# A Strategic Deep Dive into the Timelord Archetype: Masters of Stall, Burn, and Inevitability

## The Timelord Doctrine: Core Mechanics and Philosophy

The Timelord archetype represents a unique strategic paradigm within the Yu-Gi-Oh! Trading Card Game. Eschewing the conventional combo-intensive strategies that define much of the modern competitive landscape, Timelords operate as a reactive, control-oriented deck. Their primary objective is to systematically dismantle an opponent's established board through a combination of inherent resilience and powerful, disruptive effects. The archetype's philosophy is built upon a foundation of shared characteristics that dictate its tempo, defensive capabilities, and ultimate win conditions.

### Shared Characteristics: The Pillars of the Archetype

Every main deck Timelord monster is governed by a set of four fundamental principles that define their function on the field.

* **Summoning Condition:** The vast majority of Timelord monsters share the summoning clause: "If you control no monsters, you can Normal Summon this card without Tributing".1 This mechanic establishes the deck's characteristic "one-at-a-time" tempo. It incentivizes a go-second strategy, allowing the Timelord player to use their Normal Summon to deploy a specific, powerful answer to an opponent's pre-existing board.
* **Inherent Invincibility:** Timelords possess a formidable defensive layer, articulated by the effects "Cannot be destroyed by battle or card effects" and "You take no battle damage from attacks involving this card".2 This dual immunity renders them impervious to the most common forms of removal, forcing opponents to utilize less conventional, non-destruction methods such as banishing or returning to the hand.4
* **The Battle Phase Imperative:** The archetype's most potent abilities are contingent upon combat. Their primary effects activate "At the end of the Battle Phase, if this card battled".3 This makes entering the Battle Phase and successfully conducting an attack not merely an option, but an absolute necessity for the deck to function. Any strategy that prevents the Battle Phase or negates attacks effectively neutralizes the Timelord threat.6
* **The Grand Return:** This inherent invincibility is balanced by a significant drawback: "Once per turn, during your Standby Phase: Shuffle this card into the Deck".1 This "self-recycling" mechanic ensures that a single Timelord cannot maintain a permanent field presence on its own. It creates a constant pressure on the player to manage their resources and find ways to either replenish their hand or circumvent this effect entirely through their support cards.

### Strategic Philosophy: The Anti-Meta Stance

The design of the Timelord archetype is fundamentally reactionary, positioning it as a natural counter to many prevalent competitive strategies. Their immunity to destruction was particularly effective against past metagames dominated by cards like Zoodiac Drident and Master Peace, the Dracoslaying King.3 Furthermore, their removal effects often involve shuffling cards into the deck without targeting, a method that bypasses the protective layers of many modern boss monsters that are immune to targeting and destruction.3 The deck operates on a slow, methodical pace, aiming to out-grind opponents through resource denial and incremental damage, functioning as a stall/control strategy that can pivot into a decisive One-Turn Kill (OTK) when an opportunity arises.2

This strategic identity is deeply intertwined with their unusual stat line of $0$ ATK and $0$ DEF. On the surface, this is a glaring vulnerability; if a Timelord's effects are negated, it becomes a defenseless monster that will be destroyed by battle, inflicting significant damage to its controller.4 However, this weakness is also the cornerstone of the deck's consistency. The archetype's most critical enabler, Time Maiden, uses its effects to search or summon "a 'Timelord' monster with 0 ATK".9 This means the very attribute that makes them fragile when disrupted is what allows the deck's primary searcher to access nearly any monster in the archetype, creating a high-stakes gameplay loop where protecting the Timelord's effect is paramount.

## The Archetypal Engine: Key Cards and Internal Synergies

While the Timelord monsters are the face of the strategy, their effectiveness is entirely dependent on a small but powerful engine of in-archetype support cards. This engine is responsible for consistency, extension, and ultimately, transforming the deck's temporary threats into a permanent, game-winning board state.

### Time Maiden: The Heart of the Machine

Time Maiden is unequivocally the most important card in the Timelord archetype, acting as a one-card starter, searcher, and extender.3 Its utility is derived from three distinct and synergistic effects.

