

MAGICTHEGATHERING.COM

ARTICLES

TOURNAMENTS

MAGIC ONLINE

Article Search ▾ →



Do you have a question about **Magic: The Gathering** or *Wizards of the Coast*? Send it, along with your full name and location, to us via this [email form](#). We'll post a new question and answer each day.

 Search Ask Wizards

May 28, 2004



**Q:** "I know this may seem like an odd question, but on your cards, you reference many books, e.g. Sarpadian Empires Vol. III or other sources. I was wondering if these books actually exist?"

--Anthony Gamble

**A:** From **Doug Beyer**, [magicthegathering.com](#) web developer and flavor text writer:

"Thanks for your question, Anthony. For those of you who don't know, Anthony is referring to flavor text in which a quote is attributed to a presumed outside source, like a book, poem or song. (Quotes from the 'Sarpadian Empires' in particular can be found on *Fallen Empires* cards like **Aeolipile**, **Basal Thrull**, and **Fungal Bloom**.)

"With the exceptions of the [Love Song of Night and Day](#) (which is a complete poem written for the purposes of being quoted on many *Mirage* and *Visions* cards) and real-world quotations (see for example the *Eighth Edition* versions of **Cowardice** and **Naturalize**), the books and other texts quoted in **Magic** flavor text are fictional.

"Books, poems, songs, chants, scrolls, sayings and other bits of written lore are made up by **Magic** world-builders and flavor text writers in the same way that characters, objects and locations are. *The History of the Goblin Wars*, the *Necromancer's Handbook* and the *Scroll of Beginnings* are fictional elements of the **Magic** fantasy world in the same way that **Akroma**, the **Mirari** and the **Tel-Jilad** are. In most cases it's not necessary (or possible!) to create the entire text from which the flavor text is fictionally taken -- it's enough that their existence is implied, and the details are left to the imagination."

May 27, 2004



**Q:** "Are there any celebrities who are known to be **Magic** players?"

-- Justin Marble, North Kingstown, RI

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

"Justin,

Are there celebrities that play? Almost definitely. I wish I could give you a list, but all the names we have are nothing but speculation and rumor. Unfortunately, this isn't solid enough information for me to print actual names (well, and not get a nasty call from our lawyers)."

May 26, 2004



**Q:** "Aren't Entwine and Kicker basically the same? Why not just bring Kicker back?"

-- Webster Huston, Richland, Washington

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

"Webster,

"Entwine is not a subset of kicker. The Kicker mechanic says 'Do effect A. Or pay additional mana and do Effects A & B.' The Entwine mechanic says 'Do effect A or B. Or pay additional mana and do Effects A & B.' While these might seem similar, the 'or B' is an important difference.

"As an example, let's look at the popular tournament card **Tooth and Nail**. It's text reads: 'Choose one -- Search your library for up to two creature cards, reveal them, put them into your hand, then shuffle you library; or put up to two creatures cards from your hand into play. Entwine 2.'

"If this was a kicker card, it would read: 'Kicker 2. Search your library for up to two creature cards, reveal them, put them into your hand, then shuffle you library. If you paid the kicker cost, put up to two creature cards from your hand into play.'

"These two cards seem similar. That is until you draw a **Darksteel Collosus** and just want to be able to put it into play from your hand. This may seem like a subtle difference, but **Magic** design is all about subtle nuances. Is Entwine reminiscent of Kicker? Absolutely. As more mechanics get added to the game there will be more things that may seem comparable on the surface. Is it the same? No. Entwine is not written as Kicker because there is something that Entwine does that Kicker does not do."

**May 25, 2004**



**Q:** "Why does R&D include coin-flipping cards in their sets? They are worthless in limited and their value in constructed is negligible. **Magic** is a game of intelligence, so why would you print cards that effectively reduce it to a game of chance?"

-- John Cuadros, Citrus Heights, CA

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

"First and foremost, R&D includes coin-flip cards in their sets because a significant portion of the audience finds them fun to play with."

"The claim here is that these cards are, in effect, useless... but this is true only to the relatively competitive player. In a more casual setting **Goblin Bomb**, **Chance Encounter**, and friends are sure to make a pretty wacky impact no matter what the format is. Remember, Magic isn't solely a 'game of intelligence', it's also a social game people play for fun. And coin-flip cards are just that - fun."

