

= Magic : The Gathering =

Magic : The Gathering ( MTG ; also known as Magic ) is a trading card game created by Richard Garfield .

First published in 1993 by Wizards of the Coast , Magic was the first trading card game produced and it continues to thrive , with approximately twenty million players as of 2015 . Magic can be played by two or more players in various formats , the most common of which uses a deck of 60 + cards , either in person with printed cards or using a deck of virtual cards through the Internet @-@ based Magic : The Gathering Online , on a smartphone or tablet , or other programs .

Each game represents a battle between wizards known as " planeswalkers " , who employ spells , artifacts , and creatures depicted on individual Magic cards to defeat their opponents . Although the original concept of the game drew heavily from the motifs of traditional fantasy role @-@ playing games such as Dungeons & Dragons , the gameplay of Magic bears little similarity to pencil @-@ and @-@ paper adventure games , while having substantially more cards and more complex rules than many other card games .

New cards are released on a regular basis through expansion sets . An organized tournament system played at an international level and a worldwide community of professional Magic players has developed , as well as a substantial secondary market for Magic cards . Certain Magic cards can be valuable due to their rarity and utility in gameplay . Prices range from a few cents to thousands of dollars .

= = History = =

Richard Garfield was a doctoral candidate at University of Pennsylvania when he first started to design the game . During his free time he worked with local volunteer playtesters to help refine the game . He had been brought on as an adjunct professor at Whitman College in 1991 when Peter Adkison ( then CEO of Wizards of the Coast games company ) first met with Garfield to discuss Garfield 's new game RoboRally . Adkison saw the game as very promising , but decided that Wizards of the Coast lacked the resources to produce it at that point . He did like Garfield 's ideas and mentioned that he was looking for a portable game that could be played in the downtime that frequently occurs at gaming conventions . Garfield returned and presented the general outline of the concept of a trading card game . Adkison immediately saw the potential of this idea and agreed to produce it . Magic : The Gathering underwent a general release on August 5 , 1993 .

While the game was simply called Magic through most of playtesting , when the game had to be officially named a lawyer informed them that Magic was too generic to be trademarked . Mana Clash was instead chosen to be the name used in the first solicitation of the game , however , everybody involved with the game continued to refer to it as Magic . After further consultation with the lawyer , it was decided to rename the game Magic : The Gathering , thus enabling the name to be trademarked .

A patent was granted to Wizards of the Coast in 1997 for " a novel method of game play and game components that in one embodiment are in the form of trading cards " that includes claims covering games whose rules include many of Magic 's elements in combination , including concepts such as changing orientation of a game component to indicate use ( referred to in the Magic and Vampire : The Eternal Struggle rules as " tapping " ) and constructing a deck by selecting cards from a larger pool . The patent has aroused criticism from some observers , who believe some of its claims to be invalid . In 2003 , the patent was an element of a larger legal dispute between Wizards of the Coast and Nintendo , regarding trade secrets related to Nintendo 's Pokémon Trading Card Game . The legal action was settled out of court , and its terms were not disclosed .

Magic was an immediate success for Wizards of the Coast . Early on they were even reluctant to advertise the game because they were unable to keep pace with existing demand . Initially Magic attracted many Dungeons & Dragons players , but the following included all types of other people as well . The success of the game quickly led to the creation of similar games by other companies as well as Wizards of the Coast themselves . Companion Games produced the Galactic Empires CCG

( the first science fiction trading card game ) , which allowed players to pay for and design their own promotional cards , while TSR created the Spellfire game , which eventually included five editions in six languages , plus twelve expansion sets . Wizards of the Coast produced Jyhad ( now called Vampire : The Eternal Struggle ) , a game about modern @-@ day vampires . Other similar games included trading card games based on Star Trek and Star Wars . Magic is often cited as an example of a 1990s collecting fad , though the game 's makers were able to overcome the bubble traditionally associated with collecting fads .

The success of the initial edition prompted a reissue later in 1993 , along with expansions to the game . Arabian Nights was released as the first expansion in December 1993 . New expansions and revisions of the base game ( " Core Sets " ) have since been released on a regular basis , amounting to four releases a year . By the end of 1994 , the game had printed over a billion cards . Until the release of Mirage in 1996 , expansions were released on an irregular basis . Beginning in 2009 one revision of the core set and a set of three related expansions called a " block " were released every year . This system was revised in 2015 , with the Core Set being eliminated and blocks now consisting of two sets , released biannually . While the essence of the game has always stayed the same , the rules of Magic have undergone three major revisions with the release of the Revised Edition in 1994 , Classic Edition in 1999 , and Magic 2010 in July 2009 . With the release of the Eighth Edition in 2003 , Magic also received a major visual redesign .

In 1996 , Wizards of the Coast established the " Pro Tour " , a circuit of tournaments where players can compete for sizeable cash prizes over the course of a single weekend @-@ long tournament . In 2009 the top prize at a single tournament was US \$ 40 @,@ 000 . Sanctioned through the DCI , the tournaments added an element of prestige to the game by virtue of the cash payouts and media coverage from within the community . For a brief period of time , ESPN2 televised the tournaments .

While unofficial methods of online play existed previously , Magic Online ( " MTGO " or " Modo " ) , an official online version of the game , was released in 2002 . A new , updated version of Magic Online was released in April 2008 .

