# The Cutting Edge: A Strategic Deep Dive into the Mitsurugi Archetype

The "Mitsurugi" archetype, a TCG-exclusive introduced in Creation Pack 09, represents a significant paradigm shift in modern game design, revitalizing both the Ritual Summoning mechanic and the long-underrepresented Reptile monster type.1 Its core identity is that of a highly resilient, resource-looping midrange strategy that thrives on generating advantage through a unique tribute-based engine. Upon its release, the archetype made an immediate competitive impact, securing top placements in major tournaments and establishing itself as a formidable meta contender.4 This success is largely attributable to its sophisticated design philosophy, which notably avoids the restrictive summoning locks common in contemporary archetypes. This lack of inherent restriction not only defines its internal playstyle but also enables its components to be integrated into other strategies as a potent and flexible engine.4

## Anatomy of the Blade - The Mitsurugi Core Engine

The strategic efficacy of the Mitsurugi archetype is rooted in the synergistic functions of its core cards. Each monster, spell, and trap is designed not merely to perform a single function but to act as a cog in a self-sustaining machine, where costs are converted into advantages and resources are perpetually recycled.

### The Divine Rituals (The Payoffs)

The apex of the archetype's power lies in its Level 8 Ritual Monsters. These are not just powerful boss monsters but also central components of the deck's recursive engine.

* **Ame no Murakumo no Mitsurugi:** As the primary boss monster, Murakumo serves as both a board-breaker and a control piece. Its first effect, which destroys all of the opponent's monsters upon being Special Summoned, functions as a built-in "Raigeki," making it an exceptional tool for dismantling established boards when going second.1 Its second ability is a Quick Effect that acts as a soft negate; when an opponent activates a card or effect, Murakumo forces them to choose between discarding a card or having the effect negated. This creates a difficult choice, depleting either their hand resources or their on-field plays. Finally, it possesses the signature Mitsurugi Ritual Monster effect: when Tributed, it allows the player to add any "Mitsurugi" card from the Deck to the hand and then Special Summons itself back to the field. This turns every interaction that uses it as a tribute into a net gain of advantage.1
* **Ame no Habakiri no Mitsurugi:** This monster is the deck's premier starter and a critical extender. Its most potent ability is a once-per-Duel effect that allows it to be revealed in the hand to Special Summon any "Mitsurugi" monster directly from the Deck, at the cost of tributing one monster on the field.1 This single effect is the genesis of the deck's most powerful opening combo lines. While on the field, it provides constant pressure by reducing the ATK of all opposing monsters by 800. Like Murakumo, its effect to search and revive itself upon being Tributed makes it a key component of the resource loop, ensuring that even when used as a cost, it replaces itself and generates further advantage.1
* **Futsu no Mitama no Mitsurugi:** Functioning as a lockdown and grind-game specialist, Futsu punishes opponents for extending their plays. Its trigger effect allows it to revive a Reptile monster from the Graveyard each time the opponent Special Summons a monster.1 When paired with the disruptive capabilities of Murakumo, this creates a punishing loop where the opponent's attempts to rebuild their board are met with a constantly regenerating field of monsters. Its high DEF stat of 3400 makes it a formidable defensive wall, and its shared ability to search and revive upon being Tributed ensures it contributes to the deck's long-term resource recursion.1

### The Mikoto Vassals (The Enablers)

These non-Ritual monsters form the backbone of the deck's consistency, ensuring that the necessary combo pieces are always accessible.

* **Mitsurugi no Mikoto, Aramasa:** As the deck's primary monster searcher, Aramasa provides unparalleled access to the entire monster lineup. Its effect to add a "Mitsurugi" monster from the Deck to the hand triggers under three conditions: on Normal Summon, on Special Summon, or when Tributed.1 This flexibility is critical, allowing it to start plays, extend them, or even generate advantage when used as a cost. It is the most direct route to accessing Habakiri to begin the main combo. Its secondary effect, which allows it to be Tributed to protect another Reptile monster from destruction, can also be used proactively on the opponent's turn to trigger its own search effect and prepare for a follow-up play.7
* **Mitsurugi no Mikoto, Saji:** Functioning as the Spell/Trap counterpart to Aramasa, Saji shares the same versatile trigger conditions to search for any "Mitsurugi" Spell or Trap card.1 This makes it essential for acquiring the deck's powerful Ritual Spells or its searchable omni-negate, Mitsurugi Great Purification. Like Aramasa, it can also tribute itself for protection, turning a defensive maneuver into an opportunity to search for a key card.7
* **Mitsurugi no Mikoto, Kusanagi:** Kusanagi is the engine that drives the deck's long-term grind game. Its ability to add back any "Mitsurugi" card from the Graveyard or even the banished zone upon being summoned or Tributed is what grants the archetype its profound resilience.1 In variants that rely on a single copy of Mitsurugi Ritual, Kusanagi is the indispensable tool for recycling it, allowing the deck to perform its most powerful plays multiple times throughout a duel.9

