

MAGICTHEGATHERING.COM

ARTICLES

TOURNAMENTS

MAGIC ONLINE

Article Search ▾ →



Do you have a question about **Magic: The Gathering** or *Wizards of the Coast*? Send it, along with your full name and location, to ask@wizards.com. We'll post a new question and answer each day.

July 31

Q: "Have you ever thought of creating a whole new color for **Magic: The Gathering**, like purple, or even orange?"
 -- Steve Prez, Secaucus, NJ

A: From **Mark Rosewater**, R&D senior designer:
 "Believe or not, we have. At the beginning of *Odyssey* design, the team (then Henry Stern, William Jockusch, Richard Garfield, and myself) spent a whole afternoon discussing many of the 'wild' ideas that have been floating around since **Magic's** beginning. The sixth color discussion was very interesting and we came up with several different ways to approach the problem. That said, we have no current plans for a sixth color."

July 30

Q: "How come when making *Apocalypse* more familiars weren't made, like a 'Raka Familiar' that would cheapen white and blue spells by 1?"
 -- Jim O'Neill, Philadelphia, PA

A: From **Randy Buehler**, **Magic** lead developer:
 "There are a bunch of cycles that run through *Invasion* and *Planeshift* which we could have chosen to mirror in *Apocalypse*, but there was not enough room in the set to do all of them. In the end, we decided to do the ones that we thought were the coolest cards, especially the ones that captured the flavor of enemy colors working together for once. We thought the **Disciples**, **split cards**, **counterspells**, and 2-mana double creature-type dudes (the 'bears') did a better job of this than a new cycle of familiars would have done. Plus we needed to save room for new cycles like the **Sanctuaries** and the **Volvers**."

July 29

Q: "Why didn't R&D give players the option of removing counters to prevent damage on the **phantom creatures** instead of making it required. Wouldn't it make more sense to take one damage, than to have your 7/7 become a 6/6?"
 -- Hisham Salama, Orlando, FL

A: From **Brian Tinsman**, R&D game designer:
 "I have two explanations for why the phantoms work that way. First I'll give you the flavor reason: Hey, they're ghosts. Your weapons pass right through them -- that's just the way ghosts are.

"Second is the game play reason: It's true that the phantoms would be more powerful if players could choose whether or not to remove a counter, but would they be as interesting? If you had the option to remove a counter and prevent damage you would only use it when the creature was about to die, so the ability would feel pretty much like regeneration. Kind of boring. Plus, the ability to choose would make those creatures

more powerful so they would have to cost more, again making them less interesting. Very often giving cards an ability that can sometimes be a drawback creates an exciting tension and more challenging play decisions.

"Now my question for you is, are you really upset about losing a +1/+1 counter when you just dealt 7 damage and gained 7 life?"

July 26



Q: "What is the **'Deckmaster'** logo on **Magic** cards supposed to mean, and how did it get there in the first place? I think I recall seeing the same logo on different TCGs, so I'm curious."

-- Arthur Robinson McKay III, Marietta, GA




A: From **Henry Stern**, Research & Development:

"You have to know that back in 1993, when **Magic: The Gathering** was being born, there was no such thing as a 'trading card game.' Here at Wizards of the Coast, we wanted to create a brand identity for our trading card games, thus was born **'Deckmaster.'** The thought was, if you saw **'Deckmaster'** on the packaging, you knew a fine game indeed lay inside.

"In the beginning, WotC really did promote the **Deckmaster** brand, and the **Deckmaster** logo appeared on our first three trading card games: **Magic**, **Vampire: The Eternal Struggle**, and **Netrunner**. The problem was, we came to realize that the populace wasn't buying into the **Deckmaster** brand identity. Looking back on it, it's clear we were trying to promote too many icons; one box of **Magic** promoted three logos: **Magic**, WotC, and **Deckmaster**. We realized we had much more equity in the **Magic: The Gathering** logo and in the Wizards of the Coast logo. Those were the icons we wanted to promote, so **Deckmaster** was dropped from future products and did not appear on *Battletech*, our fourth trading card game."

July 25



Q: "How do you determine which cards should cost 2 (or more) colored mana and which should only cost 1? For example, why did **Worldgorger Dragon** cost  and not  or ?"

