M:tG Drafting for Dummies

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1)

"What is a draft?" In the context of Magic: the Gathering (which all questions will be answered in), a draft is a limited event format. You and several friends or strangers or both get together, sit at a table, and make decks from a collective pool of cards.

Before going through how to draft, here is some terminology explained:

- Pod: A pod of players is a group at a draft. The best size for a pod is 8. Drafts might have multiple pods, where each pod plays only with players in the same pod.

- Chaff: This will refer to the token and basic in the pack, or the cards that players get forced to pick.

- Force: Eventually, you will have only one card left to pick from. This is your force.

- Limited: A style of playing the game where you have access to a limited card pool.

- Sealed: Similar to a draft, but you open you packs and add all the cards from each. No passing involved.

- Format: A set of rules to play M:tG by. Other formats include Legacy, Vintage, Modern, EDH, Kitchen Table, and Pauper. This is not an exhaustive list.

- Constructed: Any format where you create a deck before playing.

- Set:

- Block:

- Pack: A M:tG booster pack.

- Crack: Depending on usage, it means either to open a pack, or the cards you got from the pack

- Rarity: How hard to find the card is. The rarities are:

[[PICS OF SYMBOLS WITH COLOURS FOR EACH RARITY]]

Some rare cards are harder to find than others.

Alright, now on to "How do I draft?" It's pretty simple. You start by getting seated with your pod, and everyone gets three packs. If there are multiple types of packs, ask which order to open them in. Once the drafting begins, everyone opens their first pack, selects a card in secret and removes it from the pack, then passes the rest of the pack to the next player. The player you don't pass to will pass you some cards. From them, you once again select a card in secret, remove it, and pass the rest along. Repeat for three packs.

Quick note:

On your first pack, you pass left. The second has you passing right. Pack three you pass left.

The cards you picked become your Draft Pool. These are the cards you are allowed to make your deck from, not including basic lands. At this point, you and the rest of the pod will make a deck (minimum 40 cards), and then start playing each other. If the event has prize support, the top few players will win more packs.

Now that the mechanics of the draft are explained, let's delve into some philosophy (important things?).

First, buying a pack of M:tG cards is basically gambling. You are paying an amount of money, and hoping to get cards valued at more money. Unlike most gambling, you are expected to break even. However, this includes the commons and uncommons and basic land you get, which most people do not care to trade for. In fact, most people will leave behind all the commons and uncommons they got during the draft. However however, this assumption is no longer true when opening multiple packs. The value of some cards are enough to skew the average enough that you break even if you open enough packs.

Back to the point, cracking packs is a form of gambling. Does that extend to drafting? Depends on how you look at it. A very important disctinction to make here is that skill matters. Knowing what to pick, what to play, even just knowing what is in the set can give you an edge. The stronger your edge, the more likely you are to win. If you win, you are pretty much guaranteed to make your money back (15(buy in) compared to 13.5(3 packs) + 27(6 prize packs).

Second, every meta is different. A meta is a group of players. More specificaly, it is the playstyle of the group of players. In terms of drafting, meta differences will be most noticeable when it comes to player personalities and colour choices. The nature of a draft is to level the playing field, which also resets the meta. For reference, you might find one EDH meta is full of land destruction, and another is only combo-control, while a third is hyper competetive.

Whether or not you like your meta (and if you don't, you should try some other places to play) you should try playing somewhere else occasionaly. Switching up the meta will let you interact with other people of varying skill levels, and you might be forced to learn to play in your non-favourite colours. All in all, it will make you a better player.

Ultimately, Magic: the Gathering is, like any other game, about having fun. If your idea of "fun" is crushing your opponents, this is the game for you. If you like playing politics, or just want to be an enbaler, this is the game for you. If you like hiding in an invincible fortress, this is the game for you.

What drafting does is remove the "Money Wall". The Money Wall is when you have a good deck, but can't make it better because you can't afford to. If you are playing a hyper competeive game, this matters. If you are playing anything else, this doesn't. A VERY important point that needs to be made:

A very expensive deck will lose to a very cheap deck if the cheap deck's owner knows how to play it. If you play any constructed format, play testing your deck will be more beneficial than getting a Black Lotus (the most expensive card of the game at $20k USD).

Removing this wall means that everyone is on an even playing field. The more skilled (and sometimes the lucky) players will win more often than the wealthy players.

Finally, a regular group of drafters will become friends. These people can leak into other aspects of your life. You will get on a first name basis with these people, you will banter with them, you may even stay up all night playing with them. If you let it happen, you will find yourselves interacting outside of drafting or Magic.

