



THE COMPLETE

HEARTHSTONE® GUIDE

FOR LEVELING UP YOUR GAME



by Dann Albright



The Complete Hearthstone Guide for Leveling Up Your Game

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Published April 2017.

Read the original article here: <http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/complete-hearthstone-guide-leveling-up-game/>

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If you've been playing *Hearthstone* for a while, there's a good chance you're ready to **level up your game**. Maybe you've been finishing your seasons with ranks in the high teens. Or you want to start winning more than three Arena games in your runs. No matter: it's time to step it up, and here's how you do it.

Play Every Day

If you're just getting into *Hearthstone*, you can play when you want and not really suffer any consequences. Trying to make it to the next level, though, requires that you play every day, or at least close to it. Not only does it give you more experience, but it also ensures that you don't miss any daily quests that will net you extra gold (remember that you can **reroll quests** for better ones, too).

Playing the Tavern Brawl at least once a week to get a Classic pack is also highly recommended. Because Classic cards will always be allowed in the Standard format, building up a solid collection of these cards is extremely valuable.

Some people can pick up a game and immediately become really good at it. But most people **need a lot of practice**. Play a lot and you'll get better.

Know the Basics

This might sound patronizing, but understanding the basic concepts of success in *Hearthstone* will help you go far. Board advantage, for example, is crucial. Trading up (killing a minion with a lower-cost minion) is almost always a good decision. Using weapons or otherwise sacrificing health to gain board control can be a great strategy, especially early in the game.



Efficient mana use is another core principle. Do you play a three-drop on turn four and waste one of your available mana? Or do you wait until turn five to play that three and a two? It depends on the game state. And to figure it out, you'll need to give it some careful thought. Think about your next move, and your opponent's next move. Then figure out the best play.

Knowing when to attack your opponent directly is also a necessary skill. Are you playing a fast, aggressive deck that's built on doing as much damage as early as possible? Go for direct damage as soon as you can. A more methodical or late-game deck will benefit from emphasizing board control.



Carefully counting the amount of damage you can do is something that a lot of beginning players forget about. It's easy to focus too much on board advantage and miss the fact that you can win the game. It's mistakes like this that will keep you from getting better.

These are the sorts of small tactics that you learn through a lot of practice. Reading about strategy is always helpful, but playing hundreds of games is what's going to make these principles second nature. You might think you can stop worrying about the most basic parts of the game once you've gained more experience. But forgetting just one of them can be the difference between a win and a loss.

Build Your Collection

If you want to build top-tier decks, you need a killer collection. You don't need to have all the Legendaries and Epics. But you do need to make sure you have the most useful cards available. There are three main things you can do to make sure you've got the resources to succeed:

1. **Buy a lot of packs.** Yes, you can **play the game for free**, and you can even do pretty well without paying. But buying packs makes the process a lot easier. This is especially true when new sets come out – that's when you're going to want to get as many of the cards as possible. You can store up a lot of gold to save yourself the real money, but that will slow down your progress.
2. **Play solo adventures.** The cards from solo adventures are often excellent. Getting to these special cards is most easily accomplished by paying \$20 to unlock the whole adventure. Again, you can save up gold, but it's a lot easier to just pay once when each set comes out.

3. **Disenchant and craft.** There are some cards that just aren't worth keeping. Which cards those are, of course, is entirely a matter of opinion. But there are plenty of disenchanting guides (the **Sector One guide** is a good one to start with) out there. Read a few of them, and disenchant away. Then use that dust for cards you need.

Whether you decide to focus on a single deck – which many people recommend for beginner and intermediate players – or try to build a complete collection is up to you. The more you focus your collection, the easier it will be to get the cards you need.

