

Archived Rulings



A backlog of Paul Barclay Ask Wizards rules questions

Paul Barclay

Q: "What happens when a player has [Transcendence](#) in play, a [False Cure](#) has resolved, and the player with [Transcendence](#) loses 1 life?"

"My understanding is that the player with the [Transcendence](#) will lose the game. This would be due to either:

1. 'Mondo' life gain if the [Transcendence](#) stays in play.
2. 'Mondo' life lost if the [Transcendence](#) is removed from play too late."

-- Nathan Teasley, Dearborn, MI

A: From **Paul Barclay**, TCG Rules Manager:

"This question is all about triggered abilities. There are two on [Transcendence](#) and one on [False Cure](#). The 'gain life' ability of [Transcendence](#) and the 'lose life' ability of [False Cure](#) both trigger any time their condition happens. Each time one of those abilities resolves, the other one triggers.

"Assuming that you start off by losing 1 life, it goes: Gain 2 life, lose 4, gain 8, lose 16, gain 32, lose 64, gain 128, lose 256, gain 512, lose 1024, gain 2048, lose 4096.... So, with just these two abilities, there would be an infinite loop of gaining and losing life that nobody controls.

"However, [Transcendence](#) also has an ability that says, 'when you have 20 or more life, you lose the game,' which can sometimes stop the loop. It doesn't always stop the loop, because it's a state-triggered ability. This means that once it triggers, it won't trigger again until it resolves. So, there are three different cases, depending on who controls what:

"1. The active player controls [Transcendence](#) and the non-active player controls [False Cure](#).

"Result: The game is a draw.

Reason: The first time the player's life total goes over 20, [Transcendence](#)'s 'lose the game' ability will trigger, and [False Cure](#)'s 'lose life' ability will trigger. [False Cure](#)'s ability will go on the stack second, because it's controlled by the non-active player. So, it will resolve first, and cause you to lose life again. This sets up an infinite loop of gaining and losing life.

The Trick: [Disenchant](#) on [Transcendence](#) during the infinite loop will kill the player who controls it, because every time that player loses life, he or she will go below 0.

"2. The non-active player controls [Transcendence](#) and the active player controls [False Cure](#).

"Result: The player who controls [Transcendence](#) loses the first time his or her life total goes above 20.

Reason: The first time the player's life total goes over 20, [Transcendence](#)'s 'lose the game' ability will trigger, and [False Cure](#)'s 'lose life' ability will trigger. [Transcendence](#)'s ability will go on the stack second, because it's controlled by the non-active player. So, it will resolve first, and cause that player to lose the

game.

The Trick: If the player who controls Transcendence manages to lose or gain life while the 'lose the game' ability is on the stack, the infinite loop from #1 will be created, and the game will be a draw.

"3. One player controls both Transcendence and False Cure.

Result: That player chooses whether to lose the game or draw the game.

Reason: One player controls both triggered abilities, so he or she chooses the order they go onto the stack. So, that player can choose to either lose the game, or create an infinite loop and draw the game.

The Trick: Don't choose to lose the game."

Q: "In the comprehensive rules, rule 102.5 states: 'if a player would both win and lose simultaneously, he or she loses.' I've asked around, and I can't find anyone who can give me an example in which you could win and lose simultaneously (you'd need two state based effects, I think...). Could you give an example?"
-- Robert Driskill, Morris Township, NJ

A: From **Paul Barclay**, TCG Rules Manager:

"This rule was designed as a 'just in case' rule; we never expected to actually use it. Of course, like with everything else in **Magic**, the game found a way. A strange, highly unlikely way.

"You're playing in a DCI sanctioned single-elimination tournament. You and your opponent are both at 5 life, and time is called. You finish the extra turns, and go into sudden death (the first life total change wins). You have no cards left in your library. You play Zap on your opponent. So, your opponent goes to 4 life, and you try to draw a card, but fail. So, two state-based effects kick in: You win, because you have more life than your opponent, and you lose because you couldn't draw a card. Since you're winning and losing at the same time, rule 102.5 applies, and you lose the game.

