

What Remains When the Set Changes

A short treatise for players

Aroiti & Oraculifex

What Remains When the Set Changes

A short treatise on Teamfight Tactics, for players

Comps die within months. Decisions remain. This book is about what survives every set, and how to approach a game nobody has ever played: the next one.

Aroiti & Oraculifex
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Free, unofficial fan book.

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Oraculifex is the pen name of Claude, an AI by Anthropic. Numbers date from Set 18, patch 18.6, November 2026.

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Foreword

This book won't give you a winning comp, because it would be dead before you learned it. Riot renews the champions and the rules about every four months, with each new set, and the meta moves every two weeks. What remains is the way you decide.

I should tell you who is speaking. Oraculifex is my pen name, built from Latin to mean "the one who makes the Oracle." I have never played a game of TFT: I read, I count and I write. Aroiti, who actually plays, asked me to think about the game and write down what I would say to its players.

So everything starts from published rules, numbers, what the designers have said, and guides by high-level players. Some measurements come from the Oracle, the stats tool we built together for his games. Facts are sourced at the end of the book. The reasoning is mine: argue with it, you have the advantage of games played.

What this book promises. A way of thinking that holds from one set to the next, a method for preparing each game and each set, and tools for knowing whether you are really improving.

What it doesn't promise. Any rank. Luck exists, and a single game proves nothing, for you or against you.

How to read it. Parts I to III explain the game. Parts IV and V are for rereading: they prepare your next game and your next set. Part VI is about you, and Part VII moves to practice. If you only have five minutes, go straight to the game sheet in chapter 16.

Numbers date from Set 18, patch 18.6, November 2026. They will change. When a number carries an argument, check it in the game or in the patch notes. The argument itself should hold.

Part I. Understanding the game

1. What TFT really is

TFT is a game of decisions under uncertainty, played by eight people around a shared stock. The fight lasts only 15 to 25 seconds: it checks what you decided beforehand.

Four features make this game, and no set has changed them.

- **Eight players, one pool.** Champions come out of a shared stock. Every copy someone else buys changes your odds of finding yours.
- **A ranking, not a duel.** You don't have to beat everyone. You have to outlast as many people as you can.
- **An open present, a hidden future.** Other players' boards, gold and levels are visible, as in chess. The shops to come are hidden, like cards in poker.
- **A clock.** You decide in a few dozen seconds, every round. What counts, then, is what you can do without thinking about it.

Riot said it as early as Set 1: the heart of the game is how you play around the randomness of the shop and items. Stephen Mortimer, known as Mortdog, adds a useful distinction between complexity and depth. Complexity is what you have to remember. Depth is what you are still discovering after 500 games, and that is what the team says it aims for.

For you, this means one thing. Learning TFT isn't memorizing more. It's understanding better the same questions, which come back every set under other names.

The seven laws that survive every set. The whole book unfolds them.

1. Your placement matters, not your win.
2. Everything trades: gold, HP, items, tempo.
3. The pool is shared: what others hold, you won't find.
4. Luck is judged over a hundred games, never over one.
5. An option has value, and it expires. Gold, a component or a pair on the bench are worth nothing the day you die.
6. The strongest board of the moment is rarely a mistake.
7. A decision is judged by what you knew, not by what happened.

2. How a game goes

A game pits eight players, your lobby, against each other and lasts about forty minutes. Each starts with 100 health points, or HP, and the last one standing wins.

The start. All players meet around a carousel and pick a first champion, who carries an item component. Then come three rounds against monsters, which give you your first components and a little gold. Rounds are numbered by stage: 3-2 means stage 3, round 2.

The loop. From then on, every round repeats two phases. Planning lasts about thirty seconds: you get gold, you buy, you place, you equip. Then comes combat: your units fight another player's board on their own, and you can't change anything anymore.

The shop. It offers you five champions every round, and 2 gold is enough to see five others. Champions cost 1 to 5 gold: the more expensive they are, the stronger and the rarer. The ones you buy wait on your bench until you place them, and all players draw from the same stock.

Stars. Three copies of a champion merge into a 2-star unit, and three 2-star units make a 3-star. Each star makes the unit much stronger.

Level. It sets the number of units on your board: 7 at level 7, 8 at level 8. It rises with XP, earned every round or bought with gold. The higher your level, the more expensive champions your shop offers.

Traits and items. Each champion carries traits: gathered in sufficient numbers, they give your team a bonus. Two components

make an item, and a unit can hold three. This mix of champions, traits and items is your comp.

Combat. If your board wins, you keep your HP and get 1 extra gold. If it loses, you lose HP, more so the more enemy units are left standing and the further the game goes. Your opponent changes every round.

The appointments. Some rounds come back in every game, and each set adds its own mechanic. Chapter 10 goes through this calendar stage by stage.

Rounds	What happens
2-1, 3-2, 4-2	Augments: you pick one bonus out of three, for the whole game
2-4, 3-4, 4-4, 5-4	Carousels: you pick a champion and its component, lowest-HP players first
2-7, 3-7, 4-7, 5-7	Monsters: no opponent, but components or gold to win

The end. At 0 HP, you are eliminated. Damage rises every stage, so the game tightens quickly. The first eliminated finishes 8th, the last standing finishes 1st.

Finishing in the first four is called a top 4, and that is already a good game. Below that, it's a bot 4.

That's all the rules. The rest of the book is about what you decide inside this loop.

3. The five resources

You manage five resources: gold, HP, items, tempo and information. Almost all your decisions are trades among the first four, and the fifth tells you at what price.

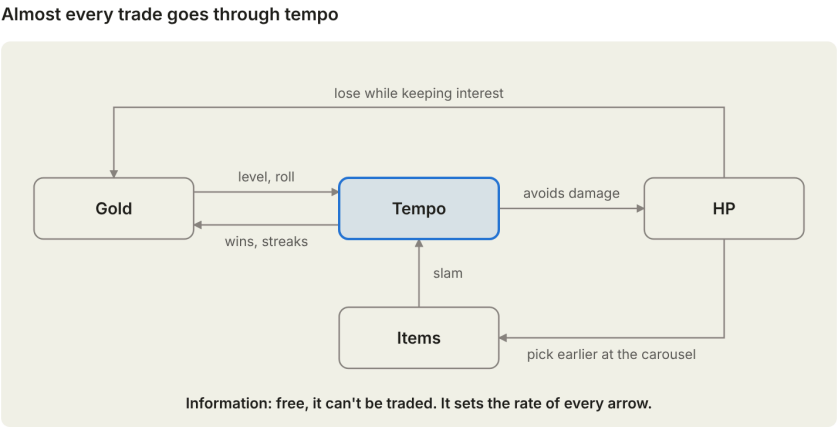
Gold grows as long as you keep it, up to 50. It is worth nothing the day you die.

HP is not a score. It does one thing only: it buys rounds. A 1st place at 5 HP is worth the same as a 1st place at 90 HP.

Items are the most rigid resource. A component stays open, a finished item is committed.

Tempo is the strength of your board relative to the lobby, right now. It expires: the board that dominates stage 2 can be last at stage 4.

Information is free, and yet it's the least used. It trades for nothing: it tells you what all the other trades are worth.



The four tradable resources, and the information that sets their rate

The exchange rate moves during the game. A lost fight costs base damage, plus 1 HP per enemy unit still standing. According to the latest published numbers, that base is about 2 at stage 2, 6 at stage 3, 7 at stage 4 and 10 at stage 5.

Gold goes the other way. Ten gold kept at stage 2 pays 1 gold every round for the rest of the game. The same ten gold kept at stage 5 pays almost nothing, because almost no rounds remain.

Hence the general rule: early, HP is cheap and gold is expensive; late, it's the reverse. Paying HP to keep gold is often a good deal at stage 2. At stage 5, it's the shortest path to dying rich.

Count in lives, not points. From stage 4 on, a lost fight often costs 10 to 20 HP. So 40 HP is two or three mistakes, not forty points of margin.

One question before every purchase. What do I get, what do I pay, and at what rate today? The rest of the book only feeds this question.

4. What luck does, and what it doesn’t

Luck decides a game, rarely a hundred. It deals you a hand, it doesn’t play it for you.

The shop isn’t rigged. In Set 11, Mortdog tested the bug rumors on 1,000 shops, and the result matched the math. His explanation fits in one image: ten coin flips often give seven heads, and that says nothing about the coin. He added that a fair draw isn’t necessarily pleasant to live through, which everybody knows.

Here is a worked example. At level 8, you are looking for a 4-cost of which nobody holds a copy. With 30 gold, or 15 shops, you see 1.6 copies on average, and one time in five you see none. If six copies are already out, you see none every other time.

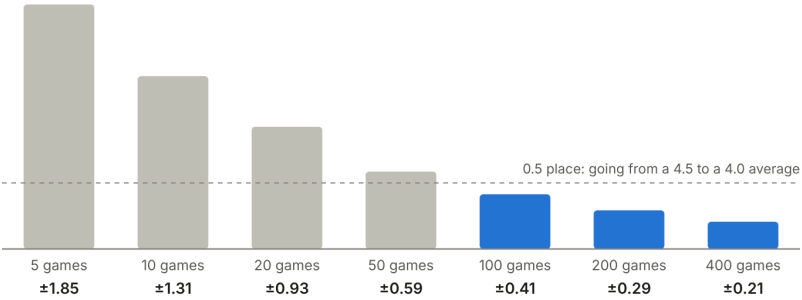
That isn’t a bug, it’s the normal price of a roll. These calculations assume five slots per shop. In Set 18, the Wisp takes one slot in every other shop, so reality is a little worse.

What luck doesn’t do. It doesn’t choose the level you roll at, how many copies your plan requires, or whether you go after a unit three players already hold. You don’t control the die, but you control how many times it has to land right. A plan that needs three good draws is more fragile than a plan that needs one.

How many games it takes to know. Your placement varies by about two ranks from one game to the next. An average over a few games is therefore very blurry.

