

Beginner's guide to tournament play.

Answers

to all those common questions
players have at their
first tournament.

Handy Definitions:

Swiss: A format in which players continue to play throughout the entire tournament regardless of their match wins or losses.

Single Elimination: A format in which players are eliminated from the tournament after a single match loss. This is the usual format for booster draft events.

Match: A game or set of games between two players. Some card games specify one game to determine a match, others use best two out of three games.

Round: A fixed period of time in which all participants are expected to complete their match.

Constructed: A constructed event is one in which the players build their decks from their own collection of cards before the event.

Draft: A format in which players select cards one at a time from sealed packs with which to build their decks. Packs are supplied at the time of the event.

Sealed Deck: A format in which players are given packs of cards with which to build their decks. Packs are supplied at the time of the event, usually when everyone is seated.

Deck Swap: A type of sealed deck, where the cards that a player receives and registers may not be the same cards that he or she builds a deck from.

Sanctioned: A sanctioned tournament is one where the results of the matches will be reported to the company that produces the game. Sanctioned tournaments affect a player's rating and usually have more stringent rules requirements.

Deck List: A list of all the cards in a player's deck by name and count. Most sanctioned constructed formats require a player to submit a list of the cards in their decks before the first round begins. In sanctioned events players may have their decks checked against the deck list they submitted for the tournament. The decks are expected to match the list.

Sideboard: Extra cards that may be added to a deck after the first game in a multi-game match. Each game has different rules concerning sideboards. Not all game formats allow sideboards to be used.

Top eight: After a Swiss tournament has completed its normal number of rounds, the top eight players will face each other in three rounds or single elimination matches to determine the final winner.

Pairings: The assignment of each player to their opponent for a round. Pairings usually indicates a table number indicating where each player should sit.

Rating: After you have played a number of sanctioned matches you will be given a rating. Your rating increases or decreases based on your



1. Signup

Most tournaments are open to anyone who shows up. They start with a sign up period. This is the time before play starts when people are expected to register with the organizer and pay any entry fee. Some organizers will have players fill out a registration form with the players name, address email and player number. Please print legibly when filling out forms.

2. Player numbers

Many trading card game manufacturers require that the players in their tournaments have player numbers. For Magic the Gathering and Duelmasters, this is called a DCI number. For Yu-Gi-Oh! or VS System, it is a UDE Player Number, for Pokémon it's a POP Id. If you don't have a player number you can get one at the tournament. You will be asked to fill out a small form, and will be given a card with their player number on it. Players should keep this card and bring it to each tournament they attend. The purpose of these numbers is so that players can be given rankings.



3. Single elimination or Swiss?

There are two main standard formats, single elimination and Swiss. In single elimination, when a player loses a match, they are eliminated from the tournament. Most booster draft tournaments are single elimination. In Swiss format, players are not eliminated from the tournament and are expected to keep playing each round, regardless of whether they won or lost their last match. Each round they will be matched up against a player with the same win/loss record.

4. Dropping

It is important to tell the tournament organizer if you decide to stop playing. This is called dropping. If you don't tell your judge, but just leave, then next round there will be someone waiting for you to show up, and they may not get a chance to play.

5. Pairings

In each round of a tournament, players are told who they are to play. This is done by assigning each player a table number. Two players who are assigned the same table number will sit across from each other and play. These are called pairings. Players should find their name on the pairings list, read across to their table number, and then go sit at that table at the beginning of each round. Players may not start playing until told to by the judge.

6. Rounds

How long a tournament will last is most often determined by how many people show up. The more people in attendance, the more rounds of play there must be to determine the final winner. Each round can be between 30 to 50 minutes long depending on the game. Pokémon rounds are 30 minutes long, Magic the Gathering rounds are 50 minutes long.



7. Finals

Often the top players in a tournament face off in the playoffs, which are called the quarter-finals, semi-finals and finals. Usually this is the top eight players. The names of the top players are announced at the end of the tournament.

8. Constructed format:

A constructed format tournament is one where the players all bring their own pre-made decks to play with. There are often rules about which cards can be played with. Each game manufacturer will have tournament rules posted on their web sites. 1PlayerPlace.com also has links to the tournament rules section for each game. Players are expected to familiar with the game rules and understand the game format.

9. Draft format:

Drafting means to select. Players sit around a table and pass cards to each other. Each player opens a single booster pack, selects one card to keep, and then passes the rest to the player on their left. Each player then picks another card from the ones that were just passed to him or her, and then passes them on again. In this way, the packs of cards are passed around the table, getting fewer and fewer until all the cards have been picked. Depending on the game, players will repeat this procedure three or more times, alternating the direction the cards are passed. When all the packs have been opened, the players use the cards they have drafted to build a deck to play with. Most booster draft formats are single elimination.

10. Sealed deck format:

In a sealed deck format, the players are given their cards at the tournament, and may not play with any of their own cards or add cards to the ones they are given. The players may be given the cards when they pay, or most often, all at once when they are called to sit down

Sometimes players are asked to record the cards they have been given and to turn them back in. Once they are all collected they will be given back to the players randomly. This is called a deck swap. It helps prevent cheating and is used in the more serious tournaments.

Players must then build a deck using the cards they have been given. They will not have to use all the cards, but may do so. Good players pick only the best cards to play with. Most sealed deck games are Swiss format..

11. Sportsmanship

When you are playing in a tournament you must obey the rules of the game and you must also obey the rules of the tournament.

The two rules that most people have trouble with are starting a new round, and unsportsmanlike conduct. The beginning of each round is announced by the judges or organizer. Players are expected to find their seats quickly and get ready to play.

Poor sportsmanship is a rules violation and can get players warnings, game losses, match losses and ejected from the tournament depending on the severity of the action and mood of the judge and organizer. Poor sportsmanship includes trying to trick another player, lying, arguing with an official, as well as most any other form of bad behavior.

12. Final note

It is important to know that players always keep their own cards. They do not lose them to other players.

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