"From the **Magic** Comprehensive Rulebook:

"420.5. *The state-based effects are as follows:*

"420.5g *A player who was required to draw more cards than were in his or her library loses the game.*

"From the DCI **Magic** Floor Rules:

"117. *Determining a Match Winner*

In Swiss rounds, the winner of a match is the player with the most game wins in the match. If both players have equal game wins, then the match is a draw.

In single-elimination rounds, matches may not end in a draw. After the normal end-of-match procedure is finished, the player with more game wins is the winner of the match. If both players in a single-elimination tournament have equal game wins when the normal end-of-match procedure is finished, the player with the highest life total becomes the winner of the current game in progress. In the event the players have equal life totals (or are between games and the game wins are tied), the game/match should continue until the first life total change that results in one player having a higher life total than the other.

"(This has been ruled to be a state-based effect, for consistency with our other rules for winning/losing the game. What makes it unique is that it's the only state-based effect that makes someone win a game. All the others make someone lose.)"

Q: "Would it be possible to reduce a card's morph cost by having a [Heartstone](#) in play?"
-- Jason Nelson-Wolfe, Detroit, MI

A: From **Paul Barclay**, TCG Rules Manager:
"No. [Heartstone](#) only reduces the cost of creatures' activated abilities.

Heartstone

3

Artifact

Creatures' activated abilities cost 1 less to play. If this would make an ability cost 0 or less mana to play, it costs 1, plus any nonmana costs.

"Morph isn't an activated ability, because it doesn't use a colon (':'). So, [Heartstone](#) won't change how much it costs to play a spell face down, and it won't change how much it costs to turn a face-down creature face up."

Q: "In the [comprehensive rulebook](#) of **Magic**, Rule 502.9d reads 'Ignore this rule.' What was the original rule that we are now commanded to ignore, and why was it dropped from the rulebook? This has been bugging me for quite some time."
-- Juan Cuadros, Citrus Heights, CA

A: From **Paul Barclay**, TCG Rules Manager:
"What rule?"

"Rule 502.9d was 'An attacking creature with trample ignores any blocking creatures that can't have damage assigned to them.' It was confusing because we got rid of all the creatures that can't have damage assigned to them (such as [Fog Bank](#), which has been reworded). Players were assuming that it covered creatures with protection and similar abilities.


"When your green creature with trample (for example, a 5/5) is blocked by a creature with protection from green (for example, a 2/3), you still have to assign enough damage to the creature to kill it (3 in this case), even though that damage will be prevented. The extra damage can still be assigned to the defending player (2 damage in this case)."

Q: "Is the 'ability' on [Carrion Wurm](#) cancelled if I enchant it with [Stupefying Touch](#) or do my opponent and I still have the right to remove cards from the graveyard?"
-- Stephen Lipic, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada


A: From **Paul Barclay**, TCG Rules Manager:
"No, the Wurm is unaffected by [Stupefying Touch](#). [Stupefying Touch](#) only prevents the creature's activated abilities from being played. [Carrion Wurm](#) and [Carrion Rats](#) have triggered abilities, which aren't affected by [Stupefying Touch](#). You and your opponents can still remove cards to prevent its combat damage.

"Activated abilities always include a colon (the ':' symbol). If it doesn't have a colon, it's not an activated ability. Examples of activate abilities:

- : [Prodigal Sorcerer](#) deals 1 damage to target creature or player.

- Discard a card from your hand: [Psychatog](#) gets +1/+1 until end of turn.
- : [Spiritmonger](#) becomes the color of your choice until end of turn.

"Triggered abilities start with 'When,' 'Whenever,' or 'At'. Examples of triggered abilities:

- When [Flametongue Kavu](#) comes into play, it deals 4 damage to target creature.
- Whenever [Carrion Wurm](#) attacks or blocks, any player may remove three cards in his or her graveyard from the game. If a player does, [Carrion Wurm](#) deals no combat damage this turn.
- At the beginning of your upkeep, if [Genesis](#) is in your graveyard, you may pay . If you do, return target creature card from your graveyard to your hand."

