



**Upper Deck Specialist Handbook**

**2009**

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# Upper Deck Specialist Program Handbook

This handbook is intended to introduce you to the Specialist Program, provide an overview of the information you'll need to know to fully participate in the program, and offer suggestions to improve your Ops and help you advance in the program. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact the Specialist Program Manager at [demo@upperdeck.com](mailto:demo@upperdeck.com).

## Getting Started

In this section, we'll cover the essential information about the program—how to get started, what to expect, and what we expect of you. You will learn how to prepare yourself to participate in the program by understanding different kinds of activities to help promote the games. From demos to local tournaments to judging to promotional events, we'll explain what is expected of a Specialist and outline the various ways in which Specialists can join in.

### Welcome to the Program!

Congratulations on successfully passing Upper Deck's Level 1 Specialist exam! We're glad to have you on board to share your experience and enjoyment of Upper Deck's games. Whether you're teaching the games to new players, participating in special programs for specific brands, or helping increase the levels of Organized Play opportunities in your area by running events, Specialists make invaluable contributions to the health of our games.

This handbook will help you get started, as well as provide information to use as you become more active in the program. Nothing can prepare you for every situation you may encounter, but reading through this book will answer basic questions about the program, give you a solid understanding of how the Specialist Program works, and offer insights into how to improve your efforts. There's more to being a Specialist than showing off a game or two!

There are several things you should do as a new Specialist to get yourself off to the best possible start. There's always something you can be working on to prepare yourself—you don't have to sit and wait passively because you lack a particular demo item, haven't received any requests to run demos, or don't think you know enough players who will participate in a tournament.

## Here Are Your Most Essential Starting Tasks

First, you need to learn a few terms. You'll see them often in this handbook, and you'll want to know exactly what they mean.

**Volunteer:** This means you! Specialists are volunteers; they are not employees of Upper Deck.

**Customer:** This is the person taking the demo, playing in the tournament, visiting the promotional event, or otherwise interacting with a Specialist. Specialists should treat the people they interact with as if they were customers in a store—the entire reason you are promoting games is to get people to play them.

**Host:** This is the person or company who provides you with a place to run Ops—usually the owner of a gaming store, an event manager or Tournament Organizer, or an administrator for a public venue, such as a library or community center. The host enables you to set up and run an Op, either as a service to others or as a means of increasing sales or attendance at a store or events. It's important to maintain a good working relationship with any host you are involved with.

**Tournament Organizer:** Tournament Organizers run Organized Play events, such as tournaments and product-release promotions. They depend on new players to supplement their existing players, and, therefore, game demos are important to them. New players need Tournament Organizers to provide places to play the games they've just learned.

**Event Manager:** This is a person designated by a Tournament Organizer to oversee the operations of an organized play event. You'll often work with the event manager rather than the Tournament Organizer, if you are running an Op at an organized play event.

**Organized Play:** This is the program of tournaments managed by Upper Deck to provide players with opportunities to enjoy the games. Organized Play programs range from casual hobby leagues to competitive World Championships, with all kinds of tournaments in between. As a Specialist, you encourage new players to participate in Organized Play by teaching the games and running tournaments. This helps keep players interested in the game, and often encourages them to include their friends. Organized Play supports the player base on all levels.

**Demo:** A demonstration of a game. A demo should cover the different parts of the game, an explanation of how the game works, and some examples of how the turns are played. Demos can be very technical and detailed or more generalized, depending on your audience. Demos can be for individual customers or for several customers at once.

**Demo Session:** This is a block of time you set aside to run individual demos. It's usually best to devote several hours to running demos, giving plenty of advance notice as to the time and the place. Take the requirements of your venue and host into consideration when planning the length of the session.

**Venue:** The location where you run your Ops. Venues can be stores, tournament halls, or other public spaces like libraries or community centers—any place where you can safely and legally gather to run a demo session.

### **Read through Your Handbook**

This handbook serves as a basic guide to getting you started in the program and to help improve your knowledge of Specialist procedures and expectations, as well as to offer suggestions for setting up and running your Ops. Don't forget to refer to it as you move along in the program—there's a lot of information here that will continue to be of use to you.

### **Read the Online Policy Documents**

These are official guides to what the program is all about, so you should check for updates as well. You might think you don't need them once you've read them over to pass the Level 1 exam, but they'll continue to be useful. Print out a copy for each update, and keep it accessible. Don't stop after the Specialist Policy Guidelines and the Specialist FAQ—you'll also want to know Tournament Policy and Penalty Guidelines. You can find a listing of Upper Deck policy documents in the Upper Deck forums, by clicking on the Files link.

### **Look Over the Games in Your Specialist Kit**

Kits will include supplies for a variety of the games we produce—most of you will already know at least one of these games fairly well. Open the decks, and familiarize yourself with the contents and the cards—it's easier to run a demo when you know what you're working with. There are also rulebooks for each of the games—you'll want to read through these, even if you already know how to play.

You should keep this kit intact. *Don't* remove cards to use in your own decks, and *don't* give away individual cards or entire decks. Even if you don't play one of the games, you should

keep the supplies for that game on hand. You never know when an opportunity might arise to demo a specific game. We can't send you replacement supplies each time you get rid of them, so please hold onto the supplies in your kit.

### **Learn to Play the Games!**

It's all right if you want to focus on only one game, but don't overlook the benefits of knowing multiple games. If you become proficient in a lot of games, you're more likely to find places to run Ops—you never know which game a store owner will want to feature in-house demos or tournaments. Particular programs like organized tours or special demo events usually feature specific brands, and if it's one you aren't familiar with, you may miss out on a good opportunity. Also, if you want to demo at larger conventions, you're more likely to be chosen if you know multiple games. Flexibility is a great asset!

Many of the games supported by Upper Deck have an easy online Flash tutorial that will teach you the basics. These tutorials are a great way to familiarize yourself with the games. Look for them on the brand's individual sites on <http://www.upperdeck.entertainment.com>. Then turn to the rulebooks included in the Starter Decks to help you with the nuances. Find a friend who knows the game and play a few matches to get a reliable feel for it. Don't forget the importance of staying in practice—even if it is only through casual play once or twice a month. It's much easier to run Ops for a game that you know well enough to play.

### **Familiarize Yourself with Game Stores and Tournament Venues in Your Area**

Not only will you need places to demo, but you will also need places to send your customers once they've gained an interest in the game! If you're planning on running tournaments as Ops, you will need somewhere to hold them. Demos are intended to introduce players to games, but not much can come of that if the player can't find tournaments or product. If you know the local game stores and tournament structures, you'll be able to direct your customers to places where they can support their new games by purchasing product and joining in tournaments. The more places you know, the better! The phone book, the internet, and fellow game enthusiasts can help you find new places.

### **Get to Know Other Specialists**

Whether they live in your area or involve themselves in your efforts via the Upper Deck forums, your fellow Specialists are an ideal source of support. Focus on making contacts and friends in the program. Demo Team members can offer suggestions, share expertise, lend support, and fill in for one another—but only if they are communicating. Go ahead and make the first move rather than waiting for another member to find you. Introduce yourself on the forums, and strike up some discussions.

There is also an official Facebook group for Upper Deck Specialists – if you are a member of Facebook, this is another great online tool to help you stay in the loop. Join the group, participate in the discussions, and socialize with other volunteers.

If there are other Specialists in your area, it's a good idea to arrange for a meeting every other month or so to practice the games you need to know and to exchange information about what you've all been working on. It's likely that you may eventually end up working with the other members near you, so go ahead and start building good working relationships with each other.

**Here, we'll give you an idea about what the Specialist program expects of its members. The most valuable volunteers will do their utmost to live up to these expectations.**

## **Specialist Expectations**

We need Specialists to help our programs grow, support existing brands, and broaden the player base to improve Organized Play. The Specialist Program is as vital as the other branch of the Upper Deck volunteer network, the Judge program. Specialists serve a vital and important role in helping our games flourish.

We expect enthusiastic, committed volunteers to join the program. It shouldn't be intended as a source of free product or rewards, inside information, or an ego boost! The program thrives on dedicated individuals who are willing to put forth the effort to spread awareness of the different games—and have a good time in the process! If you're that sort of person, then you can look forward to high levels of accomplishment and enjoyment as a Specialist.

### **What We Expect of You**

#### **You Should Meet Activity Requirements**

You will need to run and report a certain number of Ops each month to remain active in the program. After you sign up, you will be sent materials to demo our games, but to continue receiving updated Specialist kits, you'll have to remain an active member in good standing, by running and reporting your Ops. Sometimes you might miss the requirements due to personal circumstances—occasional lapses are something we understand, but they can't become too frequent. You can always contact the Specialist Program Manager when circumstances prevent you from meeting your requirements now and then.

#### **You Should Develop Your Own Personal Skills and Resources**

The more effort you put into improving your Ops, the more successful you'll be and more opportunities will open for you. While other members and the Specialist Program Manager are there to help you along, you should expect to put forth a good bit of effort on your own. The more self-driven you are, the better you will do! You shouldn't have to wait for instruction and guidance every step of the way. The overall responsibility for how well you perform rests with yourself.

#### **You Should Know and Understand the Brands**

Strive to have a proficient level of knowledge of all Upper Deck games for which you have demo materials. Complete and total expertise is not asked of you, but a basic understanding of all the games in your Specialist Kit can only benefit you. Often, when a big opportunity comes up, such as a sponsored trip to a major convention, we will need Specialists who know specific games (or preferably multiple games.) If there's an opening and you're given a chance to apply but don't have the means to fill the required role, you could be missing out on a fantastic opportunity.

Beyond acquiring a basic understanding of how a game works and what kind of experience it offers, make the effort to understand the brand behind the game. Upper Deck's games are based on compelling characters, worlds, and concepts. An understanding of these elements can help you capture the imaginations of your customers. Someone who stops by to try out the World of Warcraft TCG may not find the "variable main phase gameplay structure" or the "freeform field representation" as interesting as the opportunity to try all-new adventures in Azeroth or the chance to see his or her favorite items and characters rendered by famous artists.

Ask yourself, "What makes the license for a specific game attractive and fun, and how is that represented in the game?" If you can give a few different answers, you'll be ready to help a

fan of the license really get into the game. You don't have to be able to win a trivia contest on the subject, but you should know a little bit about all aspects of the various brands. That knowledge will come in handy.

### **You Should Be Able to Present Solid, Effective Demos**

As important as pre-existing knowledge of games and brands are to the quality of your demos, just knowing everything about a game won't guarantee a successful demo. There are some basic universal skills that are useful no matter which game you're teaching your audience. Regardless of how many demos you've run, you should always be conscious of the effort you put into developing these skills.

Your demos should communicate the key information about each game, provide an easy to understand demonstration, and give the customer a feel for what the game is about and why he or she would enjoy playing it regularly.

### **You Should Be Able to Organize Local Tournaments**

While being a Tournament Organizer is not a requirement to join the Specialist program, the ability to run tournaments for the games you are teaching will help you retain your customers. After all, why would someone start playing a game if there aren't many places to play?

### **You Should Maintain a Professional Appearance and Demeanor**

Remember, even though you are not an employee of Upper Deck, you are representing the company to your local community and store owners. You should always conduct yourself in a professional manner, which comprises your dress, grooming, and behavior.

Your clothing should be neat and professional looking. Unless you're demoing at an event with a dress code, you don't need to adhere to any particular color scheme or wear any specific shoes, but the clothes you're wearing should be clean, presentable, and fit you appropriately. When in doubt, make the conservative choice. Groom yourself for professional presentation. Shower, wash your hair, trim your nails, and shave adequately.

You should refrain from making negative comments about any games—either Upper Deck's or a competitor's. Be respectful and polite to store employees, players, and customers and their family members. The image they form of Upper Deck will be shaped by how their perception of you.

### **You Should Represent Upper Deck's Brands to Both New *and* Existing Markets**

Many of your customers will be seasoned gamers, but many others won't be gaming hobbyists. It's important to recognize and understand the difference. Don't be unprofessional toward or dismiss someone because he or she has a different hobby background. Nearly everyone likes to play games—many just don't realize it yet! If your demo is compelling enough, nongamers who participate in or observe a demo just might make that step across the threshold, and they may become as interested in the gaming world as someone who's been there for years.

**So, what do we have in store for people who can meet and maintain these expectations? There are a lot of ways for Specialists to participate in the program! Here's a look at the kinds of opportunities you'll find in the Specialist program.**

## **Specialist Volunteer Opportunities**

Your membership in the Upper Deck Specialist program offers some great opportunities. Not only will you be supporting your local gaming scene, but as you progress and become more experienced, opportunities to work events further out of your area may open up to you. Below are some examples of opportunities that are open to Specialists

### **Present Demos to Drive New Players to Organized Play**

This is the core of the Specialist program—focused, tailored demo sessions run in stores and similar venues. These kinds of demos do a good job of reaching players, interesting them in the brand and encouraging them to make that first step to take up the game and support it. This kind of demo effort helps make Organized Play possible, especially in areas where it might have a hard time taking root. Never underestimate the importance of this part of the program!

### **Run Demos at Larger Organized Play Events**

Tournament Organizers will sometimes request Specialists to show off new games or support existing ones at established events. This is a great opportunity to introduce new players to the games and for hard working Specialists to introduce themselves to the Tournament Organizers and Upper Deck employees.

### **Participate in Brand Tours and Other Special Promotions**

There are all kinds of new programs constantly being developed to promote our games. Reliable, dependable Specialists are prime candidates to be selected to participate in these events due to their experience and proven track record. There are more of these events than you think, and they can be a great chance to reach out to new players. Look for these opportunities to be announced on the Upper Deck forums or in emails from the Specialist Program Manager.

### **Promote Games at Conventions**

Some degree of sponsorship to major events is sometimes made available for exceptional Specialists. You'll usually hear about these opportunities in posts on the Organized Play forum or occasionally in emails from the Specialist Program Manager. Be aware that the degree of sponsorship you need can affect your chances of being selected: full sponsorships, which pay for your accommodations and travel, are few, but partial sponsorships, which provide travel or accommodations, are more common. If you can accept partial sponsorship, you have a better chance of being selected.

There are varying sizes of conventions. Some go on for several days and attract tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands of attendees, while others last for a day or two and pull in a few hundred fans. Larger conventions offer a great chance to work with Upper Deck employees and to meet a lot of other Specialists. Smaller conventions, where you are often the sole representative for the brand, provide a unique opportunity to show what you are really capable of.

### **Sanction Local Tournaments**

One of the best things you can do to support the new players you've attracted through your demo sessions is run events so they have somewhere to play. If you can advertise, sanction, run, and upload plenty of local events, you'll find that more of these new players will stick with the game you demoed to them.

### **Judge Local Tournaments**

You can also act as a judge in local events, your own or someone else's. Players appreciate fair, consistent rulings, so Specialists who are certified judges can contribute even more to keeping the games strong.

### **Make Formal Store Visits**

Sometimes Upper Deck will have information for you to distribute to or collect from your local stores, giving you the opportunity to make a formal store visit to check in with the owner and pass along what's new. This is a good way to get to know the stores in your area, perhaps finding you more places to run demos or tournaments.

### **Attend Programs Designed Exclusively for Volunteers**

Some Specialists will get the chance to participate in Specialist training meetings, summits, or convocations. These gatherings are designed to provide training and support. It also gives Specialists the opportunity to offer their insights and ideas regarding the program. You'll find these programs running alongside larger conventions or other events where there will be a sizeable Specialist presence.

**In this section, we'll take an in-depth look at the duties and responsibilities of a Specialist. Beginning with the demoing process, we'll explain how to gain a better understanding of how to reach your audience and how to set up a demo, whether you're answering an existing demo request or going out and arranging a session on your own. We'll go over the basics of what you need to do to promote and execute a successful demo, as well as what to do once your demos are completed.**

**We will also cover the basics of organizing and sanctioning tournaments: selecting a venue, finding staff, and providing the right level of service for your players. An overview of what's expected of a Judge will help you prepare to judge local events, and an explanation of what you can do on a store visit will enable you to get the most out of your interaction with store owners.**

## **Becoming an Active Specialist**

Once you've passed the Level 1 Specialist Certification test and understand the program's goals, you're ready to become an active Specialist! Specialists perform a variety of tasks collectively titled "Ops" (short for "Operations"), which range from running demos to sanctioning local tournaments. The Ops you perform can vary, but they all have one thing in common—each Op is intended to promote Upper Deck's games. By completing Ops, you'll help your favorite games prosper. There are a lot of different Ops you can conduct, and the more you do, the bigger impact you'll have.

### **Understanding Ops**

The Ops system is relatively straightforward, but to get the most out of it, you need to know all of your options. Choosing the right Op at the right time can mean the difference between a moderate event with low turnout and successfully supporting your favorite game and inspiring others to do the same. Deciding which Op to do (and when) is a skill that will come with time. The first step is learning which Ops you can perform as a Specialist. Here's a brief overview of the most common varieties of Ops to get you started—we'll go into more detail later on.

### **Giving Demos**

Demoing a game to a fresh audience is the number one way to attract new players. Rulebooks and starters are good, but there's just no substitute for a customized learning experience. As a Specialist, you can tailor your demos to your audience while infusing your own excitement for your favorite games into the demo sessions. Demos should be engaging, educating, and, most importantly, fun! They're the perfect way to show someone why they might like a game they've never tried before.

Hosting a demo means more than just preparing and memorizing a script. You'll find yourself demoing to all kinds of people—from kids to senior citizens. They might be hardcore TCGers or tabletop gamers, or videogamers making the jump to other types of games for the first time. They might not even be gamers at all. Each individual is unique and will benefit most from a personalized demo. Try to avoid settling into a routine, and learn to recognize what will appeal most to your customers. We'll explore demo techniques in-depth later in the handbook, but for now, remember that the purpose of a demo is to show someone why they'll enjoy the game you're demonstrating.

