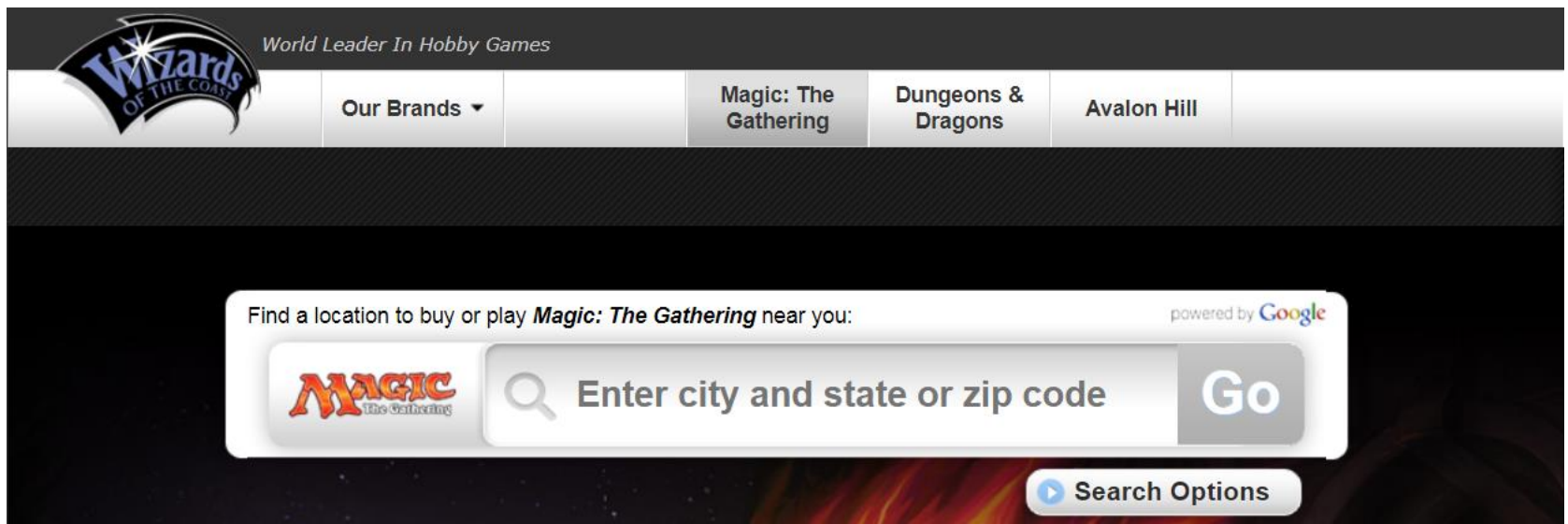


Magic: The Gathering Arena

- Play tutorial games free on Magic: The Gathering Arena:
<https://magic.wizards.com/en/mtgarena>
 - Really free to play – rather than pay, can *play* to earn wildcards to trade in for cards to **build tier 1 standard decks**
 - Good, clear interface
 - Generous good, **free decks** awarded to regular players (e.g. “Jungle Secrets” merfolk deck)

