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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. We'll post a new question and answer each day.

October 31, 2002

Q: "Goblin King and Elvish Champion both cost 3 mana to play. On the other hand, Lord of Atlantis costs only 2. Are they supposed to be some kind of cycle? If so, why does Lord of Atlantis costs less?"

-- **Ciro Duran Santilli**, Santos, Brazil

A: From **Robert Gutschera**, Research & Development:

"They're related cards, but they're not exactly a cycle. They weren't all designed at the same time. Our ideas of what's appropriate have changed, and that's part of the reason things are different (our making **Elvish Champion** is a way of saying we think **Goblin King** is closer to being right than **Lord of Atlantis** is).

"Of course, **Goblin King** and **Lord of Atlantis** date from the same time period. At that time (way back before Alpha), people thought the Goblin deck was pretty good and the Merfolk deck was weak, so the **Lord of Atlantis** needed to be better to make up for that. The fact that there was only one actual Merfolk card may have had something to do with it. These days, with so many good Merfolk and Goblins available, the Lord seems overpowered compared to the **Goblin King**."

October 30, 2002

Q: "Why is the new prerelease card (**Silent Specter**) in English? Why have you stopped the 'strange alphabet' cycle?"

-- **Piotr Konieczny**, Poland

A: From **Scott Larabee**, Organized Play Territory Manager:

"For each block, we are doing something different with the prerelease card. For the *Invasion* block we did 'dead languages.' For the *Odyssey* block we did 'non-Roman alphabet.' The *Onslaught* block features 'fun with foil.' Doing the same thing to the prerelease cards every set would quickly become stale and boring."

October 29, 2002

Q: "As far as I know, you have never printed any card that uses exactly four colours in its mana cost. Why is that?"

-- **Stuart Lloyd**, Wolverhampton, England

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

"We have in fact never done a four-color card. We have done dozens of three-color cards and five five-color cards. (**Atogatog**, **Last Stand**, **Cromat**, **Sliver Queen** and **Coalition Victory**, plus the **1996 World Champion** card if you count that) In general, we try to keep all the colors even so we don't get spurious rumors like, 'R&D obviously hates green, they didn't do a green card here.' It also looks odd to collectors if the colors are not balanced, like some cards are missing.

"We recently did a black-themed set where we came close to doing a four-color card. We could easily have done a card with all the colors except black that had some large

effect against black, like maybe search their hand, library, and graveyard for all swamps and black cards and remove them from the game, but we decided not to do that card. Maybe someday in the future we will do a cycle of four-color cards, but given the narrow range of effects you would have for this, it would likely be something like a Dragon or Avatar cycle of large creatures and would be more flavorful than actually needing to be all four colors for mechanic reasons."

October 28, 2002



Q: "I saw that Wizards doesn't want anachronisms in the names of cards. In *Revised* you have **Rocket Launcher**, and the picture of the *Invasion* card **Zap** looks like a laser shot. The world of **Magic** is not a real world, so what exactly is the policy of Wizards concerning anachronisms?"

-- Bury Jean-Gerard, Belgium

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

"This subject is one we discuss often. We want **Magic** to be unique and to have its own 'look and feel' (distinct from Tolkien or D&D, for example). But we also want to make sure it's a fantasy game. We look at it this way: when you're trying to ride the edge, you occasionally fall over onto the wrong side. Examples of cards that ventured too far into modern or sci-fi territory include **Rocket Launcher**, **Phyrexian Walker**, **Orcish Lumberjack**, **Umbilicus**, **Thran War Machine**, **Extruder**, **Stratodon**, and **Power Armor** (and all the cards that show the armor, such as **Void**). We don't regret these cards, but we'd do them differently if we could turn back time. **Zap**, **Heat Ray**, **Strafe**, and other cards show weapons that fire beams or rays of mana, but we've decided these are just too close to lasers and should be avoided.

"In general, robots and lasers are off limits. Technology is fine, as long as it's clear that the technology is *based in magic* or powered by magic. The illustrations on **Urza's Mine**, **Urza's Power Plant**, and **Ashnod's Transmogrator** are great examples of magic-based machines (although the name "Power Plant" might be too modern). We'll continue to push the fantasy envelope, and I'm sure we'll go too far now and then. But we're learning more about how much is too much with every new set."

October 25, 2002



Q: "What is the story behind the *Ice Age* common **Fyndhorn Elves**? I think it is interesting that the development team would make a card just like **Llanowar Elves**. To me, eight **Llanowar Elves** in one deck seems odd and too powerful."

