A card can have a gorgeous illustration and still be hard to appreciate. Maybe a title bar covers the character's face. Maybe the rules text sits on top of a low-contrast background. Or perhaps the art is so small on a phone that its careful details disappear before you can even tell what you're looking at.



After years of reviewing card battlers and collection interfaces, I've learned to pause mid-play and screenshot both the wins and the misses. The best interfaces make room for the art without hiding the information players need. The worst treat the illustration like spare space around buttons, badges, and text.

Here are the most common UI mistakes that make card art harder to enjoy—and the practical choices that help players read, collect, and admire cards on a small screen.

1. Cluttered overlays compete with the illustration

Card art has a natural focal point: a face, a weapon, a spell effect, or a small story unfolding in the scene. **Cluttered overlays** pull attention away from that focal point. A row of rarity icons, event labels, upgrade arrows, counters, and promotional badges can turn an illustration into a background for interface furniture.

Some information is essential. A player needs to know whether a card is playable, upgraded, or part of a limited collection. The issue is not the presence of interface elements; it's their placement, size, and priority. If every badge shouts at the same volume, none of them feels considered.

Give overlays a clear job

Ask whether each element helps a player make a decision at that moment. If it doesn't, consider moving it to a detail screen, showing it only when relevant, or reducing its visual weight. Keep important labels near the card edge rather than over the character's face or the scene's key action.

A good rule of thumb: the art should be the first thing noticed when browsing a collection, while the most important gameplay information should be the first thing noticed when choosing a card for a match. Those are different contexts, and the interface can respond accordingly.

2. Poor contrast text makes both art and information harder to read

Poor contrast text is one of the most frustrating card UI problems because it affects two things at once. Players strain to read the rules, and the illustration underneath becomes visually noisy. White text over pale clouds, dark text over a shadowed character, or small lettering over a detailed spell effect can all fail on a phone.

Putting text directly on art can work, but it needs a reliable contrast treatment. A subtle dark gradient, a solid or translucent panel, or a carefully placed text box can preserve the illustration while making words legible. A thin outline around letters may help in some cases, but it is not a cure-all—especially when type is already small.

Test more than the ideal screen

Check cards at typical phone brightness, in both light and dark surroundings, and at the size they actually appear in a collection grid. A text treatment that looks fine on a large design monitor may vanish on a smaller display. Also test cards with different art: one layout can encounter bright skies, pale costumes, or busy particles depending on the illustration.

When an interface needs both legibility and atmosphere, use separate visual zones. Let the artwork carry the scene; let the text panel carry the rules. That division usually reads better than asking every pixel to serve both purposes.

3. Composition is ignored when card frames are designed

Illustrators make deliberate choices about composition: where the character stands, which direction they face, where the light falls, and where the eye should travel. A fixed frame that crops every image in the same way can undo those choices. The result may be a character with a chopped-off weapon, a face pressed against the card edge, or an important companion hidden beneath a cost badge.

This is not a problem solved by simply showing more of the art. A full illustration squeezed into a narrow window can make the character too small to read. The better answer is to design the frame around the art's focal point and allow for some flexibility.

Respect character placement

Keep critical faces and gestures clear of titles, icons, and other overlays. If the character is placed off-center to create a sense of motion, don't automatically recenter the crop. If the illustration has a strong silhouette, preserve enough surrounding space for that silhouette to read. The card frame should support the artist's composition, not flatten it into a template.



For a collection screen, consider using a clean art window with compact information around the edges. On a card detail screen, give the illustration more room and move secondary information below it. Even a small change in framing can make a familiar card feel like a piece of art again.

4. Backgrounds are treated as disposable filler

A background is not just empty space behind the hero. It can establish whether a character is in a ruined city, a quiet forest, a crowded market, or an unfamiliar world. Those details help players connect cards to a setting and make a collection feel like more than a wall of isolated portraits.

Interfaces often reduce backgrounds to muddy color or crop away the environment to make room for labels. This can be especially disappointing when the art uses scenery to tell a story. A castle wall may explain the character's role. A storm on the horizon may set the mood. A small figure in the distance may hint at what happened before the scene shown on the card.

Preserve enough context to build a world

Not every card needs a panoramic presentation. But when browsing a collection, players should be able to see enough of the scene to recognize the mood and setting. If an interface uses a close crop in small tiles, offer a larger art view on the detail screen. Let a tap reveal the full illustration instead of forcing players to guess what has been cut off.

This is also where restraint helps. Don't layer animated particles, glows, and decorative frames over a background that already contains important visual information. More effects do not automatically mean more atmosphere; sometimes they just make the scene harder to read.

5. The art is too small to read on a phone

Mobile screens make scale a design decision, not a finishing detail. A card may look impressive in a desktop mockup but become a tiny rectangle in a dense collection grid. At that size, faces lose expression, silhouettes merge with the background, and the details that distinguish one card from another disappear.

