Budget for Beginners

Todd W. Neller
Central Questions

• I personally avoided Magic: The Gathering (and all trading card games) for its first 25 years as a perceived “money pit” with a “pay to win” aspect. Two focus questions:
  – What changed my perceptions of M:TG?
  – Through my learning experiences, what do I recommend as the highest value purchases and best resources for the beginner?
The Perception: Standard Format

### Standard Metagame

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deck Name</th>
<th>Decks</th>
<th>Meta %</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sultai Midrange</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hydroid Krasis</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>14.97%</td>
<td>$507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jadelight Ranger</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Vivien Reid</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Esper Control</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teferi, Hero of Dominaria</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>10.54%</td>
<td>$505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaya’s Wrath</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absorb</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mono-Red Aggro</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vraskan Pyromancer</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10.20%</td>
<td>$116</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ghifu Lavarunner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lightning Strike</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mono-Blue Tempo</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Siren Stormtamer</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5.10%</td>
<td>$57</td>
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<tr>
<td>Curious Obsession</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tempest Djinn</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Azorius Aggro</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legion’s Landing</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5.10%</td>
<td>$212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benalish Marshal</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venerated Loxodon</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Izzet Drakes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Chart a Course</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5.10%</td>
<td>$176</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crackling Drake</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enigma Drake</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Four-Color Gates</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circuitois Route</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.76%</td>
<td>$257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guild Summit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enigma Drake</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth Spiral</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bant Nexus</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nexus of Fate</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.40%</td>
<td>$649</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wilderness Reclamation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemister’s Insight</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [https://www.mtggoldfish.com/metagame/standard#paper](https://www.mtggoldfish.com/metagame/standard#paper) 2/8/2019
The Perception: Modern Format

Modern Metagame

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deck</th>
<th>Meta %</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Izzet Phoenix</td>
<td>7.23%</td>
<td>$873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grixis Death's Shadow</td>
<td>5.78%</td>
<td>$1,067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burn</td>
<td>5.30%</td>
<td>$585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dredge</td>
<td>3.73%</td>
<td>$628</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bant Spirits</td>
<td>3.37%</td>
<td>$1,083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jund</td>
<td>3.13%</td>
<td>$1,623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeskai</td>
<td>2.89%</td>
<td>$1,159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humans</td>
<td>2.65%</td>
<td>$1,192</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: https://www.mtggoldfish.com/metagame/modern#paper 2/8/2019
The Perception: Legacy Format

Legacy Metagame

Grixis Delver
- Lightning Bolt
- Ponder
- Daze
- Decks: 25, Meta %: 7.42%, Price: $4,185

Grixis Control
- Baleful Strix
- Ponder
- Brainstorm
- Decks: 22, Meta %: 6.53%, Price: $4,905

Azorius Stoneblade
- Ponder
- Swords to Plowshares
- Brainstorm
- Decks: 17, Meta %: 5.04%, Price: $2,397

Mono Red Prison
- Chalice of the Void
- Chrome Moon
- Blood Moon
- Decks: 14, Meta %: 4.15%, Price: $1,779

Miracles
- Ponder
- Swords to Plowshares
- Brainstorm
- Decks: 14, Meta %: 4.15%, Price: $2,725

Ad Nauseam Ten...
- Lion's Eye Diamond
- Infernal Tutor
- Thoughtseize
- Decks: 13, Meta %: 3.66%, Price: $3,346

Sneak and Show
- Sneak Attack
- Griselbrand
- Show and Tell
- Decks: 13, Meta %: 3.66%, Price: $3,069

Death and Taxes
- Aether Vial
- Stoneforge Mystic
- Thalia, Guardian of Thraben
- Decks: 13, Meta %: 3.66%, Price: $1,010

Source: https://www.mtggoldfish.com/metagame/legacy#paper  2/8/2019
The Perception: Commander Format