### **Sanctioning Local Tournaments**

If a store in your area doesn't run or sanction tournaments, you can change that by passing the Tournament Organizer certification test. From there, you can sanction and report tournaments, giving your local players a place to play, while you rack up Ops!

There are a few important points to remember if you want to sanction tournaments and report them as Ops. First, you need to be a certified Tournament Organizer—being a certified Specialist isn't enough for this particular Op, so pass the online Tournament Organizer test before you try to start running tournaments. To get credit for running a tournament, you need to be on site to manage the tournament *and* you need a scorekeeping system. A scorekeeping system entails inputting the results of each round into MANTIS, doling out pairings, and dealing with any player issues that might arise. In addition, you absolutely must report your tournament results online once the tournament has concluded. Otherwise, the tournament won't go on record, players won't earn ranking points, and you won't get credit for performing an Op. Reporting tournament results through MANTIS is easy to do, but a lot of people forget to do it. Make sure you don't put yourself in that situation.

### **Judging**

If there is already a healthy tournament scene in your area and the current Tournament Organizer can handle sanctioning and organizing duties without your assistance, then judging is another valuable service you can offer your local gaming community.

If you want to judge local events, you'll need to establish a relationship with the Tournament Organizer. Some Tournament Organizers may wish to handle judging themselves, or they may not be ready to take on a judge for the first time—organizing judges represents a certain level of commitment that they may not be ready for. Most, however, will be happy to have your help.

To earn credit for judging as an Op, you must have at least a Level 1 Rules Certification for the game you'll be judging. Passing a Level 1 Rules Certification test will open forum resources to you that will help you in your judging, and your certification will also help you prove your worth to your local Tournament Organizers. "I'm a certified judge" is not a line you should depend on when dealing with players, but even basic levels of certification will instill some trust in the players receiving your rulings. If you're considering judging Ops, then passing the Level 1 tests for the games you're interested in should be pretty easy. The testing process is a good way for you to make sure that your game knowledge is adequate to judge at the local level.

It's perfectly acceptable to act as a volunteer in both the Judge and Specialist Programs; however, if you judge an event and then report it as a Specialist Op, it won't count toward your minimum activity requirements for the Judge Program and vice versa. So make sure you don't double-report your events, and remember to balance out your activities so you don't wind up accidentally losing your Judge certifications.

### **Making Formal Store Visits**

Most Ops will be concerned with directly engaging and supporting their local players, but some Ops will involve actual stores. Private chats with your primary contacts at store locations helps the store owners and managers understand the products (and players) that you're looking to assist.

The purposes of a store visit can vary, but there are some points you'll almost always want to touch on. The chief goal of a store visit is to keep a manager or owner in the loop so that they can serve their customers. That means sharing a lot of information—from Upper Deck to the store and from the store to Upper Deck.

### **Why So Many Kinds of Ops?**

If you're new to the Specialist Program you might be wondering, "Hey, why are there so many different Ops?" After all, the Judge Program only encompasses judging, while a Specialist has so many different tasks to perform. Why not have separate programs for demos, store visits, tournament sanctioning, and all the rest of it?

The answer's pretty simple: all the Ops you can perform as a Specialist may be different, but they all have the same goal—supporting Upper Deck Entertainment games on a local level.

While the Judge Program is largely concerned with promoting and supporting the competitive side of your favorite games, Specialists have a different focus that all the of the Ops share. In fact, performing a variety of Ops is a really important element to your success!

Though all the Ops have the same end goal, each one takes a different path to get there. Demoing is vital for the promotion of any game, whether it is brand new and needs to be introduced or it has been around a while and needs an influx of new players. Demoing brings new players into stores. Judging is usually viewed as a service provided to players who are already familiar with a game and who attend tournaments regularly, and it helps keep the customers you already have. Sanctioning tournaments helps out new and old players alike, and store visits help keep it all together.

Now that you know a bit more about each Op and what it can do for your customers, it should be easy to see how important it is to perform a variety of Ops. The feedback you collect from store visits and talking to your customers will help guide you toward the types of Ops that will benefit your area the most. If you can offer a variety of Ops, you'll see a much bigger payoff for the time you've invested.

It might be tempting to focus on only the kinds of Ops that you feel are your strongest, but you should avoid doing that. If you distance yourself from certain Ops, you'll end cheating yourself out of growth and future opportunities. When big events and sponsorships come up, they often demand a variety of expertise. The best way you can demonstrate that and gain more experience is to vary the Ops you perform. Go for it! Every Specialist has Ops they prefer to do, but don't limit yourself on account of your strengths. If you lack certifications, work to acquire them. The more you can do, the further you will advance in the program.

**Now that you know how to prepare yourself, it's time to give some thought about the actual demoing process! Let's look at what is involved in creating a demo. What is a demo? What purpose does the demo serve? In what type of venue should I offer demos? Understanding these concepts will help you deliver better, more effective demos.**

## **An Introduction to the Demoing Process**

### **What Constitutes a Demo?**

The flat definition of a "demo" is a demonstration of a game that provides the customer with the basic idea of how to play. The customer learns about the different kinds of cards, the phases of the game, basic mechanics, and how to win. But it's really more than that—the Specialist has a short opportunity to convey to the customer *why* he or she should play the game. It's fun, it's a way to win prizes, and it's another way to experience a world and characters he or she already enjoys—whatever the reason, there's something that will appeal to each person who stops to try out the game. A really good demo from a person who is enthusiastic about the game, followed up with the idea that playing this game is something the customer really *wants* to do is probably the best way to get new players to embrace a game. You'll have to go beyond just teaching the customer how the game works; you'll need to show each customer why that game would be a meaningful, enjoyable game to play.

### **The Benefits of Demos**

Why run a demo? Because most people are more likely to invest in a game if they believe they'll enjoy playing it! While some people purchase Starter Decks or a few booster packs on their own and then read through the rulebook or find a friend to teach them to play, it's not always going to give them the ideal first experience with the game. They may find the rulebook confusing, or their friend might defeat them mercilessly, and they might come away with the impression that the game isn't fun. "Why should I waste my time and money on this?" they might ask themselves.

Compare that to a well-run demo session—clearly explained cards, a trial run through of the game, and the basic mechanics and win condition presented in an interactive and easy-to-understand way, as well as playing against someone interested in teaching the game rather than delivering a beating—and the well-run demo session is the more-positive experience every time. The customer is more likely to walk away thinking "That was fun!", so, he or she stops by the counter, picks up some more product, and heads out the door a happy customer. He or she may buy product and play only casually or become deeply involved with collecting or competing—either way, the key to getting people to pick up a game is to show them that they *want* to.

### **Analyze the Demo Process**

Not all demos are the same. There are one-on-one demos, group demos, and these demos can take off in a lot of different directions.. When you're contacted to give a demo, find out as much as you can about what will be expected. As a demo team member, you may be called upon to do a variety of promotional activities, so make sure you know what you'll be doing ahead of time so you can prepare accordingly.

The first thing you should do before setting up your demo is gather an understanding of the demo process. To do that, you'll need to know the answers to a few questions. Here is a basic list to help you get you started.

### **For What Audience Is This Demo Intended?**

Will you be dealing mostly with children or adults? New players, non-gamers, or veteran card players? Understanding your audience will help you make important decisions about how to

approach the entire demo session. Good communication with whoever requested the demo or the owner of the venue will give you an idea of what to expect.

### **How Long Should Each Demo Last?**

This will depend in part on the answer to the first question. If you expect a large audience, especially one with a lot of kids or nongamers, your demos should be short and to the point. That kind of audience will usually be interested in getting a taste of the game to see if it's fun, so you won't need to go into the detail that more experienced gamers may prefer. If your audience is small or consists of experienced gamers, spending more time on the intricacy and design elements of the game might be more attractive.

### **What Do You Want to Accomplish with the Demo?**

Are you trying to show established gamers a game they haven't tried before? Are you trying to draw nongamers into the hobby? Will you focus on the game itself or expend your efforts on encouraging players to participate in local Organized Play programs?

The answers to these questions might vary from demo to demo, so be ready to alter your approach if you find your audience is very mixed or not what you expected. You should definitely arrive with a plan, but be prepared to adapt. You'll see that re-evaluating these points to fit each customer can really help your demos be more successful.

Sometimes the goal of the demo will be up to you. Other times, your host may have a particular agenda for the demo. Recognize when the decision is yours and when it isn't. If your host tells you that he or she really wants you to focus on driving players to Hobby League, that should be your goal.

### **Where to Offer Demos**

The most common places to run demos are gaming or card stores that already sell the product or run events for the games. Ideally, you'll form lasting relationships with the stores in your area by running demos on a regular basis. If that isn't possible, you can demo at schools, libraries, and other public venues. Don't let a limited number of card shops or lack of store interest keep you from showing off games to people! There are almost always alternatives.

### **Demos at Stores**

You'll probably find that the most popular demo locations are hobby and game stores that sell the games you're demoing. You can show customers how to play the games that the store is selling, and in turn, you can increase interest in the brands that the store supports with local-level tournaments. This is where knowing the stores in your area will serve you well! Talk to the stores' owners and explain the benefits of running demos, and tell them what games you are familiar with. If you can strike up a good long-term relationship with a store by offering demos on a regular schedule, even better!

### **Demos at Public Venues**

Don't think that stores or tournament venues are the only place you can show off a new game. Community centers, libraries, after-school programs, camps, and so forth are also good places to find potential new players. Look around and see what there is in your area, but always make sure you contact someone in charge of the facility or program to clear the demos in advance.

### **Demos at Tournaments and Conventions**

These are often the most high-profile demo events! If you are selected to work a major tournament or convention, you can expect to spend many hours demoing to veteran gamers, novices, and curious individuals who don't consider themselves gaming hobbyists. Working this type of event can be a lot of fun, and it allows you to make a big contribution to the program and the games you support; however, it also requires stamina, tolerance, and the ability to adapt

your demoing style to a wide variety of customers. You'll definitely want to get some experience on a smaller scale before diving into this kind of event. You'll usually be working directly with Upper Deck employees at these large events, so it's a good chance to get to know them, and network with other Specialists that you would not ordinarily get to work with.

Sometimes, Upper Deck employees can't be present to manage demo duties at smaller conventions or distributor meetings, so you'll get the chance to act as a representative of Upper Deck at these events. This is a good chance to show what you can do—these types of demos are a mark of confidence for the chosen volunteer.

**All right, we've talked about what a demo is, how to analyze it, and where to present it. Now, you'll need to know how to arrange the demo session.**

### **Set Up the Demo**

Booking and arranging a successful demo session takes more than just waiting for demo requests to arrive! If you want to run demos, you'll have to get out there and do some work to get the process started.

### **Proactively Seek Out Places to Demo**

Demo opportunities rarely just come to you. Oftentimes, you have to actively seek them out. If you sit around waiting for a demo request email to arrive in your inbox, you may wait in vain. If you go out and make the rounds of your local stores, introducing yourself and explaining how demos can increase sales and tournament attendance, the opportunities to demo will increase. And remember, there are more places to demo than just game stores and conventions. Make a point of finding different locations and promoting your services to potential hosts.

### **Respond to Specialist Requests**

If you get an email requesting a Specialist, read it carefully for specific times and dates and which game is being requested. Check for anything additional that the host requires. If the email is unclear, politely contact the requestor for further clarification.

If you get a request, *answer it* even if your answer is "I'm sorry, I won't be able to help you out. I hope you are able to find another member who can assist you." If a change in time or date would enable you to accept, let them know. Try to respond to all requests within twenty-four hours. Even if you can't make a firm commitment at that time, it's better to respond with "I'd love to help you out, but I need to make sure my schedule is clear for that day." Give the requestor a firm date when you will contact him or her with a definitive answer, and then follow through.

This also applies to requests made directly by Upper Deck. The Specialist Program Manager may contact you when a particular program or special event comes through your area. Don't ignore these requests. If you're unable to help out, send a response saying that you can't accept. Volunteers who repeatedly ignore Specialist requests end up looking undependable, and they run the risk of removal from the program.

Use a calendar to keep track of Specialist requests. Mark the dates with the appropriate times and locations, as well as any dates on which you've said you'll provide definite answers. Confirm the information a few days before the demo, and verify that you know where and when it will take place. You don't want to show up late or at the wrong place because you mixed something up.

Use a respectable email address. Store owners may think twice about having someone who uses [Really Really Hungover@gmail.com](mailto:Really Really Hungover@gmail.com) as his or her email address demo games in their establishment! You might think about getting an email address that you can use specifically for Demo Team activity. Choose a reliable service, pick an easy-to-remember address, and make

sure that the email requests aren't being filtered into the spam folder. If you do get a separate address, **check it frequently**.

Use a professional tone when responding to Specialist requests, through email or over the phone. Whether you are dealing with a store or an Upper Deck staff member, behave as you would toward other professionals. This is especially important when dealing with individuals whom you have not yet met. If your first contact with someone is through email, spend some time writing and spell-checking to ensure that their first impression of you is a good one. Stores may not accept your offer to run an Op if your initial contact with them makes you seem incompetent, and you may not be selected for special programs if your emails are incoherent or impolite.

Remember that while you are a volunteer, you are still representing Upper Deck, and you're expected to maintain a professional attitude toward Specialist requests. Treat them as if they are part of a job, and not as favors that you do only when you feel like it. The right attitude toward the Ops you run will only help you advance in the program.

**Once you have a demo to run, you'd better get ready for it. There's much more to being prepared than merely grabbing some cards and walking out the door! In this section, we'll go over the basics, and point out some things you may not have thought of before.**

### **Preparing for Your Demo**

Demos can be a lot of fun, and you'll find they're much more enjoyable when you've put some effort into preparing for them. You'll never avoid every surprise, but some simple preparation will help things stay on the right track, providing a much more relaxed and positive atmosphere for everyone.

### **Build and Maintain Your Specialist Kit**

A top-notch Specialist is going to view the Specialist Kit that Upper Deck provides as a starting point for future successes. Sure, your Specialist Kit is a good resource on its own, but you should feel free to make it a better fit for your own personal style, as well as your audience's needs. Evaluate what kinds of additions would help out your demos, choose something sturdy and functional to store your supplies, and put it all together.

### **Add in Cards or Custom-Built Decks**

If you have a particular game you enjoy, you can probably create new demo decks or make the existing decks even better. If you decide to build your own demo decks, try putting together some decks of cards that are brand recognizable but not too valuable. It helps if you build one deck to be superior to the other, because full-game one-on-one demos tend to go better when the customer wins. A victory leaves the customer with a good feeling about the game (provided it wasn't brutally obvious that you were throwing the game). Of course, if you're talking two customers through a game against each other, two equal-level decks are necessary in most cases. Exceptions include a parent and child demoing together or a much younger customer against an older, more experienced one.

Adding in new, "hot" cards or cards associated with popular characters can help keep your demos interesting. Keep it as current as you can—show off cards from new sets, and focus on newer characters whenever possible. It's likely that certain audiences will be very up to date on character-related issues, so having "the new big thing" will help draw them in.

### **Card Sleeves and Deck Boxes**

Color-coordinated card sleeves and deck boxes can keep you from mixing up decks, especially if you're running multiple-player demos and you want to keep the specific decks properly sorted. To avoid brand confusion, don't use branded sleeves and boxes for games other

than the one you're demoing. Plain-colored sleeves are your best bet, and they're usually more cost effective, too. Even if your deck has only commons, sleeves will improve their lifespan. Make sure you replace the sleeves as they get worn or dirty—it's very off-putting to a potential customer to handle sticky, scruffy card sleeves.

A cardboard long-box can store all of your decks and supplies for any given game, and you can easily label them to help you find what you need when you need it. These are a big help to those who are used to demoing more than one game, and they help ensure you arrive on site with the correct supplies.

### **Playmats**

If you have a colorful promotional playmat that ties into the game that you're showing, great! Though, you might find that the playmats included in the Starter Decks work better, as they show where to put the cards, and some offer additional game instructions that help the customer remember what to do. You may want to laminate a set of these mats. This gives your demo sessions a very professional appearance, while keeping the playmats protected from wear, spills, and dirt. Laminating larger playmats can make them tricky to transport since they won't fold, so you may want to consider getting an inexpensive mailing tube or a plastic architect's tube to carry around all your laminated mats. Throw in a few decks, along with whatever flyers or posters you have, and you can sling an entire demo session right over your shoulder!

### **Promotional Materials**

Posters, standees, or some other eye-catching brand-related items make great additions to the demo area. They help draw people's attention and announce what the game is about. If you don't have access to commercially produced goods, handmade items work, too, if they are well executed. Make sure that whatever you are using is secure and won't fall on someone or be too easy to damage or steal.

### **Informational Sheets or Cards**

Informational cards make useful handouts to give to people who may have more questions about the game. These cards could include links to the official websites, useful email addresses, anything that will help keep newly interested players in the game. If you make the information easy to access, the new player is far more likely to go and check it out. The random scrap of paper on which your customer scrawled out your email address or the game's official URL could get lost the moment he or she leaves the store.

Tournament information sheets are also valuable to interested customers. They will very likely want to know where to go to play, so be prepared to tell them! If you're demoing at a store or tournament, then it's easy—recommend the store that is hosting the demo. You shouldn't suggest other places unless there's an actual reason, such as the customer lives too far away, he or she is looking for a different tournament format, his or her schedule won't work with this particular store, etc. A sheet or card with local shops, Tournament Organizers, and Hobby League venue info will make it much easier to get a new player into local events. If you are planning on running events as well, this is a prime opportunity to advertise them!

### **Other Useful Articles**

Add in a few pens, a notebook, and other things that come in handy. Include some tissues, hand-sanitizer gel, etc. Plan for the unexpected but inevitable, and you'll avoid a lot of discomfort and hassle. If you're ever running a demo and you say to yourself, "Oh, I wish I had a [insert item here]!", make a note of it so you'll bring it next time.

