

MAGIC The Gathering® ONLINE

GAME GUIDE

by Howard Carson



MENU

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INTRODUCTION

Many years ago I was an avid **Magic: The Gathering** player. How many years you may ask? Does the word 'Dark' mean anything to you? If you are a new comer to the world of **Magic**, probably not – If, like myself, you are returning to the fold it may bring back memories of your killer black deck where Uncle Istvan ruled with Rag Man backing him up.

Now that I have come back, I have a lot of catching up to do! I've had to learn all the newer mechanics like 'Threshold' and 'Madness', and just what a graveyard is all about and how it can help me in my hour of need. I have to admit that I have an unfair advantage over the average **Magic** novice or returning player as I now work in the hallowed halls of *Wizards of the Coast*.

Well, now all have the possibility to learn the game; either for the first time, again after a long hiatus, or simply just move from the real world to the virtual. Best of all you get to play against (and hopefully learn from) **Magic** players of all levels; and better still, at any time of the day or night you feel the urge to try to put the hurt on someone who has the urge to do the same thing to you.

MAGIC ONLINE IS BORN

After several attempts to bring **Magic: The Gathering** to the digital world, *Wizards* has finally provided the game an online presence that it so richly deserves. In the process they have given birth to a whole new form of online entertainment that beats the snot out of playing Spades via the Internet with some grandmother from Peoria.

Magic Online not only opens a whole new world of opponents for you, but it also has other advantages like:

- Solving the age-old question of rules disputes.
- A whole host of people with whom to trade extra cards from your collection in exchange for the cards that you need.
- Being able to learn by watching more experienced players, either live or in tournament replay.

Now that you know some of what it can do for you, you should get this bad boy installed on your system (if you haven't already) so I can give you a quick tour of the game and its interface. Here is a link to the download of the game client <http://www.wizards.com/default.asp?x=magic/magiconline/modownload> to speed you on your way.



One last word before I drag you kicking and screaming through the game's interface. The following is intended as a 'walk through' of the online game.

Magic strategy and actual game play is a subject for players more qualified than I, not to mention that the subject would fill (and has filled) many books. I just want to make sure that when you log into the

game, that your experience will be a pleasant experience, without the frustrations that learning the ins and outs of a new piece of software can sometimes bring (remember that first time you tried a spreadsheet application? 'nuff said).

PART ONE – Standing at the Crossroads

OK, so you have the game installed and have an account set up. Now it's time to logon and start to see what you're getting yourself into.

After you go through the logon process you are at what I like to call the 'Crossroads' of the game. The Main Room is that many-pronged fork in the road that will take you everywhere you will need to go.

...ON THE LEFT HAND SIDE

You will notice on the left of the screen, there are several buttons with special iconic symbols. This is the Link Bar that will be on your screen in most non-game situations:



Preferences – Here is where you will be able to adjust all your personal settings in the game (Avatar, Password, Sounds, Display Preferences, Etc.)

My Games – Of course you want a record of your victories! Unfortunately they come along with a list of your defeats (if any).

Home – This one brings you right back here to the Main Room.

Help – Even if we don't admit it to others, we all need help now and again. This button will give you everything you wanted to know about the room you are in at the time.

There will also be a symbol like this  on the upper right corner of many of the game screens.

Log Out – There is always needs to be a button that will allow you to rejoin the rest of civilized society. There are a few players out there who will only use this button after long intervention sessions with their loved ones.

Report Bugs – As this is a beta there may be problems you run across that our developers should know about – That’s why we’re letting you guys beat the game up for free. We appreciate any and all submissions we get.

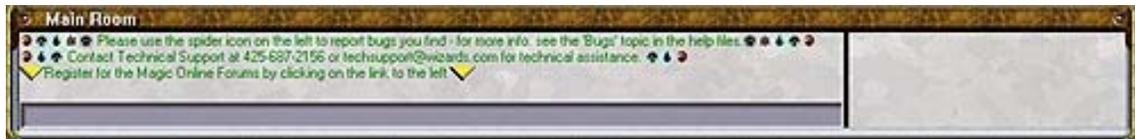


THE MAIN BOARD

Not wanting to keep you from the action any longer, the main screen has portals to all the areas you would want to venture into. Some will lead you straight into battle, while others are more community oriented. I’ll focus on them one by one as I go on in this article.

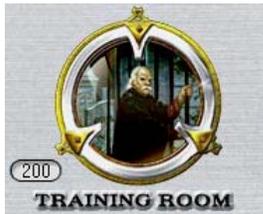
COMMUNICATE

The bottom of the screen shows us our first glimpse of the chat interface in the game. Most of the rooms of the game have this feature that serves two purposes: 1.) It provides the perfect place for any important game oriented messages to be posted; and more obviously 2.) All players can communicate with one another in the fashion of an IRC chat.