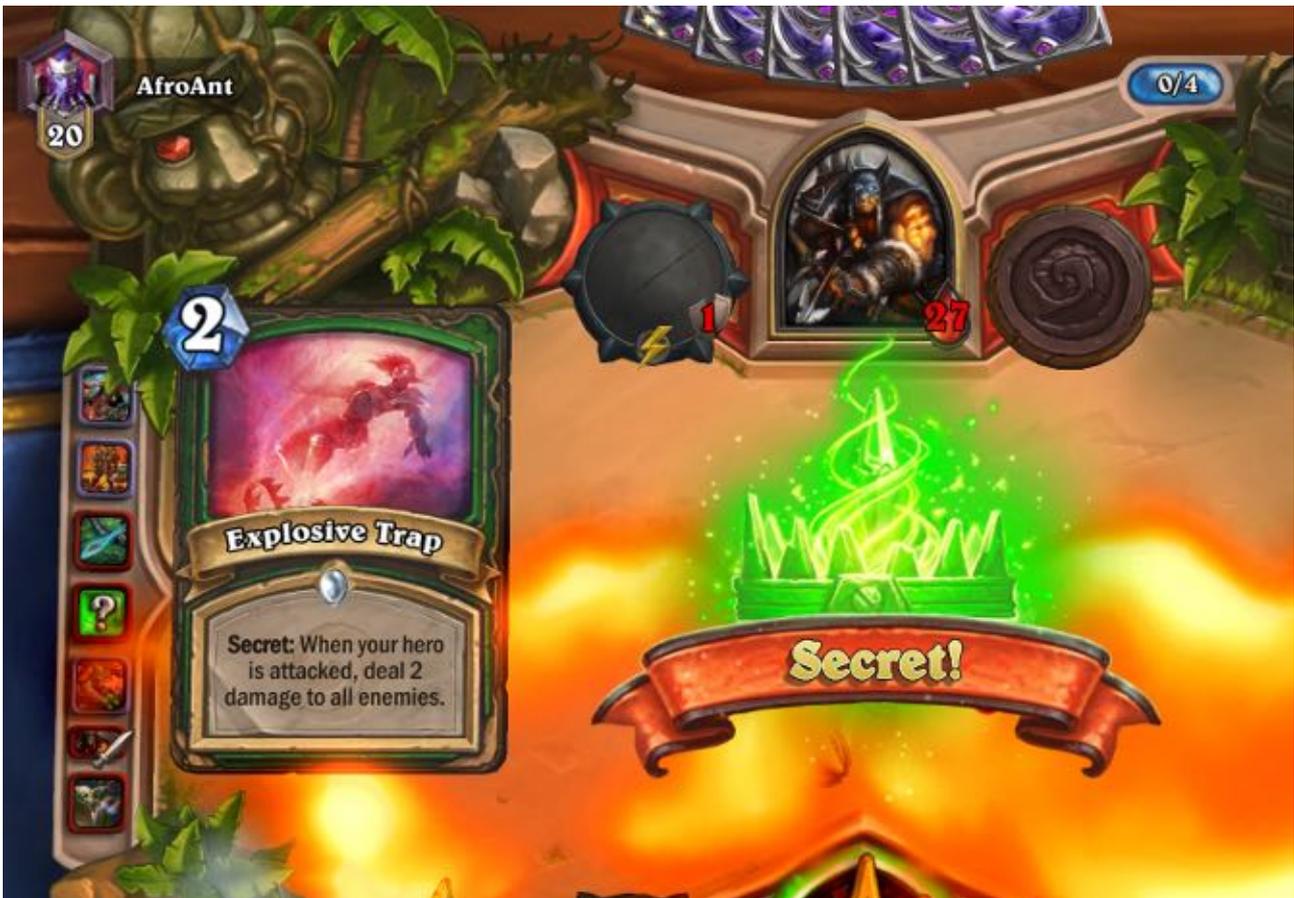
On the other hand, building a large collection of cards for all the different heroes will let you build a wide variety of decks. And it's pretty cool to have all the cards from a set. In the end, it comes down to how much time and money you're willing to spend.