-- Tyler Carlson, Minnesota

A: From **Skaff Elias**, Senior VP of R&D:

"When we first designed the set, the card was **Llanowar Elves**. We felt green needed the boost to mana that it got from that card. When we were adding the story to the set, we were regularly changing the names of all the creatures, and obviously this deserved some consideration with the more powerful creatures, like Elves. We playtested thoroughly and decided that it wasn't a problem. In fact we had other fast green mana sources in *Ice Age* as well.

"In practice, of course, it turned out that it wasn't a problem--even with all the Elves available, no dominant deck played them all. Green did not go on to rule the tournament environment through its Elven army, and the flavor of *Ice Age* was kept distinct from the base set."

October 24, 2002



Q: "Why didn't you make **Dream Chisel** a legendary artifact? Since it seems to be Ixidor's own unique tool, and its ability makes it even easier to play the morph ability, why not limit it to only one at a time?"

-- Scott Gasperino, Oregon, USA

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

"Well, what happened was that the darker planeswalkers liked Ixidor's Chisel, so they created what amounts to a blueprint basically, so that they can in fact replicate the Chisel. This is not done often because dealing with dreams is dangerous business, but it does mean that the **Dream Chisel** is no longer unique. As a show of respect to Ixidor, the people who duplicated the **Dream Chisel** retained the name."

October 23, 2002



Q: "Why do innate abilities that cards have such as threshold, landwalk, fear, etc., all have an explanation of what the ability does in parentheses? Isn't the point of having these shortened versions of the abilities to avoid having to write out what they do?"
-- Steve Jackson, West Long Branch, NJ

A: From **Henry Stern**, Research & Development:
"The short answer to your question is: yes. The long answer is a bit more complex. Our policy on reminder text for keywords is to always print the reminder text if there is room on the card to do so. In general, we will only use the keyword without reminder text on rare-ish cards in expert sets.

"You have to keep in mind, although a card might be the 50th you have seen with the keyword 'fear' on it, for a new player, it quite possibly could be the first or second card with fear that he or she has seen. Keywords with no reminder text can be extraordinarily frustrating if you don't know what every keyword means. **Magic** is a complicated enough game already, we want minimize the number of times that people will have to refer to the rulebook. Another thing to keep in mind is that we expect most advanced players to see the keyword and then just skip over the reminder text and not even read it."

October 22, 2002



Q: "Why is it that Christopher Rush suddenly appeared in *Onslaught* after his sudden disappearance after his art for *Infantry Veteran*? Did he disappoint you guys one too many times and had to be put in your dungeon for a year or so?"
-- Chris Fady

A: From **Jeremy Cranford**, Art Director, **Magic** Brand:
"Christopher Rush had broken out of our dungeon and was last seen traveling the countryside with a beautiful woman. After his around-the-world travels, he returned home to the Pacific Northwest. This is where our artist scouts quickly captured him and put him back into the artist dungeon and made him start painting again. We have to keep an eye on him. He is always trying to escape."

October 21, 2002



Q: "Why do you put cards such as **Shock** and **Pacifism** in an expansion set at the same time they are in a base edition? You also did the same thing with **Elvish Champion**. It was in *Invasion* and the in *Seventh Edition*. Why not give us different cards in the expansion sets?"
-- Gregory Favreau, Champlain, NY

A: From **Worth Wollpert**, Research & Development:
"One of the main reasons we do this is that we feel like we want a specific card 'around' longer in Standard than its time would allow with it being just in an expansion or standalone. Another reason is that we feel like Limited play (sealed deck and draft) involving a specific set would be greatly enhanced by the existence of a particular card. For instance, we felt like **Shock** fit very well into the *Onslaught* block, since all the morph creatures have two toughness, and that created a good tension. With *Onslaught* out now, aren't you glad you still have **Elvish Champion** around in Type 2 to put in Standard Elf decks?"

October 18, 2002



Q: "I know that Kai Budde has won three Pro Tour Player of the Year awards. Exactly what did he receive for getting this honor, if anything?"
-- Gregory Ortiz, Bronx, New York

A: From **Jeff Donais**, DCI Manager:
"The Player of the Year receives two types of awards.

"The first is an automatic invitation to most major events in the season following his win. This includes Worlds, Pro Tours, Nationals, and so on. This is an important award, but the player will probably have enough pro points to receive most of these invitations, so it's not quite as powerful as it first appears."

"The second award is very valuable for any player who receives it. The player who wins Player of the Year receives free travel and accommodation at all the Pro Tours and Worlds in the next tournament season. This can easily add up to more than \$5,000 in a season and is probably closer to a \$10,000 bonus.

"The Rookie of the Year receives travel and accommodations to a single event of his or her choice."

