



MAGICTHEGATHERING.COM

ARTICLES

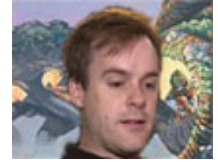
- Related links
- Read other articles

TOURNAMENTS

MAGIC ONLINE

Article Search

Trading Online



Don't get ripped off

Chad Ellis · Online and Enjoying It
Tuesday, June 1, 2004

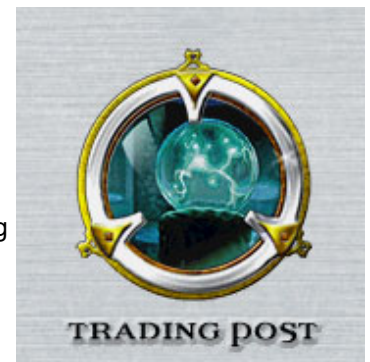
Ever since Wizards of the Coast first assumed that no player would have access to four of every rare (thus reducing the importance of card balance), **Magic** players have been trading. Whether it's friends going through binders, professional dealers making markets in singles and sets, or just Benzo (for whom the deck was named) trading and selling any non-Black cards for tournament entry fees (since, after all, "More Swamps means more death!"), trading is as much a part of **Magic** as deck construction and playing.

Trading on MTGO is different in many ways from trading offline. Some of those differences are good; others not. Today we're going to look at how to trade, buy and sell on MTGO – how to get the best prices for your unwanted rares, how to raise two tickets quickly when you just want to get in the draft queue, and how to avoid getting ripped off.

First, let's look at the very basics of trading – preparing your cards for trading, where you can go, and how a trade is performed on MTGO.

The first thing you may want to do is to decide which of your cards are up for trade. There are some convenient automatic settings that can, for example, make all of your cards tradable or all cards in excess of four, or you can go through your collection card by card.

Then there are three main places for buying and selling cards. The home page link to Trading Post takes you directly to two of them: Message Board and Marketplace. The Message Board allows players to list buy and/or sell prices (in event tickets) for singles, boosters, sets or even event tickets. You can either post a message or use the search function to scroll through all messages with a particular text string, e.g. a card you're looking for, MMD if you want a draft set, or "Foil" if you're buying or selling premium cards. In the Marketplace players make specific offers which scroll rapidly across the screen for people who want to trade more rapidly.



The third is a player-run auction room. Type /join auction and you're there. Players can submit cards for auction, with or without a minimum bid, or bid on auctions submitted by other players.

Once you and another player have agreed on a trade, one of you must initiate it by right-clicking on the other's name and selecting "Trade." This will open up a new window in which you see the other player's "available for trade" collection and he or she can see yours. Click on the cards/tickets you want and they are added to the "you get" column. If you add a card by mistake, click on it in the "you get" column and it will go back to the player's virtual binder. You can give and receive up to 32 cards or tickets in any one trade.

Once all the cards and tickets are in place, click confirm – when you have both confirmed a trade you will see a final confirmation window showing what you're giving and getting. Once you confirm this, the trade is completed and you'll be given a trade confirmation number.

Before we go on to specific advice on trading, let's look at some of the most important differences between trading virtual cards on MTGO vs. physical ones:

- There are many more people to trade with. While John Cataldo makes an [interesting case](#) for software that would enable trading with players even when they're offline, the fact remains that there are more dealers and traders online at any point in time on MTGO than you'll find in any store. (At time of writing, for example, there were nearly four hundred buy/sell active offers in the trading post, over two hundred in the MTGO message board and almost one hundred players in the auction channel.) This means pricing is more efficient, because you have a real market rather than only one or two sellers or buyers in which case prices can be distorted.
- Supply is much more efficient. Do you know how many copies of **Fact or Fiction** you own offline? I don't. Every now and then I go through my boxes of cards and try to bring a bit of order to them, but I know that if someone offered me a good price for my FoFs I wouldn't be able to get to all of them quickly. With offline cards you may even struggle to find people with the commons you need for your deck – just watch the dealer tables before any Extended PTQ to find out how much a random common may go for because there are five players who need four for their decks! Online this isn't an issue. If you've opened it, or drafted it, you've got it. I, for example, have 80 copies of **Mage's Guile**. Going cheap. The end result is that most non-rares can be bought cheap and commons can often be had for the asking, which is great if you're a relatively new player and don't want to bust open packs in order to find old commons for your constructed deck. Unpopular rares are also often quite cheap (less than one ticket each) for you rogue deckbuilders out there.
- You're not face to face. This is obvious, but it's also important. When you're in a room with someone and cards and/or money trade hands, you see what you're getting and you often know who you're getting it from. We'll discuss some good safety precautions later in the article.

The next thing to recognize is that there is no one set of advice that applies to all traders. You have to recognize what kind of trader you want to be. Are you a drafter whose only interest is in selling the rares you draft or pack you've won to buy your way into the next draft? Are you a constructed player who just wants to get the cards for your decklist? Or do you want to be an active trader, buying and selling cards for profit? How much time do you want to spend trading?

Getting started

"The best thing for a new trader to do," explains Greg Nash (RAZerne), "is to know what your cards are worth. And the best way to do that is to do a search on the message board and marketplace." New traders frequently sell their cards for too little because they haven't done their homework. Once you know what you've got, "put up an ad offering to sell at the market sell price and [if you've got tickets you can invest in trading] to buy at the market buy price." That way you're able to benefit from the pricing spread.