2)

When picking cards, there are several principles to work with. These include B.R.E.A.D., Quadrants, Archetype, and more. For the sake of brevity, this book will only discuss the major styles, as there as many styles as there are players.

Without going into the different styles of drafting, there is an overall thought that goes into the whole thing:

* You want your deck to be better than your opponents’
* Therefore, you want your cards to be better than your opponents’
* Finally, you want to pick better cards than your opponents

This process states that picking the better cards will give you a better deck which will give you victory. Generally speaking, this is true. What the different styles do is attempt to judge a card based on different standards, allowing you to then take the best card available.

So, you open your first pack. What do you take? A good rule of thumb is to pick the rare. This isn't always true (maybe it's a really bad card, and one of the uncommons is better), and you might be passing the rare pack 2 or 3.

Alright, so you picked the rare. This will usually be the cornerstone of your deck. For example, if it's a blue creature that does things when you cast spells, you would want to go more spell heavy than normal. For your second pick, you will try to find something that synergizes with that card, or does something awesome on its own. For each card after, you try to do the same.

Another good rule of thumb is to keep your colours as few as possible. While going multiple colours is a strategy, it makes it harder to play individual cards. This can be balanced out by playing mana fixers. A mana fixing card is one that allows you to generate multiple, or any, types of mana, which makes it easier to play multicoloured spells. You will also see cards with multiple of the same mana cost. These can be difiicult to play in decks with three or more colours, and not a lot of fixing.

Each new set will rework the archetypes. An archetype is a general playstyle that many different cards can adhere to. For example, in [[SET]] there was the [[COLOUR(S) ARCHETYPE]]. This archetype synergized many different cards together, allowing drafters to play it regularily, as they could make it work with different card pools. When a new set comes out, the archetypes change as the new cards are added. [[ADD SET+1 ARCHETYPE]]. In general, you have control, tempo, aggro, [[ETC]].

When making your deck, you should decide early on to be either hyper focused or more diverse. A hyper focused deck will try to do one thing, and one thing only. For example, you might get all the spells tha6t deal direct damage (like modern burn). A diverse deck will try to be able to handle anything thrown at it, and eventually make the opponent run out of cards while it has many options remaining (like modern midrange).

Once you finish your deck, the rest of the cards you drafted are your sideboard.

3)

Bombs

Removal

Efficient spells

Aggro

Dregs

The B.R.E.A.D. principle states that, when picking a card, you should focus on the top, then work your way down.

A bomb is a big hitter, or something evasive. These are usually cards that can win you games by smashing face, will kill other creatures by blocking, and will make your opponent use removal on them.

Removal cards, well, remove things from the board (the playing field). They can kill creatures, exile enchantments, make your opponent sacrifice things, and to a lesser extent they include counterspells and deathtouch. They are spells that try to go 1 for 1 (one card (kill spell) for one card (creature)).

Spells that go 2+ for 1 are efficient spells. These result in what is called Card Advantage (having more options than your opponent). Such a spell could be draw three cards (you lose 1 and draw 3, netting 2), a card that reads "Counter target spell. Draw a card" which nets you one (spell and countered spell balance out, then you draw a card putting you one ahead), or "Opponent discards two cards" (you lose one, your opponent loses two, a net of one). Another kind of spell that falls under this are spells that replace themselves. Things like "Make target creature unblockable. Draw a card" (lets you attack and nets you a card). Ramp spells (a spell that nets you exztra mana) belong here. Finally, creaures that do multiple things fall under here, although they are usually classified as bombs.

Aggro is all about going wide (lots of creatures, as opposed to going tall which is a few large creatures). Spells that make multiple tokens, cheap creatures, direct damage, these are the hallmarks of aggro.

Finally, we have the dregs. These are the cards that, for whatever reason, no one wanted. They are not necessarily bad cards, they just don't usually fit the deck anyone is attempting to make.

Bombs. Big things. Examples. Why they’re useful. Examples of non-creature bombs (ie make 20 tokens, wrath, deal 20 damage, etc). When to take them, and when to pass them.

Removal. Examples. Which ones are better than others. How to make a good judgement call on which removal to take.

Efficient spells. Two for 1. Good draw. Counter-draw. Examples (Staff of Domination).

Aggro. Beats. Cheap fast things. Mixes well with other cats. Weaknesses.