Let me add that as with any online community, it is up to the users to chat responsibly. Wizards is nurturing a community that is oriented towards having fun, but when that fun turns ugly, then everybody loses. Isn’t fun what online gaming is all about? OK... OK... I’ll get off my soapbox!

PART TWO – Getting some schoolin’



Our first port of call will be the logical next step for anyone who needs to kick the tires before they hit the highway. On the top left corner of the Main Board is the Training Room. Inside you will find all you need to get up to speed with the game.



INTRODUCTION TO HELP

It does exactly what it says on the label... This will familiarize you with the workings of the game’s Help system. You never know when a little nudge will be exactly what you need.

TUTORIALS

Although a fair share of *Magic Online* users will be familiar to a degree with the mechanics of the game (tapping cards, working the stack, etc), using the MTGO user interface may not be second nature to them. This section gives you a handy walk-through of game mechanics and techniques so you know how you do things such as paying kicker costs, blocking attackers effectively, and pumping up your creatures when the time comes.

PRACTICE GAMES

Once you have the skills you’ve learned in the Tutorial area down, there is no better place to try them out than in a ‘real world’ scenario. Here you can go in and start a game with another player who, like yourself, is getting their bearings. You don’t need to have cards already when you play in this room. There are pre-built *Seventh Edition* single mana color decks waiting for you to put the beat down on the other guy. Stick around in this room for as long as you feel you need to. It’s a great place to learn, both from your triumphs as well as your mistakes.

PART THREE – Booster and Theme Decks and Event Tix Oh My!

RETAIL THERAPY

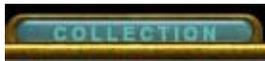
Once you feel like you're ready to stop eating at the kiddies table and move up to where the big folks get their supper, you are obviously going to need cards. And just as in the real world your main way of getting cards in your collection is by picking up decks and boosters.



You can access the *Magic Online* Store by either clicking on the store's link that rotates through on the bottom left hand side of the game screen, by clicking the link in the top right corner of the menu , or by entering in the store's URL in your browser's address bar

<http://magiconlinestore.wizards.com/> (book marking the page wouldn't be a bad idea). Once there you can pick up all you need to get started.

After you complete your purchase from the store, you will receive a confirming email giving the details of your order. Shortly thereafter you will see everything waiting for you in your collection window, which can be accessed by clicking the appropriate tab at the top of your screen.



Opening your decks and boosters is as easy as right clicking on the items and selecting to open them. Keep in mind what kind of game formats you will want to play, then buy and open packs accordingly. You may want to make sure you have enough event tickets and unopened items left over for playing in draft or sealed deck events.

PART FOUR – Deck building even Bob Vila hasn't mastered

Before you go in to show the rest of the world your newfound skills, you are going to have to put together a deck. This will hopefully be something to make your opponent quiver with a faint hint of terror.

MAKING YOUR CARDS WORK FOR YOU

Next to your Collection tab on the top of your screen will be your Deck Editor tab. This will bring you to where you can start work on your first deck.



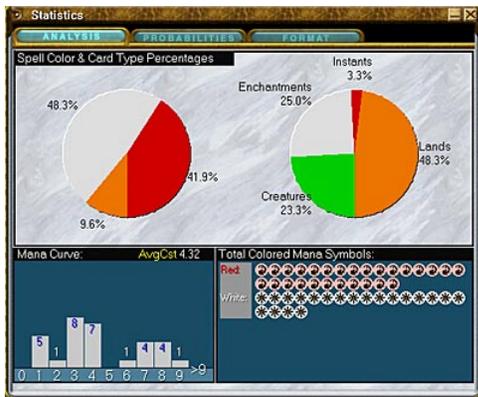
This is a simple drag and drop interface that can work in both a graphical or text mode. Simply click the card stack icon in the upper right side of one of the windows to switch to graphic mode and the eye that replaces it to return.



- This icon will change your view to a list, which is sometimes easier to sort things like tournaments about to start and your card collection.



- This icon will change your view to a visual graphical representation of cards and rooms and is usually the default view.



During your deck creation process you can use the Statistics Tool that is accessed on the bottom row of buttons on your screen.



This will help you analyze your deck as to how much mana your deck needs, probability factors, and if your deck passes muster on certain formats.



Also handy is the card filters in the upper left window. When you select a button, you will filter out that type from your view, so if you are looking for only black and red cards you would click on green, blue, and white to view just what you need. You'll find this a handy tool in situations where your collection starts to become a bit ponderous.

