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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](mailto:ask@wizards.com). We'll post a new question and answer each day.

September 30

**Q:** "What is the wire-winged angel creature fighting the female **Llanowar Elf** in the [Magic Online](#) banner? Except in reference with *Magic Online*, I don't think I've seen that creature before. Is she the mascot for *Magic Online*? Will she ever be a card? I hope so; she looks cool and powerful."  
 -- James Frank Stonestreet IV, Temple, TX

**A:** From **Jeremy Cranford**, *Magic* Artistic Director:  
 "The creature fighting the **Llanowar Elf** on the cover of the box and on the *Magic Online* banner was a concept design for **Fallen Angel**. This design never made it to the card but we thought she should get out in the public eye somehow. When were deciding what should be fighting the female **Llanowar Elf** we decide it should be this alternate **Fallen Angel**. I don't know if this version will ever end up on a card, but I hope so. I think she kicks ass."

September 27

**Q:** "I was wondering when *Eighth Edition* was scheduled to come out. I'm really excited about the cards that are going to be in it and I want to go ahead and preorder a box ASAP. When do you think that I would be able to do that?"  
 --Lywellyn

**A:** From **Wendy Wallace**, *Magic* product manager:  
 "I'm afraid you've got a while to wait, Lywellyn. *Eighth Edition* is scheduled to come out just in time for the ten year anniversary of *Magic* at Gen Con 2003! In actuality we'll be previewing the set at Gen Con and its official release date will be the Monday after, July 28. Preorders will most likely be available through retailers about a month before the release. In the mean time you can continue to help with *Eighth Edition* by voting in the upcoming flavor text and art polls here at [MagicTheGathering.com](http://MagicTheGathering.com)."

September 26

**Q:** "When the development team was throwing two color combos together for *Invasion* and *Apocalypse* creatures, who thought, 'If we put an Elf and a Merfolk together I'd bet they'd have flying?'"  
 -- Edward "Bring Back Banding" Myers

**A:** From **Randy Buehler**, *Magic* lead developer: "What actually happened is we said, 'What would happen if blue and green got together to make a weenie creature?' Well, the obvious thing to do was to make a creature that got size from green and flying from blue. In fact, this creature had been theorized long before we started working on *Apocalypse*. Ever since **Wind Drake** turned out to be decent, but not great, people (including R&D members) have wondered if we could make a cheaper 2/2 flyer. Well, 'not in blue' had long been the conclusion. But ... maybe in green-blue. The fact that it [**Gaea's Skyfolk**] is a Merfolk and an Elf came afterwards, when the creative guys decided they wanted to use iconic races."

## September 25



**Q:** "Why did you decide to change the corners of the cards between Alpha and Beta?"  
-- Jani Remesaho, Tampere, Finland

**A:** From **Richard Garfield**, creator of **Magic: The Gathering**: "The change was not intentional, and I don't know why it is there. I heard a rumor that the dies which cut the corners wear out over time and alpha was made using well worn dies, and beta's dies were fresh. I think that is nonsense though - if it were true we would see more variation in the enormous runs we have these days. So I believe it is just oversight, and once we saw the difference we chose to stick with the beta cut."

## September 24



**Q:** "What's up with the art on some of the gold creatures in *Planeshift*? **Silver Drake**, **Cavern Harpy**, and **Marsh Crocodile** look like they're coming from somewhere (or somewhat). Is it some kind of coincidence or maybe it came from the original story of *Planeshift*?"

-- MJ Boon, Cougar, WA

**A:** From **Rei Nakazawa**, **Magic** creative text writer:  
Good eye! Not many people noticed that. What you're seeing is actually a visual cue to reflect the 'gating' ability. For example, on **Silver Drake**, you see a bird vanishing into one side of the portal, and the Drake coming out the other. This is supposed to mirror what happens in the game when the Drake comes into play: in order to show up, another creature has to fold out of existence temporarily. In fact, even though you can't see the 'disappearing' creature on some of the creatures with gating, you can still usually see the portal they appear from behind them."