### The Sacred Spells (The Conduits)

The archetype's Spell cards are designed to facilitate the Ritual Summons with unprecedented efficiency and flexibility.

* **Mitsurugi Ritual:** Widely considered one of the most powerful Ritual Spells ever printed, this card is the heart of the archetype.10 It circumvents the inherent resource disadvantage of traditional Ritual Summoning through two revolutionary effects. The first allows for a Ritual Summon of a Reptile monster directly from the Deck by tributing monsters from the hand or field. The second allows for a Ritual Summon from the hand by tributing monsters from the Deck.1 This incredible flexibility is the primary source of the deck's consistency and explosive power, allowing it to summon its key monsters using resources from almost any location.
* **Mitsurugi Prayers:** This Quick-Play Spell is a versatile tool for both searching and extending combos. In its simplest form, it can add a "Mitsurugi" monster from the Deck to the hand. However, its true power is unlocked by tributing a Reptile monster upon activation, which allows the player to apply both of its effects in sequence: searching a monster and then Special Summoning a "Mitsurugi" monster from the hand or Graveyard.1 This enables intricate plays, such as dodging targeted effects by tributing the target, or extending combos by reviving a key enabler like Saji or Aramasa.
* **Mitsurugi Mirror:** A secondary Ritual Spell designed for the grind game, Mirror summons a Reptile Ritual Monster from the hand or Graveyard.1 Its most important feature is its Graveyard effect: if a primary Ritual Monster (Murakumo, Habakiri, or Futsu) is Tributed while Mirror is in the Graveyard, it can be shuffled back into the Deck. This recycling ability ensures that the deck never runs out of ways to access its boss monsters, even in prolonged duels.1
* **Mitsurugi Magatama:** This Quick-Play Spell offers a choice between interaction and extension. It can either be used to tribute a Reptile monster to destroy a face-up card the opponent controls, or it can be used to perform an additional Ritual Summon from the hand.1 This flexibility makes it a valuable tool in various game states, serving as removal, disruption, or a way to further build a board.

The archetype's design demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of modern card advantage. Traditional Ritual decks are resource-intensive, often resulting in a net loss of cards to summon a single monster. Mitsurugi inverts this paradigm. The core Ritual Monsters—Habakiri, Murakumo, and Futsu—all possess an effect that triggers when they are Tributed, allowing the player to search for any "Mitsurugi" card and then revive the Tributed monster.7 Simultaneously, key enablers like Mitsurugi Prayers, Mitsurugi Magatama, and Mitsurugi Great Purification require a Tribute as a cost to activate their powerful effects.7 When a player tributes Murakumo to activate Great Purification's omni-negate, they are not losing a monster. Instead, they negate an opponent's action, search for another engine piece like Mitsurugi Ritual, and then immediately Special Summon Murakumo back to the field. This transforms what would typically be a one-for-one trade (or a net loss) into a significant gain in card advantage relative to the opponent. This self-sustaining loop is the fundamental principle that elevates Mitsurugi from a simple Ritual deck to a top-tier competitive strategy.

### The Divine Traps (The Interruption)

* **Mitsurugi Great Purification:** This Normal Trap is the archetype's searchable omni-negate. By tributing any Level 5 or higher Reptile monster, it can negate the activation of an opponent's card or effect and destroy it.13 This synergizes perfectly with the Ritual Monsters. Tributing Murakumo or Habakiri to pay the cost for Great Purification immediately triggers their effects in the Graveyard, turning a single negation into a powerful sequence that searches a new card and returns the monster to the field, ready to disrupt the opponent again.16 Its secondary Graveyard effect, which can banish itself to revive a Reptile, provides yet another layer of extension for future turns.

## The Flow of Battle - Search Networks and the Tribute Loop

The consistency and power of the Mitsurugi archetype stem from its intricate network of internal searching and its central gameplay mechanic, the Tribute Loop. Understanding these systems is key to mastering the deck and recognizing its resilience.