-- Jacky Au, Sydney, Australia

A: From **Worth Wollpert**, Research & Development:

"There are a few big reasons we choose to cost cards with different numbers of colored mana symbols in them. The main one is that it lets us make players commit to a certain color in order to realize the benefit of a particular card. Sometimes we realize that there are ways to circumvent our efforts, especially with creatures, as some of the most famous reanimator targets have been historically non-black (the animation color, obviously). Other than that though, we wanted to make sure, in the **Worldgorger Dragon**'s case, that you were very committed to red in order to play it. In a related note, we sometimes up the number of colored mana symbols on cards that we think are especially flavorful for that particular color as well. We know some of our most popular cards have had lots of colored mana symbols in them, keep your eyes open for another addition to that group when *Onslaught* comes out in a couple months!"

July 24



Q: "How does one effectively shuffle? There are so many different methods; do tournament ranked players shuffle in a certain way? If there is a mathematically sound way of shuffling, what is it?"

-- Miguel Batista, Manila, Philippines

A: From **Thomas Pannell**, Level 3 Judge and *Sideboard* editor:

"Pro Tour players shuffle in many different ways. The most common is a combination of 'riffle' shuffles and 'pile' shuffles.

"A 'pile' shuffle is done this way: take a deck and place X (however many piles you decide, most commonly between 4-7) cards on the table. Then put a card from your deck on top of each card already on the table, and repeat until you have placed every card in the deck in a pile. Then pick up the piles in any order.

"The reason pile shuffling is useful is that it forces cards that are stuck together to be separated, as no card can end up next to the same cards it was next to before using

this method. However this shuffle should never be used by itself as it does not sufficiently randomize the deck.

"I would recommend that you start out with a few 'riffle' shuffles (a normal card shuffle - split the deck into two approximately even piles, place the two halves end to end, lift the ends facing each other with your thumbs, let the cards fall down, alternating between the two piles, one after another) then do a pile shuffle, then a few more riffle shuffles. While this is not the only effective shuffling method, it is one of the best.

"If you playing in a tournament the DCI strongly recommends that you shuffle your opponent's deck very thoroughly every time. Never assume that your opponent's deck has been randomized just because his shuffling looked sufficient."

July 23



Q: "I have a question for Michael Donais or anyone else that was on both the design team and the development team for a **Magic** set. Are there additional challenges when you are designing a set you know you will later be developing? Also, does it help in development to know what the designer was thinking when creating a particular card or mechanic?"

-- Christopher Hickman, Richmond, VA

A: From **Mike Donais**, Research & Development:

"When we develop sets we always have a set of meetings that involve the designers and the developers to discuss the new cards and mechanics of a set. This helps a lot with transition. When developing a card that I designed it is very important to be objective. On balance I find it to be big plus to have someone on both teams to help explain the reasoning behind various card designs, as long as that person is not the lead of both teams."


July 22



Q: "Shouldn't **Gainsay** have been a red card? How come blue got the new **Pyroblast**? You talk a lot about rebalancing the color wheel, but I don't know that colors should get hosers against themselves. And it's not like control decks needed help beating other control decks."

-- Juan Garcia, West Hollywood, CA

A: From **Bill Rose**, head of Research & Development: "Colors have always had hosers against themselves. Landwalkers are colors hosing themselves. Black can't **Terror** black creatures. We are rebalancing the color wheel (10% black, 10% red, 10% green, 70% blue, and white only playable Tuesday nights after 9pm). But we still view hosers, both hosers of enemy colors and in-color hosers, as part of **Magic**."

"**Gainsay** was designed as a blue-hose-blue card. (There also was a red card -- , Destroy target Mountain. But the developers quickly nixed that idea.) The game theory behind the design is this: If blue is an average or weak color, no one plays **Gainsay**. If blue is a strong color, blue decks will need to have four **Gainsays** in their sideboards, reducing their sideboard potential against other deck types. Of course, non-blue tournament decks need to exist to properly test this theory."

July 19



Q: "I was reading an issue of *The Sideboard* magazine a while back and I noticed that in a close-up photo of a pro event, a player had his cards on the table, and each one of them had a red stamp on it. I looked at other issues of *Sideboard* and saw this stamp on the cards in many photos for different events. What is this little red stamp for?"

-- William Reznay, Muskegon, MI

A: From **Scott Larabee**, Organized Play Territory Manager: "At most high level draft events (Pro Tours, Grand Prix, larger National Championships), we stamp the cards used in each draft with a unique stamp. This prevents players from cheating by swapping cards from outside the draft into their decks. Different symbols and stamp colors are used for each different draft round. The positions of the stamps on the cards are also significant, and allow us to recreate the draft from scratch if necessary."