"Some coin-flip cards have made an impact on limited and constructed environments. **Frenetic Efreet** and **Crooked Scales** have both caused nightmares for opponents in the past - reason enough to make the coin-flip cards of the future considerably weaker... No competitive player likes losing to an obvious coin-flip, and R&D, over time, has diminished the power level of coin-flip cards to compensate."

**May 22, 2004**



**Q:** "Take the nearest **Magic** card you've got. Flip it over. You see the 'Deckmaster' label near the bottom? Look at the letters 'TER'. Notice something? There's a blue/purple mark right there! Is there any reason that's there? Defective printing plates? Evil government conspiracy to brainwash people through a careful message conveyed through it? Was it a fluke, or was it part of some sort of promotion?"

-- Jonathan Choi, Vancouver, BC

**A:** From **Worth Wollpert**, Research & Development:

"I noticed that when I first started playing as well. Up until your question I really had no idea, but I asked around and some old-timers helped me out with the answer. According to Sr. VP Skaff Elias, the purple line through the word Deckmaster (Specifically through the T and R) was simply a printing error -- a stray pen-mark, really -- that was never caught and corrected. As you know, it's very important that the backs of **Magic** cards are all uniform, so it was never changed. On a related note, I think one of you guys should write in and ask someone (probably Richard) about the day the card backs in *Arabian Nights* almost changed..."

**May 21, 2004**



**Q:** "I've been wondering, why do some cards have flavor text while others don't?"  
-- Jaryth Kushniruk, Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, Canada

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

"There are a few reasons why a card might not get flavor text. The most obvious, and the one that comes up most often, is its interaction with rules text. Generally, **Magic** card text runs between 7.5 and 9 points in font size, and it's the editing department's job to make sure that the text is large enough to be readable, that there aren't unsightly blank spaces, and so on. There are also certain rules about separating abilities and flavor text with blank lines, which prevents awkward text layouts like on **Wall of Caltrops** back in *Legends*. So sometimes, these considerations mean that a card's text just looks better at a size that doesn't allow for any flavor text on it. This happens more often with commons than rares, since a player's a lot more likely to read any one common over and over in Limited than most rares.

"Also, you might notice that basic lands and certain staple cards (such as **Wrath of God**) don't have flavor text. This is because such cards are played so often, and have such iconic, well-known abilities, that many people think that the card just looks cooler without any made-up flavor text to muddy the waters. Finally, of course, there's the fact that if we had to come up with flavor text for every single card, all our writers would get burned out pretty quickly!"

**May 20, 2004**



**Q:** "How come you've created scores of creature tokens, but never a single land or enchantment token (i.e. a token that counts as a land or as a global enchantment)?"  
-- Alexander Blumke, Geneva, Switzerland

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

"Since we use counters on many cards, having local enchantment tokens would probably be very confusing for many players, especially if you had an enchantment token on a creature token. So we will probably never do local enchantments as tokens. The rules allow for tokens to be of a type other than creatures, so we could conceivably make land tokens or global enchantment tokens if we ever decide to introduce these into the game. We would just have to minimize the confusion associated with having other types of tokens on the table, potentially in the same environment as creature tokens, since we tend to do creature token generation cards all the time."

**May 19, 2004**



**Q:** "Where do I find the current Pro Player standings?"  
-- Chris Armbruster

**A:** From **Scott Johns**, magicthegathering.com Content Editor:

"The current Pro Player standings for each event of the '03-'04 season can be found [here](#)"

**May 18, 2004**



**Q:** "I missed the live video feed of the Pro Tour San Diego Top 8. When will the archived files be available for download?"  
-- Franklin Twombly, Bakersfield, CA

**A:** From **Scott Johns**, magicthegathering.com Content Editor:

"We originally announced that the downloadable archives of the live streaming video from the 2004 Pro Tour San Diego Top 8 would be made available on Thursday in [Alex Shvartsman's column](#). However, because of technical problems with the live stream during the quarter-finals it was decided to release all the video archives without the originally announced delay, so you can now download any of the video archives from the [PT San Diego event coverage page](#) under "Video Coverage". "

**May 17, 2004**



**Q:** "I am planning on constructing a monkey deck and was wondering just how many different monkey or ape-like creatures have been printed in **Magic**? Thanks for helping your banana loving friend."

-- A Benner

(P.S. will monkeys ever be a serious creature type like goblins?)

