

# How To Perform Deck Checks

Deck checks must be performed at all Competitive and Professional Rules Enforcement Level tournaments. At least ten percent of all decks should be checked over the course of the tournament.

We have two specific goals in mind when we perform a deck check. First, we're obviously trying to catch people who have done the sort of things we check for in deck checks: Marked Cards, Insufficient Shuffling, Deck Problem and Decklist Problem. But more importantly, our goal is to create an environment in which players are aware that judges are checking their decks on a regular basis. This disincentivizes people from committing errors, deterring far more infractions than we could ever hope to actually catch.

## Decklists

Before you can perform any deck checks, you first need to collect decklists from the players. For large constructed tournaments, the head judge usually will seat players in alphabetical order for a player meeting and collect lists then. For smaller tournaments, it's fine to collect them during round 1 as long as you are careful not to show a list to the opposing player. Collecting decklists piecemeal as players register is unwise, as inattentive players may slip through the cracks.

For limited tournaments, the decklists are an integral part of the deck construction process. Collect them as appropriate.

Regardless of how you end up collecting the lists, do your best to sort and alphabetize them as early as possible so you can quickly and reliably find individual lists.

## Swooping

You can't check a deck until you get the decks from the players. You need to be ready to grab decks after they present, but you can't be obviously about to deck check someone. If players know in advance that they will or won't be deck checked, then deck checks lose their value as deterrents. For that reason, the process of collecting decks is generally known as "swooping."

Here are some tips for swooping:

- Watch the players shuffle. In rare cases, you'll end up having to issue infractions for Insufficient Shuffling or Slow Play. Don't overdo it, though!
- Do **not** swoop until players have presented. Prior to that point, players can correct deck errors with no penalty.
- **Do** try to swoop before the players have cut or shuffled one another's deck. This removes any ambiguity as to which player is responsible for mis-oriented or damaged cards.
- Do **not** swoop if players have started to deal opening hands.
- Tell the players immediately that they're being deck checked.
- In addition to the decks, collect sideboards and deckboxes that store the decks.
- Remember which player has which deck. Grabbing the match slip can help with names.
- Note the time you swooped. The players will get a time extension for the time spent doing the deck check.

## Deck Check

After swooping, we now have the players' decks and decklists.

Aim to perform the deck check in 10 minutes or faster. Here are the points we suggest you follow to perform a full deck check:

- Check the main deck against the decklist. Most judges will do a high-level sort before actually checking the deck. Some prefer to sort by color, others by mana cost or by card type. Use whichever you feel most comfortable with, but you probably should **not** sort each card into its own pile.
- Note that mid-round deck checks will involve sideboarded cards. If you find a card on the decklist that's not in the deck, look for it in the sideboard.
- If you swooped during game 1, check the sideboard against the decklist. Failure to de-sideboard is the most common Deck Error you will see. Fortunately, it's also the easiest to catch.
- Check for MARKED CARDS. Square the deck up and look at the sides, front, back, and top. All the cards should look the same, or very nearly so. If you can pick one or more out, that could be a problem. Common causes of marking include:
  - Sleeves are inconsistently worn, damaged, or dirty. . It's an unfortunate fact of life that after a few rounds of tournament play, this can happen to sleeves.
  - The cards themselves are bent. Foils in particular can warp and pop up from the top of the deck.
  - Double-faced cards like Delver of Secrets may be visible through non-opaque sleeves.
  - Players may inconsistently use inner sleeves on different cards.

If you spot one or more of these problems, continue with the deck check. When finished, consult the IPG and apply the appropriate penalty for Marked Cards.

- If the contents of a deck or sideboard do not match the decklist registered and the decklist represents what the player intended to play, that is a DECK PROBLEM.
- If the decklist is illegal, doesn't match what the player intended to play, or needs to be modified due to a card loss over the course of the tournament, that is a DECKLIST PROBLEM.

After you do the deck check, it's time to give the decks back. If you need to assess any penalties, do so now. If the penalty involves the content of a player's deck, inform that player away from the table so their opponent does not get access to hidden information. Once that's done, get the players playing Magic. Give an appropriate time extension: the time you took away from their match, plus 3 minutes for them to shuffle thoroughly (make sure to remind the players that their decks were sorted).