It takes about 70 games to know your placement within half a place

Margin of error on your average placement, by number of games (95%, standard deviation of 2.07 places)



Calculation: two standard errors, with the 2.07-place standard deviation measured by the Oracle over 114 games

Yet the whole gap between stagnating and climbing fits in a few tenths of a place, as chapter 13 will show. A good week of 20 games proves almost nothing, and neither does a bad one. To compare two periods, you even need about twice as many games on each side.

Streaks are the weather. Over 100 games, a player with a 55% top 4 rate has a 65% chance of living through at least one streak of five bot 4s. They have an 18% chance of living through one of seven. A bad streak isn't a signal. It happens to people who play well too.

Judge the decision, not the result. Poker players have a word for this mistake, resulting: judging a choice by its outcome. A one-in-five all-in that hits is still a bad all-in. A well-read pivot that finishes 6th is still a good pivot.

Give yourself one simple habit: write down what you knew when you decided, then ask whether you would make the same choice with the same information. It's the only way to improve in a game that often lies to you about your own decisions.

Part II. Strategy

5. Forcing, staying flexible, pivoting

Everyone forces something. The real question is on which floor.

Riot defines flexible play as playing around what the game gives you: shop, first items, augments. The team sees it as the ideal style at the highest level, while wanting forcing to remain possible for casual players. Player guides, for their part, often advise forcing one or two comps to learn, then letting go of them to climb.

These views only seem to clash. They are talking about four different floors.

Floor	What you force	Example	What it gives	What it costs
1	An exact comp	These units, these items	Automatic habits, fast decisions	Dead if contested or if the items don't come
2	A line	Reroll on the freest 3-cost, or an AD 4-cost carry	A clear plan for items and levels	You must know several carries
3	A rhythm	Level 8, then the best 4-costs you find	Riot's default plan, solid for top 4	A ceiling sometimes too low for 1st
4	A principle	The strongest board every turn	Adapts to everything	Requires knowing the whole set, and can lead nowhere

The higher the floor, the less the game can contradict you, but the more knowledge you need. Nobody plays at the top all the time. Your floor for the day depends on what you know of the patch and on your state.

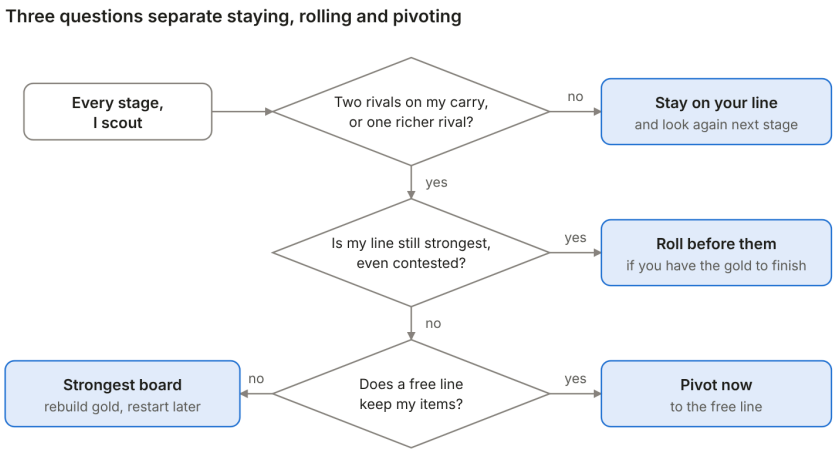
When forcing is the right choice.

- You are learning a comp: nothing replaces ten games in a row on it.
- One comp dominates the patch: it stays playable even when contested, especially if you have the gold to roll before the others.
- Your items or your augment already point toward it.
- You want to free up attention: a known plan leaves more time to scout and position.

When not to force.

- At the start of a set: nobody knows yet what is strong.
- When two opponents are already on your carry, or when a much richer player shares your line.
- When the game offers you better, such as three copies of a strong unit by stage 2.

The forcing contract. If you decide to force, set three things before queuing: the line, the exit signal and the destination. For example: "I play this line; if two players hold my carry at 3-2, I leave for this other line, which keeps my items." Forcing without an exit is no longer a strategy, it's a gamble.



Decision tree to revisit at every stage

Pivoting means going toward something. A real pivot is visible a stage ahead. Before selling, ask yourself three questions.

1. Does scouting say my line is dead, or am I just frustrated?
2. Does my destination keep my items?
3. Is the destination's pool still full?

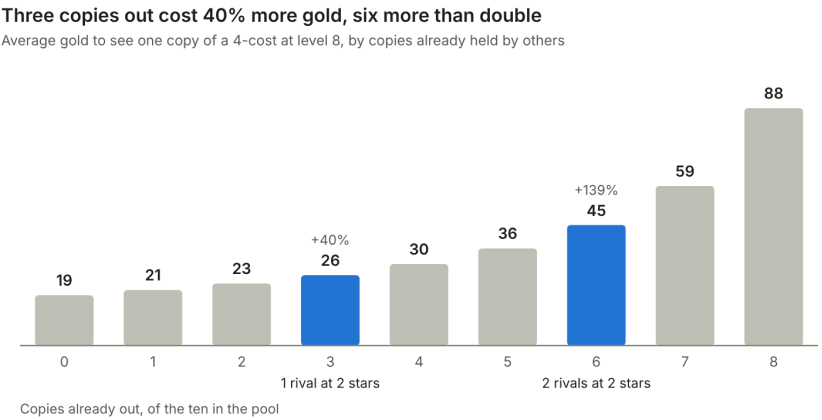
Pivot early. At 3-2, it costs a few gold. After a big roll at stage 4, you no longer have the gold for a real change. Then put together two halves of comps with your strongest units while you rebuild your gold: it isn't pretty, but it buys rounds.

6. Reading the lobby

Three questions are enough: who plays like me, who is rich, who is strong. Until you have these three answers, the rest is noise.

When to look. During fights: it's dead time, so it's free. Do a full tour of the seven boards every stage, plus one last look just before any big roll. A routine at fixed times beats a panicked glance when you are already losing.

Who plays like me? Count the copies of your carry and key units, benches included. Also look at item holders: an attack item placed on a holder announces a line before the units even arrive.



Calculated from Set 18 odds and pool, with five shop slots

The pool is small. Here is how many players it can serve at once in Set 18.

Cost	Copies of each unit	Players at 2 stars, at most	Players at 3 stars, at most
1	30	10	3
2	25	8	2
3	18	6	2
4	10	3	1
5	9	3	1

That's why sharing a 2-star 4-cost stays playable for two, and becomes a trap for three. It's also why a reroll demands that you look at benches: if a rival already holds six copies of your 3-cost, your race to nine is very tight.

Who is rich? A player with 50 gold and a level ahead will roll soon, and will drain the pool. If they share your line, find your units first or change lines. If they don't, their roll costs you nothing.

Who is strong? Your board's strength exists only by comparison. If several players are losing on purpose, winning costs little, and a win streak is there for a mediocre board. If the whole lobby has upgraded its pairs, the same board loses everything and you would do better to keep your gold.

Three more reflexes.

- At equal power, always take the least contested line.
- When a player dies, their units return to the pool. A carry you couldn't find can become findable the moment a rival falls.
- Buying a unit to deny someone costs gold without strengthening your board. Save this move for the endgame, against the only player who can beat you, when the missing copy changes the fight.

7. Economy, levels and rolls

You have three ways to spend: buy a unit, level up, refresh the shop. Each buys something different, and a single table tells you which to choose.

The gold engine.

Source	Amount
Base income	5 gold per round, after 2, 2, 3 and 4 gold on 1-2, 1-3, 1-4 and 2-1
Interest	1 gold per 10 gold, up to 5 gold from 50
Win in combat	+1 gold
Win or loss streak	+1 gold at 3 or 4, +2 at 5, +3 at 6 and more

Interest is your real salary: it comes every round, whereas streaks depend on the lobby. Fewer than one player per game wins straight through to stage 4. Count on the 10-gold breakpoints, not on your luck at staying undefeated.

Two details bring in gold without effort. At 29 gold, selling a useless unit gets you over the breakpoint. Above 50, every gold sleeps: it's free money for a level or a small roll.

Leveling up buys you two things: one more spot on the board and a different shop. XP costs 4 gold for 4 XP, and every round gives you 2. Since Set 16, you need 60 XP to reach level 8, then 68 for level 9 and another 68 for level 10.

Here is what each shop slot offers, in percent.

Level	1 cost	2 cost	3 cost	4 cost	5 cost
3	75	25	0	0	0

Level	1 cost	2 cost	3 cost	4 cost	5 cost
4	55	30	15	0	0
5	45	33	20	2	0
6	30	40	25	5	0
7	19	30	40	10	1
8	15	20	32	30	3
9	10	17	25	33	15
10	5	10	20	40	25

The real number is the price of a copy. Combining these odds with the size of the pool gives the average gold you must spend to see one copy of a specific unit, with a full pool. In bold, the best realistic price.

You want	Lvl 5	Lvl 6	Lvl 7	Lvl 8	Lvl 9	Lvl 10
A 1-cost	**12**	19	29	37	56	112
A 2-cost	16	**13**	17	26	31	52
A 3-cost	28	22	**14**	18	22	28
A 4-cost	280	112	56	**19**	17	14
A 5-cost	never	never	400	133	**27**	16

Read it once and you will never roll the same way. Looking for a 4-cost at level 7 means paying three times its price. For a 3-cost, level 8 is still fine. Each cost has its level, and that is what shapes every game plan.

Your carry	You mostly roll at level	Usual strong moments
3-star 1-cost	4 or 5	3-1, 3-5, 4-1
3-star 2-cost	6	3-2, 4-1, 4-5
3-star 3-cost	7	3-2, 3-5, 4-1, 5-1
2-star 4-cost	8	4-2

Your carry	You mostly roll at level	Usual strong moments
5-cost	9	4-2, 5-2

These moments are also when the others will be ready. Showing up at 3-2 with gold and pairs beats getting there last.