Free Welcome Decks

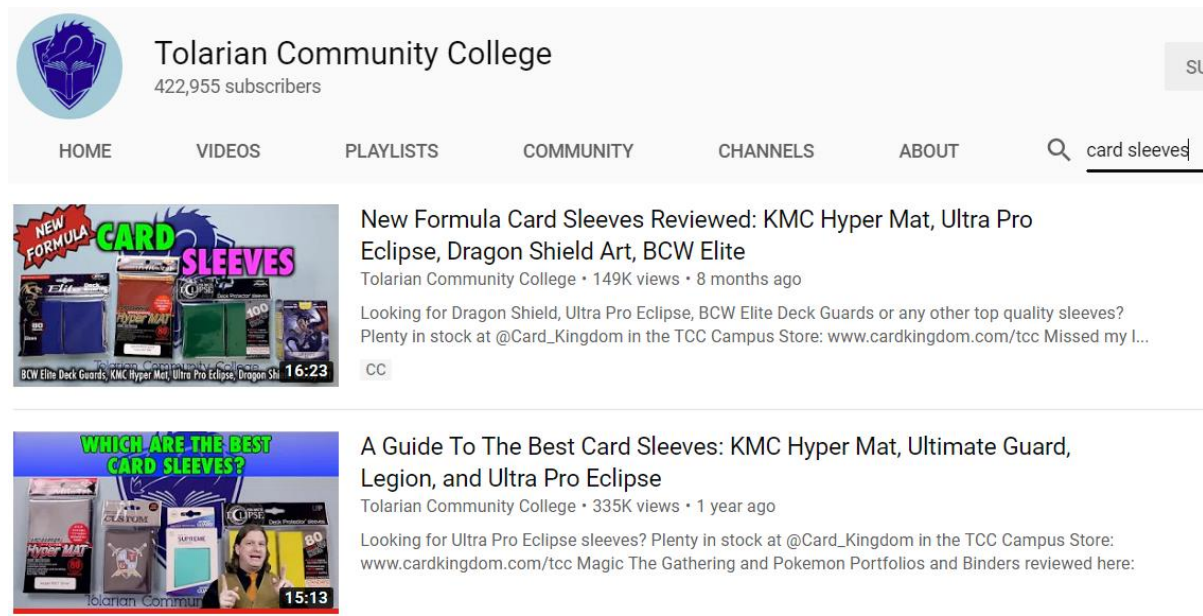
- Many local game stores that sell M:TG products also offer free 60-card *welcome decks*.
- 2018 welcome decks featured two 30-card mono-colored decks that could be played against each other or combined as a 60-card standard deck.
- Find your local game stores using <http://locator.wizards.com/>



The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the Wizards of the Coast website. The logo "Wizards OF THE COAST" is on the left, with the tagline "World Leader In Hobby Games" to its right. The navigation menu includes "Our Brands" (with a dropdown arrow), "Magic: The Gathering", "Dungeons & Dragons", and "Avalon Hill". Below the navigation bar is a search bar with the text "Find a location to buy or play *Magic: The Gathering* near you:" and "powered by Google". The search bar contains the "MAGIC The Gathering" logo, a magnifying glass icon, the text "Enter city and state or zip code", and a "Go" button. A "Search Options" button is located below the search bar.

Want to Support the Store?

- Buy a practical accessory while you're there: *card sleeves* to protect and preserve your cards.
 - Good brands:
 - [UltraPro Eclipse](#)
 - [Dragon Shield](#)
 - See [Tolarian Community College videos](#) for reviews and recommendations for accessories.

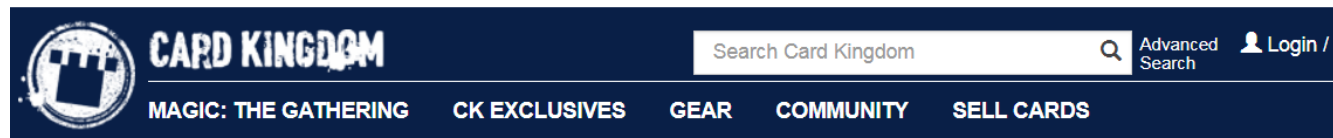


The screenshot shows the YouTube channel page for Tolarian Community College, which has 422,955 subscribers. The search bar contains the text "card sleeves". Two video thumbnails are visible:

- Video 1:** "New Formula Card Sleeves Reviewed: KMC Hyper Mat, Ultra Pro Eclipse, Dragon Shield Art, BCW Elite". The thumbnail shows various card sleeve products. The video duration is 16:23. The description includes: "Tolarian Community College • 149K views • 8 months ago" and "Looking for Dragon Shield, Ultra Pro Eclipse, BCW Elite Deck Guards or any other top quality sleeves? Plenty in stock at @Card_Kingdom in the TCC Campus Store: www.cardkingdom.com/tcc Missed my L...".
- Video 2:** "A Guide To The Best Card Sleeves: KMC Hyper Mat, Ultimate Guard, Legion, and Ultra Pro Eclipse". The thumbnail shows a person holding up card sleeves. The video duration is 15:13. The description includes: "Tolarian Community College • 335K views • 1 year ago" and "Looking for Ultra Pro Eclipse sleeves? Plenty in stock at @Card_Kingdom in the TCC Campus Store: www.cardkingdom.com/tcc Magic The Gathering and Pokemon Portfolios and Binders reviewed here:".