* **Special Summon (from Hand):** If you control no monsters, Time Maiden can be Special Summoned from the hand.10 This allows it to establish a presence on the field without consuming the turn's valuable Normal Summon, setting up its other effects immediately.
* **Searcher (from Field):** By Tributing itself from the field, Time Maiden allows the player to add one "Timelord" monster with $0$ ATK from the Deck to the hand.10 This is the deck's primary consistency tool, enabling the player to select the precise Timelord needed to counter the opponent's board. Because this effect does not use the Normal Summon, the searched monster can be summoned immediately.3
* **Extender (from Graveyard):** By banishing itself from the Graveyard (GY), Time Maiden can Special Summon one "Timelord" monster with $0$ ATK directly from the Deck, ignoring its summoning conditions.1 This is the deck's main power play, providing the second Level $10$ body required for Rank $10$ Xyz Summons and OTK sequences.

The importance of Time Maiden elevates generic support cards like One for One and Foolish Burial, which can send it from the Deck to the hand or GY, respectively, effectively turning them into one-card starters for the entire strategy.9

### The Path to Infinity: The Continuous Trap Engine

The archetype's trio of Continuous Traps—Empty Machine, Infinite Machine, and Infinite Light—represents a linear, escalating win condition. Successfully resolving this chain of cards is the deck's primary method for establishing an unbreakable lockdown.1

* **Stage 1: Empty Machine:** This is the foundational trap. Its primary use is to discard a Level $10$ monster to draw one card, which helps set up the GY with a Timelord for revival or a Time Maiden for its extension effect. Its more crucial secondary effect allows it to be used to Set Infinite Machine directly from the Deck.1
* **Stage 2: Infinite Machine:** Activated by sending a face-up Empty Machine to the GY, this trap is a significant upgrade. It grants the ability to Special Summon one "Timelord" monster from the hand during the Main Phase.1 This effect is the first step toward swarming the field with multiple Timelords. Like its predecessor, it serves as a stepping stone to the final trap, Infinite Light.
* **Stage 3: Infinite Light:** The ultimate goal of the control strategy, activated by sending Infinite Machine to the GY. This card provides three game-altering effects: it cannot be destroyed by an opponent's card effects; it grants targeting protection to all "Timelord" monsters you control; and most critically, it prevents Timelords from being returned to the Deck by their own effects.1 With Infinite Light on the field, the Timelords become permanent, untargetable, indestructible threats.

This trap engine, while immensely powerful, is also a telegraphed and vulnerable process. The requirement to send the previous trap from the field to the GY to activate the next one is a significant chokepoint.1 An experienced opponent will recognize this and shift their focus from the Timelord monster to the backrow, using Spell/Trap removal like Cosmic Cyclone to break the chain before Infinite Light can be activated.5 This dynamic turns the duel into a race against time, where the Timelord player must protect their backrow at all costs to establish their lockdown, while the opponent must dismantle it before being overwhelmed. The true "end board" of the control variant is not a field of monsters, but a resolved and protected Infinite Light.

## The Celestial Roster: A Strategic Analysis of Each Timelord

The strength of the Timelord archetype lies in its toolbox nature. Each monster provides a unique solution to a different problem, and skillful play is defined by the ability to select the correct tool for the job. The Timelords can be categorized by their primary strategic function: removal, damage, and utility.

### Group A: The Removal Suite (Board Control)

These Timelords specialize in clearing the opponent's field through non-destructive means.

* **Metaion, the Timelord**: The premier solution for monster-heavy boards. After battling, it returns all *other* monsters on the field to the hand and inflicts $300$ damage for each card returned.1
* **Zaphion, the Timelord**: The dedicated backrow remover. After battling, it shuffles all Spells and Traps the opponent controls into the Deck, making it invaluable against control, stun, and Pendulum strategies.1 It also allows you to draw a card if it is sent from the field to the GY.
* **Kamion, the Timelord**: The surgical tool for singular, problematic threats. After battling, it shuffles one card the opponent controls into the Deck and inflicts $500$ damage. Critically, the opponent cannot activate cards or effects in response to this effect's activation, making it the perfect out for monsters with built-in negation effects.1
* **Gabrion, the Timelord**: A high-risk, high-reward board wipe. It shuffles all cards the opponent controls into the Deck, but then allows them to draw cards equal to the number shuffled.1 This is best reserved for a game-ending push where the opponent's subsequent hand size is irrelevant.

### Group B: The Damage Dealers (Win Condition)

These Timelords are focused on reducing the opponent's Life Points to zero, forming the core of the deck's burn and OTK strategies.