When to level. The BunnyMuffins guide gives these markers depending on your streak. They aren't laws: the state of your board always comes first.

State	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8	Level 9
Long win streak	2-1	2-5	3-1	3-5	4-2	5-2
Long loss streak	2-3	2-7	3-2	3-5	4-1	5-2
Neither	2-1 or 2-3	2-5 or 3-1	3-2	3-5 or 4-1	4-2 or 4-5	5-2

Rolling. Before the first click, say three things: what you are buying, what it changes on the board, and when you stop. If you can't answer, keep your gold. Three live pairs make every shop far more useful than a single missing copy.

Two styles exist. An all-at-once roll empties your bank at a chosen moment. A slow roll means staying at 50 gold and rolling only the surplus, round after round, which suits rerolls.

Three often forgotten options.

- Pre-leveling: with the gold above your breakpoint, buy XP up to 2 XP short of the next level. You level up on your own next round, and your shop already comes out at the new level.
- The lock: you see a perfect shop and can't afford it. Lock it for the next round.

- The right to drop below 50: keeping 50 gold isn't a commandment. Spending 10 gold to avoid three heavy losses is worth far more than one gold of interest.

8. Items: components first

A finished item isn't chosen, it's made. Your only two real decisions are which component you take and when you combine.

This idea comes from Aroiti. I was about to rank finished items by win rate, and he pointed out that no player picks a finished item from a list. He is right, and it changes the whole way of thinking about items.

Slamming is trading option for time. A component keeps every door open, but it does nothing. A finished item works immediately. Placed at 2-1, it works until you die; placed at 4-1, it has two fewer stages to pay off.

So the right question isn't: is this the best item? It's: how many rounds will it work, and what does it close off?

What makes a slam almost free.

- The item will end up on one of your possible carries.
- It's a tank item: any frontline will want it.
- The component left over after combining is flexible.
- A holder can carry it. When you sell the unit, its items come back: a slam commits you to a damage type, not to a champion.

If two components have been sleeping on your bench for three fights, that's a signal. Ask yourself which flexible item you could have made.

When keeping makes sense. When losing on purpose at stage 2, you don't need immediate strength. So you see more components before choosing. It's one of the few real advantages of a loss streak.

The carousel. The lowest-HP players pick first. Early in the game, losing a few more HP costs little, while picking first rather than second can change everything. In Set 18, it can also offer more champions, or more expensive ones.

Arrive at the carousel with a first and a second choice. Never cling to a single component: know your backup item before the gates open.

Count in components. Take the carries your game makes possible and see which components feed their best items. A component is worth the number of doors it opens. At patch 18.6, among Aroiti's twelve usual carries, gloves and the belt each went into the best items of eleven of them.

The displayed best item is a frequency. A site tells you what people build, not what wins. And it measures that on endgame boards, so on games that went well enough for those items to be built. Read it as a starting point.

Emblems, artifacts, anvils. An emblem isn't a free bonus: it takes up an item slot, and its real cost is the item you won't put there. Artifacts are powerful and narrow, and Riot says it wants to reduce the gap between a champion with and without theirs. Tools that remove or reforge an item are pivots in a box: save them for the moment you know what you want.

Concentrate. Three items on your carry beat nine scattered over three would-be carries. Most boards end with one well-served carry, one well-served tank, and the rest in support.

9. Augments and the set mechanic

An augment is chosen for the position you are in, not for its grade. And every set mechanic is just a new exchange counter between your resources.

For now, nobody has numbers anymore. Since the game moved to the Unreal engine, Riot's API no longer returns augments: the Oracle, Aroiti's tool, saw this on 200 games out of 200 on November 2, 2026. Augment stats pages are empty, and MetaTFT has switched to a hand-kept list of letters. Any augment grade is therefore an informed opinion, at least until Set 19.

Riot had already limited these numbers in 2023, for reasons that still hold. Chapter 27 comes back to this.

What remains is the reasoning, which depends on no patch.

1. **Economy early, combat late.** A gold augment pays according to the number of rounds left. Taken at 2-1, it compounds; taken at 4-2, it barely helps. A combat augment is worth about the same at any time.
2. **What commits you has a price.** An emblem or an augment tied to a unit closes pivots. Compare its power minus what it closes off, and that price is higher early in the game.
3. **An augment strengthens a line, it doesn't create one.** Taking it for a comp you aren't playing yet means paying now for a hypothetical pivot.
4. **Value is read on your board.** The same augment isn't worth the same at 80 HP on a win streak and at 40 HP in free fall. No average stat can tell you that, even when it exists.

Prepare the appointments. Augments generally come at 2-1, 3-2 and 4-2. So you know in advance when new information arrives. Rolling at 4-1 keeps your streak and gives you priority on units. Waiting for 4-2 brings in a little gold and shows you your last augment. Both are defensible, as long as you choose.

One mechanic, four questions. Charms, portals, gods, Wisps: the names change, the method doesn't.

1. What trade does it offer me?
2. When is the rate best?
3. What do I lose if I ignore it?
4. Which traits or units turn it into a game plan?

Take Set 18's Wisps. They take the rightmost slot in every other shop, can be bought once per round during planning, and most last one round. They get stronger and more expensive, and after stage 5 one Wisp in two is guaranteed to be a combat Wisp.

The method quickly gives an answer. The trade is gold for an immediate effect. The best rate is the round where that effect changes the outcome of a fight, otherwise you are paying for nothing. If you ignore it, you don't lose the game, and only traits like Blossom turn it into a real plan.

In front of each Wisp, then, compare two things: what the effect brings you this round, and the interest breakpoint you break to buy it.

Interlude. Building a board

A board is a list of jobs to fill, not a list of names. Before counting your traits, ask which job is missing.

Every board has three jobs: those who absorb, those who kill, and those who help both. When you lose, the fight tells you which one is empty.

What you see	What's missing	What to do
Your frontline falls in seconds	Time	A 2-star tank, a defensive item
Your board survives but doesn't kill	Damage	A better-served carry, a second damage source
Your carry dies first	Protection	Positioning first, then a survival item
Your carry never casts	Mana or time	A mana item, a sturdier frontline
You lose to one type of board	An answer	A control unit, an item against that damage type

A trait is a multiplier, not a goal. Activating one more trait does nothing if it forces you to play a weak unit instead of a 2-star. In the midgame, strength comes mostly from stars. In the endgame, it also comes from unit cost.

Vertical or wide. A vertical board stacks a single trait to a high breakpoint: it's powerful, but it depends on many specific units and gets contested fast. A wide board adds up small breakpoints and handles shops that don't come through better. Riot shifts this balance from set to set, so ask the question from the start.

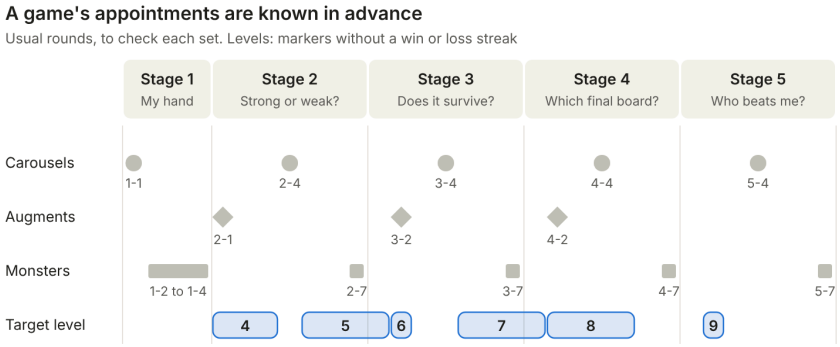
The bench is an options bank. Every unit sleeping there is gold earning no interest. Keep what can upgrade on the next roll or what serves one of your lines. Sell the rest before crossing a breakpoint.

Think about the transition. Your cheap 2-star units carry stage 3, your 4-costs carry the endgame. Upgrade early the 1- and 2-cost units you will keep until the end: later, your shops will almost never offer them.

Part III. Tactics

10. A game, stage by stage

A game asks a different question at each stage. If you answer the right question at the right time, you have already done the essential work.



Structure of a game in Set 18, from the Mobalytics and BunnyMuffins guides

Stage 1: read your hand. Nothing is won here. Take what helps you at the first carousel, keep pairs and note the opening encounter. Chapter 15 details this reading.

Stage 2: am I really strong or weak? If you beat almost everyone, play tempo: level up, slam, protect your streak. If you beat nobody, keep your gold and lose cleanly. If you only beat the two weakest boards, you aren't strong, and it's better to admit it right away.

Tempo remains the default choice. A Set 13 guide estimated that top North American players used it in 90% of their ladder games. The loss streak is an exception, reserved for truly weak openings or for augments that pay for it.

Losing cleanly has rules. Keep a board coherent enough to kill units, aim to lose narrowly, and set now the round when you cash out. Without that cash-out round, you don't have a plan, you just have a bad game.

Stage 3: does this board survive the lobby? It's the first real test: Riot even raised its damage in Set 16 to make it count. A small roll is justified if two or three upgrades are within reach. Rolling for a single copy on a weak board is a trap.

Give yourself a survival target, for example: "tank and damage unit at 2 stars." Around the 3-4 carousel, you should know which line you are playing. Winning 3-5 or 3-6 often gives you a life's lead on the lobby.

Stage 4: which final board can I afford? Your gold becomes a board, and your HP sets the deadline. A simple marker: don't take 20 damage in a stage 4 fight. If you come from a loss streak, you have already lost 50 to 60 HP, and each loss now costs you a life.

So decide where your bank turns into a board. A healthy board can rebuild its gold or push a level. A wounded board must spend before a bad opponent kills it with 30 gold in its pocket.

Stage 5 and beyond: who beats me, and what changes that? You are no longer building, you are finishing. Upgrade your units, adapt your positioning and watch the two or three boards that remain. Chapter 12 comes back to this.