**All right, your kit is ready. There's a bit more to "demo preparedness" than just a good kit, though. You still need to make sure your information is correct and your demo is properly developed.**

### **Demo Logistics**

If you verify these details beforehand, you'll save yourself a lot of hassle when you arrive on site. You will always want to know the following things before you head to your demo. Get in the habit of making a checklist, so you don't get caught by surprise.

#### **Date, Time, and Contact Information**

Verify that you have the correct date and time for the event, and contact information, if needed. It's a good idea to phone your contact two or three days before the booked date to make sure everything is still moving forward as planned. When you arrive on site, make sure you know who you're looking for and, if possible, where to find them. This is especially important if you're demoing at a larger venue, like a mall or chain store, where other staff members may not know a demo event was booked for that particular day.

#### **Know What to Expect and What Is Expected of You**

Make sure you know how to get to the location, eat something before you go, and bring all the supplies you'll need. Always double check with the location about what you need to bring, what they will supply, the availability of food and drink, parking, and so forth. It doesn't always occur to people to ask questions or give information, and assumptions can hinder your demo session. Make every effort to be prepared, and anticipate what may or may not be available for you.

#### **Choose a Suitable Location for Your Demo Station**

It's a good idea to talk to your host beforehand, to make sure that a clean, sturdy table (and chairs, if needed) will be available to you. The table's location is important too, as you don't want to be stuck off someplace where no one can find you, and you don't want to create any hazards with your setup. Look for a place that is easy to see, has space for the table and several onlookers, is well lit and ventilated, and is away from any potential hazards like a loose floorboard, exposed electrical outlet, etc. Make sure you aren't blocking any hallways, stairs, or doorways, and try to choose an area that is accessible to people with disabilities. Think about visiting the location ahead of time, so you'll be better equipped to choose the best place to set up. Regardless, you should definitely discuss the demo table location with your host before heading to the event.

**Well, you've prepared for your demo, now it's time to actually run it! There are a lot of small factors that contribute to the overall success of a demo, and careful attention to each of these will really help improve your performance.**

### **The Successful Demo**

Successful demos might happen by pure chance, but you shouldn't rely on it. The amount of effort and planning you put forth are the biggest influences on the success of your demos—here's a look at what you should do.

#### **Promote the Demo in Advance**

You can be the most brilliantly prepared and highly skilled demoer in the world, and it won't mean very much if you don't have an audience. Don't just show up and hope to attract the attention of whoever is randomly in the area—advertise scheduled demos ahead of time! Making people aware of an upcoming demo session can be as simple as word of mouth at related events

or a poster prominently displayed at the venue. It can also take much more ambitious forms, limited only by your creativity and resources. However you decide to promote your demo, remember that even the best-run demos can't be successful if you don't have an audience.

### **Come Up with Some Promotional Giveaways**

People love free stuff, and for collectible games in particular, a giveaway is often all that a potential player needs to pique his or her interest. Sometimes, a particular program will provide some promotional items. Other times, you should try to work something out with your host. Coupons for discounted prices on Starter Decks or a reduced price on a tournament admission are a great giveaway to encourage a customer to pick up the entry-level materials and keep playing, and most store owners will be able to offer these kinds of inducements.

Specialists are *not* expected to provide promotional product out of their own pockets—this isn't fair to volunteers who are already giving their time and skills. Providing your own promotional materials can also set a negative precedent that can work against the program as a whole because some hosts may try to take advantage of your generosity or come to take it for granted. Hosts may even expect free giveaways as part of every demo and demand them of all Specialists they interact with, creating negative trends that hurt your peers. Or they may just grab all the free stuff they can and resell it. None of these scenarios are positive, so while you might mean well, avoid providing significant promotional items from your own collection.

### **Arrive Promptly with the Right Supplies**

Plan to arrive at least fifteen minutes before your demo session is scheduled to begin. This gives you time to settle in so that you can start demoing when you're expected to. A prompt arrival at the correct time speaks well of your professional conduct—store owners and event coordinators will appreciate this, and you'll earn their respect. They will feel confident about your abilities and will be more likely to invite you to run more demos in the future. Also, if people are expecting your demo session to begin at a set time, you may arrive to find that eager customers are waiting for you. Keep that wait to a minimum by being ready to start on time, and your customers will leave with a positive game experience.

### **Communicate Appropriately with the Customers and Store Staff**

One of the most important skills a good demoer can have is the ability to communicate effectively with a wide variety of people. During a demo session, you'll interact with customers of all skill and understanding levels, their parents and friends, and store owners and employees. All of these different people will require different kinds of communication. For instance, the enthusiastic kid-friendly speech patterns that work well with younger children might make you seem silly to a venue staff member or an older, experienced player. Speaking to customers in an indifferent mumble will reduce their interest in participating in your demo. Store owners and event managers should be treated like respected business associates, especially when you first meet them. Be aware of how you're communicating.

### **Understand What You Are Trying to Accomplish**

You're running a demo, and the purpose of the demo is to convince the customer that they will like the game and want to continue playing it. If you can clarify beforehand what age range and skill level you'll be demoing to, as well as the purpose of the demo, this will be much easier.

The customer needs to enjoy the demo, so whenever possible, let him or her win the game during one-on-one demos. It might not always happen, but whatever you do, don't stomp your customer flat! You aren't there to show how unstoppable you are. You're there to show the customers that the game is fun to play, and getting walloped while trying to learn is not what most people consider "fun." Tailor your demo decks to give the customer an advantage and explain basic strategies. Don't be obvious in your losses, or tell a customer, "Well, actually I just let you win."

Enjoy yourself! Fun is contagious, and games should be fun. If they weren't, you wouldn't be passionate about them to the point of wanting to promote them to complete strangers! You won't do a very good job of convincing your customers that the game is fun if you seem irritated or bored.

**Let's take a moment to look more closely at a successful presentation. Everything discussed above is important, but there are some finer points that have yet to be developed, and they will certainly influence how well your demo is received.**

### **Focus on the Basics of a Successful Presentation**

There are some basic guidelines for a well-run demo that will help your audience understand what you're presenting to them so that they'll walk away with a better grasp of the game. Make sure that you're doing the following:

#### **Smile!**

It should go without saying, but let's say it anyway. Your expression and attitude make a strong impression on your audience. If you stand at your demo station and look out at the people around you with a friendly smile, they'll be more inclined to come over to your table to see what is going on. Pay attention to your facial expressions and body language as you run your sessions—you want to look like you're having a good time, not tired or annoyed by the person you're interacting with.

#### **Read Your Audience to Determine the Best Approach**

If an eight-year-old is interested in trying out the Huntik TCG, it may be because he or she likes the animated series. If a thirty-year-old is interested, it may be for different reasons. Try to evaluate your audience without making assumptions, which can irritate the customer if you presume incorrectly. Feel out your customers without pigeonholing them, and you'll be able to tailor your demos to their particular interests.

If you're demoing to beginners, resist the urge to go into unnecessary detail too early. It may overwhelm them and make the game seem too difficult and complicated to learn.

Treat everyone with respect, regardless of their experience or current interest in games. This goes beyond the end of the demo, too. If a non-gamer tries the demo but doesn't seem interested by the time you're finished (or unfortunately decides to leave midway through), that's his or her decision. Thank the customer for his or her time, analyze what might have gone wrong for your own future reference, and move on to your next demo.

#### **Form a Mental Outline of Your Demo before You Begin**

Once you have a participant for a demo, you should decide which part of the game system to introduce first. There's no 100 percent "right" way to do this. The structure of your demo depends largely on your style, the particular game, and your audience. But you should at least plan out a basic structure for the demo that you can then tweak as needed, depending on your customer. If you already have a general outline of what you want to say, you won't have to worry about your demo faltering midway through because you don't really know how to continue, and you are less likely to forget something.

#### **Pace Your Speech**

Don't speak too quickly, because no one will understand a word that you say. If you have a lot of people waiting to demo, it can be tempting to blow through things you consider to be basic. If you're talking at the pace of a machine gun, though, even the simplest of concepts can become confusing. Be careful not to speak too slowly, either, as that makes demos overlong, difficult to

schedule, and boring. Games are supposed to be fun, and if the demo is too long because you are moving too slowly, the game will seem dull and uninteresting.

### **Speak Clearly and Project Your Voice**

Your demo won't be effective if your customer has to constantly interrupt and ask you to repeat yourself. Don't chew gum or eat while you are giving a demo—not only is it unprofessional, but it also interferes with the clarity of your speech. Speak out toward the audience, rather than addressing your remarks to your playmat and cards. You should do your best to make yourself heard if there is a crowd or a lot of background noise, but avoid outright shouting—that will only wear you out and distress the people nearest to you. You may have to run an additional demo if some people cannot hear you. Make sure to look around at and acknowledge your customers as you speak—this helps them feel as if they are included in the demo process, rather than meaningless bystanders.

### **Use Language Appropriate for Your Audience**

You're a seasoned gamer, but the person taking the demo may not be. Try to keep gamer jargon to a minimum, unless you know for certain that your audience can handle it. Terms like "synergy" or "resource system" can be boggling to a novice, and abbreviations like "TCG" should be verbalized in their full form (and explained if needed). In addition, remember that younger children may not have a vocabulary as robust as your own. Don't talk down to your audience, but try to keep things simple when the needs of the audience seem to demand it.

It should go without saying, but you do need to control your choice of words and expressions. Parents are far less likely to pick up a product or support a child's interest in a new game if their first introduction to it is hearing their child shouting out "Mom! Dad! That guy over there told me that this game is \$%^&ing awesome! We should *totally* get it!" Obscenity is simply not appropriate when you are demoing, and while this may not be an issue for some, you'll need to develop some self-restraint if off-color language is part of your normal vocabulary.

### **A Demo Is Not Open-Mike Night**

Remember that you are running a demo, not doing a stand-up routine. If you are a genuinely witty person there's nothing wrong with a bit of humor to engage the audience, but if you find that your demos are developing long pauses while you wait for a laugh, you're making yourself look silly and you're wasting everyone's time. Stick to teaching the game.

**Your job isn't over once you've taught a few games to some new players. You also want to encourage interested people to participate in Organized Play, where they will continue to be involved in the game. One demo isn't going to keep them hooked all by itself. They need to know where to go to find other people to play and trade with and events to hone their developing skills.**

### **Promote Organized Play to Your Customers**

There's not much use in running a demo for people if they never play again. Make sure your customers understand the kinds of Organized Play opportunities that exist in their areas—you should be able to explain the different programs available for the game that they demoed. No matter how much a customer likes a game, if he or she worries that no one else will be around to play it, the customer may not decide to purchase product for the game. If you can show new players that it's easy to find other people to play with, they will be far more likely to consider picking up that game as their new hobby.

Make it easy for your customers to continue their new interest, by having "next step" information all ready for them.

### **Provide Flyers Listing Places to Play or the Store's Event Calendar**

Giving customers well-organized information about where to play goes a long way toward convincing them to continue playing a game. A person is more likely to check out a few events if he or she has the information on hand than if he or she has to seek out that information on his or her own. Chances are good he or she won't bother or won't know how to find it. Take a bit of time to print out some information sheets. They don't need to look fancy or take a lot of effort to produce. A straightforward, functional sheet of paper that new players can stick to their refrigerators is easy to make, and it's a good resource for your customers.

### **Offer Contact Information for Local Tournament Organizers**

Most Tournament Organizers will be happy to provide you with business cards or flyers to hand out, just make sure that it's all right with whoever is hosting your demo event. Since some Tournament Organizers operate their own stores, it's perfectly reasonable for a store hosting your demo to want to avoid promoting their local competition. You want players to have as much information as possible, but biting the hand that feeds you will quickly make you unpopular with your local demo host. Keep in mind that if other Tournament Organizers and stores want you to promote them as well, they can go ahead and request demos just as easily as your current host.

Remember to be professional if you're ever faced with this kind of situation. If a Tournament Organizer or another store owner asks you to promote an event or hand out flyers when you are demoing at an unrelated location and your host prefers that you do not, politely explain the situation to the requester. Do not give him or her any attitude for not inviting you to demo at his or her venue. Odds are good that he or she simply never saw the situation from your perspective or the current host's. He or she might even think about having you demo at his or her establishment at a later date.

**If there's a shortage of tournaments or leagues in your area, consider stepping up to run some. If you are running demos in a store, talk to your host and point out the advantages of bringing all these customers into his or her store on a regular basis. The importance of a place to play the new game cannot be emphasized enough if you want your customers to stay interested in what you just taught them.**

## **An Introduction to Local Level Tournament Organization and Sanctioning**

Organizing and sanctioning local tournaments can have a big impact on the level of activity in your area. Sanctioned tournaments have a big impact on the gaming community because they give current players something to participate in, while drawing in new players. As a result, the return on the time you invest each week is pretty high, and you benefit an array of players with different levels of interest. Here's what you should do to make your TO'ing Ops successful.

### **Pass the Exam**

This one's really important! Before you can start fulfilling Tournament Organizer duties at the local level, you'll need to pass the Level 1 Tournament Organizer Certification test. You can't sanction events without it. You can find this test online on the Certification Page, at <http://entertainment.upperdeck.com/op/certprogram.aspx>. Before taking the test, print out and study the Sanctioning and Reporting FAQ, which you can find in the Organized Play file section, here: [http://entertainment.upperdeck.com/op/faq/reporting\\_faq.aspx](http://entertainment.upperdeck.com/op/faq/reporting_faq.aspx). Reviewing MANTIS, Upper Deck's tournament software, is a good idea as well.

### **Gather Your Tournament Equipment**

To sanction an event, you'll need an on-site computer equipped with Upper Deck's free tournament software, MANTIS. MANTIS makes pairing, organizing, and reporting your tournaments a snap. If there isn't an available computer at your venue, your next best option is a laptop. You can download a current copy of MANTIS and its user manual at <http://entertainment.upperdeck.com/op/mantis/default.aspx>. If the computer you are using is connected to the internet, even better! You can access the Global Player List, look up rulings, and upload your tournament results.

You'll also need a printer to print out pairings and match slips. You can write these by hand if necessary, but printing them directly from MANTIS is a much better, and easier, option. If there is a printer on site that you can use, great! Make sure you have the appropriate drivers if you plan to bring your own laptop.

Get a sturdy box and fill it with the miscellaneous supplies you will need, such as printer paper, ink cartridges, tape, pens, rubber bands, extension cords and a power strip, and scissors or a paper cutter. Sometimes, the venue will have these things, but it's more professional to come prepared. If you will be charging admission for your event and handling the cash yourself, bring a secure cash box and enough small bills or coins to make change.

In a binder, place a printed copy of the MANTIS user guide, a copy of the Sanctioning and Reporting FAQ, a current copy of Upper Deck's Tournament Policy, as well as the appropriate appendix for the game(s) for which you are running events, and a copy of the Tournament Penalty Guidelines. A separate binder with rules or FAQ's for the game(s) is a smart addition.

A time clock and table numbers are nice additions to your tournament supply kit, although not absolutely vital. Professional touches like these will add an additional layer of polish to your event and promote a smoother tournament. Consider adding them to your supplies; your players will appreciate it.

### **Find a Location**

You can't run a tournament without a venue! Your venue doesn't have to be a gaming store, nor does it have to be the same place that you perform your Ops. Public facilities like libraries, community centers, or schools are often available to host events. So if you can't find a working option in the gaming community, don't be afraid to think outside the box. Besides, these kinds of locations often already have things you will need, such as tables and chairs and internet access. Look for a clean, safe location that's easy to get to and has good facilities such as restrooms and nearby places to get food—the more comfortable the venue is for your players, the happier they, and you, will be.

A lot of store owners run their own tournaments, and many will be happy to let you take over the Tournament Organizer's duties since it lets them focus on running their stores instead of running after players on tournament nights. Don't be afraid to offer your services. If you have a good relationship with your store contact, he or she might set you up as the regular Tournament Organizer. If he or she chooses not to, don't take it personally, as there are a lot of reasons why a store may choose to control their own sanctioning. You can always run events at a different location!

### **Promote Your Event**

You can get the perfect venue and have an awesome laptop running MANTIS at the speed of light, but nobody will show up to play if you don't advertise! If you're running your tournaments at a store, ask your contact about what advertising works best for them. The store can put up posters advertising your tournament dates and times, add tournament info to its calendar, website, or regular newsletter or email blasts that it sends out, or even print flyers to drop in customers' bags when they purchase relevant products.

If the store can help you (and they almost always can), be sure to stay involved in the process. Since you're the one running events and making a lot of the decisions, it's best if you create the posters and flyers that promote your efforts. Include dates, times, format information, and as much prize info as you can. If you feel up to it, include an email address or phone number so prospective players can get in touch with you for any questions they might have. Your advertising materials should be concise but thorough.

Remember to make your customers aware of your events while you perform other Ops. Hand out flyers with tournament information after you've completed a demo. If they enjoyed the demo session, new players will probably feel comfortable attending your tournament. If you have the TO's permission, you can do announcements during downtime at events where you are acting as a judge. Be aware that a little discretion may be required, since a store owner may not want you promoting events at a competitor's store.

Even if you're not running your tournaments at a particular store, local game shops may still be willing to help you out—this is another time when a strong relationship with store contacts can pay off. It never hurts to ask your contacts how they might be able to help you out, and an on-the-ball store owner or manager knows that any activity in the area (whether it's in his or her store or not) is going to be good for them in the long run.

You can advertise on online forums, make postings on real-world community bulletin boards (think high schools, colleges, or your local community center), or explore partnerships with other local businesses (they don't necessarily have to be related to gaming). Explore all of your options and don't hesitate to get creative.

MANTIS will also help drive players to your event. You can create and list your tournaments in the online Upper Deck database, so players searching for nearby events will see your listing. Allow at least a week's advance notice when you list your events, so players can plan accordingly. Make sure your data is accurate and complete, so the players will be able to find your event.