In January 2014 , Hasbro announced a franchise film deal with 20th Century Fox for Magic : The Gathering , saying that they wanted " to launch a massive franchise on the scale of Harry Potter and The Lord of the Rings . " Simon Kinberg is serving as writer and producer for the project . In June 2014 , Fox hired screenwriter Bryan Cogman to write the script for the film .

= = Reception = =

A 2004 article in USA Today suggested that playing Magic might help improve the social and mental skills of some of the players . The article interviewed players ' parents who believe that the game , similar to sports , teaches children how to more gracefully win and lose . Magic also contains a great amount of strategy and vocabulary that children may not be exposed to on a regular basis . Parents also claimed that playing Magic helped keep their children out of trouble , such as using illegal drugs or joining criminal gangs . On the other hand , the article also briefly mentions that Magic can be highly addictive , leading to parents worried about the Magic obsession of their kids . In addition , until 2007 , some of the better players had opportunities to compete for a small number of scholarships .

Jordan Weisman , an American game designer and entrepreneur , commented , " I love games that challenge and change our definition of adventure gaming , and Magic : The Gathering is definitely one of a very short list of titles that has accomplished that elusive goal . By combining the collecting and trading elements of baseball cards with the fantasy play dynamics of roleplaying games , Magic created a whole new genre of product that changed our industry forever . "

= = Awards = =

1994 : Mensa Select Award winner

1994 : Origins Awards for Best Fantasy or Science Fiction Board game of 1993 and Best Graphic Presentation of a Board game of 1993

1994 : Origins Award for the Legends expansion as Best Game Accessory  
 1995 : Deutscher Spiele Preis special award for new game mechanics  
 1995 : Italian Gaming Society Gioco dell 'Anno award winner  
 1996 : Super As d 'Or award for " Best New Game Concept and Genre Introduced in France "  
 1997 : InQuest Fan Award for Best CCG Expansion for the Weatherlight expansion  
 1998 : Origins Award for the Urza 's Saga expansion as Collectible Card Game Expansion of the Year  
 1999 : Inducted alongside Richard Garfield into the Origins Hall of Fame  
 2003 : Games Magazine selected Magic for its Games Hall of Fame  
 2005 : Origins Award for the Ravnica : City of Guilds expansion as Collectible Card Game Expansion of the Year  
 2009 : Origins Award for the Shards of Alara expansion as Collectible Card Game Expansion of the Year  
 2012 : Origins Award for the Innistrad expansion as Collectible Card Game Expansion of the Year  
 2015 : Origins Award for the Khans of Tarkir expansion as Best Collectible Card Game of the Year  
 In addition several individuals including Richard Garfield and Donato Giancola won personal awards for their contributions to Magic .

= = Gameplay = =

A game of Magic involves two or more players who are engaged in a battle acting as powerful wizards called planeswalkers . Each player has their own deck , either one previously constructed or made from a limited pool of cards for the event . A player starts the game with twenty " life points " and loses the game when he or she is reduced to zero . A player can also lose if he or she must draw from an empty deck . In addition , some cards specify other ways to win or lose the game . Garfield has stated that two major influences in his creation of Magic : the Gathering were the games Cosmic Encounter , which first used the concept that normal rules could sometimes be overridden , and Dungeons & Dragons . The " Golden Rule of Magic " states that " Whenever a card 's text directly contradicts the rules , the card takes precedence . " The Comprehensive Rules , a detailed rulebook , exists to clarify conflicts .

Players begin the game by shuffling their decks and then drawing seven cards . Players draw one card at the beginning of each of their turns , except the first player on their first turn . Players alternate turns . The two basic kinds of cards are " spells " and " lands " . Lands provide " mana " , or magical energy , which is used as magical fuel when the player attempts to cast spells . Players may only play one land per turn . More powerful spells cost more mana , so as the game progresses more mana becomes available , and the quantity and relative power of the spells played tends to increase . Spells come in several varieties : " sorceries " and " instants " have a single , one @-@ time effect before they go to the " graveyard " ( discard pile ) ; " enchantments " and " artifacts " are " permanents " that remain in play after being cast to provide a lasting magical effect ; " creature " spells ( also a type of permanent ) summon creatures that can attack and damage an opponent . The set Lorwyn introduced the new " planeswalker " card type , which represent powerful allies who fight with their own magic abilities .

= = = Deck construction = = =

In most tournament formats , decks are required to be a minimum of sixty cards , with no upper limit . Players may use no more than four copies of any named card , with the exception of " basic lands " , which act as a standard resource in Magic , and some specific cards that state otherwise . Certain formats such as Commander may limit the number of iterations of a single card players may have in their decks .

In " limited " tournament formats a small number of cards are opened for play from booster packs or tournament packs , and a minimum deck size of forty cards is used . Depending on the type of play , some individual cards have been " restricted " ( the card is limited to a single copy per deck ) or "

banned " ( the card is no longer legal for tournament play ) . These limitations are usually for balance of power reasons , but have been occasionally made because of gameplay mechanics .

Deck building requires strategy as players must choose among thousands of cards which they want to play . This requires players to evaluate the power of their cards , as well as the possible synergies between them , and their possible interactions with the cards they expect to play against ( this " metagame " can vary in different locations or time periods ) . The choice of cards is usually narrowed by the player deciding which colors they want to include in the deck . This decision is a key part of creating a deck . In general , reducing the number of colors used increases the consistency of play and the probability of drawing the lands needed to cast one 's spells , at the expense of restricting the range of tactics available to the player .