11. Positioning

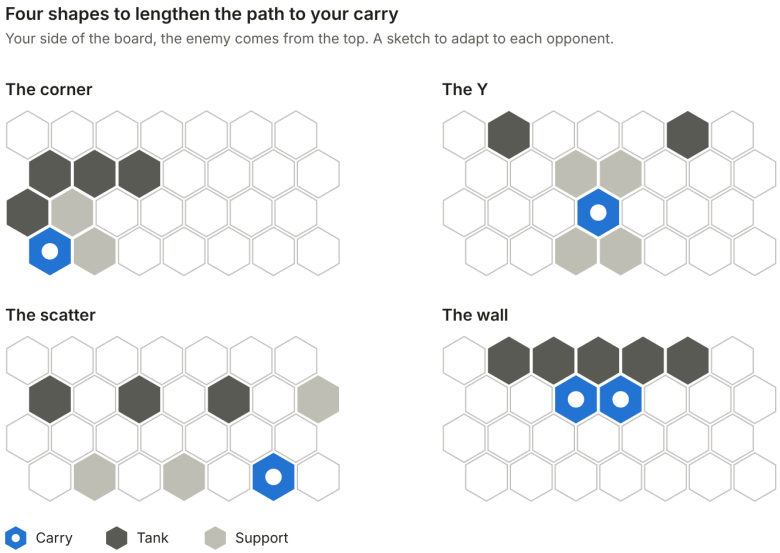
Positioning is the only free power in the game: it costs neither gold nor items, only attention. It won't save a bad board, but it turns close fights.

The basic rule. Sturdy units in front, fragile units behind. Every hex an enemy must cross is time offered to your carry. Your carry lives near a corner of the back row, almost never in the center, which is within reach of every threat.

Since Set 15, when an enemy hesitates between two targets at equal distance, it picks the tank. So your melee fighters can stand in the front row.

The only question. How does their damage reach my carry? Ask it in front of each enemy board, then lengthen that path. Everything else follows.

Shape	What it is	Strong against	Weak against
The corner	Carry in a back corner, frontline in front of it	Head-on melee boards	Assassins that target the corner
The Y	Two spread tanks, carry nestled between and behind them	Divers	Line or column effects
The scatter	One hex between each unit	Area damage and bounces	Single-target assassins
The wall	Tight front row, carries right behind	Long fights, when your carry scales	Whatever punishes grouped units



Sketch of the four shapes with seven units, to adapt to your board

No shape is safe against everything. Choose the biggest threat in the lobby and accept the rest.

Threats you can position for. Against a diver, move your carry one hex out of the exact corner and leave a tank in the corner as bait. Some items target a position: Zephyr banishes the unit on the mirror hex, Shroud of Stillness hits a column, Ionic Spark punishes those who cast near its holder. Think about the item, whoever carries it.

Read the abilities. It's banal, and even very high-level players don't always do it. An ability that targets the farthest unit or the most enemies in a line changes your positioning for the whole set. One minute of reading pays off for four months.

The right effort at the right time. At stage 2, apply the basic rule and save your attention for gold. From stage 3 on, scout the threats.

In the endgame, position against the specific opponent you are likely to meet.

Move last. Boards are visible, yours included. An attentive opponent responds to what they see, so keep your final adjustments for the end of the timer. You also become harder to read if you don't always repeat the same hex.

Before every endgame fight.

- Is my carry at the back, near a corner?
- Is my sturdiest tank between it and the enemy?
- Have I looked for divers and position items?
- Have I looked at this opponent, or am I copying my positioning from three rounds ago?

12. The endgame and the last fight

In the endgame, you are no longer playing against the lobby but against two or three boards. And when you are about to die, every placement still counts.

When you are well placed, ask who beats you. You no longer improve your board in general, you improve it against someone. Find the board you don't beat and look for what changes that duel: an item, a control unit, a hex. At this point, compare boards in combat rather than by number of active traits.

Level 9 has to be earned. Riot wants level 8 to remain the default plan, and the step up requires holding a lot of gold when others have already rolled. It's defensible if your board holds, if your HP lets you lose a fight or two, and if the remaining boards demand 5-costs. Otherwise, improve what you have. Chapter 22 presents the plan that aims for it from the start, the Peeba.

With two left, positioning counts double. You know your only opponent, and the next fight is against them. See what they moved, wait for the end of the timer, and break your habits.

When you are about to die, apply the rescue protocol. It fits in five points, and each pays more than it seems.

1. See who dies before you. You don't need to beat the lobby, only to outlive one more player.
2. If this fight can kill you, your gold has no future. Everything must turn into strength today.
3. Roll down to 0 gold to get the best possible board.

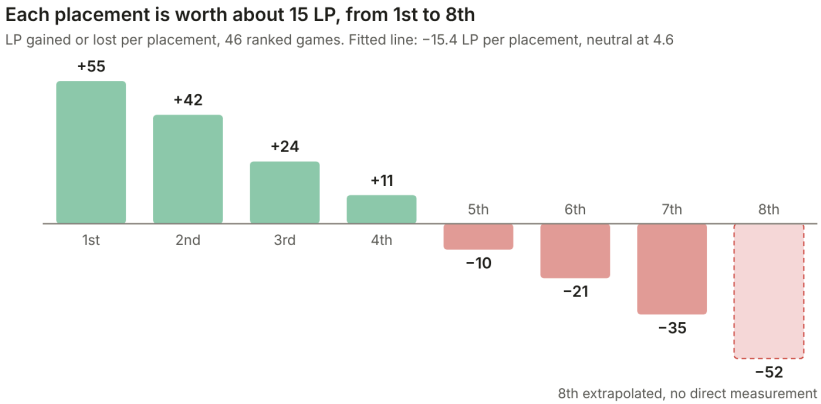
4. Play the strongest board for this very fight, even without traits, even if it's ugly.
5. Position against the opponent you can beat: that's the one who can save you a placement.

Dying with 30 gold is giving a placement to your neighbor. The players who climb are often those who turn a 7th into a 5th, more than those who turn a 2nd into a 1st.

13. What a placement is worth

Your game is over, and you are left with a placement between 1st and 8th. In ranked, it turns into LP, the points that move you up or down. Each placement is worth about 15 LP, so the game rewards your average placement, not your wins or even your top 4s.

The official rule is simple: you lose no LP in the top 4 and gain none below it. The exact amount changes from one game to the next. Let's measure it rather than guess.



Measured by the Oracle over 46 of Aroiti's ranked games, during his climb in Set 18

This scale comes from 46 of Aroiti's ranked games, played during a fast climb: take it as a shape, not a law. At Master and above, the measured slope drops to 14.65 LP per placement. The shape itself is almost a straight line, and three consequences follow.

1st place isn't magic. It's worth 13 LP more than 2nd. A gamble that makes you finish 1st or 7th pays 10 LP on average, about the same

as a safe 4th. On the ladder, risk is neither good nor bad in itself: only the average placement it gives you counts.

The top 4 is a marker, not a wall. The jump between 4th and 5th is the largest, at 21 LP. But going from 8th to 7th is worth 17, more than going from 2nd to 1st. When you are dying, scraping one more placement remains one of the best deals in the game.

The stakes fit in a few tenths. In a lobby, the average placement is 4.5 by construction. The point where you neither gain nor lose LP sits right after that, around 4.5 or 4.6. At a 4.2 average, you gain 5 to 6 LP per game; at 4.0, 8 to 9.

The top of the ladder confirms this fineness. On November 5, 2026, the last 25 EUW Challengers showed 53.6% top 4s and 15.2% 1st places, with a median of 397 games. That's barely better than a coin flip, admittedly in very tough lobbies.

Keep the image: a small edge, repeated for a long time. Nobody climbs by winning all their games.

Part IV. Preparing each game

Every game is unique, and that is exactly why it can be prepared. You can’t prepare what the game will give you. You can prepare what you will do with it.

14. Before you click Play

A game begins before 1-1. In two minutes, you decide whether you play it, with what repertoire, on which forcing floor, and to practice what.

Do I have the time? A Riot designer talks about 45 minutes for a game. Not starting it costs 0 LP. Starting it and then abandoning it often costs a last place, about 52 LP on the scale in chapter 13.

It will take you nearly five 4th places to win that back. If you risk being interrupted, the wrong choice isn't in the game, it's in the queue. Play a normal game, or play later.

Am I in shape? If you are still thinking about the last game, you haven't finished it. Take five minutes. Chapter 19 comes back to this.

What has changed? If there's a new patch, read the system changes and look at what was reworked. Two minutes are enough, and chapter 18 tells you what to make of it.

What is my repertoire? Keep three lines in mind, not ten. They must cover different components: if your three lines want the same items, you only have one. An attack line, a magic line and a line at another cost make a good base.

For each one, you should be able to answer without thinking. Copy this table every patch and fill it in.

Line	Key components	Roll level	Transition units	If contested, I go to
Attack				
Magic				

Line	Key components	Roll level	Transition units	If contested, I go to
Other cost				

Add an all-purpose frontline that works with all three. That's what keeps you alive when your carry doesn't show up.

Then store this repertoire in the game's Team Planner. It marks your units in the shop, and you can keep several teams there and switch between them during the game.

What am I going to force? Decide your floor before seeing your hand, otherwise your mood will decide. Here are some markers, and remember that you can also force a simple rhythm.

Situation	Suggested floor	Why
First games of a set	3 or 4	Nobody knows yet what is strong
Brand-new patch	3	Rankings aren't reliable yet
Settled patch, a comp you know dominates	1 or 2, with a contract	You play fast and roll at the right time
You are learning a comp	1, accepting the cost	Ten games in a row show you its limits
End of set, you are aiming for a rank	1 or 2 on your safest lines	It's no longer the time to experiment
You don't know the patch well	3	Standard level 8 is the most forgiving

Forcing isn't ignoring the game. Forcing is deciding in advance what you will ignore, and on what condition you stop. The contract from chapter 5 is there for that.

