

How to beat the Online crowd Drafting *Seventh Edition*

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While *Seventh Edition* booster draft will never be a Pro Tour format, **Magic** Online has certainly popularized it as an interesting pastime. With a bit of patience, you can find a draft at almost any hour of the day or night.

As a longtime gamer, I get a lot of pleasure out of figuring out new games or, in the case of **Magic**, new formats. *Seventh Edition* draft is the latest one that I have set out to conquer. Over the past few weeks, I've been drafting this set almost exclusively in order to bring you this article. To start, here are some simple observations about the format:

1. Card advantage is rather rare, so get the 2-for-1 cards while you can ([Gravedigger](#), [Dakmor Lancer](#)).
2. Most creature tap abilities don't cost mana, so they can be very strong in multiples ([Prodigal Sorcerer](#), [Seeker of Skybreak](#), [Angelic Page](#)).
3. The format is slow enough that enchantments that continuously make all your creatures better are quite good ([Castle](#), [Knighthood](#), [Levitation](#)).

EXPLORING THE COLORS

The most important cards to look at in a limited environment are the ones that show up the most often, in other words the commons and to a lesser extent the uncommons. I'll travel quickly through the colors below, touching on their strong commons and some of the other cards as well.

Paul's Picks
Top 5 7E Commons
WHITE
1. Angelic Page
2. Razorfoot Griffin
3. Pacifism
4. Cloudchaser Eagle
5. Samite Healer

White unfortunately has the fewest main deck playable commons due to the [Circles of Protection](#) and useless [lifegain spells](#). However, it has strengths in the areas of flying, healing and combat effects. You generally want to stick to the fliers with two power or more as the other ones such as [Skyshroud Falcon](#) just don't have much effect on the game. [Razorfoot Griffin](#) is a great option with its built-in first strike. [Cloudchaser Eagle](#) is also strong as it allows you to maindeck enchantment removal in the form of a creature that will always be useful. As for healing, it's not a bad idea to pick up some [Samite Healers](#). The combat-modifying cards come in two flavors: ones that do damage to opposing creatures and ones that pump your own creatures. Both of these only affect attackers or blockers, but since 99% of all limited games are won in the combat phase and it is hard to evade with white creatures (some of them fly and there is no plainswalk in this set), that's really not much of a drawback. Pumping your creatures is generally a stronger ability than doing damage, except that it sometimes allows you to kill creatures that wouldn't be blocked otherwise. Remember that your [Heavy Ballista](#) can block a 2/2 on the ground and tap to kill another 2/2 before damage goes on the stack, thereby stopping and killing both of your opponent's creatures. [Crossbow Infantry](#), the common damage dealer, is not the greatest due to only being a 1/1 and only dealing 1 damage, but it is certainly playable and can be strong in a long game or in multiples. [Angelic Page](#), a common with flying and the pump ability, is one of the best two-drops in white, and [Serra Advocate](#) is extremely strong.

Green provides the usual complement of fat creatures, pump spells, and, to a lesser extent, useful creature enchantments. From the common slots you are looking for as many copies of [Trained Armodon](#), [Spined Wurm](#), and [Gorilla Chieftain](#) as you can pick up. [Llanowar Elves](#) are useful for providing explosive starts and [Seeker of Skybreak](#) and [Grizzly Bears](#) should fill out the curve. [Giant Growth](#) will always be useful and you want as many of them as possible.

Enchantments are dangerous due to the potential for card disadvantage and the fact that they require a good target, as Mark talked about in [his column](#), but both [Blanchwood Armor](#) and [Lure](#) provide strong enough effects that they should generally be considered playable. [Regeneration](#) as an enchantment can occasionally be good but it is better to just draft creatures that have regeneration in the first place (my green opponents always seem to have [Ancient Silverback](#), which is about as good as it's going to get).

Blue will give you the traditional strengths of flying, card drawing, bounce, and countermagic. The efficient [Wind Drake](#) and the ever-watchful [Vigilant Drake](#) are the trademark fliers from the common slot, with the uncommons providing [Air Elemental](#), [Fighting Drake](#), [Wind Dancer](#), and [Thieving Magpie](#). In card drawing, we have [Inspiration](#) which is a disappointment as you are paying four mana for one extra card (two cards minus the one you've spent), even if it is at instant speed. On the other end of the spectrum is [Opportunity](#), which will often win the game if it resolves due to the sheer card advantage. There is also [Sleight of Hand](#) which improves card quality if not quantity. [Remove Soul](#) and [Counterspell](#) are both strong, with [Memory Lapse](#) and [Force Spike](#) being much more situational and mainly serving to help you in the early game against aggressive decks.