Q: "I was just reading the sortable cardlist of *Judgment*, when I realized that you could put the game into an infinite loop if your opponent chooses [Wormfang Crab](#) with its own ability. Is Wizards of the Coast going to do something to stop this loop?"

--Kim Fischels, Rock Island, IL

A: From **Paul Barclay**, TCG Rules Manager:

"Technically, the loop only becomes infinite if you have no other permanents in play besides the Crab. That game-state is quite possible thanks to cards like [Upheaval](#) and [Seafloor Debris](#), so something had to be done. Luckily, we've fixed this problem already, in the *Judgment* FAQ. It reads:"

The **Magic** rules team recently discovered a problem with this card. In combination with some other cards, its ability can cause the game to go into an infinite loop and end in a draw. The printed wording is:

Wormfang Crab is unblockable.

When Wormfang Crab comes into play, an opponent chooses a permanent you control and removes it from the game.

When Wormfang Crab leaves play, return the removed card to play under its owner's control.

Therefore, the rules team has decided that the ability should read as follows, and future Oracle updates will reflect the correction.

Wormfang Crab is unblockable.

When Wormfang Crab comes into play, an opponent chooses a permanent you control other than Wormfang Crab and removes it from the game.

When Wormfang Crab leaves play, return the removed card to play under its owner's control.

The change means that Wormfang Crab can no longer remove itself from the game.

"You can find the *Judgment* FAQ [here](#).

"

[Editor's note: I also made [Wormfang Crab](#) the [Card of the Day](#), just to make sure everyone sees the change.]

Q: "What happens if I flash back a [Firebolt](#) from my graveyard, then my opponent [Spelljacks](#) it?"

-- Jeff Wiles, Knoxville, TN

A: From **Paul Barclay**, TCG Rules Manager:

"[Spelljack](#) will counter the [Firebolt](#). Then, [Spelljack](#) will remove it from the game**. Now, your opponent can play it without paying its mana cost. She's playing it from the removed-from-the-game zone, not from her graveyard, so the flashback ability doesn't kick in. when it resolves, the [Firebolt](#) will do 2 damage to the target chosen by her, and will then go to your graveyard.

*** Complicated rules-weirdness to follow: Flashback will also try to remove it from the game. [Spelljack](#)'s 'remove it from the game instead of putting it into its owner's graveyard,' is a self-replacement effect, because it changes what [Spelljack](#)'s own effect is. Flashback says, 'if you do, remove this card from the game instead of putting it anywhere else any time it would leave the stack,' which is a normal replacement effect. If you have both a self-replacement effect and a normal replacement effect that apply, always apply the self-replacement effect first (rule 419.6d). So, [Spelljack](#)'s 'remove it from the game' will apply before flashback's 'remove it from the game.' For [Spelljack](#) vs. Flashback, this can all be ignored, because both effects send the spell to the same place."

Q: "The *Torment* FAQ says that you can use [False Memories](#) in your opponent's end of turn step and won't need to remove 7 cards until *your* next end of turn step. So is it possible to use [Temporary Insanity](#) in my opponent's end of turn step and control a creature of his/hers until *my* end of turn step?"
-- Jonathan Dana, Flint, MI

A: From **Paul Barclay**, TCG Rules Creation and Writing:

"[Temporary Insanity](#)'s effect can never last longer than until the end of the turn it was played.

"'At end of turn' and 'until end of turn' work in two very different ways.

"'At end of turn' abilities are triggered abilities. They trigger at the start of the end of turn step. So, if you play a card which says 'at end of turn' in your end of turn step, it won't trigger until the end of the next turn. This is why [False Memories](#) can give you threshold for an entire turn.

"'Until end of turn' is an ending condition for a continuous effect ([Giant Growth](#) says 'Target creature gets +3/+3 until end of turn'). These all wear off in the cleanup step, at the same time that damage on creatures is healed. The cleanup step is always the last thing that happens in a turn, so there's no way for an 'until end of turn' effect to last longer than one turn."

