



WELCOMING NEW PLAYERS

A Retailer's Guide to Attracting, Acquiring,
and Aiding New Players

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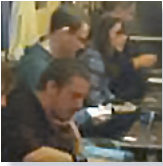
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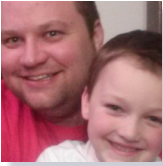
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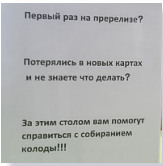


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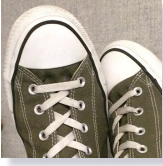
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New players are the lifeblood of the Wizards Play Network.



Attracting, acquiring, and aiding new players can help build a more robust business and achieve sustainable long-term growth.

This guide can help you with each of those steps. You'll learn how to allure new players, reduce their barrier to entry, and guide them from casual to committed and beyond.

Ready to get started?



“The Only Way to Sustain the Community Long-Term”

When Jay Kirkman took over [Moonlite Comics](#) in 2013, the store’s *Magic* business was lagging. The previous owner only ran one Friday Night Magic event a week and Prereleases. Turnout was light: about 8 to 16 players.

One year later, the business has turned 180 degrees. Jay runs *Magic* events virtually every day the store is open. Attendance for FNM averages about 30 people. Players feel the game genuinely matters.

He got to that point by not only [creating spectacular events](#), but by building a community that welcomed new players.

We asked Jay to share his tips for reaching out to new players. Try them out!

* * *

1. Run Events Just for New Players



Our “flagship” event is our Casual Planeswalker Society. This is a three-round non-format event on Sundays, and it’s the first point of entry we recommend for new players wanting to get into playing Magic here at the shop.



2. Introduce Your New Players

Ask all players at the start of an event to identify themselves when their names are called out for pairings.

Often new players will be the only ones in the room that don't know anyone else. So we want to break down that isolation as quickly as possible to help them bond with the community.

3. Look After New Players' Experiences

The more attention you give a player, the more likely it is that they'll return. Ask how they're doing, if they're having a good time, and offer help or encouragement if they seem to be struggling.

More than once in between rounds I've had a new player ask me to look at their deck. If I'm too busy, I'll grab one of our regulars who I know is good at the archetype the new player is playing and introduce them.

I read from Mark Rosewater once that the average *Magic* player exits the game after 18-24 months. So when I look out at the sea of gamers here for our events I'm acutely aware that we have to provide an easy access point to the game for new players, as it's the only way to sustain the community long-term.



How to Use Duels of the Planeswalkers to Grow Your Community

Can a video game really have an impact on your face-to-face *Magic* business?

The answer is a resounding yes!

By following a few simple steps, you can capitalize on the wide reach of *Duels of the Planeswalkers* and grow your community from the ground up. Here's how:

Set Up a Duels Demo Station

Our research has shown time and again that *Duels of the Planeswalkers* is the best way for new players to discover and learn to play Magic.

But don't leave it to potential players to discover this on their own! Set up a computer or tablet near your point-of-sale area.



Download the free *Duels of the Planeswalkers* demo from Steampowered.com or iTunes. Then leave the demo running for new customers to try out as they browse your store.



Nurture Duels Players at Events

When players who started with *Duels* arrive at your events, greet them by name and introduce them to some of the veteran players.



“The more attention you give a player,” says Jay Kirkman, “the more likely it is that they’ll return. Asking how they’re doing, if they’re having a good time, and offering help or encouragement if they seem to be struggling are vital.”

”

Let *Duels of the Planeswalkers* draw in new players. Then add your personal touch to watch your community grow!



Take Your Players from Pupil to Pro

Duels of the Planeswalkers means a lot of new players coming to *Magic*—and coming through your door.