## September 23



**Q:** "Why is it that you printed **Persuasion** and made it a rare despite the fact that far better 'take-control' cards have been around? I quote **Confiscate** (*Urza's Saga* uncommon), **Control Magic** (*Fourth Edition* uncommon), and **Treachery** (*Urza's Destiny* rare). After such superior cards as those, **Persuasion** is an insult. Can somebody please explain why you didn't just reprint **Treachery** or **Control Magic**?"  
-- Jon Stock, Denver, CO

**A:** From **Mike Donais**, Research & Development:  
"In the past (and likely in the future) we have created cards that are too strong like **Mox Sapphire** and **Ancestral Recall**. Rather than continuing to reprint our mistakes we design more balanced versions of the cards like **Sky Diamond** and **Concentrate**. These new versions certainly are not as strong as the original ones but we feel that game balance is one of the factors that keeps **Magic** interesting to play. We talked about just reprinting **Control Magic** and we tested it out, but it was too good in the environment that we tested it for. The problem is cards like **Control Magic** discourage people from playing large powerful creatures like dragons and angels. We want to let people play their dragons because it is fun to smash someone with a dragon, so we had to make **Control Magic** effects slightly weaker."

## September 20



**Q:** "Why is **Flicker** a sorcery? It would have been a great trick, if only it were an instant."

--Doug Beyer, Seattle, WA

**A:** From **Mark Rosewater**, R&D senior designer:  
"During early design, **Flicker** (then called Refresh) was an instant but was later changed to a sorcery to fit better into a three card cycle in white (one common, one uncommon, and one rare); the instant use of the new mechanic was left for the rare card. Here are the cards as they appeared in an early version of design: (note that the original version of the mechanic didn't actually remove it from play)

### Refresh



Sorcery

Treat target permanent as though it has just come into play.

### Serra Hypnotist



Summon Cleric

2/3

Echo

When CARDNAME comes into play, treat target permanent as though it had just come into play.

### Master Hypnotist



Summon Wizard

1/1

: Treat target permanent as though it was just cast.

"The idea of removing the permanent from play and the returning it as a means of 'refreshing' a card was discovered later in design. Development decided that this mechanic was confusing enough that they wanted to start with just one rare card so they moved Refresh (aka **Flicker**) to rare. For similar reasons, the team felt best for first try out the mechanic at sorcery speed. The mechanic proved popular and has been since used on other cards (such as **Liberate** and **Anurid Brushhopper**) at instant speed.

## September 19



**Q:** "Ok you've got creature types of Elf, Dwarf, Dragon, etc. but no Human. Why are the more 'human' cards called Soldiers or Nomads instead of Human to follow suit with the other race types?"

-- Shane Irons, Wobegon, WI

**A:** From **Brady Dommermuth**, **Magic** creative director:

"Thanks for asking. For years, **Magic's** creature types had no rhyme or reason. If a strange creature such as **Lhurgoyf** came along, what creature type was it assigned? Lhurgoyf. This randomness led to famous flubs such as **Goblin Rock Sled** (type: Rock-Sled) and **Skyshrout Troll** (type: Giant). Then along came **An-Zerrin Ruins** and, um, ruined everything. But it opened up lots of new possibilities, too.

"**An-Zerrin Ruins** is an obscure rare card from the *Homelands* expansion. It's also the first time card designers made a card that keyed off creatures' types. The floodgates had been cracked. Later, when we printed more powerful creature-type cards such as **Extinction** and **Engineered Plague**, we began to realize how haphazard our creature types were. We made a few attempts here and there to fix things up, but by then we already had several years of cards under our belts. And once we print a card, we don't like to change its creature type (in the Oracle reference or in a reprinting), because the mixture of old and new versions can confuse players (**Longbow Archer**, anyone?).

"Lately we've been thinking about creature types a lot. We're trying to figure out how to get them to make more sense without disrupting the patterns among creature types on cards we've already printed -- and that's no easy task. For example, everyone has an idea about what kinds of abilities go with Elf, Rat, Angel, Atog, Dragon, Cleric, Specter, Griffin, Shade . . . the list goes on and on.

