# A Strategic Analysis of the "C" Series in the Yu-Gi-Oh! Trading Card Game

## Deconstructing the "C" Series: A Toolkit, Not an Archetype

In the vast and complex ecosystem of the Yu-Gi-Oh! Trading Card Game, the term "archetype" typically refers to a group of cards with a shared naming convention that are supported by specific Spell and Trap cards, enabling a cohesive and synergistic strategy. Archetypes like "Lightsworn," "Harpie," or "Labrynth" are defined by their internal support cards that search, summon, and protect their members.1 The "C" series of monsters, however, defies this conventional classification. It is not a formal, searchable archetype but rather a thematic series of cards united by a common design philosophy and visual narrative.2 Understanding this distinction is the first and most critical step in mastering their strategic application.

### Defining the "C" Series

The "C" cards are a collection of monsters, almost exclusively EARTH Insect-Type, that share a core mechanical identity: they are designed to be reactive tools, or "handtraps," that activate from the hand in response to an opponent's actions, primarily their Special Summons.2 Unlike a true archetype, there are no Spell or Trap cards with effects like "add 1 'C' monster from your Deck to your hand." This lack of internal support means they cannot function as a self-contained deck strategy. Instead, they operate as individual "tech" cards—specialized tools that players include in their Main or Side Decks to counter prevalent strategies within a given competitive format.2

The design history of the "C" series reveals a deliberate evolution in Konami's approach to game balance, with each card acting as a "silver bullet" aimed at a specific, often dominant, mechanic of its era. The earliest members, such as Shiny Black "C" and Flying "C", were created as direct counters to Synchro and Xyz Summoning, respectively, during periods when those mechanics saturated the competitive landscape.2 This targeted design indicates that the series was not conceived as a single, unified strategy but as an expanding family of reactive countermeasures. Consequently, the strategic value of most "C" cards fluctuates dramatically with the metagame. Flying "C" is largely ineffective in a format dominated by Fusion and Link Summoning, whereas Retaliating "C" becomes a premier choice against decks that rely heavily on Spell cards to initiate their plays.2 The "C" series, therefore, can be viewed as a historical timeline of Yu-Gi-Oh!'s most powerful mechanics, with each card representing a specific answer to a past or present threat.

### The Narrative of the Swarm: Lore and Thematic Identity

While mechanically disparate, the "C" cards are thematically unified by a clear and humorous narrative told through their card art. The series depicts the escalating struggle of a homeowner against a burgeoning cockroach infestation.4 This story begins with the discovery of a single roach (Maxx "C"), progresses to direct confrontation (Confronting the "C"), witnesses the insects taking flight (Flying "C"), and culminates in the homeowner constructing a giant mech to fight back (Super Armored Robot Armed Black Iron "C").4 The "C" in each name is widely understood to stand for "Cockroach," which is reflected in their shared Insect typing.4 This narrative provides a flavorful and memorable identity for the series, but it has no direct bearing on gameplay. It serves only to connect these otherwise independent cards under a single, cohesive theme.

## Individual Card Analysis: The Tools of Disruption

To effectively utilize the "C" series, a duelist must understand each card not as a piece of a larger engine, but as a distinct tool with a specific purpose, activation window, and strategic impact. This section provides a granular analysis of each significant "C" monster, detailing their mechanics and role within the game.

### Maxx "C": The Game-Warping Powerhouse

* **Card Details:** Level 2, EARTH, Insect/Effect, ATK 500 / DEF 200.6
* **Effect Analysis:** As a Quick Effect, this card can be sent from the hand to the Graveyard. For the remainder of that turn, each time the opponent Special Summons a monster(s), its controller immediately draws one card. This effect can only be used once per turn.6
* **Strategic Role:** Maxx "C" is widely regarded as one of the most powerful and format-defining handtraps ever printed.7 Its function is twofold: it either forces an immediate halt to the opponent's turn, as they cannot afford to give away free cards, or it generates overwhelming card advantage for its user, providing them with the necessary resources to dismantle the opponent's established board. In a game where sequences of multiple Special Summons are the norm, Maxx "C" punishes the very core of modern deckbuilding.9
* **The "Maxx 'C' Challenge":** The activation of Maxx "C" initiates a high-stakes mini-game. The opponent is forced into a difficult decision: they can end their turn prematurely, often leaving a suboptimal and vulnerable board, or they can "take the challenge" and continue their combo, hoping their final board is strong enough to withstand an opponent who may have drawn into numerous powerful "board-breaker" cards.9 This dynamic single-handedly shapes the flow of any duel in which it is resolved.
* **Metagame Impact:** In formats where it is legal, such as the OCG and Master Duel, Maxx "C" is a mandatory staple. Deck construction is fundamentally warped around its existence, with players dedicating numerous slots not only to Maxx "C" itself but also to its primary counters, such as Ash Blossom & Joyous Spring, Called by the Grave, and Crossout Designator.8 Its longstanding ban in the TCG is one of the most significant factors differentiating the TCG and OCG metagames, leading to vastly different deckbuilding philosophies and in-game strategies.7

