

# Shadow Era Archetype & Deck Types

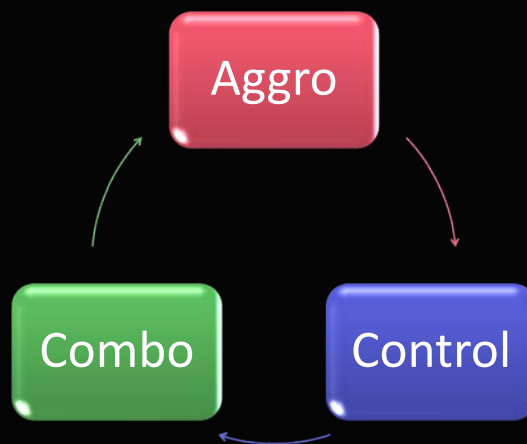
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## Introduction

Trading card games provide wide range of play style and as more and more cards are added to the game, the combination continues to increase exponentially. So the variation in the actual content of the deck may reach to infinite. However, the general play style can be categorized to limited types.

## Archetype

Unfortunately, various definitions exist for certain deck categories, which can be a frequent source of confusion for beginning players; however, 3 main types that are widely accepted in most TCGs. Some people call these as actual deck types, but for the better organization and understanding purpose, I like the approach "Archetype." You can essentially think as Archetype is the highest category baskets and within each, there are subcategories i.e. specific deck types. This makes understanding deck types much easier. Three basic types of archetype are Aggro, Control and Combo archetypes.



Conceptually, Aggro archetype deck plays well against control as it can overwhelm control archetype deck with quick attacks before control can even respond. Whereas, control plays well against combo as it can pin point counter/control to combo archetype deck's key card. Then combo plays well against aggro as aggro tends not to have enough way to counter combo building.

## Archetype as deck type

As stated above, some categorize categorize deck type directly without archetypes i.e. archetype is deck type. With this approach, you can divide decks into 3 basic deck types (Aggro, control and combo deck types), 4 hybrid types (Aggro-control, control-combo, Aggro-combo and Aggro-control-combo), and lastly midrange.

For this approach classification in Magic the Gathering, please refer to

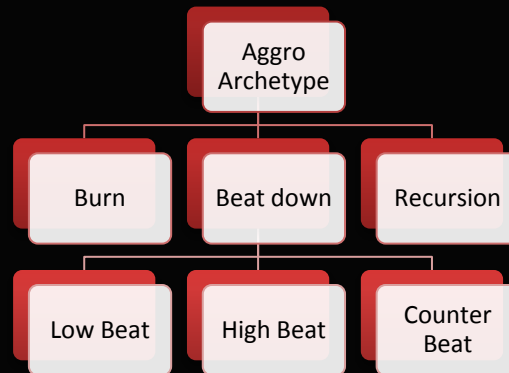
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magic:\\_The\\_Gathering\\_deck\\_types](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magic:_The_Gathering_deck_types).

Presented by I Love dTCG at <http://www.houshasen.wordpress.com>

## Aggro Archetype

The goal of the decks fall under the Aggro (short for "aggressive") archetype is to reduce the opponent hero's life as quickly as possible, rather than emphasize a long-term game plan. These decks can quickly finish the game when the opponent is not prepared.

There are 3 main deck types fall under the Aggro archetype with one of which further divided into sub classifications.



### Burn

Most commonly decks are referred as Burn deck when primarily method of attacking opponent is non-ally i.e. using directly damaging ability card (e.g. Fireball) and/or heroes' directly damaging ability. These non ally method of attacking are referred to as burn spell/attack.

### Beat down

These are types of decks focused winning by directly damaging opponent allies/heroes by means of either direct damage by friendly allies attack or hero's attack with weapon. Depending on the cost of allies included in the deck, this can be further divided into two types.

### High Beat/Beat down/Stompy

This is a deck type focused on the direct damage using allies or hero attacks. Rather than using complex counter or control mechanisms, this type of deck aims to win the game by resource acceleration and casting relatively high power allies. This type of deck contains high cost powerful allies and resource acceleration to support casting high cost allies as fast as possible. In Yu-Gi-Oh, this type is referred to as high beat. In Magic, stompy or many refers to simply as beat down to mean this particular type of deck.

Note: Many also uses aggro interchangeably with beat down; however, more than couple sources suggested slightly more specific use of this term, which in my opinion fit better with hierarchical approach. Hence, that is the definition I used here.

