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# Catching the Low-cost Blues

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Building on a Budget  
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PRO TOUR-VALENCIA

When you are on a budget and you want a really strong deck, there is one thing you can resort to that will at least be serviceable in any situation. Sure, it might not be that much fun for you or your opponent, but you only had like 20 tickets and a bunch of random cards, and your tournament was starting soon, right? There were a bunch of **Condescends** and **Talismans** in your pile of cards anyhow, so why not play **Control Blue**?

Here we have your most basic blue control deck, supplemented with **Vedalken Shackles** for an added control element. It has very few ways to actually win; only with **Stalking Stones**, **Guardian Idol**, or attacking with **Morphs** – **Voidmage Apprentices**. Sound interesting? Here is the decklist:

### Building on a Budget: Control Blue (about 30 tickets)

**Main Deck**  
60 cards

2 <b>Stalking Stones</b> 16 <b>Island</b> 4 <b>Seat of the Synod</b>  22 lands	3 <b>Voidmage Apprentice</b> <hr style="width: 50%; margin: 5px auto;"/> 3 creatures	4 <b>Talisman of Dominance</b> 4 <b>Guardian Idol</b> 3 <b>Echoing Truth</b> 4 <b>Thirst for Knowledge</b> 4 <b>Thoughtcast</b> 4 <b>Rewind</b> 4 <b>Mana Leak</b> 4 <b>Condescend</b> 4 <b>Vedalken Shackles</b> <hr style="width: 50%; margin: 5px auto;"/> 35 other spells
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Ok, we have a total of 15 counterspells, with **Rewind** and **Voidmage Apprentices** as the only ones that counter a spell 100% of the time by disregarding mana requirements. Oh, **Counterspell**, we miss ye! There are three bounce spells (**Echoing Truth**) to catch anything that might have got through your web of countermagic. After that, the rest of the deck is full of card-drawing effects, to help ensure that your hand is full of counters.

**Vedalken Shackles** is the most important part of this deck. In reality, 15 counters just aren't enough to deal with a deck full of random guys. You need to have a permanent solution on the table that continually solves the problem, and then protect it with your countermagic.

**Vedalken Shackles** makes it so that you will be very difficult to kill via attacking -- just think about it. If they play a guy, you take it. If they play two guys, you take one and use it to block. They need to play out at least three guys to force any damage through. Usually they won't attack even when they play out three guys -- they will just wait for you to take one and play out more guys, building up until they can swing past for a lot of damage.

Luckily, you can play out more than one **Shackles**, making their life very difficult. If things ever start to look messy, just start countering their creatures. Here's a great way to kill off their creatures after you have **Shackled** them -- when you get your second **Shackles** into play, just attack with one of the stolen creatures. They will probably take the damage, but eventually they will be forced to block. This will likely kill the creature, and then you will be free to take another.

If you are playing against a control deck, you are probably going to have to win via your **Stalking Stones** and **Guardian Idols** (and **Morphs**, I suppose). Your **Shackles** still might be useful, however, depending on their creature base. They might have something nice for you to take, like **Pristine Angels** or **Leonin Abunas**.



## Tips on Playing the Deck

- Remember, you can untap your **Shackles** if you want to take something better than what you have.
- Rewind** will help you a lot in casting **Thirst for Knowledge** and countering two threats in the same turn.
- You can use the **Echoing Truth** on your **Voidmage Apprentices** to reuse them in a pinch.

- Leave you mana open! Do not tap out! If you tap out, you might lose! Only tap out on your turn if you absolutely, positively have to! It is OK to tap out for an end-of-opponent's-turn **Thirst for Knowledge**.
- Be careful if you opponent is accumulating mana. They might be able to pay for your **Mana Leak**. There is not a whole lot you can do about this, but you should be aware of it.

## Adding Money to the Deck

There are a lot of things you can add to this deck, such as **Chrome Mox**, **Voidmage Prodigy**, and **Decree of Silence**. You would probably want access to **Annuls** and **Stifles** in the sideboard, if you have one. Overall, with unlimited money, this deck is best changed into a blue-white deck with lots of good white rares, such as **Decree of Justice**, **Akroma's Vengeance**, and the like. Still this deck performs OK with just the blue -- after all, it was blue that first said "no!"

Overall, this deck is a good way to learn how to play control decks. Most control decks are very forgiving to their players, allowing them to still win even if they make crucial mistakes. When you are building on a budget with Blue Control, mistakes are going to cost you. Letting a spell through that you shouldn't have, or countering something inconsequential, can both be game-ending errors.

If anything, playing this deck will make you a better control player! I only became a really good control player after playing one of the most unforgiving control decks I have ever played -- a blue-black deck from *Invasion* Block Constructed that used **Ravenous Rats** and **Nightscape Familiars** as its' only win conditions! Just imagine trying to control the game for 20 agonizing turns while your little rat ferociously beat your opponent to death. It agonizes me just thinking about it again.

Until next time, say "no" -- but then let them draw two cards because you feel bad.

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