### **Prepare Your Venue**

Once you've settled on a venue and promoted your event, make sure your venue is equipped with everything you need. You'll need enough clean, sturdy tables and chairs to accommodate your players, set up in an efficient layout. Ensure that there are restroom facilities nearby and that you can direct your players to them when asked. Know where your players can get food and drinks (especially water). If players will be relying on public transportation or need places to park, have any information they'll need ready at hand.

You should learn the rules of your tournament venue. If there's a limit on noise, make an announcement so your players will know. If you're running your tournament at a game store, alert your players to the store's rules about selling and trading—some don't mind if players make cash exchanges, while others may not allow it.

Make sure that you have a reliable power source for your computer and printer—you don't want your system to go down midway through the tournament! Know where the light switches and fire exits are, as well the capacity of the room in which you're holding your event. Decide on where you'll be positioned during the tournament, and plan an accessible place to post pairings each round.

Have all your areas set up: a scorekeeping station with a clearly marked place for your players to report their results; an area for the judge staff to securely store their belongings and take their appropriate breaks; and an area for the judge staff to perform duties, such as deck checks. Decide what to do with your players when they finish their matches. If you want them to clear out of the tournament tables, have someplace for them to go.

Be prepared for tournament attendees with special needs, and do your best to accommodate everyone. Think ahead about what could happen, and you'll be better prepared to deal with it if it does.

### **Run a Smooth, Professional Event**

Once you've attended to the basics, consider the appearance of your event. Tablecloths keep your event looking clean and professional. Easily visible table numbers keep your players orderly and get the rounds started faster. A time clock lets everyone know exactly where they are in the round. If you have a large event, a microphone or PA system will help ensure everyone can hear your announcements.

Maintain the venue as the event goes on! Tuck in chairs between rounds, and straighten tables and tablecloths. Make sure that there are trash bins in or near the tournament area, encourage players to use them, and don't let them overflow. The tournament area needs to be kept clean: rely on your judges to help and don't be afraid to remind the players to pick up after themselves. Let players know that they should not put food and drinks on the tables. A clean and orderly venue helps keep the tournament experience positive and under control—and encourages players to keep coming back.

Don't neglect the areas that aren't directly under your eye. If you're responsible for the condition of the bathrooms, check on them. If it's raining outside, make sure the floors or entryway are not slippery or dangerous. Tell your judges and other staff to inform you if and when they notice any issues.

Volumes and volumes can be written on how to run a fantastic event. Look around at the next tournament you attend and see what you like and don't like. Talk to the other players around you and get their opinions. Use that feedback to fine-tune your own events—you might as well profit from your insider understanding of what makes the event attractive to players.

**Tournaments can't function without judges. If you're intending to really move forward as a Specialist, you'll want to expand all the skills you possibly can. Even if you don't plan on judging regularly, understanding the process of becoming a judge and judging a tournament or two will give you useful insight for interacting with judges, who are important volunteers in their own right.**

## **An Introduction to Local Level Judging**

If your area doesn't need you as a Tournament Organizer, then judging for existing tournaments is the next best place to contribute. Judging in your local area is a great way to get to know members of the community, and it really keeps you visible as you provide a valuable service. That visibility can help bring people to your upcoming demos and events, so judging even once a month can boost your local success as a Specialist. Judging also gives you a way to improve the experience for veteran players, for whom demos may not be relevant.

### **Earn Your Certifications**

Most TO's will prefer Certified judges to work their events, and getting your certification will open up a lot more resources for you. You can take the Level 1 test for Upper Deck's games online – they are open book tests, and anyone with a solid knowledge of basic gameplay, mechanics, and essential rulings should pass with no difficulty. You can find the tests here: <http://entertainment.upperdeck.com/op/certprogram.aspx>. If you cannot access the test that you want, email [judge@upperdeck.com](mailto:judge@upperdeck.com) with your name and UDE number, and explain which test you would like. They will send you a link to the test.

Level 2 and higher certifications are offered in person, at larger events or from judges in your area with a Player Management Level 3 certification. You can see if there are any PM 3 judges in your area by looking for the list in the Player Management section of the Upper Deck Forums.

### **Judging Resources**

If you want to do your best when judging on the local level, take advantage of the resources available to you. Since you'll need to earn a Level 1 Certification for any game you'd like to judge, you'll automatically have rulings and judge forums opened up to you—you'll be able to ask questions on the official rulings forums, and receive updated rulings when new sets are released. Make a habit of looking over the topics that have been posted. Ask questions, and get involved in discussions – that's what the forums are there for.

There is also a web portal on Upper Deck's main site, dedicated to the judge program at <http://entertainment.upperdeck.com/op/judge/default.aspx>. Don't overlook this page as a source for information and announcements.

There is a wealth of information provided to everyone, certified or no, in the Upper Deck Files section of the forums. Official Tournament Policy documents are an invaluable tool and accessible to all, and most Upper Deck games also have Comprehensive Rules documents you can download. Even if you know a lot about the games you're interested in supporting, don't ignore these resources. They're free, easy to use, and were designed to support volunteers just like you.

If you need questions answered on anything other than rulings, you can always email [judge@upperdeck.com](mailto:judge@upperdeck.com). It may take a day or two, but you'll get an answer. Please **don't** use this email to ask rulings questions, though – use the forums to ask about cards, game mechanics, and so forth.

### **Prepare**

Preparation is important to some degree for all of your Ops, but it's even more important for judging. Print out the Comprehensive Rules and Tournament Policies that are relevant to your judging Ops, and study them in advance. You should also bring them to your event in case you

need to double check a ruling. Don't assume you know how to run an event or what is or is not allowed at a tournament – there are a lot of misinformed players as well as judges who pass along incorrect information. Go to the source, and make a habit of staying current with the official policy documents.

Look over the relevant Rulings Q&A and Judge Forums on the Upper Deck forums to keep up with new developments: a twenty-minute review each week is often all it takes to stay current. Adequate preparation will keep your skills sharp, which will give you the confidence you need when you step onto the tournament floor.

Find other judges to use as mentors – there's no sense learning the hard way when you can profit from someone else's experience! Experienced judges in your area, or on the judge forum, are the best help you can find when you're working your way into the judge program.

### **Running the Tournament and Judging**

You're welcome to act as both the Tournament Organizer and the judge for a single event, but both positions can only be reported as a single Op. Because of this, it's definitely in your best interest to collaborate with other local Specialists or Judges to fill these roles—you don't really gain anything by not doing so, and if you want to keep your Ops varied, you can always switch positions each week. Teamwork is an essential part of the Specialist Program, and working with other volunteers to organize and judge an event will give everyone the chance to contribute and gain experience.

We could write an entire handbook on Judging, but the resources you need are already in place as described above. Judging can be a very rewarding way to help boost the games you've spent so much time demonstrating, so give it a try if you haven't already.

Visiting the stores in your area benefits you, Upper Deck, the local players, and the store itself. It establishes a line of communication that can be invaluable for introducing new games and supporting existing markets. There's more to an effective store visit than merely wandering in, looking around, and saying "hi", though. Make the most of your visits by developing a plan beforehand.

## **An Introduction to Store Visits**

### **Stay Informed About Upcoming Products and Events**

First, help keep your contact aware of upcoming products and promotional events. Store owners receive solicitations and notices from Upper Deck about upcoming releases or special event opportunities, but it's easy for someone in a busy managerial position to lose track of those announcements. While stores generally stay on top of big product launches like new booster sets, they might miss out on special items like the *Feast of Winter Veil* Collector's Set, the *Giant-Size VS: The Coming of Galactus* release, exclusive accessories like binders, mats, and sleeves, or smaller, hobby-level Organized Play events. It's a shame, because these are the kinds of things, often exclusive to hobby stores, specifically intended to boost interest in the games on a hobby level. Even worse, players are disappointed when they can't get things they want from their local stores, or when a coveted promotional event doesn't happen in their favorite store. You can do the store and the players a huge favor by keeping your store contact aware of upcoming products. You can answer their questions to the best of your ability or direct them to someone who can answer their questions. If you ever can't answer a question about an upcoming product you can always defer the issue and make a follow-up phone call or email the next day.

### **Find Out What the Players Really Want, and Help Them Get It**

You can also discuss the local player base and their preferences during your store visit. If players have expressed interest in a certain type of event like Battlegrounds or Hobby Leagues, then you can relay that to the store, and get involved in making it a reality. If players are eagerly awaiting an upcoming product, pass that along—that's valuable information for the store.

Depending on how receptive your contacts are to criticism, you may be able to pass along suggestions from customers about play areas, event times, and other issues. You should never feel obligated to jeopardize your relationship with your contacts. If you feel you have advice that your store contacts might find useful, they'll probably appreciate you giving it, just remember to always act in a professional manner—be respectful and try to present things from the customer's perspective rather than from your own.

### **Act as a Point of Contact for Store Owners**

Store visits aren't just a great chance to get your message out, but they're also a prime opportunity to get feedback and questions from your contacts. Store contacts can be great sources of information about your development as a Specialist, and as long as you keep communication open, the information your contacts relay to you can really help you improve. Many store owners started out as volunteers themselves, and that makes them a great resource. Listen to any feedback that store contacts might want to give you. Fulfilling their needs and acting on requests (provided they're fair) makes it easy to create a long-lasting relationship that benefits everyone.

Giving your contacts the chance to ask questions is even more important. Once your contacts become comfortable with you, they will probably have lots of questions to ask. You should encourage their questions and comments – although you might not always have the answers they want, you can usually find answers on brand websites, or through Upper Deck contacts and Upper Deck forums.

### **Arrive Prepared and Professional**

Make sure to show up to your store visits properly equipped. Professional attire goes without saying, but you should also bring any notes you might need about new products or player opinions that you want to pass along—it's easy to forget an important point or two when there is a lot to talk about. You might want to consider creating a single-sheet bulleted list recapping everything you want to discuss to leave with the store contacts. After all, most store visits will be done during business hours and that can make it tough for your contacts to remember everything you've told them.

Bring a notebook and a few pens, too, so you can add to your notes or record feedback and questions. Don't let note taking distract you from the discussion at hand, and try not to hide behind papers either: they're tools, not crutches, so don't depend on them too much or let them detract from your visit. As always, just apply people skills and general logic—if your contact seems distracted by your note taking, take fewer notes, use shorthand, or leave them until a logical break in the conversation. Jot down what you need, then resume the talk. This can be a bit tricky at first, but you'll get better with practice.

Unlike other types of Ops, you're limited to reporting up to two store visits per month as proof of activity. If you only act as a Specialist at a single store, go ahead and schedule a store visit every two weeks if you feel it's called for; scheduling just one visit is fine too if that seems best for the store's needs. If you perform Ops at two stores, then one visit at each every month is the obvious way to go. Don't feel that you can't do more store visits just because you can't report them—if you're the only Specialist in your area and there are three or more stores accessible to you, feel free to perform extra store visits if you have the time and feel it would help the community.

### **You Can Always Improve upon Your Ops**

It's important to remember that no matter how much experience you have, you can always improve on something. Your success is largely a factor of skills related to dealing with individuals and groups of people, such as conversation, public speaking, and reading the intents of the individuals you're dealing with. These are life-long skills that have limitless room for growth, so you should always think about how you can improve your performance in the future once you complete a particular Op.

Try to recognize the skills, as well as the preparations that different types of Ops share. As mentioned, people skills are valued across all of your different Ops. But a lot of preparatory measures can also be learned from and applied to a range of volunteer activities. For instance, the same advertising strategies that help you successfully promote the tournaments you TO can be applied to your demo sessions in order to drive attendance. The research you do to keep up with your judging Ops can translate into a greater knowledge of gameplay that allows you to give deeper insight during store visits. There's always room for improvement, and while advice and growth can come from store contacts, demoers, players, and other specialists, you can find a lot of room for improvement with honest self-critique too. Challenge yourself, and you might be surprised at how much you can accomplish.

Whether you run a demo session or hold a tournament, judge an event or visit a store, when you walk out the door, you still aren't finished! You've still got a few tasks you'll need to take care of to tie up all the loose ends. This section will explain what to do once your demo session is complete.

## After Your Op

### Report Your Op!

Always file a report after you've performed an Op. This is how we keep track of what you're doing, how it went, how many people you interacted with, and other important details. Aside from letting us know you're still active, building up your credentials, and earning you points for the Rewards Program, information about the Ops you run is important to Upper Deck. We need to know what games are being supported and where, as well as identify which Specialists are working particularly hard. Make a habit of reporting your Ops as soon as you get back from one, instead of putting it off to do later. You're more likely to forget important details, or even completely forget to report it. You can find the online reporting form on Upper Deck's website.

<http://entertainment.upperdeck.com/op/demoteam/default.aspx>

Click on the "Report a Demo" button, and fill in your Upper Deck membership number and password. That will take you to an online form to fill out. The form looks like this:

Thank you for performing the demo. Please fill out this form completely.

Load Request ID (if available)

Game

Date of Demo

Store Name

Contact

Email Address

Phone

Address

City

State/Province

Zip/Postal Code

Country

Time of Demo

Demos Performed

Comments

Fill in all applicable areas, and then hit the “submit” button. Make sure the information is correct, so you’re properly credited, and provide some notes on all of your Ops in the “Comments” section—how you advertised, how many people showed up, if there were any issues with the location, and what kind of a response you got. If you did something particularly innovative or interesting, make sure to note that as well!

You work hard to support this program. Don’t hurt or detract from your efforts by forgetting to report your hard work! If you have any questions or concerns about reporting your Op, email [demo@upperdeck.com](mailto:demo@upperdeck.com) (include your name, Upper Deck number, and a description of your difficulty) to find out what you should do. We want to make sure you’re receiving credit for the work you are doing, but all Specialists need to take the initiative to report their Ops accurately within a few days of performing them or contact the Specialist Program Manager if there is a problem.

### **Follow Up on Your Op**

After an Op has been completed, you should connect with your host for a follow-up soon afterward. Call, send an email, or drop in at a convenient time and talk about how the Op went. Find out if the host was satisfied, if he or she noticed an increase in sales, and so forth. This kind of discussion keeps your host involved in the Ops that you run, and makes it more likely that you will be asked back. If you want to move forward as a Specialist, you are going to need places to run your Ops—build good relationships with the people you are helping out and you’ll get a reliable venue for your Ops (along with the gratitude and appreciation that your efforts deserve).

### **What Can You Improve?**

It’s important to remember that no matter how much experience you have, you can always improve on something. Your success is built on a variety of skills, such as carrying on a conversation, public speaking, and reading the intents of the individuals you’re dealing with. These are life-long skills that have limitless room for growth.

Try and recognize the common areas shared by different types of Ops. For instance, good people skills come in handy no matter what kind of Op you’re running, and the same advertising strategies that help you successfully promote the tournaments you organize can work equally well for your demo sessions. The research you do to keep up with your judging Ops can translate into a greater knowledge of game play that allows you to give deeper insight during store visits. There’s always room for improvement, and while advice from store contacts, customers, players, and other Specialists is valid; you’ll find plenty of directions for growth through honest self-critique. Challenge yourself, and you might be surprised at how much you can accomplish.

**In this section, we'll look into ways to expand what you already know and create even better Ops. Increased attention to details and a deeper understanding of the people you're working with will also improve your results. There's always room for improvement, so pay particular attention to the topics discussed here.**

## **Going Beyond the Basics**

You won't be demonstrating games, running tournaments, or judging in a room all by yourself—there will always be other people involved in your Ops. Your interaction with them has a large influence on your success, so you will want to spend plenty of time cultivating your people skills if you want to be a successful Specialist.

### **Interacting with Other People**

Whether they're taking a demo, playing in your tournament, accompanying someone to the event, wandering past the demo, or working in the same area, you'll have plenty of different people to deal with during your Op. They all need to be treated properly.

### **Interacting with Customers**

Sometimes customers will come to you, and sometimes you'll have to lure them in. If you are running a demo session, an open, approachable presentation will encourage people to come and see what you're doing. Most people are attracted to tables with logos or items placed on them, especially if they think there might be some kind of giveaway. Establish eye contact, and smile. If they're within hearing distance, a short "Hi! I'm demonstrating the [brand] Trading Card Game. Why not come over and take a look!" The word "demoing" isn't always recognizable to people, so say "demonstrating", "teaching," or "showing" instead if you want people to understand what you are doing.

Not everyone who walks past you is going to want to take a demo, for any number of reasons. Don't let that discourage you, go ahead and extend your invitation to the next people to head your way.

If people do start to approach, don't overwhelm them. They don't know if you're going to try to sell them something, make them take a survey, or otherwise try to tie them down to a commitment. Be cheerful and nonthreatening. Explain you're giving a free demonstration of a game that easy to learn, and it won't take long. If more than one person approaches, be inclusive, and look at all members of the group as you speak, perhaps suggest that they all learn together. You should communicate through the tone of your voice and your body language, as well as your words, that the customer is interesting and important to you. Do what you can to make him or her feel comfortable. This makes the idea of learning the game more appealing. Customers who feel that you care about their concerns and want to help them out are more likely to be receptive to you.

While it's important to come across as friendly and approachable, keep personal social contact to a minimum. Even if you really like a person at your demo table, a demo session is not the right place to ask somebody out or become involved in a personal or social conversation.

An open and interested approach also works well when you are judging or running a tournament.

### **Interacting with Parents**

If a child is participating in a demo, you should always try to involve the parent or guardian in the process. A bored parent won't take the demo seriously and is likely to end it quickly or not support the child's interest. You also don't want to suddenly become a babysitter—some parents view a demo as an opportunity for them to run off and do a quick errand. You should *absolutely* discourage this. Keeping the parent involved makes it a lot harder for him or her to leave a child and disappear for ten to twenty minutes.

