# Knowledge Lesson Notes

## Vladislav Zolotukhin

**PRELIM**

**INTRO**

Hi, my name is Vlad and I’m a Software Developer intern at the DPDC

**What, Where, Why**

What: Today you’ll be learning about Magic The Gathering, which is a tabletop trading card game

Where: You’ll be able to use the information retained from this lesson to play the game anywhere with your friends, or total strangers, or just use the general knowledge you’ve obtained to impress your friends in conversations.

Why: It’s fun, it brings people together, it helps develop critical thinking skills, and the cards themselves have collector value. Due to limited prints and strict rules about what cards can be reprinted, some old cards can significantly appreciate in value. This Black Lotus card for example was auctioned off for high 5 figures.

**Approach to the Lesson**

Today we will cover the following topics

First we will go over what Magic the Gathering is and how it was created

Second we will discuss the basic rules on how to actually play the game. Some of you may already be familiar with the game in which case this will serve as a refresher for you.

**Test / Questions**

Before we begin the lesson, please raise your hand if you have any questions.

At the end of each stage of the lesson, there will be a brief test period for the audience to cover some of the things we learned today, so please make sure you are attentive.

**Control Statement**

If at any point during the lesson you feel that you need to use the bathroom, please raise your hand. If at any point I have a question for you, I will choose you. Please do not answer together as a class.

**STAGE 1: Body of the Lesson**

Magic the Gathering was created by Richard Garfield. As a child he travelled the world due to his father’s occupation and loved playing games. He noticed a universal trend of gaming that bridged cultural gaps and brought people together. He was also heavily influenced by Dungeons & Dragons, an open-ended tabletop game with focus on player decisions.

Magic the Gathering was first published by Wizards of the Coast, a tiny company at the time, who wanted a small compact game without too many pieces that people could play during their downtime. MtG was the perfect candidate for this, its portable and has fast gameplay, you don’t need to have all the cards to play, you can pick and choose, and you don’t know what players have in their decks so each game is different.

MtG made its debut in Gen Con on August 1993, which was the largest tabletop convention in North America. It immediately sold out its initial stack of 2.5 million cards, and sold out another 7.5 million by October 1993 just through word of mouth advertising.

Over 1 billion cards were produced in the first year of its existence alone, beginning a cycle of new expansions, refreshes, and supplements that would last for decades.

The immediate success of the game revealed a completely new and growing game market: collectible cards. This became a cultural phenomenon with other competitors soon jumping in on the market, in 1996 the Pokemon TCG made its debut in Japan, Yu-gi-oh in 1999, and MtG became the grandfather of card games. While other card games quickly reached success, many also fizzled out into obscurity just as fast. MtG was the first and in many ways the best, it overcame the temporary craze and novelty of its existence to endure for over 3 decades.

New careers were spawned as a result of its success, the first Pro Tour was scheduled in 1996 and over time would include prizes of 10s of thousands of dollars, setting the foundation for professional tabletop gaming.

Today, you can obtain magic cards through buying booster packs, box sets, or individual cards. They can be purchased in retail stores, online, in conventions, or through individual vendors such as on eBay.

During this stage, we covered a brief history of Magic the Gathering, what it is, its role in defining a cultural phenomenon, and where to obtain magic cards.

If there are any questions so far, please raise your hands.

I have a couple questions for you:

Q1: What year did Magic the Gathering make its debut?

A: 1993

Q2: If you wanted to obtain magic cards, where would you go & why?

**STAGE 2: Body of Lesson**

During this stage of the lesson, I’ll go over some fundamental rules of how to play Magic the Gathering.

At the most basic level, a deck of cards is made up of lands & spells.

Spells are what you cast to play the game, they have a resource cost to play, and lands are the resources you draw power from to cast your spells.

The spells in magic are comprised of 5 colours, categorized into different geographical regions (lands). They aren’t just different resource types, but also signify ideological factions and principles, having unique strengths, weaknesses, and mechanics.

These are the 5 categories.

Plains produce white colour mana, they represent peace and structure. They often have healing and protective effects. They use strength of cooperation & discipline to assemble powerful armies out of small creatures that make the whole group stronger with their abilities.

Islands produce blue colour mana, they represent knowledge, deliberation, and deceit. They are adaptable, and focus on gaining advantage by countering, outsmarting, or tricking players.

Swamps produce black colour mana. They represent power, death, and sacrifice. They often have a variety of different effects to debilitate or destroy creatures, leech life, or return fallen creatures back into play. Sometimes they make Faustian bargains where they give up something of value for something in return.

Mountains produce red colour mana, they represent freedom, action, and destruction. They’re often very aggressive, channeling powerful offensive spells for direct damage and disrupting opponents by destroying their support cards.

Forests produce green colour mana, they represent nature, connection, and spirituality. They focus on growth & strength, typically having some very hard hitting powerful creatures or quickly generating many weak creatures, boosting other creatures, or regenerating them.