Card Kingdom Battle Decks

- Welcome decks are simple and good for learning, but there are good, thematic, budget “Battle Decks” available online for ~\$10 at <https://www.cardkingdom.com/catalog/shop/battle-decks>



BATTLE DECKS ARE READY-TO-PLAY, 60-CARD DECKS BREWED FOR MAGIC: THE GATHERING FUN!

Our team of in-house experts custom build each deck around a theme, packing them full of cool cards and exciting mechanics. Perfect for players looking for something original and fun, these decks are also great for casual and new players alike. Battle Decks are balanced to be played against each other, so you and your friends can build a gauntlet and BATTLE! Learn more about Battle Decks in our behind the scenes [video](#).

Battle Decks come with two unique tokens in a clear plastic case, ready for your enjoyment.

Look for new decks on the 1st of each month!

Budget Accessories

- For keeping track of life totals:
 - Free Talisman Games Magic Life Total app:
<https://talisman.games/products/magic-life-total/>
- +1/+1 or -1/-1 counters: [small \(12mm\) d6 dice](#)
- [13.5" x 24" black playmat](#) (~\$10)
- [Deckboxes](#) (< \$2 each)

Budget Format: Pauper

- M:TG booster packs generally contain cards of varying rarity, e.g.
 - 1 rare card (or possibly a rare “mythic” rare)
 - 3 uncommon cards
 - 10 common cards
 - 1 token creature
- Often, desirable cards for competitive play are more rare, causing high prices given low supply and high demand.
- **Pauper format:** Only cards mass-produced at **common** rarity at any point in M:TG history are allowed (with the exception of a [short banlist](#)).
- Purchase cards individually online, e.g. via TCGplayer.com
- Advantage: the same joys and challenges of creative deck building with a restriction that lowers the price

Example Deck: Mono-Blue Delver

- <https://www.mtggoldfish.com/archetype/pauper-mono-blue-delver#paper>

Mono Blue Delver Suggest a Better Name

9 Decks (5.66% of meta)

Sample Deck

Pauper League 2019-01-23, (5-0)

Format: Pauper

Jan 23, 2019



	Online	Paper	Arena	My Price (Online)	My Price (Paper)	My Price (Arena)
Creatures (16)					2 Foil	0.62
4 Delver of Secrets				7.00	2 Gush	7.74
4 Faerie Miscreant				1.60	Lands (18)	
4 Spellstutter Sprite				7.96	18 Island	0.00
4 Ninja of the Deep Hours				3.76	Sideboard (15)	
Spells (26)					3 Annul	0.45
3 Mutagenic Growth				4.92	2 Dispel	0.42
4 Ponder				7.80	4 Gut Shot	12.00
4 Preordain				14.60	4 Hydroblast	4.84
4 Counterspell				3.96	1 Piracy Charm	0.25
3 Daze				5.46	1 Augur of Bolas	0.42
4 Snap				3.68	75 Cards Total	

Buy from Card Kingdom \$ 87.48

Buy from Cardhoarder 48.83 tix

Buy from TCGPlayer

Buy from MTGOTraders

Fun Budget M:TG Outing

- Visit your local game store that allows purchases from boxes of surplus commons.
- Set a time limit and have players build and purchase their best 40-card Pauper deck (typically 23 commons cards and 17 borrowed basic lands).
 - At our local shop, [Fourcorners Comics and Games](#), commons are \$.15 each, so ~\$3.45/deck.
- Compete!

Budget Format: Cube

- A playgroup builds a balanced set of 360+ cards that support many archetypes (e.g. styles/themes) of play.
- Highlander format (“There can be only one.”) – at most one card of each type permitted
- Any draft format is permitted, e.g.
 - Form 15-card “booster packs” and traditional draft.
 - Construct a limited 40-card deck from a set of 90 random cards.
- (Include enough basic lands for all.)