Commander Metagame

Atraxa, Praetors’ Voice
Sol Ring
Astral Cornucopia

Decks | Meta % | Price
--- | --- | ---
1615 | 1.82% | $266

Muldrotha, the Gravetide
Sol Ring
Sakura-Tribe Elder

Decks | Meta % | Price
--- | --- | ---
1117 | 1.26% | $158

Edgar Markov
Stromkirk Captain
Captivating Vampire

Decks | Meta % | Price
--- | --- | ---
1042 | 1.17% | $167

Meren of Clan Nel Toth
Sakura-Tribe Elder
Sol Ring

Decks | Meta % | Price
--- | --- | ---
952 | 1.07% | $180

Breya, Etherium Shaper
Sol Ring
Skullclamp

Decks | Meta % | Price
--- | --- | ---
875 | 0.99% | $296

Oloro, Ageless Ascetic
Sol Ring
Sanguine Bond

Decks | Meta % | Price
--- | --- | ---
828 | 0.93% | $192

Nekusar, the Mindreaper
Sol Ring
Fate Unraveler

Decks | Meta % | Price
--- | --- | ---
800 | 0.90% | $181

Brago, King Eternal
Brago, King Eternal
Azorius Signet
Sol Ring

Decks | Meta % | Price
--- | --- | ---
746 | 0.84% | $108

Source: [https://www.mtggoldfish.com/metagame/commander#paper](https://www.mtggoldfish.com/metagame/commander#paper) 2/8/2019
The Perception: *Expensive***!!*

- Average cost of top 8 popular decks on 2/8/2019 by format:
  - Standard: $310
  - Modern: $1031
  - Legacy: $2927
  - Commander: $194

- “*Magic: The Gathering: Twenty Years, Twenty Lessons Learned*” (head designer Mark Rosewater, GDC 2016; [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QHHg99hwQGY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QHHg99hwQGY))
  - Lesson 18: **Restrictions Breed Creativity**
  - So what’s an easy, restrictive M:TG game format that is **low-budget** and “breeds creativity?”
# One Solution: Pauper Format

## Pauper Metagame

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deck</th>
<th>Meta %</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kuldotha Boros</td>
<td>14.47%</td>
<td>$80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red-White Weenie</td>
<td>11.95%</td>
<td>$73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue-Black Delver</td>
<td>11.12%</td>
<td>$81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burn</td>
<td>6.92%</td>
<td>$64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rainbow Tron</td>
<td>6.92%</td>
<td>$62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elves</td>
<td>6.29%</td>
<td>$79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue-Black Delver</td>
<td>6.29%</td>
<td>$101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mono Blue Delver</td>
<td>5.66%</td>
<td>$87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [https://www.mtggoldfish.com/metagame/pauper#paper](https://www.mtggoldfish.com/metagame/pauper#paper) 2/8/2019
One Solution: Pauper Format

• Average cost of top 8 popular decks on 2/8/2019 by format:
  – Standard: $310
  – Modern: $1031
  – Legacy: $2927
  – Commander: $194
  – Pauper: $78

• So there’s a common format that isn’t super expensive, but it’s still a lot to pay for a beginner that doesn’t know whether or not they’ll like the game. (i.e. “barrier to entry”)

• Let’s start at the beginning... how to start learning MT:G for free.
Wizards of the Coast Videos

- Wizards of the Coast (WotC), the company that creates M:TG, has simple introductory videos:
  - What is Magic: The Gathering?
  - How to Play Magic: The Gathering
  - How to Build Your First Magic Deck
  - Ways to Play Magic: The Gathering
Magic: The Gathering Arena

• Play tutorial games free on Magic: The Gathering Arena:
  https://magic.wizards.com/en/mtgarena
  – Really free to play – rather than pay, can *play* to earn wildcards to trade in for cards to *build tier 1 standard decks*
  – Good, clear interface
  – Generous good, *free decks* awarded to regular players (e.g. “Jungle Secrets” merfolk deck)
Free Welcome Decks

- Many local game stores that sell M:TG products also offer free 60-card *welcome decks*.
- 2018 welcome decks featured two 30-card mono-colored decks that could be played against each other or combined as a 60-card standard deck.
- Find your local game stores using [http://locator.wizards.com/](http://locator.wizards.com/)
Want to Support the Store?