Learn the Cards

This is something that will happen as you play and accumulate more cards. But if you make a point to learn how each card works, you'll be at a considerable advantage. Say you're playing against Mage, for example, and your opponent plays a Secret. Knowing that it could be Potion of Polymorph will keep you from playing your highest-cost minion first in the next turn.



Or if you're facing off against a Priest, you'll know that your opponent could be holding onto an Entomb for when you play a really big minion. Knowing the cards that commonly show up in popular decks can give you a distinct advantage.



Similarly, some cards target a minion and the minions to either side of it. Rogue's Betrayal, for example, forces a minion to deal its damage to adjacent minions. This should make you think twice about how you position your minions when you're playing against a Rogue deck.

Learning *Hearthstone* cards forwards and backwards takes a lot of playing, but you can speed it up if you keep this goal in mind. Reading up on strategy and deckbuilding will help, too.

Learn the Decks

While there are a lot of decks out there, the number of deck styles is significantly lower. Generally, you'll be facing aggro, tempo, mid-range, or control decks.

- **Aggro decks** come out fast and furious, and try to do as much direct damage to your hero as fast as they can.
- **Tempo decks** are more patient, and try to develop early-game board advantage before turning up the heat in the mid-game.
- **Mid-range decks** focus on getting the highest possible value out of each card, and try to finish off the game before it goes on too long.
- **Control decks** simply survive the early and mid-game, usually by removing the opponent's minions, and win with powerful late-game cards.

Learning to recognize these decks earlier rather than later, and understanding their strengths and weaknesses, will be a huge help in understanding which cards to play and when.

There are other types of decks as well, like combo decks, but being aware of these four is a good place to start.

Play a Lot of Arena

A friend of mine, who's a great *Hearthstone* player, encouraged me to spend a lot of time in the Arena when I first started to play. There are several ways the Arena can provide a big boost to your skills. First, success in the Arena requires that you learn why certain cards are better than others. This is a huge help in deckbuilding.



Second, you'll sharpen your playing skills. Arena decks are full of surprises, and they force you to learn the intricacies of good play. It won't help your deckbuilding skills, but you'll learn how to assess minion trades and optimize the rest of your playing skills quickly. In short, it helps you refine your knowledge of the basic ideas you need to know.

In addition to that, if you notch three or more wins, you'll earn your 150 gold back. You'll always get a pack, and the combined value of gold and dust will make up for the rest of your entry fee. If you make it to seven wins, you'll get all of your gold back, plus extras. So with a good amount of practice, you'll be earning straight profit.

How do you improve in the Arena? Of course, by playing a lot. But second, by learning Arena tier lists inside and out. Tier lists are published by various publications (like [Icy Veins](#), [HearthArena](#), and [LiquidHearth](#)) and essentially tell you how good any given card is in the arena.

Common Priest Cards

GREAT		GOOD		ABOVE AVERAGE	
Kabal Talonpriest NEW	120	Mind Control	79↓	Earthen Ring Farseer	68
Bog Creeper	93	Museum Curator	79	Frost Elemental	68
Shadow Word: Death	93	Flame Juggler	78	Holy Champion	68
Holy Nova	91	Kabal Songstealer NEW	78	Psych-o-Tron	68
North Sea Kraken	91	Darkshire Alchemist	75	Sen'jin Shieldmasta	68
Power Word: Shield	91	Dark Iron Dwarf	74	Shattered Sun Cleric	68
Northshire Cleric	88	Nerubian Prophet	74	Silver Hand Knight	68
Potion of Madness NEW	86	Priest of the Feast	73	Boulderfist Ogre	67
Temple Enforcer	85	Shadow Word: Pain	72	Chillwind Yeti	67
		Stormwind Champion	72	Harvest Golem	67
		Argent Horserider	71	Mad Bomber	67
		Mistress of Mixtures NEW	71	Stranglethorn Tiger	67
		Pit Fighter	71	Evil Heckler	66
		Amani Berserker	70	Kabal Chemist NEW	66

You'll almost always want to draft the card in the highest tier available. But you also need to take into account what you've drafted so far – if you have four seven-drop cards and a Bog Creeper comes up, you may want to take something else to avoid unbalancing your deck. Learning to make these decisions will help you get to the seven-win mark (and beyond).

