

Mirrodin block's new toys Prismatic in the *Darksteel* Era

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Prismatic is a **Magic** format involving gigantic, five-color, 250-card decks. It's one of the casual formats available to you in *Magic Online*, and it's a blast. In this article I'll be reviewing the rules of Prismatic, discussing what kinds of cards are good choices to keep in mind for your own Prismatic deck, and lastly, taking a look at the gems the *Mirrodin* block has offered the format. I hope you'll stick around for a rainbowrific ride.

A Prismatic Re-Primer

Last year I wrote three articles on Prismatic on the *MagicOnline* site ([A Prismatic Primer](#), [Prismatic Treasures 1](#), and [Prismatic Treasures 2](#)). If you missed them and you're interested, check them out. But in case you didn't read them and you haven't played Prismatic before, here's a quick rundown on the rules of the format. First, the deck construction rules.

- Your deck must contain at least 250 cards.
- Your deck must contain at least 20 white cards, 20 blue cards, 20 black cards, 20 red cards, and 20 green cards. Multicolor and split cards count as one of the card's colors, but not as more than one.
- Your deck can't have [Battle of Wits](#) in it. (It is banned in this format.)

Prismatic also has a special mulligan rule.

- If your starting hand has 0, 1, 6 or 7 lands in it, you can take a "big deck mulligan" for free; that is, you can get back a fresh hand of seven cards. After that, you'll have to Paris mulligan as normal if you don't like your hand. Note that if you take a "big deck mulligan," your opponent has the opportunity to take one too, for "free." Same goes for you if your opponent takes a "big deck mulligan."

That's it. Those are the rules of Prismatic. The real fun is the strategy of the format—how you can build the best-interacting 250-card behemoth with the cards you have available, and how, once you see that opening seven, you can manage to eke a win with the resources your colorful deck provides you.



Building a Prismatic Deck

There are two main differences between a Prismatic deck and a regular **Magic** deck, which have important implications for how you build it.

It's five colors, and it's huge.

That means you're bound to have both mana issues and consistency issues. But those are the central challenges to Prismatic, and both are solvable. Let's focus on both of these issues separately and discuss what you can do about them.



Mana for Your Prismatic Deck



Mana in a five-color format is obviously a steep hill to climb. Although you may get some enjoyment just from looking at the crazy mix of cards in your opening Prismatic hand, counting the number of different colored mana symbols, and congratulating yourself on having traded for all those rainbownificent rares—it's a lot more fun actually to be able to cast some of them.

Follow these three rules and you'll be well on your way:

- **Run enough land.**

It's difficult to emphasize this enough. Think about ratios when you choose how much land to put in your Prismatic deck—if a 60-card deck runs 24 land, or about 40%, your Prismatic deck will have to run about 100 lands! But won't that make you mana flooded? No—remember, just like a regular **Magic** game, you start with only seven of your 250 cards, and you only draw one card per turn. You want to make sure that you still have two or three lands in your opening draw, and that you can muster several more as the turns progress.

- **Emphasize some colors over others.**

If you can narrow down your deck's emphasis to one or two or possibly three colors, your mana can improve drastically. For example, perhaps you want your deck to focus on green and white cards. You can keep your red, blue and black cards to their 20-card minimums, and play gold, split and cycling cards like [Vindicate](#), [Assault/Battery](#) and [Shoreline Ranger](#) to fill up those requirements. Choose splashable cards in your minor colors ([Terror](#), [Halaam Djinn](#), [Allied Strategies](#)) and leave the double- and triple-mana cards to your main colors ([Wrath of God](#), [Fangren Firstborn](#)). Then you can devote mana part of your deck to [Elfhome Palaces](#), [Brushlands](#), [Sungrass Prairies](#), and a greater proportion of Forests and Plains. That way you'll be less likely to be stuck with a handful of  spells with lands that make .