July 18



Q: "Why is it that a card may have one rarity in one set, but another rarity when

reprinted? For example, through *Fifth Edition*, **Hurricane** was uncommon. However, in *Portal*, *Sixth Edition*, and *Seventh Edition*, it is rare."

-- Mike Gauthier, Swansea, MA

A: From **Randy Buehler**, **Magic** lead developer:

"I'm not sure there is any one answer to this question, and even if there is a general answer it's not going to apply in the case of **Hurricane**. The reason **Hurricane** is rare now is because we wanted to sync it up with **Earthquake**. They make a nice pair and we thought they should have the same rarity. When we change the rarity of a card, we try whenever possible to make things more rare when we reprint them, not more common. That way, anyone who owns the older version of the card isn't going to see their card's value suddenly drop. Thus, we decided to promote **Hurricane** to rare rather than drop **Earthquake** to uncommon."

July 17



Q: "Why do the base sets have white borders? Cards look better with black borders in my opinion."

-- Richard Carrick, Wakefield, MA

A: From **Elaine Chase**, Research & Development:

"The main reason the base set is white bordered is to help keep the collector value of the original printings. While **Magic** is at its core a game, it still has a collectable aspect. If all someone cares about is the playability of a card, then getting the reprints in a base set is an economical option. For people who feel the same way you do, investing in older sets for the coolness of having black borders can help personalize a collection or deck."

July 16



Q: "Why don't enchantments use the tapping mechanic all the other types of permanents use? It couldn't cause any rules confusion and would allow more use out of the card, such as an additional +0/+1 on a **Crusade**-style enchantment."

-- Matthew Gouge, River City, IA

A: From **Mark Rosewater**, R&D senior designer:

"The reason we don't do this is very similar to the reason that we don't put counterspells in black or enchantment removal in red. Colors and, in this case, card types, are defined as much by won't they don't do as what they do. As is, artifacts and enchantments are mechanically similar. Both are permanents that can sit in play creating a global effect. To help separate the two, R&D has come up with some guidelines. One of these is that enchantments don't tap. If they have activations, they can be used multiple times. In short, enchantments don't tap because if they did, we'd just make the card as an artifact."

July 15



Q: "I was wondering why you guys made **Ember Shot**. That must be the worst card in *Judgment*: seven mana for three damage and a lousy cantrip. Here in Holland my friends and I collected all of them after the prerelease and 'Ember Shot' them."

-- Bas Kooijman

A: From **Bill Rose**, head of Research & Development:

"Here's a consolidated transcript of one of our developer's job interview:

Me: Should we make cards that test deckbuilding skill in sealed deck? Cards that you're wrong to play all of the time and you're wrong to play none of the time?

Developer: Of course.

Me: Should we make direct damage cards that aren't a no-brainer to play when you play red?

Developer: Of course.

Me: If you had a direct damage spell that dealt 3 damage for **5** **2**, would you sometimes play it?

Developer: (hesitant) I guess.

Me: So is there any reason why we shouldn't print that card?

Developer: (on verge of tears) Noooooooooooooo!!!!!!!

"And **Ember Shot** was born. The development team made it a cantrip (and added one mana). They probably made it a better card. Will you play **Ember Shot** in your Constructed deck? Not if you hope to play in round two. Should you play **Ember Shot** in

Limited? Maybe, maybe not. For those of you who refuse to play **Ember Shot** in any deck -- maybe you should stick with *Spellfire*."

July 12



Q: "Recently I was on the Internet when I saw something on a rumor page that made me happy... **Necropotence** in *Onslaught*? I can't believe it!! Is it true?"
-- Jorge Lopez, Monterrey, Mexico

A: From **Mike Donais**, Research & Development:
"**Necropotence** is a powerful card and it defined an environment for a long time. In fact it even needed to be banned in several formats. Those are some of the reasons why we will not include it in *Onslaught*. Most of the rumors on the Internet about **Magic** are just that, rumors."

July 11



Q: "We bought the *Deckmaster* set, loved the cards and the thought of *the* matchup, but cannot find any info on your website about it. Has the matchup between Garfield and Finkel already taken place? If so, who won? If not, when is it scheduled to happen?"
-- Mark Joel, Detroit, MI

A: From **Daniel Stahl**, managing web producer:
"In 2001, Wizards of the Coast created a new type of special set entitled *Deckmasters*. Special sets are those one-of-a-kind releases that feature a unique subset of cards based around a theme. Past special sets have included *Beatdown* (which featured an **Erhnam Djinn** deck vs. a **Sengir Vampire** deck), *Battle Royale* (which contains the official **Magic** Multiplayer rules), and *Anthologies* (which featured two **Magic** all-star decks). All of these special sets can be found by selecting PRODUCTS from the left side of the MagicTheGathering.com navigation, then looking under SPECIAL SETS. You will find *Deckmasters* (Garfield vs. Finkel) as well as all of the other special sets linked there.

