

The most fun tournament around **Mirrodin Prerelease Primer**

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- [Brian David-Marshall Archive](#)

For all the details on the upcoming Mirrodin Prerelease events, click [here](#).

Tick...tick...tick...tick...

That's the sound of the clock counting off the moments to the *Mirrodin* Prerelease. Players all over the world are keenly aware of the countdown and are anxiously awaiting this weekend. Are you among them?

If not, why not? Is it because you have never been to a Prerelease before? The last two times I have written Prerelease Primers were for the follow-up expansions to *Onslaught*. I can understand that some players might be reluctant to jump into a set mid-expansion.

In *Onslaught/Legions/Scourgesealed* deck, the morphs in particular would leave you at a serious disadvantage if you did not have much experience with the base set. But with *Mirrodin*, all things are fresh and new to all players.

I, sadly, cannot play in the prerelease itself because I have advance access to the spoiler. I miss playing in them and still attend on the second day to draft with my friends. Since players win booster packs as prizes we usually organize casual drafts late Saturday evening or all day long on Sunday. I still miss playing in the actual tournament, which is probably why I urge MagicTheGathering.com readers not to miss out on the most fun you will have playing **Magic** at a tournament.



This is your opportunity to get in on the ground floor. I know a number of players (Hogan, are you reading this?) who drift in and out of the game. When they come back it is always with the release of a new stand alone block. Plus, as you can probably tell from the previews, *Mirrodin* puts its own

unique twist on the game. Everyone should be starting out at pretty much square one with the new mechanics. Perfect for the new or returning **Magic** player.

New Twists

As Anthony pointed out in his article [on Saturday](#), there is also going to be a Team Sealed option at all the North American prereleases. That allows you to play with your friends (and not *against* them, as Anthony astutely pointed out) as opposed to having to build your sealed deck by yourself. This way you get four more eyes on each deck and generally have more fun than in an individual sealed deck match. It also give you a little resiliency against mana screw and mana flood. It will still happen but it won't be an auto loss for you that round—your teammates can pick you up and you can return the favor next round.

Getting Started

When you arrive at the location you will pay a tournament entry fee. This fee covers your entry into the tournament and with that you will receive a *Mirrodin* Tournament Pack, two *Mirrodin* booster packs and a commemorative foil Prerelease card (you cannot use this card to build your deck). Don't worry if you don't receive your tournament pack and boosters right away. Tournament organizers will generally wait until everyone is seated and hand out the cards to everyone at the same time.



When you pay your entry fee you will be asked for your name and your DCI number. The DCI is the governing body for organized **Magic** and to play in a DCI sanctioned event you must have a unique number that they assign to you. Do not worry if you don't have one. They are free and all you will have to do is fill out a card with your pertinent information. If you already have a DCI number but you don't remember it, don't worry. The organizer should be able to find it for you from a DCI database. Your DCI number is used to track your performance in **Magic** tournaments and lets you know how you are doing compared against every player in the world, in your country, in your state, and so on. For more information about the DCI and specific tournament floor rules you should visit the [DCI homepage](#).

Now What?

You have paid your entry fee and are registered for the tournament. Your foil prerelease card is tucked in your binder awaiting the day's best trade offer and you are seated and the cards are being handed out. At this point you will more than likely be asked to register the contents of the card pool you receive. There is a checklist that will be handed to you (this is a good time to mention that you should make sure and bring a pen!) and you will see a complete checklist of all the *Mirrodin* cards sorted alphabetically by color. After you sort and alphabetize your cards you will check off those card on this sheet. You will probably be asked to turn in the cards you have registered and the checklist. The cards will then be randomly redistributed and deck building will begin. The reason for this step is preserve the integrity of the event. Not only does it make it impossible for an unscrupulous player to

bring in game-breaking cards that he didn't have originally but it allows you to play in the tournament with confidence that everything is on the up and up.

Time to build your deck. Once you have been given the cards you will be playing with you will have an announced amount of time to construct a 40-card minimum deck. The tournament organizer will provide you with additional basic lands to build your deck if you need them. Some organizers will collect all of the basic lands and then redistribute them based on what each player needs to build his or her deck.

A couple of quick pointers about sealed deck construction:

- Try, try, try to stick to a 40-card minimum. You don't need to play with all of your cards and some are better left unplayed. The closer you can keep the deck to the minimum size the more likely you will be to draw the best and most exciting cards in your deck.
- Play at least 17 lands in that 40-card deck. If you play more cards you will need to play more land.
- Try to play two colors if you can. It is perfectly reasonable to "splash" a third color as long as the mana requirements are not too intense. Splashing red for a Shrapnel Blast is fine. Splashing two Islands for Vedalken Archmage is much less reasonable. Splashing for a card with triple or multiple colored mana costs is not reasonable at all.
- All of the cards you do not use in your deck are considered your sideboard. You don't have to worry about playing with an answer for every question in your main deck. You will be playing best two out of three and will have the opportunity to sideboard for the last two games.
- Make sure you play with some removal. In the past that has meant playing red and/or black to dispatch creatures. Since this is "the artifact set" you may be looking to different colors for different types of removal, although red and black should not steer you wrong for traditional creature removal.

Now that you have built your deck it is time to start playing. Prerelease tournaments are run using a modified Swiss system. This means that there are a set number of rounds announced for the tournament and you can play in every round regardless of your record until the tournament is over. Most tournaments will have a posted prize schedule before the tournament starts. It may say that everyone with a specific record or better will win prizes at the end of the tournament. Usually, two losses will knock you out of range of prizes but you should find out before the tournament starts. Once you possess this information you will be able to make a decision about whether or not you want to continue playing based on the likelihood of winning prizes. Prizes are always *Mirrodin* booster packs, ranging from an entire box for an undefeated record to 1/3 or a 1/2 box for less perfect records.

Each round lasts 50 minutes with a varying amount of down time between rounds. There are usually a variety of card dealers at these events looking to buy and sell cards. Some events even have signings

by **Magic** artists. Trading is rarely better than on prerelease day. You should have no trouble keeping yourself occupied while waiting for the next round to start.

Most prerelease events will have multiple "flights" running throughout the day. This means that instead of running one ginormous tournament there are many smaller ones held throughout the weekend. What this further means is that you can sign up for more than one event. It will cost you another entry fee but is usually less expensive for the second flight you play in. because the tournaments are run in smaller flights you can either play for a little while or just play all day long signing up for tournament after tournament.

The tournaments are sanctioned but since they have a low "K value" they will not have a tremendous impact on you rating, which allows the tournament to remain a low on cutthroat play, high on fun kind of event. It is also an excellent opportunity to try new styles of play like Booster Draft if you are so inclined.

If you have been following the previews here and on [Sideboard](#) and find yourself intrigued with [imprint](#), [affinity](#), [artifact lands](#) and exciting new cards like [Isochron Scepter](#) and [Mindslaver](#), I hope you will give the *Mirrodin* prerelease weekend a try. I will be hanging around the one at Neutral Ground in New York on Sunday envying everyone who gets to play. Stop in and console me if you're in the area.

As always, be sure to contact your local tournament organizer to verify times and locations or to answer any other questions you may have.

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