If you are like me, you have about a half dozen different decks going as ‘works in progress’. The Deck Editor will help you build and rework your decks as you learn what is deadwood and what is working best for you. Best of all, you can have one card shared between several decks without having to re-sort cards as the deck files saved to your system just need to know you have a card in your collection to be useable.



This raises a good point for those of you who may float from one system to another at times to play the game. When you are going over to a friend’s house to spend the evening on their computer playing, you can copy your deck files onto a floppy disk and have them ready to go once you get there. Just look for the Decks folder on your system and copy them over. Remember though if you do any tweaking of your deck that evening to save your changes to your floppy disk and update your local system.

PART FIVE – The Trading Post is open!

One of the best aspects of the Magic: The Gathering community is the social tradition of trading cards to get rid of some of the extra cards in your collection and replace them with cards you really need. MTGO has included a terrific bit of trading functionality so you can grab that hard to find rare card from another player. In turn you can give him something that he really needs.

TRADE AWAY

The first thing you would want to do before trading with the great unwashed masses is to go into your Collection area and make the cards you are willing to part with tradable. Either by going to each individual card and setting the trade level by hand, or by right clicking in your collection background you can select that you want to make all your cards potentially tradable, none of them, or just your excess cards.



The easy place to go for trades is through the Trading Post link in the Main Room. This will open a chat window where people who are actively searching cards spout out their shopping lists. Once you spot someone with a card you like, all you need to do is right click on the user name of the person in question and select Trade from the list (you can do this anywhere you can see the list of user names, not just in the Trading Post). A message will be sent to the other person about your intentions and they will be given the option to accept or refuse.



When someone accepts a trade, both of you will be sent to a trading screen where you will see all the cards the other person has on the block. Browsing the cards is quite simple, and when you see something you like, you just click on it, and it will go into the holding window. You will see the other person's selections as well. Once all is agreed upon you simply confirm the trade as does your counterpart, and all is complete. If you don't find anything you want or if the trade doesn't seem equitable, you can just choose to leave it 'Unconfirmed' and the trade will cancel.

PART SIX – Time to do damage



Smack dab in the center of the Main Room, right where Whoopi Goldberg would be sitting if this were The Hollywood Squares, is where you more than likely will get your first taste of head on game play. The Casual Play room leads you to where you can play all the Magic game formats; Constructed, Draft, Sealed Deck, and Multiplayer games.

Playing matches in this area will not affect your ranking in the least. This is just the right place to test out those new decks of yours; find out if they work for you; and if not, re-test them after you give them the velvet hammer treatment in the Deck Editor.

The interface will be exactly the same as in the Practice Games area, so you should be an old hand at playing when you get in here. The only thing different is that in certain areas you will have some prerequisites needed of you to play. As I have mentioned previously, drafts and sealed deck games will require you to have certain unopened products on hand as well as event tickets. You will find out what is needed from you in each case when you click to join in the game and the opportunity to pick up the product if you fall short.

PART SEVEN – Consider yourself one of us!

Human nature has always drawn us into groups of one type or another. Not to deny you of your basic instincts, *Magic Online* has two ways for you to find safety, and perhaps some fun, in numbers.

JOINING A CLAN



You'll find our Clan area on the lower left part of the Main Room. Here you can find a listing of all the clans that have been formed, and if you wish to start one for a group of your friends, you can do that here. As there tends to be a lot of clans, you might want to sort them alphabetically by name (click on the part of the upper bar that says 'name'). If you have a clan in mind that you want to join, you need to message the clan leader, whose name is in red. Joining a clan is my invite only, so you need to talk to someone first.