**A:** From **Daniel Stahl**, Managing Web Producer:

"My Dear Banana Loving Friend:"

"While this sort of question is not often tackled in Ask Wizards, I was compelled to reply due to my obsession with monkeys... well with the word *monkey* to be more specific."

"It just so happens that I use the word *monkey* to test all of our new web features here at monkeythegathering.com - and most recently on the *Orb of Insight*. That's right... the first word I typed into the orb? MONKEY. Did I expect anything but **0** ... YES!"

"I was sadly disappointed. I asked the developer if the Orb was working properly. He said that's why I was testing it. I asked if he was sure there were no monkeys. He answered back in frustration - STOP USING MONKEYS!"

"Stop using monkeys??? Noooo."

"However! There is hope my tree-dwelling bretheren! For when I type the word monkey into our up-and-coming Card Database (code named: Gatherer)... I receive the following information which I hope you will find very useful!"

Tree Monkey - 1/1 - *Portal Second Age*

Zodiac Monkey - 2/1 - *Portal Three Kingdoms*

(I would autocard them but they are so rare, we don't even have them in there yet)

"Ok. So.. Not the spectacular Monkeyfest you'd hoped for. But DO NOT FORGET the infamous **Monkey Cage** which makes... um... ape tokens. Hey - its all good. I guess **Hidden Gibbons** isn't the ONLY card that makes Apes now is it!"

"So even though apes and monkeys are NOT the same, if you are looking to build a deck around banana-eaters you should definitely focus on the Apes as **Magic** seems to prefer the chest beaters."

#### **I Give You The Apes of Magic!**

- **Ancient Silverback**
- **Apes of Rath**
- **Barbary Apes**
- **Gargantuan Gorilla**
- **Gorilla Berserkers**
- **Gorilla Chieftain**
- **Gorilla Pack**
- **Gorilla Shaman**
- **Gorilla Titan**
- **Gorilla Warrior**
- **Kird Ape**
- **Raging Gorilla**
- **Ravenous Baboons**
- **Savage Gorilla**
- **Silverback Ape**
- **Simian Grunts**
- **Uktabi Orangutan**

"So there you have it. Now you can go Monkey around! No - Seriously - GO APE! Just don't be too surprised if you find yourself typing *Monkey* the next time you see a search box."

"I'll understand."

(P.S.: No)

(P.S.S.: Yes I realize other creatures might eat bananas.)



**Q:** "I was reading an issue of The Sideboard magazine a while back and I noticed that in a close-up photo of a pro event, a player had his cards on the table, and each one of them had a red stamp on it. I looked at other issues of Sideboard and saw this stamp on the cards in many photos for different events. What is this little red stamp for?"  
-- William Rezny, Muskegon, MI

**A:** From **Scott Larabee**, DCI Program Manager:

"At most high level draft events (Pro Tours, Grand Prix, larger National Championships), we stamp the cards used in each draft with a unique stamp. This prevents players from cheating by swapping cards from outside the draft into their decks. Different symbols and stamp colors are used for each different draft round. The positions of the stamps on the cards are also significant, and allow us to recreate the draft from scratch if necessary."

**May 13, 2004**



**Q:** "I noticed that the creature type for the four most recent Invitationalist cards were all Wizard. (**Meddling Mage**, **Shadowmage Infiltrator**, **Sylvan Safekeeper**, and **Voidmage Prodigy**.) Is this a conscious effort on the part of Wizards to sort of make the in-game embodiment of the cards' creators more realistic, or just some sort of happy coincidence?"

-- Brian Winterlin, South Sioux City, NE

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

"The reason the cards are Wizards is quite simple. The Invitational winners like the idea of the being the creature on the card. (Winners get their images put on their cards.) In order for this to happen, the creature type needs to be something human. **Meddling Mage** and **Shadowmage Infiltrator** were turned in as Wizards. Olle Rade's card was turned in as an Elf, but *Judgment* didn't have any Elves, so we changed it to a Wizard. Part of the reason we did this was that we knew Kai's card was going to work well with Wizards and we liked the idea of some of the Invitational cards having synergy with one another. Jens Thoren, the latest Invitational winner, turned in his card as an Elf Wizard. As we try to stay as close to the player's card as we can, there is a good chance that this card will also be a Wizard."