### == Colors of Magic ==

Most spells come in one of five colors . The colors can be seen on the back of the cards , in a pentagonal design , called the " Color Wheel " or " Color Pie " . Clockwise from the top , they are : white , blue , black , red , and green . To play a spell of a given color , at least one mana of that color is required . This mana is normally generated by a basic land : plains for white , island for blue , swamp for black , mountain for red , and forest for green . The balances and distinctions among the five colors form one of the defining aspects of the game . Each color has strengths and weaknesses based on the " style " of magic it represents .

White is the color of order , equality , righteousness , healing , law , community , peace , absolutism / totalitarianism , and light . White 's strengths are a roster of small creatures that are strong collectively ; protecting and enhancing those creatures with enchantments ; gaining life ; preventing damage to creatures or players ; imposing restrictions on players ; reducing the capabilities of opposing creatures , and powerful spells that " equalize " the playing field by destroying all cards of a given type . White creatures are known for their " Protection " from various other colors or even types of card , rendering them nearly impervious to harm from those things . White 's weaknesses include a focus on smaller creatures , its unwillingness to simply kill creatures outright ( instead hobbling them with restrictions that can be undone ) , and the fact that many of its most powerful spells affect all players equally ? including the casting player .

Blue is the color of intellect , reason , illusion , logic , knowledge , manipulation , and trickery , as well as the classical elements of air and water . Blue 's cards are best at letting a player draw additional cards ; permanently taking control of an opponent 's cards ; returning cards to their owner 's hand ; making cards go directly from a player 's deck to their graveyard ; and countering spells . Blue 's creatures tend to be weaker than creatures of other colors , but commonly have abilities and traits which make them difficult to damage or block . Blue 's weaknesses include having trouble permanently dealing with spells that have already been played , the reactive nature of most of its spells , and a small ( and expensive ) roster of creatures .

Black is the color of power , ambition , greed , death , illness , corruption , selfishness , amorality , and sacrifice ; it is not necessarily evil , though many of its cards refer directly or indirectly to this concept . Black cards are best at destroying creatures , forcing players to discard cards from their hand , making players lose life , and returning creatures from the players ' graveyards . Furthermore , because Black seeks to win at all costs , it has limited access to many abilities or effects that are normally available only to one of the other colors ; but these abilities often require large sacrifices of life totals , creatures , cards in hand , cards in library , and other difficult @-@ to @-@ replace resources . Black 's main weaknesses are an almost complete inability to deal with enchantments and artifacts , its tendency to hurt itself almost as badly as it hurts the opponent , and difficulties in removing other Black creatures .

Red is the color of freedom , chaos , passion , creativity , impulse , fury , warfare , lightning , the classical element of fire , and the non @-@ living geological aspects of the classical element earth . Red 's strengths include destroying opposing lands and artifacts , sacrificing permanent resources for temporary but great power , and playing spells that directly damage creatures or players . Red has a wide array of creatures , but with the exception of extremely powerful dragons , most are fast

and weak , or with low toughness , rendering them easier to destroy . Some of Red 's cards can turn against or hurt their owner in return for being more powerful for their cost . Red also shares the trickery theme with Blue and can temporarily steal opponents ' creatures or divert spells , although generally not permanently . Many of Red 's most famous creatures have " Haste " which lets them attack and use many abilities as soon as they enter the battlefield . The ability to raise a creature 's power temporarily is also common among Red 's creatures . Red 's weaknesses include its inability to destroy enchantments , the self @-@ destructive nature of many of its spells , and the way in which it trades early @-@ game speed at the cost of late @-@ game staying power . Red also has the vast majority of cards that involve random chance .

Green is the color of life , nature , reality , evolution / adaptability , ecology , interdependence , instinct , and indulgence . Green 's strengths are on the battlefield , usually winning through combat with creatures , of which it has a broad menagerie . These tend to be strong for their cost and have abilities that make them more survivable like Regenerate and Hexproof . Green creatures also often have " Trample " , an ability which allows them to deal attack damage to an opponent if blocked by a weaker creature . Many Green spells bolster its creatures ' power , either permanently or temporarily . Green spells often focus on growth , such as regaining life points , amassing large quantities of green mana , and getting land cards faster , thus allowing the player more resources and the capacity to get strong creatures on the battlefield faster . Green 's weakness is an inability to defend against indirect attacks . It has few cards that allow it to counterattack against the hand , library , or graveyard ; Green also has few defenses against creatures that bypass its own powerful creatures when attacking .

The colors adjacent to each other on the pentagon are " allied " and often have similar , complementary abilities . For example , Blue has a relatively large number of flying creatures , as do White and Black , which are next to it . The two non @-@ adjacent colors to a particular color are " enemy " colors , and are thematically opposed . For instance , Red tends to be very aggressive , while White and Blue are often more defensive in nature . The Research and Development ( R & D ) team at Wizards of the Coast aims to balance power and abilities among the five colors by using the " Color Pie " to differentiate the strengths and weaknesses of each . This guideline lays out the capabilities , themes , and mechanics of each color and allows for every color to have its own distinct attributes and gameplay . The Color Pie is used to ensure new cards are thematically in the correct color and do not infringe on the territory of other colors .

