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April 30, 2004

**Q:** "Will equipment stay around after *Mirrodin* block?"  
-- Michael Jacobs

**A:** From **Elaine Chase**, **Magic** R&D:

"Most of the time, new key word mechanics stay in the block they were designed for. On occasion, new key word mechanics may make their way out of a block and into the design space of **Magic** as a whole. The most recent example of this is double strike, which premiered in *Legions* but has appeared in the *Mirrodin* block.

"While new key word mechanics get introduced every block, it is a rare occasion when **Magic** gets a new card type. I know, I know, technically equipment is a new sub-type, but it has such a unique function that it really feels like a whole new card type. For R&D to develop such an innovative class of card that can transcend block mechanics and then just let it be boxed off into *Mirrodin* Block seems like such a waste of design space. Then again, we could withhold equipment for a few years, and then bring it back in a glorious return a la cycling.

"Which way will Equipment go? Only time will tell...."

April 29, 2004

**Q:** "What does the 'DECKMASTER' on the back of **Magic: The Gathering** cards mean?"  
-- Craig Stubing, Chicago, Illinois

**A:** From **Mark Rosewater**, **Magic** Lead Designer:

"Craig,

"When **Magic** was first designed, Wizards of the Coast had plans for a series of trading card games. To group these games together, they were all given the name "Deckmaster". **Magic**, **Jihad** (renamed **Vampire: the Eternal Struggle**) and **Netrunner**, for example, were all Deckmaster games. Wizards of the Coast eventually abandoned this method of grouping our trading card games, but the **Magic** card back is locked (to ensure that all the cards look the same from the back) so the Deckmaster logo remains."

April 28, 2004

**Q:** "With the growing popularity of cards being specified in more than one way (e.g. Creature-Goblin, Land-Locus, Artifact-Equipment), is it possible that we might see instants or sorceries that behave differently depending on what card type they are? For

instance, could we expect to ever see an 'Instant-Cantrip'?"  
-- Alec Weir, Olympia, WA

**A:** From **Brian Tinsman, Magic R&D:**

"It's possible. As **Magic** continues to grow, the developers have increasingly taken a long-term view of the game. One result of this is that the current rules would allow for the existence of subtyped instants, sorceries, and even enchantments. 'Instant-Cantrip' isn't a good example because the term 'cantrip' is a nickname for a specific effect (draw a card.) It makes more sense to do these kinds of abilities in the text box where new players can understand them without having to reference a rulebook. Any subtype that could live on an instant wouldn't be a common game term, creature type, or land type.

"All this is theoretical of course, but I wouldn't be surprised to see R&D explore this path sometime in the future."

**April 27, 2004**



**Q:** "Is there really a 'mana pool' at Wizards R&D that Matt Place had to run laps around?" -- Dave B. Delaware

**A:** From **Matt Place, Magic R&D:**

"Yes there really is a beautiful pond here at Wizards that we call the mana pool. It has a waterfall flowing into it and is surrounded by flowers and trees. Twenty-five laps around the mana pool equals one mile. On a side note, Mark Rosewater would like me to make it clear that in my [March 25 Ask Wizards answer](#) I was wrong to imply that he 'made' me run laps. As Mark has told me many times, when I make mistakes, I 'make' *myself* run the laps, or wash his car, or write his column, etc. Sorry Mark."

**April 26, 2004**



**Q:** "I was curious if there were any women working at Wizards in R&D? All the columns we see are written by men, and all of the play testing we hear about is with all men."  
-- Jill Schmeichel, Eden Prairie, Minnesota

**A:** From **Elaine Chase, Magic R&D:**

"Let me look around....man, man, man, man.... I don't see any women around here. Oh wait - I'm a woman!