Example: Card Kingdom Starter Cube

Card Kingdom Starter Cube



Current Version: **V7**

By popular demand, we've launched V7 of our Starter Cube, including beautiful BFZ full art basic lands! Click on the links below to see how the Cube has evolved.

Nothing is more fun than drafting a Cube, but building a Cube can be hard and expensive. That's why we created the Card Kingdom Starter Cube! This Cube contains 360 cards and was created with one thing in mind: FUN! Our Cube is filled with fun draft archetypes and exciting bombs to get you started on your own personal Cube. Use this as your base, and add or swap cards as you see fit!

*Includes 35 of each basic land and comes in two custom Card Kingdom Blue boxes with enough **Ultra Pro** sleeves for the whole kit!*

All cards included are NM/EX condition.

\$99.99

Add To Cart

Available: 100

White (53)

Creature (30)

Dauntless Bodyguard
Doomed Traveler
Haazda Marshal
Healer's Hawk
Novice Knight
Skymarcher Aspirant

Knight of Grace
Kor Skyfisher
Leonin Skyhunter
Lone Missionary
Silverchase Fox
Stormfront Pegasus
Sunhome Stalwart

Aerial Responder
Attended Knight
Danitha Capashen,
Paragon
Fiend Hunter
Pegasus Courser
Roc Charger

Baird, Steward of Argive
Gallant Cavalry
Inspiring Unicorn
Parhelion Patrol

Bishop of Rebirth
Regal Caracal
Serra Angel
Venerated Loxodon

Evra, Halcyon Witness
Lena, Selfless Champion
Noble Templar

Instant (7)

Cloudshift

Blue (53)

Creature (20)

Departed Deckhand
Dreamscape Artist
Mystic Archaeologist
Nightveil Sprite
Omenspeaker
Vodalian Arcanist

Eldrazi Skyspawner
Jeskai Infiltrator
Mirror Image
Sea Gate Oracle
Wall of Frost

Archaeomancer
Murmuring Mystic
Niblis of Frost
Tower Geist

Djinn of Wishes
Mnemonic Wall

Sage-Eye Avengers
Shoreline Ranger

Sphinx of Uthuan

Instant (22)

Diminish
Opt
Unsummon

Anticipate
Blink of an Eye
Disdainful Stroke
Essence Scatter
Impulse
Mana Leak
Negate
Radical Idea
Think Twice

Black (53)

Creature (32)

Diregraf Ghoul
Festering Mummy
Hired Poisoner
Pilfering Imp
Sanitarium Skeleton
Tenacious Dead
Typhoid Rats

Burglar Rat
Carrier Thrall
Child of Night
Doomed Dissenter
Dusk Legion Zealot
Knight of Malice
Reassembling Skeleton
Scrapheap Scrounger

Bloodflow Connoisseur
Phyrexian Ghoul
Plague Mare
Ravenous Harpy
Skymarch Bloodletter
Vampire Aristocrat
Vengeful Rebel

Falkenrath Noble
Fell Specter
Gravedigger
Smothering Abomination
Whisper, Blood Liturgist

Phyrexian Plaguelord
Priest of the Blood Rite
Yargle, Glutton of
Urborg

Twisted Abomination

Eater of Hope

Red (53)

Creature (30)

Fanatical Firebrand
Foundry Street Denizen
Goblin Banneret
Skirk Prospector
Torch Courier
Bomat Courier

Altac Bloodseeker
Champion of the Flame
Cheering Fanatic
Electrostatic Field
Goblin Cratermaker
Goblin Instigator
Kiln Fiend
Ornery Goblin
Thermo-Alchemist
Torch Fiend

Goblin Warchief
Guttersnipe
Pia Nalaar
Rummaging Goblin
Smelt-Ward Minotaur
Valduk, Keeper of the
Flame

Enthralling Victor
Heart-Piercer Manticore
Volley Veteran

Charging Monstrosaur
Goblin Dark-Dwellers
Magmaw

Burning Sun's Avatar
Chartooth Cougar

Instant (9)