### **Low Beat/Weenie/Rush**

Relatively, unanimous definition exists for this deck type, which is deck that aims to win the game by using many low casting cost allies i.e. unlike beat down/stompy instead of using high power attack ally, in weenie low cost good attacking power but many. Simply think as 2 + 2 + 2 or one big attack with 6. Both are still total of 6 damages. In some TCG (Yu Gi Oh for instance), this is called low beat.

### **Counter Beat**

The general concept of this deck is indeed beat down i.e. ally's attack and hero's attack driven. However, in order to protect the key element in the deck i.e. friendly ally attacker, you incorporate counter element. So the counter aspect of this type of decks is there to protect your allies or allow you to carry the game so your friendly allies can continue attacking opponent.

The deck like Portal Nishaven, which has a few board reset element and burn spell to gain control of the board but the main method of finishing/winning game is by attacking with friendly ally best fits under this category.

### **Recursion**

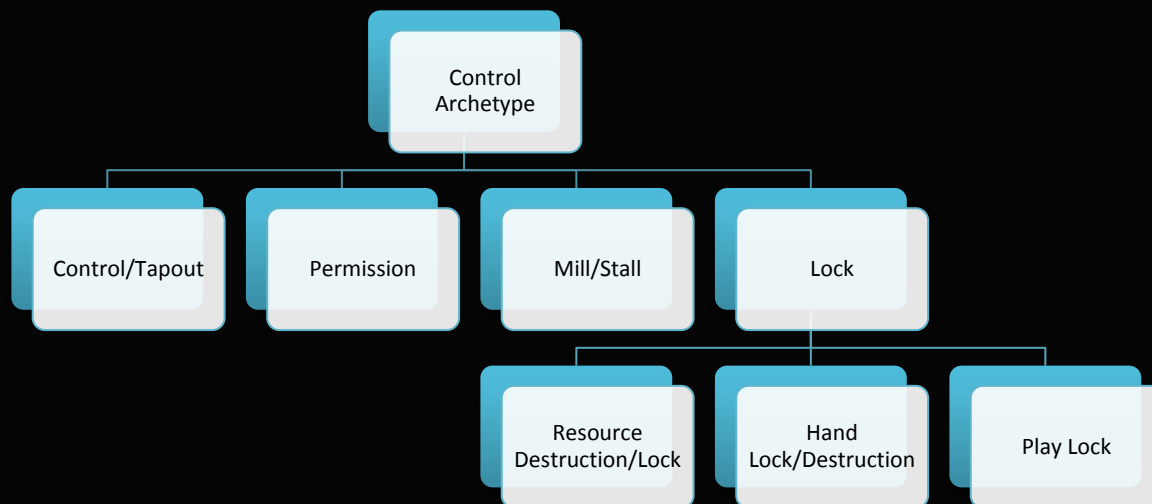
This is a type of deck utilize cards from your graveyard, and essentially overwhelm opponent like beat down deck by revived allies from the graveyard.

Shadow Mage, Graveborn has a great potential to build strong recursion deck due to its ability; however, for the best support of recursion deck, we will need to see cards that allow us to discard card from hands to graveyard strategically.

### **Control Archetype**

This type of decks strategically slows down the game by interfering with opponent's action i.e. uses attrition plan. The interference to opponent's move is achieved by countering/destructing/devaluing opponent cards and actions. This is essentially resulting in you CONTROLLING the game/board. As the game progresses, opponent continues to lose options or things that they can do to win the game. As this happens you slowly build up resources to cast more powerful card to finish the game, or simply continues this to the end so opponent basically not able to do anything anymore and even your small attacks can end the game as there will be no interference from the opponent. So think control archetype as generally passive game play i.e. counter what you see until opponent run out of his gas, and at which point you finally start attacking; whereas, other archetypes i.e. Aggro and comb, you play actively play to win as soon as you can.

The newer players tend to hate playing against this archetype as games tend to take longer time to finish, and you feel like none of your plan goes through, but at the same time your opponent is not really attacking you either. On the other hand, more experience players favor this archetype due to its relative challenge and satisfaction when winning with this type of deck i.e. feeling of having total control in the game.



### Control/Tapout

Under the control archetype, you have actual control deck type. This is the most classic type of control archetype deck in the Shadow Era. You see what opponent does during his turn. Then next turn, you answer by eliminating the opponent's threat e.g. ally, item, and support ability. This is different from permission, in which you do not even allow opponent to finish their turn with the new threat he/she tried to cast (see below). This is called "tap out" in Magic.