* **Michion, the Timelord**: The great equalizer. Its effect halves the opponent's Life Points, a cornerstone of nearly every OTK combo the deck can perform.1
* **Sandaion, the Timelord**: The heavy artillery. It inflicts a direct $2000$ damage after battling.1 It also possesses a unique summoning condition ("If *only* your opponent controls a monster") and becomes a $4000$ ATK beatstick if its effects are negated.
* **Raphion, the Timelord**: The reactive damage source. It inflicts damage equal to the ATK of a monster it battled.1 This effect has perfect synergy with the Kaiju engine, turning the monster you give your opponent into a weapon against them.
* **Hailon, the Timelord**: A comeback tool. If your Life Points are lower than your opponent's, it inflicts damage equal to the difference.1

### Group C: The Utility Masters (Niche Specialists)

These Timelords offer unique forms of disruption that cripple specific strategies.

* **Lazion, the Timelord**: The graveyard manipulator. It shuffles all cards from the opponent's GY back into the Deck, which is devastating against any modern combo deck that relies on GY resources.1 It also has a passive burn effect, inflicting $1000$ damage whenever the opponent draws a card.
* **Sadion, the Timelord**: The life point recovery tool. If your LP is below $4000$, its effect makes your LP become $4000$.1 This is a situational card, typically used to survive against other burn-focused strategies.

### The Boss Monsters

While the main deck monsters form the core of the strategy, the archetype also includes two larger boss monsters.

* **Sephylon, the Ultimate Timelord**: The original boss, requiring $10$ or more monsters in the GY to be Special Summoned.1 This condition is difficult to meet in a pure Timelord deck, as the monsters are designed to return to the Deck rather than go to the GY, making it largely inconsistent.8
* **Timelord Progenitor Vorpgate**: A Level $10$ Synchro monster that can banish all opposing monsters after it battles.1 Its power is undeniable, but the archetype lacks in-house Tuner monsters, making its summoning reliant on external engine pieces.

| **Timelord Name** | **Primary Effect (Post-Battle)** | **Secondary/Passive Effect(s)** | **Strategic Application & Optimal Targets** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Metaion, the Timelord** | Returns all other monsters on the field to the hand; inflict $300$ damage per card returned. | None. | Board wipe for monster-heavy fields. Effective against Xyz, Synchro, and Link-based strategies that cannot easily recover their Extra Deck resources. |
| **Zaphion, the Timelord** | Shuffles all Spells/Traps your opponent controls into the Deck. | If sent from field to GY: Draw 1 card. | Board wipe for backrow-heavy fields. Essential against control decks (Altergeist, Eldlich) and Pendulum decks. |
| **Kamion, the Timelord** | Shuffle 1 card your opponent controls into the Deck (unchainable); inflict $500$ damage. | None. | Premier removal for single, powerful boss monsters with negation or protection (e.g., Herald of Perfection, Dragoon of Red-Eyes). |
| **Gabrion, the Timelord** | Shuffle all cards your opponent controls into the Deck; they draw cards equal to the number shuffled. | None. | High-risk, all-in board wipe for a final OTK push when the opponent's hand advantage is irrelevant. |
| **Michion, the Timelord** | Halve your opponent's Life Points. | None. | Core component of nearly all OTK strategies. Sets up game-ending damage from other sources. |
| **Sandaion, the Timelord** | Inflict $2000$ damage. | Becomes a $4000$ ATK monster if its effects are negated. | A reliable and significant source of burn damage to close out games. |
| **Raphion, the Timelord** | Inflict damage equal to the ATK of one monster it battled. | None. | Synergizes with Kaijus. Give the opponent a high-ATK monster, then attack it with Raphion for massive burn damage. |
| **Hailon, the Timelord** | If your LP is lower, inflict damage to your opponent equal to the difference. | None. | A comeback mechanic that can turn a losing position into a win, especially after taking significant damage. |
| **Lazion, the Timelord** | Shuffle all cards from your opponent's GY into the Deck. | If your opponent draws a card: Inflict $1000$ damage. | Cripples GY-reliant strategies (e.g., Tearlaments, Lightsworn). The passive burn provides constant pressure. |
| **Sadion, the Timelord** | If your LP is less than $4000$, your LP becomes $4000$. | None. | Situational life gain, primarily used to survive against other burn decks or to stay in the game long enough to mount a counter-attack. |

## Executing the Grand Design: Combo Lines and End Boards

Timelords are not a "combo" deck in the traditional sense of executing long, intricate sequences. Instead, their "combos" are short, decisive plays designed to establish control or execute an OTK. The deck's end board is not a static field of negates but rather a strategic state chosen to counter the opponent.

### The Foundational Play: One-Card Starter with Time Maiden

This is the most common and fundamental opening play for the deck.