GREEN

1. [Gorilla Chieftain](#)
2. [Spined Wurm](#)
3. [Giant Growth](#)
4. [Trained Armodon](#)
5. [Seeker of Skybreak](#)

BLUE

1. [Vigilant Drake](#)
2. [Wind Drake](#)
3. [Counterspell](#)
4. [Prodigal Sorcerer](#)
5. [Giant Octopus](#)

RED

1. [Lightning Blast](#)
2. [Volcanic Hammer](#)
3. [Shock](#)
4. [Spitting Earth](#)
5. [Balduvian Barbarians](#)

BLACK

1. [Dark Banishing](#)
2. [Corrupt](#)
3. [Gravedigger](#)
4. [Serpent Warrior](#)
5. [Razortooth Rats](#)

Red will provide your deck with an aggressive side, with efficient creatures and burn in large quantities. Its other primary strategy, land destruction, isn't terribly viable in draft. However, almost every burn spell in *Seventh Edition* is playable, [Lava Axe](#) being the only possible exception. The main spell that you really want is [Blaze](#), as time has shown that X damage spells are broken in limited environments, but [Shock](#), [Volcanic Hammer](#), and [Spitting Earth](#) will all do. For the creatures, anything with power equal to the converted mana cost is great, such as [Goblin Raider](#), [Balduvian Barbarians](#), [Ogre Taskmaster](#), and [Fire Elemental](#). In fact, most of the red creatures in *Seventh Edition* are worthwhile.

Black has the highest number of playable commons in my opinion. There are two common removal spells in the form of [Dark Banishing](#) and [Corrupt](#) (plus [Nausea](#) is sort of a third). For discard, it has [Mind Rot](#) and [Duress](#), both of which can come in handy even if discard is not as strong in limited as it is in constructed. And [Raise Dead](#) essentially lets you cast any creature out of your graveyard for one mana more than it originally cost. It's not card advantage, but it's cheap enough that it is usable. And lastly, the artifacts, while not strictly a color, also have a place in *Seventh Edition*. Looking at the uncommons, only [Phyrexian Hulk](#) and [Pit Trap](#) stand out as possible high picks. Remember that the Trap only kills non-fliers (although [Caltrops](#) affects all creatures -- anyone care to explain that?), but it is still a good answer to green fatties or regenerators. [Rod of Ruin](#) can be useful in a control deck but the expensive casting and activation costs mean that it's only helpful against long game annoyances such as [Angelic Page](#) or [Samite Healer](#), not against creature rushes. The various 2/3's ([Grapeshot Catapult](#), [Pataqia Golem](#), and [Wall of Spears](#)) are fine and can serve to fill out creature bases in the right decks. But it ends there. Please don't be tempted by the sparkly [Diamonds](#), the "[lucky charms](#)," the [Soul Net](#), or the [Sisay's Ring](#).

WHAT'S THE PLAN?

An important realization made by every good drafter at some point is that you are not just trying to draft the best card in your colors of every pack, but you are trying to draft the best card for *your* deck. There is a big difference between these two and that difference is one of the reasons why we won't have a computer AI drafting with the best players any time soon. You could rank every one of the cards in a set and have the computer first figure out its two colors and then just pick the highest rated card from those colors out of each pack, but it would rarely come up with a cohesive deck. The problem is that the value of cards fluctuates wildly depending on what sort of deck you are drafting, or in other words, how you plan to win. [Pit Trap](#), for example, is a pretty strong artifact that seems like it would fit right into any deck. For a relatively cheap price you get to kill a creature that is attacking you without the possibility of regeneration. But in an aggressive green/red deck that wants to kill its opponent as quickly as possible, the [Pit Trap](#) is almost a dead draw.

During the first pack or early in the second, you should have figured out how your deck plans to win. Partially it depends on your colors, partially it depends on your preferences, and partially it depends on what cards are coming around. The plan can be anything from the standard "I'm going to hold the ground with big blockers and then kill my opponent through the air" to the more esoteric "I'm going to stay alive using [Worship](#) and draw lots of cards using [Greed](#) while gaining life through [Venerable Monks](#) and [Corrupts](#)." I actually won a draft with a deck that followed that second plan, although I wouldn't always recommend pursuing strange strategies. The more complicated the strategy is, the more individual cards you are probably depending on drawing before it will work.

GOING AGGRO

Traditionally, aggressive decks have been green/red, but there is a lot of room for innovation. Realistically, the only color combinations that can't effectively follow the aggro route are white/blue, blue/black, and maybe white/black. However, every color has at least a few cards to offer to this archetype. If you are drafting something like aggressive white/red, just be aware that most of your cards might have to come from red, as you have no real use for some of the more defensive white cards.