"I am currently the sole female member of TCG R&D. If you poke around [magicthegathering.com](#) you'll find me pop up in a bunch of places. While I spend most of my time working on non-**Magic** TCGs (I am currently the lead developer for **Neopets**, and have worked extensively on **Duel Masters**, **Harry Potter**, and **The Simpsons**, among other games), I have my fingers in **Magic** as well. I have been on the development teams for *Onslaught*, *Legions*, *Mirrodin*, *Champions of Kamigawa*, and *Eighth Edition*, am a member of the **Magic** rules team, and even worked on the X-Box game, [Battlegrounds](#). Before I moved into R&D, I was the DCI Policy Manager, and I am still a level 3 judge, so I have a lot of organized play involvement as well. And before I came to work at Wizards, I did play on the Pro Tour. Out in the real world, I spent more time judging than I did playing, so I'm not as good as the guys around here who have won Pro Tours, but I'm not a total scrub.

"If you look at R&D as a whole, there are other women around. Teeuwynn Woodruff in our new products group doesn't work on **Magic** now, but in the past has worked on design and/or development for *Weatherlight*, *Nemesis*, *Prophecy*, *Planeshift*, *Apocalypse*, and *Seventh Edition*. Incidentally, she's the only person currently at Wizards who has the job title 'Inventor.' There are a bunch more women in RPG R&D and editing, which are both under the R&D umbrella.

"So what's it like being the only woman in TCG R&D? Maybe if someone sends that question in to Ask Wizards, I'll tell you about it...."

**April 23, 2004**



**Q:** "After *Darksteel*, what is the total number of unique cards (not counting repeats) that has ever been released for **Magic: the Gathering**?"  
-- Mark Tidd, Carmel, Indiana

**A:** From **Paul Barclay**, **Magic** rules manager:

"There are 6681 functionally different cards out there. That's a lot of cards, and it would take a while to collect them. But, it wouldn't take nearly as long as collecting all the different versions of those 6681 cards. Counting all languages, versions, sets, etc, there are an amazing 112,500 different **Magic** cards in existence (give or take a few - even we don't know the exact number).

- Stacked up on top of each other, they make a stack 22.5 meters (74 feet) high.
- Placed end-to-end, the collection would stretch for nearly 10 kilometers (over 6 miles), the height that an airliner flies at.
- Laid out in a grid, it would take up 600 square meters (6500 square feet).
- The entire collection would weigh in at over 200 kilograms (450 pounds).
- You would need 6250 9-pocket binder pages to store it all (using both sides of the pages!)."

**April 22, 2004**



**Q:** "Do the **Magic** designers have a favorite **Magic** block/expansion?"

-- Jaap Kosse, the Netherlands

**A:** From **Mark Rosewater**, **Magic** Lead Designer:

"Jaap,

"Yes.

"Oh, you'd like more detail? My favorite block has changed over the years. My current favorite is *Mirrodin* block. I spent a great deal of time on both the mechanics and the flavor and I'm very happy with how it came out. Before *Mirrodin*, my favorite block had been *Tempest*. Before that *Ice Age*. Before that Antiquities. Before that, *Alpha*. I'm beginning to warm up to the Control block (that's the codename for the large fall set of 2005). Only time will tell."

**April 21, 2004**



**Q:** "Could you explain the flavor text of **Starstorm**? I don't quite get the relationship between the card, the text and the illustration."

-- Mario Castillo, Quito, Ecuador

**A:** Brandon Bozzi, R&D Creative Coordinator:

"Thanks for your question Mario. For those of you that don't remember it, don't know it, and/or don't want to click on this link - **Starstorm**'s flavor text is: '*Pardic barbarians didn't complain when the Order started blaming every crisis on the Cabal.*' Here's the meaning we intended: The Pardic barbarians are causing the starstorm. The Order (whose huts are being destroyed in the art) have blamed it on the Cabal because the Cabal is generally the source of all-things-bad in *Onslaught* block. The Pardic barbarians are happy that the Order is pointing their fingers at the Cabal because it allows the barbarians to get away with random acts of mischief and destruction.