- **Play mana-fixing cards.**

R&D wants you to be able to play your spells—it's true, I asked them. Well, at least I asked [MagicOnline's](#) search engine for a list of lands and spells that generate or give access to multiple colors of mana. It's a long list. From lands ([fetchlands](#), [taplands](#), [painlands](#), [Cities](#), [Coliseums](#), [Quarries...](#)) to creatures ([Diligent Farmhand](#), [Necra Disciple](#), [Dream Thrush](#), [Weathered Wayfarer](#), [Birds of Paradise...](#)) to artifacts ([Talisman of Dominance](#), [Darksteel Ingot](#), [Chromatic Sphere...](#)) to spells ([Rampant Growth](#), [Harrow](#), [Journey to Discovery](#)), you have a ton of options for ways to smooth your mana. In fact, you'll have access to far more choices than you need, even given your deck's impressive girth. Choose an array of these and many other fine mana-helping cards and you'll be playing out that colorful opening hand in no time.

Consistency for Your Prismatic Deck



Your Prismatic deck is big – it has about four times as many cards as a regular 60-card deck. Face facts, that makes your deck less consistent. The bigger a deck is, the less often a particular card will come up, so the less often you'll be able to draw just the right card at the right time. You might draw a [Fireshrieker](#) without a [Hystrodon](#) to equip it. You might draw a [Chainer's Edict](#) when you really need to destroy your opponent's [Mirari's Wake](#). You might draw a Plains when you need a creature. But that's why we love it – Prismatic is not about well-oiled machines. It's about the fun of playing the

same deck a different way each time, seeing bizarre combinations of cards that would normally never see play, and throwing all your favorite cards into one superdeck and playing against opponents who've done the same.

But losing all the time is no fun.

Luckily, you've got weapons to deal with this inconsistency. Again, follow these three rules and your Prismatic deck will do the unexpected—*reliably*.

- **Think in ratios.**

How many of a certain card to play depends on how often you want to draw it. To build a Prismatic deck with the right number of each type of card, model it after a 60-card deck you already like. A simple rule of thumb is to multiply by 4 to translate from a regular 60-card deck to your Prismatic deck. If your model 60-card deck has 8 small, cheap creatures, your Prismatic deck should have about 32 creatures in the same role (probably spread out over all five colors). This is just an approximation of course, but it's a handy way to translate to the larger deck size without having to whip out your calculator for more exact figures.

- **Use analogues.**

You can only play 4 [Wild Mongrels](#) in your Prismatic deck—but what if you've determined that you need 32 small, efficient creatures? You play *analogues*—cards that have a similar cost and function. [Wild Mongrel](#) is a tough 2/2 with some tricks up his sleeve. You might fill in the ranks with [Gaea's Skyfolk](#), [Whipcorder](#), [Meddling Mage](#), or [Nomadic Elf](#). Being able to find analogues of cards that suit your deck's strategy is a key skill to building a successful Prismatic deck.

- **Mind your mana curve.**

Many Prismatic games go long enough for you to cast that [Dromar, the Banisher](#) or even entwine that [Promise of Power](#). But that doesn't mean you shouldn't have anything to do until then. Make sure you have an appropriate mix of cheap, early-game spells so that you can stay alive long enough to cast (or fend off) that [Dromar](#). Again, think in terms of ratios—if a 60-card deck plays 12 spells for 3 or less mana, then you should play around 48!

A Prismatic Deck Recipe

I'm not going to provide you with a decklist. But to get you started, I'd like to sketch out a configurable "deck recipe" that you can use to create your own Prismatic deck.

