# An Analytical Deep Dive into the Malefic Archetype

## The Malefic Paradigm - Core Mechanics and Strategic Identity

The "Malefic" archetype represents a unique design philosophy in the Yu-Gi-Oh! Trading Card Game, centered on summoning colossal DARK attribute monsters with overwhelming attack points. These monsters are twisted, more powerful versions of iconic creatures from the game's history, such as Blue-Eyes White Dragon and Stardust Dragon.1 The archetype's strategic identity is defined by a high-risk, high-reward playstyle, rooted in its core mechanics and a series of self-imposed, debilitating restrictions.

### The Foundational Gimmick: High Power, High Risk

The primary mechanic of the Malefic archetype is the ability to easily Special Summon its high-Level boss monsters from the hand. This is achieved by banishing their original counterparts from the Main Deck, Extra Deck, or hand.3 Critically, this is an inherent Special Summon, meaning it is a built-in summoning condition of the monster itself and does not start a Chain Link.3 This property grants the archetype a notable resilience against common monster effect negation, as effects that must be chained to an activation (such as that of Baronne de Fleur or Dark Requiem Xyz Dragon) cannot respond to the summon itself.4

However, this immense power is balanced by a singular, critical vulnerability: an absolute dependency on a face-up Field Spell. Nearly every main deck Malefic monster carries the continuous effect, "If there is no face-up Field Spell on the field, destroy this card".1 This clause establishes the archetype's foundational fragility. The presence of a Field Spell is not merely a bonus; it is the lifeline that keeps its powerful monsters on the board. The removal of that Field Spell by an opponent invariably leads to the self-destruction of the Malefic player's entire board, creating a constant state of precariousness.

### The Three Great Restrictions

The original design of the Malefic monsters was shackled by three significant restrictions that dictated the archetype's strategy for years and severely limited its competitive potential. Understanding these limitations is key to appreciating both its historical playstyle and its modern evolution.

1. **The Field Spell Dependency**: As detailed above, this is the most defining characteristic and weakness of the archetype. Without a Field Spell, the deck cannot maintain any board presence.1
2. **The "One Malefic" Rule**: Most of the original Malefic monsters include the condition, "There can only be 1 'Malefic' monster on the field".1 This rule prevents the deck from swarming the field with multiple high-ATK threats, forcing it into a singular, linear offensive strategy that is easily disrupted by a single piece of removal.3
3. **The Attack Restriction**: Compounding the previous limitation, these monsters also state, "Other monsters you control cannot declare an attack".1 This prevents the player from supplementing their single Malefic monster with other attackers, further cementing a "one big attacker" game plan and severely limiting the deck's ability to apply pressure or close out games.

### The Strategic Schism: From "Skill Drain Stun" to "Synchro Turbo"

The evolution of the Malefic strategy can be divided into two distinct eras. The first, and for a long time the only, viable strategy was a "Stun" or "Anti-Meta" build centered on the powerful continuous trap card, Skill Drain.6 Skill Drain negates the effects of all face-up monsters on the field. This ingeniously turns the Malefics' weaknesses against them; under Skill Drain, the self-destruction clause, the "One Malefic" rule, and the attack restriction are all negated.3 This allowed a Malefic player to summon multiple high-ATK monsters that would not destroy themselves, all while crippling the opponent's own monster-effect-reliant strategy.6

However, the modern era has seen a significant paradigm shift. With the release of new in-archetype support and a plethora of powerful, generic Synchro monsters, the optimal strategy has evolved into a "Synchro Turbo" combo build.3 The goal is no longer to sit on a single floodgate-protected monster, but to leverage the Malefic monsters as high-Level (primarily Level 8 and 10) bodies to be used as Synchro material.3 This allows the deck to summon game-defining boss monsters like Bystial Dis Pater and Baronne de Fleur, which provide negation, recursion, and disruption far beyond what the archetype itself can offer.

The archetype's inherent flaws—its restrictive nature and lack of complex internal combos—created a strategic vacuum. This "incompleteness" by design makes Malefics a paradoxically perfect host for external engines. They do not conflict with the game plans of archetypes like Bystial or Centurion; instead, they provide the raw material (high-level DARK monsters) that these engines require to function. Thus, the very weaknesses that once defined the archetype are now the source of its modern strength, allowing it to serve as a flexible core for powerful hybrid strategies.