"That said, I think you'll see the results of our creature-type discussions soon. Very soon. Very, very soon. And if I get to try some things with creature types, that will be only the beginning. As for 'Human,' only time will tell -- about a year's time, to be more specific. It's been a hotly debated topic; many people think 'Human' is the default race for humanoid and that it shouldn't have its own creature type. But you're right that the current model is inconsistent. Some of our creature types are races (Elf, Goblin) whereas others are jobs (Soldier, Wizard). Stay tuned. Change is afoot in this area."

## September 18



**Q:** "Is it true that the commons and uncommons from the Alpha, Beta, and Unlimited era will be allowed to be reprinted? And if so how likely are we going to see cards like **Psionic Blast** reprinted? I am wondering if their appearance would change the environment of gameplay for Extended and Type 2. And if some are reprinted would their rarity change?"

-- Mike "Sapphire" Rizzo, New Jersey

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

"It is true that some commons and uncommons from the original sets will be available for reprint... I'd say that you're very unlikely to see **Psionic Blast** or **Ice Storm** or

**Sinkhole**, etc., make a comeback... For one, those specific cards are a bit out of flavor (for example, blue doesn't really do damage much anymore). Secondly, I think that we're going to try and avoid making a negative impact on the value of old, nostalgic cards.

"An interesting note... **Clone**, a perfect example of the kind of card we're looking to reprint, is in *Onslaught*. I hope this gives you an indication of what kinds of cards we're interested in reprinting (I can't go into it much further).

"The impact new repeats will have on constructed will, obviously, vary from card to card. I believe that some of the new cards will have an effect on constructed formats.

"Lastly, some of these new cards will change in rarity, some will not."

For more, check out the full [Magic Reprint Policy](#).

## September 17






**Q:** "You always make 'situational' cards, for example, creatures with landwalk abilities, protection from colors, etc., so a player can have them in his sideboard. Why don't you create cards that a player has to *remove* from his main deck while sideboarding? For example, a powerful creature that cannot attack or use abilities if the opponent has a swamp, or permanents of certain colors? Or spells that *cannot* be played against some colors?"


-- Leonid Komarov, Russia, Nizhny Novgorod

**A:** From **Mike Elliott**, R&D senior designer:

"The problem with main deck creatures that you have to remove if your opponent is playing a certain color is that to play them you are playing a guessing game.

"Say you have a card that is amazing unless your opponent is playing blue. Do you really start that card against a field that is 80% blue, like the recent Worlds field? In the cases where cards with narrow abilities get played maindeck, they are usually good enough to play without the extra ability. Players generally never sideboarded out **River Boa** if the opponent was not playing islands, since a 2/1 regenerator is very good against a lot of different deck types. And many of the pro white and pro black white and black weenie cards like **White Knight** were generally not sideboarded out if the opponent was not playing white or black.

"We have actually done a couple cards like what you are suggesting. A classic one was **Mtenda Lion**, which was a 2/1 for  that your opponent could pay  to neutralize its combat damage during any turn. Against decks that could not provide , it was **Savannah Lions**, but against decks with blue, it was hideously awful. Because it is only marginally better than a vanilla creature, it is usually not worth the risk to play these types of cards main deck since the relative value against decks where they are good versus an average creature is much less than the relative loss against decks they are bad against.

"Say we had a card that was : Deal 4 damage to target creature or player unless your opponent has a swamp or a forest in play. Compared to **Shock** you get an extra 2 damage when you use it, versus 2 fewer damage if the situation occurs. So if 50 percent of your opponents are playing swamps or forest it is worse, and if not it is better. Some other factors weigh in, like how often do you need to do 4 damage versus 2 do kill a creature, and if you are playing land destruction you might be able to suppress swamps and forests. In general, players don't like to rely on the field accommodating their deck by playing the right colors so these cards are more novelty than playable, so we don't tend to do them that often."

## September 16



**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**



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."