Multi @-@ color cards were introduced in the Legends set and typically use a gold frame to distinguish them from mono @-@ color cards . These cards require mana from two or more different colors to be played and count as belonging to each of the colors used to play them . Multi @-@ color cards typically combine the philosophy and mechanics of all the colors used in the spell 's cost , and tend to be proportionally more powerful compared to single @-@ color or hybrid cards , as requiring multiple colors of mana makes them harder to cast . More recently , two @-@ color " hybrid " cards were introduced in the Ravnica set , and appeared extensively throughout the Shadowmoor and Eventide sets . Hybrid cards are distinguished by a gradient frame with those two colors , and can be paid with either of the card 's colors ; for instance , a card with two hybrid @-@ red / white icons can be cast using two red mana , two white mana , or one of each . Several sets have made multi @-@ colored cards a theme , including Shards of Alara , both Ravnica blocks and others . Core sets do not typically include multi @-@ color cards in them , although the Core 2013 set was the first to do so .

Colorless cards belong to no color , and most often appear in the form of Lands and Artifacts . Unlike the five colors , Colorless cards do not have a specific personality or style of play . Sometimes , colorless cards will imitate the mechanics of a particular color , though in a less @-@ efficient manner than a similar colored card . Often colorless cards are linked to one or more colors via their abilities , through story references , or through flavor text on the cards themselves . With the Rise of the Eldrazi expansion , however , colorless cards that are neither artifacts nor lands have been introduced for the first time in larger quantities .

= = = Luck vs. skill = = =

Magic , like many other games , combines chance and skill . One frequent complaint about the game involves the notion that there is too much luck involved , especially concerning possessing too many or too few lands . Early in the game especially , too many or too few lands could ruin a player 's chance at victory without the player having made a mistake . This in @-@ game statistical variance can be minimized by proper deck construction , as an appropriate land count can reduce mana problems . In Duels of the Planeswalkers 2012 , the land count is automatically adjusted to 40 % of the total deck size .

A " mulligan " rule was introduced into the game , first informally in casual play and then in the official game rules . The modern " Paris mulligan " allows players to shuffle an unsatisfactory opening hand back into the deck at the start of the game , draw a new hand with one fewer card , and repeat until satisfied , after which any player who has taken a mulligan may look at the top card of his or her deck and either return it or put it at the bottom of the deck . In multiplayer , a player may take one mulligan without penalty , while subsequent mulligans will still cost one card ( a rule known as " Partial Paris mulligan " ) . The original mulligan allowed a player a single redraw of seven new cards if that player 's initial hand contained seven or zero lands . A variation of this rule called a " forced mulligan " is still used in some casual play circles and in multiplayer formats on Magic Online , and allows a single " free " redraw of seven new cards if a player 's initial hand contains seven , six , one or zero lands .

Confessing his love for games combining both luck and skill , Magic creator Richard Garfield admitted its influence in his design of Magic . In addressing the complaint about luck influencing a game , Dr. Garfield points out that new and casual players tend to appreciate luck as a leveling field , in which a random effect increases their chances of winning . Meanwhile , a player with higher skills appreciates a game with less chance , as the higher degree of control increases their chances of winning . According to Dr. Garfield , Magic has and would likely continue decreasing its degree of luck as the game matured . The " Mulligan rule " , as well as card design , past vs. present , are good examples of this trend . He feels that this is a universal trend for maturing games . Dr. Garfield explained using chess as an example , that unlike modern chess , in predecessors , players would use dice to determine which chess piece to move .

= = = Gambling = = =

The original set of rules prescribed that all games were to be played for ante . Garfield was partly inspired by the game of marbles and wanted folks to play with the cards rather than collect them . For Magic , each player removed a card at random from the deck they wished to play with and the two cards would be set aside as the ante . At the end of the match , the winner would take and keep both cards . Early sets included a few cards with rules designed to interact with this gambling aspect , allowing replacements of cards up for ante , adding more cards to the ante , or even permanently trading cards in play .

The ante concept became controversial because many regions had restrictions on games of chance . The rule was later made optional because of these restrictions and because of players ' reluctance to possibly lose a card that they owned . The gambling rule is forbidden at sanctioned events and is now mostly a relic of the past , though it still sees occasional usage in friendly games as well as the " five color " format . The last card to mention ante was printed in the 1995 expansion set Homelands .

= = = Variant rules = = =

While the primary method of Magic play is one @-@ on @-@ one using standard deck construction rules , there are many alternative formats for playing the game . The most popular alternatives describe ways of playing with more than two players ( with teams or free @-@ for @-@ all ) or change the rules about how decks can be built .

= = Organized play = =

Magic tournaments regularly occur in gaming stores and other venues . Larger tournaments with hundreds of competitors from around the globe sponsored by Wizards of the Coast are arranged many times every year , with substantial cash prizes for the top finishers . A number of websites report on tournament news , give complete lists for the most currently popular decks , and feature articles on current issues of debate about the game . The DCI , which is owned and operated by Wizards of the Coast , is the organizing body for sanctioned Magic events . The two major categories of tournament play are " Constructed " and " Limited " .

= = = Constructed = = =

In " Constructed " tournaments , each player arrives with a pre @-@ built deck , which must have a minimum of sixty cards and follow other deck construction rules . The deck may also have up to a fifteen card sideboard , which allows players to modify their deck . Normally the first player to win two games is the winner of the match .

Different formats of Constructed Magic exist , each allowing different cards . The DCI maintains a " Banned and Restricted List " for each format ; players may not use banned cards at all , and restricted cards are limited to one copy per deck . The DCI bans cards that it determines are damaging the health of a format ; it seeks to use this remedy as infrequently as possible , and only a handful of cards have been banned in recent years .

Block Constructed formats are defined by the cycle of three sets of cards in a given block . For example , the Ravnica block format consists of Ravnica : City of Guilds , Guildpact , and Dissension . Only cards that were printed in one of the sets in the appropriate block can be used in these formats .