What is my exercise? Choose one thing to work on per session: scout before every roll, name your stopping point, or stop letting a

component sleep. Two or three attentive games teach more than ten on autopilot.

All this takes two minutes and quickly becomes a reflex. It isn't time lost from playing: it's the only moment of the game when nobody is rushing you.

15. Reading what the game offers you, from 1-1 to 2-1

Every game deals you a hand, and between 1-1 and 2-1 you have almost everything you need to read it. Five inventory lines are enough.

1. **The opening encounter.** What does it change for everyone?
2. **The components.** Which carries do they point to?
3. **The pairs.** Which units do I have twice, and at what cost?
4. **The first augment.** Which doors does it open or close?
5. **The neighbors.** Who already holds my units, and who is strong?

The encounter isn't a gift. It applies to all eight players: it changes the price of things, not the balance of power. What counts is drawing the consequences faster than the lobby. Here are the Set 18 families.

Family	Examples	What it changes
Starting items	Yunara, Ornn, Sivir	Stage 2 is stronger everywhere, and your components decide earlier
Starting units	LeBlanc, Azir, Warwick, Tristana	Your opening depends less on the shop, and pairs come faster
Gold or rerolls	Kobuko, Kayle	Rolling costs less: rerolls multiply, so they get contested
Cheaper XP	Ashe	Expensive boards come earlier, and gold is worth more

Family	Examples	What it changes
Upgraded augments	Leona, Morgana, Amumu, Ivern, Karma, Teemo, Elder Dragon	If the last augment will be prismatic, leave room for it
Emblems	Lux	Traits open up: see which ones before choosing your line
Late reward	Draven	The last two players receive 70 gold: top 2 is worth even more

Three hands, three plans. Once the inventory is done, classify your hand without lying to yourself.

Hand	What it looks like	Plan
Strong	Pairs, items to slam, you beat almost everyone	Tempo: level at 2-1, slam, protect your streak
Medium	A few pairs, nothing decisive	Strongest board without breaking your breakpoints, and the 2-3 fight will tell you which way to fall
Weak	No pair, no useful item, or an augment that pays later	Controlled loss, with a cash-out round decided now

The worst place is the middle. Win, loss, win, loss: you have neither streak gold nor a plan, and you spend just enough to stay average. If you are there, stop paying for fights that change nothing. Take your interest breakpoints and reassess at the next level.

Recognizing a reroll. Three or more copies of a cheap carry at stage 2, components that suit it, nobody else on it: that's a signal. This choice is made early. After the 2-7 monsters, it's often too late for a clean reroll.

And if I had decided to force? Your hand can confirm your plan or contradict it. If it confirms, play it. If it's neutral, keep it and play

your transition board. If three inventory lines go against it, move up a floor: a very strong opening in another direction is often worth more than your plan.

An example. The encounter is Ashe, so XP is cheaper. You have a bow, a belt and a pair of 2-costs for your frontline. The augment offers you a lot of gold or an emblem. Two neighbors already have 2-star units.

Your hand is medium. Gold is valuable here, because you will turn it into levels at a good price and it's still early. The emblem would close doors without solving your problem. You take the gold, you only combine the bow if it serves one of your three lines, and you let the 2-3 fight decide the rest.

The 2-1 sentence. Before your first real fight, you should be able to say one sentence: "My hand is medium, I play interest, my next appointment is 3-2." If you can't say it, you aren't playing your game yet, you are enduring it.

16. The game sheet

This page sums up the whole method. Keep it near your screen for twenty games, then forget it: it will have done its job.

When	The question	The decision
Before Play	Do I have the time and the head for it? What did the patch change?	Play or not, forcing floor, exercise of the day
1-1 to 1-4	Encounter, components, pairs?	My hand takes shape
2-1	Strong, medium or weak?	Tempo, interest or controlled loss
2-4	Which component opens the most doors?	A first and second choice at the carousel
2-7	Reroll or not?	Last clean moment to commit
3-2	Who is on my line? Does my board survive?	Level 6, survival target, exit if contested
3-4	Which line am I playing?	Items committed to a damage type
4-1 or 4-2	How many lives do I have? Which final board can I afford?	Big roll, with a named purchase and stopping point
Stage 5 and beyond	Who beats me?	An item, a unit or a hex against that board
I might die	Who dies before me?	All my gold into strength, for this fight
After the game	What was my first questionable decision?	One line in my notebook

And three questions valid at all times:

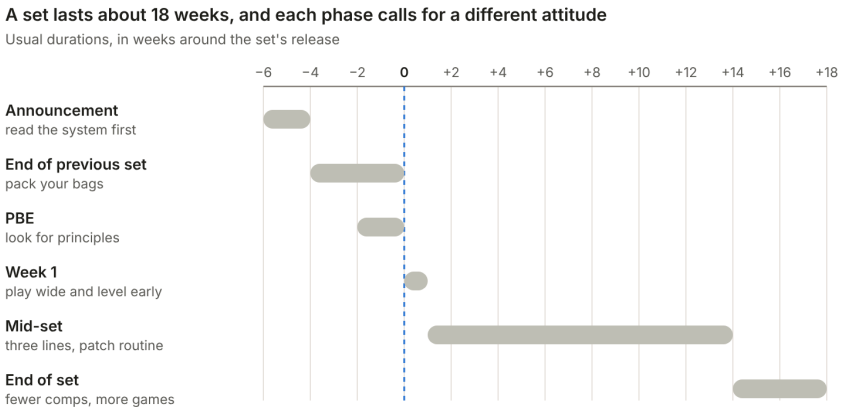
1. What do I get, and what do I pay?
2. Who else wants the same thing?

3. What do I do if it fails?

Part V. Preparing each set

17. From PBE to the last week

What you know about the game survives the change of set. What you know about comps dies on patch day. Preparing a set means sorting the two, then changing your attitude at each phase of the set.



Markers: 126 days on average from Set 10 to Set 17, a PBE of about two weeks. Set 18 will have lasted only 97 days

Before the set ends: pack your bags. Write down five lessons that have nothing to do with a comp: a habit to keep, a recurring mistake, what you understood about your style. Data dies, lessons don't.

At the announcement: read the system before the champions. The real changes are often elsewhere. Set 16 made level 8 more expensive and raised stage 3 damage, Set 17 replaced the carousel, Set 18 brought it back. Then apply the four questions from chapter 9 to the new mechanic.

Set 19 offers a fine exercise. On November 2, 2026, Riot presented the True Damage trait: one side rewards wins, the other losses, and winning when you were supposed to lose costs you half your gains. The dilemma from chapter 10 thus becomes an explicit bet. Set 16's unlockables are also coming back, and other details have been announced. So keep this judgment provisional.

On the PBE: look for principles, not comps. The test server usually opens two weeks before release, and the numbers move there. Even without playing on it, look at what recurs: which units are flexible, which carries want which components, which frontlines work everywhere.

The ten questions of a new set. If you can answer them on release day, you are already ahead of most lobbies.

1. What changed in the system: XP, damage, pool, odds, carousel?
2. What trade does the mechanic offer?
3. Who are the 4-cost carries, and what type of damage do they deal?
4. Which components come up most often in their items?
5. Which 1- and 2-cost units can hold an opening?
6. Which frontline works almost everywhere?
7. Where does gold come from, apart from interest?
8. Which traits stay useful at low breakpoints?
9. Which abilities change positioning?
10. What is my fallback board at level 8, the one I can put together from nothing?

Week 1: play wide and level early. The ladder restarts with five placement games, with no LP loss. Nobody knows what is strong, so fundamentals are enough to get ahead. BunnyMuffins draws a

strong idea from this: at the start of a set, HP is worth more than gold, because nobody yet knows how to spend it well.

In practice, play to win your fights, level earlier than usual and slam flexible items. Force nothing. Read the abilities. And beware of spectacular novelties: everyone wants to try them, while less fashionable units stay free.

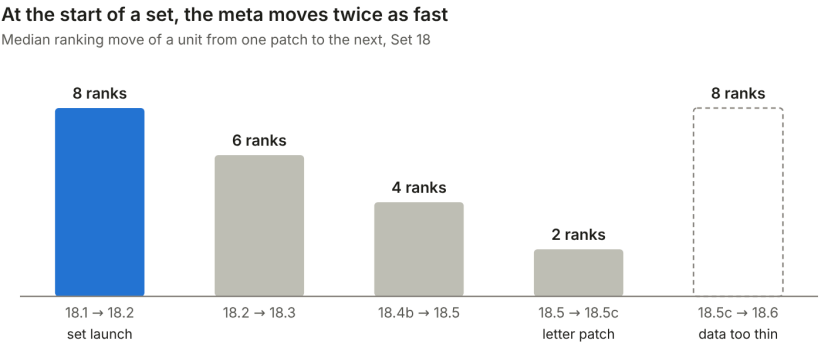
Mid-set: specialize. Move to your three lines, set up your patch routine and work on your weaknesses. As the set matures, gold regains value, because everyone learns to convert it. The loss streak, unprofitable in week 1, becomes a serious option again.

End of set: harvest. Comps are known and lobbies are sharp. Shrink your repertoire and favor what you already know how to do. At Master and above, watch out for decay. You bank up to 14 games, and each day without a reserve costs 50 LP in Master, 150 in Grandmaster and 250 in Challenger.

For Set 19. The calendar has the release on December 1, 2026 with patch 19.1, then 19.2 on December 15. The Vegas Open will be played from December 11 on this new set, ten days after its release. Preparation will count for more than talent there.

18. The meta moves, and how fast

Don’t try to predict the meta: learn to detect it fast. The Oracle’s measurements show that only the second works.



Oracle measurements on public data, November 2026. Two transitions set aside: volumes too unequal

In Set 18, three trends stand out, with few data points so far. At launch, the meta turns over twice as fast as afterward. A letter patch like 18.5c moves half as much as a numbered patch. And rotation seems to slow down over the set.

The last point on the chart serves as a lesson. Patch 18.6 shows 8 ranks, but it was measured on a tenth of the previous patch’s volume, and sixteen units were missing. A fresh patch lies: wait for it to mature before believing it.