From white, an aggressive deck wants a base of creatures that can swing like [Knight Errant](#), [Longbow Archer](#), and [Seasoned Marshal](#) if you can get one. Then you want to pick up cards that will continuously make it difficult for your opponent to block such as [Angelic Page](#), [Serra Advocate](#), [Knighthood](#), and [Heavy Ballista](#). [Pacifism](#) is a cheap card that removes a potential blocker and [Serra's Embrace](#) can create a huge flier that can continue the beatings. Unfortunately, it pretty much ends there as white is not an aggressive color.

As a green mage you just want many of the creatures that I talked about above. A good curve is key for dealing damage in the early game and keeping the pressure on. Then you want to follow up with a couple of fatties at the top end who can continue smashing through after your opponent has stopped your smaller creatures. Pump spells are important and landwalk can sometimes make the difference. [Monstrous Growth](#) should be looked at as a way to either get roughly six damage through that otherwise wouldn't have, or as removal for one of your opponent's creatures, both of which you like. I'm not a huge fan of [Giant Spider](#) as it is not very aggressive but in *Seventh Edition* it can be difficult to kill a control-style opponent terribly quickly. Since even one [Giant Spider](#) (or [Femeref Archers](#)) can give you an extra ten turns of survival against a defensive deck with fliers, I can see them being included.

From blue you're not getting a whole lot, but cheap fliers like [Wind Drake](#) along with countermagic and bounce is probably your best bet. You are pretty much taking the tempo route at this point so you want to put down a few creatures and then make it tough for your opponent to get anything into play and keep it there.

You should make full use of the creatures that can't block in red since some other people won't value them very highly. [Ogre Taskmaster](#), [Goblin Raider](#), and [Pygmy Pyrosaur](#) will all work fine in your deck. Beyond that, pick up as much burn as possible. Most of the enchantments are a bit risky but [Goblin War Drums](#) is perfect at making your swarm of creatures tough to stop. And don't forget to pick up as a [Disorder](#) as a good sideboard option for clearing out annoying white weenies.

If you're in black, pick up aggressive creatures like [Serpent Warrior](#), [Spineless Thug](#), [Foul Imp](#), and [Giant Cockroach](#) backed up by removal like [Dark Banishing](#). [Unholy Strength](#) can bring the pain and [Howl from Beyond](#) acts as a finisher or as an answer to high toughness blockers.

Finally, [Razortooth Rats](#) are useful as a fairly costed evasion creature.

CONTROLLING THE GAME

The control player also has a lot of options in this format. Blue/white is the obvious choice, but I have also had success with white/black. Green and red are not as well suited to this archetype but they can be made to work in combination with a stronger control color. Again, the basic premise behind control is to answer your opponent's threats and then either kill him using evasion or by drawing more cards than him and producing enough threats to overwhelm him.

White has a bunch of options, from the tough [Standing Troops](#) to the old standby, [Wall of Swords](#). A well-placed [Castle](#), some [Samite Healers](#) and maybe a [Master Healer](#) make you and your creatures tough to kill while the fliers finish it. [Reprisal](#) and [Vengeance](#) are both viable answers to large threats, with [Reprisal](#) shining as an answer to green's pump spells because of it being a cheap instant. [Breath of Life](#) makes your creatures come back for second helpings. The [Circles of Protection](#) are not my favorite spells, but you might as well pick up a few of them since they are so plentiful and it's occasionally a good idea to side them in against the appropriate colors. In my opinion though, the best way to win with white is to get a couple of the enhancing guys on the table and keep them alive. As long as they are around, combat is just a losing proposition for your opponent.

As a side note, if you are playing against a white deck on **Magic Online**, you almost always want to consider bringing in enchantment removal as pretty much everyone seems to side in CoPs. Or, if you've seen multiple CoPs and you don't have any answers, consider surprising them with a third color as I did one time in game three. In game two my opponent had played the CoPs of both my colors on turns two and three. A few turns later I conceded as he kept laying lands and I had no answers in the maindeck. I went to look at the sideboard and I somehow hadn't managed to pick up any enchantment removal, so I sided three forests and a [Thorn Elemental](#) into my white/black deck. It worked like a charm. He had both CoPs by turn five or so, but on turn twelve [Thorn Elemental](#) hit the board and about five seconds later he scooped, giving me the match.

Green can deal with fliers pretty effectively through the use of [Giant Spider](#), [Squall](#), and [Wing Snare](#). It can also gum up the ground with large fatties, but beyond that it sort of falls flat from a control perspective. Unfortunately it is weak in the area of evasion unless your opponent is playing with islands or swamps and you have [Bull Hippo](#) or [Anaconda](#).

Blue tends to want as many fliers as possible plus something to let it draw a bunch of cards and, as always, some countermagic. White is a good pairing for blue as it shores up the ground and can pump the blue fliers up to punch through [Giant Spiders](#) and other blockers. I have had trouble drafting blue/black effectively in *Seventh Edition* although it probably could be made to work.