[**Editor's Note:** this question first appeared in December, 2002; Jens Thoren's card, **Solemn Simulacrum**, appeared in Mirrodin as an Artifact Creature]

**May 12, 2004**



**Q:** "I know that **Shadowmage Infiltrator** is called 'Jonny Magic' by many Magic players. Why? I mean, why isn't **Shifty Doppelganger** or something like that called 'Jonny Magic?'"

-- Corey Boyle, Westhampton, MA, USA

**A:** From **Worth Wollpert**, Research & Development:

"The reason that **Shadowmage Infiltrator** is called 'Jonny Magic' by some players is because the card was designed by Jon Finkel after he was the Magic Invitational in Sydney. When a player wins an Invitational (we have one a year, roughly) the only prize is that they get to design their own card that we then put into a set (with the player put into the card's artwork). Other past winners include **Chris Pikula**, **Darwin Kastle**, and **Olle Rade**, with Jens Thoren's (from the last Invitational here in Seattle) card set to come out in Mirrodin later this year. 'Jonny Magic' is Finkel's nickname because he's been so successful on the Pro Tour, and that nickname got carried over to his card."

[**Editor's Note:** this question first appeared in March, 2003; Jens Thoren's card in Mirrodin is **Solemn Simulacrum**.]

**May 11, 2004**



**Q:** "Is there actually a card called 'Wall of Schizophrenia?' I think it was available at the 2000 Invitational, but I've yet to find anyone else who has heard of it. Please help me... I collect walls and would like to know if i have to look for this one."

-- Ryan Johnson, Menifee, CA

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

"Every year at the **Magic** Invitational (**Magic's** equivalent of the all-star game), I run a format called Duplicate Limited. Duplicate Limited is simply a limited format with one major twist: all the players receive the exact same set of cards. To add a little extra fun, I often create new cards specifically for the event. This adds an extra skill testing element as players have to evaluate cards they have never seen before.

"Wall of Schizophrenia was a card I created for the [2000 Magic Invitational](#) held in Kuala Lumpur. The card text was:

Wall of Schizophrenia



Creature - Wall

5/3

Trample

CARDNAME may block any number of goblins or wizards each combat.

CARDNAME cannot block elephants, carnivores, or walls.

"The only copies of the card were the 16 stickered versions (much like an R&D playtest card) I used at the event. After the Invitational ended, I let the players keep the cards, so the only physical copies in existence are in the hands of the sixteen invitees.

"If you're wondering why I made a 5/3 trampling wall, you should know that I also created a new creature enchantment called 'Undercover Disguise' for that read: 'You may play CARDNAME any time you could play an instant. As CARDNAME comes into play, choose a creature type. Enchanted creature is the chosen creature type.'"

[**Editor's Note:** this question first appeared in February, 2002; since then, the Invitational has moved to Magic Online, where the Duplicate Limited format does not appear]

May 10, 2004



**Q:** "What will the abbreviation for *Champions of Kamigawa* be?"

-- Fabian Rockwell, San Diego, CA

**A:** From **Wendy Wallace**, **Magic** brand manager:

"The expansion code for *Champions* will be CHK."

May 7, 2004



**Q:** "How does R&D decide which cards get put into one of the four theme decks?"

-- Michael Rasmussen, Birmingham, AL

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

"The first thing we do for theme decks is pick the four themes we want to focus on. Most of the time, we try to highlight the new mechanics of the set, but sometimes we look at flavor as well. After we pick the themes, the next step is to pick out the cards that complement that theme. Decks are rounded out with general utility cards from the block. We try to make sure the rares in particular fit with the feel of the deck. We will make changes to the decks to make sure they are balanced against each other, but the most driving issue for card selection is how well it fits the theme of the theme deck."

May 6, 2004







**Q:** "Why do the white paladins have the ability to destroy any permanent, while the black paladins can only destroy creatures?"

