

Home > Games > Magic > Magicthegathering.com > Columns



Thanksgiving in Dominia

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Ah, Thanksgiving. It's that time of year when ye olde family gathers round the crock pot to spoon out copious quantities of Beefaroni to the young'uns. Not every family shares that rich tradition, so this week I'm going to give you all a special treat: a look at Thanksgiving in Dominia.

People often write me emails. Here's a random sample from my current inbox:

"Dear Ben:

I couldn't help but notice that you've become more and more insane as time marches on. We're sending over the paddy wagon right now to confiscate your computer and replace you with a more efficient, robotic columnist.

Yours Truly,
Coach A.F., Editor"

Reading between the lines as only I can, I think this 'reader' is really asking me to explain the difference between Dominia and Dominaria. Dominia is the entire multiverse in which **Magic: The Gathering** takes place. Dominaria is the world where most of the sets have taken place, aka *Urza's Saga*, the Legacy Quest, and the current storyline.

THANKSGIVING TIME

Thanksgiving is a time to reflect upon the past year (or your entire life) and give thanks for all the blessings you've had in your life. This week I'm giving thanks for a couple of rules changes that have made **Magic** a game of even more strategy and fun.

Coming into the release of *Classic: Sixth Edition*, it was clear that many **Magic** rules needed cleaning up. Some interactions between cards were counterintuitive, and some rules were so convoluted that you needed to carry around the Magic Team rulings in a binder about the size of Gibraltar. To clean up the game a bit, the following aspects of the game of **Magic** changed:

ARTIFACTS

Change: Tapped artifacts no longer turned off. (Read more about this change [here](#).)

Why: Intuitively, there's no reason why this should happen. If two people picked up the game for the first time and started playing, there was maybe one obscure line of rules in the rulebook which covered the fact that artifacts shut off when tapped. Example: Let's take a gander at **Torture Chamber**.

How it used to work:

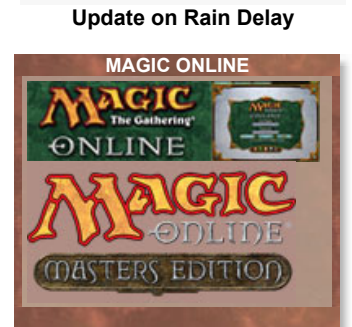
- During my upkeep, I announce "adding a counter to Torture Chamber."
- In response, I tap **Torture Chamber** to shoot my **Giant Badger** for zero.
- The counter ability resolves; I put a counter on **Torture Chamber**.
- Since **Torture Chamber** is tapped, I take no damage from it at the end of turn.

How it works now:

- At the beginning of my upkeep, "adding a counter to **Torture Chamber**" goes on the stack.
- In response, I tap it to shoot my **Skirk Prospector** for zero.
- The counter ability resolves; I put a counter on **Torture Chamber**.
- At the end of my turn, I take one point of damage since tapped artifacts no longer turn off unless it says so on the card itself (aka **Static Orb**). So it was pretty dumb of me to shoot my guy for zero, now, wasn't it?

THE STACK

Change: The stack resolved one effect at a time, instead of all at once. New effects could be added in the middle of a resolving stack.



Why: Often players "play" the game incorrectly when learning on their own. Of all the ways to bend the rules, this one by and far took first place in the "how can I play wrong" race. The game was changed to reflect a more intuitive (I'll be using this word a lot today) way of playing: spells and effects resolve one at a time, and you can add back onto the stack after each resolution.

Example: I'm at three life, with **Mystical Tutor** and **Obsessive Search** in hand. You play **Lightning Bolt**, targeting me. Under earlier rules, there was no way for me to tutor for **Counterspell**, draw it, and counter the Bolt.