October 17, 2002



Q: "On all the new cards, when referring to a player, it says 'he or she.' I've never heard of any girls playing **Magic**. Can you clarify me on this? Do you know of any girls that play **Magic: The Gathering**?"

-- Jarrid Legere, Milwaukee, WI

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

"I don't know of any girls who play **Magic** either. We just write 'he or she' to mess with you.

"I'm just kidding. I'm actually the only girl who plays **Magic**. Besides being a **Magic** developer and a level 3 judge, I'm also on the **Magic** rules team, so I make sure to tell the templating team to use 'she' a lot. Every time you see a 'she' on a card, it's talking about me.

"Oh, alright. One of the members of the templating team is a girl, too. She's the one who makes sure the cards say 'she' on them. That's two.

"Let me keep thinking. When I played on the Pro Tour, there was always one or two other girls playing in the event. Hold on, I'll go check the DCI database to find them.... Wow! There's over 95,000 women with DCI memberships! That can't be right. I'll go check with market research to see if they can shed any light on the issue....Will you believe it turns out that 10-15% of all **Magic** players are actually females?"

"Seriously, we're out there. In general, women tend to like the social aspect of **Magic** more than the competitive angle, so you'll find a smaller number at tournaments and many more laying the smack down around the living room coffee table. But I don't think I've ever been to a prerelease or Pro Tour qualifier where there wasn't at least one other girl besides me in attendance. And I could tell you some good stories about guys who couldn't seem to take the blow to their ego caused by losing to one of us. So don't think the next girl you play won't kick your butt. She'll just do it with a smile."

October 16, 2002



Q: "Why do some creature types have a definitive color and some not? For instance, Squirrels are green... Zombies are black... I usually think of Cats as red, but there are a few green ones as well."

-- Jennifer Maureen Savage

A: From **Brandon Bozzi**, **Magic** creative coordinator: "Sometimes the color of a creature type is determined by figuring out what color fits that type's personality best. For example, Goblins are red because they are impulsive and short-sighted, two of the main characteristics of red. Soldiers are white because they maintain law and order, two of the main characteristics of white.

"On the other hand, sometimes creature type is determined by where that creature lives. If a Cat lives in the forest it'll be green, if it prefers a home in the mountains it'll be red, if it roams the plains it'll be white... you get the idea."

October 15, 2002



Q: "Whatever happened to card that add or remove poison counters? I have always thought poison counters were cool and I wanted to make a deck, but there are hardly any poison cards. Why did you stop making them? Were they too powerful?"

-- Tim Wright, Kamloops, BC, Canada

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

"Ah, poison. Let me start by saying that I'm a fan of poison. Possibly the biggest fan in R&D. In fact, the design of *Tempest* (my first lead design) was handed over to development with sixty-two poison cards. So what happened? Well, poison has a

couple strikes against it. First, it requires a lot of bookkeeping for something that more often than not doesn't matter. Second, it's a very dangerous mechanic. If R&D misjudges it even a little, **Magic** could become a game where damage no longer matters. (This fear is why the poison cards to date have sucked.) Does this mean poison is dead? Not as long as I work here. Eventually, I'll find a cool way to implement poison that deals with those two issues. And knowing me, the poison will probably be delivered by rabid squirrels. But someday it will happen. Until then, my poison comrades, be patient. Poison will have its day. Oh yes, poison will have its day."

October 14, 2002



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."

October 11, 2002



Q: "Why don't basic lands have text in recent sets? A lot of people on the [Rules Q&A boards](#) seem to be confused by this. A lot of newbies don't understand the difference between land and mana. I also think 'text lands' look a lot cooler."

-- Thomas Nak, Haarlem, Netherlands

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

"The use of a huge mana symbol in place of text on basic lands began with *Portal*. Through testing this product, we found that the large mana symbols in place of rules text helped new players to better distinguish lands from spells. Yes, the difference between land and mana is a subtle one. However, the we feel it is more important for the true beginner to easily see the difference between land and spells. Once they are asking the difference between land and mana, in some senses they are no longer 'newbies' as this is a somewhat advanced concept.

"Also, there was a general consensus that the large mana symbols just looked better. Thus they were rotated into the basic set with *Classic Sixth Edition*, and have been used for expert expansions starting with *Mercadian Masques*."

October 10, 2002



Q: "Why is it that **Gigapede** and **Gangrenous Goliath** don't have the tombstone symbol? Was that symbol restricted to *Odyssey* block only, or did someone just forget to put them on?"

-- Robert Driskill, Morris Township, NJ

A: From **Randy Buehler**, Director of **Magic** R&D:

"The tombstone symbol ended up being an *Odyssey* block only thing. The graveyard was so important in *Odyssey* that we felt we needed a symbol to make players' lives easier. However, we've decided not to do it on an ongoing basis. That will just be one of the things that was special about the *Odyssey* block and its graveyard theme."