Shivan Fire

Green (53)

Creature (31)

Arbor Elf
Avacyn's Pilgrim
Llanowar Elves
Oviya Pashiri, Sage
Lifecrafter

Deathcap Cultivator
Druid of the Cowl
Elfhame Druid
Elvish Visionary
Kraul Harpooner
Naga Vitalist
Untamed Kavu
Voyaging Satyr
Wall of Roots

Atzocan Archer
Daggerback Basilisk
District Guide
Ghirapur Guide
Jungleborn Pioneer
Reclamation Sage
Yavimaya Sapherd

Ambassador Oak
Deadbridge Goliath
Giant Spider
Wolfbriar Elemental

Acidic Slime
Crested Herdcaller
Ridgescale Tusker

Affectionate Indrik
Elvish Aberration

Pelakka Wurm

Verdant Force

Instant (5)

Multicolor (30)

Azorius (3)

Momentary Blink
Turn to Mist
Cloudblazer

Dimir (3)

House Guildmage
Artful Takedown
Rags // Riches

Rakdos (3)

Spike Jester
Auger Spree
Brawl-Bash Ogre

Gruul (3)

Draconic Disciple
Rubblebelt Raiders
Rubblehulk

Selesnya (3)

Centaur Healer
Ledev Champion
Conclave Cavalier

Orzhov (3)

Hidden Stockpile
Pillory of the Sleepless
Aryel, Knight of
Windgrace

Golgari (3)

Golgari Findbroker
Brood Butcher
Izoni, Thousand-Eyed

Simic (3)

Colorless (65)

Artifact (23)

Bloodtallow Candle
Explosive Apparatus
Pacification Array
Short Sword
Traveler's Amulet

Jousting Lance
Kitesail
Marauder's Axe

Prismatic Lens
Prophetic Prism
Sky Skiff
Torch Gauntlet

Arcane Encyclopedia
Captain's Hook
Manalith

Moonglove Extract
Orazca Relic
Seer's Lantern

Sigiled Sword of Valeron
Sleek Schooner
Strider Harness

Icy Manipulator
Oracle's Vault

Creature (14)

Hedron Crawler
Suspicious Bookcase
Voltaic Servant

Aesthir Glider
Filigree Familiar
Pilgrim's Eye
Skittering Surveyor
Skyscanner

Jhoira's Familiar

Best of Both Worlds: The Pauper Cube



Welcome To The Pauper Cube

In 2008, after more than a decade of on-and-off again playing, I got back into *Magic* forever with *Shards of Alara*. The multicolor mayhem and plentiful cubes at [my then-local game store](#) inspired me to put the two ideas together. While “the Pauper multicolor cube” wasn’t a great way to play, the idea of using only commons stuck. With the help of [cube aficionado \(and amazing artist\) Eric Klug](#) a tight, fun cube of powerful commons came together.

Today, “the Pauper Cube” is a *Magic* fan-favorite that’s been featured by the game’s top content creators.

White (56)**Creature (36)**

Doomed Traveler
Elite Vanguard
Gideon's Lawkeeper
Goldmeadow Harrier
Hunted Witness
Loyal Pegasus
Savannah Lions
Thraben Inspector

Daring Skyjek
Gather the Townsfolk
Kor Skyfisher
Martyr of Dusk
Mistral Charger
Raise the Alarm
Seeker of the Way
Stormfront Pegasus
Whitemane Lion

Attended Knight
Aven Riftwatcher
Dauntless Cathar
Glint-Sleeve Artisan
Ordinary Pony
Sandsteppe Outcast
Sheer Drop
Triplicate Spirits

Battle Screech
Call the Cavalry
Coalition Honor Guard
Gallant Cavalry
Guardian of the Guildpact
Paladin of the Bloodstained
Seraph of Dawn

Custodi Squire

Blue (56)**Creature (32)**

Augur of Bolas
Carnivorous Death-Parrot
Errant Ephemeron
Halimar Wavewatch
Kitesail Corsair
Ninja of the Deep Hours
Omenspeaker
Seeker of Insight

