

Wizards of the Coast is out of the office for the Thanksgiving holiday, and will return with new articles beginning Monday, 11/29. In case you missed it, what follows is the article that ran in this slot last week. In the meantime, we'll still be running new content in Card of the Day, **Magic** Arcana, and Ask Wizards.

Have a great weekend!
Scott Johns, **magicthegathering.com** Content Manager

There was a period of time recently when you had to watch what you said around here. No, I'm not talking about when Hasbro sent their hit squad of grim-visaged auditors to shadow us in an attempt to make sure we weren't wasting company dollars. (Convincing them that playing Prismatic online was "research" was easy--Frisbee, not so much.) I'm talking about the period when *Unhinged* was in what passed for development.

Yes, some token amount of playtesting went into this upcoming silly little set. Not too much, mind you--if cards are broken in *Unhinged* world, no biggie. We kept our normal man-hour count on expert-level expansion development up, so if Horizon Seed ruins Standard, don't blame *Unhinged*.

Most of the playtesting was done using various limited formats, and most of the funniest and most memorable moments came thanks to the set's only keyword mechanic, "Gotcha."

What does this wacky new mechanic do? Let's check the handy FAQ to see how it works...

"**t**a" *ards

r **ra* **t**a *ards, **at ****ts as a ****a* **t**a?

T** **rd m*st ** *s*d *xa*t**. T** **** *x**** **s ***ra*s. ** ***r *****t sa*s "***s", t*at tr****rs a **t**a **r t** **rd "****."

WELL, THAT WAS FREAKIN' HELPFUL! WHOSE BRILLIANT IDEA WAS THAT? Ahem. Since that isn't going to help us, why don't we just look at a sample card?



That's right--with Gotcha, anything you say can and will be used against you. Deal Damage is actually part of a five card cycle of Gotcha cards, each of which has a two-word title for which either word will trigger its Gotcha condition, which returns the card to its owner's hand from the graveyard. Unfortunately for all of you, all the words in question are uttered frequently by people playing **Magic**. Words like "creature." And "life." And "spell."

That's not it, either. There are several other Gotcha cards in the set as well, each with its own unique trigger. Some continue the talking theme, prohibiting you from saying things like numbers. Others punish common actions, such as touching your face or (my favorite) flicking your cards around in your hand. You'll be on pins and needles playing against these cards, trust me.

Just ask Mark Rosewater. I suppose there is some irony in the fact that the madman behind *Unhinged* is the easiest guy to nail with its marquee mechanic. Developer Worth Wollpert took particular glee in subjecting Mark to the shame of being "Gotcha'ed" multiple times, and it was never while Worth was actually playing.

I can remember watching one particular game between Mark and developer Devin Low. Devin had played a Gotcha card earlier in the game (let's say it was Deal Damage), and Mark was being careful not to accidentally say either "deal" or "damage" at any point. But Worth was hovering about, biding his time, waiting for the perfect moment. And then he did it.

"Wasn't there a blue card in *Onslaught* that made all opponents draw seven cards?" Worth asked no one in particular. That probably wasn't the exact question, but I guarantee it pertained to a bit of trivia about **Magic**, television, or movies. Mark can't resist trivia questions, factoids, and other opportunities to show off his encyclopedic knowledge of minutiae. Forgetting what he was doing and what was at stake, he instinctively yelled out the answer.

"Wheel and Deal!"

"Gotcha!" cried Devin. Mark cursed. Worth--along with everyone else in the room--burst out laughing. Of course, the best part of this story is that Worth managed to trick Mark not once but twice more in the exact same way, during the *same game!*

Trust no one.

Mix It Up

When *Unglued* came out, many players built decks out of *Unglued* cards exclusively, and did drafts with *Unhinged* cards exclusively. While formats like that are brimming over with wackiness, I hope people will mix *Unhinged* in with "normal" **Magic** a little more, such as casual decks with 8 to 12 *Unhinged* cards, or sealed deck tournaments with a *Champions of Kamigawa* tournament pack and two *Unhinged* boosters. The crazy flavor and playstyle of *Unhinged* really shines when there are "normal" cards to play the straight man.



The Gotcha mechanic in particular benefits from a mixed card pool. If you play with an all *Unhinged* deck, your opponents will probably be very focused on what they're saying, and will probably not tend to screw up very often. But if you throw a few copies of Deal Damage into your Samurai deck, the game will be much more relaxed, your opponent will probably forget what's in your graveyard, and the next thing you know... "GOTHCA!"

Advancing Technology

For as silly as *Unhinged* is, it taught us a lot about how to make our regular sets better. For instance, the templating of Gotcha cards led us down a path that we will be using in the future on some of our

other mechanics.

If you look at Deal Damage above, you'll see that the keyword has no reminder text. Everything you need to know is in the rules text proper. In a way, the mechanic wouldn't need a keyword at all. But putting one there allows us to refer to the cards as a group, and gives them an easily identifiable common bond.

We often try to give our mechanics "official nicknames" by writing about them in theme deck inserts and articles on this site, but now with the "keywords that aren't really keywords" technology, we can make the unofficial names official. Here are some examples of how text from older cards would look using this new templating idea:

Gating—When Shivan Wurm comes into play, return a red or green creature you control to its owner's hand.

Deathback—When Rancor is put into a graveyard from play, return Rancor to its owner's hand.

Spiritcraft—Whenever you play a Spirit or Arcane spell, regenerate target creature.

While we won't be using the "Spiritcraft" keyword in this block retroactively, we will be introducing a few pseudo-keywords like these later on.

Last Week's Poll:

| What kind of Constructed format do you like best? | | |
|--|--------------|---------------|
| A wide open one where any deck can win. | 8157 | 73.0% |
| I don't play competitive Constructed. | 1671 | 15.0% |
| A more predictable format that I can metagame and prepare for. | 1349 | 12.1% |
| Total | 11177 | 100.0% |

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