Standard , formerly known as Type 2 , contains the current block and the last two completed blocks . The Standard card pool undergoes a " rotation " twice a year , in April and October , when the first set of the next block is released . As of April 8 , 2016 , the Standard card pool consists of Dragons of Tarkir , Magic Origins , Battle for Zendikar , Oath of the Gatewatch , and Shadows Over Innistrad . ( For Standard rotation purpose , Dragons of Tarkir and Magic Origins , released under the previous three @-@ set block / core set model , are considered to be a block . )

Modern is a format that was first played at the Magic Online 2011 Community Cup , a response to players ' desire for a non @-@ rotating format that is more accessible to newer players . Wizards of the Coast introduced Modern as a legal format on August 12 , 2011 , and saw its first paper magic play at Pro Tour Philadelphia 2011 . Modern consists of every block and core set using the modern card frame since the release of 8th Edition to the present . Certain cards that released in products that are not standard legal such as Planechase or Commander series cards , are not legal in Modern , even if they have the modern card frame .

Legacy Is a format that allows every card ever printed except the Legacy banned list . It is distinguished from Vintage in that certain cards are banned for power reasons .

Vintage , previously known as Type 1 , is an Eternal format . The only banned cards in Vintage are cards using the " ante " mechanic and a few other cards that the DCI considers inappropriate for competitive Magic . Because of the expense in acquiring the scarce old cards to play competitive Vintage , some unsanctioned Vintage tournaments permit players to proxy a certain number of cards . Currently , the only format with a Restricted List is Vintage . Proxy cards are forbidden in DCI @-@ sanctioned tournaments , except as replacements for damaged cards when created by the event judge .

Commander ( originally known as Elder Dragon Highlander or EDH ) is a casual format , but can be played competitively . In this format each player constructs a 100 singleton deck that has a legendary creature that acts as a commander . The deck construction is limited to the colors that are represented by the chosen commander and there cannot be two or more cards with the same name with the exception of basic lands . The legendary creature chosen as commander is kept in a special " command zone " and may be cast at any time you can afford to cast the creature . If the

commander card would enter any zone other than the battlefield from anywhere , its owner has the choice to return that card to the " command zone " , where it can be cast again for an additional two generic mana to its regular cost . The banned list and unique rules are governed by an independent body ( not by Wizards of the Coast ) .

= = = Limited = = =

In " Limited " tournaments , players construct decks using booster packs plus any additional basic lands of their choice . The decks in Limited tournaments must be a minimum of forty cards . All unused cards function as the sideboard , which , as in " Constructed " formats , can be freely exchanged between games of a match , as long as the deck continues to adhere to the forty card minimum . The rule that a player may use only four copies of any given card does not apply .

Sealed Deck tournaments give each player six 15 @-@ card booster packs from which to build his or her deck .

Booster Draft is usually played with eight players . The players are seated around a table and each player is given three booster packs . Each player opens a pack , selects a card from it , and passes the remaining cards to the next player . Each player then selects one of the remaining cards from the pack he or she just received , and passes the remaining cards again . This continues until all of the cards are depleted . Players pass left for the first and third packs , and right for the second . Players then build decks out of any of the cards that they selected during the drafting . Talking , signaling , and showing cards is forbidden during the drafting process , except for double faced cards from the Innistrad and Shadows over Innistrad blocks and " Magic Origins " , which cannot be hidden as each side of the physical card has a spell printed on it .

= = = Other Formats = = =

Players often create their own formats based on any number of criteria . Sometimes these can be based on limiting the financial value of a deck , mixing and matching different blocks or sets , or taking an existing format and modifying the DCI Banned List . Commander ( formerly EDH ) was one such format , before being officially supported by wizards . Tiny Leaders is a variant of Commander , that is not officially supported . One of the most popular player created formats for Limited is Cube Drafting . Similar in structure to Draft , players will instead use a collection of cards instead of random boosters to draft from . Since 2014 player created formats are allowed as Friday Night Magic events , so long as they follow basic Tournament Magic rules ( no fake cards , no gambling etc . )

= = = Tournament structure = = =

The DCI maintains a set of rules for being able to sanction tournaments , as well as runs its own circuit . Local shops often offer " Friday Night Magic " tournaments as a stepping @-@ stone to more competitive play . The DCI runs the Pro Tour as a series of major tournaments to attract interest . The right to compete in a Pro Tour has to be earned by either winning a Pro Tour Qualifier Tournament or being successful in a previous tournament on a similar level . A Pro Tour is usually structured into two days of individual competition played in the Swiss format . On the final day , the top eight players compete with each other in an elimination format to select the winner .

At the end of the competition in a Pro Tour , players are awarded Pro Points depending on their finishing place . If the player finishes high enough , they will also be awarded prize money . Frequent winners of these events have made names for themselves in the Magic community , such as Gabriel Nassif , Kai Budde and Jon Finkel . As a promotional tool , the DCI launched the Hall of Fame in 2005 to honor selected players .

At the end of the year the Magic World Championship is held . The World Championship functions like a Pro Tour , except that competitors have to present their skill in three different formats ( usually Standard , booster draft and a second constructed format ) rather than one . Another difference is



that invitation to the World Championship can be gained not through Pro Tour Qualifiers , but via the national championship of a country . Most countries send their top four players of the tournament as representatives , though nations with minor Magic playing communities may send just one player . The World Championship also has a team @-@ based competition , where the national teams compete with each other .