1. Begin with Time Maiden in hand and no monsters on the field.
2. Special Summon Time Maiden using its own effect.10
3. Tribute Time Maiden to activate its search effect, adding the most appropriate Timelord from the Deck to your hand (e.g., Kamion to deal with a singular threat, Metaion for a full board).3
4. Use your Normal Summon to play the searched Timelord.  
   The resulting board is a single, disruptive Timelord on the field with Time Maiden now in the GY, ready to be banished on a subsequent turn for an extension play.

### The OTK Setup: Summoning Two Level 10s

The primary offensive goal is to summon two Level $10$ Timelords to the field to enable a Rank $10$ Xyz Summon. There are two primary methods to achieve this.

* **Method A: Time Maiden GY Effect:** This is the standard method. If Time Maiden is in the GY, you can Normal Summon one Timelord from your hand, then activate Time Maiden's effect by banishing it to Special Summon a second Timelord from the Deck.1
* **Method B: Celestial Transformation:** This Quick-Play Spell provides another route. After Normal Summoning one Timelord, Celestial Transformation can Special Summon another from the hand.15 Its Quick-Play nature allows it to be activated during the Battle Phase, which can be used to play around targeting hand traps like Effect Veiler.17

### The Primary End Board: The Rank 10 "Train" OTK

This is the deck's most explosive and frequent win condition, utilizing the "Superdreadnought Rail Cannon" Xyz monsters.12

1. Using two Level $10$ Timelords, Xyz Summon Superdreadnought Rail Cannon Gustav Max.
2. Activate the effect of Gustav Max, detaching one Xyz Material to inflict $2000$ damage to the opponent.
3. Overlay Gustav Max with Superdreadnought Rail Cannon Juggernaut Liebe.
4. Activate the effect of Juggernaut Liebe, detaching a material to increase its ATK to $6000$.
5. Attack with the $6000$ ATK Juggernaut Liebe to inflict lethal damage. This sequence alone accounts for at least $8000$ damage.

### The Ultimate End Board: The Infinite Light Lockdown

This is the control-oriented win condition, achieved by successfully resolving the trap engine. The board state consists of a face-up Infinite Light in the Spell & Trap Zone and two or more different Timelord monsters on the field. Under the protection of Infinite Light, these monsters are now untargetable, indestructible, and, most importantly, they no longer shuffle themselves back into the Deck during the Standby Phase.1 This creates a permanent, oppressive board that can attack turn after turn, applying relentless pressure and disruption until the opponent is completely out of resources.

The duality between these two end boards forces the Timelord player to make a critical strategic decision each game. They must constantly assess whether the opponent's board is vulnerable enough for an immediate OTK push or if their strategy is resilient enough to necessitate the slower, more secure lockdown offered by Infinite Light. Choosing the correct path is a key element of mastering the archetype.

## Alliances Across Time: Hybrid Builds and External Synergies

The Timelord archetype, while self-contained, is significantly enhanced by a variety of external engines and generic support cards. These alliances shore up the deck's weaknesses and amplify its inherent strengths.

### The Kaiju Partnership: The Perfect Symbiosis

The most common and effective Timelord variant incorporates the Kaiju engine.11 This partnership is synergistic on multiple levels.

* **Unconditional Removal:** Kaiju monsters are summoned by Tributing an opponent's monster. This is not an effect but a summoning condition, allowing them to remove any monster, including those that are unaffected by card effects, untargetable, or indestructible.4 This clears the path for Timelord attacks against otherwise unbreakable boards.
* **Fueling Raphion, the Timelord:** A key strategy involves giving the opponent a high-ATK Kaiju, such as the $3300$ ATK Jizukiru, the Star Destroying Kaiju, and then attacking it with Raphion. Raphion's effect will then inflict $3300$ burn damage, turning the opponent's new monster into a massive liability.12 Interrupted Kaiju Slumber is a staple in this build, serving as both a potent board wipe and a searcher for the Kaiju engine.11

### The Burn/Stun Variant: Maximizing Control

This build de-emphasizes the Xyz-based OTK in favor of a pure stall and burn strategy.8

* **Floodgates:** This variant employs powerful Continuous Traps like There Can Be Only One, Gozen Match, and Skill Drain to severely restrict the opponent's ability to play the game.2
* Burn Support: Generic burn cards such as Magic Cylinder, Ring of Destruction, and Dimension Wall are included to supplement the damage output of Timelords like Sandaion and Michion.11  
  It is important to note that Skill Drain is a double-edged sword; while it cripples many opposing strategies, it also negates the crucial battle effects of the Timelords, turning them into simple walls that will still return to the deck unless Infinite Light is active.4