- 8-12 utility creatures ([Flametonque Kavu](#), [Mesmeric Fiend](#), [Nekrataal](#), [Genesis](#), [Dwarven Blastminer](#), [Cloudchaser Eagle](#))
- 4-8 huge fatties ([Rith, the Awakener](#), [Visara the Dreadful](#), [Cromat](#), [Plated Slagwurm](#), [Bribery](#))
- 8-12 land-fetchers ([Harrow](#), [Solemn Simulacrum](#), [Weathered Wayfarer](#), [Journey to Discovery](#), [Living Wish](#))



- 8-12 five-color cards ([Birds of Paradise](#), [Darksteel Ingot](#), [Fertile Ground](#), [Mirrodin's Core](#))
- 4-8 tutors ([Diabolic Tutor](#), [Fabricate](#), [Eladamri's Call](#), [Fierce Empath](#), [Burning Wish](#), [Captain Sisay](#), [Quiet Speculation](#), [Buried Alive](#))
- 8-12 card-drawing spells ([Allied Strategies](#), [Fact or Fiction](#), [Promise of Power](#), [Greed](#))
- 4-8 multiple-creature removal spells ([Starstorm](#), [Akroma's Vengeance](#), [Fireball](#), [Decree of Pain](#), [Desolation Giant](#), [Jilt](#))
- 4-8 ways to deal with artifacts and enchantments – you may want to run more ways to deal with artifacts nowadays ([Viridian Shaman](#), [Hull Breach](#), [Vindicate](#), [Thunderscape Battlemage](#), [Altar's Light](#))
- 8-12 single copies of splashy, fun, game-ending or butt-saving stuff to tutor for ([Desolation Angel](#), [Darksteel Colossus](#), [Worship](#), [Memnarch](#), [Legacy Weapon](#), [Mirari's Wake](#), [Wrath of God](#), [Twilight's Call](#), [Platinum Angel](#), [Pernicious Deed](#))
- 100 lands and/or Talismans ([Onslaught cycling lands](#), [Onslaught fetchlands](#), [Invasion/Eighth Edition tap-duals](#), [Seventh Edition](#) and [Apocalypse painlands](#), [Planeshift Lairs](#) are all great... but don't forget to run enough basic lands!)

The rest of the recipe is configurable. Want a creature-licious beatdown deck? Add:

- 16-20 quality weenies ([Wild Mongrel](#), [Spectral Lynx](#), [Gaea's Skyfolk](#), [Arcbound Slith](#))
- 12-16 efficient midrange fighters ([Juggernaut](#), [Skizzik](#), [Erhnam Djinn](#), [Thought Devourer](#), [Hystrodon](#))
- 4-8 equipment and creature enhancers ([Lightning Greaves](#), [Bonesplitter](#), [Anger](#), [Glory](#), [Leonin Sun Standard](#))
- 8-12 tempo or anti-control cards ([Genesis](#), [Duress](#), [Temporal Spring](#))
- If in doubt, add more creatures

Want a control deck?

- 16-20 pinpoint creature removal spells ([Terror](#), [Pyrite Spellbomb](#), [Reprisal](#), [Prophetic Bolt](#), [Confiscate](#), [Treva's Charm](#))
- 12-16 additional multiple-creature control spells ([Chainer's Edict](#), [Starstorm](#), [Wrath of God](#), [Collective Restraint](#))
- 12-16 additional card-drawing cards and/or counters ([Arcanis the Omnipotent](#), [Concentrate](#), [Skeletal Scrying](#), [Discombobulate](#), [Mystic Snake](#))
- If in doubt, add hard-to-kill fatties

Congratulations, you're a Prismatic expert! Now let's investigate what new toys *Mirrodin* and *Darksteel* have brought us for Prismatic.

The *Mirrodin* Block and Prismatic

Artifacts—and therefore half the *Mirrodin* block—play an interesting role in Prismatic. On the one hand they are supremely easy to cast, which is a luxury in a five-color format. Want to play that [Aether Spellbomb](#)? Tap a [Plains](#), a [Charcoal Diamond](#), a [Darigaaz's Caldera](#), an unsac'ed [Terminal Moraine](#), or whatever your deck has coughed up for you so far. On the other hand, artifacts are colorless, so they don't help fulfill any of your deck's color







requirements. Out of your 250-card deck, 100 must be colored spells (minimum 20 of each color), and around 100 should be land, so that only leaves 50 colorless spells at the maximum (leaving aside artifact lands). You could run a 500-card deck and increase your percentage of artifacts, but you sacrifice a lot of consistency that way—at 250 cards, you're already leaving enough of the outcome to fate!