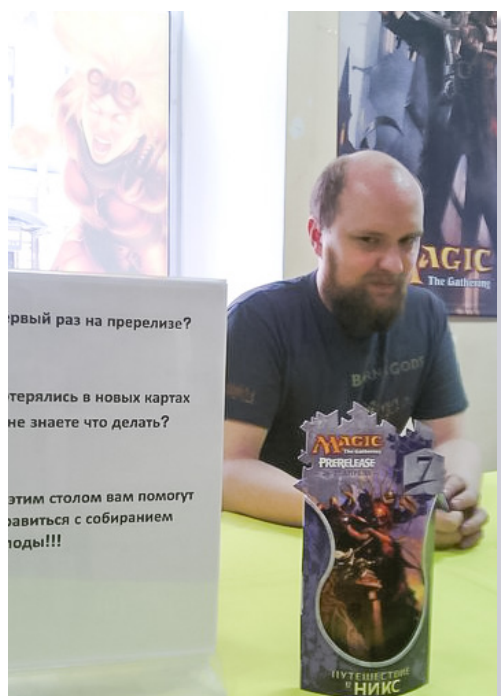
But learning the game shouldn't be the end of a *Magic* education. It should be the beginning. With the right coaching, you'll see those new players having a blast—week after week.

Open Enrollment

Jimmie Johnson of [Across the Board Games](#) reaches out to local schools and demos the game tirelessly.

In a player's first lesson, teach the joy of the flawless curve, not the misery of mana screw.

Tailor an opening hand of four basic lands, creatures to cast on turns 1 and 2, and a spell for turn 3. Make sure the player has dynamic draws on the following turns—a big creature, the land to cast it, maybe an aura.



After the tutorial, it's time for battle! Open the player's choice of sample deck and guide them as they pilot through their first duel.

Graduation

Now they know how to play, but do they know how to compete?

[Hobbit Games](#) in St. Petersburg, Russia is making sure they do. During *Hobbit's Journey into Nyx Prerelease*, Pro Tour competitor Anatoly Chukhvicev manned a help station where new players could get advice on deckbuilding.



“Two players that got help at the special table ended up in Top 8 of the Prerelease!” said Hobbit Games’ store owner, Sergey Aleksenko. “Now they are active players in all our events.”

Higher Learning

“I don’t think it’s enough to just plant a flag and say ‘we have an FNM every Friday, see you here when you’re ready,’” says Jay Kirkman. To teach new players the essentials of drafting, Jay [built a cube](#) of the *Magic 2014 Core Set*. After going over some basic draft strategy, players draft custom, reusable boosters of Jay’s own design.



The results? A great new experience and a great new group of regulars. “One of my personal highlights at Moonlite was when I saw the first Draft Academy ‘graduates’ come and draft at an FNM, and they’ve continued to draft!”

Have a Little Class

[Contact us](#) for *Magic* sample decks, and schedule your how-to-play events as casual events in Wizards Event Reporter today!



Make the Most of Sample Decks

Not only a great tool for teaching *Magic: The Gathering*, our no-charge sample decks can serve double-duty as a marketing tool for your store.

Here's how to make them work for you:

Be Enthusiastic

Before demoing a game, enthusiastically show off a few of your favorite cards from the deck, and share what you like about them.

Keep It Simple

Don't worry about being precise with the rules. The goal is to teach people that *Magic* is fun and get them excited to learn more.

Give a Reason to Come Back

After completing the demo, offer the second sample deck and a free entry into your next Friday Night Magic or other new player-friendly event. Show the player how to combine the two sample decks to create a Standard legal deck.

Advertise Your Store

Put a sticker on your sample decks with your store information and a call-to-action encouraging new players to come to your next FNM to learn how to play!

Share Sample Decks Beyond Your Store

Don't wait for new players to walk into your store and ask for a demo.



Hand out sample decks at local events such as fairs, festivals, and anywhere potential players might congregate.

Need to Order More?

[Contact your WPN representative](#) to order sample decks at no-charge!



Tools for Teaching New Players

Attracting new players to *Magic: The Gathering* begins with a great demo. And we have lots of free downloads to help!

Demo Flip Guide

Walk new players through the game using the [Learn-to-Play Demo flip guide](#) for an intuitive, face-to-face *Magic: The Gathering* demo! Take it to a copy shop and have them laminate the pages and add a spiral binding to the top edge so you can use it again and again.



Rules Reference Cards

Set up a demo table by downloading and printing the [Rules Reference Card](#) and taping it flat on the table!



Quick Start Guide

Download, print, and hand out the [Quick Start Guide](#) for a detailed experience that goes over all the important aspects of the game and even includes a glossary of keywords and abilities!