A good way to involve the parent is to transition from a one-on-one demo model to a two-on-one model, in which the parent and child play each other under your guidance. This way, the parent isn't bored and can't wander off, while the child feels more comfortable because Mom or Dad is still around. Adapting the demo to this technique doesn't take any additional time, and you never know—you just might end up with two new players instead of one!

### **Interacting with the General Public**

If you are set up to run an Op in a busy location, such as a large chain store, a mall, or in a tourist destination, people who are not actually interested in what you are doing are likely to view you as an information desk. You will be asked for information on a variety of topics, so before you start your Op, do yourself a favor and learn a few things—where the restrooms are, any major stores or landmarks, etc. If you can give a quick answer to these generic kinds of questions, go ahead and do so, after excusing yourself to the customer taking your demo.

You won't always know the answer, or sometimes someone will have a very detailed request with which they have no problem interrupting your Op to ask. In cases like these, regardless of how rudely a member of the public might treat you, resist the urge to retaliate. A polite, "I'm sorry, I'm not an employee here. I'm running a demo for the World of Warcraft Trading Card Game. I'm sure someone with a store name tag would be able to help you out." with a friendly smile is the best way to pass them along. You can't always make everyone happy, and while your immediate responsibility is to the people taking your demo, you should still aim toward a professional and competent attitude toward anyone else who comes along. Don't rise to the bait if a person becomes angry or offended.

If someone turns up and begins creating a disturbance, notify your host or alert security. You shouldn't get directly involved with a troublemaker, but you don't want to have anyone around who is creating a negative experience for the customers participating in your Ops.

### **Interacting with Store Owners, Event Managers, and Tournament Organizers**

Store owners, event managers, and Tournament Organizers should view you as an expert on the games you promote, and as a valuable resource for attracting new customers and players. You are doing your part to educate the public about the games and provide an introduction to Organized Play. If you behave with respect, you should be treated with respect in return. Just as you are providing store owners, event managers, and TOs a valuable service by demonstrating games, they provide you with a customer base for your Ops and sell the products that keep the game going.

You should not be viewed as an unpaid employee, or as a free "bonus" thrown in as a reward for stocking Upper Deck product. Some store owners don't realize that Specialists aren't working for Upper Deck and do not have paid positions. So if they seem excessively demanding to you, they may be under the impression you are being paid to visit their stores and show off games. It's important to explain your role as a *volunteer* very clearly when you are offering your services. It should be one of the first things you bring up to a new potential contact. As a Specialist, you are expected to run Ops for games—you aren't obligated to perform the duties of a store employee or to act as a source of free product.

Be as clear as possible when you communicate with your host, and verify your information. Miscommunication can cause a lot of problems, especially when you're functioning in a busy environment. Don't assume, always ask for clarification, and don't be afraid to make a follow-up call to make sure everything is going well. It's often that easy to fix a problem.

Remember the names and positions of store employees, especially if you will be running a lot of Ops in the same store. Feel free to keep a notepad with you to write down important personal information—after all, you're a professional, and professionals don't look out of place taking a few notes. Be friendly. You'll often need help from these people, and a comfortable working relationship will make things much easier for everyone.

### **Maximize Your Audience**

If you're going to go through all the trouble to run an Op, some customers would be nice, don't you think? Choosing venues that are more likely to attract the kinds of people who will be interested in your Op and then promoting the Ops that you arrange will help take care of that. You don't want to rely solely on luck to get customers running to you.

### **Collaborate with Your Hosts**

Ops—demos, tournaments, or store visits—are a great way to increase sales and traffic in a store, so most store owners will be receptive if you present your offer appealingly. Involving the store can give you resources that you wouldn't be able to provide on your own. Store owners interested in acquiring new customers will usually immediately recognize the value of what you do, but sometimes you might have to spell it out a bit. Just be careful to strike the right tone, as you don't want to come across as pushy or arrogant.

### **Run Multiple Kinds of Ops in the Same Settings**

Setting up a demo table at a tournament puts people who are already interested in games right there in front of you. It's also a great way to involve parents, siblings, or friends of the competitors who might be there with nothing to do. Organizing a local tournament in the same shop where you've been running demos gives your new players extra inducement to come back. Some of the people who are most likely to try out and pick up a new game are established gamers, and if you establish a regular presence at local gamer environments, it's easy to attract a reliable audience. The customers are already there, and they're waiting for you!

### **Involve Other Specialists**

Building "Demo Day" events in which several games, small tournaments, etc. are offered will help bring in more people, and they give a much more impressive scope to the different brands. Dividing the work makes the event go much better, as well! Many experienced Specialists already know the benefits of working with each other to get the most out of a deluxe event: not only is the event larger and more attractive, but the workloads can also be distributed while the different team members learn from each other. You don't have to be the only Specialist in the spotlight to be recognized. Work together, and you'll be surprised at how much you can do.

### **Advertise in Advance**

People won't know about your Op if you don't tell them! Stores can include advertisement for your demos and tournaments in their event calendars or on their websites. You can make and post flyers and resort to word-of-mouth campaigns on message boards and stores. Don't assume that a store will promote the Op for you—many store owners won't think to list your activities on their store calendars or websites unless you ask them to, and they won't put up posters or flyers unless you bring them yourself and offer them.

Think outside the store, too. Local businesses might not mind nonprofit flyers being posted. Try advertising in places where a new potential audience can be found. After all, you want to get people who *haven't* played games to come and give it a try too. Let local businesses like convenience stores or restaurants know that attracting more people to your event just might shoot a little extra business their way as well.

### **Be Creative!**

There are all kinds of inventive ways to promote your Op. If you're going to give a World of Warcraft TCG demo and you have a friend who put together a killer costume for a convention and is pining for an excuse to wear it again, see if you can persuade him or her to suit up and parade around your demo area. Maybe the guy who owns the pizza place down the street has some kids who just love the Huntik TCG and he's willing to tape flyers promoting your tournaments to the pizza boxes he sends out in exchange for you helping his kids fine-tune their

decks and teaching them to play a little better. Brainstorm and see what you can come up with— just make sure that whatever you're doing is legal and safe.

**You've expanded your kit, developed your presentation skills, and covered the essentials necessary to support a game on the local level. There's still more to learn, though. You can always find new ways to refine your efforts and build upon the basics you already know. If you want to keep improving your Ops and move forward in the program, you can't stop now!**

## **Beyond the Basics—Demos**

You've given several demos and feel confident about your performance, but there's still room for you to grow. You'll likely find that there are plenty of ways to improve on your performance, especially if you're hoping to travel to a large event like a big tournament or convention where you'll be running a significant number of demo sessions.

When you think about performing a demo, you might envision yourself teaching a new player on a one-on-one basis. This is how most demos are given, and if you've taken demos yourself in the past, it may be the only type you've experienced. One-on-one demonstrations are effective and fun, but they're not the only way to teach a game. The size of your audience, your allotted time, and even the venue you're demoing at can alter your working environment and make one style of demo better than others.

By gaining proficiency in multiple demo styles, you'll improve your ability to meet the needs of a given demo session. You'll reach more members of your audience, they'll retain more information, and everyone involved will have a lot more fun. Being able to recognize when to employ which demo technique is a skill that comes with time and experience, but learning that skill will pay off in big ways. When you finish a demo session, you should consider the style (or styles) you used; reflection and hindsight are great tools to help you perform better in the future.

Let's take a look at a few different demo styles. After a brief definition and overview, we'll explore each from a variety of perspectives to help you understand them better. We'll do our investigation point by point, so when you finish reading through this, you can go back and compare specific aspects of the different styles. We'll start with the most basic and work our way up from there.

### **The One-on-One Demo**

This is the most common type of demo you'll encounter. If you're an experienced demoer, this style is probably the one you use most often. It allows you to teach the game you're demonstrating to one member of your audience at a time. You do so in two phases.

First, you'll provide some basic game information to the customer. This could include anything from the phases of the turn to brand-related info to draw him or her in. It usually includes a few consistent elements, such as a statement of what the game is about, the game's goal and primary win, and an introduction to the different card types in the game. It's important not to overwhelm the customer with too much information at this point—you want to give the customer just enough knowledge to ease him or her into the next phase, but not so much that he or she can't retain the information. When in doubt, err on the side of brevity. You'll have time to fill in the details later.

Second—and the real meat of the demo—is the play experience. In this style of demo, you'll actually play the game (often a simplified version) against your customer. This allows you to introduce aspects of gameplay in a logical order with an easy-to-follow flow of events, and you can immediately convey a sense of how the game plays. Once the game is over, or once you decide to end it, you can gauge the customer's level of interest and proceed from there, giving them additional information on purchasing the game, related Organized Play programs, and answering their questions.

It's an easy two-step process that's the staple for any demoer.

### **Strengths of One-on-One**

The one-on-one demo has a lot of great things going for it, and the main one is “focus.” Because you can focus on one customer at a time, you can customize the entire experience to his or her needs and preferences. You can observe the demo-taker’s reactions over time and change your approach to the demo to make sure it’s effective. Because you can pay so much attention to each member of your audience, this style helps customers of all ages retain a lot more information from the demo. It also gives you the most control over how much information you communicate.

People like to feel that they’re being given special treatment and that they’re being recognized as an individual. Providing one-on-one demos lets you do that, and they encourage the customer to be receptive. People are more likely to listen to you if they feel you’re speaking directly to them, instead of to a group. Because of this, they’ll be willing to devote more time to the demo, and they’ll be more inclined to ask questions when they’re confused or curious.

Speaking of questions, one-on-one demos allow you to field questions and interruptions with ease. You don’t have to worry about one confused customer disrupting the experience for the rest of the audience, since everyone’s getting a private demo. This is another advantage of this style—the customer can effectively pause and rewind the demo whenever he or she needs clarification.

Finally, one-on-one demos let you, the demoer, control the customer’s first experience with the game. No matter what aspect the game appeals to your audience, this style gives you the best chance to deliver the kind of gaming experience they’ll enjoy. You can make the game as complicated or as basic as you like through careful communication and in-game decisions; more importantly, you can be sure that they win. Most customers will walk away from a demo happier if they won, provided you didn’t visibly throw away the game. Since you’re their opponent, you can ensure that happens.

### **The Best Use of One-on-One Demos**

As effective as this style can be in the hands of an experienced demoer, it’s only right for certain situations. If you have a relatively small, patient group, it works well. It takes the most time, so situations with low time pressure and relatively few customers are ideal. It’s especially good for children, who often need more attention and a different language set than their older counterparts. It’s also ideal for experienced gamers, who will no doubt have plenty of questions about the game system and will want to explore the complexities of gameplay.

If you have time, a small audience, and customers at extreme ends of the experience and maturity scales, then this is the ideal demo style to use.

### **Challenges of One-on-One Demos**

If you are short on time, then you do not want to use this technique. One-on-one demos can take anywhere from ten to twenty minutes depending on the game you’re teaching and how long you actually want to play with each customer. This length can lose you prospective customers if your session expires before they can get a demo.

If your audience is of a considerable size, many people will leave if they’re kept waiting. The one-on-one style doesn’t work as well for a large group of people who would like to try the game. If you’re demoing alone or with a minimal number of partners, you’ll start to lose audience members once the wait becomes too long.

In addition, if your audience is more interested in a quick overview of the game, it’s easy to go overboard with one-on-one demos. A skilled demoer can gauge his or her audience’s level of interest most of the time, but if your default demo length is fifteen minutes you’re going to run into problems somewhere along the line. If someone is short on time or simply has a short attention span, this style isn’t usually the way to go.

In short, big groups, time deficits, and short attention spans are the enemy of the one-on-one style demo.

### **Vital Skills for One-on-One Demos**

Each style of demo calls upon certain skills. For instance, the ability to read your customer and change the demonstration to his or her needs is important for successful one-on-ones. Without that ability, you're losing out on one of the most useful resources this technique offers: adaptation and customized support. If you can get a fix on how well your customer is learning, how interested he or she is in the demo, and why he or she is attracted to the game (which could be anything from an associated animated series or video game, to word of mouth about the game's competitive quality), you can deliver a great demo experience with the right impact.

It's also important to distance yourself from the results of the demo gameplay. You shouldn't have any problems with losing games on purpose, regardless of who you're matched up against or how they behave when they win.

It's imperative that you keep an eye on both your watch and your audience. However long a game may run, and as many questions as a customer might have, you can't spend an hour teaching all the intricacies of the game to one new player, unless he or she happens to be the only person wanting a demo. If your demo runs longer than fifteen or twenty minutes or your audience starts to wander away, it's time to wrap things up and re-evaluate the speed with which you're delivering information.

### **Points to Consider**

Remember that you're in total control of the one-on-one style demo. If a group of potential customers suddenly appears or the interest of your current customer seems to be flagging, you can always cut the demo short. Once the customer understands the basics of the game and has played a few turns, you can trust that he or she will be able to decide whether or not to stay involved in the game. Any further time spent is just going to build off the positive opinion you have, hopefully, already established. Cut off the demo as needed, offer a brief explanation ("Oops! Looks like we've got a line forming—we'd better finish up quick."), and move on, being courteous and respectful, of course.

### **The Two-on-One Demo**

This style of demo is very similar to the one-on-one, but it allows you to teach two members of your audience at a time instead of one. Your introductory information about card types, brand tie-ins, and the goal of the game will all mirror those from one-on-one demos, but the actual gameplay phase is different.

In a two-on-one demo, two customers play each other instead of you. This allows both people to have an interactive demoing experience at once, and frees you up to focus less on play decisions and more on guiding the audience into a receptive state. You can still field questions, control the length of the demo, and influence the play experience to some degree, but there are a few tradeoffs.

### **Strengths of Two-on-One Demos**

The main advantage to the two-on-one demo is speed. You can run two customers through a complete demoing process in the same amount of time it would take you to teach one customer in a one-on-one demonstration, which can make a huge difference on busy demo days. If you have room at the table, enough decks to go around, and enough focus, you can run several pairs of customers through a demo at once.

Two-on-one demos also allow two people who already know each other to experience a new game together. Generally, if one customer is interested in the game the other will follow suit, and it's often a lot easier to rationalize picking up a new hobby if you know you'll have someone to enjoy it with. This style of demo lets you keep pairs of friends together, and you can even engage potential customers who didn't actually intend to take a demo, such as girlfriends/boyfriends or family members.

The ability to include parents in the gameplay portion of their child's demo is a real advantage to this style. The more you involve parents or guardians in the demo, the more likely they are to take it seriously and the more willing they will be to support their child's interests. No matter how much a kid may like a game, the parent is often the one making decisions as to what gets purchased or when a child can be driven to which event. Beyond that, including a parent or guardian can work wonders for a younger child's comfort levels. It's impossible to give an effective, fun demo if your audience is shy or terrified of you, so it'll frequently be in everyone's interest to include an older relative. When dealing with children, you need to consider their perspective very carefully. This style lets you do that, and it also adds a buffer between you and the younger customer.

Including a parent or guardian in the demo also makes it harder for them to leave the area while you're giving the demo. You never want to end up with a parentless child under your responsibility, especially when you have a lot of other customers to get through. Make it impossible for that to happen by including the parent in the demo.

### **The Best Use of Two-on-One Demos**

Two-on-one demos are best used when you're under moderate time pressure, when you're faced with several customers at once, or when customers are grouped into obvious pairs. Even if you have plenty of time, look at your next two customers and if they look like they're familiar with each other and would enjoy learning the game together, go ahead and give them a two-on-one demo. Use your intuition—time and attendance aren't always the only factors to consider.

This style is also useful when you see an opportunity to create a customer out of a bystander who may not have considered taking the demo. Maybe all the bystander needs is a bit of prodding from his or her companion who's already seated and ready to go. You should never force or guilt someone into being part of a demo, but you can certainly invite and accommodate him or her with a two-on-one setup if he or she accepts.

### **Challenges of Two-on-One Demos**

The two-on-one demo comes with some unique challenges, most of which revolve around the pairings you make. Pair off strangers, and they may be too shy with one another to pay attention to the actual demonstration. Pair off a belligerent older brother with a younger sibling, and you may find that competitive tempers flare. It can be very difficult to control the situation when your customers are experiencing emotions or thoughts unrelated to the demo.

In addition, you'll have to balance the focus of the demo between two people instead of one, meaning you won't always be able to tailor the process equally for both customers. Finding a happy medium can be difficult, but it is necessary. And in order to cope with the situation, you'll need to understand that you can't tweak the experience 100 percent like you can with a one-on-one. Accept that, and do your best to create a balance.

### **Vital Skills for Two-on-One Demos**

Your communication skills are more important here than they are in one-on-one demos. It's easier to repeat or clarify the statements you make in a one-on-one style, because when a customer asks for assistance you won't be giving it while his or her partner sits and waits. And since these two customers will play each other, you need to ensure you give them equal amounts of information and that all of it is equally understood. Otherwise, one customer may feel unfairly treated, which may grow worse when a misunderstanding or lack of clarification creates problems during the gameplay period. A customer might not mind losing under usual circumstances, but he or she may become resentful if he or she feels it's your fault!

Identifying potentially compatible pairs is a skill in and of itself. Being able to read your audience and understand their perspectives is important for anyone hoping to run this style of demo.

Finally, one of the most important skills needed for this demo style is knowing when to use it. Unless a superior tells you otherwise (such as at a big convention or tournament) you don't have to adhere to just one demo style. Switch things up! If your next two customers don't seem very compatible or friendly toward one another, revert back to a one-on-one style. You'll lose some time, but you'll save yourself a lot of hassle, and your customers will retain more information than they might have otherwise.

### **Points to Consider**

Again, you have somewhat less control over this demo style than you do with one-on-one demos. The demo can take on a life of its own depending on the attitudes of your customers. A pair of friends who pick up the game and have a great time with it might not want to stop playing until they finish their game. Or you might end up with two players who don't really seem to like each other or care about the game. When you encounter these kinds of situations, you'll need to step in and conclude the demo. Again, courtesy and respect will help this go smoothly.