Aether Adept
Calcite Snapper
Dimir Informant
Eldrazi Skyspawner
Man-o'-War
Pestermite
Shaper Parasite
Skittering Crustacean
Stitched Drake
Warden of Evos Isle

Cloaked Siren
Makeshift Mauler
Mist Raven
Separatist Voidmage
Shimmering Glasskite
Wretched Gryff

Clutch of Currents
Gryff Vanguard
Mnemonic Wall
Mulldrifter
Soul of the Rapids
Watcher in the Mist

Aethersnipe
Striped Riverwinder

Instant (16)**Black (56)****Creature (35)**

Carrion Feeder
Disowned Ancestor
Plagued Rusalka
Ruthless Ripper
Typhoid Rats

Butcher Ghoul
Doomed Dissenter
Dusk Legion Zealot
Pit Keeper
Sinuous Vermin
Sultai Emissary
Thrill-Kill Assassin

Bloodflow Connoisseur
Crypt Rats
Deadeye Tormentor
Deathbloom Thallid
Hired Blade
Liliana's Specter
Phyrexian Ghoul
Phyrexian Rager
Wakedancer

Driver of the Dead
Faceless Butcher
Falkenrath Noble
Gravedigger
Gurmag Angler
Slum Reaper
Soulstinger
Thorn of the Black Rose
Vulturous Aven

Blade Juggler
Gray Merchant of Asphodel
Midnight Scavengers
Predatory Nightstalker

Red (56)**Creature (38)**

Fanatical Firebrand
Frenzied Goblin
Insolent Neonate
Jackal Pup
Mogg Fanatic

Common Iguana
Dragon Fodder
Fireslinger
Goblin Freerunner
Goblin Instigator
Goblin Trailblazer
Keldon Marauders
Krenko's Command
Mogg Flunkies
Mogg War Marshal
Nest Robber
Plated Geopede
Viashino Pyromancer

Azra Bladeseeker
Brazen Wolves
Burning-Tree Vandal
Fervent Cathar
Ghirapur Gearcrafter
Goblin Heelcutter
Hissing Iguana
Hordeling Outburst
Inner-Flame Acolyte
Minotaur Skullcleaver
Skirk Marauder
Sparkspitter
Vulshok Sorcerer

Beetleback Chief
Keldon Raider
Voldaren Duelist
Flurry of Horns

Green (56)**Creature (33)**

Basking Rootwalla
Squirrel Dealer
Young Wolf

Ambush Viper
Brindle Shoat
Sakura-Tribe Elder
Saproling Migration
Thornweald Archer
Wall of Roots
Wild Mongrel

Elvish Rejuvenator
Hooting Mandrills
Jungle Wayfinder
Jungleborn Pioneer
Scion Summoner
Scion of the Wild
Yavimaya Elder
Yavimaya Sapherd

Aerie Bowmasters
Baloth Gorgor
Elephant Ambush
Imperiosaur
Peema Outrider
Penumbra Spider

Aerie Ouphes
Lifecraft Cavalry
Nessian Asp
Overgrown Armasaur
Scatter the Seeds

Citanul Woodreaders

Maul Splicer
Wrecking Beast
Walker of the Grove

Multicolor (65)**Azorius (6)**

Deputy of Acquittals
Feeling of Dread
Momentary Blink
Curse of Chains

Court Hussar
Lawmage's Binding

Dimir (6)

Cavern Harpy
Dimir Guildmage
Agony Warp

Whisper Agent
Soul Manipulation
Dinrova Horror

Rakdos (6)

Spike Jester
Terminate

Kathari Bomber
Auger Spree
Blightning

Wrecking Ball

Gruul (6)

Burning-Tree Emissary
Colossal Might

Branching Bolt
Savage Smash

Frenzied Arynix

Scuzzback Marauders

Selesnya (6)**Colorless (64)****Artifact (15)**

Adventuring Gear
Bonesplitter
Flayer Husk
Leonin Bola
Sylvok Lifestaff
Wayfarer's Bauble

Armillary Sphere
Guardian Idol
Mind Stone
Prophetic Prism
Star Compass
Vulshok Morningstar