At the beginning of the World Championship , new members are inducted into the Hall of Fame . The tournament also concludes the current season of tournament play and at the end of the event , the player who earned the most Pro Points during the year is awarded the title " Pro Player of the Year " . The player who earned the most Pro Points and did not compete in any previous season is awarded the title " Rookie of the Year " .

Invitation to a Pro Tour , Pro Points and prize money can also be earned in lesser tournaments called Grand Prix that are open to the general public and are held more frequently throughout the year . Grand Prix events are usually the largest Magic tournaments , sometimes drawing more than 1 @, @ 000 players . The largest Magic tournament ever held was Grand Prix : Las Vegas in June 2013 with a total of 4 @, @ 500 players .

= = Product and marketing = =

Magic : The Gathering cards are produced in much the same way as normal playing cards . Each Magic card , approximately 63 × 88 mm in size ( 2 @. @ 5 by 3 @. @ 5 inches ) , has a face which displays the card 's name and rules text as well as an illustration appropriate to the card 's concept . 15 @, @ 919 unique cards have been produced for the game as of May 2016 , many of them with variant editions , artwork , or layouts , and 600 ? 1000 new ones are added each year . The first Magic cards were printed exclusively in English , but current sets are also printed in Simplified Chinese , Traditional Chinese , French , German , Italian , Japanese , Korean , Portuguese , Russian , and Spanish .

The overwhelming majority of Magic cards are issued and marketed in the form of sets . For the majority of its history there were two types : the Core Set and the themed expansion sets . Under Wizards of the Coast 's current production and marketing scheme , a new set is released quarterly . Various products are released with each set to appeal to different segments of the Magic playing community :

The majority of cards are sold in booster packs , which contain fifteen cards normally divided into four rarities , which can be differentiated by the color of the expansion symbol . A fifteen @-@ card Booster Pack will typically contain one rare ( gold ) , three uncommons ( silver ) , ten commons ( black ) , and one basic land ( colored black , as Commons ) . Sets prior to Shards of Alara contained eleven commons instead of a basic land .

Shards of Alara also debuted mythic rares ( red @-@ orange ) , which replace one in eight rare cards on average . There are also premium versions of every card with holographic foil , randomly inserted into some boosters in place of a common , which replace about one in seventy cards .

Four to five Intro Packs are released with each set . An Intro Pack is a pre @-@ constructed deck aimed at newcomers that highlights one of the set 's mechanical themes . It comes with two booster packs from that set , a rulebook , and a fixed selection of cards , including one foil rare . This product will be replaced with Planeswalker Decks in Kaladesh , where there will be two 60 card preconstructed decks featuring a planeswalker from the set .

Each set from Mirrodin Besieged to Gatecrash featured two Event Decks , which are pre @-@ constructed decks designed as an introduction to tournament play . Beginning with Dragon 's Maze , each set featured only one Event Deck . However , event decks were discontinued following the Khans of Tarkir block .

Previously , cards were also sold in Tournament Packs typically containing three rares , ten uncommons , thirty @-@ two commons , and thirty basic lands . Tournament Packs were discontinued after Shards of Alara .

Expansion sets are currently released in a two @-@ set block , starting with a large set and ending with a smaller one three months later . Prior to 2016 , expansion sets were released in a three @-@

set block ( again , beginning with a larger set followed by two smaller sets ) . These sets consist almost exclusively of newly designed cards . Contrasting with the wide @-@ ranging Core Set , each expansion is focused around a subset of mechanics and ties into a set storyline . Expansions also dedicate several cards to a handful of particular , often newly introduced , game mechanics .

The Core Sets began to be released annually ( previously biennially ) in July 2009 coinciding with the name change from 10th Edition to Magic 2010 . This shift also introduced new , never before printed cards into the core set , something that previously had never been done . However , core sets were discontinued following the release of Magic Origins , on July 17 , 2015 , at the same time that two @-@ set blocks were introduced .

In addition to the quarterly set releases , Magic cards are released in other products as well , such as the Planechase and Archenemy spin @-@ off games . These combine reprinted Magic cards with new , oversized cards with new functionality . Magic cards are also printed specifically for collectors , such as the From the Vault and Premium Deck Series sets , which contain exclusively premium foil cards .

In 2003 , starting with the Eighth Edition Core Set , the game went through its biggest visual change since its creation ? a new card frame layout was developed to allow more rules text and larger art on the cards , while reducing the thick , colored border to a minimum . The new frame design aimed to improve contrast and readability using black type instead of the previous white , a new font , and partitioned areas for the name , card type , and power and toughness .

For the first few years of its production , Magic : The Gathering featured a small number of cards with names or artwork with demonic or occultist themes , in 1995 the company elected to remove such references from the game . In 2002 , believing that the depiction of demons was becoming less controversial and that the game had established itself sufficiently , Wizards of the Coast reversed this policy and resumed printing cards with " demon " in their names .

= = = Spin @-@ offs = = =

Magic : The Gathering video games , comics , and books have been produced under licensing or directly by Wizards of the Coast . While comics and books have mostly been supplements to develop a background story for the game , several video games have been produced which lean in varying degree on the original game . For the first computer games Wizards of the Coast had sold licenses to Acclaim and MicroProse roughly at the same time . While MicroProse 's Magic : The Gathering received favorable reviews , Acclaim 's Magic : The Gathering : BattleMage was mostly dismissed with negative reaction .