Focus on balance. While you might simplify your vocabulary in a one-on-one demo for a child, using the same language set with that child's parent might seem weird. You can't cater to everyone's needs, so accept that and do your best to deal fairly with any problems that arise. If you can do that, you'll find that the two-on-one demo cuts your previous demo times in half, letting you reach far more people than before.

### **The Casino Style Demo**

The casino-style demo differs from the one-on-one and two-on-two styles of demo in that it doesn't rely on the two-phase explanation followed by gameplay. Instead, it focuses entirely on explanation. You'll sit or stand at your table and demonstrate the central elements of gameplay from beginning to end, but you won't actually host a game.

The reason? Casino style demos are designed to address three, five, seven, or even more customers all at once. They move at a very brisk pace and tend to explain only the basics of a game. The purpose of a casino-style demo is to introduce the game to as large an audience as possible at one time, give your audience a favorable insight into what the game offers, and send them on their way with minimal time invested.

### **Strengths of the Casino-Style Demo**

Since it doesn't actually show gameplay, you might think that this style isn't a very effective way to show off a game; however, it offers some significant advantages over the other two styles. The main benefit is the sheer numbers you can move through—because your demos are based solely on basic explanation, you can usually complete them in five to six minutes, far faster than a one-on-one or two-on-one. And since you can easily accommodate several people at once, this style lets you reach the largest audience in the shortest amount of time.

This style is also good when you have curious customers who may not be ready to commit to a ten- or fifteen-minute long demo. A shorter demo may seem more accessible and is better than sending them away with no contact at all. Nongamers are often more receptive to shorter demos, and since there's little to no personal involvement, shy individuals and younger audience members can find casino-style demos much easier to absorb.

### **The Best Use of Casino-Style Demos**

Unless you're absolutely amazing at drawing dozens and dozens of customers to small venues, you'll probably never have to employ the casino-style technique at a local store. Even big tournaments rarely warrant its use.

The casino-style demos are usually reserved for large conventions or distributor meetings, where you would never be able to get through enough customers using one-on-one or two-on-one demos to give everyone a taste of the game. There are two reasons why this is the

perfect environment for short, low-pressure, bite-sized demos that are run frequently. First, there's a lot to do at these big events! A shorter, accessible demo will seem more feasible to the average attendee, and they'll be less likely to pass you up for whatever's in the next booth. Second, many people attending comic or pop culture conventions don't classify themselves as gamers, and regular demos can be imposing to them. The low-pressure approach works well with groups of nongamers and small children.

### **Challenges of Casino-Style Demos**

As great as this shotgun blast of information is for hitting a lot of customers at once, it's not without its challenges. The time constraint can be difficult to overcome—there's less of an opportunity to engage potential players who are interested and want to know more and there's not much time for questions. You can't let yourself be sidetracked by that one audience member who wants to know everything about one particular point in the game. If you do, you'll find that the entire structure of the demo falls apart and everyone will start shouting questions at you.

This style simply doesn't give you time to create personal connections with the people you're demoing to. Just remember that it requires you to be more of a public speaker than you'd be with the previous styles. You're not having a conversation so much as you're giving a presentation. You'll need to be able to engage a crowd and keep everyone's interest.

### **Vital Skills for Casino-Style Demos**

For this style to work effectively, you need a powerful stage presence. If you normally possess a quiet voice and a shy demeanor or have difficulty speaking to a crowd, the casino-style demo will be difficult for you. You need to be able to engage a crowd, have fun doing so, and not be shy about addressing groups of people all at once.

It's almost more of a performance than a demo, and you have to maintain control of the crowd. People should grasp that you're giving a presentation, not running a dialogue. You're essentially putting on a show for the audience, and it needs to be a good one if you're going to inspire them to try the game. Don't hesitate to get into the brand you're demonstrating and show your enthusiasm! Stay professional, but a little bit of attention-grabbing behavior and a high-spirited attitude can go a long way toward engaging your audience.

### **Points to Consider**

If you need to reach a lot of people with minimal resources and time, this demo style is probably the right choice. Remember, though, that what casino-style demoing lacks in easy personal connections and thoroughness needs to be compensated for by your sense of showmanship. It's always important to make your demos fun, engaging, and entertaining, but it's more integral here than it would normally be. It's also more difficult. If you're not used to speaking in front of groups, expect to flop a bit in your first few attempts if you're not used to speaking in front of groups—proficiency in any demo style comes with practice and attention to detail.

Once you're well practiced in each of these three techniques, you should be well prepared for just about any task you'll encounter as a Specialist. You'll be able to handle everything from slow days at the local game store to the biggest and busiest gaming conventions in the world. You can even adapt these styles for less conventional situations, such as promotional tours or meetings with distributors—you'll be ready for anything!

**Now that you understand the different styles of demos, you can begin to develop your own best approach for each. Going into a demo “cold” won’t ensure that you cover all the essential points of the game or are prepared to answer the majority of questions that might come up. You’ll time your demos better if you prepare and practice them beforehand, and your entire presentation will go more smoothly. Here’s how to make that happen.**

## **Preparing for Demos**

### **Create Some Scripts**

You know how to play the game, but are you certain that you know the best, easiest, and most effective way to teach it? Demoing is harder than it looks, and drafting a script will help you remember to hit all the key points in the best order. Earlier, we discussed how important it is to structure your demo and have a general idea of how it will be laid out. Creating a script is probably the easiest way to do that. You don’t need to adhere to it word for word, just look upon it as a great exercise that can help you organize your presentation.

If you decide to use a script, learn it beforehand—don’t read from it as you present the game. Treat the script as a tool for your memorization and organization. If you need a short list of points to help you guide your demos, that’s fine, but keep the actual script out of sight—very few people can read as if they’re speaking naturally. You’ll run the risk of alienating your audience if they realize you’re just reading cue cards.

Collaborate with other Specialists to create scripts for various games, and don’t be afraid to share them with each another. A little variation to your usual way of presenting a game could be a refreshing change for your audience, and you are likely to pick up a few points that may have been missing from your own presentations.

### **Practice Your Demos, and Review Their Effectiveness**

You might find that reorganizing how you present the different key concepts makes a big difference in the effectiveness of your demos. What seems logical to you might not always make the most sense to your audience, so try out different approaches instead of arbitrarily picking a starting point and sticking with it.

Just as you should be familiar with your script and your intended demo structure, you should know the contents of the decks and what all the cards do. You should be able to recognize the cards by picture, because they can be difficult to read if they’re across the table and facing you upside down. If you have to pick up and read each card as you go, you won’t generate much confidence in your demo! All you *will* generate is lag time, as the seconds and minutes spent reading the demo deck cards begin to add up.

Give practice demos to your friends and family. Try demoing to both experienced players and people who aren’t familiar with the games, then get their feedback on your performance. Demoing is a dynamic process, and it will be easier to get honest feedback from people you already know. It’s also easier to get constructive criticism from your friends than to be glared at for an unknown reason by a demo audience. If there are other Specialists in your area, you should think about getting their input on your repertoire—in return, you can evaluate them. You’ll get some professional-level feedback, and maybe a few new ideas to use in your own demos.

**If you've been doing a good job with your demos, you should have an assortment of new players eager to try out the games they've just learned – but they can't do that unless someone is running tournaments for them to participate in. If you don't already have a strong system of local events in your area, maybe it's time to step up and start running them yourself!**

## **Beyond the Basics—Tournament Organization**

Perhaps you've organized a few Constructed tournaments, either at your local store or another venue, such as a library. Even if it's been going well, you know that you can run bigger, better events. You've got the time, and the players are ready for more. So, where do you start? First, you need to answer one question.

### **What Is a Successful Tournament?**

A truly successful tournament is more than an event that ends on time and gets reported. Rudimentary advertising, scheduling, player registration, and keeping the tournament running smoothly are just bare-bones goals.

A great tournament leaves players feeling good about your event and the game you're supporting. It builds their faith in you as a Tournament Organizer and leaves them wanting more. A successful tournament is the kind of event that will help you expand your local player base, because your existing players won't want to miss out and new players will be attracted. Local tournaments are about equal parts fun and competition, and they should always be clean, professional, and well-planned.

Local players will affect your success. Since they will be attending your events, learn what appeals to them and try to provide it. Learn to listen to them, and don't hesitate to ask them for feedback or suggestions. Just remember that at the local level, you'll have a combination of newbies, casual players, and competitive players to support. Sometimes the different groups will want different things.

Let's look over the factors that help make up a tournament and contribute to its overall success. There are a lot of things to keep track of when you are planning and running an event, but this will give you an idea of the most important ones.

### **Selecting Your Staff**

You'll probably be able to run your first few events on your own. As your tournaments become more successful, you're going to get more players, and that makes it harder for you to stay on top of everything. As your player base grows, you're going to need more staff to keep your tournaments running smoothly.

Be ready for a few challenges. While some areas have a lot of volunteers to choose from, others might not have as many. Anyone you take on as a judge will have strengths and weaknesses. As a Tournament Organizer, you've got to make the most of the volunteers assisting you. Here are some of the qualities to look for.

### **Rulings Knowledge**

There's a lot more to being a good judge than just knowing rulings, but you can't judge successfully without a good grasp of fundamentals. While having a rulings guru on hand is always great, a judge that's weaker on rulings but who can often supplement his or her knowledge by preparing carefully might work out just as well. Onsite access to a game's Comprehensive Rules and Official Card Reference can help, and a self-maintained rulings reference is also a good idea—it could be as simple as taking half an hour each week to print out new rulings to bring along.

Rulings made in your tournaments need to be accurate. If your best rulings judge isn't up to snuff, encourage him or her to focus more on preparation. When experience is lacking, prep time can compensate. Look for judges that are willing to help your players and get the job

done. It doesn't really matter if they have superior experience or just a willingness to study hard, no judge alive gets every question right every single time. But judges should do their part to be as reliable and accurate as possible.

### **Player Management**

Whenever there is a tournament, judges will be interacting with players. Creating a successful local tournament scene is all about building relationships—if you run Regional events, you might get players you never see again, but your local customers will be there all the time. You want every member of your staff to be competent at player management.

Managing the players means your judges (as well as yourself) need to talk to them and make sure they're having fun, while maintaining an authoritative role. Good player management means that a judge knows what to do and when. Judges don't need to rule with an iron fist, but they should command respect without having to ask for it. Staff members should control players and situations while keeping things enjoyable. This paves the way to a smooth and successful event.

### **Parent Interaction**

Dealing with parents is different than dealing with players, and since local events draw more kids than premier tournaments, parents will be a constant presence at your events. It's important that your staff understands the need for respect at all times, and the difference between a player's interest level in the game and a parent's. If you have staff members who are parents, then they will generally have few problems. If not, dealing with parents can be a unique challenge.

It's especially important in situations like these that your staff members understand the importance of professionalism and respect. You can run amazing tournaments that players flock to, but if parents feel they can't trust you or that you don't give them enough attention, you'll lose attendees as a result.

### **Work Ethic**

A strong work ethic is the most valuable strength a staff member can have. If a volunteer lacks a particular expertise but is willing to work to make up for it, he or she will be able to do virtually anything. With enough time, a hard-working volunteer will grow to fill whatever role is needed in the community. All that's needed is an open exchange of feedback; they'll often have good advice you can learn from as well.

### **Acquiring and Maintaining a Good Staff**

Remember to be respectful to both your existing and potential staff. When you're a Tournament Organizer, the responsibility for the event rests on your shoulders, but that doesn't make you "better" than the people you interact with. Even if someone isn't quite ready to join your staff yet due to skill or attitude, that might change in the future, so don't close any doors.

If volunteers aren't approaching you, remember that you have other options. Other Specialists in your area make good staff members because they share your goals. Your player base may be a source of staff as well, and dedicated players of the game will often have strong rulings knowledge. You can advertise for volunteers in the same way you advertise your tournaments: post on message boards, make announcements at your events, and tie your recruiting efforts into your existing advertising.

Remember that judges aren't the only staff you will want as your tournaments grow. Volunteers who lack gameplay experience can still provide help with logistics, so don't assume that a World of Warcraft TCG judge can't be of use to you at a Huntik TCG tournament (or vice versa). If your tournaments really take off, you might find yourself needing a dedicated scorekeeper to work MANTIS, too.

## **Advanced Advertising Techniques**

Earlier sections of the handbook discussed ideas for drawing players to your tournaments. Let's take a closer look at some of them now.

### **Sanctioning**

When you sanction your events in advance, they'll be listed on the official website for that game. The further in advance you sanction, the longer your events will be visible online, and that draws players who use the online tools to search for tournaments. Try to book your tournaments three to four weeks in advance. The advance notice gives players time to work your event into their schedules, find rides, and prepare enough to compete with confidence. The easier you make it to plan, the more attendees you'll get.

### **Building Email Lists**

Keeping an email list of players for each game you support is a good idea. Maintaining contact with your players is invaluable: send out monthly reminders about tournament times, notify them of upcoming changes to events or emergencies, and advertise special events. If you have to reschedule due to a holiday, store closing, or personal problem, you need to be able to get that message out to your players. If they show up and find no tournament, they may be annoyed.

The best way to build an email list is to collect player emails during registration. This can add a little time to your registration process, so plan ahead. If you're swamped by players while you're doing registration, delegate the task of collecting email addresses to another member of your team—your team member can take down an attendee's email as soon as you've finished registering them.

Posters, flyers, and pre-event announcements are all great ways to advertise further events, but they can also be easy to miss. Maintaining an email list ensures that your messages get to the people you want to communicate with, and almost guarantees that your message will be read. Just be careful not to send too many emails! A regular monthly newsletter outlining the next month's events, plus one email for each extra event or special announcement will be enough to get your message out without landing you on a player's spam filter list.

Some players may have reservations about giving you their contact info. Assure them that you won't bombard them with countless messages. As long as you're true to your word, your players should be fine.

### **Partnering**

Creating partnerships with businesses and organizations in your area is a great way to advertise. While it might seem that the store where your tournaments take place is your only choice for advertising, you actually have many more.

Other game stores are your first option. While you might think that stores won't support events run at competing venues, presentation and compromise are two points you'll want to keep in mind. Remember that while events at one store may increase business there, you're not a Specialist because you want to benefit one store. You're a Specialist to support the games. Running tournaments may draw players to one particular store, but it also keeps those players interested and gets them more involved with the game. That means a growing customer base for anyone in the area catering to that market, so tournaments held at a single store benefit all the stores in the area. That's the key to presenting this idea.

The compromise element usually comes in the form of promoting stores that promote your tournaments, and it can be as simple as including their names, locations, and phone numbers on your flyers and emails. That type of concise information is all a player needs to explore new stores. You can also mention stores that have promoted your events in the opening announcements of your tournaments, or even recommend them after you finish a demo.

Don't underestimate the value of partnering with other local businesses. Book or electronics stores that sell manga, comic books, or video games tied to the games you're

promoting are usually pretty quick to see the value in cross-promotion. These businesses don't compete with the stores you run Ops at, so you don't have to worry about conflicts of interest.

Never hesitate to approach businesses that aren't directly linked to the gaming world, either. A local pizza parlor would probably be glad to advertise your events in return for promotion to a group of hungry gamers. If there is a family-owned business in your area that you have connections to, see if someone there might help you out.

Seek out opportunities to advertise in your community. Libraries, community centers, town hall, schools, and a lot of other public facilities are often quite happy to promote local, kid-friendly activities. Take some time, put together some phone numbers, and spend an hour calling around to find out what your options are. You'll be surprised at how many free systems are out there waiting for you.

Partnerships with libraries and youth centers can be particularly good, because they're often looking for people to come in and run events for kids. Doing a bimonthly demo session geared toward a younger crowd can expose you to a bigger audience while building strong contacts within those organizations.

### **Forum Posting**

A lot of event information is circulated online. While many players look to the Event Locators on official Upper Deck websites first, many don't. Most popular forums for the games you support have a board where players can talk about upcoming tournaments, so you should definitely take advantage of them. Make sure you hit all the following points when you post:

- Name and location of venue
- Date of event or event schedule
- Start times / projected end times
- Tournament format
- Venue phone number, if applicable
- Your name (plus a note that identifies you as the Tournament Organizer)
- Your contact information: email and a phone number, if possible
- Prize information (if prizes are dependent on attendance, make sure to explain how they'll be determined)
- Registration fee
- What players will need to compete (deck, dice, pen and paper, UDE number, etc.)
- Anything else the players need to be aware of, such as special parking or directions if finding the venue is complicated

Once you've made your post, remain available to handle questions from potential players or parents. Some Tournament Organizers make the mistake of posting information on a bunch of different boards and then skipping town. That's a problem, because if a player calls or emails about a tournament and doesn't receive a reply, he or she will often assume the event isn't happening or that the organizer doesn't know what he or she is doing.

Remember that even if you give a phone number and email address, some players will still reply to you through the forum's private message system. Check your messages regularly. The same goes for the thread you created! Reply to any questions or comments posted there, both for the sake of the person asking and to make sure your thread doesn't fade away.

The follow-up you provide when someone responds to your advertising is often the first interaction you'll have with a potential new player. That's really important to recognize because it can set the tone for that person's interactions with you over the course of many months. Stay organized and get things started on the right foot, and your players will have no reason to question your ability. They'll trust you, they'll trust your events, and they'll keep coming back.

## **Player Satisfaction**

The success of your tournaments eventually comes down to player satisfaction. While it sometimes seems that the only things players care about are prizes, that's not usually the case. If you can understand what your players want, it's a lot easier to give it to them. Let's look at some common player concerns.

### **Staffing Priorities**

Earlier in this section, we mentioned that competitive players like having a dedicated judge who is strong on rulings. Listen to your players' opinions about your staffing arrangements. If you don't have a judge right now, do players seem to want one? If you do have one, are players happy with him or her? Do you need more than one judge, and is your staff's collective skill set sufficient for player needs? Your players' priorities are often different from yours, so keep their perspectives in mind when evaluating yourself and your staff.