October 9, 2002



Q: "I was just wondering why you never tried more specific local enchantments? For example 'Enchant Elf' or 'Enchant Wizard,' giving an advantage to playing a creature type or them deck, or for lands, instead of Enchant Land have 'Enchant Basic Land' or 'Enchant Mountain.'"

-- Ian Rohde, Shreveport, LA

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

"I believe we considered 'specific local cards (though not necessarily enchantments)' in *Onslaught* and opted not to do them, mainly because they were too narrow within the context of our environment. That doesn't mean we couldn't do them... there just hasn't been a window where we thought using extreme 'specifics' would be good for a set. We don't want to make too many cards (or create abilities) that are useful only if a certain condition is met... from experience, I can tell you it's no fun having **Lotus Vale** in your hand with only one land in play."

October 8, 2002



Q: "**Crusade** made its appearance in *Odyssey* as **Divine Sacrament**, is there a reason why a version of **Bad Moon** isn't printed?"

-- Benjamin Tan, Singapore

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

"Not really. But we haven't seen a good reason in favor of printing one either. We've made an effort in the past couple of years to strengthen the identity of each color. A big part of white's identity is being the weenie creature color and **Crusade**-type abilities are pretty weenie-oriented so they are a natural fit for white. Black isn't especially strong in small creatures, so designers haven't created any new versions of black weenie helpers like **Bad Moon**."

October 7, 2002



Q: "Why aren't you printing cards of Phage, Akroma and Nivea?"

-- Eric Chua, Singapore

A: From **Brady Dommermuth, Magic** creative director:
"I can't comment on Phage, Akroma, or Nivea specifically. But I can say that (a) the novels contain far more characters than we could ever make Legend cards for, and (b) we try not to cram all the characters from the story into the first set. We spread them out across the three sets in the block instead. So there's a chance you'll see the characters you like in one of *Onslaught's* expansions. Happy hunting."

October 4, 2002



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.)"

October 3, 2002



Q: "The card **Wonder** has the tombstone icon on it. Does this mean that you can retrieve it with a **Quiet Speculation**? On the *Odyssey* rules insert it says that if a card has the tombstone on it, it has flashback."
-- Tom Devereux, Auckland, New Zealand

A: From **Randy Buehler, Magic** lead developer:
"The short answer is 'no.' The long answer is that -- after we had already written the *Odyssey* rules insert -- we decided it would be handy to use the tombstone to denote any card that does something while it's in the graveyard, not just flashback cards. Thus cards like **Ichorid** and the **Incarnations** got the symbol too so it would be easier to see them when looking at your opponent's graveyard."

October 2, 2002



Q: "A few days ago, I was flipping through an old *Ice Age* rulebook that I had found (yes, I was very bored), and I noticed the following in the credits: 'Our condolences to everyone who has been killed by an **Ornithopter**.' What's the story behind this?"
-- Ryan Stone, Stittsville, ON, Canada

A: From **Mark Rosewater**, R&D senior designer:
"Wizards of the Coast is a game company, so it's filled with employees that are, well, playful. As such, every rulebook has had at least one joke line in it. Really, check them out. How did this particular line come to be? Well, as I wasn't here during the development of *Ice Age* (I was just a player back then), I turned to Darla Kennerud, the current head of the Editing department. She was one of the editors that worked on *Ice Age*. To the best of her memory, the line was a nod to an employee named Scott Hungerford, nicknamed 'Scooter.' (Scooter, along with Kyle Namvar, designed the expansion *Homelands*.) Anyway, at the time Scooter worked in Customer Service and had a habit of playing **Ornithopters** in every deck. Others had told him that **Ornithopters** weren't any good, so Scooter took great joy in killing people with them. In fact, not only would he beat them but also he would make little propeller noises whenever he attacked with them. According to Darla, this line was a nod to Scooter and the many like him that went out of their way to win with less than optimal cards."

October 1, 2002



Q: "How did Richard Garfield come up with the 20 life total? Did he just decide it and then made the cards according to that, or did he make the cards and then thought 20 would be a reasonable number?"
-- Luís Almeida, Lisbon, Portugal

A: From **Richard Garfield**, creator of **Magic: The Gathering**:
"That was the biggest I could go to on my fingers and toes!

"Seriously, it was the first number that occurred to me, and I built the rest of the cards around that number. Later in development I experimented with 30 life to make larger creatures worth more, and 12 life to simplify the game. In the end, though, 20 just seemed right. (And it works so well with a 20-sided die.)"



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