

How To Run a Draft

This document will go through the basics on how to run a draft.

Preparation

Begin by dividing players into draft groups, which was call “pods.” Drafting works best in pods of 8 players. Aim to keep your pod sizes as close to 8 as possible, and never have more than one pod with an odd number of players.

- Example: A 12 player draft, works best with 6 players in each of two pods.
- Example: A 19-player draft works best with 10 players in one pod and 9 players in the other. .
- Example: A 21-player draft works best with three pods of 8, 7, and 6 players respectively.

Seat players around a table within their pod. You may seat them randomly, or you may seat them such that players are on the opposite side of the draft from their first round opponent (in an 8-person pod at a rectangular table, this creates what’s called a “Big X little x” pattern when players point to their opponents).

By default, players will only play against opponents from their own pods. If you intend to have cross-pod play, announce that now..

Distribute 3 booster packs for each player. Each player must receive an identical set of product..

- Create draft pods
- Seat the players
- Distribute product to the players

Pre-draft instructions

Make any announcements, including number of players, number of rounds, time for each round and other relevant information, before the draft begins. Please see the “How to make Head Judge Announcements” for more details. Also, include any information specific to the draft, such as the proper order of boosters in a mixed-set draft, or policies such as “zone drafting” (see below).

Ask whether any players are unfamiliar with drafting. If necessary, briefly explain the entire draft procedure (outlined below) to the new players. You may also want to provide some basic information of what to draft (bombs, removal, evasion, filler). The players should remove the token and non-foil basic land if appropriate.

- Make Head Judge Announcements
- Ask if there are any players that haven’t drafted before, and if there is, go through the basics.
- If a multi-set draft, instruct players which order boosters should be opened

The Draft

Instruct the players to open the first booster. The players will each select a single card and place it on the table face-down in front of them. , Then, each player will pass the remainder of the pack to the player to their **left**. This pick-and-pass process continues until all the cards in the first booster are

exhausted. This procedure is untimed at Regular REL, which can result in a backlog of packs behind a single player. However, many judges and TOs enforce “zone drafting,” permitting no more than one pack to wait in the zone between two drafters.

At no point during the draft may players reveal any cards, drafted or undrafted, to other players, except for double-faced cards. Players may not conceal or hide double-faced cards from the table, and many TOs ask players to announce the names of DFCs

Players will then repeat this entire process twice more, passing the second pack to the **right** and the third pack to the left. Players have a period to review their picks in between each pack; you should not normally need to time this period strictly, but if you wish to, the recommend times are 60 seconds after the first pack and 90 seconds after the second. At Regular REL, players are also permitted to review their picks at any time. However, they must still make their picks in a timely matter, and under no circumstances should they hold drafted and undrafted cards at the same time.

After the third pack has been completely drafted, players are ready to construct their decks.

- Open first booster, pick a card and pass the rest to the left. Continue until all cards in the first booster is exhausted. Let the players review what they have picked.
- Open second booster, pick a card and pass the rest to the right. Continue until all cards in the second booster is exhausted. Let the players review what they have picked.
- Open third booster, pick a card and pass the rest to the left. Continue until all cards in the third booster is exhausted. The players are now ready to construct their decks.

Deck Construction

The players must now construct their decks. Ideally, the players should have no contact with any cards except their drafted deck and basic lands provided by the judge.

Using their draft picks and basic lands, players must construct a deck of at least 40 cards. Unlike constructed play, booster draft rules allow for any number of a single card to be used in a deck, so a player who drafts five or more copies of a card may play all of them. At Regular REL, players are not required to register their decklist and may change the configuration of their main deck and sideboard between rounds.

The Tournament

In the first round players will either selected at random to play against each other, or play the opponent seated furthest from them in the draft, depending on the tournament structure. Most local stores run their drafts as Swiss pairings, so players can play all three rounds even if they lose. In contrast, side events at MagicFests and conventions typically run single-elimination brackets.

Like all single-player tournaments, drafts have best-of-three matches. Swiss drafts use 50-minute rounds. Single-elimination side events typically use untimed rounds.