The word tap out came from Magic as when you use land (resource equivalent) in the game, you tap the land card. Since we don't really tap a card in Shadow Era, this should be appropriately called "Resource out" in Shadow era; however, the word just does not click and nobody uses, so I just left at calling this category as "control."

### Permission

It is called permission because when a player plays against this type of decks, they feel like they have to ask "May I cast this card? May I attack with this ally? May I use my weapon?" i.e. get a permission from the opponent before they can do what they want. Needless to say, the permission deck user's answer most of time should be "No."

This is probably the most classic style of control deck type created in the Magic the Gathering. This type of deck essentially focuses on the countering opponent's move during opponent's turn. Classically in the magic, counter was defined as you casting spell to negate opponent's spell casting i.e. block casting of the opponent spell itself before it resolves. In order to achieve this, Magic used spell type called instant, which you could cast even during opponent's turn. We will never see instant in the Shadow Era per Kyle Poole (the designer of the Shadow Era), so that is not how permission deck emerge in Shadow Era. Instead similar to Permission decks in the Yu Gi Oh, as the trap cards evolves i.e. more options, trap card driven deck will emerge inevitably and those will be permission deck in the Shadow Era.

## **Mill/Stall**

The aim of mill deck type is to have opponent run out of the cards from their library. In Shadow Era, you do not automatically win/lose due to out decking, but you get damage penalty for each card that you cannot draw. However, even without such effect, by running out of card to draw you essentially run out of hand soon, and no longer able to do anything new other than what is currently on the board. So at which point, you can essentially win the game even with small damage per turn as opponent can not counter anything so game will eventually end with you winning.

Stall is very similar to the Mill, the only difference (if there is any) is you basically stall the game but not all way to the point out decking. As there is no instant win by out decking in Shadow Era, Stall is more likely what players are playing after than actual out decking itself.

## **Lock**

The “lock” condition refers to the state where you cannot do anything. So lock deck types are essentially decks that aim to achieve this goal. Generally speaking there are three main ways to lock the opponent.

### **Resource lock**

Resource is the key element in the game of Shadow Era to cast new card. So by destroying, or locking resources, the opponent will not be able to do what he/she planned to do. Cards like Plague, Sandra Trueblade, Here be monsters plays are the key component of this deck type in current version. Though not full support for this type of deck is currently available due to lack of card like “neither player can gain additional resource during X turns,” I am certain we will see something like this in the future to make resource lock deck more viable in the future.

### **Hand lock**

Even if you have enough resource, if you have no cards in the hand then you cannot cast anything. So by destroying/locking hand cards, the opponent will not be able to do anything new other than what is already on the board.

Draw lock is another way to lock the opponent, but the end effect of locking/blocking drawing card is essentially hand lock. So consider under this category. Though in Shadow Era currently there is no way to block opponent to draw a card.

### **Play lock**

This is a term I created (or at least I did not see in any of my reference). The opponent may have enough resource and cards in hand but may not be able to do anything if no ally or hero can be targeted.

Permanent play lock creation may potentially be game balance breaker; however, temporary play lock style already exists. For instance, Full Moon without friendly ally is a play lock as you can only target the support ability or weapon, and frequently many players may not have those card in the hand.

## Combo Archetype

In order to understand the term “combo” appropriately, you need to first know the difference between “synergy” and “combo.” So let’s start with definition of the two.

### Combo

“Combo” refers to the the interaction of two or more cards (a "combination") to create a powerful effect that either wins the game immediately or creates a situation that subsequently leads to a win. In general, cards in “combo” tend to be suboptimal as individual cards but creates very powerful effect when combined.

### Synergy

“Synergy” refers to the interaction of two or more cards but not strong enough to win game i.e. many decks have synergy. Generally speaking, in synergy a good card makes other good cards even better.

As a side note, there are two types of synergies: intentional synergy and accidental synergy.