### The Search and Recursion Matrix

The deck's ability to consistently access its key pieces is a result of a dense web of search and recovery effects. Nearly every card in the engine can lead to another, creating a chain reaction of advantage that allows the deck to function even with suboptimal opening hands. The following table provides a clear, at-a-glance reference for these resource pathways, mapping how each card contributes to the deck's overall consistency.

| **Card Name** | **Searches/Adds from Deck** | **Recovers from GY/Banish** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Ame no Habakiri no Mitsurugi | Any "Mitsurugi" card (except self) | Revives self |
| Ame no Murakumo no Mitsurugi | Any "Mitsurugi" card (except self) | Revives self |
| Futsu no Mitama no Mitsurugi | Any "Mitsurugi" card (except self) | Revives self; Revives any Reptile from GY |
| Mitsurugi no Mikoto, Aramasa | Any "Mitsurugi" monster (except self) | - |
| Mitsurugi no Mikoto, Saji | Any "Mitsurugi" Spell/Trap | - |
| Mitsurugi no Mikoto, Kusanagi | - | Any "Mitsurugi" card from GY or Banishment |
| Mitsurugi Prayers | Any "Mitsurugi" monster | Special Summons "Mitsurugi" monster from hand/GY |
| Pre-Preparation of Rites | Ame no Habakiri, Murakumo, or Futsu + Mitsurugi Mirror | - |

### The Engine's Heartbeat - The Tribute Loop Explained

The core gameplay pattern of Mitsurugi can be distilled into a self-perpetuating cycle known as the Tribute Loop. This loop is the engine that generates continuous advantage and allows the deck to out-grind nearly any opponent. The process is as follows:

1. **Summon:** Establish a primary Ritual Monster, such as Ame no Murakumo no Mitsurugi, on the field. This can be done through Mitsurugi Ritual or other summoning effects.
2. **Activate:** During either player's turn, activate a card that requires a Reptile monster to be Tributed as a cost. The most common activators are the omni-negate trap Mitsurugi Great Purification, the Quick-Play Spell Mitsurugi Prayers, or the removal effect of Mitsurugi Magatama.
3. **Tribute:** Tribute the Ritual Monster on the field (Murakumo) to pay the activation cost.
4. **Resolve & Recur:** The activated card's effect resolves (e.g., negating an opponent's card). Immediately after, the Tributed monster's effect activates in the Graveyard.
5. **Advantage:** The Tributed monster's effect resolves, allowing the player to add a new "Mitsurugi" card from their Deck to their hand and then Special Summon the Tributed monster back to the field.

This seamless cycle demonstrates how the deck maintains both board presence and hand advantage simultaneously. A single Ritual Monster can be used multiple times to fuel disruptive effects without ever leaving the field for long, creating a relentless wave of interaction that is difficult for opponents to overcome.1

## Forging the Endboard - Core Combo Lines

The Mitsurugi archetype is capable of constructing formidable endboards from a variety of starting hands, showcasing its high degree of consistency and power. The following are examples of its core combo sequences.

### The "One-Card" Starter: Pre-Preparation of Rites

The deck's incredible consistency is best exemplified by its ability to generate a full, multi-interruption endboard from a single copy of Pre-Preparation of Rites.17

1. Activate Pre-Preparation of Rites, adding Ame no Habakiri no Mitsurugi and Mitsurugi Mirror from the Deck to the hand.
2. Activate the effect of Habakiri in the hand. Reveal it to Special Summon Mitsurugi no Mikoto, Aramasa from the Deck, then Tribute Aramasa.
3. The Tributed Aramasa activates its effect, adding Mitsurugi no Mikoto, Saji from the Deck to the hand.
4. Normal Summon Saji. Its effect activates, adding Mitsurugi Ritual from the Deck to the hand.
5. Activate Mitsurugi Ritual, choosing the effect to Ritual Summon from the hand by tributing from the Deck. Summon Habakiri by tributing Mitsurugi no Mikoto, Kusanagi and Night Sword Serpent from the Deck.
6. Two effects activate in the Graveyard. Kusanagi adds Mitsurugi Ritual from the Graveyard back to the hand. Night Sword Serpent Special Summons itself to the field.
7. Activate Mitsurugi Ritual a second time, choosing the effect to Ritual Summon from the Deck. Tribute Habakiri to Special Summon Ame no Murakumo no Mitsurugi from the Deck.
8. The Tributed Habakiri activates its effect, adding Mitsurugi Prayers from the Deck to the hand and then reviving itself.
9. Link Summon I:P Masquerena using Saji and Habakiri as materials.
10. Activate Mitsurugi Prayers. Tribute Murakumo to activate both effects: add Futsu no Mitama no Mitsurugi to the hand and Special Summon Saji from the Graveyard.
11. The Tributed Murakumo activates, adding Mitsurugi Great Purification from the Deck to the hand and reviving itself.
12. Xyz Summon Abyss Dweller using Night Sword Serpent and the revived Saji.