### September 13



**Q:** "Why don't you restrict certain cards right out of the box? Maybe something like, 'You may only have one copy of [card name] in your library.' It seems that it would ease R&D's mind to know that certain cards were not being abused."  
-- Nicholas Pry, Cleveland, OH

**A:** From **Brian Tinsman**, R&D game designer:

"It's an idea we've considered, but the main problem is that it makes luck more important than we're comfortable with. Restricted cards tend to be very powerful. After all, you want a strong ability in exchange for the drawback of only getting to play one of them. This means whoever draws his restricted card first tends to have a big advantage, especially in formats like Standard and Block where there aren't a lot of 'tutor' effects. Look at Type 1 games where there are lots of restricted cards. Drawing an early **Ancestral Recall** can really swing the game and end it before it even gets going. There's enough random chance in the game without magnifying it this way.

"Until we solve this problem, when we want to ease our mind knowing that certain cards aren't being abused, we'll just pull those cards out of the set."

### September 12



**Q:** "Why do the sets in Standard rotate the way they do? Wouldn't it seem more balanced (and economical for the players) to rotate them one at a time? For example: When *Onslaught* rotates in this fall, why not have just *Invasion* rotate out instead of the entire block? This would keep the format at six sets all the time, and players would be able to play their cards longer."  
--William Rezny, Muskegon, MI

**A:** From **Robert Gutschera**, Research & Development: "If we rotated sets one at a time, players would have to rebuild their decks every 4 months (every time a new set came out). This way, players only have to do this every year, which is much less strain. Of course, some people will *want* to rebuild their decks to adjust to the new cards, but it's not required. And even if you do add cards, at least you aren't always forced to take out a whole chunk, which might kill your whole deck.

"As to how long players get to play their cards, that's really a separate decision. For example, you could have every set stay in for a year, and then you'd be rotating in and out all the time, but it wouldn't mean you'd be playing your cards for longer. Or you could do it a block at a time, but let 3 blocks stay in at once; that would be like the current setup, but players would be able to play their cards longer.

"So we decided '1 block at a time' for the reasons I gave above. We decided '2 blocks stay in at once' because having the entire old block vanish the moment the new one came in was too much, but having 3 blocks in at a time would be so many different cards at once that it might as well be Extended. Extended is cool because you can play lots of different cards, but it's hard for any new set that comes out to impact it that much for that same reason -- the huge mass of old cards outweighs the new cards. So Extended doesn't tend to be as vibrant and changing an environment as some people might like. Which is why we have Standard!"

### September 11



**Q:** "Why does a sideboard have to be exactly 15 cards? Why can't it be under 15? It really doesn't make a difference."  
-- Stuart Jones, Kelowna, British Columbia

**A:** From **James Do Hung LEE**, Organized Play Program Manager:

"Of course, the upper bound for a sideboard is to limit the range of advantage available to players. After a certain limit, each card we allow in a sideboard reduces the skill-testing level of the constructed environment.

"But, why do we not allow smaller sideboards of fewer than fifteen cards? The primary reasons are practicality and fairness. If sideboards are of variable size, it becomes much more difficult for judges to do deck checks quickly. Also, by varying the size of sideboards, players are more likely to make decklist errors by leaving out cards in their sideboards or listing cards no longer being used in their actual sideboards. Finally, having a sideboard that can be fewer than fifteen cards allows some players to more easily claim that cards they have in their sideboards were simply left off of the decklist as an oversight. The DCI aims to implement rules that both protect tournament integrity and are easy to follow and enforce whenever possible. The sideboard of exactly fifteen cards is a successful example of such a rule."

### September 10



**Q:** "Recently during a game an opponent played a **Rhox**, at first I didn't recognize it because the art was different to the art I usually see, from a **Rhox** a friend of mine has. The new **Rhox** was some kind of spiny creature smashing up the ground, as opposed to the **Rhox** I am used to having a large club and two horns on his face. Both Rhoxes have the *Nemesis* symbol; why did they have different art?"  
-- Adam Ridley, Washington, England

**A:** From **Scott Rouse**, **Magic** product Marketing Manager:  
"The **Rhox** card you saw recently is the one that was available in the *Nemesis* expansion. The piece of art for the *Nemesis Rhox* was done by Carl Critchlow. The **Rhox** card you are more familiar with was created as premium card available in the **Magic: The Gathering Starter 2000** game released in April 2000. That art depicting Rhox wearing armour and holding a club was done by Mark Zug and was also used on the packaging. We also commissioned Mark Zug to create images of [Rhox in action](#) that were used in the *Starter 2000* marketing campaign.