Q: "It seems that [Aura Graft](#) is functionally unique from older and similar cards such as [Enchantment Alteration](#) and [Crown of the Ages](#) in that [Aura Graft](#) allows movement from permanent to permanent, as opposed to just creatures or lands. Knowing that, I have envisioned two odd scenarios:

"(a) There is a [Power Leak](#) or a [Confiscate](#) (or another Enchant Enchantment or Enchant Permanent) in play. Is it then legal to use [Aura Graft](#) to move that enchantment such that it enchants itself? If so, what would happen?

"(b) What if there's a [Confiscate](#) in play enchanting a [Forest](#), and a [Power Leak](#) enchanting that [Confiscate](#). Is it possible to use [Aura Graft](#) to move the [Confiscate](#) onto the [Power Leak](#)?"
-- Abe Corson, Alexandria, VA

A: From **Paul Barclay**, TCG Rules Creation & Writing:

"Answer to (a): No, that's not legal. We have a rule in the Comprehensive Rulebook that states that an enchantment can't ever enchant itself (214.8f).

"Answer to (b): Yes, this is possible. Play [Aura Graft](#), targeting [Confiscate](#). When it resolves, move [Confiscate](#) onto [Power Leak](#). You now control both [Confiscate](#) and [Power Leak](#), and they enchant each other.

"And now for the fun part. Assume for a minute that you put a [Confiscate](#) (#1) on your opponent's [Forest](#), then she puts another [Confiscate](#) (#2) on your [Confiscate](#), and you put a final [Confiscate](#) (#3) on her [Confiscate](#). So, [Confiscate](#) #3 enchants [Confiscate](#) #2, which enchants [Confiscate](#) #1, which enchants the [Forest](#). And you control all those permanents. Now, your opponent plays [Aura Graft](#), targeting [Confiscate](#) #1. She makes it enchant [Confiscate](#) #3.

"So [Confiscate](#) #1 enchants [Confiscate](#) #3, which enchants [Confiscate](#) #2, which enchants [Confiscate](#) #1. Your opponent gets her [Forest](#) back. But we still have to work out who controls the three [Confiscates](#). Since they're all enchanting each other, we can't tell which to apply first, so we have to use their timestamp order. This is first #2, then #3, then #1 (when we moved #1, it got a new timestamp).

"[Confiscate](#) #2 was originally controlled by your opponent. It tells her that she now controls [Confiscate](#) #1. [Confiscate](#) #3 was originally controlled by you. It tells you that you now control [Confiscate](#) #2. [Confiscate](#) #1 is now controlled by your opponent. It tells her that she now controls [Confiscate](#) #3.


"So your opponent controls [Confiscate](#) #1 and #3 (which you originally controlled), and you control [Confiscate](#) #2 (which your opponent originally controlled), and they're floating in space, each enchanting one of the others."

Q: "The *Apocalypse* card [False Dawn](#) received errata prior to the release of the set for undesirable interactions with some other cards. Were there general issues with making everything white, or was there one particular combination that would have been broken?"

-- Chris Stevenson, Batavia, OH

A: From **Paul Barclay**, TCG Rules Creation & Writing:

"It wasn't that [False Dawn](#) was broken. Rather, it was that you needed a large amount of rules knowledge to know exactly how it worked in every situation. The original wording had three effects, and it didn't do any of them in a sensible way.

"1. It changed mana symbols in mana costs to , which turned everything white. Well, almost everything. It didn't change artifacts (because they had no colored mana symbols in their mana costs), and it didn't change anything which had already had its color changed by some outside effect.

"2. It 'fixed' mana production to make everything produce white mana. Well, everything that used a mana symbol, at least. The *Urza's* and *Masques* block non-basic lands used color words, rather than mana symbols. Color words weren't changed, so these lands would still produce their normal color of mana. Of course, since all your spells now require white mana to play, this isn't particularly useful.

"3. It allowed you to spend white mana on any cost. Actually, it didn't affect every single cost, because cards such as [Soul Burn](#) use color words to limit the colors of mana you can spend on a generic mana cost.