"In retrospect, I can see why this flavor text caused you trouble. It probably works better after you've read all the flavor text in this set, in *Odyssey* block, and probably all the corresponding novels. As is this flavor text is pretty convoluted. In general, we try to avoid printing flavor text like this. I apologize for any head-scratching, confusion, or arguments that it may have caused in your play group."

**April 20, 2004**



**Q:** "How good is the Future Future League in predicting decks and strategies for the Standard environment? I would be interested in knowing if the FFL ever tested decks like Goblin Bidding or Three-Color Wake."

-- Jonathan Bohn, WI

**A:** From **Brian Schneider**, **Magic** R&D:

"I'd say we very rarely build decks that exactly mirror what actually gets played in tournaments. We do, however, often rightly predict the direction of Type II environments and we often build decks that look similar to what ends up getting played."

"In the case of the decks you've mentioned, we tested Goblins primarily without **Bidding** (until it became an actual real-world entity). Most of our Wake decks were essentially combo decks (not so control-minded) because we feared its combo potential far more than its control potential. **Wake** was intimidating enough in that capacity to warrant a move from to .

April 19, 2004

**Q:** "Why is it that green gets land destruction? It seems fine in the flavor of red (burn it down) and black (decay), but why does green, the color that wants to preserve nature, get spells to destroy land?"

**A:** From **Brady Dommermuth, Magic** Creative Director:

"Green doesn't mind destruction at all. It relishes in destroying artifice, for example, and predatory nature is definitely a green trait. Some natural disasters are also green-aligned. The green mage's motivation is growth, but growth on his or her own terms. A green mage seeks to clear a path for his or her own vision of nature to spread."

April 16, 2004

**Q:** "How does **Magic** define 'artifact?' The English word is defined as 'something created by humans, usually for a practical purpose, especially an object remaining from a particular period,' but in **Magic** it seems to mean just 'something made of inorganic material.' Many of the *Mirrodin* artifacts weren't created by anyone but 'grew' naturally. On the other hand, there are also many cards which are constructions (walls, ballistae) but have a color."

**A:** From **Brady Dommermuth, Magic** Creative Director:

"We define 'artifact' pretty loosely in the **Magic** game to allow for as many cool card ideas as possible. In general, it means 'constructed thing,' although 'thing without natural life' might also fit. *Mirrodin*'s artifacts are an exception to these rules, because the line between organic and inorganic is practically nonexistent in its metal-based ecosystem."

April 15, 2004

**Q:** "Have you ever considered releasing the Comprehensive Rules and/or a complete **Oracle** for **Magic** in physical book form? It would be a boon for those who don't have Internet access or for those times that getting to the 'Net is impossible. (Such as local tournaments.)" -- Will Rezny, Muskegon, Michigan

**A:** From **Paul Barclay, Magic** Rules Manager:

"We actually have done both of these things for our high-level certified judges (at Pro Tour and Grand Prix events). And, when the *Sixth Edition* rules were first released, we sent printed copies of the rules to stores and tournament organisers. We don't do this for the public for a couple of reasons. The first is that, since we give them away for free on the Internet, very few people would buy them, so we would lose a lot of money. The second is that the rules change frequently and quickly, meaning that any such books would be out of date before they were even released."

April 14, 2004

**Q:** "What is the Æther?"  
-- Nate L.

**A:** From **Brady Dommermuth, Magic** Creative Director:

"Æther is the stuff between planes. In the **Magic** multiverse, when a creature is summoned, it materializes from (is 'pulled through') the æther. Blue and red mages are best at manipulating the æther -- blue by **returning** summoned creatures to the æther, red by **'spiking'** the æther so that it hurts creatures that emerge from it."