## The Malefic Arsenal - Key Cards and Internal Synergies

A granular analysis of each in-archetype card is necessary to understand the deck's internal machinery. The cards can be categorized by their function: engine starters, high-level beaters, modern combo extenders, and consistency-boosting Spells and Traps.

| Card Name | Card Type | Key Stats | Effect Summary | Strategic Role & Key Synergies |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Malefic Paradox Gear** | Effect Monster | Level 1 / 0 ATK / 0 DEF | Tributes itself to summon Malefic Parallel Gear from Deck and add a "Malefic" monster from Deck to hand. Can be banished from GY as cost for a Malefic summon. | The deck's primary 1-card starter and combo enabler. Tributing is a cost, so it can be activated under Skill Drain. Its GY effect mitigates the risk of drawing "garnet" monsters.3 |
| **Malefic Parallel Gear** | Tuner Monster | Level 2 / 0 ATK / 0 DEF | Can use a "Malefic" monster in the hand as the other Synchro Material. | The core Tuner for all Synchro plays. Allows for Synchro Summons without committing a high-level monster to the field first, playing around disruption.1 |
| **Malefic Stardust Dragon** | Effect Monster | Level 8 / 2500 ATK / 2000 DEF | Summons itself by banishing Stardust Dragon from the Extra Deck. Protects face-up Field Spells from being destroyed by effects. | The most efficient and valuable Level 8 Malefic. Provides a free body for Synchro/Xyz plays and crucial protection for the deck's lifeline.1 |
| **Malefic Cyber End Dragon** | Effect Monster | Level 10 / 4000 ATK / 2800 DEF | Summons itself by banishing Cyber End Dragon from the Extra Deck. | The most efficient Level 10 Malefic and the primary beatstick. Its 4000 ATK can end games on its own.1 |
| **Malefic Blue-Eyes White Dragon** | Effect Monster | Level 8 / 3000 ATK / 2500 DEF | Summons itself by banishing Blue-Eyes White Dragon from the Deck. | A Level 8 body for Synchro plays, but requires running a "garnet" in the Main Deck. Made viable by Malefic Paradox Gear's GY effect.1 |
| **Malefic Red-Eyes B. Dragon** | Effect Monster | Level 7 / 2400 ATK / 2000 DEF | Summons itself by banishing Red-Eyes Black Dragon from the Deck. | A Level 7 body, making it awkward for the deck's primary Level 10 Synchro lines. Generally considered the least useful of the main deck beaters.2 |
| **Malefic Rainbow Dragon** | Effect Monster | Level 10 / 4000 ATK / 0 DEF | Summons itself by banishing Rainbow Dragon from hand or Deck. | A Level 10 body, but requires running a "garnet." Its flexibility (banish from hand) makes it slightly better than Malefic Blue-Eyes.1 |
| **Malefic Paradigm Dragon** | Effect Monster | Level 10 / 4000 ATK / 4000 DEF | Summons by banishing a "Malefic" from Extra Deck. Requires Malefic World. Sends a "Malefic" card from Deck to GY to revive a banished Level 8 Synchro. | A powerful combo extender. Can send Malefic Tune to search or set up the GY for Malefic Selector. Its dependency on Malefic World is a significant restriction.5 |
| **Malefic Paradox Dragon** | Synchro Monster | Level 10 / 4000 ATK / 4000 DEF | Requires Malefic Parallel Gear + a non-Tuner "Malefic." Revives a Synchro monster from either GY when Synchro Summoned. Requires Malefic World. | The in-archetype Synchro boss. Its revival effect can generate significant advantage. Also locked to Malefic World.1 |
| **Malefic Territory** | Continuous Spell | N/A | On activation, can place Malefic World from Deck. Allows multiple differently-named Malefics on field and allows all Malefics to attack. | The single most important Spell/Trap. Fixes two of the three original restrictions, transforming the deck's playstyle from a single attacker to a potential board of threats.3 |
| **Malefic World** | Field Spell | N/A | During the Draw Phase, instead of drawing, reveal 3 "Malefic" cards from Deck; your opponent adds 1 to your hand. | The archetype's dedicated Field Spell. Its search effect is slow and unreliable. Primarily used because Paradigm and Paradox Dragon require it by name.6 |
| **Malefic Selector** | Normal Spell | N/A | Banish 2 "Malefic" cards from GY; add 2 differently-named "Malefic" cards from Deck to hand. | A powerful mid-game searcher that generates a +1 in card advantage. Requires GY setup to activate.1 |
| **Malefic Divide** | Quick-Play Spell | N/A | Special Summons a "Malefic" monster from the GY with its effects negated. | A simple revival card for extending plays or recovering a body for Synchro material.1 |
| **Malefic Claw Stream** | Normal Trap | N/A | If you control a "Malefic" monster, destroy 1 monster your opponent controls. | Simple, targeted removal. Generally too slow for modern play but can be a useful budget option.1 |
| **Malefic Tune** | Normal Trap | N/A | Draw 2 if a "Malefic" is destroyed. Can be banished from GY when a "Malefic" is destroyed to search a "Malefic" monster. | Provides card advantage upon destruction. Its GY effect is its most relevant, making it a prime target to send with Malefic Paradigm Dragon.12 |