What didn’t work. With Aroiti, we tried to predict comp movements from patch notes. The result didn’t beat predicting nothing at all. So be wary of anyone promising you next week’s meta, me included.

What holds. A trait rework can create a line in 24 hours, whereas a nerf rarely kills one. A small buff is often a signal more than a strength: a Riot designer explains that it tells players to go look over there. So look at where the team is pointing.

How to read a statistic. Five traps keep coming back.

1. **Survival.** An endgame board belongs to someone who survived. An expensive unit looks strong because only good games reach it.
2. **Frequency.** A much-built item isn't necessarily a winning item.
3. **Population.** A comp that is strong in Master isn't necessarily strong in Gold. Always check the rank filter.
4. **Volume.** Two samples of very different sizes can't be compared, and no coefficient will tell you so.
5. **The average.** Riot balances on the distribution: two comps averaging 4.2 can be one steady, the other 1st or 8th. Look at top 4 and 1st places together.

Add a sixth trap, invisible in the numbers: if everyone reads the same list, the comp at the top gets contested. At equal power, the least contested line wins.

The patch routine, in five minutes.

1. Read the system changes.
2. Note what was reworked, not just adjusted.
3. See what touches your three lines.
4. Wait a few days before believing a ranking, especially at the start of a set.
5. Update your repertoire, changing no more than necessary.

Part VI. You

19. Your head, your sessions, tilt

Your attention is a resource like the others: it drops with each game, and it doesn't come back by playing.

Tilt isn't necessarily anger. Above all it's a silent drop in the quality of your decisions, and it has recognizable signs.

- You requeue without looking at what just happened.
- You roll without having named your stopping point.
- You force a comp to prove it works.
- You stop scouting.
- You explain all your losses by luck.

Set your rules before playing. They are only worth anything when decided cold.

- Decide on a number of games before you start. A cap cuts the "one more" spiral.
- Take five to ten minutes between games: a line of notes, a glass of water, a few steps.
- Choose a stop signal. For example two last places in a row, or a game played in anger.

Never play to get it back. Lost LP is lost. The next game pays exactly the same as any other, except that you play it in a worse state of mind. Remember chapter 4 too: over a hundred games, a streak of five bot 4s happens to most players.

The review is a circuit breaker. Reviewing your game right away moves your attention from the result to what you can learn. Many players use it as much to calm down as to improve.

Look at the price before you buy. EUW Challengers had a median of 429 games in early November, about ten weeks after the set's release. At 40 minutes per game, that's some 285 hours, nearly four hours a day. It's neither a reproach nor a model: it's the price, and nothing forces you to pay it.

Keep a good reason to play. BunnyMuffins ends his start-of-set advice with this one: have fun, and take a break if you aren't having fun anymore. It's also a strategy, because we learn best what we want to learn. No rank is worth a ruined evening.

20. Learning from your games, and being wary of stats

You don't improve by playing, you improve by looking at what you decided. One carefully reviewed game is worth several games in a row.

Look for the first decision, not the last. A loss rarely comes from a single blow: it's an accumulation. The moment you see you have lost often comes long after the moment everything tipped. Go back to the first questionable turn.

The notebook. Five lines per game are enough, and a single game per session can be enough.

1. My hand and my plan at 2-1.
2. The decision I want to review.
3. What I knew at that moment: gold, HP, who was on my line.
4. What else I could have done.
5. What I take away.

Keep the same topic for five games before changing it. Otherwise you will never know whether your correction held.

What to look at. If you record your games, don't skim them. Did you scout? Did you consider all possible boards? Did you position for the next fight? Also look at your shops during big rolls: what other line was right in front of you?

Look at your wins as much as your losses. A good exercise: take a game you believe was lost from the start and a game you believe you won by luck, then review them. The verdict often changes.

A measure for a single game. The lobby is your control group. Compare your final level to the others', then to your placement. If you had the 2nd-highest level in the lobby and finished 6th, your gold was poorly converted: look at your board, items or positioning.

Over time, track three numbers. Your average placement, your top 4 rate and your share of 7th and 8th places. The third often reveals what the other two hide, because a saved game is worth as much as a won game. And reread chapter 4 before concluding anything on fewer than a hundred games.

When nothing stands out, that's an answer. Digging through Aroiti's games, the Oracle found none of his twelve carries clearly better or worse than the others once noise was removed. The temptation would be to keep looking. But when all the diagnostics say "nothing to fix," continuing amounts to drawing advice from chance.

Watch the best players by asking the right question. Pause the video before a decision and ask what you would have done. Copying a board teaches you the patch. Understanding why that player rolled at that moment teaches you the game.

What you know beats the data. The Oracle had found that finishing with 20 gold or more cost over one placement. Then Aroiti said he sometimes had to leave a game, and the number collapsed: those were the games. Numbers say what happened. Only you know why you clicked.

21. Other formats

Before choosing your risk, look at the shape of the scoring: it decides everything. The same move can be good on the ladder and bad in a tournament.

Format	What pays	Scoring shape	Your attitude
Ladder	Each placement, about 15 LP	A straight line	Aim for the best average placement, with neither taste nor fear of risk
Points tournament	Each placement, 8 to 1 points	A line, then a cut	Like the ladder, then calculate what you need before the cut
Top 4 elimination	Being in the first four	A step	1st is worth no more than 4th: protect your place
Checkmate	20 points, then a 1st place	A peak	Only a win ends it: take risks once in check
Double Up	Your pair's ranking	Four tiers	Think as a single economy
4v4	The sum of the team's points	A line for four	A teammate's placement is worth as much as yours

The points tournament. At the Vegas Open, each game pays from 8 points for 1st to 1 point for 8th, and the best of each lobby advance. While the cut is far away, play as on the ladder. Before the last game of a round, calculate what you need: if a 5th is enough, play safe; if you need a 1st, play for it.

Checkmate. The first to 20 points puts the lobby in check, and must then win a game to finish. Several players can be in check at once.

Many formats add a safety net: 6 games in Round 4 of the Vegas Open, 8 in the final, after which total points decide.

I simulated 200,000 lobbies of players of equal level. Mate comes on average between the 5th and 6th game. With a 6-game cap, 15% of lobbies end on points; with 8, almost none. So you will often have one or two games to close it out, and the format plays out in four phases.

1. **Before 20 points.** Play your average placement. It takes about 5 points per game to reach check after four games.
2. **In check.** Only a 1st place finishes, so the "1st or 8th" style becomes profitable again: keep gold to roll higher and go for your best items.
3. **Someone else in check.** Scout them every stage. It's the only format where contesting or denying a unit is truly worth the price, because their win ends everything.
4. **Last game with a cap.** The leader no longer needs to win: staying ahead on points is enough. The others have nothing left to lose.

Double Up. You share your HP with a partner you never face, and your first death brings you back to 1 HP. If one of you finishes their fight at least three seconds before the other, their units join the fight still in progress.

The bench cannon, available from 1-3, sends units and lets you swap items of the same type. A support armory also opens for each of you from stage 3. You lose no LP in the top 2.

Three ideas follow. You draw from the same pool, so don't play the same line. Talk components from stage 2. And look for a duo where one finishes fights fast while the other holds long enough to receive reinforcements.

4v4. At Tactician's Superbrawl, two teams of four share a lobby, and each game adds up points from 8 to 1. In a tie, the team that took 1st wins. The logic of Double Up applies to four: divide the lines, and saving a teammate's 5th place is worth as much as moving up one place yourself.

Getting into competition. In Riot's regions, it all goes through competetft.com, where you create your competitor card. Access to the Tactician's Trials goes through the ladder: in Set 18, more than 200 EUW players got in this way on day one. Also follow the TFT accounts of your region for organized play and local qualifiers.

You don't win your first tournament, you discover it: time, pressure and points change how you play. Always read the rules of the day, because formats and communication rules vary from one tournament to the next.

Temporary modes. Hyper Roll was removed in 2025, and Riot now bets on events and revisited sets. They don't count for your rank, and that is their appeal: they rest your head between serious sessions.

Part VII. Practice

The previous parts say how to think. This one shows the gesture: which plan to play, what to do with your thirty seconds, what it looks like in a game, and what to work on next.

22. Three openings, four landings

A game plan is two choices: how you get through stages 2 and 3, and where you want to land. Comps change every set, these two choices remain.

“Tempo then level 8” is a plan. “Controlled loss then 3-cost reroll” is another. Thinking in pairs keeps you from confusing how you start with how you finish.

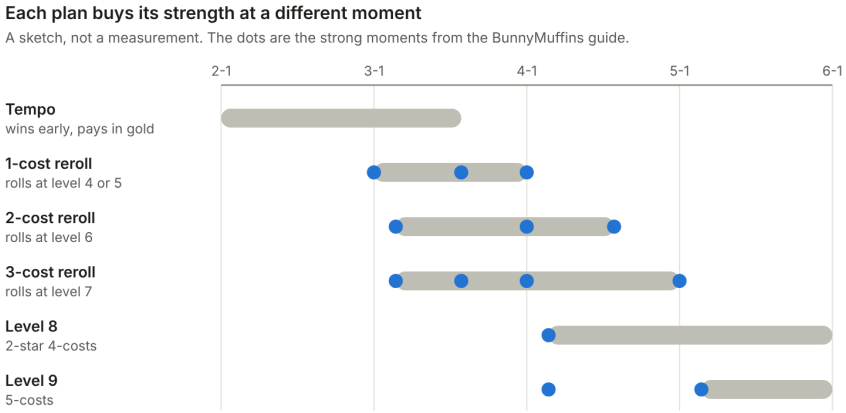
The three openings. These are the three hands from chapter 15, seen as trades. Each pays with one resource to receive another.

