



POKERADEX GUIDE 2026

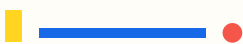
GETTING STARTED

Pokémon TCG Glossary: Learn the Language of Cards Like a Pro

A practical glossary for identifying cards, understanding gameplay, comparing sealed products, and discussing condition, rarity, or price without mixing up similar terms.

Reading time: 15 min read

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The essentials

Reverse holo, full art, SIR, graded, master set: the Pokémon TCG has several overlapping vocabularies. Rules language is not the same as collector language, and listings often use shortcuts that do not correspond to an official rarity.

This Pokeradex guide puts every term in context. It starts with official Pokémon rules, databases, product pages, and checklists, then uses published marketplace and grading standards for condition language. Rarity names, booster contents, and tournament legality change, so the current set checklist and Play! Pokémon rules always take priority.

Key takeaways

- + Rarity, finish, and value are different: a shiny card is not automatically rare or expensive.
- + Card number, expansion code, language, and variant identify a specific printing.
- + Near Mint does not mean grade 10; seller condition and third-party grading are separate assessments.
- + US, Japanese, Simplified Chinese, and European products may have different contents and references.
- + Chase, hit, alt art, and master set are community terms that need a stated definition.

01

Identify a Pokémon card correctly

Before discussing price or rarity, record a complete identity: exact name, language, expansion, collector number, variant, and condition. Two cards with the same artwork can be different printings.

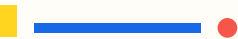
A collector number does not tell the whole story. A numerator above the main set total is often called secret by collectors, but the official checklist is still needed for the exact rarity.

Expansion / set - A group of cards released under one name and documented in an official list; regional contents can differ.

Expansion code - A short code identifying a modern set. It is not the same as a regulation mark.

Collector number - A fraction such as 125/182: the first number identifies the card and the second the announced main-set total.

Rarity symbol - The symbol or category used by the set checklist. Systems change across eras.



Regulation mark - A letter used to determine Standard legality. It says nothing about rarity or value.

Variant - A distinct version of a card, such as standard, parallel, promotional, stamped, or differently finished.

Promo - A card distributed through a specific product or event instead of the normal random booster checklist.

Illustrator - The artist credited on the card. Similar card text can appear with different artwork.

The expansion code says where the card comes from, the number identifies its checklist entry, the rarity symbol classifies rarity, and the regulation mark concerns competitive play.

02

Gameplay and tournament vocabulary

Pokémon TCG and the French term JCC Pokémon refer to the same physical game. A standard deck has exactly 60 cards, at least one Basic Pokémon, and normally no more than four cards with the same name, excluding Basic Energy and card-specific exceptions.

The rules distinguish damage from damage counters, and Abilities from attacks. Precise words prevent gameplay mistakes.

Active Pokémon - The Pokémon in the Active Spot; it normally attacks and receives opposing attacks.

Bench - The area that holds up to five Pokémon under the basic rules unless an effect changes the limit.

Ability - An effect on a Pokémon that is not an attack. Its timing and use follow the card text.

Prize card - One of six face-down cards set aside at the start of a standard game and taken after certain Knock Outs.

Retreat - Move the Active Pokémon to the Bench by paying its Retreat Cost.

Lost Zone - An out-of-play zone separate from the discard pile; cards there normally cannot return during the game.

Damage counter - A marker representing 10 damage. Placing counters is not always the same as doing attack damage.

Special Conditions - Asleep, Burned, Confused, Paralyzed, and Poisoned, resolved under the official rules.

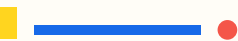
Rotation - The periodic removal of older regulation marks from the Standard format.

Errata - An official correction to card text or function; the corrected reference governs tournament play.

Decklist - The exact list of cards in a deck, submitted for certain tournaments.

Metagame / meta - The decks and strategies most represented at a given time; a community analysis term, not a format.

03



Collecting vocabulary

Collectors use practical terms that Pokémon does not always define. In a sale or trade, state your convention instead of assuming everyone uses the same one.

Finish, rarity, and popularity should remain separate. Holo describes a reflective treatment; chase describes demand; neither identifies the official rarity by itself.

Single - One card sold separately rather than inside a random or sealed product.

Bulk - A volume of common or low-demand cards grouped for sorting or sale; not an official rarity.

Complete set - Every card in a checklist under a stated rule, with or without secret cards and variants.

Master set - A community term often meaning every number and variant, but its exact scope varies by collector.

Holo / foil - A reflective finish on all or part of a card; it does not identify rarity on its own.

Reverse holo / parallel - A variant with foil in a different area from the regular holo; several rarities can have one.

Full art - A visual description for artwork covering much of the card, not one universal rarity.

Alt art - Community shorthand for alternate artwork; a more precise official rarity may apply.

Hit - A card considered notable when pulled. The threshold varies and is not official.

Chase card - A highly sought card in a set; demand can change and does not guarantee rarity or future value.

Pull rate - The estimated frequency of a category. Without official data it depends on sample size and method.

Case hit - Jargon suggesting roughly one occurrence per shipping case; never a guarantee without manufacturer confirmation.

04

IR, SIR, Hyper Rare: rarity terms

Rarities belong to a particular series and era. Recent international checklists use the categories below, but not every expansion contains all of them.

Do not use ultra rare as a generic phrase for every difficult pull. Ultra Rare is a specific official category where the checklist uses it.

Common - The base rarity tier shown in an official set checklist.

Uncommon - The intermediate tier between Common and Rare.

Rare - An official category whose finish and presentation vary across eras and regions.

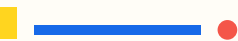
Double Rare - A recent rarity used for certain regular-art Pokémon ex cards.

Ultra Rare - A specific official category, not a generic label for every scarce or desirable card.