"There was also an animatronic Rhox created for a television ad that ran in the US in the fall and winter of 2000. A person got inside the Rhox while two puppeteers ran the various functions of the costume."

### September 9



**Q:** "Why aren't there any enchantments or other spells that specifically grant Drake creatures an ability? Other creature types such as Goblins (**Goblin Chirurgeon**), Zombies (**Zombie Trailblazer**), and Minions (**Balthor the Defiled**) have cards that help out for a mono-creature type deck. Why not Drakes?"  
-- Warren Eng, Seattle, WA

**A:** From **Elaine Chase**, Research & Development:  
"There are so many creature types in **Magic** that we couldn't possibly make cards to specifically help each one of them. We try to pick the most prolific and popular races to enhance. While we do make a lot of people happy with this criteria, we know we're going to miss some people's favorites (somebody else actually sent in a similar email asking for more starfish). To help out the less popular races, we've made some cards that will help any type of mono-creature type deck, such as **Coat of Arms**. Granted, that was a long time ago, but there just might be some more of these cards appearing in the future...."

### September 6



**Q:** "I was looking the Olympics website, and I asked myself this question: Will Magic: The Gathering be included in the Olympics at some point?"  
-- Nicolás Femenía, Mendoza, Argentina

**A:** From **Joe Hauck**, Vice President of **Magic** brand: "Possibly. I just recently heard that there is a plan being worked on to include what are considered 'mind sports' games at the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens. At this year's **Magic World Championships** in Sydney, I met with a woman who is a researcher of communication and educational development and knows the group that is working on this plan. It is my intention to try and have **Magic** included in the mind sport competition aspect of the Olympics if they are successful with their plan. I think it would be a great honor for **Magic** to be included in such an event."

### September 5



**Q:** "Does Wizards actually deny the existence of the **Unholy Strength** featuring a burning pentagram? And if so, why?"

-- Andrew Bains, Richmond, VA

**A:** From **Brady Dommermuth, Magic** creative director:

"No, we don't deny the existence of the early version of **Unholy Strength** featuring a pentagram, nor do we deny altering the art to **remove it** back in 1995. (These days, we would simply use a brand new illustration rather than noticeably altering an existing one.)

"Wizards made a decision many years ago -- a good decision, in my opinion -- to prohibit the appearance of real-world symbols and words in **Magic** illustrations. That means no pentagrams, crosses, ankhs, David's stars, Nordic runes, and so on. We want to build our own fantasy world, and the intrusion of Earth-based faiths and/or languages disrupts those efforts. The **Magic** game is set in Dominia, not Earth, and we want Dominia to have its own unique look and feel.

"A related issue is that we're working toward a **Magic** world in which no color (of the five) has 'good' or 'evil' as one of its traits. Instead, each color has a good and evil side. For example, white isn't about 'good,' it's about law, order, and structure, even if it means oppressing others (fascism, for example, would be a white concept). Black isn't necessarily 'evil,' but it's about ambition, selfishness, and using others for personal gain. At its best, black is realistic and honest about its desire for power. Omitting real-world symbols helps us avoid associating individual colors with traditional notions of good and evil.

"I'm sure some of you can locate some slip-ups here and there regarding this policy, such as the Chinese and English characters on the *Portal Three Kingdoms* version of the card **Balance of Power**. Sometimes we make allowances for special cases, but in general, you won't see Earth symbols or letters in card illustrations."

#### September 4



**Q:** "I was looking over the Pro Tour coverage at [Sideboard Online](#), and noticed that the last Pro Tour featuring Standard as a format was [PT Chicago](#), in December 2000. Looking at the [2002-2003 schedule](#), there doesn't seem to be any Standard events either: Team Sealed/Rochester in Boston, Extended in Houston, Rochester Draft in Chicago, Block Constructed in Italy and Booster Draft in Yokohama. That makes something like two-and-a-half years without Pro Tour featuring the Standard format. What's the point in calling a format 'Standard' if it's never used on its own in high-level events? Sure, it's part of various championships, but those usually feature other formats at the same time."