"As far as the actual showdown between Garfield and Finkel, it took place earlier this year at Pro Tour - San Diego. We have the entire match captured on video and ready for you to [download here](#). I don't want to spoil anything, but lets just say that things would have gone a LOT different if the match had been played with the rules Garfield created instead of the current floor rules that Mr. Finkel is highly familiar with."

July 10



Q: "What is up with the **Northern Paladin's** left eye? It seems that several cards in *Seventh Edition* picturing the **Northern Paladin**, such as **Glorious Anthem**, **Final Fortune**, and **Reprisal**, all show the left eye as simply white. What happened to him? Or is this just a mistake?"

A: From **Brandon Bozzi**, creative administrator:
"Actually, all four of the paladins have a missing eye. In the *Seventh Edition* backstory, when someone is 'confirmed' as a paladin he trades one of his eyes for a magical gemstone which increases his spell casting ability. Take a look at **Infernal Contract**, **Grapeshot Catapult**, and **Oppression** for other examples of the replaced eye."

July 9



Q: "I noticed **Masked Gorgon** from *Judgment* grants green and white creatures protection from gorgons, but **Masked Gorgon** is the only gorgon in **Magic**. Are you going to make other gorgons or was that just a mistake?"
-- Andy Fischer, Oklahoma City, OK

A: From **William Jockusch**, Research & Development:
"It's not a mistake -- it means that green and white creatures have protection from the **Masked Gorgon**. I don't know if we are going to make more gorgons or not, but either way this ability does matter."

July 8



Q: "What is Wizards' policy on creating cards that are strictly better than other cards?"

Examples of this are **Mental Discipline** versus **Compulsion**, and **Grizzly Bears** versus **Wild Mongrel**."

-- Jay Goldberg , Boynton Beach, FL

A: From **Brian Schneider**, Research & Development:

"In general I think we try to avoid making cards that are strictly better than those from the past. In some cases, like those you've mentioned above, we reconsider old cards that fit our mechanics well and try pushing them for constructed play. An example of this happened during *Torment* development... one problem we encountered was that, in theory, while **Mental Discipline** worked well with both madness and flashback, it just wasn't good enough to make it in *Standard*. We thought it would be an interesting effect to have around, and so, in the end, we decided to make a better version of the card. With **Wild Mongrel** it was basically the same way... he interacts with flashback and threshold in ways **Grizzly Bear** could only dream about...

"Typically, as I said above, we try to avoid making 'strictly betters.' If we think a card would be more interesting (for whatever reason) at a different cost, we'll discuss obsoleting an older card. But there'd have to be a good reason.

"One last reason we make cards that are strictly better: **Saprazzan Raider**. **Sword of the Chosen**. **Squire**. Some cards are so bad it's nearly impossible not to obsolete them."

July 5



Q: "With the new **Extended** format going into effect this November, has there been any thought of un-banning cards that were previously banned under the old **Extended** format (**Dark Ritual** for one)?"

-- Brian Boyle, Chicago, IL

A: From **Henry Stern**, Research & Development:

"The following individual cards are currently banned in **Extended** tournaments. Those marked with an asterisk will still be banned come November:

- **Amulet of Quoz** (*Ice Age*)
- **Dark Ritual*** (several sets)
- **Demonic Consultation** (*Ice Age*)
- **Dream Halls*** (*Stronghold*)
- **Earthcraft*** (*Tempest*)
- **Lotus Petal*** (*Tempest*)
- **Mana Vault** (*Fifth Edition*)
- **Memory Jar*** (*Urza's Legacy*)
- **Mind over Matter*** (*Exodus*)
- **Necropotence** (*Ice Age / Fifth*)
- **Replenish*** (*Urza's Destiny*)
- **Survival of the Fittest*** (*Exodus*)
- **Time Spiral*** (*Urza's Saga*)
- **Timmerian Fiends** (*Homelands*)
- **Tolarian Academy*** (*Urza's Saga*)
- **Windfall*** (*Urza's Saga*)
- **Yawgmoth's Bargain*** (*Urza's Destiny*)
- **Yawgmoth's Will*** (*Urza's Saga*)
- **Zuran Orb** (*Ice Age*)

Yes, we have thought about all of the cards that will remain banned come November, and what **Extended** will be like when the *Ice Age* and *Mirage* Blocks leave. However, most of the cards that are on the banned list are not there because of how they interact with *specific* cards from the departing blocks.