### Retaliating "C": The Lynchpin of Synergy

* **Card Details:** Level 4, EARTH, Insect/Effect, ATK 1400 / DEF 1400.11
* **Effect Analysis:**
  1. **Summoning/Floodgate Effect:** As a Quick Effect, when an opponent activates a Spell Card that includes an effect to Special Summon a monster(s), Retaliating "C" can be Special Summoned from the hand. If summoned this way, while it is face-up on the field, any card sent to the Graveyard is banished instead.11 This effect effectively turns Retaliating "C" into a temporary, targeted Dimension Shifter, crippling Graveyard-reliant strategies.2
  2. **Search Effect:** If this card is sent from the field to the Graveyard, its controller can add 1 EARTH Insect monster with 1500 or less ATK from their Deck to their hand, except another copy of Retaliating "C".11
* **Strategic Role:** Retaliating "C" serves a crucial dual purpose. First, it is a potent, matchup-specific disruptive tool. It is devastating against Fusion-based decks that rely on spells like Branded Fusion, Ritual decks, or any combo deck that uses spells like Emergency Teleport to start its plays.2 Second, and more importantly for the series itself, its search effect makes it the sole source of consistent internal synergy. It is the only "C" card that can reliably search another, transforming it from a simple disruptive piece into a valuable consistency tool.2

### Contact "C": The Extra Deck Obstruction

* **Card Details:** Level 6, EARTH, Insect/Effect, ATK 1500 / DEF 2200.13
* **Effect Analysis:** When an opponent Normal or Special Summons a monster(s) (except during the Damage Step), this card can be Special Summoned from the hand to the *opponent's* field in Defense Position. The controller of Contact "C" cannot Fusion, Synchro, Xyz, or Link Summon unless they use this card as one of the materials.13
* **Strategic Role:** This card offers a unique form of disruption by actively clogging the opponent's field with a problematic monster. It forces the opponent to deviate from their primary game plan, as they must now find a way to incorporate a non-archetypal, Level 6 monster into their summons.2 This can be particularly effective against decks that are "xenophobic," meaning they have effects that lock the player into summoning only monsters of their specific archetype. It can also completely halt decks that lack an easy way to remove or use a Level 6 monster for an Extra Deck summon. However, its effectiveness is significantly reduced against decks that can easily use it to summon a generic Link-1 monster like Linkuriboh or a generic Link-2 like Knightmare Phoenix, turning the disruption into a minor inconvenience.2

### Sneaky "C": The Looming Threat

* **Card Details:** Level 3, EARTH, Insect/Flip/Effect, ATK 1000 / DEF 1200.
* **Effect Analysis:** Sneaky "C" functions as a two-part threat. Its first effect allows it to be Special Summoned from the hand in face-down Defense Position when an opponent Special Summons a monster.2 Its second, more powerful effect is a Flip effect that triggers if it is flipped face-up during the End Phase: it destroys all Special Summoned monsters on the field. This has earned it the moniker of a "delayed Dark Hole".2
* **Strategic Role:** As the most recently released disruptive "C" monster, Sneaky "C" is a powerful tool for players going second. It presents a dilemma for the opponent: they must either expend resources to remove the face-down monster before the End Phase, potentially weakening their board, or risk having their entire field of Special Summoned monsters wiped out. The primary weakness of Sneaky "C" is its vulnerability. Because it must remain on the field until the End Phase, it can be removed by any form of monster, Spell, or Trap-based removal, or its effect can be negated before it has a chance to resolve.2

### Legacy and Niche "C" Cards

The "C" series includes several older cards whose effects, while innovative at the time, have become too specific for the modern game.