Illustration Rare / IR - An official rarity that foregrounds a card's illustration.

Special Illustration Rare / SIR - An official rarity distinct from Illustration Rare and Ultra Rare.

Hyper Rare - A rarity in certain modern series, often gold-treated; color alone is not enough to identify it.



Mega Hyper Rare / MHR - An official Mega Evolution-series rarity that should not be applied retroactively to older cards.

Shiny Rare - A rarity found in certain special expansions featuring Shiny Pokémon.

Secret rare - Historical or community shorthand for cards beyond the main total; use the checklist's exact rarity when possible.

Rare Holo - A label used by some older series to distinguish a foil Rare.

Holo says what shines, reverse describes a finish variant, IR/SIR/Hyper Rare are official set-specific rarities, while chase, hit, and alt art are usually community language.

05

Booster packs, booster boxes, and ETBs

Product contents depend on the exact SKU, era, and market. Common numbers - 10 game cards in a recent international booster, 36 packs in some booster boxes, or six in some Booster Bundles - should never be assumed without the local official product page.

Pokémon Support says packs included in collection products are the same as packs sold separately and do not receive special pull rates.

Booster pack - A pack of random cards whose composition varies by era and region.

Sleeved booster - A booster inside individual cardboard packaging; the inner pack is normally standard.

Blister - Retail packaging with one or more boosters and sometimes a promo, coin, or other bonus.

Booster box / display - A box of multiple booster packs. Pack counts are not universal across markets and products.

Booster Bundle - A small group of booster packs without the full accessory set of an ETB.

ETB - Elite Trainer Box: an international product combining boosters with play and collecting accessories.

Pokémon Center ETB - An exclusive version with listed content or promo differences, not a promise of better pulls.

Build & Battle Box - A prerelease product with a 40-card ready-to-play deck for that format plus boosters in recent examples.

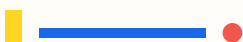
Tin - A metal container sold with the assortment listed on its packaging.

Case - A shipping carton of multiple products; quantities depend on the SKU and imply no guaranteed card.

06

Condition, grading, and market language

Condition scales differ. Cardmarket uses categories including M, NM, EX, GD, LP, PL, and PO, while North American platforms commonly use NM, LP, MP, HP, and Damaged. Do not convert them automatically.



The United States, Japan, China, and France do not always share the same set, card number, or product. Compare exact language and use the regional official database before calling two items equivalent.

- United States: TCGplayer conditions and prices follow its own published methodology.
- Japan: confirm the card and product in the official Japanese catalog.
- China: confirm the Simplified Chinese release and product number through official Pokémon tools.
- France and Europe: Cardmarket condition labels do not map one-to-one to US scales.

Raw - A card sold without a third-party grade or encapsulation.

Graded - A card authenticated and evaluated under a grading company's standard, then usually encapsulated.

Slab - The sealed holder around a graded card. Verify the certification as well as the holder.

Near Mint / NM - A sales condition allowing minimal imperfections; it never guarantees a grade 10.

Grade - A result under one company's standard. Scores from different companies are not automatically equivalent.

Centering - The printed image's position relative to the borders, separate from handling wear.

Print defect - A manufacturing flaw that can affect grading even when it is not handling wear.

Altered - A card changed after production, such as trimming, recoloring, or restoration.

Asking price - The amount a seller requests; an unsold listing does not prove market value.

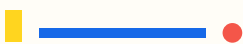
Comparable / comp - A completed sale matching reference, language, variant, condition, and grade when relevant.

Liquidity - How easily an item finds a buyer at a realistic price within a reasonable time.

Population report - A grader's recorded count at each grade, not the total print run.

Provenance - Documented ownership or origin history; helpful, but not enough to authenticate an item by itself.

Restock - Inventory returning to a seller; not necessarily a new print run.



Practical checklist

The 10-point Pokeradex field memo

- + Record language, expansion, number, variant, and condition.
- + Check the official checklist before naming a rarity.
- + Keep holo, reverse, rarity, and value separate.
- + Define alt art, hit, chase, and master set before a trade.
- + Check the regulation mark before a tournament.
- + Read the exact regional product page before buying.
- + Never treat NM as a promise of grade 10.
- + Compare genuinely equivalent completed sales.
- + Think in net proceeds after fees, shipping, and insurance.
- + Label unofficial pull rates as estimates, not facts.

Frequently asked questions

Is a reverse holo rarer than a holo?

Not necessarily. Reverse and holo mainly describe finishes. Official rarity comes from the symbol and checklist, and a reverse can parallel a Common, Uncommon, or Rare card.

What is the difference between IR, SIR, and alt art?

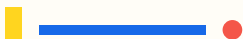
IR and SIR are official modern rarities. Alt art is broader community language that can refer to a current SIR or an alternate illustration from another era.

Can a Near Mint card grade a 10?

It can be submitted, but NM does not predict a 10. A marketplace and a grading company use different criteria for centering, corners, edges, and surface.

What does a number such as 203/182 mean?

The card number exceeds the announced main-set total. Use the checklist to learn whether it is an IR, SIR, Ultra Rare, Hyper Rare, or another category.



Do ETBs or collection boxes have better pull rates?

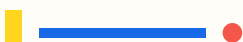
Pokémon Support says packs in collection products are the same as separately sold packs and do not have a special pull rate. Promos and accessories can differ.

Why does a Japanese card have a different number from the English card?

Sets and products are not always released with the same composition across regions. Compare each printing in the official database for its language.

Good to know

This glossary is an educational reference. Rarities, product contents, formats, and rules can change; always check the current expansion checklist, regional product page, and Play! Pokémon documents. Market terms are descriptive and are not financial advice or a valuation.



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