Dregs. Usually forced. Not always bad, could be that no one is playing the right colour/playstyle. How to integrate (if desired) into the deck.

Other. Ramp. Draw. Goodstuff. Hate draft. Would these fall under E?

4)

8)

Choosing colours. Usually determined in the first pack. If pack two, can still go multi coloured. In pack 3, can splash (if single colour or have lots of fixing) a third. More than this is not recommended.

9)

Aggressive techniques. Cutting people out of colours. Hate drafting.

10)

Defensive techniques. Hate drafting. Confusing your pass as to what colours you’re taking. Dealing with being cut out of a colour.

11)

Deck construction. 40 cards. Can go over, but it is usually best to stay at 40. Ask people from others pods (if they exist) to critique and play against your deck. 16-18 lands (depending on curve and ramp), 18-24 creatures (depending on deck style), and the rest non creatures.

12)

Sideboarding. The rest of your picks. Place things like Negate there. Basically, useful but specific cards. If your opponent’s deck causes something to be not useful, swap it. After each round, skim your deck, see if there is anything you think would be less useful than a SB card.

13)

Variants. Two headed. Sealed. Chaos. Conspiracy. Cube.

14)

Misc. Drafting is about having fun. You can usually opt to take store credit instead of packs as prize. Bring sleeves, some dice, and lands. Make an EDH deck! Bring your EDH deck! If you lose to someone, ask them to critique your deck. Eventually, you will lose to a poorly built deck. Don’t sweat it. If you pull a card worth $$$, check if it is in standard. If it is, it will most likely drop in price when it rotates out (link to whatsinstandard). Trade/sell it. If it is a brand new card in a set that just came out, do the same thing. Some card types though (ie Expeditions, masterworks) are good to hold onto. Picking the money card vs the good for your deck card (personal preference). If you know a card is an option, leaving mana open to cast it to mind game your opponent

//TODO:

Go through channel fireball and tappeout for knowledge

In the basic concepts chapter, explain that drafting is basically gambling, but you're expected to break even. Also discuss what a meta is, and trying out different shops to find the right meta for you, and how it can be useful to switch metas (even for only one draft) every now and then.

Read:

<https://mtggrindersaus.wordpress.com/2015/06/11/early-drafting-techniques/>

<http://www.mtgsalvation.com/forums/the-game/limited-sealed-draft/limited-archives/140253-drafting-in-regards-to-bread>

<http://tappedout.net/mtg-forum/modern/the-modern-brewers-bible-part-1-getting-into-the-format-overview/>

<http://tappedout.net/mtg-forum/limited/2hg-in-amonket/#c3020862>

<http://tappedout.net/mtg-forum/limited/amonkhet-draft-archetype-discussion/#c3020064>

<http://tappedout.net/mtg-articles/2013/aug/10/pandoras-deckbox-characteristics-strong-deck/>

<http://tappedout.net/mtg-forum/general/community-discussion-what-makes-a-card-good/>

Turn BREAD stuff into a single chapter (basic styles or something). Talk about Quadrant drafting (below), make this another chapter. Then, talk about Archetype drafting (again, another chapter).

Quadrant drafting:

This is dividing the game state into four different quadrants, and figuring out how helpful a card is in each stage or quadrant. They are;

**Developing**: This is the opening part of the game, when everyone is playing their opening hands. A good example of a card that's useful here is [[Elvish Mystic]]

**Parity**: This is when you and your opponent are pretty even. Probably there are a few creatures on the board, but either no-ones attacking or people are just swinging away at eachother's faces and no-one's really ahead. A card that might be useful here is something like [[Gruul Charm]]. It can allow you to swing in unblocked, or get rid of some pesky fliers.

**Winning**: This is when you're ahead. You've got more creatures than your opponent, and you're attacking profitably each turn. Cards that are useful here are things [[Act of Treason]] effects. You don't want to focus too much on this quadrant as generally, if you're winning, any sort of spell is likely to keep you there.

**Behind**: This is when you're behind. Maybe the opponent's got more creatures than you, or they've got an evasive creature that's eating out your life total. Cards that are good here will stabilise the board and start helping you pull back from behind. An example is something like [[Wrath of God]], or big defensive creatures like [[Soul of Theros]]

If you break down the game like this, you can start to see what makes good cards good, and it's really useful for analysing cards you haven't seen before. If you want to know more, check out the Limited Resources Podcast, particularly #248 (I Think, it might be +-1), where they discuss it more and how to use it.

Talk about card advantage

Talk about the characteristics of a strong card and deck