This breakdown reveals a fundamental design tension within the archetype's support cards. Cards like Malefic Stardust Dragon and Malefic Cyber End Dragon are flexible, requiring only *any* face-up Field Spell to function.1 This encourages a versatile strategy that can incorporate powerful external Field Spells like Necrovalley or those from engines like Centurion.6 Conversely, the more modern and combo-oriented support cards, Malefic Paradigm Dragon and Malefic Paradox Dragon, specifically require Malefic World by name to remain on the field.1

This forces a critical deck-building decision. A player cannot easily maximize the consistency of the generic beaters and the explosive potential of the World-locked combo pieces simultaneously. This strategic crossroads explains the divergence in modern decklists: hybrid builds using the Centurion engine often cut the World-dependent cards entirely to focus on consistency, while "purer" builds or those focused on the Bystial engine lean heavily into Malefic Territory to enable the powerful plays of Paradigm Dragon.3

## Constructing the End Board - Combo Lines and Strategic Execution

The modern Malefic strategy revolves around converting a few key starting cards into a powerful end board featuring multiple points of interaction. The combos are not strictly linear but rely on a fluid conversion of resources between the hand, Graveyard, and banished zone.

### The Core Engine: Paradox Gear into Synchro-10

This sequence is the fundamental building block for nearly all modern Malefic combos. It efficiently converts a single Normal Summon into a Level 10 Synchro monster.

* **Starting Hand**: Malefic Paradox Gear + any Level 8 Malefic Monster (e.g., Malefic Stardust Dragon).
* **Step 1**: Normal Summon Malefic Paradox Gear.
* **Step 2**: Activate its effect, Tributing it as cost. This is the primary choke point for an opponent's Ash Blossom & Joyous Spring.16
* **Step 3**: The effect resolves, Special Summoning Malefic Parallel Gear (a Level 2 Tuner) from the Deck and adding another Malefic monster to the hand.
* **Step 4**: Special Summon the Level 8 Malefic monster from the hand by banishing its counterpart from the Extra Deck.
* **Step 5**: Synchro Summon a Level 10 monster, typically Bystial Dis Pater or Baronne de Fleur, using the Level 2 Parallel Gear and the Level 8 Malefic monster.3

### Combo Line A: The Basic "Dis Pater" Board

This common 2-3 card combo establishes a powerful interactive monster and sets up for the following turn.