Landcyclers and Your Color Count

While we're talking about fitting artifacts into your Prismatic deck, consider *Scourge's* landcyclers ([Chartooth Cougar](#), [Elvish Aberration](#), [Eternal Dragon](#), [Noble Templar](#), [Shoreline Ranger](#), [Twisted Abomination](#), and [Wirewood Guardian](#)). Cycling is already a clever way to fill up your deck's minor-color slots, and the landcyclers go the extra mile—they cycle for colorless mana and grab you a basic land of the appropriate type. Furthermore, Prismatic games often go long enough that you'd actually be able to cast that [Shoreline Ranger](#) or [Wirewood Guardian](#), so they serve a very handy dual purpose. So fill up those color slots with landcyclers, and make more room for artifacts!

A Word about Affinity

Back to artifacts. Affinity is a central mechanic in the Prismatic block—and if it's one of your favorites, you may be sad to hear what I'm about to tell you. Affinity for artifacts is a cool ability, but it's awfully tough to pull off in Prismatic. As I mentioned before, you're really only going to be able to play about 50 artifacts (80 with artifact lands) in your deck. With less than 33% of your deck being artifacts, you're not going to be able to count on playing Thoughtcast for U—in fact, you should feel lucky if you manage it for  . And for  , wouldn't you rather be casting [Fact or Fiction](#)?

Affinity for basic land types is probably a similar story. While you could probably manage a cheaper [Tangle Golem](#), you'll almost never pull off a turn-3 [Razor Golem](#). It's a five-color format—your deck is concerned with getting domain (all five basic land types) on the table a lot more than with playing multiples of any particular land type.

So, sorry to the Affinity fans (and congratulations, if you're not a fan). But there are some powerful artifacts, colored spells and mechanics in the *Mirrodin* block that you *should* consider.

Prismatic-Grade Artifacts

You're already filling your Prismatic deck with gold cards, split cards, landcyclers and other colored goodies—but hold on a moment. Even in Prismatic, color isn't everything. Here are a few artifacts that should make it onto your shopping list and into at least some of your decklists.



Mana acceleration and mana-fixing are both golden in Prismatic, and *Mirrodin* block has arguably the best mana artifacts in the format. For example, *Mirrodin's* cycle of [Talismans](#) are like the [Seventh Edition Diamonds](#), except they make *two* colors of mana. And they don't come into play tapped, so they can be used immediately—not even [Star Compass](#) (a personal Prismatic fave) has it so good. *Darksteel's* [Darksteel Ingot](#) is like [Drake-Skull Cameo](#), except it makes all five colors of mana. And it's common... And oh yeah, *it's indestructible*. My, how our standards have changed for mana artifacts thanks to *Mirrodin* block! Take that, [Phyrexian Lens](#)! (And lest I forget, we already had access to [Chromatic Sphere](#) from *Invasion*, but we're glad to see it back.)

But there's more than mana where artifacts are concerned. If you're looking for flexibility without specific color requirements (and in this format, you are), you're in luck, because artifacts are now doing what only colored spells did in the Prismatic environment before *Mirrodin*. [Culling Scales](#) and [Oblivion Stone](#) destroy permanents of multiple types. [Cathodion](#) and [Juggernaut](#) beat down with a vengeance. [Elf Replica](#) and [Scrabbling Claws](#) remedy hard-to-deal-with enchantments and Incarnations. [Greaves](#), [Masks](#), [Swords](#) and [Shields](#), and all manner of other equipment power up creatures with unheard-of durability and reusability. And many artifacts do things that have never been done before – [Mindslaver](#), [Lightning Coils](#), and [Mycosynth Lattice](#) come to mind.