• Buy a practical accessory while you’re there: *card sleeves* to protect and preserve your cards.
  – Good brands:
    • [UltraPro Eclipse](https://www.ultrapro.com/)
    • [Dragon Shield](https://www.dragonshield.com/)
    • See [Tolarian Community College videos](https://www.youtube.com/user/TolarianCommunityCollege) for reviews and recommendations for accessories.
Card Kingdom Battle Decks

- Welcome decks are simple and good for learning, but there are good, thematic, budget “Battle Decks” available online for ~$10 at https://www.cardkingdom.com/catalog/shop/battle-decks
Budget Accessories

• For keeping track of life totals:
  – Free Talisman Games Magic Life Total app: [https://talisman.games/products/magic-life-total/](https://talisman.games/products/magic-life-total/)
• +1/+1 or -1/-1 counters: small (12mm) d6 dice
• 13.5" x 24" black playmat (~$10)
• Deckboxes (< $2 each)
Budget Format: Pauper

• M:TG booster packs generally contain cards of varying rarity, e.g.
  – 1 rare card (or possibly a rare “mythic” rare)
  – 3 uncommon cards
  – 10 common cards
  – 1 token creature
• Often, desirable cards for competitive play are more rare, causing high prices given low supply and high demand.
• **Pauper format**: Only cards mass-produced at **common** rarity at any point in M:TG history are allowed (with the exception of a **short banlist**).
• Purchase cards individually online, e.g. via **TCGplayer.com**
• Advantage: the same joys and challenges of creative deck building with a restriction that lowers the price
Example Deck: Mono-Blue Delver

- [https://www.mtggoldfish.com/archetype/pauper-mono-blue-delver#paper](https://www.mtggoldfish.com/archetype/pauper-mono-blue-delver#paper)

Mono Blue Delver  Suggest a Better Name

9 Decks (5.66% of meta)

Sample Deck
- **Pauper League 2019-01-23, (5-0)**
- **Format: Pauper**
- **Jan 23, 2019**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Online</th>
<th>Paper</th>
<th>Arena</th>
<th>My Price (Online)</th>
<th>My Price (Paper)</th>
<th>My Price (Arena)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Creatures (16)**
- 4 Delver of Secrets
- 4 Faerie Miscreant
- 4 Spellstutter Sprite
- 4 Ninja of the Deep Hours

**Spells (26)**
- 3 Mutagenic Growth
- 4 Ponder
- 4 Preordain
- 4 Counterspell
- 3 Daze
- 4 Snap

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2 Foil</th>
<th>2 Gush</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>7.74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Lands (18)**
- 18 Island

**Sideboard (15)**
- 3 Annul
- 2 Dispel
- 4 Gut Shot
- 4 Hydroblast
- 1 Piracy Charm
- 1 Augur of Bolas

**Total:** 75 Cards
Fun Budget M:TG Outing

• Visit your local game store that allows purchases from boxes of surplus commons.

• Set a time limit and have players build and purchase their best 40-card Pauper deck (typically 23 commons cards and 17 borrowed basic lands).
  – At our local shop, Fourcorners Comics and Games, commons are $.15 each, so ~$3.45/deck.

• Compete!
Budget Format: Cube

• A playgroup builds a balanced set of 360+ cards that support many archetypes (e.g. styles/themes) of play.
• Highlander format (“There can be only one.”) – at most one card of each type permitted
• Any draft format is permitted, e.g.
  – Form 15-card “booster packs” and traditional draft.
  – Construct a limited 40-card deck from a set of 90 random cards.
• (Include enough basic lands for all.)
Example: Card Kingdom Starter Cube

Card Kingdom Starter Cube

Current Version: V7

By popular demand, we've launched V7 of our Starter Cube, including beautiful BFZ full art basic lands! Click on the links below to see how the Cube has evolved.

Nothing is more fun than drafting a Cube, but building a Cube can be hard and expensive. That's why we created the Card Kingdom Starter Cube! This Cube contains 360 cards and was created with one thing in mind: FUN! Our Cube is filled with fun draft archetypes and exciting bombs to get you started on your own personal Cube. Use this as your base, and add or swap cards as you see fit!

Includes 35 of each basic land and comes in two custom Card Kingdom Blue boxes with enough Ultra Pro sleeves for the whole kit!

All cards included are NM/EX condition.