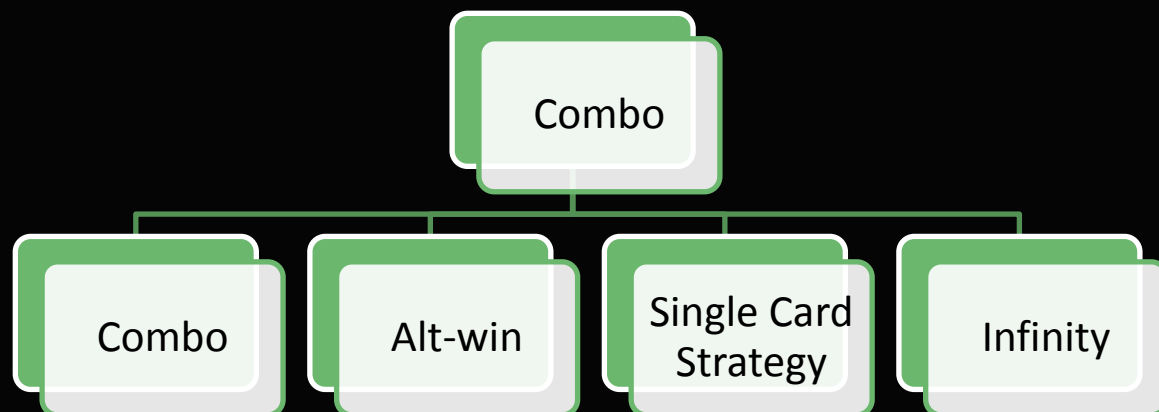
*Intentional synergy* is the synergy intentionally created per the card design i.e. card explicitly states/specifies interaction. For example, Pack Wolf has self synergy i.e. more pack wolf on the board more bonus they get, which are specified on the card ability explicitly.

On the contrary, *accidental Synergy* is not explicitly created at the time of card design; however, players find on own. For instance, protect your own ally by holy shield from tidal wave.

Now that we understand the distinction between the “combo” and “synergy”, let talk about combo archetype.

The decks in this archetype aim to achieve a specific “combo.” To make a valid combo archetype deck, the aiming combo must be reliable enough to produce at a regular basis, and strong enough to win the game if the combo is successfully achieved.

Currently, Shadow Era does not have real combo deck but this will certainly be changed with future.



## Combo

This is plain deck type under the combo archetype i.e. goal is to achieve specific combo(s) that is powerful enough to win the game. So rest of cards in the deck is essentially support card to facilitate this goal.

## Alternative Win

Any deck that utilizes specific cards or strategies that win you the game without bringing your opponent down to zero life or less are considered ALT-WIN decks. If achieving the goal wins the game instantaneously at the moment, then the deck is called “**Insta-Win.**” Shadow Era currently provides no alternative method to win the game other than the taking opponent’s hero life down to zero. But taking example from other games, for instance Magic has a card that allows you to win a game if your health becomes 40. Also Magic has a way to win if opponent gets 10 infect counter, which is specific type of damage you can inflict on the opponent. Yu Gi Oh had cards called Exodia if you can cast it, you win the game instantaneously.

## Single card strategy

This is as the name implies, the entire deck revolves around a very specific single card that is powerful enough to win the game. All other cards are there to support this card.

## Infinity Decks

Infinity decks are really combo decks except that these can go infinite with allies, resources, damages, turns, or whatever. I don’t expect to see this happening in the Shadow Era any time in near future.

## Other

These are deck types that do not fall under any of the archetypes or can fall under any of depending on how you build.

## Theme deck

These are decks build around some common theme such as card relationships in the background story, card artist except tribal.

## Tribal deck

These are decks build based on the common tribal/race e.g. Undead ally only deck etc. Currently not enough tribal/race defined cards but as the Shadow Era continues to evolve, there is no doubt we will start seeing this type of decks.

## Solo/Allyless deck

Relatively unique to the TCGs that has hero i.e. not in the Magic. This type of deck plays without any ally. This is more of a concept deck than actual winning style. In theory, you can potentially play solo deck with board control using hero’s ability, weapon attack, and spell cards and even stall the game to the point it almost becomes mill deck. Alternatively, you can play aggressively with cheap weapon and using hero’s ability continue attacking opponent like Aggro archetype. Then lastly, as the card selection increase there may be potential combo that you can pull off to rapidly end the game when it is achieved

e.g. double strike with boosted weapon attack. So again, this type can fall under any archetype depending on how you build the deck.

### **Unique/NOS deck**

This is a waste basket. This is essentially a deck that does not fall under any of the above. In theory, there should not be much under this category as long as the classification system does not have flaw. NOS stands for Not otherwise specified, which is medical terminology often used by pathologist.

### **Conclusion**

In reality, players tend to mix different element in a deck. In fact, depending on your opponent's deck your play style may end up changing from one type to other. So rather than using these classification as absolute mutually exclusive categorization, use more as guide when building deck, playing against certain deck to make your strategy.

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