Pristine Talisman
Renegade Freighter
Serrated Arrows

Creature (14)

Bonded Construct
Sparring Construct
Vault Skirge
Perilous Myr
Porcelain Legionnaire

Gathan Raiders
Will-Forged Golem

Clay Statue
Cogwork Librarian
Peace Strider
Pierce Strider

Kozilek's Channeler

Eldrazi Devastator
Ulamog's Crusher

Land (35)

Budget M:TG Summary

- Try for free: [welcome decks](#), [MTG Arena](#)
- \$10 [CK Battle Decks](#), free/inexpensive accessories
- Learn a lot about M:TG through cube drafting for as low as \$12.50 per person in a playgroup of 8 with a [CK Starter Cube](#).
- Exercise creative deckbuilding on a budget with the [Pauper](#) common rarity restriction.
- Continue to learn online through [MTG Arena](#) play and many free [YouTube](#) and [Twitch](#) videos.

Proposal: Contrarian Format

- **contrarian**: a person who takes a contrary position or attitude specifically : an investor who buys shares of stock when most others are selling and sells when others are buying.
- Basic philosophy:
 - **Cards are only good/bad in comparison to other cards.**
 - Restrictions breed creativity → **Restricting price breeds affordable creativity.**
- Grade cards according to price *quintile* or *percentile*:
 - A: Absolute bargain, lowest cost 20% of cards (2/11/2019: ≤ \$.05/card)
 - B: Bargain, next lowest 20% (2/11/2019: ≤ \$.09/card)
 - C: Common (price), middle 20% (2/11/2019: ≤ \$.17/card)
 - D: Demanded, next to highest 20% (2/11/2019: ≤ \$.70/card)
 - E: Expensive, highest 20% (2/11/2019 highest: Black Lotus ~\$4K)
 - *n*: lowest cost *n*% of cards (3/1/2019 50% ≤ \$.13/card)

Proposal: Contrarian Format (cont.)

- Example possible format sketch:
 - Contrarian A format: Allow only cards with an annual sampled median price grade of A.
 - Contrarian B format: Allow only cards with an annual sampled median price grade of A or B.
 - Etc.
- Con:
 - Non-eternal formats because of price swings. An outstanding Contrarian A deck can become a Contrarian B deck when unseen value is discovered.
- Pro:
 - Low cost by definition: A “Contrarian 50” 60-card deck’s ~35 non-lands would currently be \leq ~\$4.55.
 - Thus experimentation is very affordable.
- Possible implementation: Scryfall API randomized price sampling with annual contrarian grades published.

Is an Affordable Eternal Format Possible?

- There is an inherent tension between **eternal** (low/no-continuing costs) and **affordable** (low entry costs)
 - **Eternal Pauper**:
 - As pauper has grown in *paup*ularity, supply-and-demand of top deck staples have pushed the entry price for top decks from ~\$30 to ~\$80 deck average
 - **eternal** → **growing entry cost**
 - **Affordable Penny Dreadful** (MTGO .01 tix cards @ new set releases): ~\$39 (paper price, 2/18)
 - However, today's good deck can be unplayable with the next set.
 - Price fluctuation leads to a form of rotation
 - **affordable** → **continuing costs**

Format Tradeoffs: Initial Versus Continuing Costs

- Eternal Contrarian n : Cards within Eternal Contrarian n for X year(s) are forever legal in Eternal Contrarian n ?
 - Counterargument: Even cheap cards can become harder to find with time, limiting supply and increasing prices.
- Alternative: slow rotation
 - Cards within Contrarian n for X year(s) are granted Contrarian n legality for Y years hence.
- What is the best (X, Y) tradeoff between low-entry cost versus low continuing costs?

Addendum

- Game Club Recommendations:
 - [The Commander's Quarters](#): Build 100-card commander format decks around your commander card for \$25.
 - [Budget MTG Decks](#): Build decks in a variety of formats with all non-commander cards < \$1.
- Ultra-budget format: Standard Pauper
 - [PK Standard Pauper events with deck lists](#)
 - [Hipsters of the Coast](#) Standard Pauper on MTG Arena