$99.99

Add To Cart

Available: 100
# CardKingdom Starter Cube Version 7 (360 cards)

## White (53)
- **Creature (30)**
  - Dauntless Bodyguard
  - Doomed Traveler
  - Haazaq Marshal
  - Healer's Hawk
  - Novice Knight
  - Skymarcher Aspirant
  - Knight of Grace
  - Kor Skyshaper
  - Leonin Skyhunter
  - Lone Missionary
  - Silverchase Fox
  - Stormfront Pegasus
  - Sunhome Stalwart
  - Aerial Responder
  - Attended Knight
  - Danitha Coposhen
  - Paragon
  - Fiend Hunter
  - Pegasus Courser
  - Roc Charger
  - Baird, Steward of Arge
  - Gallant Cavalry
  - Inspiring Unicorn
  - Parhelion Patrol
  - Bishop of Rebirth
  - Regal Caracal
  - Serra Angel
  - Venerated Loxocon
  - Eva, Halcyon Witness
  - Lena, Selfless Champion
  - Noble Templar

## Blue (53)
- **Creature (20)**
  - Departed Deckhand
  - Dreamscape Artist
  - Mystic Archaeologist
  - Nightveil Sprite
  - Omenspeaker
  - Vodalian Arcanist
  - Eldrazi Skyspawner
  - Jeskai Infiltrator
  - Mirror Image
  - Sea Gate Oracle
  - Wall of Frost
  - Archaeomancer
  - Mummuring Mystic
  - Nibils of Frost
  - Tower Geist
  - Djin of Wishes
  - Memonic Wall
  - Sage-Eye Avengers
  - Shoreline Ranger
  - Sphinx of Uthuun

## Black (53)
- **Creature (32)**
  - Diregraf Ghoul
  - Festerling Mummy
  - Hired Poisoner
  - Pilling Imp
  - Sanitarium Skeleton
  - Tenacious Dead
  - Typhoid Rat
  - Burglar Rat
  - Carrier Thrall
  - Child of Night
  - Doomed Dissenter
  - Dusk Legion Zealot
  - Knight of Malice
  - Reassembling Skeleton
  - Scapegoat Scrounger
  - Bloodflow Connoisseur
  - Phyrexian Ghoul
  - Plague Mare
  - Ravencloth Harpy
  - Skymarch Bloodletter
  - Vampire Aristocrat
  - Vengeful Rebel
  - Falkenrath Noble
  - Fell Specter
  - Gravedigger
  - Smothering Abomination
  - Whisper, Blood Liturgist
  - Phyrexian Plaguelord
  - Priest of the Blood Rite
  - Yarling, Glutton of Urborg
  - Twisted Abomination
  - Eater of Hope

## Red (53)
- **Creature (30)**
  - Fanatical Firebrand
  - Foundry Street Denizen
  - Goblin Banneret
  - Skirk Prospector
  - Torch Courier
  - Bomat Courier
  - Attacl Bloodseeker
  - Champion of the Flame
  - Cheering Fanatic
  - Electrostatic Field
  - Goblin Cratermaker
  - Goblin Instigator
  - Klin Fiend
  - Omeryn Goblin
  - Thermo-Alchemist
  - Torch Fiend
  - Goblin Warchief
  - Gutterstings
  - Pia Nalaar
  - Rumraging Goblin
  - Smell-Ward Minotaur
  - Valdak, Keeper of the Flame
  - Enthralling Victor
  - Heart-Piercer Manticore
  - Volley Veteran
  - Charging Monstersaur
  - Goblin Dark-Dwellers
  - Megmaw
  - Burning Sun's Avatar
  - Chortoosh Cougar

## Green (53)
- **Creature (31)**
  - Arbor Elf
  - Avacyn's Pilgrim
  - Llanovar Elves
  - Ovyla Pashiri, Sage
  - Lifebracer
  - Deathcap Cultivator
  - Druid of the Cowl
  - Ethelme Druid
  - Elvish Visionary
  - Kraul Harpooner
  - Naga Vitalist
  - Untamed Kavu
  - Voyaging Satyr
  - Wall of Roots
  - Atzocan Archer
  - Daggerback Basilisk
  - District Guide
  - Ghrapur Guide
  - Jungleborn Pioneer
  - Reclamation Sage
  - Yavilmaya Saphorid
  - Ambassador Oak
  - Deadbridge Goliath
  - Giant Spider
  - Wolfbrar Elemental
  - Acidic Slimel
  - Crested Herdcaller
  - Ridgepole Tusker
  - Affectionate Indrik
  - Elvish Aberration
  - Polakka Wurm
  - Vordon Force