With Magic : The Gathering Online , Wizards developed and released a computer version of the game themselves that allows players to compete online against other players using the original Magic cards and rules . The latest computer implementation of Magic is Magic : The Gathering ? Duels of the Planeswalkers which was developed by Stainless Games and released for the Xbox 360 in June 2009 . The game was ported to Windows in June of the next year . Six months after the PC release of Duels of the Planeswalkers , the game was ported to the PlayStation 3 platform . The game was the most @-@ played Xbox Live title for two weeks after its release .

In September 2011 , Hasbro and IDW Publishing accorded to make a 4 @-@ issue mini @-@ series about Magic : The Gathering with a new story but heavily based on MTG elements and with a new Planeswalker called Dakka Fayden , which story is mainly developed in the planes of Ravnica and Innistrad . The ongoing series started in February 2012 .

In 2015 Wizards of the Coast and Hasbro published Magic : The Gathering ? Arena of the Planeswalkers . Arena of the Planeswalkers is a tactical boardgame where the players maneuver miniatures over a customizable board game , and the ruleset and terrain is based on Heroscape , but with an addition of spell cards and summoning . The original master set includes miniatures that represent the five planeswalkers Gideon , Jace , Liliana , Chandra , and Nissa as well as select creatures from the Magic : The Gathering universe . They later released an expansion Battle for Zendikar featuring multi @-@ color planeswalkers Kiora and Ob Nixilis and a colorless Eldrazi Ruiner , and a second master set Shadows Over Innistrad which has 4 new planeswalkers and also

includes the addition of cryptoliths .

== Film ==

In January 2014 , 20th Century Fox acquired the rights to produce a Magic : The Gathering movie with Simon Kinberg as producer .

In April , 2016 , Enter the Battlefield , a documentary about life on the Magic Pro Tour was released . The film was written by Greg Collins , Nathan Holt , and Shawn Kornhauser .

== Parodies ==

In 1998 , PGI Limited created Havic : The Bothering , which was a parody of Magic : The Gathering . Wizards of the Coast , which owned the rights to Magic : The Gathering , took active steps to hinder the distribution of the game and successfully shut out PGI Limited from attending GenCon in July 1998 . In an attempt to avoid breaching copyright and Richard Garfield 's patent , each starter deck of Havic had printed on the back side , " This is a Parody " , and on the bottom of the rule card was printed , " Do not have each player : construct their own library of predetermined number of game components by examining and selecting [ the ] game components from [ a ] reservoir of game components or you may infringe on U.S. Patent No. 5 @, @ 662 @, @ 332 to Garfield . "

== Secondary market ==

There is an active secondary market in individual cards among players and game shops . Many physical and online stores sell single cards or " playsets " of four of a card . Common cards rarely sell for more than a few cents and are usually sold in bulk . Uncommon cards and weak rare cards typically sell from 10 ¢ up to \$ 1 . The most expensive cards in standard tournament play are usually priced at \$ 35 to \$ 50 , although many commonly played cards in the modern and legacy formats sell for \$ 60 to \$ 180 . Foil versions of rare and mythic rare cards are typically priced at about twice as much as the regular versions . Some of the more sought @-@ after rare and mythic rare cards can have foil versions that cost up to three or four times more than the non @-@ foil versions .

A few of the oldest cards , due to smaller printings and limited distribution , are highly valued and extremely rare . This is in part due to the " Reserve List " , a list of cards from the sets Alpha to Urza 's Destiny ( 1994 ? 1999 ) that Wizards has promised never to reprint . The most expensive card that was in regular print ( as opposed to being a promotional or special printing ) is Black Lotus . In 2013 , a " Pristine 9 @. @ 5 grade " Beckett Grading Services graded Alpha Black Lotus was bought by an anonymous buyer , for a record \$ 27 @, @ 302 .

The secondary market started with comic book stores , and hobby shops displaying and selling cards , with the cards ' values determined somewhat arbitrarily by the employees of the store . With the expansion of the internet , prices of cards were determined by the amount of tournament deck lists a given card would appear in . If a card was played in a tournament more frequently , the cost of the card would be higher ( in addition to the market availability of the card ) . When eBay , Amazon , and other large online markets started to gain popularity , the Magic secondary market evolved substantially . Buying and selling Magic cards online became a source of income for people who learned how to manipulate the market . Today , the secondary market is so large and complex , it has become an area of study for consumer research , and some people make a career out of market manipulation , creating mathematical models to analyze the growth of cards ' worth , and predict the market value of both individual cards , and entire sets of cards .

As of late 2013 , Wizards of the Coast has expressed concern over the increasing number of counterfeit cards in the secondary market . Wizards of the Coast has since made an effort to counteract the rise of counterfeits by introducing a new hologram stamp on all rare and mythic rare cards as of Magic 2015 .

== Artwork ==

Each card has an illustration to represent the flavor of the card , often reflecting the setting of the expansion for which it was designed . Much of Magic 's early artwork was commissioned with little specific direction or concern for visual cohesion . One infamous example was the printing of the creature Whippoorwill without the " flying " ability even though its art showed a bird in flight . The art direction team later decided to impose a few constraints so that the artistic vision more closely aligned with the design and development of the cards . Each block of cards now has its own style guide with sketches and descriptions of the various races and places featured in the setting .

A few early sets experimented with alternate art for cards . However , Wizards came to believe that this impeded easy recognition of a card and that having multiple versions caused confusion when identifying a card at a glance . Consequently , alternate art is now only used sparingly and mostly for promotional cards . When older cards are reprinted in new sets , however , Wizards of the Coast has guaranteed that they will be printed with new art to make the older cards more collectible .