-- Staffan Johansson, Växjö, Sweden

**A:** From **Chris Galvin**, director of Organized Play:

"I think it's pretty fair for the format formerly known as Type 2 to be called Standard. The DCI sanctioned over 90,000 Magic tournaments in 2001. The plurality, just under half in fact, were Standard format. The balance were a mix of booster draft, Extended, Sealed Deck, Block Constructed, team, and Vintage (pretty much in that order). Standard is definitely the most played format.

"Given that Standard really is... well... standard, I actually read your question as: 'How come no Standard Pro Tour?' We've gone back and forth on it, as evidenced with the now-classic Budde-Kibler PT Chicago in 2000. I can easily sum up the nature of the conversation we have around here whenever the topic comes up:

"Which existing PT format would you cut?"

"Every format brings something to the table. We like to balance limited and constructed individual formats, since we like to give equal opportunity to the skills involved in each. Extended generally offers the widest array of different deck choices. Block Constructed changes the most rapidly and, historically, has often led Standard deck design. If you ask some of the best deck designers in the world, they'll tell you Block Constructed is their favorite format. Team is one of the most interesting formats to watch. Many Pros consider it to actually be the most skill testing format.

"Standard is great, of course, as shown by its overall popularity. But we figure we give Standard plenty of time in the sun not related to the PT. As you mention, the Regionals/Nationals/Worlds chain of events uses Standard all the way through, even though some other formats are mixed in. State and Provincial Championships in many parts of the world are Standard format, right after the Standard format rotates blocks

(so no 'net decks' for all you folks who don't like that phenomenon). The annual Amateur Championship is Standard. And every once in a while we throw out a Standard Grand Prix, like Milwaukee this past year.

"We try to make sure that every format worth playing gets some time to shine, PT or no. We're pretty happy with the current mix."

### September 3



**Q:** "Recently you have been referring to cards such as **Force of Will** and **Bounty of the Hunt** as Alternate Playing Cost (APC) cards. I have always heard them referred to as Alternate Casting Cost (ACC) cards. Is there any significance to this difference, or is it just a matter of preference (for example are APC cards not actually cast)."

-- Patrick O'Neill, New York, NY

**A:** From **Mark Gottlieb**, **Magic** technical editor:

"There is a significance to that difference: 'cast' is no longer supported as a game term. This was one of the changes made when the rules were simplified for *Classic (Sixth Edition)*. The type line on creatures was changed from 'Summon Zombie' to 'Creature - Zombie' to actually clearly state on the cards that they were creatures. In terms of terminology, 'summon' went hand-in-hand with 'cast': you summoned creatures and you cast spells. But when 'summon' went out the window, 'cast' followed closely behind. In another act of simplification, 'play' replaced both words. Now you could play all your cards! You played land, you played creatures, you played instants, sorceries, artifacts, and enchantments. 'Cast' is now listed in the glossary of the Magic Comp Rules as an obsolete term, as is 'casting cost' (which has been replaced by the term 'mana cost')."

### September 2



**Q:** "What is the picture on **Yawgmoth's Will** supposed to be? Is it a monster that was created out of corpses or is it Yawgmoth digging up a grave or is it something else entirely?"

--Jim Hill, West Lafayette, IN

**A:** From **Rei Nakazawa**, **Magic** creative text writer:

"Well, here's what the original art description said: 'Show a creature - half bone and flesh, half machine, forcing its way up from the soil of an unmarked grave. The creature does this with speed and ferocity. It has only a few seconds of life energy and it intends to exact its revenge in that short time.'

"So the monster is actually coming UP, not digging down, and shows the 'bring back from the graveyard' effect of **Yawgmoth's Will**. Note, by the way, that this is back from the days of showing story points on cards, and this is a LOT more detailed than what we'd give our artists these days."



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