## Multicolor (30)
- **Azorius (3)**
  - Momentary Blink
  - Turn to Mist
  - Cloudblazer
  - **Dimir (3)**
  - House Guildmage
  - Artful Takedown
  - Rags // Riches
  - **Rakdos (3)**
  - Spike Joster
  - Auger Sproe
  - Brawl-Bash Ogre
  - **Gruul (3)**
  - Draconic Disciple
  - Rubbelbelt Raiders
  - Rubblehulk
  - **Selesnya (3)**
  - Centaur Healer
  - Ledev Champion
  - Conclave Cavaller
  - **Orzhov (3)**
  - Hidden Stockpile
  - Pillory of the Sleepless
  - Arel, Knight of Windgrace
  - **Golgari (3)**
  - Golgari Findbroker
  - Brood Butcher
  - Iziorn, Thousand-Eyed
  - **Simic (3)**

## Colorless (65)
- **Artifact (23)**
  - Bloodtallow Candle
  - Explosive Apparatus
  - Pacification Array
  - Short Sword
  - Traveler's Amulet
  - Jousting Lance
  - Kitesail
  - Marauder's Axe
  - Prismatic Lens
  - Prophetic Prism
  - Sky Skiff
  - Torch Gauntlet
  - Arcane Encyclopedia
  - Captain's Hook
  - Manalith
  - Moonglare Extract
  - Orazca Relic
  - Scoer's Lantern
  - Sigiled Sword of Valeron
  - Sleek Schooner
  - Strider Harness
  - Icy Manipulator
  - Oracle's Vault
  - **Creature (14)**
  - Hedron Crawler
  - Suspicious Bookcase
  - Voltoic Servant
  - Aesthir Glider
  - Filigree Familiar
  - Pilgrim's Eye
  - Skittering Surveyor
  - Skyscanner
  - Jhorda's Familiar
Welcome To The Pauper Cube

In 2008, after more than a decade of on-and-off again playing, I got back into Magic forever with Shards of Alara. The multicolor mayhem and plentiful cubes at my then-local game store inspired me to put the two ideas together. While “the Pauper multicolor cube” wasn’t a great way to play, the idea of using only commons stuck. With the help of cube aficionado (and amazing artist) Eric Klug a tight, fun cube of powerful commons came together.

Today, “the Pauper Cube” is a Magic fan-favorite that’s been featured by the game’s top content creators.
## The Pauper Cube (409 cards)

### White (56)
- **Creature (36)**
  - Doomed Traveler
  - Elite Vanguard
  - Gideon's Lawkeeper
  - Goldmoor Harrier
  - Hunted Witness
  - Loyal Pegasus
  - Savannah Lion
  - Thranen Inspector
  - Daring Skyjek
  - Gather the Townsfolk
  - Kor Skyfisher
  - Martyr of Dusk
  - Mistral Charger
  - Raise the Alarm
  - Seeker of the Way
  - Stormfront Pegasus
  - Whitemane Lion
  - Attended Knight
  - Aven Riftwatcher
  - Dauntless Cathar
  - Glint-Sleeve Artisan
  - Ordinary Pony
  - Sandsteppe Outcast
  - Sheer Drop
  - Tripletic Spirits
  - Battle Scooch
  - Call the Cavalry
  - Coalition Honor Guard
  - Gallant Cavalry
  - Guardian of the Guildpact
  - Paladin of the Bloodstained
  - Seraph of Dawn
  - Custodi Squire
  - **Creature (32)**
    - Augur of Bolas
    - Carnivorous Death-Parrot
    - Errant Ephemeron
    - Halimar Wavewatch
    - Kitesail Corsair
    - Ninja of the Deep Hours
    - Omenspeaker
    - Seeker of Insight
    - Aether Adept
    - Calcite Snapper
    - Dimir Informant
    - Eldrazi Skyspawner
    - Man-o'-War
    - Pestermite
    - Shaper Parasite
    - Skittering Cruystean
    - Stitched Drake
    - Warden of Evos Isle
    - Cloaked Siren
    - Makeshift Mauler
    - Mist Raven
    - Separatist Voidmage
    - Shimmering Glasskite
    - Wretched Gryff
    - Clutch of Currents
    - Gryff Vanguard
    - Mnemonic Wall
    - Mullcriditer
    - Soul of the Rapids
    - Watcher in the Mist
    - Aethersnipe
    - Striped Rivervinder
    - Instant (16)