Dark Ritual was banned for two reasons. 1) Like all of the cards that produce more mana than they cost, it can have an unhealthy effect in combo decks. 2) First-turn **Dark Rituals** can be incredibly swingy. There is enough randomness in **Magic** as is, having matches come down to 'who drew their Ritual' is not a very satisfying way to play.

These reasons haven't changed with the departure of the *Ice Age* and *Mirage* blocks.

July 4



Q: "How many **Magic** players are registered with the DCI?"

-- Larry Whysall, Goldsboro, NC

A: From **R.E. Dalrymple**, Organized Play Operations Manager:
"The DCI continues to increase its **Magic: The Gathering** player base and activity levels. In the past 12 months, more than 200,000 **Magic** players participated in DCI-sanctioned tournaments around the world. The DCI sanctioned more than 90,000 **Magic** tournaments during that time period -- the most it's ever had in a 12-month span."

July 3



Q: "I saw that in one of the votes for what cards to put into *Eighth Edition*, **Rewind** was one of the options. Because it contains a block mechanic, I didn't think it was eligible to be reprinted. Does this mean that you're changing your reprint policy?"
-- Eric Lund, Milwaukee, WI

A: From **Randy Buehler**, **Magic** lead developer:
"Good question. We in R&D think of mechanics as falling into several categories. Some are things we do all the time (flying, first strike, etc) while others are things we like to save up and do all at once in order to help give an identity to the block they appear in (flashback, threshold, echo, etc). These are the two most talked about categories, but there is actually a third -- stuff that we sprinkle around where it seems appropriate. I'm talking about things like cantrips and 'can't be countered' that we don't do every set, or even every block, but that we still do reasonably often. This third category is mostly utility mechanics that aren't exactly splashy, but they are nice to have around from time to time because of their play value.

"The 'free mechanic' started life as a block mechanic, but it turned out to be inherently broken and it's one of the main reasons that *Urza's Saga* gave rise to the dreaded 'Combo Winter.' It's simply too easy to use free spells in a combo deck to generate mana. Note, however, that **Rewind** never fit into any of those combo decks. It was only the proactive free spells that were flawed -- you can't play reactive stuff (like **Rewind**) until your opponent does something and therefore the combo decks just weren't interested.

"So rather than write off the free mechanic as a failure, R&D thinks there's still a potentially interesting 'Category 3' mechanic buried under there. We think we can occasionally do *reactive* free spells when the urge strikes us.

"Meanwhile, it's true that the base set doesn't include any 'block mechanics,' but category 3 mechanics (I wish I had a better name for these) are indeed fair game. In addition, **Rewind** has a great name and great flavor and it would make a fine *Eighth Edition* card."

July 2



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: "Recently, a certain Japanese cartoon has been depicting high ranking CCG players as leading exciting, dangerous lives and the head of R&D as an incredibly powerful, omniscient being of pure evil. I'm hoping that there's no truth to this, but can you at least tell me where the heck did they get those ideas from?"
-- Steve Davis, Berkeley Heights, NJ

A: From **Robert Gutschera**, Research & Development:
"Well, R&D does from time to time assign top tournament winners to important but dangerous secret missions in third-world trouble spots, but I'm afraid that since these missions are secret I can't really tell you much more about them.

"As to the true nature of the head of R&D, I'm glad to finally get the truth of this out before the public. In fact, [\ Content Removed by B_R_SearcherBot \]. Furthermore, he monitors the web constantly and has any negative content about him deleted automatically, thus preserving his evil secrets."

[Ask Wizards Archive](#)

Interact
Rant, rave and share



[Respond to](#)
via email

Continue
Other recent articles



[Iname, Fist of the Corrupted](#) Your rules questions answered, plus a detailed look at "summoning sickness"
John Carter

Yesterday



[Light 'em up!](#) Going straight for the head
Nate Heiss

2 days ago



[Not As Good As We Thought](#) Five Onslaught block cards that bombed
Aaron Forsythe

2 days ago



[The Attack of Captain Obvious](#) Stupid heroes
Mark Gottlieb

3 days ago



[In It to Win It](#) PTQs and roundtable feedback
Brian David-Marshall

3 days ago

▪ [More recent articles](#)

▪ [Return to Magicthegathering.com](#)