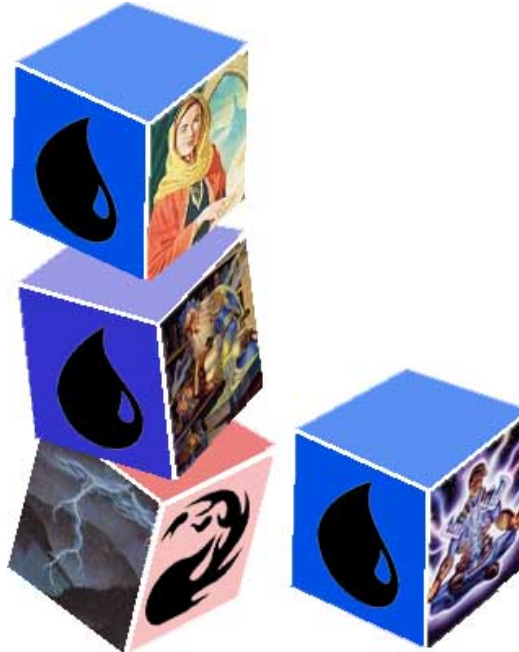
How it used to work:

- You play **Lightning Bolt** to begin a batch.
- I play **Obsessive Search**, which is added to the batch.
- I play **Mystical Tutor**, which is added to the batch.
- Last in first out: **Mystical Tutor** resolves; I put **Counterspell** on top of my library. **Obsessive Search** resolves; I draw **Counterspell**. Your **Lightning Bolt** resolves and deals three to me; I'm dead (sort of, see below).

See, under the old rules you could not insert any effects into a batch once the batch began to resolve.

How it works now:

- You play **Lightning Bolt**, which goes on the stack.
- I play **Mystical Tutor**, which goes on the stack.
- We both allow **Mystical Tutor** to resolve, and I put **Counterspell** on top of my library.
- I play **Obsessive Search**, which goes on the stack.
- We both let **Obsessive Search** resolve, and I draw **Counterspell**.
- I add **Counterspell** to the stack, targeting your **Lightning Bolt**.
- When **Counterspell** resolves, **Lightning Bolt** is countered.
- We're both disqualified from the local Friday Night Magic tournament when a wandering judge sees us playing illegal cards.



NO MORE INTERRUPTS

Change: Interrupts were done away with completely. All former interrupts (and mana sources) became instants.

Why: Interrupts took away from the game by hitting a pause button while resolving. They worked outside the normal flow of time. They threatened the space-time continuum. (Take a look [here](#) for more information about Interrupts.)

Example: This one's a classic.

How it used to work:

- You play **Lightning Bolt**, while I'm at three life. You sure like playing with **Lightning Bolt**, don't you? You like it so much, you've got another one in hand, with another mountain untapped.
- As an interrupt, I play **Power Sink** for two, countering your **Lightning Bolt** and forcing you to tap your last land and emptying your mana pool.
- You cannot respond to interrupts with instants. Congratulations! This means you cannot play that second **Lightning Bolt** in your hand this turn to kill me.

How it works now:

- You play **Lightning Bolt**. Hurray!
- I play **Power Sink** for two. Hurray!
- You play your second **Lightning Bolt** in response. I die. Hurray!

SUDDEN DEATH

Change: You lose immediately if for any reason you find yourself at zero life. **Why:** Again, an intuitive change within the game's structure. Why should you be allowed to continue playing after you've already technically lost?

Example: Old combo decks used to go way below zero life before winning.

How it used to work:

- You are reduced to zero life or less somehow.
- You have until the end of the current phase until you die. You can continue playing, drawing cards, tapping and untapping City of Brass fifty more times, and if you **Braingeyser** your opponent out of cards, you win



the games, even if you have -34 life.

How it works now:

- You are reduced to zero life or less somehow.
- Game over, man! Game over!

TRIGGERS ON THE STACK

Change: Triggered abilities (such as **Nekrataal**'s comes-into-play ability) go on the stack and can be responded to. Previously they could not.

Why: This rule worked against all common sense to begin with. Take a look below for an example.

Example: Ah, you took a look below! Here we go:

How it used to work:

- I have two **Spike Feeders** in play. You play **Nekrataal**.
- My only window for responses is in response to the **Nekrataal** spell, before I know what you want to kill with it. Once it comes into play, I can't respond. You don't chose which creature to kill until after it's too late for me to respond.
- **Nekrataal** comes into play, killing a **Spike Feeder**. The Feeder dies, since I can't respond at all. If I had sacrificed one Feeder for four life in response to **Nekrataal**, you could have just killed the other one.

