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**Making Magic** Monday, April 8, 2002

## With Trends Like These



Mark Rosewater

### The story behind the top 10

With the preliminary voting finished for the card mechanic of "You Make the Card," (for the results check in this Wednesday) I thought it might be fun to take this week's column to share with all of you what trends I discovered while reading through the 5000+ entries. But before I get to that I wanted to address a few issues concerning "You Make a Card" that have popped up on-line and in my mailbox.

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## How Much Control?

The first issue is how much control will all of you will have in making the card. The simple answer is as much control as possible but not total control. Why not total control? Because we want the finished card to look similar to what you design. Remember, after all of you design the card, it's going to go where all designed cards go: to development. Development will look at it in conjunction with the other cards in the same set, block, and various constructed formats to make sure that it doesn't unhealthily unbalance any of the environments.

This leaves us with two choices. We could let all of you pick whatever you want and then let R&D adjust the card in development or we could try to aid you in the voting to give you choices that will allow the card the best chance possible to go through development without any changes. We have chosen to do the latter because we feel it's more important for the finished card to match what you all have chosen than it is to give you complete freedom in voting and then have the actual card wildly different than what the votes determined.

This, of course, begs the question, "Why does the card even have to go through development?" Because every card goes through development. This card is special, but not so much so that we want to risk unbalancing the **Standard** environment for two years. That said, we are taking every step possible to maximize your ability to affect the card. You will have some input into every element of the card including the mana cost. But we will be adjusting the choices to create a balanced (but still good) card.



Apparently these aren't enough. Players want blue to suffer even more.

## What Happened to the 140-Character Limit?

The second issue that's been raised is that numerous selections are longer than the 140-character limit we set on the mechanics. The answer to this question is that none of the chosen submissions were longer than 140 characters. But to give you all a better sense of what card you were voting for, we did a preliminary templating pass. In general, templating lengthens a card's text. This is why some of the mechanics are over 140 characters.

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## Why Only Ten Choices?

The third issue was why we cut down the mechanics to ten choices. We did so to simplify the vote. While some of you might have been willing to sift through 5000+ entries, we felt the majority of readers wanted a smaller set of choices. Having a larger selection would also have had other negative effects such as not allowing us time to template all the cards. We tried hard to pick ten interesting entries that represented the overall flavor of the 5000+ submissions.

## Why These Ten Choices?

The final issue was why we chose the mechanics we did. The ten cards selected had several criteria. First, we tried to pick out cards that were interesting. As different players want different things from their cards (see my [“Timmy, Johnny, and Spike”](#) article for better clarification), we tried to select a variety of cards that would appeal to a variety of players. Next, we picked cards that did something that hadn’t been done before in green. (Obviously, some have more precedent than others.) Finally, we tried to choose cards that reflected the overall trends suggested by the readers.

So, what were those trends? Ah, back on topic.

## The Trends Justify the Means

One of the most interesting things about reading the submissions (and yes, I actually read each of the 5000+ mechanics submitted), was the strong trends that showed up. Certain ideas, for example, came up again and again. As a designer, I found this information quite enlightening. It gave me a nice insight into what all of you desire in a green creature.

Here are the major trends:

### Anti-Blue

How many anti-*black* cards were submitted? About thirty. How many anti-blue cards? A thousand. One fifth of all the entries. I’m sure some of you might think I’m exaggerating, but I’m not. A certain segment of the audience *really* wants to put the thumbscrews to blue. Why? I have my theories, but this is something I’m planning to investigate more in the future.

### Can’t be the target of spells or abilities

About a tenth of the cards had some version of untargetability. The message here is that many of you didn’t want others messing with your creature. I’m sure this comes from the frustration of paying six plus mana for some giant green trampler only to watch your opponent tap two mana for **Terminate**.

### Can’t be countered

Okay, okay, this is a subcategory of anti-blue but this particular ability showed up so often, I felt it deserved a mention. And yes, untargetability and uncounterability appeared together a lot.

### +1/+1 counters

Another interesting lesson of this exercise was how much many of you like +1/+1 counters. The most common use of them was that the creature gets to add them when “event X” happens.

### Choose a creature type

There also appears to be a lot of players with creature theme decks on their mind. The effects were varied although +1/+1 to all creatures of the chosen type was the most popular.

### When CARDNAME goes to graveyard from play



I think this trend taps into a similar vein as untargetability. These effects basically say, "don't destroy my creature." It is interesting to note that there were more leaves play effects than comes into play effects submitted.

As you can see, the final ten picks were very influenced by these trends. There were a few other trends. These are the ones where players tried introducing new things to green by bleeding abilities from other colors.

## Destroy target creature

Green's greatest weakness is its inability to destroy creatures. Many players thought to fix this problem by submitted mechanics that allowed this creature to destroy others (mostly through tapping abilities). While we were looking for new areas to stretch green, we didn't want to take away key weaknesses that define the color.

## Deal X damage to target creature or player

Another popular work-around was to try and give the creature the ability to deal direct damage. While this is okay in limited ways (such as damage to fliers), direct damage has the same problem as creature destruction. It's just not green.

*"Don't kill my man" was another popular theme.*

## Counter target spell

A third popular trend was creatures that could activate to counter spells. I chalk this up to all the players who helped blue come in second to green. Perhaps in denial, many of them turned in their blue creature ideas. Like the last two categories, these cards got vetoed for being fundamentally un-green.

And there you have it. I'm sure my comments today will spur some discussion so if you'd like to get in your two cents in on the "You Make the Card" processes, please add a comment to the [discussion thread](#).

Next week I'll talk about a much-maligned card type.


Until then, may your mechanic of choice get more votes than the other nine.

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