Duels of the Planeswalkers

Put *Duels of the Planeswalkers* to work as an "extra employee." [Download the free tutorial](#) and set up a demo station in your store!

Be sure to send your new players home with a sample deck, promo booster, or even an intro deck, and invite them back to your next event!

How do you teach new players? [Tell us about it!](#)



How do you welcome new players?

[Game On](#) in Cheltenham, UK, believes the way to a player's heart is with food. They give their new players cake to help bring them into the fold.

At the UK store [Chimera Brierley Hill](#), veteran players often donate commons and uncommons from their drafts to the newest player. This leaves the new player with a great feeling and gets them more engaged with the store.



The Gift of the New Player

It was a Friday night like any other at my store, [Wonko's Toys and Games](#). Turnout for Friday Night Magic was nice—30 for Standard and 16 for draft—with a few new players for both formats.



At the start of round 2, Frank, one of the newer players, came up and asked to speak with the manager. I stepped up, prepared for a complaint.

What happened next was a complete surprise.

New Player Seeks Welcoming Store

Frank said he'd been all over town playing *Magic*. But no matter where he went, it was the same story over and over again. Everyone was all about competition and had no patience for players with questions about the rules.

Then, two weeks ago, he found Wonko's.



A Place to Call Home

With our “No Intimidation” policy right on the signup sheet, Frank felt relaxed. Then we did our normal rules announcement at the beginning of the first round.

He played in FNM Draft, and the table master gave him tips on drafting with the current block and helped him build his deck.



That was two weeks previous, and he got the same treatment, but with different people this evening.

He said, “I’ve found a place I can call home.”

An Offer Like Never Before

As if these comments weren’t enough to make me proud, Frank followed up with an offer to buy three booster boxes—my choice—to add to prize support for that night and the next FNM.

I was floored. Never got an offer like that before.

So I met him half way, and offered to sell him the boxes at cost. He agreed, but upped the quantity to four.

The Crowd Went Nuts

At the end of round three, I called everyone to attention. I announced that thanks to a new player, tonight it was going to be three packs per paid player in the pool.

The crowd went nuts. Someone asked: “What’s going on?”

I told them their good sportsmanship, coaching, and mild manner had convinced someone to call Wonko’s his new home for *Magic*.

Everyone applauded. Even some of the pro players that night said they chose us because of the atmosphere.



Then, someone piped up that it's because of my family, and our insistence upon keeping the environment fun and supportive at all times. I kinda got all teary-eyed and thanked everyone.

So, see what happens when you do the right thing? Treat people with respect, demand that they treat each other with that same respect. Encourage the kids and returning players to give it a go, and you wind up with a great player environment.

Occasionally, that environment will surprise you and support itself.

By Eric Dow, [Wonko's Toys and Games](#)



*Front Row: Erica, Rebekah & Denise Dow
Back Row: Alex Tune, Brian M. & Eric Dow
Missing: Keith Blackard and Ray Rimmer*



Attract New Players with the D&D Starter Set!

The D&D Starter Set is the best way to attract new players and to give veteran players the chance to experience the new rules and celebrate their beloved game!



Make the release a special occasion in your store! Set up stations around the store to offer lots of activities, or pick and choose a few ideas below:

1. Learn to Play with the D&D Starter Set

Enlist your local Dungeon Masters to lead 30-minute how-to-play sessions, using the first encounter from the new [D&D Starter Set](#). The Starter Set includes 6 pre-generated characters, so all players need to do is pick a character and roll for initiative!

You could run several sessions at a time or set out a sign-up sheet and run sessions all day long. While players are waiting, they can explore some of the other fun activities in the store.

At the end of the play session, invite players to come back in D&D Encounters—and/or encourage them take home their own Starter Set to continue play at home!



2. Dish Out the Rations

Keep players fortified for adventure with D&D-themed snacks, such as [magic missile meatballs](#), [initiative rolls](#), or simple adventurer's rations (nuts, cheese, crackers, dried fruit). Don't forget the mugs of cider!