### Analysis of Other Hybrids and Tech Choices

* **Runick:** This potential pairing is fundamentally anti-synergistic. Many Runick Quick-Play Spells include a clause that forces the player to skip their next Battle Phase.2 As Timelord effects are entirely dependent on the Battle Phase, this core mechanical conflict renders the hybrid largely unviable.
* **Trains/Rank 10:** This is less a hybrid and more a classification of the deck's primary OTK engine, which is composed of the Rank $10$ "Train" Xyz monsters (Gustav Max and Juggernaut Liebe).16
* **Generic Support:** Generic Fairy support like Celestial Transformation is a staple for its extension capabilities.15 Mound of the Bound Creator provides valuable targeting protection for the Level $10$ Timelords.16 Draw power is often sourced from "Pot" cards like Pot of Extravagance and Pot of Prosperity, as the Extra Deck is often flexible and can be banished without significant loss.11

## Chronal Weakness: Counter-Strategies and Vulnerabilities

Despite their formidable defenses, Timelords possess several critical vulnerabilities that can be exploited by a knowledgeable opponent. Understanding these weaknesses is key to both piloting the deck effectively and countering it.

### The Achilles' Heel: Effect Negation

The single most effective counter to the Timelord strategy is effect negation. A Timelord whose effects are negated becomes a $0$ ATK monster that is no longer indestructible and can be easily destroyed by battle, often resulting in an OTK against the Timelord player.4 Key counter cards include hand traps like Infinite Impermanence and Effect Veiler, as well as powerful floodgates like Skill Drain.4

### Bypassing Immortality: Non-Destruction Removal

Since Timelords are immune to destruction, any effect that removes them from the field through other means is highly effective.5

* **Bouncing:** Returning the monster to the hand (e.g., Compulsory Evacuation Device).
* **Spinning:** Shuffling the monster into the Deck (e.g., Knightmare Unicorn).
* **Banishing:** Removing the monster from play (e.g., Karma Cut).
* **Tributing:** Using the monster as a Tribute (e.g., any Kaiju monster).

### Exploiting the Battle Phase Dependency

The archetype's complete reliance on the Battle Phase is a significant weak point. Any effect that prevents a Timelord from attacking, negates an attack, or prematurely ends the Battle Phase will prevent its primary effect from activating.6 Cards like Scrap-Iron Scarecrow or simply removing the Timelord from the field during the Main Phase can completely shut down the deck's turn.

### Systemic Flaws: Speed and Consistency

The Timelord strategy is inherently slow, typically summoning only one monster per turn without access to its trap engine or extenders.2 The deck is also heavily dependent on drawing Time Maiden or a card that can access it; an opening hand without a playable Timelord or a path to Time Maiden is often too slow to compete against aggressive, modern decks.6

The effectiveness of these counter-strategies can be ranked by how early they can be applied within the Timelord player's turn sequence. The most effective counters are those that prevent the Timelord from ever becoming a threat. Negating the Normal Summon with a card like Solemn Judgment is the most definitive answer.8 The next best approach is to remove or negate the Timelord during the Main Phase, before it has a chance to enter the Battle Phase.4 Less effective, but still viable, is negating the attack itself. Once the Battle Phase has concluded, the Timelord's effect will have already activated, and the opponent will be forced to play from a disadvantaged position. This hierarchy provides a clear priority list for any player facing this unique and resilient archetype.

## Conclusion

The Timelord archetype stands as a testament to an alternative design philosophy in Yu-Gi-Oh!, one that prioritizes control, disruption, and inevitability over explosive, linear combos. Its core strength lies in its roster of indestructible monsters, each serving as a specialized tool to dismantle different facets of an opponent's strategy—from monster-heavy boards and dense backrows to GY-reliant engines. The deck's success hinges on the masterful use of Time Maiden, the central cog that provides crucial consistency and enables the deck's two primary win conditions: a swift, decisive OTK via Rank $10$ Xyz monsters, or a methodical, unbreakable lockdown established by the Infinite Light Continuous Trap.

However, this power is balanced by clear and exploitable weaknesses. The archetype's complete dependence on the Battle Phase, its vulnerability to effect negation, and its susceptibility to non-destruction removal create clear avenues for counter-play. Hybrid builds, particularly with the Kaiju engine, have proven effective at mitigating some of these weaknesses by providing unconditional removal. Ultimately, the Timelord archetype offers a challenging and rewarding experience for players who enjoy a reactive, strategic playstyle. It forces both the pilot and their opponent to engage in a tactical duel, where understanding the specific role of each card and the precise timing of interruptions is paramount to achieving victory.

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