* **Flying "C":** A Level 3 EARTH Insect with 700 ATK/DEF.14 When the opponent summons a monster, it can be Special Summoned to their field. Its controller cannot perform Xyz Summons.2 This was a direct and potent countermeasure during the ZEXAL era, when Xyz-centric decks dominated the metagame, but its utility has since faded.
* **Confronting the "C":** A Level 5 EARTH Insect with 1100 ATK/2500 DEF.15 When the opponent Special Summons from the Extra Deck, it can be Special Summoned from the hand and becomes unaffected by monster effects that target it.15 Its high DEF can serve as a defensive wall, but it lacks the proactive disruption of its more modern counterparts.3
* **Shiny Black "C":** A Level 1 EARTH Insect with 200 ATK/500 DEF. This card was designed specifically for the Synchro era. When an opponent Synchro Summons, it can be equipped to that monster from the hand, preventing it from attacking.2 Like Flying "C", its niche application has made it obsolete.
* **Shiny Black "C" Squadder:** A Level 4 EARTH Insect Normal Monster with 2000 ATK/0 DEF.2 As a Normal Monster, it lacks an effect but possesses the highest ATK of any Level 4 Insect Normal Monster. This distinction makes it a key card for strategies involving Gokipole and, most notably, the Field Spell Giant Ballpark.2

The evolution of the "C" series from highly specific, mechanic-based counters like Flying "C" to broad, universally applicable threats like Maxx "C" illustrates a significant shift in game design. The early cards provided players with surgical, metagame-dependent tools. Later additions, particularly Maxx "C", introduced a "nuclear option" that fundamentally alters the risk-reward calculation of the game's core summoning mechanic. The profound impact of Maxx "C"'s legality in the OCG versus its prohibition in the TCG is a testament to this design escalation, creating two distinct competitive environments from the same card pool.

## Strategic Synergies and Applications

While the "C" cards are not designed to function as a cohesive deck, they possess a few key interactions that allow for strategic sequencing and resource generation. Understanding these limited synergies is essential for unlocking their full potential, both as individual tech cards and within dedicated Insect-based strategies.

### Comparative Analysis of Core "C" Handtraps

To visualize the distinct roles and activation windows of the primary "C" handtraps, the following table breaks down their core functions. This allows for a quick strategic comparison, highlighting which tool is appropriate for a given situation.

| **Card Name** | **Level/Attribute** | **Activation Trigger** | **Resolving Effect** | **Strategic Role** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Maxx "C"** | 2 / EARTH | (Quick Effect) Send from hand to GY. | For the rest of the turn, draw 1 card each time the opponent Special Summons. | Universal Card Advantage Engine / Turn-Ending Threat |
| **Retaliating "C"** | 4 / EARTH | Opponent activates a Spell that Special Summons. | Special Summons itself; cards sent to GY are banished instead. Searches on being sent from field to GY. | Anti-Spell Floodgate / Series Searcher |
| **Contact "C"** | 6 / EARTH | Opponent Normal or Special Summons a monster. | Special Summons itself to the opponent's field. | Board Clogger / Extra Deck Disruption |
| **Sneaky "C"** | 3 / EARTH | Opponent Special Summons a monster. | Special Summons itself face-down. | Delayed Board Wipe / Going-Second Tool |
| **Flying "C"** | 3 / EARTH | Opponent Normal or Special Summons a monster. | Special Summons itself to the opponent's field. | Anti-Xyz Floodgate (Legacy) |
| **Confronting the "C"** | 5 / EARTH | Opponent Special Summons from the Extra Deck. | Special Summons itself from hand. | Defensive Wall (Niche) |

This table clarifies the specific niches each card fills. For instance, while both Maxx "C" and Contact "C" can be activated upon a Special Summon, their outcomes are vastly different: one generates resources for the user, while the other obstructs the opponent. The most crucial interaction, however, lies in the unique dual-purpose nature of Retaliating "C".

### The Search Chain: The Retaliating "C" Engine

The only consistent "combo" line available to the "C" series revolves around Retaliating "C"'s ability to search Maxx "C". This is not a combo designed to build a board but rather one focused on converting a specific form of disruption into a universal one.

