

MtG Deck Building Tips

Choose a theme. *[optional]* (Examples: Merfolk, Knights, Goblins, Clerics, fairies, etc.)

Rationale: A theme helps solidify a deck's concept. Also, many themes share spells and artifacts that make strategy and card choice easier.

1.) **Choose a deck concept.**

While this may sound like choosing a theme, it is much different. While a theme might be knights, or giants, a concept is how your deck will function mechanically. Do you want a lot of fast creatures (aggro)? Do you want to run the table and affect your enemies with powerful spells (control)? Do you want a mixture of the two (aggro-control)? Do you have a trick in mind or one you found on the net (combo)? Common deck concepts are weenie (a swarm of low casting cost creatures), burn (lots of spell damage), discard, and stomp (big creatures).

2.) **Decide on a win condition.** How do you intend to win the game? Do you want to do creature damage, spell damage; do you intend to 'deck' your opponents? Maybe you want to use poison?

3.) **Choose cards that support your chosen win condition.** For example: If you intend to do fast creature damage, choose spells that will remove roadblocks on your path to victory. Make your creatures unblockable, give them flying, remove blockers, etc.

4.) **Plan for everything.** Ok, not possible, but did you cover the most common threats? Do you have a way to deal with: flying, enchants, artifacts, burn, creature damage?

5.) **Never, ever, ever, go over 60 cards (or 40 in a tournament) in your deck.**

Rationale: This one is simple statistics: each card you add to your deck over 60 makes it that much more unlikely that you'll pull the card you need. Wouldn't you rather have a 1 in 60 chance of pulling your needed card than a 1 in 70?

6.) **Understand the statistics in the game and make them work for you.** If you need a certain card to make your combo work, place four in your deck. This takes you from a 1 in 60 chance of pulling that card to a 1 in 15. Simple enough. Put cards in your deck that will affect the chances of pulling your needed cards. Cards that allow you to search for a certain card, spells that allow you to draw more cards, cards with the cycle ability; all of these tactics will greatly improve your odds of pulling the cards you need. Don't leave it to chance, take control.

7.) **Learn the 'rule of nine'.** You truly only need nine cards to create a magic deck.

Rationale: By only using 24 lands and nine playsets (four copies of a card) your deck will be focused and honed. By choosing only nine cards that support your win condition your deck will be a dangerous weapon whose strategy comes together quickly, rather than a random collection of 60+ cards with 'neat effects', or 'cool art'. Many players find this approach too restrictive, but if you need evidence of its effectiveness, google any number of pro decks and you'll see the RoN at work. And remember, use the RoN as a starting point, but don't be a slave to it.

8.) **Learn the mana curve.** You want the casting costs of your deck to form a bell curve. Create your deck in such a way that you are using all your mana each round and playing spells each turn. Be sure and put several (about 1/3 of your deck) 1 and 2 casting cost cards in your deck so that statistically you will be sure to draw a 'one drop' spell on your first turn. Sure, that 8-casting-cost creature is awesome, but while you wait 10 – 12 turns to cast him, your opponent has already wiped the floor with your corpse by dropping lower cost creatures every turn and needled you to death.

9.) **Learn how much mana your deck needs.** In multi-color decks, you will need to add the mana symbols up and place them in a ratio, simplify the ratio, and that will tell you how much mana you need. Until you're comfortable doing it yourself, sites like: www.onlinewebpage.com/simplelandcalc/ can help you compute how much mana your deck needs. (note: the average 60-card deck needs about 24 mana)

Good luck!