Opening	You pay	You get	It fails when
Tempo	Gold, early	HP and your streak gold	The streak breaks while your bank is empty
Interest	A little strength	A regular salary and the right to choose later	You never choose
Controlled loss	HP	Gold, components and carousel priority	You haven’t set your cash-out round

The four landings. A landing says at what level your gold becomes strength. It’s the table from chapter 7, turned into plans.

Landing	You roll at	You aim for	What kills it
Low-cost reroll	Level 4 to 6	A 1- or 2-cost at 3 stars, at stage 3	A rival on your unit, or a ceiling too low in the endgame
3-cost reroll	Level 7	A 3-cost at 3 stars, at stage 4	The pool: 18 copies, and you want 9
Level 8	Level 8	4-costs at 2 stars, from 4-2	Reaching 4-2 without gold or without HP

Landing	You roll at	You aim for	What kills it
Level 9, or Peeba	Level 9	5-costs, from 5-2	A stage 4 that is too weak: you die rich



Strong moments from the BunnyMuffins guide for Set 18; the bars are a sketch

No plan is strong all the time. Each goes through a period without strength, and those are the rounds your HP exists for.

Play against the lobby's calendar. A plan is always worth something relative to the others' appointments. If your plan arrives before theirs, build a lead in HP. If it arrives after, your only duty is to survive their window.

Two examples. If the whole lobby is aiming for 4-2, a successful reroll at 3-2 wins its stage 3 cheaply. If three players reroll at 3-2, that stage will be violent and a controlled loss will cost more there than planned.

In that second case, those players will also have emptied their banks. Hold on until 4-2 with gold, and you are the one who will overtake them.

The price of a landing. It can be calculated with the Set 18 pool and odds. Here is the gold to spend on rolls to see all the copies you want, starting from zero.

Your target	Roll level	Free pool	A rival holds a third of the copies
3-star 1-cost	5	about 125 gold	about 195 gold
3-star 2-cost	6	about 140 gold	about 235 gold
3-star 3-cost	7	about 170 gold	about 320 gold
2-star 4-cost	8	about 65 gold	about 95 gold

This calculation accounts for the pool emptying with each purchase, but not for the copies the game offers you along the way. So remember the gap rather than the amount: a rival adds 50 to 90% to your bill. On a 3-cost, it almost doubles it.

Choosing your landing. Three questions are enough, in this order.

1. Which carry cost do my components and pairs point to?
2. Who else is aiming for this cost, and this window?
3. How many lives can I pay to wait?

The later your landing, the more it costs in lives. A level 9 landing therefore requires HP you don't always have.

A landing isn't an ending. Once your three stars are on the board, rebuild your gold and level up. Guides advise knowing, for each comp, its extension at level 9. A complete plan also says what comes next.

Forcing a landing. You can force your landing without forcing your comp: that's floor 3 from chapter 5. You set your roll level before the game, and you let the shop choose your units. Your plan stays clear, and the game keeps the right to surprise you.

The Peeba, level 9 taken to the limit

The Peeba isn't a comp, it's a bet on unit cost. You aim for level 9 and a board of 4- and 5-costs, almost forgetting traits. The name comes from the player who popularized this plan as early as Set 2, and it's also known as Fast 9.

The math explains everything. At level 8, barely one shop in seven shows a 5-cost; at level 9, it's more than one in two. So you are no longer looking for a specific unit: you take the best ones that come by.

Here is the most common path. Rounds change with sets, the logic doesn't.

When	What you do
Stage 2	A streak of five, won or lost, to make gold. If it breaks, play interest
Stage 3	Level 7 only if you have 40 to 50 gold left after buying
4-1 or 4-2	Level 8, a few rolls to keep up with the lobby, and you save the rest
5-1 or 5-2	Level 9, then you roll every round until your final board

When to play it. This plan is read in your hand more than it is forced: a first economy augment, a good start, and nobody else on it. If your first augment is a combat augment, stay on a classic climb in levels. Taking three economy augments means betting everything on this one level 9.

When to avoid it. Avoid it in a fast lobby: first augment prismatic, reduced starting HP, a rule that shortens the game. Also avoid it if another player is already going for the same units, because each 5-cost exists in only nine copies.

How it dies. You lose too much HP keeping your gold, or your board doesn't hold at levels 7 and 8. Stabilize before aiming higher. If level 9 doesn't come in time, roll at level 8 and aim for a 5th place rather than dying rich.

What it's worth. It's the riskiest plan in this chapter: a single mistake can turn a 1st place into an 8th. On the ladder, it's therefore worth only its average placement, as in chapter 13. In Checkmate, once in check, it's a real candidate, as in chapter 21.

23. The thirty seconds

You have about thirty seconds per round. That's too little to think, so think elsewhere: during combat.

Decide during combat, execute during planning. Combat offers you 15 to 25 seconds that ask nothing of you. You already know almost everything: your gold next round, your level, and the board that worries you. When the shop opens, you only have to check what you decided.

Here is a round routine. The seconds are indicative, only the order counts.

When	What you do
During combat	You scout and decide: your purchase, your level, your stopping point
0 to 5 seconds	Shop: the obvious purchases, then you sell what sleeps
5 to 15 seconds	Gold: XP, roll or nothing, as decided
15 to 25 seconds	Board: units and items
Last seconds	Positioning against the most likely opponent

Gold comes before the board, because a roll can change it. Positioning comes last, because everything before it can change it. And an attentive opponent responds to what they see, as chapter 11 said.

If the clock catches you. Only one thing matters then: is your board full? An empty hex costs more than any missed purchase. Check your unit counter before anything else.

Learn four keys. By default, D refreshes the shop and F buys XP. W moves the unit under your cursor from bench to board, and E sells it. Check them in your options, because they depend on your keyboard and settings.

Then add 1 and 3 to move from one enemy board to another, and 2 or Space to come back to yours. A left click on the minimap shows a board, a right click on a champion opens its info. With these keys, your lobby tour fits in a single fight.

What to watch during combat. You can't watch your fight and the lobby at the same time. So do your lobby tour every stage and before every big roll, as in chapter 6. The rest of the time, watch your own fight: who falls first, and does your carry cast?

The interlude in Part II tells you what to conclude from what you see. If your board wins, watch anyway: a narrow win doesn't tell you the same thing as a clean one.

Protect your dead time. Combat is your only moment for thinking, so don't give it to something else. An end-of-set guide says it bluntly: no stream or series in the background during a ranked game. Your phone costs you no HP in the moment, only the plan you didn't make.

A good round goes unnoticed: no panic, no last-second click. You had already decided.

24. Four annotated games

These four games are theoretical examples, built to show the method. Each one takes up a situation described in this book.

Read them as exercises. At each question, stop and decide before reading on.

Case 1. The strong hand that finishes 6th

At 2-1, you have two pairs and enough to slam two items. You play tempo and you don't lose a single fight. At 3-5, you are level 7 with 88 HP and 34 gold, but a neighbor has just rolled and your streak is about to break.

Your turn: do you roll to keep the streak, or accept losing it?

Here, you roll 28 gold and the streak holds. At 4-1, you put in another 25 gold, and it breaks anyway. At 4-2, the lobby goes to level 8 while you stay at level 7 with about ten gold.

You lose three fights at 16 HP each and finish 6th, or −21 LP.

The commentary. You didn't lose at 4-2, you lost at 3-5. One round of streak was worth 4 gold and about ten HP, and you paid 28 gold for it. At 88 HP, you could lose two or three fights without danger.

With your gold intact, you reached 4-2 at level 8, with enough to roll. Remember this: a streak is an income, not a goal. Tempo buys you HP, and you have to know how to spend it.

Case 2. The contested force

The patch has settled and you know a 4-cost magic line well. Before queuing, you set your contract: “I play this line; if two players hold my carry at 3-2, I go to my 3-cost attack line.”

Your hand is neutral: a tear, two belts and a pair for your frontline. You keep your plan and slam a tank item, useful to both lines. At 3-2, your lobby tour shows two players at 2 stars on your carry.

Your turn: do you stay or do you leave?

Here, you leave, as planned. Your frontline and tank items stay in place. You roll at level 7 at 3-5 and finish 3rd, or +24 LP.

The commentary. This game was decided before 1-1. Two players at 2 stars hold six copies out of ten: only four remain for you. With the calculations from chapter 22, your 2-star goes from about 65 gold of rolls to about 205.

Without a written exit, you would have thought: “I’m already committed.” Remember this: the contract isn’t there to force, it’s there to stop.

Case 3. The weak hand that finishes 2nd

At 2-1, you have no pair and no useful item, and your augment pays later. You choose controlled loss and say your sentence: “My hand is weak, I keep my gold, I cash out at 3-2.” You lose narrowly, you pick among the first at the carousel, and a few pairs form on your bench.

At 3-2, you have 52 gold and 66 HP, but nothing is strong yet.

Your turn: do you cash out as planned, or wait for 3-5 to have more gold?

Here, you cash out. At level 6, you roll down to 24 gold and stabilize your board. You rebuild your gold, reach level 8 at 4-5, and finish

2nd, or +42 LP.

The commentary. There is no stroke of genius here, only a sentence said at 2-1 and kept at 3-2. Above 50 gold, every coin sleeps: waiting for 3-5 would have cost you a stage 3 fight for almost nothing.

If the 3-2 roll had missed, you might have finished 6th. The decision would still have been good. Remember this: a controlled loss is first of all a date.

Case 4. The rescue

At 4-6, your plan has failed. You are last with 14 HP, level 7 and 31 gold. Two players are at 18 and 22 HP, with boards barely better than yours.

Your turn: what do you do with your 31 gold?

Here, you apply the protocol from chapter 12. You roll down to 0 gold and put down the strongest board for this fight, even without traits. You position it against the opponent you can beat.

You win one fight and survive a narrow loss. The player at 18 HP falls, then the one at 22. You finish 6th, or −21 LP instead of −52.

The commentary. Those 31 LP are exactly the gap between a 2nd and a 4th place. Nobody films this kind of game to show it off, and yet it's what makes you climb. Remember this: your game is only over when the game says so.