Red pretty much just contributes burn and more burn to a control deck. This can either kill troublesome creatures or go straight to the dome if the defenses are strong enough. [Inferno](#) is a great reset button if you manage to pick one up.

Black gives fast card drawing (at a price), creature recursion, and removal to a control deck. There's also some evasion in the forms of flying, swampwalk, and fear. The main weakness is probably the creatures as they aren't that good on defense except for the regenerators [Wall of Bone](#) and [Drudge Skeletons](#), which is why it's not a bad idea to pair white with black.

WHAT DO YOU VALUE?

If you draft a lot, you can go into your online collection, change it to a certain set, and arrange it by the number of each card that you have. Doing this provides some truly interesting information that would never be available to you without **Magic Online**. If a card is near the top, it means that you value it more than the average player does. Cards that are valued highly by everyone (such as [Dark Banishing](#)) will rarely be near the top, as you won't even get a chance to pick enough copies for it to rival a card like [Scathe Zombies](#), which is currently at the top of my list. The Zombies are closely followed by [Spineless Thug](#) and [Coral Merfolk](#) (with [Serpent Warrior](#) close behind), which just goes to show how much more I value having a good mana curve of creatures than most people. After that comes [Memory Lapse](#), a tempo-based counterspell that I am starting to like less and less, and

then [Gravedigger](#), a card-advantage generating creature which, like I said earlier, is very strong in a basic set like *Seventh Edition*.

My first green card is [Gorilla Chieftain](#), in the eleventh spot. In my experience green is overdrafted on **Magic** Online in both *Odyssey* and *Seventh Edition* draft, but regeneration on a 3/3 body is powerful enough in this format that I sometimes end up playing green anyway. After that comes [Goblin Raider](#) and [Giant Growth](#), both strong cards in an aggressive green/red deck. White isn't represented until a little later, with [Razorfoot Griffin](#) and [Knight Errant](#) at the top of the list. When I first started drafting *Seventh Edition* I didn't value white much, probably because I hate going near it in *Odyssey/Torment* draft. However, these days I will always draft it if the cards are coming, as I've since realized that it can be rather strong.

SUMMING IT UP

I have kept a record of my wins and losses during the last few weeks. Interestingly, decks including white have the strongest win percentage with me winning over 80% of my matches. Blue and red follow close behind, with green and black bringing up the rear. But I've found that it's possible to win with almost any color combination if you know what you are doing.

Good luck if you decide to try the format out, as it can be a lot of fun. And take a look below for some examples of 3-0 decks from online drafts.

DECK EXAMPLES

Aggressive Green/Red



Main Deck

40 cards

7 Forest	1 Blaze
10 Mountain	1 Giant Growth
_____	1 Inferno
17 lands	1 Monstrous Growth
	1 Pyrotechnics
2 Balduvian Barbarians	1 Spitting Earth
1 Giant Spider	1 Volcanic Hammer
2 Goblin Chariot	_____
2 Goblin Raider	7 other spells
1 Hill Giant	
1 Lightning Elemental	
1 Lone Wolf	
2 Pygmy Pyrosaur	
1 Sabretooth Tiger	

- 1 [Seeker of Skybreak](#)
- 1 [Spined Wurm](#)
- 1 [Trained Armodon](#)

16 creatures



Control Blue/White



Main Deck

40 cards

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 7 Island | 2 Breath of Life |
| 10 Plains | 1 Castle |
| <hr/> | 1 Knighthood |
| 17 lands | 1 Reprisal |
| | <hr/> |
| 1 Angelic Page | 5 other spells |
| 2 Cloudchaser Eagle | |
| 1 Crossbow Infantry | |
| 1 Horned Turtle | |
| 1 Kjeldoran Royal Guard | |
| 1 Master Healer | |
| 1 Razorfoot Griffin | |

- 2 [Samite Healer](#)
- 1 [Seasoned Marshal](#)
- 1 [Serra Advocate](#)
- 1 [Standing Troops](#)
- 1 [Venerable Monk](#)
- 1 [Vigilant Drake](#)
- 1 [Wall of Air](#)
- 2 [Wind Drake](#)

18 creatures



Greed Lifegain



Main Deck

40 cards

- | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 8 Plains | 2 Corrupt |
| 9 Swamp | 1 Dark Banishing |
| <hr/> | 1 Greed |
| 17 lands | 1 Knighthood |
| | 2 Vengeance |
| 2 Angelic Page | 1 Worship |
| 1 Dakmor Lancer | <hr/> |

- 1 [Giant Cockroach](#)
- 2 [Gravedigger](#)
- 1 [Looming Shade](#)
- 1 [Razorfoot Griffin](#)
- 2 [Scathe Zombies](#)
- 2 [Spineless Thug](#)
- 2 [Venerable Monk](#)
- 1 [Wall of Swords](#)

8 other spells

15 creatures



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