Patience and Greed

There is often a clear trade-off between speed and price. If you're like me, you've sometimes realized you need a ticket or two to enter a draft and you don't want to wait. In that case you can get forced to sell too cheap. With even a little time you can post a slightly higher price than the typical "buy" price in the Marketplace and often make an extra ticket, whereas if you keep an active sell list of your trade stock whenever you're online you'll be selling at an even higher price.

The same thing applies to buyers. If you want to enter a constructed tournament and need two **Arcbound Ravager** in the next minute, your best bet is to find the best quoted Buy price and make a *slightly* higher offer in the Marketplace. For example, as I write this the best Buy price for Ravager is 16, so you might offer to buy two Ravagers for 33 tickets. But if it isn't taken you may have to pay up. If you have a week to find the Ravagers you can leave a buy message on the trading post and may save a few tickets.

Traders can also use prices that are slightly better than the market norm to increase their rate of sales and, in many cases, their profit. David Milot (VgManiac) says, "If you sell for as little profit as possible you can move on to the next sale more quickly." Nash agrees. "The trick is, you want to buy slightly higher and sell slightly lower than the other traders online for a better chance of a quick turnaround. For example, if a card is being bought for 1 ticket and sold for 3, buy two

copies for 3 tickets and offer to sell two for five. Other people will wait a long time to buy for 1 and sell for 3, but you can make that two ticket profit much faster by buying and selling more quickly.”

Pay Attention

Prices can move sharply online and often react more quickly than offline prices to metagame changes. You can sometimes get ahead of the curve (I personally made a nice profit when I read about **Tooth and Nail** doing extremely well in the *Mirrodin* Block Constructed pro tour and realized that a “junk rare” was about to go up in price) but any regular trader needs to keep an eye on what's happening in the market. A single article from a top player touting a new decklist can cause cards like **Vernal Bloom** to jump sharply in price. You can also get some idea of how prices are likely to move by the relative number of people offering to sell or buy a given card. If the sellers greatly outnumber the buyers, the odds are good the card will come down slightly.



Play it Safe

While trading online offers you some protections that aren't available offline (e.g. the cards won't be counterfeit), there are some important risks to be aware of, particularly with large trades or with trades involving payment outside of MTGO. Graff explains:

“If you are buying [through PayPal] and you give your money first they may not give you your cards. And with selling if you sell to someone who bought with a credit card they can report the card stolen and get their money back. The credit card company will then go after PayPal and PayPal will deduct the money from your account.” Many dealers don't accept credit card PayPal payments for precisely this reason.

Another potential scam can occur when someone secretly plays middleman between a buyer and seller. Suppose you are selling a set of Ravagers via paypal and the scam artist knows that I am looking to buy them. He contacts each of us pretending to be the other party. He tells you (on MTGO) that he's sending the money and gives me your PayPal account information (which I think is his) to send it to. The payment arrives and you assume it's from the scam artist, so you give him the cards without him paying .

A more mundane scam in a big trade/sale is for one person to make a card untradable in their binder after you've already selected it. If 32 cards are changing hands, you may not notice that one is missing, and once you've completed the trade it's very hard to prove that you were cheated.

Fortunately there are steps you can take to reduce the danger:

- Always check the final trade confirmation window to make sure it's right, especially with large trades.
- If you are using PayPal, break large transactions down into smaller ones. If you've just won that set of Ravagers, for example, don't send the full payment up front unless you know the trader or have good reason to trust them. (A high eBay rating with no negatives is often a good indication of safety.) Do two separate transactions of an equal amount.
- Keep evidence of any large deals. “When selling online,” Graff explains, “I demand that they include their MTGO name with their payment and will video tape the transaction with my webcam for the best evidence possible that I gave them their cards, along with screenshots of our conversations.”

Whether you're finding the last few cards for your decklist, going infinite in draft or making a business of buying and selling, good luck with your MTGO trading!

Hugs 'til next time,
Chad

Interact

Rant, rave and share



[Discuss "Trading Online"](#) on the message boards



[Respond to Chad Ellis](#) via email

Consult

More articles by Chad Ellis



[Oscar Clans for Icy Fun](#) Twilight wins MTGO Community Contribution Award
Today



[A League of One's Own](#) The lowdown on leagues
7 days ago



[The Envelope Please](#) Who will win?
2 weeks ago

- All [Chad Ellis](#) articles

Explore

Similar articles



[Ice Guys Finish First](#) The best from Ice Age
Yesterday
Mark Rosewater



[Disruption Beats](#) Using black for Aggro-discard
4 days ago
Nate Heiss



[The Power Behind Affinity](#) Is the keyword the source of trouble?
4 days ago
Aaron Forsythe



[On Tour, Part 1](#) History of the Pro Tour
8 days ago
Mark Rosewater



[Red Head](#) Taking advantage of red's monsters
11 days ago
Nate Heiss

- More [Behind the Scenes](#) articles
- More [Magic Online](#) articles

Continue

Other recent articles



[Oscar Clans for Icy Fun](#) Twilight wins MTGO Community Contribution Award
Today
Chad Ellis



[Hyalopterously Yours](#) Ice Age's cutest darn little creature
Today
Anthony Alongi



[Selecting Ninth Edition Week 8](#) Viashino Cutthroat vs. Viashino Sandstalker, Zur's Weirding Sketches, and Flavor Text Submission
Yesterday
Magicthegathering.com Staff



[The Dawn of Magic's Ice Age](#) Designing Ice Age
Yesterday
Skaff Elias



[Sending Signals](#) Good communication is the key to a successful draft
Yesterday
Scott Wills

- [More recent articles](#)
- [Return to Magicthegathering.com](#)