April 13, 2004

**Q:** "Around Wizards, is **Psychatog** generally considered a great design success, a

fabulous design failure, or somewhere in between? After all, it's seen play in all constructed formats possible, something only a handful of cards can say to their own credit. But it's an uncommon, a card in a cycle completely ignored otherwise. So what sort of opinions are their floating around about the 'Tog?' -- M.W. Gribbin, San Francisco, CA

**A:** From **Mark Rosewater**, **Magic** Lead Designer:

"I think **Psychatog** was a design success and a development failure. The idea behind having gold atogs that ate two different things was a good one (and note that this design was done during *Odyssey* development). The actual play value of **Psychatog** was also good. It created interesting decisions in play. The problem was that it was too powerful and thus not fun in the long term. It didn't do unfun things to the environment.

"So are we happy with **Psychatog**? Yes, and no. It was an interesting card that we probably would have decreased in power if we had it to do over again."

**April 12, 2004**



**Q:** "Although this question might peg me as a newbie, I've been playing **Magic** for several years now. Throughout the site, the term 'broken cards' is used. What is a 'broken card' and how does it differ from the others?"

**A:** From **Mike Elliott**, **Magic** R&D:

"'Broken' is a weird term that has become incorporated into our design and development lingo here at WOTC, and because we use it so much, it has filtered out to the public as a generally used term now. In law there is a phrase called 'breaking an alibi' to describe when it is proven that the alibi is inconsistent with the facts. In economics, an economic model is considered to be broken if it no longer follows a theoretical predicted pattern. "So what does this mean and why is Mike babbling on like this? The answer is mostly to follow with the statement that I have no idea how the current use evolved. The term was made popular by a former R&D member, William Jockusch, who used the term mostly to describe cards that were so far above the 'appropriate' power level that they created some degenerate deck that won almost every game. For example, an early card called by the playtest name Life Leech cost 6 and allowed you to drain an opponent for 2 for each card you discarded when you played it. Since you could often pitch 6 or 7 cards to it and drain your opponent for 14, it seemed reasonably good, but several developers loudly proclaimed that this card was 'broken' and in fact, William coined a new term, 'BaH-Roken' to describe cards like this. Based on these comments we changed the cost on Life Leech to 10, but the card got pulled later for an unrelated reason. "The term 'broken' has evolved over the years to expand in meaning from just degenerate cards, since we of course never put out completely degenerate cards these days and we still want to use the term since it is cool. So the term is now commonly used to describe cards that are very powerful or seem like they should cost much more, or combinations that are very strong. It is also occasionally used to describe mechanics that are strong, such as 'Rebels are broken,' or 'Madness is broken,' or 'Bands with other Legends is broken.' Err, maybe not the last one, but you get the point."

**April 9, 2004**



**Q:** "I happen to be a big fan of the card **Humble**. Would you consider reprinting it, or using the principle behind it in a future cards? I know **Humility** was a rules nightmare, but **Humble** is much simpler to understand." -- Shane Doherty, Northern Ireland

**A:** From **Elaine Chase**, **Magic** R&D:

"While **Humble** is simpler to understand than **Humility**, it's still above our rules-messiness threshold. The only real difference between the two is that **Humble** is at least polite enough to end at the end of the turn. There's two big issues involved. The first is setting a creature's power and toughness to a particular number. The card says it becomes 0/1 until the end of the turn. What if I **Giant Growth** it? What if it's a White creature and I play **Crusade**? What if it's not white and I have **Crusade** out and then turn it white later? The other, and much bigger, issue is making the creature lose all abilities. What exactly are abilities? Flying? Unblockable? Indestructible? What if the creature has a creature enchantment on it? And let's not even start thinking about what happens when **Opalescence** or **March of the Machines** get added into the mix. Try asking 20 different new players these questions at the next prerelease you go to and

you'll get wildly different answers, and it's very likely that hardly any of them will get them all right."