Starting in 1995 , the copyright on all artwork commissioned is transferred to Wizards of the Coast once a contract is signed . However , the artist is allowed to sell the original piece and printed reproductions of it , and for established and prolific Magic artists , this can be a lucrative source of revenue .

As Magic has expanded across the globe , its artwork has had to change for its international audience . Artwork has been edited or given alternate art to comply with the governmental standards . For example , the portrayal of skeletons and most undead in artwork was prohibited by the Chinese government until 2008 .

= = Storyline = =

The way Magic storylines are conceived and deployed has changed considerably over the years . The main premise of Magic is that countless possible worlds ( planes ) exist in the Multiverse , and only unique and rare beings called Planeswalkers are capable of traversing the Multiverse . This allows the game to frequently change worlds so as to renew its mechanical inspiration , while maintaining planeswalkers as recurrent , common elements across worlds . An intricate storyline underlies the cards released in each expansion and is shown in the art and flavor text of the cards , as well as in novels and anthologies published by Wizards of the Coast ( and formerly by Harper Prism ) . Important storyline characters , objects and locations often appear as cards in Magic sets , usually as " Legendary " creatures , artifacts , and lands , or as " Planeswalker " cards .

The original Magic : The Gathering Limited Edition has no overarching storyline , and the cards only have unconnected bits of lore and trivia to give the cards some individual depth . In the early expansion sets until Visions there is usually no real story arc either . Instead , some of these sets are inspired from mythologies of various cultures . This is most apparent in Arabian Nights , that takes some of the One Thousand and One Nights characters and makes them into Magic cards . Norse mythological influences can be seen worked into Ice Age and African influences into Mirage . However , not all of the early sets can be linked as directly to earth mythology . Antiquities touches on an independent storyline about two warring brothers , Urza and Mishra . Homelands is the exception in that period . For this set , a back story was first conceived and the cards in the set were designed afterwards to fit the storyline .

Beginning with the Weatherlight expansion there was a shift in the way Magic storylines were used . For the blocks Weatherlight through Apocalypse , the story was laid out in a character driven story , following the events of the Weatherlight ship and its crew . With help of the planeswalking capabilities of the Weatherlight , the protagonists travel through the multiverse to fight Yawgmoth and his army of Phyrexians . Odyssey through Scourge are an unconnected storyline set 100 years later on the Dominaria where multiple factions battle for control of the Mirari , a powerful magical artifact left by Karn . After Scourge , Magic storylines have mostly panned away from Dominaria . New planes were created to set the scene for new storylines . In contrast to the previous character driven stories , these releases focused on thematic worlds . This was the model from Mirrodin through Alara , a world split into five magically and culturally distinct " shards " but later reunited .

After Alara , Magic visited Zendikar , a world used as a prison to entrap a race of interplanar parasitic monsters called the Eldrazi , which were inspired by H. P. Lovecraft 's Old Ones . Beginning with Zendikar the world @-@ centric storytelling was complemented by an overlying story layer . Planeswalker cards had been introduced in Lorwyn and these Planeswalker characters were used to give the overarching storyline a sense of continuity , despite the constant change of setting . The block following Zendikar , Scars of Mirrodin , revisited the plane of Mirrodin , where the Mirran natives battled against an invading Phyrexian corruption unwittingly left by Karn ( again interconnecting various storylines ) . To further integrate the storyline into the gameplay , certain events for the second set , Mirrodin Besieged , encouraged players to affiliate themselves with either the Mirran or Phyrexian faction . Much of the recent focus has been on both integrating the play experience with the story line and on making mechanics and individual cards which represent pivotal points in the story .

On Innistrad , a plane inspired heavily by gothic horror , its guardian angel has gone missing . Darkness has started to consume the plane , and the players must discover that the Helvault , a magical prison , has been holding the archangel Avacyn as well as demons . Thalia , a cathar of the Church of Avacyn , broke open the Helvault and released Avacyn as well as all of the demons . In the ? ' Return to Ravnica block , players were encouraged to affiliate themselves with a guild and take control of the city of Ravnica by completing the maze discovered by Niv - Mizzet . Theros was a plane inspired by Greek mythology , containing many references to Greek mythological figures such as Prometheus and the pantheon of gods . Tarkir was a plane where dragons were long since dead . Through time travel , dragons took over the plane and ruled its people .

Battle for Zendikar was a return to the plane of Zendikar , which had been ravaged by the Eldrazi horrors . This marks a change in Magic 's storytelling where it uses a team of planeswalkers , called the Gatewatch , to tell the story . Shadows Over Innistrad is a return to Innistrad , where Avacyn has been corrupted .

The newest set , Eldritch Moon , focuses on the fact that Emrakul , the most powerful Eldrazi titan who had been missing from the Battle for Zendikar storyline , is now on Innistrad . Together , the Gatewatch must find a way to save the plane of Innistrad . This story also focuses on cosmic horror instead of the traditional gothic horror of old Innistrad .

= = Academic research = =

There are several examples of academic , peer @-@ reviewed research concerning different aspects of Magic : The Gathering . One example examined how players use their imaginations when playing . This research studied hobby players and showed how players sought to create and participate in an epic fantasy narrative . Another example used online auctions for Magic cards to test revenue outcomes for various auction types . A final example uses probability to examine Magic card @-@ collecting strategies . Using a specific set of cards in a specialized manner has shown Magic : The Gathering to be Turing complete .