3. Quiz The Dungeon Master!

Set up a Q&A station hosted by your local Dungeon Masters. More engaged players will enjoy discussing rules and other details. Newer players might be curious about what it takes to become a DM. (It's easier than you might think!) Use the opportunity to recruit new DMs for [your Tyranny of Dragons Encounters events!](#)



4. Craft Magic Items and Potions

Every adventurer covets magic items and potions! Provide materials for to craft a [wand](#) of magic missiles, a [+1 sword](#), or even a [tanglefoot](#) bag!



5. Don't Forget the Treasure!

Run a random drawing of D&D-themed prizes for new players. Let your engaged players show off their D&D prowess with a trivia contest. Or how about a [spelling bee](#)?

D&D's Basic Rules

D&D's Basic Rules are available for [free download on DungeonsandDragons.com](http://DungeonsandDragons.com).

Pregenerated Characters

Rev up the excitement at your store by downloading, printing, and handing out [pre-generated characters](#) to new players or to those who forgot to bring a character to the event.

For an even greater effect, print on thick stock paper and laminate them for wet-erase use!



What Have You Done to Surprise and Delight Your New Players?

Christian Liedtke of [Blitzplatz](#) gives away t-shirts with his store's logo. Players wear them when they play in another store to show where they come from. The stores in his area have a strong community, and this practice is part of the experience.



Derrick Sheets of [Game On](#) says: "I've done a lot of door prizes at events. We just gave away a *From the Vault: Twenty*. . . . I think door prizes are fantastic. Random drawings are fantastic. Anything that someone can show up and they just get stuff for free or just for participating. If they're paying \$5 to play at your event, and they get a free promo now and again, they're gonna love it."

Why a Simple Gift Can Create a Customer for Life

A few years ago, I kept hearing great things about a new online-only shoe store, called [Zappos](#).

Curious to find out if the hype was true, I ordered a pair of Chuck Taylor All Stars from them. After finalizing my order, I tweeted about my purchase.

To my surprise, [Zappos customer service](#) immediately replied. They wanted to know my email address, so they could send a surprise with my order. I happily obliged.

I found the shoes on my doorstep the next morning—several days before they were due to arrive—along with a note from Zappos: I was now a VIP customer, entitled to free, next-day shipping for life.

A Gift is Worth a Thousand Words

With a simple, unexpected gift, Zappos ensured my loyalty for life.



I now buy all my shoes from Zappos. And thanks to a couple of speaking engagements, I've told at least five hundred people this story.

My story isn't unique.

You likely frequent businesses thanks to a kind gesture or inexpensive gift. In fact, you likely have customers who are loyal to you because of something you've done for them.

Why is that?

The Power of Reciprocity

When someone does something for you, you're inclined to return the favor. This psychological concept is known as [reciprocity](#).

In short, positive interaction leads to more positive interactions.

But can you quantify it?

The (Low) Cost of Loyalty

Assume you invest \$2 to surprise and delight every new customer who comes through the door. How often do you think it will work?

Taking the most negative outlook, say only 1% of your customers decides to come back.

To convert just one customer out of a hundred, you've spent \$200. While the conversion rate isn't great, the acquisition cost still is.

How much do you think one loyal customer will spend over the life of your business?

Check out the [Grow Your Store](#) section of this site for more ideas of *how* to create the positive interactions that build loyalty. Then put the power of reciprocity to work in your store!



By Paul Hagan, Senior Trade Marketing Manager, Wizards of the Coast



4 Easy Ideas for Giveaways

When it comes to giveaways, we all know promo cards are a great draw. But players also love freebies that show their store spirit.

A quick Google search for “promotional materials” turns up legions of websites where you can create custom, branded materials, many of them inexpensive.

[According to this study](#) from Promotional Products Association International, the most-often remembered promotional products are:

Wearables: 41%

Writing instruments: 35%

Drinkware: 19%

Here are some ideas from other stores to get you started:

Stickers



Lifepads



Branded Shirts



Buttons



What do you do to surprise and delight your players?

[Email us your stories and photos!](#) We'd love to hear from you!



How do you engage new players during an event?

Matt Hanes sent us this story, about his son's first experience playing a trading card game.



"Jimmy was the youngest player there. He was very nervous, and to tell the truth so was I. Most of the other players were adults, but they all keyed in on Jimmy's excitement.