1. **Trigger:** The sequence begins when the opponent activates a Spell Card that includes an effect to Special Summon a monster. Common examples include Branded Fusion, Fusion Destiny, Rite of Aramesir, or Emergency Teleport.10
2. **Activation:** In response, Retaliating "C" is activated from the hand. It Special Summons itself to the field, and its continuous effect becomes active, banishing any card that would be sent to the Graveyard for the rest of the turn.11 This initial effect can be highly disruptive on its own.
3. **Conversion:** Once on the field, Retaliating "C" becomes a resource. On the player's own turn, it can be used as material for a Link, Synchro, or Xyz Summon. This action sends it from the field to the Graveyard, which is the trigger condition for its second effect.
4. **The Payoff:** Upon being sent to the Graveyard from the field, Retaliating "C"'s search effect activates. Its target parameters—an EARTH Insect monster with 1500 or less ATK—perfectly encompass the most powerful card in the series: Maxx "C", which has 500 ATK.2 The player can add Maxx "C" from their Deck to their hand, setting up a devastating interruption for the opponent's following turn. This engine can also be used in dedicated Insect decks to search for other key combo pieces that fit the criteria.2

### Redefining the "Endboard": Prevention over Presence

When players discuss a deck's "endboard," they typically refer to the board of monsters and set cards they establish at the end of their own turn. The "C" cards operate on a completely different axis. Their strategic goal is not to create a powerful board presence but to ensure the *opponent* cannot. The "endboard" achieved by a successful "C" card is a simplified, weakened, or entirely absent opposing field.

* **The Maxx "C" Endboard:** The opponent, unwilling to give up massive card advantage, ends their turn after only one or two Special Summons. They are left with a minimal board that is easily dismantled. The "C" player's true "endboard" is not on the field, but in their hand—a grip full of cards ready to secure victory.
* **The Contact "C" Endboard:** The opponent's field is occupied by Contact "C", preventing them from summoning their key Extra Deck monster or forcing them into an inefficient, suboptimal play to remove it. Their combo is cut short, and their board is left incomplete.
* **The Sneaky "C" Endboard:** During the End Phase, Sneaky "C" flips and destroys the opponent's entire field of Special Summoned monsters. The opponent is left with virtually no resources on the field heading into the "C" player's turn.

The core strategy of the "C" series is, therefore, one of proactive prevention and resource denial. They aim to simplify the game state, breaking down complex combo decks into a resource-light grind where the player who resolved the "C" card typically has the advantage.

### The Anomaly: Super Armored Robot Armed Black Iron "C"

* **Card Details:** Level 8, EARTH, Insect/Effect, ATK 2400 / DEF 2800.18
* **Effect Analysis:** This monster stands apart from the rest of the series. It cannot be activated from the hand as a quick effect. Instead, it can be Special Summoned from the hand if you have three Insect monsters with the same name in your Graveyard. When summoned this way, it equips those three monsters to itself. As its second effect, it can send one of the equipped monsters to the Graveyard to destroy all monsters the opponent controls with ATK greater than or equal to the ATK of the sent monster.18
* **Synergy and Application:** This card has no direct synergy with the handtrap nature of the other "C" monsters. It is a dedicated boss monster for Insect strategies that can rapidly fill the Graveyard. Its ideal partner is Shiny Black "C" Squadder, used in conjunction with the Field Spell Giant Ballpark.5 The combo works as follows:
  1. Activate Giant Ballpark.
  2. During the Battle Phase, if a player would take battle damage, Giant Ballpark's effect can be used to prevent the damage and send one Level 4 or lower Insect from the Deck to the GY.16
  3. Send Shiny Black "C" Squadder. Because it is a Normal Monster, Giant Ballpark's effect then allows the player to Special Summon any number of monsters with the same name from their hand, Deck, or GY.16
  4. This summons all three copies of Shiny Black "C" Squadder to the field. Once they are eventually sent to the Graveyard, the condition for Super Armored Robot Armed Black Iron "C" is met, allowing it to be summoned for a potentially devastating board wipe.19

## Metagame Context: Interactions with the Broader Card Pool

The true measure of a tech card's strength is its performance within the wider competitive ecosystem. The "C" cards, while thematically linked, see play in vastly different contexts, from being universal staples to niche role-players in specialized decks. Understanding these applications and the methods used to counter them is the final piece of the strategic puzzle.