The resulting endboard consists of Murakumo (providing a soft negate), I:P Masquerena (allowing for a Link Summon on the opponent's turn, such as into S:P Little Knight), Abyss Dweller (preventing opponent's Graveyard effects), and a set Mitsurugi Great Purification (a searchable omni-negate). This board presents multiple layers of interaction, backed by follow-up plays in hand with Futsu and Mitsurugi Mirror.

### Breaking Boards: The Murakumo Offensive

When going second, the deck's strategy shifts to dismantling the opponent's board, primarily through the use of Murakumo's board-wiping effect.1 The most direct method is to use Mitsurugi Ritual's effect to summon Murakumo directly from the Deck. Because this effect does not target and destroys all monsters simultaneously, it can be difficult for many strategies to counter effectively. To ensure this crucial effect resolves, players can use techniques like chain-blocking. For instance, by activating Mitsurugi Prayers as Chain Link 1 and then chaining Mitsurugi Ritual as Chain Link 2, the opponent cannot respond to the activation of Mitsurugi Ritual with a card like Ash Blossom & Joyous Spring, as the last action in the chain was the activation of Prayers.

The archetype's combo structure is not linear but rather fractal and resilient. Many decks rely on a single, fragile combo line where interrupting the starter effectively ends their turn. Mitsurugi, by contrast, possesses multiple viable starters and extenders, including Pre-Preparation of Rites, Mitsurugi Ritual, Habakiri, Aramasa, and Saji.8 The community often refers to "1.5 card combos," indicating that a single starter plus nearly any other engine card is sufficient to execute a full sequence.4 This resilience stems from the generic nature of the searchers and the self-perpetuating Tribute Loop. If one line of play is interrupted, another can often be initiated. This means the deck's strength lies not just in the power of its ideal endboard, but in its exceptionally high probability of establishing a competitive board state even through multiple points of interaction, distinguishing it from more fragile "glass cannon" strategies.

## The Wandering Sword - Synergies and Hybrid Decks

A defining feature of the Mitsurugi archetype is its complete lack of in-archetype summoning restrictions or locks.4 This design choice grants it unparalleled flexibility, allowing its powerful engine to be seamlessly integrated with a variety of other archetypes to create potent hybrid strategies.

### The Ogdoadic Alliance: Graveyard Overlords

The most natural pairing for Mitsurugi is with the Ogdoadic archetype, another Reptile-based strategy that focuses on Graveyard effects.4 The primary enabler for this hybrid is the powerful Spell Card Snake Rain, which allows the player to send any four Reptile monsters from the Deck to the Graveyard.11 This single card can set up the Graveyard with Ogdoadic monsters for their revival and combo plays while simultaneously loading key Mitsurugi pieces like Kusanagi (for recursion) or Night Sword Serpent (as a free extender).4 The Ogdoadic engine provides additional monsters for tribute and link fodder, as well as its own forms of disruption, which complement the control-oriented nature of the Mitsurugi core.

### The Ryzeal Partnership: Rank 4 Toolbox

One of the most competitively successful variants combines Mitsurugi with the Ryzeal archetype.5 The synergy arises from the Ryzeal engine's proficiency at swarming the field with Level 4 monsters to facilitate Rank 4 Xyz Summons. The crucial point of interaction is the Xyz Monster King of the Feral Imps, which can detach a material to search for any Reptile monster from the Deck.8 This provides the deck with another highly consistent, non-archetypal method of accessing Ame no Habakiri no Mitsurugi, the deck's best starter. In return, the Mitsurugi engine provides a high-impact, resilient win condition that the pure Ryzeal strategy often lacks, creating a symbiotic relationship where each engine covers the other's weaknesses.