Perfect Your Decks

Having a great *Hearthstone* deck will take you a long way. You still need to know how to play it, but starting with a deck that has enough power and synergy to win is going to help. Part of this will come from experience. You'll see over time that certain cards in your deck are helping a lot – or not. And you can make tweaks based on this experience.



The other option, of course, is net decking. There are tons of places where you can find deck designs (I really like [Icy Veins](#)). Run a search for what you're looking for: Budget Mage, Legend Warrior, Control Paladin, and so on. Then build the deck you find or something similar to it.

Being able to construct your own decks that take your cards and the current meta into account is the ultimate goal, but learning from well-constructed, proven deck is a great way to start developing your deckbuilding skills.

Watch Experts

Like anything else, learning from experts is a great way to advance your skills. YouTube and Twitch are great places to **watch the best players in the world**. Watch carefully, look at their options, and try to guess the play they're going to make before they do. If you get it wrong, try to figure out why.

It might not seem like a good use of your time when you could be earning gold and practicing your skills, but learning from the best is always an effective way of leveling up your skills. One thing that great players excel at is looking ahead and figuring out what effects their plays will have down the line.

Watch the YouTube video here: **Hearthstone: Trump's Best Moments in January**

That's a difficult skill to master. But when you're watching someone else play, you can be more objective and look back on the plays that led them into a particular situation. Here are a few streamers to check out:

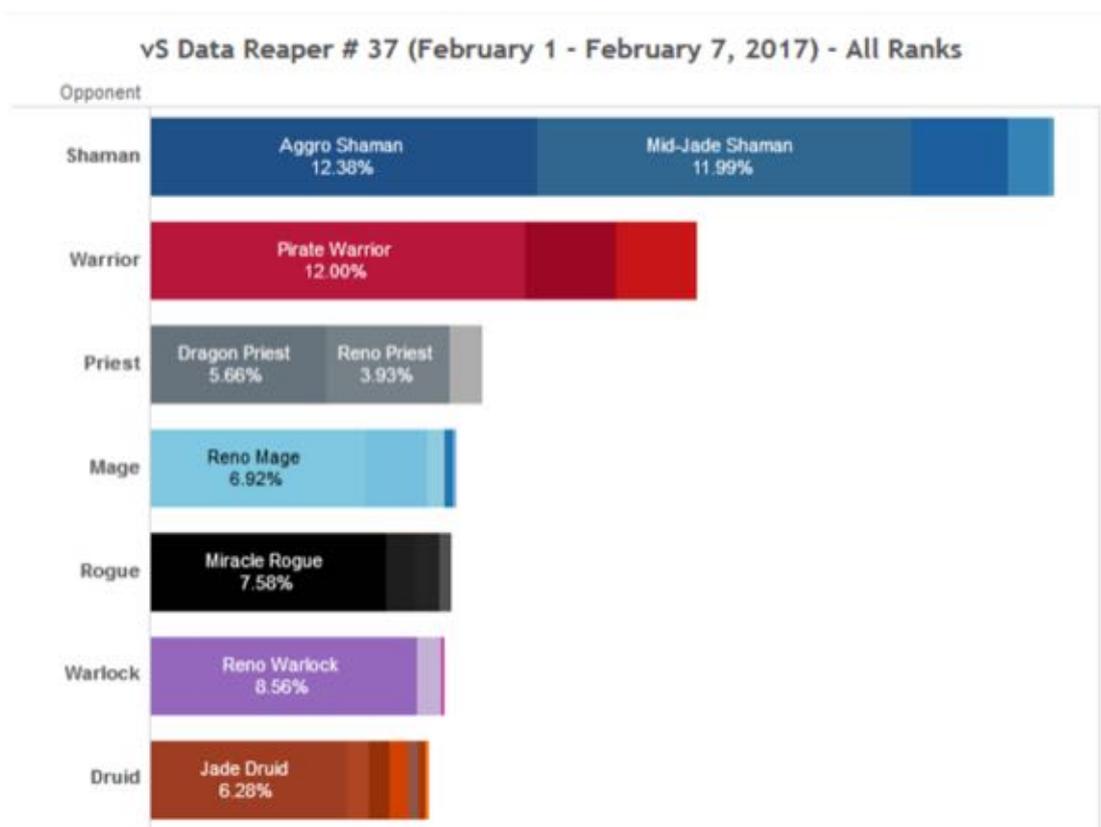
- **Lifecoach**
- **Trump**
- **Kolento**
- **StrifeCro**
- **Kripparian**
- **FireBat**
- **Reynad**
- **ADWCTA / Merps**
- **Ratsmah**