**March 8, 2004**



**Q:** "What exactly are the differences between the tournament Rules Enforcement Levels? Is it advisable for a player to adjust his play style based on the tournament's REL?" --Rich George, Indiana, PA

**A:** From **Mike Donais**, Level 4 Judge and Game Developer:

"Rules Enforcement Levels (REL) refer to how significant or how strictly enforced a tournament is. The [penalty guidelines](#) talk about how penalties differ at different RELs. Most small events held at a local game store will be REL 1. This means that the main goal is for everyone to have fun or learn about the game and tournament play. When playing in a REL 1 event you should be casual and friendly with your opponents. If everyone is having fun in your local events then organized play in your area has a better chance of growing. When playing in REL 4-5 events (like pro-tours) you are no longer teaching people to play. You should pay more attention to the phases and steps. Be clear about what step you do something in. For example if you want to tap one of your opponent's creatures before he attacks tell him what step you tap it during. Pay close attention to your play, don't accidentally lay two lands in a turn, and when you cast spells clearly declare your targets. Even in high levels of play you should be friendly to your opponents - even though you don't allow him to take back mistakes."

**April 7, 2004**



**Q:** "The FAQs for every **Magic** set used to be listed on the [magicthegathering.com](#) main page under the menu. Where can it be found with the new design?"

**A:** From **Scott Johns**, [magicthegathering.com](#) Content Editor:

"Any product information you're looking for can now be found by clicking on the [Products box](#) from the front page."

**April 6, 2004**



**Q:** "Have you ever thought about giving the ability 'whenever this creature deals damage you gain that much life' a key word, like calling it **spirit link**? Kind of similar to what you did with **fear**?"

**A:** From **Devin Low**, **Magic** R&D:

"Good question. We've talked about the possibility of keywording this ability, but we decided not to do it. Whenever we introduce a new keyword, we usually give it reminder text for the first year it's in print. For block-specific keywords like 'amplify,' that year is enough to last the life of the mechanic. When we first introduced keywords for fear and haste, we gave them reminder text too. But by the time *Darksteel* came out, people had seen fear and haste often enough that we didn't need to include the reminder text anymore. When keywords appear often enough, we know players have gotten the hang of it, so we feel okay about cutting the reminder text.

"If there were too many keywords without reminder text, new players might feel like they need a rulebook just to read their cards and that would be bad. So we only add long-term keywords when the ability comes up enough that players will see it again and again. In the current Standard environment, there are 34 cards that mention haste, and 12 cards that mention fear, but only 6 with the text of '**spirit link**.' So the ability 'whenever this creature deals damage you gain that much life' just doesn't come up often enough to be worth keywording. In fact, the ability 'this creature may block as though it had flying' comes up 8 times in Standard (more often than spirit link's 6), but we don't get many people asking us to keyword '**Web**.'"

**April 5, 2004**



**Q:** "I heard there was a group of cards called the Power 9. The only card that I know that is in this group is **Black Lotus**. I was wondering what the other cards are?"

**A:** From **Robert Gustchera**, **Magic** R&D:

"Besides the **Black Lotus**, they are the 5 Moxes (each of which costs 1 and taps for 1 colored mana -- **Mox Pearl**, **Mox Sapphire**, **Mox Jet**, **Mox Ruby** and **Mox Emerald**), **Time Walk**, **Timetwister**, and **Ancestral Recall**. They're called the 'Power 9' because in formats where they are legal, most people believe you must have 1 of each of them (they are all restricted, so you can't have more) in any top deck. All of these cards appeared in the original **Magic** set, nicknamed '*Alpha*.'

"These cards are so powerful that games involving them often just come down to who draws theirs first. That's no fun, so Wizards doesn't print these cards anymore. That means they are very expensive and hard to find, so not many people play with them now. But for people who still have these old cards, there's 'Type I' (also called Vintage), which is the format in which all kinds of old cards are legal, including the now all-but-legendary 'Power 9.'"