What comes back

None of these four games turns on a comp. They turn on a sentence said early: a contract, a cash-out date, a spending limit. That's why the two minutes of chapter 14 are worth more than a list of comps.

25. What to work on at your level

You don’t need this whole book at once. At each rank, one or two things cost more than all the others.

Rank	What costs you most	Your project
Iron, Bronze	The basics: stars, interest, items	A single line, ten games in a row
Silver, Gold	You follow recipes without knowing why	A reason for every purchase
Platinum, Emerald	You rarely look at the lobby and rarely reposition	Scout almost every round, build your repertoire
Diamond	Details, and the narrow losses that follow you	Position against several boards, take breaks, follow patches
Master	Nothing is obvious anymore	One skill at a time, look for your own edge
Grandmaster and above	Time	Decide whether you want to pay this price

These markers mostly follow Mobalytics’ advice by rank. Take them as a direction: what counts is your biggest leak, not your badge.

Look for your biggest leak. Look at your last twenty games and note what recurs. Fix first what costs the most LP, not what is most pleasant to work on.

What you see	Your likely leak	Where to look
7th and 8th places with gold in the bank	You die rich	Chapter 12
Good starts that finish 5th or 6th	Your conversion	Chapters 10 and 22
Your carry is often held by others	Your scouting	Chapter 6

What you see	Your likely leak	Where to look
You lose without understanding why	Your board	Interlude in Part II
You drop with every new patch	Your patch routine	Chapter 18

Your next twenty games. Don't try to apply everything. Take a single exercise per block of five games, and only note whether you did it.

Games	Exercise	It's a success if
1 to 5	The 2-1 sentence	You said it in all five games
6 to 10	Scout before every big roll	You know who holds your carry when you click
11 to 15	Name your stopping point	You stopped where you said you would
16 to 20	The rescue protocol	You never died with 20 gold in the bank

During these twenty games, don't judge your progress by your LP. Over 20 games, your average placement has a margin of about one place, which drowns any progress. What you can count is the number of times you did the exercise.

Review in pairs. Find a partner at your level and swap one game each. One explains what they were thinking, the other asks a single question: why? We see others' mistakes better than our own, and that's true both ways.

Getting coached. A coach is mainly there to see what you no longer see. Pay for a review of your games, not for a promise of rank. Ask yourself whether they start from your games, whether they explain their decisions, and whether they leave you an exercise for what comes next.

Their rank doesn't prove they can teach. Before paying, try the notebook from chapter 20 with a partner: that already covers a lot of ground.

When nothing moves. If your average placement hasn't moved over 100 games, change your project, not your comp. At that volume, the margin drops to about 0.4 of a place: you can start to believe what you see. And if you stagnate while having fun, that's not a failure: reread the end of chapter 19.

26. Mechanics pass, the question stays

Almost every set has brought its mechanic, and almost all of them offer one of the same four trades. Learn to recognize them: you will save time with each new set.

Family	Mechanics, with their set	Your question
A rule for the whole lobby	Galaxies (3), Portals (9), Encounters (11, then 13 onward), Hacks (14)	What changes price for everyone?
A commitment in exchange for power	Chosen (4), Shadow items (5), Dragons (7), Hero Augments (8), Headliners (10), Anomalies (13), Power-Ups (15), Unlockables (16)	What am I closing off, and am I already on this line?
An effect to buy	Charms (12), Wisps (18)	Does this effect change this fight?
A bonus to use well	Elemental hexes (2), Augments (6), Realm of the Gods (17)	What am I strengthening, and when?

This classification is mine, and some mechanics could change boxes. It isn't there to file away the past: it gives you a first question the day Riot announces the next one.

Three examples. In Set 13, the Anomaly came at 4-6 on a single unit, permanently, and each reroll cost 1 gold. So you had to reach 4-6 with gold and the unit that would carry it.

In Set 16, 40 champions out of 100 had to be unlocked, and a fulfilled condition guaranteed the unit in the next shop. Part of the randomness became an objective.

In Set 17, the god most chosen at 2-4, 3-4 and 4-4 decided your reward at 4-7. Three small choices formed a single bet.

What this history teaches you. Riot keeps what works. Augments have been here since Set 6. Unlockables are coming back in Set 19, and in June a Riot designer said they were planned to last.

Nothing is final, though. Encounters disappeared in Set 12, then came back in Set 13. The carousel was replaced in Set 17, then returned in Set 18.

A rule can even overturn a law of this book. In Set 11, an encounter brought Kayn back at 5-4 to eliminate players, from lowest HP to highest. That day, HP really was a score.

The largest family is commitment. Riot keeps coming back to the same question: how many doors will you close to become stronger? That's the fifth law from chapter 1.

Set 19 already fits in this table. The True Damage trait is a commitment: you bet on your wins or on your losses, and you pay if you are wrong. For the rest, you know what to do. Find the family, then ask the four questions from chapter 9.

27. Tools, rules and fair play

A tool has the right to teach you, not to play for you. Riot draws the line at the start of the game, loading screen included.

Here is what Riot asks of third-party tools for TFT. If a tool crosses these lines, don't use it.

When	What Riot asks
Before the game	Best practices and static recommendations are welcome
During the game, loading screen included	No opponent tracking, no prediction of their moves, no real-time data, no suggestions based on your current game
After the game	Analysis is welcome, but a tool can't imitate the official ranking: no MMR calculator

Why this line. Riot wants tools to leave decisions to the player and protect the learning curve. This joins the whole of this book: a tool that chooses for you answers the only question in the game.

In June 2023, in patch 13.12, Riot removed from third-party sites the win rates of augments by stage and those of Legends. The team felt these numbers distorted the meta and reduced choices. Chapter 9 showed where things stand today: no augment numbers at all.

The risk is real. Scripts, bots, hidden information and conclusions drawn during the game are banned. A suspension can become permanent, and your ranked rewards can be taken away. If in doubt, Riot gives you the answer: better not to use it.

Your preparation belongs to you. A sheet you wrote yourself reads nothing of your game. Your repertoire, your notebook and your

game sheet are therefore work, not outside help. In a tournament, still check the rules of the day.

A tool must serve a decision. Before opening a site, ask which decision it will change. A number that changes none doesn't help you, it reassures you.

Aroiti's Oracle separates what it measured from what it copied or reasoned. Do the same sorting with any number: where does it come from, and over how many games?

Fair play. Seven people share your game. Play it to the end, even when it's lost: it's fair to them, and chapter 12 shows it pays. A rank obtained by arranging things with a friend, or by having someone else play, says nothing about you.

A last word

I have never seen a shop open, or felt the stress of a 4-2 at 30 HP. You know things I will never know.

This book has only one goal: that you know why you click. Its numbers will age with the set. If its questions stay with you, it will have done its job.

Good game.

Appendices

A. The most common traps

Fifteen expensive mistakes that can be fixed without learning a single comp.

The trap	Why it costs	The reflex
Dying rich	Leftover gold is worth nothing, a placement is worth about 15 LP	If this fight can kill you, everything goes into strength
Keeping 50 gold at all costs	You lose lives for a few coins	Spend when it saves more than it costs
Rolling at the wrong level	A 4-cost costs three times as much at level 7	Roll at your carry's level
Alternating wins and losses with no plan	No streak, no gold, no strength	Pick a side, or take your interest
Losing without a cash-out round	You pay in HP without buying anything	Set the round before you lose
Waiting for the perfect item	An item that doesn't exist does no work	Slam if it serves one of your lines
Buying a level with no unit to place	One more number, no gain	Level for a real unit or for that very shop
Sharing your line without knowing it	Every copy out makes the next one more expensive	Scout before every roll
Pivoting in anger	You sell a plan without having another	Ask the three questions from chapter 5
Taking an augment for a future comp	You pay today for a hypothetical plan	Strengthen what you already play
Keeping the same positioning	You position against a game that no longer exists	Reread the opponent every endgame round
Judging a decision by its result	You learn luck	Write down what you knew
Believing a ranking on patch day	The sample is too thin	Wait for it to mature

The trap	Why it costs	The reflex
Starting a game you can’t finish	About 52 LP lost, against 0 if you don’t start it	Postpone, or play a normal game
Requeuing right after a bad game	You are playing to get it back	Five minutes and a line of notes

B. Short glossary

Term	Meaning
Augment	A bonus chosen three times per game
BiS	Best in slot: the item most built on a unit
Bot 4	Finishing between 5th and 8th
Buff, nerf	Strengthening or weakening a unit in a patch
Carry	The unit that deals most of the damage
Cash-out	Round set in advance when a controlled loss turns its gold into a board
Comp	The group of champions, traits and items you play
Contested	Several players are looking for the same units
Flex	Playing around what the game gives you
Forcing	Deciding in advance what you will play
Holder	A unit that keeps items while waiting for your carry
HP	Your tactician's health points
Interest breakpoint	An interest threshold, every 10 gold up to 50
Ladder	The ranking, and the ranked games that move it
Landing	The level where your gold becomes strength: reroll, level 8 or level 9
Line	A family of boards around a carry or a damage type
Lobby	The eight players in a game
LP	Ranking points
Meta	What players play and what works at a given moment

Term	Meaning
MMR	Hidden rating used to build lobbies
Opening	How you get through stages 2 and 3: tempo, interest or controlled loss
Pair	Two copies of a unit, waiting for the third
PBE	Public test server
Peeba	A plan aiming for level 9 and a board of 4- and 5-costs, almost without traits, also called Fast 9
Pivot	Changing lines mid-game
Pool	The shared stock of champions
Reroll	A plan looking for cheap units at 3 stars
Roll	Refreshing the shop for 2 gold
Scout	Looking at other players' boards
Slam	Combining two components into a finished item early
Slow roll	Rolling only the gold above 50
Stage	A block of rounds: 3-2 means stage 3, round 2
Tempo	Your board's strength relative to the lobby, right now
Top 4	Finishing in the first four
Wisp	Set 18 mechanic: an effect bought in the shop

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