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Lost in a Fog

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Such a basic concept, this **Fog** card.
 "Prevent all combat damage that would be dealt this turn."

Fog's been with us from the beginning of the game. It's an old friend that rolls in, distracts you for a spell, and then dissipates into the night. Actually, that sounds more like a vampire. It'd be more accurate to say that **Fog** is like that friend who shows up unannounced, wastes your time, and generally accomplishes nothing.

That's not entirely being fair to the **Fog** mechanic. It has been recognized as a very underpowered ability over the years, and been given many makeovers. Who could forget some of the **Fog** variants that showed up by *Ice Age*?

- **Fog**
- **Darkness**
- **Holy Day**
- **Angus Mackenzie**
- **Sunstone**
- **Glacial Crevasses**
- **Winter's Chill**

Wait up. No wonder **Fog** didn't work out quite so well in the beginning. Was it green? Black? White? Gold? Red? Artifact? Blue? What in good god's name happened here?

No other mechanic in **Magic** took on such an identity crisis as **Fog**. Every color dipped pretty heavily into the fog bank (Pun intended. Send hate mail to bleiweiss1@cox.net). Yet if you asked any **Magic** player which color is the "fog" color, the answer would be close to universal.

Green.

Green, green, green.

I wouldn't argue with this assessment. Green certainly possesses more fog cards than any other color in **Magic**, but the margin might be smaller than you think. Let's delve deeper.

WHAT IS THE FOG MECHANIC?

Simply put, the fog mechanic is one that causes creatures to neither deal nor receive damage in combat. It's that simple! Take a look at **Fog** again to remind yourselves of the archetypical fog card.

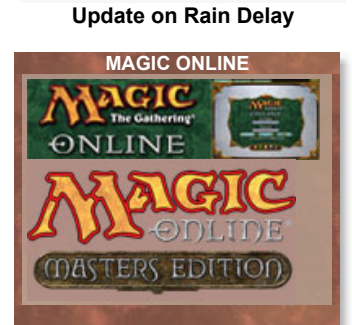
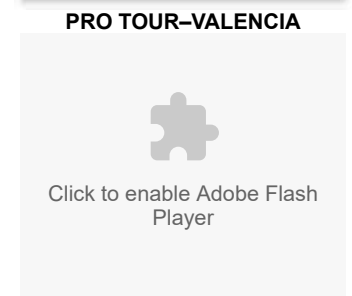
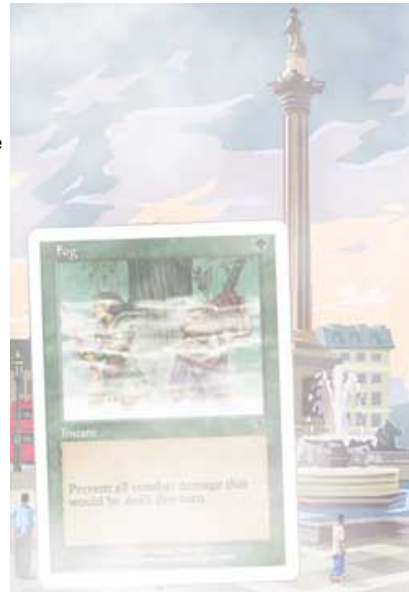
- **Fog** prevents only combat damage.
- **Fog** prevents damage both dealt and received by a creature or creatures.

WHAT ISN'T THE FOG MECHANIC?

- Damage prevention (**Circles of Protection**, **Redeem**)
- Cards that cause creatures to become blocked (**Dazzling Beauty**, **Fog Patch**)
- Cards which remove creatures from combat entirely (**Gustcloak** creatures)
- Cards which cause creatures to deal but not receive damage (**Inviolability**)
- Cards which cause creatures to receive but not deal damage (**Muzzle**)
- Cards that prevent damage to creatures outside of combat (**Bubble Matrix**)

WHO GETS THE FOG?

- Green: 15 (including **Angus Mackenzie**)
- Blue: 9 (including **Angus Mackenzie**, **Energy Arc**, and **Urborg Phantom**)
- White: 4 (including **Angus Mackenzie** and **Energy Arc**)
- Red: 3
- Black: 2 (including **Urborg Phantom**)
- Land: 2



- Artifact: 1

WHAT DOES THIS ALL MEAN?

Fog is one of those cards that new players flock to in droves. Much like life gain, it's a mechanic that delays the inevitable instead of furthering your position in the game. **Fog** won't keep you from dying to a horde of Squirrels; it will delay that death by a single turn.

There are some cards and mechanics that R&D strives to improve to the level of tournament playability, and fog definitely falls straight into this category.

And you know what?

It turns out that fog, the very mechanic derided by serious players as ranking somewhere in power between bands-with-other and rampage, wasn't very bad to begin with. More accurately to say, **Fog** itself was that bad, and the children of **Fog** became first rate tournament mainstays.

LOST IN A DAZE

Fog's biggest problems stem from its one-time usage, mass effect, and lack of overall impact. Each successful variant on **Fog** has challenged those handicaps summarily. The first of these did its job so well it got restricted in Type 1! **Maze of Ith** allowed a player to untap an attacking creature, and have it neither deal nor receive combat damage this turn. As a land, it couldn't easily be destroyed, and it sat there turn after turn selectively fogging creatures. Need to save one of your attackers? Maze it. Need to save your own hide? Maze an attacker. **Maze of Ith** was restricted from October of 1994 until April of 1999.

