

## CZ452: BEST WAY TO GET INTO COMMANDER

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1) INTRO JLK and Jimmy

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*So, you've discovered you like Commander (welcome to the club!). One of the most common questions we get is "What's the best way to get into the format?" So today we're going to break down the best first steps you can take to start your Commander journey. BUT FIRST:*

**\*\*CHANNEL FIREBALL\*\* \*\*ULTRAPRO #1\*\* \*\*PATREON: DAVID URIAS\*\***

### 2) MAIN TOPIC: **HOW TO GET INTO COMMANDER**

*Commander can be intimidating to join. There are SO many cards. The "meta" is not clearly defined. It can feel overwhelming to figure out the best way to jump in. Today we're gonna give you some tips on how to smoothly begin/continue your Commander journey.*

Everyone always asks what cards to get and how. Before we can answer that, we need to ask questions:

#### **WHAT IS YOUR PLAYSTYLE?**

This is a good question to answer first. You should try to figure out what you like before you go about getting a bunch of cards.

- If you're already a Magic player, this will probably be a little easier. But keep in mind that Commander is very different from other formats.
  - *Example: If you like aggro in Modern, you won't necessarily like playing that style in EDH.*
- You can also take lessons from other games
  - *Do you like puzzle solving? Social interaction? Are you proactive vs reactive?*

Once you determine your playstyle / "what you like", look for the analog in MTG / Commander:

- What matches in the five Colors and what they represent? WUBRG
  - White - removal, board wipes, tokens, going wide
  - Blue - control, counters, tricky, instant speed, interaction
  - Black - life as a resource, removal, graveyard recursion/reanimation
  - Red - fast, burn spells, haste, impulsive draw, aggro
  - Green - creatures, growth/pumping/buffing, lands, trample, going wide
- Once you have a few starter questions answered, then there are lots of resources online that can help you narrow down what Commander or Commanders you'd be interested in
  - EDHRec, MTGGoldfish, Reddit

## WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS?

Commander is overwhelming at first, so we still want to narrow down what exactly you are trying to do / want to accomplish. Here are some example goals of some hypothetical players that are starting out:

- I want to play with my friends at their weekly game night
- I want to build a single deck and invest in that only
- I want to build tons of decks and invest in them equally
- I want to build a huge collection of cards and constantly build decks from it
- I want to collect enough cards so my friends and I can build together
- I want to build super competitive decks and play at that level
- I want to join my LGS' weekly commander nights

## WHO WILL YOU BE PLAYING WITH?

We're gonna talk about finding or building a playgroup later, but if you know the answer to this question when you're starting out, it can make the process of obtaining cards and building decks more efficient.

- *Will you be starting with other new MTG players? Or are they MTG players who are just new to Commander? Will you be playing at an LGS? Or a kitchen table playgroup who's been playing together for years? Or online (Spelltable)? Etc.*

## CONSUME COMMANDER CONTENT

The Magic content scene is expansive, and there are TONS of great options when it comes to gameplay, strategy, deckbuilding, and more. You'll find a little bit of everything, so if you have some time to put on a podcast or show, then it can be really beneficial. Here are some from us that cover some basics:

- How to Play Magic the Gathering:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6AGzsQcLpzA>
- How to Play Commander:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eaNjXcAqCAY>
- The New Commander Deckbuilding Template:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3K9PEeLG\\_6M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3K9PEeLG_6M)

## WATCH GAME KNIGHTS!

If you see a player doing something and you think "I wanna do that!" then maybe that's a good indicator of a playstyle you would enjoy.

*OK - Everything up to this point is trying to give yourself an idea of what deck or type of deck you might want to build for yourself. Or at least to narrow it down so you have a better chance at hitting the target.*

### **BEST WAY TO OBTAIN CARDS & DECKS**

Some of the most common questions we get from new Commander players are in regards to how to go about acquiring cards and how to figure out what deck(s) to build first.

- Hint: Unless you have a lot of disposable income, buying and cracking packs is not a great idea. You won't end up using 90% of what you open.

### **BORROW FROM FRIENDS CARDS & DECKS**

One of the best ways to figure out what you like, is to take things for a test drive.

- Obviously won't work unless you have friends that already play.

### **PRECONS ARE GREAT CARDS & DECKS**

Magic has been routinely releasing ready to play, solidly built, pre-constructed decks for Commander for years now. They've gotten better and better in terms of design each year, and it's the simplest and quickest way to get into the format. Buy a precon and you can play a game almost immediately.

- Two "types" of Precons in recent years - "set" precons and the yearly Commander product precon.
  - Set Precons - usually two per set, these are precons with Commanders that do not feature many new cards and are tied to the set (If you've seen our most recent Game Knights, Post Malone played the Chishiro precon and JLK played Shorikai, both from the Commander Precons that are tied to the set Kamigawa: Neon Dynasty)
  - Yearly Commander Precon - 4 or 5 decks. These used to be separate from the set releases, but they are now tied to the sets as well, but instead feature many new cards (the last yearly Commander set was with Strixhaven, featuring each of the 2-color schools).
  - The "old school" precons are from 2012 til 2020, and each are 4 or 5 decks released yearly. The older precons from this series are very hard to obtain (and are not worth it - they're built more poorly and require more updates)
- The design of precons in recent years has been \*great\*. They're easy to upgrade, have all of the fundamentals balanced fairly well, and play well out of the box.

