

## Let us know what you think!

# Multiplayer Rules

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- [Paul Barclay Archive](#)

It's been a year since we made any big modifications to the [Magic rules](#) – the last time was the *Eighth Edition* changes in July 2003. Recently, we've tried to limit major rules changes to once every two to four years, but sometimes, someone comes up with an idea that we absolutely must implement. In this case, the idea was to design and write official rules for playing multiplayer **Magic** games.

There are several good reasons for creating official multiplayer rules. The first is that if we publish a set of official rules, then you will be able to more easily join a new multiplayer group. The second is that, with official rules, our customer service staff will be better able to answer your questions on multiplayer rules. The third is that our R&D staff will be able to use those rules to create cards that work especially well in multiplayer games. Our rules and templating teams will be able to fix problems with cards that don't work well enough in multiplayer games.





A final, and very interesting, reason is that if we have official rules for a format, we could offer sanctioned tournaments for it. We don't have any plans for multiplayer tournaments yet, but if there's sufficient demand, we'll certainly look into ways that we could provide multiplayer leagues and tournaments.

Adding rules to the rulebook can take a long time – this project was started in late 2003, and won't be finished until September 2004 at the earliest. There are a lot of steps in the process. In 2003, we spent a lot of time researching multiplayer games, and designing the aims and goals of the multiplayer rules. The first draft of the rules was written from that design document, and was passed around inside R&D for comments and ideas, which were added to the rules draft. This design-write-review-implement process (a "review cycle") was repeated several times, both with people at Wizards, and with some of our best rules gurus. These review cycles were vital for identifying the big issues that multiplayer posed.

We're currently in the second to last review cycle of the project, and this is where you come in. We want feedback from multiplayer players of all kinds. So, with that in mind, this is the link to the current draft of the rules:

## Multiplayer Rules Draft:

 [Microsoft Word document](#) (62KB) or  [Rich text document](#) (51KB)

If you're at all interested in multiplayer **Magic**, please take a few minutes to read through the draft and then post your thoughts and suggestions on the [message board](#) that goes with this article. You can use this thread for as a way to communicate with us, giving feedback, comments, and suggestions, as well as for discussing potential problems and issues. We'll be watching this message board very closely; don't miss this great chance to be part of **Magic** history!





After we've obtained the feedback, it will be incorporated into the draft, and the draft will be incorporated into the [Comprehensive Rulebook](#). The final review cycle involves the editors, who will create the final wordings, and the rules gurus, who will ensure those wordings work correctly. We will then publish the multiplayer rules in the *Champions of Kamigawa* comprehensive rulebook. The big issue with multiplayer is handling all the things that don't have to happen in 2-player **Magic** games. The big three are:

1. The game continues when a player leaves the game.
2. Some multiplayer games use a concept called "spell range."
3. There are unique rules for formats such as Emperor and Two-Headed Giant.

Some cards will require errata to function sensibly in multiplayer. Once the multiplayer rules are solid, we'll focus on creating a list of cards that have problems in various multiplayer formats, and come up with solutions to their problems. For example, [Test of Endurance](#) is a problem in a Two-Headed Giant game, and [Timesifter](#) can be a problem in a game with spell range.

## Multiplayer Rules Highlights

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## Objects

Before I get into the details of the rules, I want to explain a word that is used a lot in them. An "object" is a card, a copy of a card, a token, a spell, a permanent, an ability on the stack, or combat damage on the stack.

## **Play/Draw**

There is no play/draw rule in multiplayer. You always draw a card on your first turn.

## **Priority**

In a two-player game, priority passes backwards and forwards between the two players. In a multiplayer game, priority works in a very similar way – it simply goes clockwise round the table.

## **Teams**

The multiplayer rules support team games. In these games, the last team with a player in the game wins the game. It doesn't matter if you die, as long as your team wins the game.

## **Losing the Game**

The ways you can lose the game don't change, but what *happens* when a player loses is very different. In a normal **Magic** game, when one of the two players loses, the game is over. In multiplayer, that isn't true. The player who lost leaves the game, and the game continues. There are two big issues here: What to do with objects a dead player owns or controls; and handling all the things a dead player could be asked to do.

### **1. Dead people don't own anything.**

We spent a lot of time talking about what should happen to permanents a player owns and controls when that player leaves the game. We knew we wanted all objects a player owns to leave the game when that player left the game, because we wanted that player to be able to play another game straight away.



The next issue is all the objects a player might control, but doesn't own. There are several ways to control things you don't own, and we realized that we couldn't deal with them all in the same way.

- For all "gain control" effects, the effect ends. So, if you've stolen your opponent's creature with [Ray of Command](#) or [Persuasion](#), he or she will regain control of it.
- For any other effect where you control an object someone else owns (such as using [Bribery](#)), there's no "gain control" effect to end, so we have to have those objects also leave the game.

The final issue is that we need to make sure that triggered abilities controlled by the dead player don't go onto the stack. To cover all our bases, we wrote rule 102.6b, which is a general rule to stop objects going where they shouldn't go.

Here comes the science:

*102.6. If a player loses the game, he or she leaves the game. Likewise, if a player leaves the game, he or she loses the game.*

*102.6a When a player leaves the game, all objects owned by that player leave the game and any change-of-control effects which give that player control of any objects end. Then, if there are any objects still controlled by that player, those objects leave the game. This is not a state-based effect – it happens as soon as the player leaves the game.*

*102.6b If an object owned by a player who is not in the game would be put into any zone of the game, it leaves the game instead.*

## **2. Dead people can't do anything.**

If you're not in the game, you shouldn't be allowed to do anything that affects the game (this point is very important for **Magic Online**). But, choices still have to be made. So, we created the following rule to handle any choices that needed to be made:

*102.6d If an object requires a player who is not in the game to make a choice, the controller of the object must choose a new player to make that choice. If the original choice was to be made by an opponent of the controller of the object, the controller must choose another opponent if possible.*

## Spell Range

Spell range was the other big headache for these rules. In theory, it's a very simple concept, with a spell range of 2 usually expressed as, "I can only affect things within 2 seats of me." However, it turns out that this is much more difficult to translate into rules, because the definition of "affect" isn't clear.

Here are the highlights of spell range:



*[Hymn to Tourach](#) art by Liz Danforth*

- Spell range is the maximum distance from you (measured in metric seats) that you can affect. Spell range covers spells, abilities, effects, damage, attacking, and making choices.
- Creatures you control can only attack opponents who are within your spell range.
- Spells and abilities you control can't target a objects or players that are out of your spell range.
- You can only choose something that's within your spell range, but there are a few exceptions for weird corner cases
- If an effect you control requires information from the game, it will only get information from within your spell range.
- Effects can't affect objects or players outside your range.
- Local enchantments you control can't enchant permanents that are outside your spell range. Equipment you control can't equip permanents that are outside your spell range.
- Damage prevention effects you control prevent damage "dealt to" a creature or player in your spell range, or prevent damage "dealt by" a source in your spell range, depending on the wording of the effect.

## This is your chance

Now that you've had a chance to see where we're at, please go the [message boards thread](#) to let us know what you think. Any feedback is welcome (both specific and general), but please do your best to be clear. Thanks for taking the time to help us out, and I'm looking forward to seeing what you all think!

- Paul Barclay, **Magic** Rules Manager