### **Prize Support**

Most players are always going to want more prize support for their events, but you can only provide prizes up to the value of your total take in registration fees.

Sometimes changing your prize structure is enough to make players happier and generate excitement. Talking to the player base is important, and they'll often have ideas about how the existing prize budget could be put to better use. For instance, a very competitive local scene may want to see more prizes awarded to top finishers. A mix of competitive, casual, and new players might respond better to a standard participation prize and less impressive rewards for the Top 4.

Altering the form of your prize distribution can help, too. While cash prizes are legally forbidden in many regions, there's nothing wrong with awarding store credit or booster packs. While some players may prefer the freedom of store credit, the store may be able to offer you more stuff if you're willing to take boosters. It never hurts to ask your store contact or your players questions about prize distribution. They'll usually have plenty of ideas that they are eager to share with you.

Be aware of other options for prize support. Program kits like those provided for Battle Grounds or Hobby League are inexpensive, and the materials in those kits are an excellent value for the money you invest. As long as your store has a direct account with Upper Deck, you can order the kits through your store. Tournament Packs and Champion Packs are also great prize items, meant specifically for Tournament Organizers who want to offer them as prizes. You'll often generate a lot of interest by giving your players the chance to win things they can't get anywhere else.

### **Venue**

Do everything you can to make your venue attractive. Cleanliness is a must, and it goes beyond just picking up after people. Make sure that trash receptacles are accessible and that your players know where they are. Use tablecloths to keep your tournament tables looking (and feeling) clean. Don't allow players to abuse the venue, and issue warnings or penalties when necessary. Respect for the venue is important.

If food isn't readily accessible at your venue, consider ordering in a few pizzas or something similar. You can collect money from the players, or purchase it yourself and then sell it to them at a reasonable price. The same goes for drinks—you don't want your players to become dehydrated, so make sure water is available. If there's none to be found, pick up a case of bottled water and sell it on site.

Poor positioning of tournament elements can create problems, so observe your players. For example, if you post pairings each round, can the players get to them in a timely fashion? If it takes too long for everyone to see them because there's very little floor space in front; you should reconsider where you're posting that information, or post multiple copies in different

places. When players report their matches, does a line form that blocks people trying to move through the tournament area? Can players hear you from your position when you make announcements? If not, see what adjustments you can make, before deciding the problem rests solely with the venue.

### **Unruly Players**

It happens. Someone gets a ruling they don't like, takes one loss too many, or gets frustrated with an opponent. It usually won't happen, especially if your tournament is run smoothly, but when it does, you need to be ready to deal with it. Volumes could be written on how to deal with upset players, but here are some general guidelines to help you along:

**Isolate the player:** You don't want someone screaming in the middle of your tournament, trying to incite neighboring players to support his or her cause. It's disruptive, and the people who come to your tournament don't expect to be subjected to it. Get the player to as private an area as possible.

**Delegate:** You're the Tournament Organizer, and you're probably acting as the scorekeeper. That means time you spend dedicated to one upset individual locks up the entire tournament, as players wait to give you their results for the round. If you're not busy, and don't think you will be for some time, handle the situation yourself. But if you have the staff, get one of them to take care of it. If someone wants to speak to the Tournament Organizer specifically, he or she can wait and cool off until you're not involved in another issue.

**Be respectful:** A player that flies off the handle may not be respectful to your staff, but if you return the attitude, things are only going to get worse. Often, all a person is really looking for in this situation is a bit of acknowledgment. Listen to what that player has to say, explain the situation if it needs explaining, and let the individual know that you appreciate his or her perspective. If apologies are in order, encourage him or her to make them once they've calmed down.

**When things just can't be solved, pull the plug:** If you or your staff cannot get someone to stop disrupting the tournament, you as the Tournament Organizer have the right to ask the person to leave. It's a last-ditch measure and it's not an ideal solution, but sometimes it's the *only* solution. If a player's outburst was relatively forgivable, let the player know he or she isn't being banned from all of your tournaments, you're just requesting that he or she leave this particular event to settle down. You should always handle these types of situations yourself; your staff should not be accountable for these situations..

If players are happy with your events, they'll contribute to the atmosphere and will often become regulars. That's your goal: keeping the players you have, and attracting new ones whenever possible. The list here is by no means complete, but it is a good assortment of things to keep in mind. Try to consider things from your players' perspective, and keep looking for things to improve.

### **Event Formats**

#### **Deciding Formats**

Some Upper Deck games are usually played just one way: often some sort of Constructed format. Others are designed to be played both in Constructed formats and Limited formats like Sealed Pack or Draft. That poses a challenging question when you organize tournaments—which format should you use?

#### **Your Format Options**

Before you can decide on which formats to support and how often, you need to know what your options are. Each game has a unique range of ways to play, varying from Constructed and Limited variants, as well as restricted card pools. If you're not familiar with the formats for a particular game, check the game's official website first, as they usually have all the information

you'd need. If that doesn't work, ask other Specialists in your area or on the Specialists' General Discussion Forum.

Until you become familiar with the formats your game supports, run a Constructed format you're comfortable with. It shouldn't be hard to identify which Constructed format is the most accessible.

### **Strike a Balance Between Formats**

Finding a balance between groups in your local player community isn't easy, but a few tips can help you make the right call.

Changing formats to keep your tournaments exciting only works if you have a good tournament schedule. You need to make sure that your players know what's going to be played and when. That means planning events far in advance. It also means a lot of communication. If you have a player email list, use it to keep everybody in the loop. Make sure to edit your forum posts, flyers, and posters to reflect the formats you'll be using.

Consistency really helps. If your players know that every fourth tournament is Draft, while all other tournaments are Constructed, it'll save you a lot of work. Players won't be confused because they show up for the wrong type of tournament, and they'll be more likely to show up regularly. If you're going to shift from running tournaments in just one format to multiple formats, then a system like this is the best way to go.

In addition, that 3:1 ratio represents a good number for most gaming communities. The average player wants to use his or her creation a majority of the time. So if you run too many Limited events, you may find that you have difficulty keeping attendance up. If players tell you that they want different formats more often than that's important, but running an extra tournament to accommodate them might be better than replacing Constructed events.

### **Get Creative!**

There's a lot of room for you to be creative in how you run your tournaments. Once you feel you've got a reliable local scene going, you can up the ante by running some truly extraordinary events and take things to the next level. Here are some examples of events that you can organize to spice up a well-established gaming community.

### **Alternate Play Formats.**

Well-recognized Constructed and Limited formats aren't the only ways to play your favorite games. As games grow, players often invent variants that can take on a life of their own. Alternate Limited formats are particularly common, and they are often developed for speed or to take the game in strange, fun directions.

Alternate play formats are never really intended for serious competition, but that doesn't mean you can't promote and sanction a tournament that uses one. Doing so gives you a great way to promote the event and draw players from all over. The impact of an alternate format tournament is a lot like that of Limited tournaments as outlined in the "Deciding Formats" section, but everything is bigger—including the risks.

While new players may struggle with common formats, even experienced players may have never heard of the alternate format you've decided to support. That can scare people away. If a seriously competitive player is looking to practice for a Qualifier or Championship tournament, your wacky alternate format isn't going to give them what he or she is looking for.

Never forget, though, that alternate format tournaments can be an absolute blast! With no reputation on the line, competitive players can cut loose. Inexperienced players will find themselves on equal footing with veterans, because the format is probably going to be new to everyone. The emphasis is usually on speed and fun, and with the right direction from you as Tournament Organizer, everybody will be talking about the tournament—that's great promotion for your regular events.

Since alternate formats aren't as common as standardized ones, you might need to do some digging to find one you like. Online forums are often the best place to find suggestions,

and if you put in a little time searching you might be surprised at what you come up with. When in doubt, ask your fellow Specialists!

Just remember that an alternate format tournament is an ambitious undertaking; don't force it onto a community that isn't enthusiastic about it, and don't try to run one unless you have a solid tournament scene with a lot of regulars. Alternate format tournaments are often best reserved for special tournament nights. If you think players might feel left out or excluded then should hold off on the idea.

### **All-Night Events (Lockdowns)**

Of course, alternate format events are right at home at all-nighter events! As a Tournament Organizer, it's important to note that you aren't limited to sanctioning one tournament a day—you need to actually run tournaments you organize, but that doesn't mean you can't run them back to back. One of the best ways to accomplish that without hosting your own event is to find a flexible venue and run tournaments all night long.

Arranging an overnight event with multiple tournaments isn't easy. Most public venues close at night, and many game stores haven't considered staying open twenty-four hours—some won't be zoned for it, either. Finding a store that's willing to host an all-nighter can be difficult. It really shouldn't be attempted until you've created strong relationships with your store contacts.

The audience for an event like this is also smaller than your regular player base—kids can't stay up all night, and jobs can get in the way. Still, a lot of people will usually take to this idea very quickly, especially if it just serves as an extension to a regular tournament night.

Overnight events require more advertising than a regular tournament, but they can also draw players from further distances—who would want to miss something like this? You'll want to schedule overnight events as far in advance as possible and keep players aware, especially in the three- to six-week period before the event itself. Word of mouth can be tremendous, so that really helps.

It's important to recognize that anyone attending an overnight event probably isn't looking for nonstop brain-draining competition. Know what your audience is looking for, and don't plan to run regular Constructed tournaments again and again. That won't generate the excitement you're looking for. This is the perfect time to run a Draft for a game that might not normally see Limited play, or break out the Raid Decks and Giant Sized Vs. Keeping your tournaments varied is key.

Maintaining order is just as important as it normally would be. As the Tournament Organizer and a member of the Specialist program, you're still required to be professional and respectful. You should encourage your players to behave as well, and if someone goes overboard it's your job to reel them back in. Overnight events can be massive fun, and they can work wonders for your word of mouth promotion, but they're also a real challenge on the player management side. Be ready for that.

Don't hesitate to team up with other Specialists. An all-nighter is a great chance to host demos for other games, and having them on hand can add to the variety of the evening. It's a great chance to bond with your fellow Specialists and players, too.

### **Touring Tournament Circuits**

A touring tournament circuit is very similar to a regular weekly tournament. The only difference is that the venue changes from week to week. Running a tournament circuit puts more pressure on you as the organizer, because it's harder to get the word out about each tournament's location. It does, however, offer some advantages that would otherwise be impossible.

The first big advantage is accessibility. If there are three game stores in close proximity to you're a player's home, then all three are just as easy for him or her to get to. For players in other locations, one of those stores might be far closer. If you're the only Specialist in your area, then rotating tournaments through all three stores will provide tournaments to a larger audience.

The other advantage is keeping stores happy. While tournaments benefit all stores selling the game you're supporting, they'll frequently bring in more customers for whichever store is hosting events. By running tournaments at multiple stores, you ensure that store one gets the same boost from your efforts.

Tournament circuits can also allow for interesting competitive additions. You could divide the year into seasons and then host an invitational event at the end to let the best players from each store compete. You could keep track of tournament wins across all three venues, and declare a circuit champion at regular intervals: this can really get people traveling between stores.

Regardless of which direction you want to go, a tournament circuit can be a good way for a lone Specialist to accomplish more than they normally would with a single tournament venue. As long as you communicate with your players and don't mind the extra travel, it can solve some of the tougher problems you might run into.

Your creativity, tempered by awareness of your players' preferences, can be a powerful tool in creating successful tournaments. If you come up with an idea that you're not sure about, discuss it with other Specialists. If you think of an idea you like, but doubt that your player community is ready for it, put it on the backburner for a bit and revisit it later. The same goes for your own level of experience: challenge yourself, but don't take on anything you feel you can't handle. Come back to that idea once you've given yourself time to grow in the program. Your original plans will benefit from your experience, and you'll feel a lot more confident putting them into motion.

**What else contributes to your overall success in the program? You've sought out places to demo, worked on improving your kit, come up with some good demo scripts, and found inventive ways to promote your demo sessions. You've organized and sanctioned some popular tournaments, and you've noticed a real up swell in support for the games in your area. What else is there?**

**There are a lot of opportunities to advance as a Specialist, and participate in new and exciting additions to the program. This section will talk about what you can do to set yourself among the very best.**

## **Becoming an Exceptional Specialist**

These are the Specialists chosen for the special programs and for travel to conventions. They are recognized for their above-and-beyond contributions to the program, their value as members, and their expertise. What can you do to become one of these talented, well-recognized, and respected Specialists? It goes beyond breaking down a game and promoting it to a new player; it has to do with the kind of image you present, and the effort you make in the program.

### **Dress and Grooming**

You can wear a grubby shirt and disreputable jeans when you play a game, but not when you're representing Upper Deck as a Specialist. Specialists arriving to run an Op should look neat, clean, and professional. If you are lucky enough to be in possession of a Specialist shirt, wear it! Upper Deck-branded shirts appropriate for the game you are demonstrating will work nicely too and serve as a bit of extra advertising. If you are acting as a judge, wear your Judge shirt. As a fallback, a nice, newly laundered, plain, solid-colored t-shirt or polo shirt looks good. Wear solid-color pants (or skirts of appropriate length) rather than jeans, and stick with clothing that is professional looking, not outrageously styled. Avoid clothing that is excessively tight or baggy, ripped or faded, or heavily ornamented. Your clothes should be clean and in good condition—*clean* as in laundered or dry-cleaned, not *clean* as in hung out the window for five minutes to air out after the most obvious stains have been sprayed with a garden hose.

Don't wear shirts or pins with politically charged messages or that promote musicians or artists that aren't age appropriate for your audience. You aren't running an Op to show off your personal beliefs or funkalicious sense of style; you are running an Op to promote a game. By the same token, you should avoid wearing large or flashy accessories, especially if they're in conflict with the brand being demoed. Don't wear a Naruto headband to demo the Huntik TCG, for example. You just end up confusing the customer.

You should be clean and well groomed. Shower, brush your teeth, and apply deodorant. Your hands should be clean and neat as well, and your hair should be combed and appropriately maintained. Shave if shaving is required! It doesn't matter what the local guys hanging out in the game shop look like—*you* should not show up in a dirty, scraggly, unshaven condition.

### **Professionalism**

Professionalism is how you look, how you act, and how you communicate. It is your attitude toward the job you are doing, the game you are presenting, and the people you are interacting with. When you show a genuine interest in the well being of the game, the players, and the people you are working with, your professionalism comes through.

Professionalism doesn't stop when you pack up that Specialist Kit, either. Your behavior at events or in online communities becomes a reflection on the program, and any kind of comment or remark you make about Upper Deck, its brands, or competing brand has an impact. You can't go out and run a few demos or host a couple of tournaments, and then start flaming

Upper Deck on message boards and expect to be regarded as a Specialist in good standing. Likewise, if you are disruptive at someone else's tournament, it can have negative repercussions for your future in the program. Many people look to members of Upper Deck's volunteer programs as sources of information and inspiration—it is important not to abuse that.

Promote your local stores, not online retailers. While online retailers may offer slightly better prices for certain products, driving new customers online instead of to your local brick-and-mortar stores hurts your local gaming community. When you run your Ops locally, your job is to promote your local game scene to help it grow. Without local hobby stores, there isn't anywhere for the players to play each week, so promoting those stores should be your central focus. Mentioning large retailers is all right, but again, you want to drive players to support the local-gaming infrastructure. Without them, you have fewer places to demo and run tournaments.

Don't bash other games or companies. Even if you really dislike another game or game producer, it's in poor taste to discuss that with someone who just came by for a demo. Stay positive. Negative sentiments about anything, even unrelated companies and products, will create negative associations with your demo in the audience's mind. If they mention enjoying another game, don't leap in to disagree to convince them to come to your tournament instead—it won't help you, your customers, or the game.

### **Take and Pass Certification Tests**

Your certifications is one of the best ways for us to tell which Specialist knows what game. Even having a Level 1 Rules Knowledge certification for a specific game tells us that you have a working knowledge of the game and that you were willing to spend the time to prove it. While we don't expect everyone to have a Level 2 or 3 Rules Knowledge certification for all games, these numbers definitely do come in handy when we have a need for specific game demos at big events.

The Player Management tests are a great addition to your certifications, whether or not you intend to judge, demonstrating an awareness of how to interact appropriately with others is a definite plus for a Specialist.

If you want to run tournaments as part of your Ops (highly recommended), you'll need to pass the Tournament Organizer test.

### **Know the Brands**

As previously discussed, it's important to know the games you're promoting, and you should aim to develop a basic playing knowledge of all the games Upper Deck makes. Whether certain games are to your taste or not, you should at least be aware of them in case you are asked any questions. If you can play and teach them, even better!

The more games you know, the more opportunities you'll have to run Ops or to participate at conventions or special promotional events. It's all right to have a favorite game, but you should consider extending your expertise to cover a few more games.

You'll find your Ops will become easier if you understand the brands and licenses behind the games. Understanding what makes a game appealing, aside from the technical aspects of gameplay, will work wonders when it comes time to capture the imagination of a customer, determine the best way to promote your demo or tournament, or convince your local stores to give a game a chance on their shelves.

### **Keep Up on Product Releases and Organized Play Announcements**

You can find information on new releases on Upper Deck's websites, through press releases if you join the Upper Deck email list, or from the Organized Play forums. Make a habit of checking all the sources available to you, and remember that while most games release new sets on a fairly predictable schedule, extra products like Starter Decks, Structure Decks, Raid Decks, promotional releases, or special card collections can come out at any time. You'll want to be able to mention these products or use them in your Ops, so keep on top of what is going on.

New, exciting tournament events will give you something interesting to present to customers. If people know they can compete to win some fantastic prizes or meet a lot of other players who also like the game, their interest in the game may increase. If there are some big events coming to the area, you'll want to let your customers know, so make sure to follow the Organized Play announcements for the games you are promoting.