If you can play *with* an expert, that's even better. Having an experienced player walk you through their thought process is invaluable. Whether they're helping you draft, deckbuild, disenchant, or just play a regular game, take full advantage of their expertise.

Keep Up With the Meta

Beyond understanding the general deck styles, knowing which decks are popular can be a big help in building your own deck. If you know that tempo decks are popular, for example, you can prepare to defend against them early in the game. If control decks are common, you can try to build something that will let you gain early-game advantage.

Class/Archetype Distribution



At the time of writing, for example, Aggro Shaman is very popular. Knowing that Flametongue Totem and Spirit Claws are big parts of this deck can help you choose what to put in your own deck and how to deal with your opponent.

Different decks go in and out of fashion all the time. And within them, specific cards will be more or less common. As you get higher in the ranks, you'll see fewer decks, and if you know which ones you're likely to see and how they work, you can be prepared. The better you get at *Hearthstone*, the more important this is.

This is one reason the Arena is a lot of fun. You never know what you're going to see, and it can be boring playing against the same types of decks all the time.

Read a Lot

The *Hearthstone* community is extremely active. There are tons of subreddits, blogs, Twitter accounts, and other places to read up on strategy, deckbuilding, the meta, new sets, and absolutely anything else you can imagine. **Find a few that you like** and read them regularly. You'll pick up a lot of useful information – everything from general strategy to minutiae on which cards to include in which types of decks.

Here are a few to get you started:

- [/r/Hearthstone](#)
- [/r/CompetitiveHS](#)
- [/r/ArenaHS](#)
- [Icy Veins](#)
- [Vicious Syndicate](#) (if you like lots of data)
- [Tempo Storm](#)
- [HearthPwn](#)

Subreddits and forums are also **great places to ask questions**. If you're not sure about a particular issue, want advice on how to beat a specific type of deck, or need tips on how to improve your game, there are plenty of people out there who'd be happy to help.

Even if the articles and conversations on these sites aren't particularly relevant to you at the time, they'll still help you learn how the best players in the world think about the game. And that's so valuable.



Get Better at Hearthstone

Just like with anything else, getting better at *Hearthstone* requires time, effort, and patience. The upper echelons are extremely competitive – there are a lot of really great players out there, and they're serious about keeping up their skills. If you're going to make the step up from beginner to intermediate, or from intermediate to expert, it's going to take a lot of work.

That being said, if you really love *Hearthstone*, spending time on it will be worth it. Winning is a lot of fun, especially at higher levels. Just be prepared to work for it. And if you like *Hearthstone*, be sure to check out these [other great digital collectible card games](#).

What advice has helped you improve your *Hearthstone* game? What would you recommend to new and intermediate players? Share your best tips [in the comments](#) below!

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