### Blue (56)
- **Creature (35)**
  - Carrion Feeder
  - Disowned Ancestor
  - Plagued Rusalka
  - Ruthless Ripper
  - Tpohold Rats
  - Butcher Ghoul
  - Doomed Dismesser
  - Dust Legion Zealot
  - Pit Keeper
  - Sinuous Vermin
  - Sultai Emissary
  - Thrill-Kill Assassin
  - Bloodflow Connoisseur
  - Crypt Rats
  - Deadeye Tormentor
  - Deathbloom Thalid
  - Hired Blade
  - Liliana's Specter
  - Phyrexian Ghouls
  - Phyrexian Rager
  - Wake dancer
  - Driver of the Dead
  - Faceless Butcher
  - Falkenrath Noble
  - Grovedigger
  - Gurming Angler
  - Slum Reaper
  - Soulstinger
  - Thorn of the Black Rose
  - Vulturous Aven
  - Blade Juggler
  - Gray Merchant of Asphodel
  - Midnight Scavengers
  - Predatory Nightstalker

### Black (56)
- **Creature (38)**
  - Fanatical Firebrand
  - Frenzied Goblin
  - Insolent Neonate
  - Jackal Pup
  - Mogg Fanatic
  - Common Iguana
  - Dragon Fodder
  - Fireslinger
  - Goblin Free runner
  - Goblin Instigator
  - Goblin Tralhibazer
  - Keldon Marauders
  - Krenko's Command
  - Mogg Flunkies
  - Mogg War Marshal
  - Nest Robber
  - Plated Geodepe
  - Viadvho Pyromancer
  - Azra Bladesooker
  - Brazen Wolves
  - Burning-Tree Vandal
  - Fervent Cathar
  - Ghirapur Gearcrafter
  - Goblin Heelcutter
  - Hissing Iguana
  - Hordling Outburst
  - Inner-Flame Acolyte
  - Minotaur Skullcrusher
  - Skirk Marauder
  - Sparkspitter
  - Vulkash Sorcerer
  - Beetleback Chief
  - Keldon Raider
  - Voldaren Duelist
  - Flurry of Hops

### Red (56)
- **Creature (33)**
  - Basking Rootwalla
  - Squirrel Dealer
  - Young Wolf
  - Ambush Viper
  - Brindle Shot
  - Sakura-Tribe Eldor
  - Saproling Migration
  - Thornweald Archer
  - Wall of Roots
  - Wild Mongrel
  - Elvish Rejuvenator
  - Slowing Mandrills
  - Jungle Wayfinder
  - Jungleborn Pioneer
  - Scion Summoner
  - Scion of the Wild
  - Yavimaya Elder
  - Yavimaya Sapherd
  - Aerie Bowmasters
  - Baloth Gorgers
  - Elephant Ambush
  - Imperious
  - Peema Outrider
  - Penumbra Spider
  - Aerie Ouphes
  - Lifecraft Cavalry
  - Nessian Asp
  - Overgrown Armassar
  - Scatter the Seeds
  - Cilanol Woodreaders
  - Maul Slicer
  - Wrecking Beast
  - Walker of the Grove

### Green (56)
- **Creature (33)**
  - Azorius (6)
  - Deputy of Acquittals
  - Feeling of Dread
  - Momentary Blink
  - Curse of Chains
  - Court Hussar
  - Lawmage's Binding
  - Dimir (6)
  - Cavern Harpy
  - Dimir Guildmage
  - Agony Warp
  - Whisper Agent
  - Soul Manipulation
  - Dinrova Horror
  - Rakdos (6)
  - Spike Jester
  - Torninate
  - Kathari Bomber
  - Auger Spree
  - Blighting
  - Wrecking Ball
  - Grulu (6)
  - Burning-Tree Emmisary
  - Colossal Might
  - Branching Bolt
  - Savage Smash
  - Frenzied Arynx
  - Scuzzback Marauders
  - Selesnya (6)