* **Required Cards**: Malefic Parallel Gear, Malefic Selector, and a Level 8 Malefic monster (e.g., Malefic Stardust Dragon).3
* **Step 1**: Normal Summon Malefic Parallel Gear.
* **Step 2**: Special Summon the Level 8 Malefic monster from hand.
* **Step 3**: Synchro Summon Bystial Dis Pater. The materials, Parallel Gear and the Level 8 Malefic, are sent to the Graveyard.
* **Step 4**: Activate Malefic Selector. Banish Parallel Gear and the Level 8 Malefic from the Graveyard as its cost.
* **Step 5**: The effect of Selector resolves, adding Malefic Territory and another Malefic monster to the hand.
* **Step 6**: Activate the effect of Bystial Dis Pater, targeting the now-banished Malefic Parallel Gear to Special Summon it back to the field.
* **Step 7**: With Parallel Gear on the field and another Malefic monster in hand (from Selector), a second Level 10 Synchro Summon (like Baronne de Fleur) is now possible.
* **End Board**: Bystial Dis Pater (providing a revival and a monster negate/destruction) and Baronne de Fleur (providing an omni-negate), with Malefic Territory in hand to enable further plays on the next turn.

### Combo Line B: The "Perfect Hand" Board

This more extensive 4-card combo demonstrates the deck's highest potential, creating a multi-layered board of interruptions.

* **Required Cards**: Malefic Paradox Gear, Malefic Territory, Malefic Selector, and either Malefic Stardust Dragon or Malefic Paradigm Dragon.3
* **Step 1**: Activate Malefic Territory, using its effect to place Malefic World from the Deck into the Field Zone. This establishes the necessary Field Spell and enables the use of multiple Malefic monsters.
* **Step 2**: Normal Summon Malefic Paradox Gear. Activate its effect, tributing itself to Special Summon Malefic Parallel Gear and add Malefic Blue-Eyes White Dragon to hand.
* **Step 3**: Special Summon Malefic Blue-Eyes White Dragon. Use it and Parallel Gear to Synchro Summon Bystial Dis Pater.
* **Step 4**: Activate Malefic Selector, banishing both Paradox Gear and Parallel Gear from the Graveyard. Add the Malefic monsters you need for the combo (e.g., Malefic Stardust Dragon and Malefic Paradigm Dragon).
* **Step 5**: Activate Dis Pater's effect to revive the banished Malefic Parallel Gear.
* **Step 6**: Special Summon Malefic Stardust Dragon by banishing its original from the Extra Deck.
* **Step 7**: Special Summon Malefic Paradigm Dragon by banishing Malefic Paradox Dragon from the Extra Deck. Territory allows both to co-exist.
* **Step 8**: Activate Paradigm Dragon's effect. Send a Malefic card (ideally Malefic Tune) from the Deck to the Graveyard. This allows you to return the banished Stardust Dragon to the Extra Deck and then immediately Special Summon it to your field.
* **Step 9**: With both Malefic Stardust Dragon and the original Stardust Dragon (both Level 8) on the field, Xyz Summon Number 38: Hope Harbinger Dragon Titanic Galaxy.
* **End Board**: A formidable field consisting of Bystial Dis Pater (revival/negate), Number 38 (Spell negate), Malefic Territory and Malefic World protected by Malefic Stardust Dragon, and a search for a Malefic monster during the End Phase if Malefic Tune was sent to the Graveyard.

These combo lines illustrate that the deck's skill ceiling is not in memorizing a single sequence, but in understanding how to manage and convert resources across three different zones. The Graveyard is fuel for Malefic Selector, transforming into hand advantage. The banished zone becomes a temporary holding area for Bystial Dis Pater to convert back into field presence. This dynamic resource management makes the deck more resilient and adaptable than a simple linear strategy.

## Forging Alliances - External Synergies and Deck Variants

The modern identity of the Malefic archetype is defined by its powerful synergies with external engines. These engines are not merely supplementary; they solve the archetype's fundamental flaws and unlock its true potential. The choice of engine fundamentally redefines the deck's playstyle, shifting it between a grind-focused, consistency-focused, or control-focused strategy.