### **Stay Up to Date on Rulings and Policy**

This is particularly vital if you want to add Tournament Organization and judging to your schedule of Ops, but it's also good knowledge for anyone deeply involved in a brand. You don't want to misplay a card during a demo or be unaware of the correct way to resolve an in-game issue. Rulings and policy documents are updated frequently, and you can access them in the files section of the Upper Deck forums.

<http://entertainment.upperdeck.com/community/files/default.aspx>

### **Know Appropriate Upper Deck Contact Information**

You should know whom to contact when you (or someone involved in a demo) has a question. Eventually someone will have a question you can't answer, and you will want to be able to point them in the direction of someone who can. Having the correct email address will help ensure that your customers get a timely answer to their questions, which gives a good impression of the games and the company.

For judge issues (certification levels, training materials, etc.), contact [judge@upperdeck.com](mailto:judge@upperdeck.com).

For player issues (ratings, rankings, missing tournaments, etc.), contact [player@upperdeck.com](mailto:player@upperdeck.com).

For questions about sanctioning a tournament, contact [to@upperdeck.com](mailto:to@upperdeck.com).

For questions about rules or game play, contact [entertainment@upperdeck.com](mailto:entertainment@upperdeck.com).

For Specialist program questions, contact [demo@upperdeck.com](mailto:demo@upperdeck.com).

For a question that doesn't seem to fit under any of those categories, you can always fall back on good old [ude@upperdeck.com](mailto:ude@upperdeck.com).

You can also have them call the UDE Customer Service department at 1-800-873-7332, Monday–Friday, 8:00 AM–5:00 PM PST.

### **Develop Outside Skills**

Are you fluent in more than one language? Do you know sign language? Maybe you're CPR certified. Perhaps you have other kinds of community service or gaming experience. Whatever extra skills you may have to offer, they may come in useful in a demo situation. Let your Specialist Program Manager know if you have something extra to bring to the program! If you don't, perhaps now is the time to begin cultivating a new skill.

## **Build a Network**

The gaming world can be a hard place for a solitary volunteer, but you don't have to be lonely for long. There are a lot of ways you can build a support network to get the answers, advice, and input you need while giving back the same. Below are some suggestions to help you expand your web of contacts.

### **Work with Your Hosts**

Don't hesitate to work as closely as possible with the stores and Tournament Organizers in your area. Form relationships with them and you'll find them to be much more cooperative when you have constructive suggestions or just need some assistance. Running a variety of Ops that are tailored to fit the needs of the individual hosts in your area goes a long way toward building a solid relationship. Hosts value a flexible Specialist who can support a variety of games.

Remember that all relationships are give and take, and business relationships are no different. While a store or Tournament Organizer may approach you with a special request, and fulfilling those requests can help you build a lasting bond, you're not obligated to do extra favors. You should never feel taken advantage of, and the degree to which you give extra assistance should never be so great that it alienates other volunteers in your area (or prevents new ones from joining the program).

### **Keep in Touch with Your Fellow Specialists**

If there are other Specialists in your area, don't hesitate to get in touch with them! They are your teammates, not your competition, so don't feel like you have to compete with them. You can run bigger, more complex Ops with multiple Specialists, trade advice or information about upcoming events, and loan each other supplies in times of particular need.

Your fellow Specialists are some of the greatest resources you have. More-experienced members in your area can give important information about their previous experiences, both on a skills basis as well as info about dealing with local stores and Tournament Organizers. Be sure to coordinate with your local comrades when scheduling Ops—if you aggressively schedule a series of events and later find out that you stepped on the plans of another volunteer, you'll find yourself in an awkward position. Open communication is key.

Don't forget about the Specialist area on Upper Deck's forums, either—some of our best and most experienced Specialists can be found there, ready to hear about the Ops you are developing and willing to offer advice and support.

### **Maintain a List of Useful Contacts in Your Area**

You never know what kind of useful people you might meet whose skills might come in handy later on. Do you know a few good players who would enjoy spending time teaching kids how to build better decks? Maybe your next-door neighbor's daughter just took a body art class and wouldn't mind showing up to do free temporary tattoos at your next demo. If someone owns a copy shop and is willing to print some flyers for you for free, hey, that's a contact worth having too! Keep track of all these names, along with phone numbers or email addresses, so you can get in touch with them.

Judges make great allies, so if you don't already know a few in your area, you'll definitely want to meet them. You want to funnel all these new players into Organized Play, right? If you maintain a friendly contact with a few good judges in your area, they can help you out by supporting the new players you send them. They're also great to help out with a demo in a pinch or to teach you a bit more about a specific game. And if you manage to talk them into joining the Specialist program too, even better!

### **Let Upper Deck Know Who You Are!**

The Organized Play forums are a good way to keep in touch with other Specialists, but they're also a great way to be visible to Upper Deck staff. While your postings on other sites might not be as rigorously observed, your participation on the UDE forums is regularly observed.

You don't need to show off or control every thread, but think about posting your thoughts on the program, how your Ops are going, and what the local gaming scene is like in your area. If you have information or ideas that you think could help the program, pass it along!

You can also contact your Specialist Program Manager via email. Whether you have a specific question or concern or just want to say "hi" and introduce yourself, Specialists can send email to [demo@upperdeck.com](mailto:demo@upperdeck.com), where it will be read and responded to by Specialist program staff. Be patient. Remember, there are hundreds more Specialists than there are people to answer their emails!

### **Watch the Forums for New Volunteer Opportunities**

When new opportunities do come up, they are usually be listed on the Specialist section of the Upper Deck forums. Mall Tours, big events like National Championships, or conventions that need volunteers will be posted here, so check the forum regularly and don't miss out. Postings about these events will have information about the qualifications we're looking for, as well as instructions on how to apply.

Make sure to read the application instructions carefully – if you send an PM instead of an email, don't mention which event you want, or don't include the information requested, you aren't going to look like a very reliable or appealing candidate.

Remember, the people most likely to have their applications approved are the ones with a significant amount of experience. Build up a solid track record locally, develop your skills at more than one game, and you'll have a better chance of being selected for a big event. This is especially important if you're looking to receive partial or full sponsorship.

**What is there beyond “Exceptional”? What does that mean for you? Well, the better and more frequent Ops you perform, the higher you can rise in the program. Like the Judge volunteer program, the Specialist program is divided by levels, indicating the amount of effort and knowledge a volunteer has invested in the program. Specialists wishing to increase their level of certification will have to meet certain criteria, as well as pass written and oral certification exams. Below is a look at how the program is structured and an explanation of how you can move forward.**

## **Growing in the Program**

Before you can go any further, you’ll need to know where you are. The Specialist program is divided up into a very basic structure, different levels available for volunteers. Let’s start by looking at the structure of the Specialist program.

### **Specialist Program Structure**

#### **Specialist**

The backbone of the program, Specialists join the program by passing the online Level 1 Specialist Certification exam. They remain active in the program by performing the required amount of Ops each month. Specialists can reach higher certification levels by passing certification exams and meeting other requirements.

Specialist activity isn’t limited to running game demos or local tournaments. Qualified Specialists may be invited to attend conventions or other events as a representative of Upper Deck. They may be asked to participate in special promotional events for brands they are knowledgeable about. They help facilitate interaction between a store and Upper Deck.

#### **Specialist responsibilities include**

- representing brands in a positive manner,
- presenting a professional attitude and appearance,
- providing direct interaction with stores and other interested parties related to UDE’s brands,
- seeking out stores and other venues to host Ops,
- responding to Op requests, from hosts and Upper Deck, in a timely manner.

#### **Specialist responsibilities *don’t* include**

- acting as the **sole** go-between for a host and Upper Deck
- providing free labor for hosts,
- providing hosts with a source of free product.

#### **Specialist Alpha**

Next, we have the Specialist Alpha. This is a local-level resource person for Specialist volunteers. The Specialist Alpha helps coordinate activities in a specific region, provides advice and assistance to volunteers, and provides feedback to Upper Deck and the Specialist Program Manager.

While progressing in the certification process is a good way to improve your skills to reach the Specialist Alpha level, you do not necessarily need a higher Specialist certification to become a Specialist Alpha. Specialist Alphas have superior organizational and management skills, a flair for inventive problem solving, and a keen eye for detail. They exhibit the ability to think independently and don’t need to be micromanaged.

### **Specialist Alpha responsibilities include**

- reporting on local activity,
- contacting local stores for feedback on Op efforts,
- providing local level support (advice, problem solving, etc.) for Specialists,
- helping to resolve issues between Specialists and hosts,
- setting a strong example of professionalism for the volunteers in your area.

### **Specialist Alpha's responsibilities *don't* include**

- doing individual volunteers' work for them, such as setting up their Ops, taking care of their advertising, providing them with extra supplies, etc.,
- acting as the **sole** go-between for hosts and Upper Deck or hosts and volunteers.

Specialist Alphas are selected for their commitment to the program and their willingness and ability to perform the extra duties. They work closely with the Specialist Program Manager and other Upper Deck employees to improve the Specialist program in general and in their area.

### **Specialist Program Manager**

The Specialist Program Manager is employed by Upper Deck and is responsible for overseeing the program. The Specialist Program Manager implements new policies, develops ideas for improving the program, supervises kit mailings, announces sponsorship opportunities for conventions and promotional events, and tracks the overall performance of individual members. The Specialist Program Manager deals with product and volunteer support for smaller conventions. The Specialist Program Manager also writes and distributes certification tests and deals with the questions and concerns of the Specialists. The Specialist Program Manager works in tandem with the Judge Manager to oversee the Upper Deck Volunteer program as a whole.

The Specialist Program Manager frequently attends larger events and conventions. This is an excellent time to introduce yourself, even if you are not working at that event, and offer some feedback about the program.

Any Specialist can contact the Specialist Program Manager with questions or concerns by emailing [demo@upperdeck.com](mailto:demo@upperdeck.com). Always include your name and UDE number and be as detailed as possible if you have a specific question or problem. This will help you get the quickest and most accurate response possible.

### **Specialist Program Levels**

Here are the basic requirements for each level of certification within the Specialist volunteer program. Level 1 is the common starting level for all Specialists. You advance in the program by meeting the minimum requirements for each additional level, and then passing the appropriate Certification test.

#### **Level 1**

- Pass the Level 1 online Specialist Certification exam.

#### **Level 2**

- Pass the Level 2 written Specialist Certification exam.
- Successfully administer and report at least **10** Ops.
- Pass level 1 Rules Knowledge Certification for at least one Upper Deck game.
- Pass the Level 1 Tournament Organizer Certification exam.
- Pass the Level 1 Player Management Certification exam.

**Level 3**

- Pass the Level 3 written Specialist Certification exam and interview.
- Successfully administer and report at least **25** Ops.
- Pass the Level 2 Player Management Certification exam.
- Pass the Level 1 Rules Knowledge Certification exam for at least 2 Upper Deck games.
- Have a recommendation from a store owner, Tournament Organizer, Specialist Program Manager, Judge Manager, or level 3 Specialist.

**Level 4**

- Pass the Level 4 Specialist Certification exam and interview.
- Successfully administer and report at least **60** Ops.
- Pass the Level 1 Rules Knowledge Certification exam for all Upper Deck games.
- Have two recommendations from a store owner, Tournament Organizer, Specialist Program Manager, Judge Manager, or level 4 Specialist.

**Level 5**

- Pass the Level 5 Specialist Certification exam and interview.
- Successfully administer and report at least **100** Ops.
- Pass the Level 3 Player Management Certification exam and interview.
- Pass the Level 1 Rules Knowledge Certification exams for all Upper Deck games.
- Have three recommendations from a store owner, Tournament Organizer, Specialist Program Manager, Judge Manager, or level 4 Specialist.

**We aren't going to send you out there alone! Specialists always have help available from a variety of sources.**

## **Resources**

There are plenty of resources accessible to Specialists. The resources are available specifically to support your efforts and answer your questions, and knowing when to use each of them will save you a lot of time and help you become a better Specialist.

### **Policy Documents**

The Policy and Document Center is home to a number of useful resources to help out your Ops. You'll find official Tournament Policies for all of Upper Deck's supported games, which are must-have documents if you intend to judge or sanction tournaments. As a Specialist, it's important to be familiar with the Upper Deck Official Tournament Policy as well as all Appendixes for games you're involved with.

The most important Policy Document for Specialists is Appendix Y: Specialist Policies. Within the document, you'll find all the basic information you'll need to navigate the program. Your responsibilities as a Specialist, qualifications for levels within the program, and protocols for reporting Ops are among the topics covered. The Specialist Policies serve to outline what is expected of you and what this program seeks to achieve, so be sure to consult it.

You can find all Policy Documents at the Policy and Document Center:  
<http://entertainment.upperdeck.com/op/policy/default.aspx>

### **Specialist Handbook**

The handbook you're reading expands on the information in the Specialist Policies, going deeper to give you more information and assistance. It contains demo techniques, tips for running successful tournaments, and explanations of program elements that may not be obvious when you're first starting out. For a volunteer that's new to the Specialist Program, the Specialist Handbook gives you the opportunity to learn important lessons in advance, instead of learning them through trial and error.

It's a hefty piece of reading, but the more familiar you are with the Specialist Handbook, the better prepared you'll be for your Ops. The Handbook answers a lot of questions you may have, and it serves as an on-the-job reference packed with problem-solving ideas and tricks. Confidence and preparation will give stronger results, so study up before tackling your Ops!

Expect periodic updates to the Handbook material, as well as additions to the Appendix section. The Handbook is available as a download in the Specialist Resources file section of the Upper Deck Forums.

<http://entertainment.upperdeck.com/community/files/68/default.aspx>

### **Specialist Resources**

The link above is a folder hosted in the files section of the Upper Deck forums, dedicated to the Specialist program. You will find files and documents relevant to our program. New resources, such as demo scripts, demo decklists, Tournament Organizer checklists, and so forth, are constantly being developed, and you will find them all there. Download them, print them, and store them with your handbook.

### **Upper Deck Contact information**

When Policy Documents and the Specialist Handbook can't answer your questions, there's a network of people ready to help. If you've got a question you can't find an answer to, don't hesitate to send an email to the appropriate Upper Deck contact. The following addresses may be useful to you:

Upper Deck: [ude@upperdeck.com](mailto:ude@upperdeck.com)

Upper Deck International: [questions@upperdeck.nl](mailto:questions@upperdeck.nl)

For specific Specialist questions, please email [demo@upperdeck.com](mailto:demo@upperdeck.com).

Replies to your emails may take some time, so it's a good idea to explore other resources first. If you do send an email, include your full name and UDE number and provide all the information Upper Deck will need to solve your problem. Use a descriptive title for your email (don't just type "question," for example), and take some time with your spelling and grammar, so there won't be any confusion with your question.

### **Upper Deck Forums**

There are two parts to the official Specialist forums maintained by Upper Deck. The first section is reserved for news. It includes information on kit mailings, document updates, and volunteer requests for upcoming events. When something new happens, or an opportunity opens up, this is where you'll read about it first. It's important to check this forum on a regular basis to make sure you don't miss out.

The second forum is for Specialist discussions. Since this board is a gathering place for Specialists of all experience levels, it's a great place to find ideas and ask questions. Want to ask how other Specialists advertise their events? Want to discuss how to run a demo for a younger child, or tips for dealing with store owners? Have questions about tournament structuring or prize ideas? Any question you can come up with can be asked here, and other Specialists, and usually the Specialist Program Manager, will be happy to share some insight.

Don't neglect the other forums—the ones dedicated to the games you promote, the judge areas, and the MANTIS section. All the forums here are useful to a hard-working Specialist!

You can find the Specialist Program Forums here (after passing the specialist one certification):

<http://entertainment.upperdeck.com/community/forums/default.aspx?GroupID=57>

### **Upper Deck Specialist Official Facebook Group**

Social networking sites are a common way for people to stay in contact with one another, and we've set one up specifically for our Specialists. If you are already registered on Facebook, you should definitely join the group. If you are not, you may want to consider trying it out – but that is up to you. You won't find exclusive "official" information, since the forums are still the primary official link between you and Upper Deck, but you'll be able to participate in more discussions, enjoy pictures and event reports, and easily keep up on what's new in the program on a day-to-day basis. You can either search for the group using Facebook's search feature, or use this link: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=24751965917>.

### **Other Specialists**

The General Discussion forum is just one place where you can meet and talk to other Specialists; there are many other places and opportunities to make helpful contacts. You may not be the only Specialist in your area, and meeting up with local volunteers is a great idea. They can share some insight into player priorities and community issues. An experienced Specialist who's been running Ops in your area for a while may be able to impart valuable advice.

In addition, if you get the opportunity to team up with other Specialists at a convention or similar event, stay in touch with them! Only experienced Specialists get to work major events, so it's a great chance to meet other people in the program who have valuable knowledge.

### **Specialist Alphas**

As the program progresses, Specialist Alphas will be assigned to assist other Specialists in their area. Alpha Specialists are responsible for helping to train new Specialists, as well as helping to ensure other Specialists have the tools they need.

Specialist Alphas maintain an email address that is checked regularly, so they're never hard to contact. They're a great source of advice on general issues, and they're definitely someone to try when you encounter a situation you can't handle on your own.

Alphas are also responsible for making sure that Specialists are fulfilling their responsibilities in their region. They'll talk to store contacts on a regular basis to discuss the contact's thoughts on the Specialist program and how it's represented in their area, so they're a good source of helpful feedback. Creating a relationship with the Alpha in your area will benefit you time and time again, so make sure you get in touch with him or her!

**Congratulations! You've made it all the way through the Specialist Handbook! The information in this document has been pulled together from many different volunteers' experiences, and should make the process of becoming a successful Specialist much easier for you. Look for updates and additions as the program develops. If you have any feedback or opinions on how to make these resources even better, please let us know! You can send any comments you have to [demo@upperdeck.com](mailto:demo@upperdeck.com).**

**Once again, welcome to the program! We depend on volunteers like yourself to really make our games and programs thrive. We look forward to working with you!**

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