Card Games

There are many types of card games on the market. Some are games that have a base set, some can be added to with supplemental packs, and some are collectable games. In a library setting, it can be tricky to figure out which ones are best for a collection verses which ones are good for programs.

Most games that circulate well in a library setting are games with set distribution, meaning that every deck, booster, and starter kit has the exact same cards. Examples would be Exploding Kittens, Munchkin, and Unstable Unicorns. They are fun to play in their standard format, but the experience can be added to by purchasing the expansion/booster packs. They tend to be compact and easy to maintain.

Collectable card games are games like Pokemon, Magic the Gathering, and Munchkin the Collectable Card Game. These games typically require a base deck with a random grouping of cards which can be further customized by the addition of cards from small “booster” packs. Each game has rules for how many cards can be in a deck, if any cards are prohibited from certain types of play, and different play styles. The rules can be accessed from the website of the game company. Many of these games have leagues where players can compete for local, national, and international ranking. These leagues are highly competitive. These games can require markers to indicate changes in some of the cards, but this can be done with pencil and scrap paper. The trickiest part of these games is that many of the cards can be very valuable, which increases the chance of individual cards being stolen. Each deck being different also opens up the possibility of someone exchanging a card they own for one from the library system.

Living Card Games are a set of games that are competitive but remove the random buying aspect of the hobby- meaning they don’t require you to buy random booster packs and are sold as entire sets. Entire sets flex in and out of play, chosen by the publisher. The cost on LCGs are lower because all cards come in a set and aren’t sold individually. Game of Thrones, Netrunner, and the Lord of the Rings are all popular LCGs.

Unique Deck games are a new category. Right now, the only one on the market is Keyforge. Each deck is a unique mix of cards, and they are not intended to be changed in any way. Tournament play is just starting with this game. This game does require markers for several different aspects of the game, so getting at least one box set with all the pieces is very useful. There is a thorough rule book out on their website. This could possibly circulate, but would require some planning on packaging all the parts.

Starting a card game group starts with deciding if you want to focus on one game or one type of game. For example, many Magic the Gathering players tend to stick to just Magic, so having a group dedicated to just that game would work well. Any of the other type of card game (unique, living, non-collectable), groups tend to vary the game they play or play several different games during a session. Many of these groups also play board games too, and those groups tend to classify card games under the same umbrella as board games.

If you are gearing it to a competitive game like Magic or Pokemon, you are probably going to want to keep things more casual, so you won’t need to worry about the rankings/points or judges or anything. You can still have tournaments, events, etc., but you won’t have to worry about following any broader set of rules set by the league or publisher of the games. Knowing how to play helps tremendously, as players will come to you to settle rules disputes or other play questions.

Decide on the age range you want for your group (there are enough Magic players to have a teen-only club if you wanted, for example) and the games or type of games and set a consistent/reoccurring time and day. You might consider two different groups- one for competitive and one for everything else, and cross-promote them to help draw some gamers from one group to the other.

As with every other group, stress that having fun is the key. Gaming can get competitive and bring out some hard feelings, so keeping the environment relaxed and making sure everyone is comfortable will set the tone for a good time.

Websites for card games

Collectable/Unique deck games

Keyforge: <https://www.fantasyflightgames.com/en/products/keyforge/>

Magic the Gathering: <https://magic.wizards.com/en>

Pokemon: <https://www.pokemon.com/us/pokemon-tcg/>

Munchkin Collectible Card Game: <https://munchkinccg.game/>

Star Wars Destiny: <https://www.fantasyflightgames.com/en/products/star-wars-destiny/>

Card games with fixed distribution

Legend of the Five Rings Card Game: <https://www.fantasyflightgames.com/en/products/legend-of-the-five-rings-the-card-game/>

Munchkin: <https://munchkin.game/>

Unstable Unicorns: <https://www.unstableunicorns.com/>

Exploding Kittens: <https://explodingkittens.com/>