### Multicolor (65)
- **Azorius (6)**
  - Adventuring Gear
  - Bonesplitter
  - Flyer Husk
  - Leonin Bola
  - Sylvok Lifestaff
  - Wayfarer's Bauble
  - Artillery Sphere
  - Guardian Idol
  - Mind Stone
  - Prophetic Prism
  - Star Compass
  - Vulsok Morningstar
  - Pristine Talisman
  - Renegade Freighters
  - Sorrent Arrows

### Colorless (64)
- **Artifact (15)**
  - Bonded Construct
  - Sparring Construct
  - Vault Skirge
  - Perilous Myr
  - Porcelain Legorinn
  - Gathr Raiders
  - Will-Forged Golem
  - Clay Statue
  - Cogwork Librarian
  - Peace Strider
  - Pierce Strider
  - Kozilek's Channeler
  - Eldrazi Devastator
  - Ulamog's Crusher
  - Land (35)
Budget M:TG Summary

• Try for free: welcome decks, MTG Arena
• $10 CK Battle Decks, free/inexpensive accessories
• Learn a lot about M:TG through cube drafting for as low as $12.50 per person in a playgroup of 8 with a CK Starter Cube.
• Exercise creative deckbuilding on a budget with the Pauper common rarity restriction.
• Continue to learn online through MTG Arena play and many free YouTube and Twitch videos.
Proposal: Contrarian Format

• **contrarian**: a person who takes a contrary position or attitude specifically: an investor who buys shares of stock when most others are selling and sells when others are buying.

• Basic philosophy:
  – Cards are only good/bad in comparison to other cards.
  – Restrictions breed creativity → Restricting price breeds affordable creativity.

• Grade cards according to price *quintile* or *percentile*:
  – A: Absolute bargain, lowest cost 20% of cards (2/11/2019: $≤ .05/card)
  – B: Bargain, next lowest 20% (2/11/2019: $≤ .09/card)
  – C: Common (price), middle 20% (2/11/2019: $≤ .17/card)
  – D: Demanded, next to highest 20% (2/11/2019: $≤ .70/card)
  – E: Expensive, highest 20% (2/11/2019 highest: Black Lotus ~$4K)
  – n: lowest cost n% of cards (3/1/2019 50% $≤ .13/card)
Proposal: Contrarian Format (cont.)

- Example possible format sketch:
  - Contrarian A format: Allow only cards with an annual sampled median price grade of A.
  - Contrarian B format: Allow only cards with an annual sampled median price grade of A or B.
  - Etc.

- Con:
  - Non-eternal formats because of price swings. An outstanding Contrarian A deck can become a Contrarian B deck when unseen value is discovered.

- Pro:
  - Low cost by definition: A “Contrarian 50” 60-card deck’s ~35 non-lands would currently be ≤ ~$4.55.
  - Thus experimentation is very affordable.

- Possible implementation: Scryfall API randomized price sampling with annual contrarian grades published.
Is an Affordable Eternal Format Possible?

• There is an inherent tension between eternal (low/no-continuing costs) and affordable (low entry costs)
  – Eternal Pauper:
    • As pauper has grown in paupularity, supply-and-demand of top deck staples have pushed the entry price for top decks from ~$30 to ~$80 deck average
    • eternal ➔ growing entry cost
  – Affordable Penny Dreadful (MTGO .01 tix cards @ new set releases): ~$39 (paper price, 2/18)
    • However, today’s good deck can be unplayable with the next set.
    • Price fluctuation leads to a form of rotation
    • affordable ➔ continuing costs
Format Tradeoffs: Initial Versus Continuing Costs

• Eternal Contrarian $n$: Cards within Eternal Contrarian $n$ for $X$ year(s) are forever legal in Eternal Contrarian $n$?
  – Counterargument: Even cheap cards can become harder to find with time, limiting supply and increasing prices.

• Alternative: slow rotation
  – Cards within Contrarian $n$ for $X$ year(s) are granted Contrarian $n$ legality for $Y$ years hence.

• What is the best $(X, Y)$ tradeoff between low-entry cost versus low continuing costs?
Addendum

• Game Club Recommendations:
  – **The Commander’s Quarters**: Build 100-card commander format decks around your commander card for $25.
  – **Budget MTG Decks**: Build decks in a variety of formats with all non-commander cards < $1.

• Ultra-budget format: Standard Pauper
  – **PK Standard Pauper events with deck lists**
  – **Hipsters of the Coast** Standard Pauper on MTG Arena