### **BEST PRECON FOR NEW PLAYERS? CARDS & DECKS**

- For new Commander players, what do we think is the best precon to start with?  
*(All of these are under \$40...or were when we recorded this)*
  - Primal Genesis (Ghired) Commander 2019
  - Reap the Tides (Aesi) Commander Legends
  - Upgrades Unleashed (Chishiro) Neon Dynasty
  - Lorehold Legacy (Osgir) Strixhaven

**\*\*\*MIDROLL BREAK\*\*\***

## **BUY SINGLES** CARDS & DECKS

With over 20,000 cards to choose from, knowing where and how to buy them can be overwhelming. You also don't want to buy \*too\* many cards, especially ones that you might never end up using. So how to approach this problem?

- SET A BUDGET!
  - This might be one of the most important and overlooked steps when it comes to starting up a new hobby - if you're not careful, costs can balloon. Having a budget to reference and work with can be incredibly beneficial - burning out is no fun.
- Shop at an LGS
  - Supporting local game stores is incredibly important, especially after so many has suffered from being out of operation for the past couple of years.
  - Many LGS owners have great relationships with their customers, and can give you better deals, hold cards for you, and otherwise create opportunities you wouldn't have
- Shop digitally
  - If you don't have or want to shop locally, there are many digital options to buy cards around the world.
  - ChannelFireball marketplace allows you to simultaneously shop from LGS, but it's not the end all be all
- Trade!
  - You'd be surprised how many options there are when it comes to trading cards - whether it's within your playgroup, at your LGS, or even digitally, there are many communities that engage in trading.
  - Make sure you have a way of pricing / evaluating cards however - no one wants to be on the bad end of a trade or get scammed (especially with so many versions of cards available now)

## **BE RESOURCEFUL** CARDS & DECKS

Not everyone can afford to buy every single card for every single deck - we've seen many different ways that players have been resourceful and it's always good to keep these things in mind.

- If you have 1 of a specific card, technically that card could be in every one of your decks (as long as only one deck is being played)
  - Vinny's binder system
  - Using blank cards from draft sets that have flip cards
- Colorless Cards will take you farther
  - They can go in any deck! (Sol Ring, Sword of F&F, Sensei's Top, Arcane Signet, etc. If you're gonna spend a significant amount of \$\$\$ on a card (especially early in your Commander journey) it's waaaay better if it's a colorless card.
- Same with Staples / Mana Base
  - Cyclonic Rift, Rhystic Study, Smothering Tithe, etc
- Build across multiple colors to not run into reusing cards as often

- Before you buy / trade... test!
  - Playtest cards are a very common occurrence in Commander decks to understand if a card works or not. If you're looking at a more pricey buy, sleeve up a card to act as a playtest version (make sure you let your opponents know as well)
  - You can also use deckbuilder sites like TappedOut to goldfish your deck build and see how it works in action (especially when you're thinking about cards that affect your openers in games like low drops)
- Draft Chaff and more
  - LGS and other places often leave behind "draft chaff" and these can be huge collections of commons and uncommons (and sometimes rares) that are a great way to start a collection off - if you keep an eye out, there will almost always be a way to get free cards that could find their way into your decks.

### TEST YOUR DECK

Ok, at this point you've hopefully obtained some kind of deck. Maybe it's an unchanged precon, or maybe it's something you've built from scratch. MTG is a complicated game though (and Commander is the most complex format) so it's important to spend some time getting to know your deck.

- *Goldfish it. A lot. (most online deck builders have a goldfish function)*
  - *Have some idea what your lines are, what you will want to tutor for in different situations, etc.*

### FINDING A PLAYGROUP

Ok, now that you've built a deck, collected some cards, and gotten the ball rolling, it's time to actually get out there and play. This can be an intimidating step as well, but as always there are ways to mitigate and overcome the obstacles so you can have as much fun (and as quickly) as possible.

- If you already know people who play Magic, that's obviously the best place to start.
  - If they don't play Commander yet, maybe you can get them to try it with you. (Start 1v1 if you have to).
  - If you're new to Magic, let them know "This is my first game" etc.
- If you don't know any Magic players, then you can try to meet some.
  - LGS is a good place to start (talk to the store owner!)
  - Schools often have gaming clubs, etc.
  - Look online (facebook groups in your area, etc)
  - Jimmy/ JLK have had luck with just having MTG cards with them. Or wearing MTG gear.
  - Spelltable / MTGO

### BUILDING A PLAYGROUP

Just because you don't know anyone that plays (or can't find them) that doesn't mean you can't convince someone to learn. (This is especially good if you yourself are learning)

- Ask your friend/brother/cousin/parents to try it out with you!
- School doesn't have an MTG club? Form one up! Talk to a teacher, they're usually down to help.

Don't get discouraged

- We hear stories of playgroups gone awry and nightmare scenarios - it's important to remember that everyone has had their share of "bad games", but don't let it get you down.

3) **TO THE LISTENERS:**

If you could go back in time and talk to your younger self who is just getting started in Commander, what would you say?

**\*\*CHANNEL FIREBALL-OUT #2\*\* \*\*ULTRA PRO #1\*\***

4) **THE END STEP:**

Something cool outside the world of Magic.

5) CLEAN-UP STEP

Big thanks to our amazing team here at The Command Zone! **Arthur Meadowcroft, Ladee Danger, Manson Leung, Craig Blanchette, Ashlen Rose, Josh Murphy, Jake Boss, Patrick Nan, Jordan Pridgen, Sam Waldow, Gaurav Gulati, Truc Thai, Jamie Block, Damen Lenz, Shauna Gilles, Mitch Trafford, and Evan Limberger.**

-Special thanks to **Geoffrey Palmer** for the living card animations (**@LivingCardsMTG**)