-- Jon Watkins

**A:** From **Bill Rose**, Vice President of R&D:

**Northern Paladin** came first. It was designed by Richard Garfield for *Alpha*. **Southern Paladin** is in *Weatherlight*. **Magic** R&D made **Southern Paladin** to pair with **Northern Paladin** for *Sixth Edition*. The pair didn't make *Sixth Edition*. **Magic** R&D opted for **Warmth** and **Order of the Sacred Torch** as White's color hosers. I seem to recall discussions about the paladin pair being somewhat out of flavor because they could destroy non-attacking creatures, or some such nonsense. **Magic** R&D wised up and put the paladins in *Seventh Edition* to offset Black's two paladins in the set. **Eastern Paladin** and **Western Paladin** were originally in *Urza's Saga*. They were conceived to

be quasi-reflections of White's paladins. **Magic** R&D decided Black's inability to destroy enchantments was more important than having the Black paladins being reflections to the White paladins. I agree with this decision. Black shouldn't be able to handle enchantments -- period. If I had a time machine, I would change the White paladins to "   : Destroy target black/red creature."


May 5, 2004 

**Q:** "I was wondering through which blocks and expansions does the Phyrexian War go?"

-- Sean Sierra, Seven Oaks, MD

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

"That depends on what you mean by the Phyrexian war, Sean. Phyrexia's rise to power and eventual invasion of Dominaria is a long a complex plot. The easiest answer to your question is that the Phyrexian Invasion begins in the *Invasion* set and continues through the block (*Planeshift* and *Apocalypse*). But Phyrexia was involved in **Magic** storylines starting with the Antiquities set, and they were present either overtly or covertly in almost every expert-level expansion between *Antiquities* and *Apocalypse* (with a couple of exceptions, such as the *Homelands* set)."

May 4, 2004 

**Q:** "I was wondering what is the story behind *Sword of Fire and Ice* and *Sword of Light and Shadow*? Why did you leave out green? And how did you choose the abilities?"

-- Eric Osiowy, Winnipeg, MB, Canada

**A:** From **Tyler Bielman, Magic** R&D:

"Verily, Eric of Winnipeg, a noble inquiry worthy of a grand tale.

"Seven millennia ago, Planeswalker Stern and Planeswalker Tinsman forged the swords to do battle in a blood-feud that would tear asunder the very foundation of reality.


"Ok, not really.

"The Swords were created after *Darksteel* moved from Design into Development. History is unclear about who created them (I believe it was Henry Stern or Brian Tinsman), however they were created because we felt that there wasn't enough 'Randomly Cool' equipment. 'Randomly Cool' is a kind of code-term around here for splashy, interesting effects that have a lot of impact when you first see them. When I watched people open *Darksteel* packs at the Pre-release tournament, it was great to see people respond the way we had hoped.

"As far as green's absence goes, you may know that each color in **Magic** has two enemy colors. However, when looking at the colors symbolically, there is usually a more obvious animosity toward one enemy color or the other.

"For example, the enmity between White and Black is easier to see at a glance than the hostility between White and Red. Green is frequently an odd man out when looking at these snapshot relationships, because Nature doesn't really have an enemy in that sense.

"One of the fun things about designing *Mirrodin* was that we could play around with combining colored effects without making gold cards. We picked two of the more natural enemies, Red & Blue and White & Black and made cards that fooled around with what it would be like if those colors got together and 'made' a sword. The abilities changed a lot before we landed on the ones that were printed. Unfortunately, it would be nigh impossible to scribe that entire epic upon this measly page. Verily."

May 3, 2004 

**Q:** "How much playtesting went into deciding the number of cards required for threshold, when the mechanic was made? What were the deciding factors that caused it to be seven cards?"

-- Daniel Zollman, Philadelphia, PA

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

"Quite a bit of playtesting went into choosing that number. In fact, whenever we played Limited, we recorded the precise number of games where each player got to threshold so we could make sure it was coming up as often as we wanted it to. Our goal was for players to get to threshold in approximately 50% of their sealed deck games and in draft it would come up pretty often if you drafted a deck specifically designed to get to threshold and about a third of the time if you didn't. We tried out threshold equal to 10 early on in playtesting and we also had variable threshold for a little while, but in the end 7 seemed to put us in the right ballpark with respect to those goals so we locked it in and then developed the rest of the block around that number."



[Submit a question](#) to Ask Wizards



[Ask Wizards](#) archive

[WHAT'S NEW](#) [CORPORATE INFO](#) [WHERE TO BUY](#) [INTERNATIONAL](#) [SUPPORT](#) [SITMAP](#) [PRODUCTS](#)

© 1995-2004 Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. All Rights Reserved.  
[Wizards is headquartered in Renton, Washington, PO Box 707, Renton, WA 98057.](#)  
[PRIVACY STATEMENT](#)