Name	Members	Completed Matches	Ranked Prizes	Total Prizes	Notes
Seven Anarchy	10/10 (4 matches)	10/10	10/10	10/10	Monday League
Geometry Productions	10/10 (4 matches)	10/10	10/10	10/10	All in right in the world as long as we
Steel Dragons	10/10 (4 matches)	10/10	10/10	10/10	Currently making out
Sweden Magic	10/10 (4 matches)	10/10	10/10	10/10	Place on for you (Special League Club)
Clan's Lair	10/10 (4 matches)	10/10	10/10	10/10	Place the best - have chosen here
Special League Club	10/10 (4 matches)	10/10	10/10	10/10	Place the best - have chosen here
Advanced League	10/10 (4 matches)	10/10	10/10	10/10	Place the best - have chosen here
Enlighten Magic	10/10 (4 matches)	10/10	10/10	10/10	Place the best - have chosen here
The Silhouet - Syria	10/10 (4 matches)	10/10	10/10	10/10	Place the best - have chosen here
Clan O'Clock Crusier	10/10 (4 matches)	10/10	10/10	10/10	Place the best - have chosen here
Physion Academy	10/10 (4 matches)	10/10	10/10	10/10	Place the best - have chosen here
Team Allen Jackson	10/10 (4 matches)	10/10	10/10	10/10	Place the best - have chosen here
Starry Starways	10/10 (4 matches)	10/10	10/10	10/10	Place the best - have chosen here
Blazn	10/10 (4 matches)	10/10	10/10	10/10	Place the best - have chosen here
Team Omega	10/10 (4 matches)	10/10	10/10	10/10	Place the best - have chosen here
Team CO	10/10 (4 matches)	10/10	10/10	10/10	Place the best - have chosen here
Enlighten	10/10 (4 matches)	10/10	10/10	10/10	Place the best - have chosen here
Team NY	10/10 (4 matches)	10/10	10/10	10/10	Place the best - have chosen here
Hardcore	10/10 (4 matches)	10/10	10/10	10/10	Place the best - have chosen here
Team of the Future	10/10 (4 matches)	10/10	10/10	10/10	Place the best - have chosen here
Phylos	10/10 (4 matches)	10/10	10/10	10/10	Place the best - have chosen here
Team of the Future	10/10 (4 matches)	10/10	10/10	10/10	Place the best - have chosen here
Team of the Future	10/10 (4 matches)	10/10	10/10	10/10	Place the best - have chosen here
Team of the Future	10/10 (4 matches)	10/10	10/10	10/10	Place the best - have chosen here

Clans have rankings like individuals do, but these are based on a cumulative rating of the members. Also you will see a listing of total prizes won by the clan... This is yet another thing for the #1 clan to have bragging rights about.

LEAGUE PLAY WITHOUT THE FUNNY BOWLING SHIRT

Those of you who have tried to get a lane for bowling on league night know how popular leagues are. Here in MTGO we are making it easier for you to join a league without lugging around a 13-pound ball, or wearing shirts with your name embroidered on it



Just go into the League button on the right side to see what leagues are starting and join the one that feels right to you. The individual leagues will have their start/finish dates listed as well as any requirements of boosters and decks you need to bring in for play.

PART EIGHT – Tournaments – Where your metal is put to the real test

For those out there for whom ranking is everything, the rest of the world may never see you leave this area. This is as close to the real world tournaments as you can get without smelling the fear of your opponent first hand... I assume that smell is fear, that or just a good place for a Stick Up.

ZEN & THE ART OF SANCTIONED TOURNAMENTS



Status
Running round 3
Waiting for players
Running round 1

The Tournament area is as easy to get around in as the other game rooms with a small addition of the tournament signup page. It's actually quite easy to get into a tournament. Once you are on the tournament list window of your choice – There is Draft, Constructed and Sealed Deck – You can search for tournaments that are looking for players, which won't be difficult to spot, as they will say under status 'Waiting for Players'. To make these tournaments stand out visually, the ID number, description, and the aforementioned status will be highlighted in green.

Once you have gone into the individual tournament screen, all you need to do is to click on the Join  button (and if in constructed, select a deck you have created). As before with special matches you will need some prerequisite items such as Event Tickets, Boosters, etc. You will be told on joining what you need.

As with real world tournaments, these will start at a certain time. When that time comes you will be taken directly into a game screen to start your first round. Obviously this means that you need to be online in the game at that time, otherwise you risk losing your first round, and giving your opponent an undeserved easy win. Also once in the game you will notice that there is a timer in the lower right corner of the game screen. That is not there to time a hard-boiled egg! These games are timed so everybody knows when the next round will start, and so the tournament can finish on schedule. Time outs will deliver wins to those who played last.

PART NINE – What are you doing reading this? Go play!

You have all you need to get started. The finer points will come as you play *Magic Online*. Just like playing a musical instrument, the artistry come through the playing and doing. All I aimed to do with the preceding was to teach you to ‘read the music’ of MTGO, now you have to go and learn your individual style by playing and doing.

Many of you may want to read up more about **Magic: The Gathering**, it’s strategies, and some of the tricks of the champions. Here is a list of links where you can glean more information to get you to the next level (and beyond):

MagicTheGathering.com

This is the official site for **Magic: The Gathering** players (both online and offline). This page features daily articles and features about the game and offers you a chance to communicate directly with the designers of the game.

Playmagic.com

This site is for people who are just starting out with **Magic** and would like to know more about how to play the game in an interactive format. This site features a downloadable tutorial that will walk you through several instructional games.

[Magic Home Page](#)

This is the official home page of all things **Magic** related. This page will show you news and release information about upcoming **Magic** sets as well as links to other **Magic** related web content.

Good Luck. Now get out there and show the people no mercy!