Speaking of new things, the imprint mechanic brings new opportunities for consistency to Prismatic, which should make you at least sit up and possibly drool. There's quite a list of 2-mana instants that can plug into [Isochron Scepter](#) in this environment, and [Panoptic Mirror](#) and [Spellbinder](#) have even longer lists. There's an opportunity for some [Quiet Speculation-Spellweaver Helix](#) craziness that I leave it to the reader to contemplate. And with all the [Flametongue Kavu](#) analogues in Prismatic, [Soul Foundry](#) is a machine you'll want on your side. (Note to the Johnnies out there: [Tutors](#) are unrestricted in this format...)

One last artifact deserves its own paragraph. You'll have to thank **Magic** Invitational winner Jens Thoren for the card he helped design, [Solemn Simulacrum](#). Its 2/2 body isn't huge in a format where 4 mana buys you [Ravenous Baloth](#), [Lightning Angel](#), or your second [Call of the Herd](#) token, but its [Rampant-Growth](#)-for-colorless-mana effect is particularly nice for Prismatic, and the draw-a-card effect is not only solid, but downright abusable in evil plans that range from [Diabolic Intent](#) to [Genesis](#). Thanks, Jens!

Mirrodin Block's Non-Artifact Goodies



But *Mirrodin* and *Darksteel* have more to offer than artifacts. [Mirrodin's Core](#) is a solid “rainbow land” that can round out your collection of [Cities of Brass](#) and [Grand Coliseums](#). [Glimmervoid](#) is an amazing land if you can pull off the steep artifact requirement. Much easier to manage is [Viridian Acolyte](#), a poor man's [Birds of Paradise](#) that manages to beat down for 1 a turn.

[Stalking Stones](#) and [Blinkmoth Nexus](#) are both high-quality animatable lands – while running too many non-color-producing lands is risky in Prismatic, they're another example of a card with two uses that you won't be sad to see early or late.

I'm fascinated with the potential of entwine cards in Prismatic. Like a split card, they offer two flexible ways to play the one card you just drew. Like kicker, they provide a turbo-boosted option if you've got the mana on hand. [Journey of Discovery](#) and [Reap and Sow](#) obviously leap out as great land-searching with a potential bonus: drop those two lands immediately or contribute to your opponent's color-screw. [Tooth and Nail](#) is an exciting possibility for a format that can take a while to develop; anything that tutors for more than one card is amazing in Prismatic, and putting fatties directly into play is a color-friendly boon, not to mention that a deck this big can pack a *lot* of cool options to choose from. [Promise of Power requires](#) a hefty commitment to black, but let me tell you that either side is a bargain and both together is what is known as a *beating*. I haven't had a chance to test many other entwine spells, but I like options provided by the word “or” on any card I draw in Prismatic.

Last but not least, I have to mention [Fabricate](#). Any reasonably-priced tutor is strong in a 250-card format, and with so many powerful artifacts suddenly hitting the environment, Fabricate is incredibly flexible for its splashable cost. In this environment you can [Fabricate land](#), [mana fixing](#), [creature removal](#), [artifact](#) or [enchantment removal](#), [graveyard removal](#), [weenies](#), [fatties](#), [token generators](#), [card advantage engines](#) and absolute [wrecking-ball game-enders](#). If your deck runs some artifact “silver bullets,” you'll want to load up on [Fabricates](#).

Your Assignment

I hope you're excited about the possibilities of this format, and I have some good news: you have some homework. But, this is probably the most fun assignment you've ever had: take a few minutes

and throw together a Prismatic deck. Shuffle it up and play a few solitaire games. If you're using **Magic Online**, look in one of the casual rooms for Prismatic games—there are almost always multiple people looking to play Prismatic. If you're playing cardboard **Magic**, entice a friend to make a Prismatic deck too. Play a match. I think you'll be a convert.