### The Bystial Alliance: Recursion and Power

* **Core Problem Solved**: The archetype's inherent lack of recursion and a synergistic, powerful boss monster.
* **Key Cards & Synergy**:
  + **Bystial Dis Pater**: This Level 10 DARK Dragon Synchro is the premier boss monster for Malefic decks. It is perfectly summoned using a Level 2 Malefic Parallel Gear and a Level 8 Malefic. Its effect to Special Summon a banished LIGHT or DARK monster is the cornerstone of combo extension, allowing the deck to revive key pieces like Malefic Parallel Gear that were banished as a cost for other effects.3
  + **Branded Regained**: This Continuous Spell is a critical component, creating a sustainable resource loop. It allows the player to return a banished LIGHT or DARK monster to the bottom of the Deck to draw a card once per turn. This recycles the monsters banished to summon the Malefics, turning a resource cost into card advantage and ensuring the deck does not run out of fuel in a longer game.3
  + **Other Bystial Monsters**: Cards like The Bystial Magnamhut and Bystial Druiswurm provide free Special Summons (by banishing LIGHT/DARK monsters from the GY), on-field disruption, and additional DARK bodies for Synchro or Link plays.3

### The Centurion Alliance: The Consistency Fix

* **Core Problem Solved**: The crippling dependency on drawing a Field Spell to make any plays.
* **Key Cards & Synergy**:
  + The **Centurion Engine** (Centur-Ion Primera, Centur-Ion Trudea, Stand Up! Centur-Ion!) is exceptionally efficient at establishing its Field Spell, Stand Up! Centur-Ion!, on the field.19 This provides the Malefic monsters with a consistent, searchable, and resilient Field Spell, completely solving their primary weakness.14
  + The synergy is reciprocal. Malefic monsters, being high-level, can be used to easily Synchro Summon Centur-Ion Auxila, a key monster in the Centurion engine that can also help establish a Field Spell.15
  + This synergy is so potent and reliable that deck builders often choose to cut the native Malefic Field Spells (Malefic World and Malefic Territory) and the monsters that depend on them (Paradigm and Paradox Dragon) entirely. This streamlines the deck, focusing on the generic Malefic beaters that function with any Field Spell.14

### The Dogmatika Alliance: Advantage and Disruption

* **Core Problem Solved**: A lack of inherent card advantage and meaningful interaction during the opponent's turn.
* **Key Cards & Synergy**:
  + **Nadir Servant**: This spell searches any Dogmatika card by sending a monster from the Extra Deck to the Graveyard.21 This provides access to the engine while also setting up powerful Graveyard effects.
  + **Dogmatika Punishment**: A powerful trap card that destroys an opponent's monster by sending a monster with equal or higher ATK from your Extra Deck to the GY.21
  + **The Extra Deck Toolbox**: The core synergy lies in what the Dogmatika cards send to the Graveyard. Sending Elder Entity N'tss triggers its effect to destroy a card on the field.23 Sending Titaniklad the Ash Dragon allows a search for a Dogmatika monster during the End Phase.21 The Malefic strategy can easily accommodate the Extra Deck lock imposed by these cards, as its primary monsters are summoned from the hand, not the Extra Deck.

The choice of engine is therefore a philosophical one. A player who wishes to out-resource and grind down an opponent will favor the Bystial engine's recursion. A player who prioritizes executing their main combo as consistently as possible will choose the Centurion engine. A player who prefers a more controlling, reactive game state will opt for the Dogmatika engine's turn-zero disruption. The engine is not just support; it becomes the deck's new identity.

## Exploiting Weaknesses - Choke Points and Counter-Strategies

Despite its explosive potential, the Malefic archetype is fraught with vulnerabilities. Its strategy is akin to a glass cannon: immensely powerful if its setup resolves, but exceptionally fragile during that initial setup phase. An opponent who understands these choke points can effectively dismantle the deck before it can establish a board.

### The Achilles' Heel: Field Spell Dependency

The most fundamental weakness remains its reliance on a Field Spell. Any form of Spell and Trap removal can be devastating.

* **Counters**: Cosmic Cyclone is particularly effective because it banishes the Field Spell, bypassing the destruction protection granted by Malefic Stardust Dragon.11 While Malefic Territory can protect the Field Spell from targeting, mass removal cards like Harpie's Feather Duster or Lightning Storm can be game-ending if played before protection is established. Non-targeting, non-destruction removal like Evenly Matched can also clear the entire board, including the protected Field Spell.

### Severing the Lifeline: The Normal Summon Choke Point

The deck's entire combo engine frequently hinges on the successful resolution of a single Normal Summon, most often Malefic Paradox Gear. Disrupting this one card can end the Malefic player's turn immediately.