### As Generic Staples: The "Non-Engine" Powerhouses

In formats where it is not on the Forbidden & Limited List, Maxx "C" is the quintessential generic staple. It requires no synergy with the deck it is in; its power is self-contained and universally applicable. It is included at the maximum of three copies in nearly every competitive deck, from aggressive combo strategies to slow-paced control decks, simply because its ability to win games on its own is unparalleled.8

Other "C" cards, while not as ubiquitous, serve as powerful options for the Side Deck. A player might include Retaliating "C" to specifically counter a metagame dominated by Fusion decks like Branded Despia or Ritual decks like Drytron.2 Similarly, Contact "C" can be an effective surprise tactic against decks that are known to be vulnerable to its board-clogging effect. These cards are "silver bullets," swapped into a deck between games to target a specific opponent's strategy.

### In Dedicated Insect Decks: Unlocking Full Potential

While most decks use "C" cards as standalone tools, dedicated Insect-based archetypes can integrate them more deeply, leveraging their shared Type and Attribute to create powerful synergies.

* **Beetrooper:** This archetype focuses on Link Summoning a variety of Insect monsters. They can easily use Retaliating "C" as Link Material to trigger its search for Maxx "C" or another Insect. Furthermore, their own powerful search cards can add Retaliating "C" from the Deck to the hand, creating a highly consistent engine that combines disruption with resource acquisition.2
* **Traptrix:** This archetype is composed of EARTH Insect and Plant monsters that focus on using "Hole" Normal Trap cards. The shared EARTH Insect typing makes Retaliating "C" a natural fit, providing both a defensive handtrap and a searcher that can be triggered when used as material for their Xyz or Link monsters. The synergy is so recognized that official Konami products, like the OCG's *Structure Deck: Beware of Traptrix*, included reprints of Retaliating "C", Contact "C", and Maxx "C", explicitly highlighting their intended use within the strategy.10
* **Giant Ballpark:** As previously detailed, this strategy revolves around using Shiny Black "C" Squadder as fuel for both aggressive swarming and summoning the powerful boss monster, Super Armored Robot Armed Black Iron "C".16

### Playing Through the Swarm: Countering the "C" Cards

A comprehensive analysis requires an understanding of counter-play. For every powerful disruptive tool, the metagame develops a series of common and effective responses.

* **Direct Negation:** The most prevalent counters are generic, powerful handtraps and Quick-Play Spells. Maxx "C" is most often stopped by Ash Blossom & Joyous Spring, which can negate any effect that would move a card from the Deck.8 Called by the Grave and Crossout Designator are also primary counters, capable of banishing Maxx "C" from the Graveyard to negate its effect or negating it by revealing a copy from one's own Deck, respectively.22 These cards are just as staple in Maxx "C" formats as Maxx "C" itself.
* **Strategic Sequencing:** Playing around Contact "C" often involves baiting its activation and then using the summoned monster as material for a generic, low-cost Link Monster. Summoning a single monster, prompting the opponent to activate Contact "C", and then using that summoned monster and Contact "C" to make a Knightmare Phoenix or I:P Masquerena is a common way to neutralize the threat while advancing one's own game plan.2
* **Proactive Removal:** The counter to Sneaky "C" is to remove the face-down monster before the End Phase. Quick-Play Spells like Cosmic Cyclone, monster effects like Knightmare Unicorn, or any other form of spot removal can eliminate the threat before its devastating board wipe effect can resolve.2
* **The Minimalist Approach:** When facing Maxx "C" without a direct counter, the correct strategic line is often to minimize the damage. Instead of performing a full combo and giving the opponent 5-10 extra cards, a player might choose to Special Summon only once or twice. This "passing on a small board" approach concedes the turn but prevents the opponent from gaining an insurmountable resource advantage, keeping the game in a more manageable state.

## Conclusion

The "C" series stands as a unique and influential collection of cards within the Yu-Gi-Oh! TCG. They are not an archetype in the traditional sense but a thematic toolkit of reactive, disruptive monsters designed to counter the game's most powerful summoning mechanics. From the era-specific counters like Flying "C" to the format-warping power of Maxx "C", the series offers a fascinating look at the evolution of game design and balance. Their primary strategic function is not to build a commanding board presence but to dismantle the opponent's strategy, creating an "endboard" defined by the opponent's lack of resources. While most "C" cards are niche, metagame-dependent tools, the search synergy provided by Retaliating "C" and the sheer power of Maxx "C" grant the series a persistent and powerful presence in any format where they are legal. Mastering the "C" cards requires a duelist to move beyond archetypal thinking and embrace a more flexible, reactive mindset, understanding each card as a specific solution to a specific problem—a skill essential for success at the highest levels of play.

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