Some lands may generate more than one type of mana.

To generate mana from a land, you turn it sideways during your turn. This is known as tapping and indicates that the resource has been used for the turn.

Spells are distinguished from lands by the symbol in the top right corner. This is their mana cost. It may contain a generic number and a coloured mana symbol. Imagine a plus sign between all the icons you see here, the generic number cost can be paid by any colour while the coloured symbols require one of that specific type.

The type indicates the type of spell. It can be a creature, artifact, enchantment, instant, sorcery, or planeswalker. Creatures are your meat and potatoes, they’re used for combat and can have synergistic abilities. Artifacts and enchantments augment the board state. These 3 types are permanents, they will remain active on the board once you’ve paid their one time mana cost until they are forcibly removed. Instants and sorceries are powerful one time effects, like destroying creatures or drawing cards. Subtypes indicate what type of creature this is, such as this card being specifically an angel.

The expression symbol identifies what set its from and the colour of the symbol indicates the rarity of the card.

The rules text is the abilities or effects the card has.

The flavour text is a brief lore description of the card.

The numbers in the bottom right corner indicate the power and toughness of the creature spells. Power is the damage it deals when attacking, toughness is the hit points the creature has.

To play a spell you first declare the card you’re playing, tap the mana cost to play it, and pause to allow your opponent to respond. If the spell you’re playing has a target, you must declare that target when playing it. If the target disappears due to another action being taken, you cannot select a different target and the spell fizzles out.

To start the game, determine which player goes first. Shuffle your decks, which typically consist of 60 cards but may vary depending on different game modes, and draw a starting hand of 7 cards. You have the option to mulligan, which means redrawing a new hand of 7 cards. However, for each mulligan you take, you must pick 1 card from your hand to put on the bottom of the deck.

The structure of a players turn is the following.

First is the beginning phase, where you untap all tapped cards on your board. You have an upkeep, during which any active cards that specifically call out an upkeep action apply here. Then you draw a card.

Next is the first main phase, here you can play one land per turn and cast a spell if you have the resources to do so.

Next is the combat phase, where attackers and blockers are declared and damage is assessed.

Next is the second main phase, which is the same as the first. If you’ve already played a land earlier this turn, you can’t play one again.

Finally is the end phase, which is the last chance to perform any actions before the turn ends. This is followed by the clean-up, where if you have more than 7 cards in your hand you must discard them until you have 7, damage is removed from creatures who are still active on the board, and any “until end of turn” effects end here.

Combat is handled by the active player declaring which creatures they are attacking with, and all attacking creatures are tapped. The opposing player chooses which available creatures block the attacks, and any number of untapped defending creatures can block a single attacking creature. When multiple creatures block an attacker, the attacker chooses how the damage is spread out, and they also take damage from the blocking creatures equal to their power. Any attacking creature which is unblocked deals direct damage to the opponent. Creatures that take damage equal or greater than their toughness are destroyed and sent to the graveyard. Once this combat phase ends, creatures are no longer attacking or blocking.

All of the spells you play resolve through something called the spell stack. The stack allows players to respond to spells being cast, and when players have no more actions to take the spells resolve from the top of the stack down. First in, last out.

For example, an opponent casts Shock, which is an Instant spell dealing 2 damage to any target and selects your 2/2 bear as the target. If this resolves, it will kill the bear. You respond by playing Giant Growth, another Instant spell granting +3/+3 to a target until the end of the turn. Giant Growth resolves first and the bears gets the stat boost, then shock deals it 2 damage and it survives. However, if your opponent responds by casting another Shock, this last spell will resolve first, dealing 2 damage to the bear and killing it before the Giant Growth can boost its stats. The first Shock no longer has a valid target as the bear is dead, and it fizzles out.

Each player has a life total, usually set to 20 points, and if this number reaches 0 by taking enough direct damage, they lose the game. If a player runs out of cards to draw from their deck during their draw phase, they also lose the game.

During this stage we learned the basic rules of how to play Magic the Gathering, including the most basic level of cards, the different colours, how to read the information on a card, how to play cards, the structure of a turn, how a spell stack resolves, and the conditions for winning and losing a game.

If anyone has any questions, please raise your hand.

I have a couple questions for you.

Q1: How many different colours of mana are there in Magic the Gathering and what are they?

A: 5 (Plains, Islands, Swamps,Mountains, Forests)

Q2: What is the total mana cost to play this card?

A: 5 (3 of any colour + 1 plains + 1 island)

**FINAL CONFIRMATION**

Today we covered what Magic the Gathering is and went over some basic rules on how to play it.

If anyone has any questions, please raise your hand.

I have no further questions for you, you’ve been a great class and thank you for your time. I hope you can use the information you learned from this lesson to create some fun experiences and friendships playing Magic the Gathering!