### Other Notable Pairings

* **Megalith:** This variant focuses on the shared Ritual mechanic. Megalith monsters, which can Ritual Summon from the Deck, can be used to bring out Mitsurugi bosses, and vice-versa, creating unique and often unpredictable combo lines that can bypass traditional chokepoints.21
* **Reptilianne/Alien:** For players who prefer a lockdown strategy, Mitsurugi can be paired with other Reptile archetypes that focus on control. The Reptilianne engine can reduce the ATK of opposing monsters to 0, enabling other effects. The Alien package, utilizing Cosmic Slicer Zer'oll and the trap Planet Pollutant Virus, can establish a potent floodgate effect that forces all opposing monsters into defense position and negates their effects.10

## Parrying the Blade - Strategic Counterplay

Despite its resilience, the Mitsurugi engine has specific vulnerabilities that can be exploited. Understanding these chokepoints is crucial for both Mitsurugi pilots seeking to protect their plays and opponents aiming to dismantle the strategy.

### Pinpointing the Chokeholds

* **Mitsurugi Ritual:** The effect of Mitsurugi Ritual to summon a monster from the Deck is the single most important chokepoint in the entire strategy. Resolving a hand trap like Ash Blossom & Joyous Spring on this effect will, in many cases, end the Mitsurugi player's turn if they do not have access to an extender.9
* **Ame no Habakiri no Mitsurugi:** While Habakiri's hand effect cannot be responded to directly, the on-field effect of the monster it summons (typically Aramasa or Saji) is a key point of interaction. Negating this summon's effect can sever the combo chain before it begins.
* **Graveyard Interruption:** The deck's Tribute Loop is heavily reliant on Graveyard effects. Cards that can banish from the Graveyard at Quick Effect speed, such as Bystial Magnamhut or D.D. Crow, are extremely effective. Targeting a Ritual Monster in the Graveyard in response to its own trigger effect will prevent it from reviving, breaking the resource loop and leaving the player down a key monster.8 Ghost Belle & Haunted Mansion can also negate the revival effect.

### Systemic Counters

* **Droll & Lock Bird:** This is arguably the most devastating counter to the archetype. The standard Mitsurugi combo involves a long sequence of searches: Pre-Prep searches, Aramasa searches, Saji searches, and the Tributed Rituals search. Activating Droll & Lock Bird after the very first search will prevent all subsequent searches for the remainder of the turn, completely halting the combo.9
* **Dimension Shifter:** While the deck can play under Dimension Shifter to some extent—as Kusanagi can recover banished cards—it is still highly impactful. Shifter prevents the Graveyard effects of Mitsurugi Prayers, Futsu no Mitama no Mitsurugi, and Night Sword Serpent from activating, significantly hampering the deck's ability to extend its plays and maintain its grind game.17
* **Board Breakers:** For players going second against an established Mitsurugi board, cards that remove monsters without destroying them or allowing their effects to activate are paramount. Super Polymerization, Kaijus, or Lava Golem can remove Murakumo from the field without triggering its powerful Tribute effect, effectively neutralizing a key piece of interaction.

The deck's inherent resilience to single points of interaction necessitates that opponents adopt either a multi-pronged or a systemic counter-strategy. A single Infinite Impermanence on a starter may not be sufficient, as the deck possesses numerous ways to extend its plays.4 The Tribute Loop generates so much advantage that trading one-for-one with its threats is a losing proposition. Therefore, the most effective counter-strategies are not those that attempt to negate one component of the combo, but rather those that disable the entire mechanic upon which the deck relies. Droll & Lock Bird attacks the mechanic of searching. Dimension Shifter attacks the mechanic of Graveyard recursion. To effectively counter Mitsurugi, an opponent must understand its fundamental gameplay loop and deploy counters that sever the connections within that loop, rather than merely targeting the monsters on the field.

## Conclusion

The Mitsurugi archetype stands as a testament to sophisticated and effective TCG-exclusive design. Its competitive viability is built upon a foundation of unparalleled resilience, high consistency, and strategic versatility. The core Tribute Loop transforms the inherent costs of Ritual Summoning into a continuous engine of advantage, allowing the deck to maintain board presence and resource density simultaneously.1 Its powerful and flexible searchers ensure that its key plays are consistently accessible, while the notable absence of restrictive locks grants it the freedom to be integrated with a wide array of other strategies, enriching the broader metagame.4 Ultimately, Mitsurugi serves as a benchmark for future archetype design—a deck that is not only powerful and complex but also interactive and possessed of a distinct identity that has successfully carved its own niche in a competitive landscape.

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