

Today I learned that card grading companies are drowning in Pokémon cards

A report from Vice has opened my eyes to just how big the Pokémon trading card collecting market is getting – apparently to the point where card rating companies have waitlists that range from six to ten months, with one company claiming it's receiving over 500,000 cards to grade per week. The card graders, who rate trading cards' conditions to determine how collectable (and therefore valuable) they are, are so swamped that people who want to get their Magic, Yu-Gi-Oh, or sports cards graded are also having to wait in line (or pay out the nose to skip it).

One card rating company apparently needed employees so bad it offered \$1,000 starting bonuses – and then *bumped them up to \$2,500*. Another company had to buy *two* warehouses to store all the cards it was getting in. Apparently, even the the most basic original Pokémon cards can fetch upwards of \$40 now in excellent condition, and graded cards can be worth up to 20 times their value in perfect condition.

Of course, we've also seen the boom affecting the market in other ways– eBay is adding a feature to its app specifically to scan cards and pre-populate listings with info (though not the card's condition), making it slightly faster to list them. The *Vice* report also mentions that plastic card protectors have been completely selling out.

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Most of these effects seem linked to older Pokémon cards, as they're the ones that are scarce – as the author of the *Vice*

article points out, people are looking to see if they've got any that escaped the ravages of being childhood playthings after seeing collectors like Logan Paul buying original cards or packs for obscenely high prices.

But it also seems like some of the OG Pokémon shine has started to affect the market for new collectibles with unproven value, too: some Target stores have threatened to call police on people camping outside for new Pokémon card restocks, and the Pokémon card company has rushed to pump out as many new cards as it can.

Maybe the pandemic has awoken people's inner magpies, turning on an insatiable desire to collect without really considering the value of what we're buying (just look at NFTs, which feel like peak collectible). Of course, there are also those truly rare Pokémon cards that are quite valuable – but it can't just be the rare cards hitting these card rating companies with, as one CEO put it, “an avalanche of cardboard.”

Honestly, seeing this news, on top of everything else, has left me with one burning question: where the *heck* are people getting so much money that they can spend \$660K on a Mario cartridge or \$300K on a Pokémon card?

<https://www.theverge.com/2021/4/30/22413108/pokemon-trading-card-collectors-overwhelm-grading-collecting-rating>