* **Counters**:
  + **Ash Blossom & Joyous Spring**: This is the single most effective hand trap against the deck. It can be chained to the activation of Malefic Paradox Gear's effect after it has been Tributed for cost. If negated, the Malefic player is left with no monster on the field, their Normal Summon for the turn has been used, and their hand is likely filled with unsummonable high-level monsters.16
  + **Infinite Impermanence & Effect Veiler**: These are also effective against the key Normal Summon. While Paradox Gear can Tribute itself to dodge this form of negation, these cards are highly effective against the starters of hybrid engines, such as Centur-Ion Primera.16

### Clogging the Engine: The "Garnet" Problem

The variants of the deck that rely on Main Deck counterparts like Blue-Eyes White Dragon or Rainbow Dragon suffer from an inherent inconsistency. Drawing these "garnet" cards renders their Malefic counterparts unsummonable from the hand, as they must be banished from the Deck.11 While Malefic Paradox Gear's Graveyard effect can mitigate this, it is still a significant weakness that can cause the deck to fail on its own.

### Resource Denial

Targeting the deck's resource management is another effective strategy.

* **Anti-Banishment**: Cards that prevent banishing, such as Artifact Lancea or a resolved Imperial Iron Wall, completely shut off the summoning condition for most Malefic monsters.26
* **Graveyard Hate**: The deck relies on its Graveyard as a resource for cards like Malefic Selector and Malefic Paradox Gear. Floodgates like Dimension Shifter, Macro Cosmos, or Necrovalley prevent cards from ever reaching the Graveyard, disabling these key consistency tools.3

Ultimately, the most critical element in countering the Malefic strategy is timing. A well-timed hand trap on the initial starter is exponentially more impactful than attempting to break an established board that may include multiple negations and layers of protection. The deck's primary choke point is not a specific card on the field, but a specific moment in time: the resolution of its first search or special summon effect.

## Strategic Synthesis and Competitive Outlook

### Synthesizing Strengths and Weaknesses

The Malefic archetype is a study in extremes. Its strengths are potent and undeniable, while its weaknesses are equally pronounced and exploitable.

* **Strengths**: The deck possesses explosive One-Turn Kill (OTK) potential, capable of putting monsters with 4000 or more ATK onto the field with ease.10 It has excellent access to some of the most powerful generic Synchro monsters in the game and boasts a unique resilience to certain forms of monster effect negation due to its inherent summoning mechanic.3
* **Weaknesses**: The archetype is exceptionally fragile, often relying on a single, easily disrupted starter card (Malefic Paradox Gear) to begin its plays.2 Its absolute dependency on a Field Spell remains its greatest liability, and the builds that use Main Deck counterparts suffer from inherent inconsistency due to the "garnet" problem.11

### Deck Construction Philosophy

For players seeking to build a competitive Malefic deck in the modern era, the most effective approach is to treat "Malefic" not as a self-sufficient archetype, but as an "engine" of high-level DARK monsters. A "pure" build, while conceptually interesting, is too inconsistent and fragile for the current competitive landscape.28 The optimal strategy is to select a synergistic external engine—such as Bystial, Centurion, or Dogmatika—and build the deck around the strengths of that hybrid combination. This approach uses the external engine to solve the core problems of the Malefic archetype (consistency, recursion, or disruption) while using the Malefic cards to provide the raw power and high-level bodies needed for explosive plays.

### Competitive Viability and Final Verdict

In the competitive hierarchy, the Malefic archetype occupies the space of a potent "rogue" strategy.7 It lacks the consistency and resilience to be considered a top-tier meta contender, as it is highly susceptible to the most common and powerful hand traps in the format.26

However, to dismiss the deck would be a mistake. In the hands of a skilled pilot who has mastered its complex resource management and combo lines, a well-built hybrid Malefic deck can overwhelm unprepared opponents. Its ability to generate immense offensive pressure from unexpected angles allows it to "terrorize" competitive events and achieve high ranks on the ladder.7 The final verdict is that Malefic is an archetype for strategists who enjoy high-risk, high-reward gameplay and the intricate challenge of solving a complex deck-building puzzle. It is a glass cannon, but one capable of delivering a decisive blow.

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