How it works now:

- I have two **Spike Feeders** in play. You play **Nekrataal**.
- I have a window to respond to you playing **Nekrataal**, but I don't need to. Once **Nekrataal** comes into play, you choose a target creature to kill. When **Nekrataal**'s comes-into-play ability goes on the stack, I can respond by sacrificing the Feeder you targeted, effectively countering the comes-into-play ability.



NEW PHASES, OLD PHASES

Change: The game now operates in different phases than previously. Several old phases were grouped as subsets of new phases.

Why: Again, this consolidated the rules. It also paved the way for combat being its own phase, instead of a subset of the main phases.

Example:

How it used to be:

1. Untap Phase
2. Upkeep Phase
3. Draw Phase
4. Main Phase
 1. First Main Phase
 2. Combat
 3. Second Main Phase
5. Discard Phase
6. Cleanup Phase

How it is now:

1. Beginning Phase
 1. Untap Step
 2. Upkeep Step
 3. Draw Step
2. Main Phase
3. Combat Phase
4. Second Main Phase
5. End Phase
 1. End of Turn Step
 2. Cleanup Step

Combat became it's own phase. In addition, the two Main phases were separated, and Untap/Upkeep/Draw were combined into one "Beginning Phase." This meant you could float mana through your upkeep step and use it to play a card you drew during your draw step. Under the old rules, since these were separate phases that was not possible.

NO MORE DAMAGE PREVENTION STEP

Change: Damage prevention used to have it's own little slice of time in which it could be used. Now, it has joined the regular stack without a need to feel special and isolated. Also, damage prevention now forms a shield around the creature/player it's preventing to, allowing you to soak up damage from multiple effects.

Why: Why should damage prevention work differently than any other sort of effect in the game? It couldn't be responded to except by interrupts and other damage prevention effects, which threw the timing of the game way off kilter. Also, damage prevention used to prevent just once and then go away, even if that once didn't match the total damage dealt to a creature.

Example: Let's say I have *Orim*, *Samite Healer* and *Seeker of Skybreak* in play. You play *Lightning Bolt* targeting my *Orim*, *Samite Healer*, and respond by casting *Lightning Bolt* targeting my *Orim*, *Samite Healer*.

How it used to work:

- *Lightning Bolt* #1 would target my *Orim*, *Samite Healer*.
- *Lightning Bolt* #2 would target my *Orim*, *Samite Healer*.
- I'm not allowed to tap the *Orim*, *Samite Healer* until there's actual damage to prevent.
- The batch begins to resolve. *Lightning Bolt* #2 deals three damage to my *Orim*, *Samite Healer*. Bing! A damage-prevention window opens up.
- During the damage-prevention window (why did this even exist?!), I could tap my *Orim*, *Samite Healer* to prevent three damage to itself.
- *Lightning Bolt* #1 deals three damage to my *Orim*, *Samite Healer*. Bing!
- Since using *Seeker of Skybreak*'s ability to untap the Healer isn't a damage prevention effect, I can't use it during the resolution of the batch.
- *Orim*, *Samite Healer* dies.



How it works now:

- *Lightning Bolt* #1 goes on the stack, targeting my *Orim*, *Samite Healer*.
- *Lightning Bolt* #2 goes on the stack, targeting my *Orim*, *Samite Healer*.
- I tap the *Orim*, *Samite Healer*, putting a three-point damage prevention shield around itself.
- I let *Lightning Bolt* #2 resolve. The damage prevention shield absorbs all the damage.
- I tap *Seeker of Skybreak*, adding its ability to the stack, targeting the *Orim*, *Samite Healer*.
- *Orim*, *Samite Healer* untaps.
- I tap *Orim*, *Samite Healer*, putting a three-point damage prevention shield around itself.
- *Lightning Bolt* #1 resolves. The damage prevention shield absorbs all the damage.
- *Orim*, *Samite Healer* lives.

I don't know how many people who read my column have played **Magic** under the old (pre-Sixth) rules and how many have played under the new rules. I would like to hear from everyone through email this week to hear what you think about the most significant rules repairing in **Magic** history. Did you not know the game used to be played differently? Do you yearn for the "good old days" where you had half the options, couldn't respond to half the effects in the game, and encountered general rules frustration? Let me know!

Oh, and lest you think I've forgotten the biggest *Sixth Edition* change of all...

Coming next week: My favorite card.

Coming in two weeks: A look at the Combat Phase, Sixth Edition style.

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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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