Glacial Crevasses and **Sunstone**: Two cards, little remembered today, that made a big impact on the tournament scene in the early days of Type 2. Both fell out of favor once the DCI restricted **Land Tax**, but they were integral parts of a very strange white/red deck favored in the Northeastern US. The deck packed **Disenchant**, **Land Tax**, **Swords to Plowshares**, **Wrath of God**, **Disrupting Scepter**, **Feldon's Cane**, **Fellwar Stone**, multiple **Crevasses** and **Sunstones**, **Shivan Dragon** and **Serra Angel**. With all basic lands in this deck being snow-covered, a player could easily keep his land count down by sacrificing to his pair of fog machines, and then **Land Tax** for three more lands to play around with! Able to hold off attacking creatures indefinitely, the deck eventually either ran the opponent out of cards, or won with a single copy of **Serra Angel** or **Shivan Dragon**.



WHERE'S GREEN, DAMMIT?

Notably missing above are any green cards. **Fog** didn't hit its green stride until further down the road, circa the **Tempest** era. Two cards took different paths to achieve the same effect. In **Stronghold**, we got the a buyback **Fog** in **Constant Mists**. **Exodus** debuted **Spike Weaver**, as of yet the most successful fog card in **Magic**. Each wedded the fog mechanic to a block mechanic and came out with reusable sources of bypassing combat damage.



These fog effects have had varying levels of success in the tournament scene.

Spike Weaver itself proved especially strong in the **Oath of Druids** deck. Both Chris Benafel and Justin Gary piloted such decks to top four finishes at the [Nice Masters tournament](#) this past May.

Oath of Druids - Finalist - Nice Masters event		
Justin Gary - Extended		
	Main Deck 60 cards	Sideboard
1	Bad River	4 Call of the Herd
4	Flood Plain	2 Circle of Protection: Red
3	Treetop Village	2 Hydroblast
4	Tropical Island	4 Pyroblast
	4 Brainstorm	
	4 Counterspell	
	2 Fact or Fiction	
	4 Force of Will	

4 Tundra	2 Gaea's Blessing	1 Samite Ministration
4 Volcanic Island	4 Impulse	1 Seal of Cleansing
4 Wasteland	4 Oath of Druids	1 Trade Routes
24 lands	3 Powder Keg	15 sideboard cards
	4 Swords to Plowshares	
2 Morphling	1 Sylvan Library	
1 Spike Weaver	1 Thwart	
3 creatures	33 other spells	

Two other green Fog variants of note are **Tangle** and **Moment's Peace**. When the **Fires of Yavimaya** deck ruled the tournament scene, **Tangle** stepped up as a way to win the mirror match. Your opponent would swing with their team, and you would **Tangle** said creatures, keeping them helpless for a full two turns. This made **Tangle** the first tournament-worthy Fog card which was neither a permanent nor reusable. **Moment's Peace** saw extensive play during Odyssey Block constructed season, as it could be fetched using **Quiet Speculation**.

Wake - Top 16 - Grand Prix Hamburg		
Jan Doise - Odyssey Block Constructed		
Main Deck	Sideboard	
60 cards		
5 Forest	3 Aether Burst	1 Aether Burst
10 Island	3 Circular Logic	1 Chastise
4 Krosan Verge	4 Compulsion	1 Circular Logic
3 Plains	4 Concentrate	1 Divert
3 Skycloud Expanse	4 Cunning Wish	1 Elephant Ambush
1 Sungrass Prairie	4 Kirtar's Wrath	1 Envelop
26 lands	2 Mirari	4 Far Wanderings
	4 Mirari's Wake	1 Flash of Insight
	3 Moment's Peace	1 Krosan Reclamation
	3 Syncopate	1 Moment's Peace
0 creatures	34 other spells	1 Ray of Distortion
		1 Ray of Revelation
		15 sideboard cards

SOMETHING'S MISSING

There have been many faces of **Fog**, including the following:

- Snow-covered Fog (**Sunstone/Glacial Crevasses/Winter's Chill**)
- Buyback Fog (**Constant Mists**)
- Cycling Fog (**Lull**)
- Flashback Fog (**Moment's Peace**)
- Fog as a creature (**Spore Frog** aka Fog Frog)
- Spike Fog (**Spike Weaver**)
- Spellshaper Fog (**Dawnstrider**)

Of all these Fogs, you might notice one very significant omission. It's a card that's been due for years, but has yet to show its face in **Magic**.

Cantrip Fog.

The closest version we've gotten has been **Foxfire**, which "Maze of Iths" a creature. All I want to see is a card which acts exactly like good old **Fog**, and adds the line of text which says "draw a card."



Do you think there should be a cantrip Fog?

Yes

No

Submit my Vote

Next week: The top five green sets of all time.

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Ben Bleiweiss has written about his obsession with **Magic: The Gathering** for over a decade. He's travelled the world because of **Magic**, both as a player and a writer. When not spending time playing **Magic**, writing about **Magic**, or thinking about **Magic**, Ben is employed by StarCityGames.com, where he works with **Magic** cards all day long. He lives with his wife in Virginia, and they sleep comfortably at night under their Orgg down comforter.



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