April 2, 2004



**Q:** "How do you decide whether to make a triggered ability (that nearly always benefits its controller) optional or mandatory? For instance, why does **Leonin Elder** say 'Whenever an artifact comes into play, you may gain 1 life,' while **Arcbound Crusher** says, 'Whenever another artifact comes into play, put a +1/+1 counter on Arcbound Crusher'? Do you prefer optional (beneficial) triggered abilities but use mandatory ones when you need more space in the text box?" -- Mark S.

**A:** From **Del Laugel**, **Magic** lead editor:

"In general, we make triggered abilities that people are likely to overlook are optional so that players don't need to back up to fix mistakes. You're out of luck if you forget to gain life from your **Leonin Elder**, but on the plus side, you don't need to call a judge in sanctioned play to sort out the situation and you're not going to get a warning. (Remember, we make triggered abilities that draw cards optional whenever we can because the penalties for forgetting to draw a card are severe.)

"On the other hand, triggered abilities that put counters on permanents are usually mandatory. Why? Because the templates just evolved that way. With the exception of **Forgotten Ancient**, which was created by the players, all effects from the **Onslaught** and **Mirrodin** blocks that put +1/+1 counters on creatures have been mandatory. (Compare **Arcbound Crusher** to **Elvish Vanguard**, for example.) **Arcbound Crusher**'s effect is mandatory because R&D didn't see a reason to make an exception for this particular card. The available space in the text box wasn't an issue."

April 1, 2004



**Q:** "My father is a lawyer and he told me that he read that **Magic** was going to have to change its name? Could this possibly be true?" -- Larry Wu, Pepper Pike, OH

**A:** From **Joanne Dewey**, Wizards Chief Legal Counsel:

"Larry,

"Your father was correct but the situation is not as dire as it might first appear. During **Magic: the Gathering**'s first year in existence, there was a trademark challenge by the Orlando Magic<sup>TM</sup> of the National Basketball Association. During the last ten years, Wizards of the Coast and the Orlando Magic have been in and out of court trying to clarify the issue. Last week, Wizards of the Coast lost the final appeal. By the ruling, starting today, the first of April, Wizards of the Coast is no longer legally allowed to use the name **Magic**.

"This does not mean that the game is going to change its name. It merely means that Wizards of the Coast is forced to find an alternative spelling. Many of the popular spellings are also copyrighted (including Magik by the Marvel Entertainment Group, Magick by the Hallmark Corporation and Majic and Majick by Microsoft). Luckily, using inspiration from one of our own expansions, *Mercadian Masques*, we have decided to change the name to **Magique: the Gathering**. According to our editing department, this will have a tiny change in pronunciation. Instead of /MA jik/, the name will now be pronounced /ma JEEK/ with accent on the second syllable.

"The biggest ramification of this change though will be the **Magique: the Gathering** card back. I've been told that production has been itching for years to update the card back and with this mandated change, we will

for the first time ever do so. This does create the problem of mixing different card backs for casual and tournament play. To solve this problem, Wizards of the Coast has decided to run a limited print run of each previously published **Magique: the Gathering** expansion with the new card back. These new expansions will be printed once a month until all the old sets have been duplicated. This should take just under four years. New expansions of **Magique: the Gathering** will still be produced on the same schedule.

"I understand that this news might come as a shock, but be assured that Wizards the Coast is doing everything it can to guarantee that **Magique: the Gathering** remains the premier trading card game. Stay tuned to [magiquethegathering.com](http://magiquethegathering.com) for continuing information."



*NOTE: This Ask Wizards ran on [magicthegathering.com](http://magicthegathering.com)'s April Fools' edition, and every part of the question and answer is a joke. **Magic: The Gathering** is NOT changing its name or its card backs. We will NOT be reprinting all the old cards with different card backs, and furthermore, Joanne Dewey and Larry Wu were made up for the purpose of the joke (any resemblance to real people is pure coincidence). Take a deep breath! Happy April Fools' Day!*



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