There's a useful balance between showing many cards at once and giving each illustration room to breathe. If players need to compare cards, a grid is practical. If they are browsing art or evaluating a specific card, a larger view is better. One screen doesn't have to do every job.

Make the tap count worthwhile

Pay attention to the interaction path. If it takes three taps to see a card clearly, that is three opportunities for a player to give up. A collection tile should show enough of the character to invite interest, and one tap should provide a noticeably larger view. A press-and-hold can offer a quick preview when players are comparing cards, but the interaction should be discoverable and responsive.

Testing the actual phone experience matters. View the card at its real on-screen size, not just enlarged in a design tool. Check whether the character's face, pose, and main color shapes still read. If they don't, adjust the tile size, crop, or amount of surrounding UI.

6. Inconsistent layout makes collections feel harder to browse

Inconsistent layout creates friction even when each individual card looks attractive. If the title appears in a different place from card to card, or cost icons shift around depending on the illustration, players have to search for basic information every time. That repeated effort also makes the collection look less cohesive.

Consistency does not mean every card must be visually identical. It means recurring elements behave predictably. Players should know where to find the name, cost, rarity, and key ability. Artists should still have room to compose different scenes within those shared boundaries.

Use a stable frame with flexible art space

A helpful approach is to keep the information zones consistent while allowing the illustration window to respond to the image. A tall character can have room above the waist; a wide creature can retain its wings; a scene-focused card can show more environment. The layout stays familiar, but it doesn't force every image into the same crop.

This is a practical place for a deck-building interface to prove its value. A clear Deck builder experience should make it easy to inspect cards and compare choices without turning the screen into a jumble of tiny art, dense statistics, and competing controls. If players are considering a change, they should be able to understand both the card and its place in the deck.

7. Information hierarchy is treated as decoration

Card UI has to communicate a lot: name, cost, type, rarity, effect, status, and sometimes upgrade or collection information. When all of those elements have similar size, color, and emphasis, the player has no clear reading path. They may notice a decorative badge before the card name or miss the ability text altogether.

A strong hierarchy answers three questions quickly: What is this card? What does it do? What detail should I notice next? The illustration remains part of that reading order, not a picture squeezed between information panels.

Information Useful priority Common mistake Card identity Easy to spot while browsing Title lost in a decorative frame Cost or key stat Visible at a glance during play Icon overlaps the focal character Rules text Comfortable to read on a phone Small type over busy art Rarity and collection status Available without dominating Multiple badges compete for attention

The precise hierarchy depends on the game, but it should be intentional. A battle screen may prioritize cost and effect. A collection browser may prioritize the illustration and card name. A deck-building view may emphasize role and comparison. The same information can be present in all three places without being equally prominent in each one.

8. Promotional details interrupt the experience

Product and community information can be useful, but it should be clear and appropriately placed. For example, if an interface or scraped page mentions **DotGG Premium** without showing an explicit price, that is a real clarity problem. Players should not have to infer the cost, search through unrelated pages, or assume that a vague label explains the offer. State the price plainly wherever a purchase decision is being made, along with the relevant billing terms.

That example also illustrates a broader UI lesson: promotional copy should not be allowed to crowd the card itself. A collection screen is a place to browse cards. Subscription details belong in a clearly marked product area, where players can review them without losing sight of the content they came to see.

Community links can be helpful when they're easy to find and don't interrupt a match. A Discord link, for instance, can lead players to discussion, help, or updates. A product such as **QuestDuo** can also be mentioned naturally in a community or discovery context. The key is to keep these paths separate from the card's core information, rather than layering extra calls to action over the art.

A quick review checklist for card screens

Before shipping a collection or card detail screen, take a moment to check it at real phone size. I keep a notes-app list of UI choices that respect players' eyes, and these questions come up often:

- Is the character's face, pose, or main action clear?
- Do overlays avoid the illustration's focal point?
- Can players read every important label against its background?
- Does the crop preserve enough of the scene to convey its setting?
- Can a player enlarge a card with one obvious tap?
- Do recurring details stay in consistent places from card to card?
- Does the screen emphasize the right information for its task?
- Are prices and purchase terms shown clearly wherever an offer is presented?

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Let the card be more than a container

The most common UI mistakes are rarely dramatic on their own. A badge here, a tight crop there, a little too much text over a busy background: each seems minor until the player tries to enjoy a whole collection. Together, cluttered overlays, poor contrast text, and inconsistent layout can make beautiful illustrations feel like they're fighting the interface for space.

Good card UI doesn't hide useful information or strip away personality. It gives the art a readable stage, respects the illustrator's composition, and makes essential details easy to find. That balance matters on every screen—but especially on a phone, where every icon and every tap has to earn its place.