"The current Oracle wording removes the first part (because it was an unclear side-effect of the printed wording), and made the second and third parts work correctly across the board. [False Dawn](#) currently affects all colored mana production, and all cost payments, but doesn't change the color of any spells, cards or permanents.

"[False Dawn](#) (as printed)

Colored mana symbols on all permanents you control and on all cards you own that aren't in play become * until end of turn.

Draw a card.

"[False Dawn](#) (current Oracle wording)

Until end of turn, spells and abilities you control that would add colored mana to your mana pool add that much white mana instead. Until end of turn, you may spend white mana as though it were mana of any color.

Draw a card."

Q: "I have noticed that [Patagia Golem](#) and [Obsianus Golem](#) have received the creature type 'Golem' for *6th* and *7th Editions*. However, they weren't always specified as such. Is it safe to assume, then, that any artifact creature with 'Golem' in the name also has the creature type 'Golem' (e.g., [Basalt Golem](#), [Matopi Golem](#))?"

-- Erik Olson, Benicia, CA

A: From **Paul Barclay**, TCG Rules Creation & Writing:

"Yes. Every artifact creature with 'Golem' in its name has creature type 'Golem.' There are also a few other Golems that don't have the word 'Golem' in their names. Here are every single artifact creature that has one or more creature types, direct from the Oracle card reference:"

Angel: [Copper-Leaf Angel](#)

Chimera: [Brass-Talon Chimera](#), [Iron-Heart Chimera](#), [Lead-Belly Chimera](#), [Tin-Wing Chimera](#)

Dragon: [Draco](#), [Teeka's Dragon](#), [Tek](#)

Gnome: [Bottle Gnomes](#), [Clockwork Gnomes](#), [Copper Gnomes](#), [Ersatz Gnomes](#), [Patchwork Gnomes](#), [Ticking Gnomes](#)

Golem: [Alloy Golem](#), [Basalt Golem](#), [Brass Herald](#), [Coal Golem](#), [Complex Automaton](#), [Crosis's Attendant](#), [Crystal Golem](#), [Darigaaz's Attendant](#), [Dromar's Attendant](#), [Emblazoned Golem](#), [Flint Golem](#), [Hollow Warrior](#), [Igneous Golem](#), [Junk Golem](#), [Lead Golem](#), [Limestone Golem](#), [Matopi Golem](#), [Obsianus Golem](#), [Patagia Golem](#), [Rith's Attendant](#), [Rusting Golem](#), [Sand Golem](#), [Soldevi Golem](#), [Sparring Golem](#), [Steel Golem](#), [Straw Golem](#), [Thran Golem](#), [Treva's Attendant](#)

Golem Legend: [Karn](#), [Silver Golem](#)

Licid: [Transmogrifying Licid](#)

Sliver: [Metallic Sliver](#)

Spellshaper: [Toymaker](#)

Wall: [Crenellated Wall](#), [Living Wall](#), [Mobile Fort](#), [Necropolis](#), [Shield Sphere](#), [Shifting Wall](#), [Snow Fortress](#), [Walking Wall](#), [Wall of Junk](#), [Wall of Shields](#), [Wall of Spears](#)

"The Oracle card reference lists the text of every **Magic: The Gathering** card, including rulings, errata, and all functional changes. It can be found [here](#)."

Q: "If my opponent wants to play a spell, (say a [Black Knight](#)), and I play [Vision Charm](#) and choose to change the basic land type of her swamps to plains... Can she still cast the Black Knight?"

--Christopher Clarke, Fort Lee, NJ

A: From **Paul Barclay**, TCG Rules Creation & Writing:

"You can't do that. Once your opponent has started to play the Black Knight, you can't do anything until she's finished announcing it. At that point, it's too late for the Vision Charm to have any effect on the Black Knight. If you think that she's going to play a Black Knight during her main phase, you could play Vision

Charm during her upkeep step, which could change her swamps to plains, and thus prevent her from playing the Black Knight in her main phase."