We were playing one of the modified pre-built starter decks, and we thought we had done a good job. It worked well when we played each other. We were *severely* outclassed.

However, everyone there helped us out. Someone gave him a stack of cards to improve the deck he had. Then gave us a deck that was a much more competitive deck for the next time we went to a tournament. Someone gave him a dice that matched his shirt, and then he was so happy he couldn't stop flapping his arms . . .

Then, after we came in 27th of 29, the winners got together and gave Jimmy their patches, and another stack of cards. He became a mascot for all the other players, and now wants to play every chance he can.

For losing most of the day, he had the time of his life."



Get the Balance Right!

It's a time-tested formula: for competitive play, focus prizes at the top of the standings. For friendly play, spread the prizes around.

But how can you encourage friendly play in a competitive environment? And how can you encourage competition while maintaining a friendly atmosphere?

These two stores have it figured out. Here's how they're doing it:

Battlezone's Innovative Raffle Program

[The Battlezone](#) has built a flourishing *Magic* community in a small Florida town. In eight months, they've introduced **over 50 new players—nearly 60% of their player base**.

Organizer Kyle Halvusen says they owe much of that success to their innovative raffle program, which helps them connect to new players while staying in touch with their regulars.

Here's how it works:

Issue players 1 raffle ticket per game loss (2-1 victory = 1 ticket; 1-2 defeat = 2 tickets). At the end of the night, raffle off playmats, deck boxes, and sleeves, plus the usual prizes for placing and sportsmanship.

Kyle says it gives a "feel-good" moment to players having an off night, and it gives him a chance to connect to first timers—especially younger ones:

"How tall are you?" he'll ask, and hand out one ticket per inch.

"Once that connection's made," says Kyle, "they come back, and they come back, and they come back."



“Opened Pick” at Ace Comics

During Friday Night Magic at [Ace Comics](#) in Brisbane Australia, each player is guaranteed at least one pack. The catch is, the pack is open.

Here’s how it works:

Say an FNM draws 12 players (like on August 8th). They add 12 boosters to the prize pool (one per player) and open them. After three rounds, players choose their booster in order of standings, and top four receives a second, unopened booster.

The important thing for both stores is to make winning matter without making it *everything*.

Try it this week at FNM!



The Key to Long-Term Growth

Friday Night Magic exploded last summer at [River City Comics and Games](#).

Following *Modern Masters*, owner Joseph Scheib noticed huge new interest in the Modern format, so he switched his FNM to Modern, **promptly upping attendance 77% over the previous summer.**

But after the switch, he found himself catering exclusively to highly-engaged players, and missing opportunities to attract new ones.

“*The current players are great, but to grow the game, we need to make it accessible to new players.*”

Meanwhile, right around the time of his **225-player Modern Pro Tour Qualifier**, Joseph was approached by a father—an FNM regular— about his 10-year-old son who enjoyed *Magic*, but struggled at FNM.

“He does better when he plays against players his own age,” the father said.

So the two of them put their heads together and arrived at a common solution: an entry-level event geared toward younger gamers.

A New Model for New Players

Their idea was to maintain a “tournament” feel while maintaining a comfortable environment for young players.



They designed the event with that goal in mind:

- \$2 entry fee (“So they feel like they’re in a tournament.”)
- Modest payout (“So they get something for it”—without getting the veterans interested.)
- “Kitchen Table REL” (“So they don’t get overwhelmed.”)
- One event every two months (“I don’t want to overwhelm parents, either.”)

A Good Fit (for Everyone)

Their first event drew eight players, several of whom have come back for FNM—a big success, according to Joseph.

The way he sees it, if every eight-player event creates one new gamer, that will go a long way toward **sustaining his player base long term**.

And more importantly, it’s a great experience and a low-pressure environment for young players to meet friends and explore the game they love—which, it turns out, is just Joseph’s style.

“I like to run more friendly, laid-back tournaments,” he says.

Bright Futures

Joseph and his younger players are both looking forward to more events. And with more of them coming, Joseph is also looking forward to long-term growth for his store.

How are you creating great experiences for young players? Tell us at WPNStories@wizards.com



For more information and inspiration on welcoming new players and keeping those players coming back to your store, visit wpn.wizards.com

