

Home > Games > Magic > Magicthegathering.com

Ask Wizards - March, 2005

Ask Wizards
Tuesday, March 1, 2005



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

 Search Ask Wizards

March 31, 2005

Q: "Why does the wording on the **Ember-Fist Zuber**a not match the other four cards in the Zubera cycle?"
--Matt Cincinnati, Ohio, USA

A: From **Del Laugel**, **Magic** Senior Editor R&D:

"The other four cards in this cycle (**Ashen-Skin Zuber**a, **Dripping-Tongue Zuber**a, **Floating-Dream Zuber**a) have effects that happen 'for each Zubera put into a graveyard from play this turn.' But as Matt points out, **Ember-Fist Zuber**a is worded differently: 'it deals damage to target creature or player equal to the number of Zubera put into all graveyards from play this turn.' Why isn't this one like the others?

"The difference is that **Ember-Fist Zuber**a deals damage. Any effect that deals damage is templated so that the damage is dealt all in one clump. This makes everything interact sensibly with damage-prevention effects like **Circle of Protection: Red** and **Opal-Eye**, **Konda's Yojimbo** that check for 'the next time' a source would deal damage.

"With that in mind, **Mana Clash** stands out as the real oddball in the **Magic** universe. It's both the only spell that requires multiple **Circle of Protection** activations and the only coin-flip card that doesn't let a player call the flip."

March 30, 2005

Q: "Whatever happened to the official multiplayer rules, as previewed by Paul Barclay on [July 12 last year](#)? He said then that they wouldn't be finished until September 2004 at the earliest, but it's now six months after that and I haven't heard anything further about them."

A: From **John Carter**, **Magic** Rules Manager:

"Thanks for writing. One of the many tasks I took up when I started last August was the multiplayer project. R&D let me rework the entire system, and I think we've found some interesting areas Paul didn't predict in his original outline. We've also taken time to meet with Organized Play to explore the possibility of sanctioning one or more multiplayer formats (beyond the Team Rochester format we currently support). We also quietly slipped a few details and a poll in the Into The Aether and Serious Fun columns a few weeks ago. The official update should be available before **Saviors of Kamigawa** hits the streets."

March 29, 2005

Q: "I've been looking at **Solemn Simulacrum** for awhile now, and thinking about how much more realistically 'human' his face looks than other cards. I was wondering, do any of the illustrations in **Magic: the Gathering** have a designer's face hidden somewhere in it?"
--Thomas K.
Gorham, Maine, USA

A: From **Paul Sottosanti**, **Magic** R&D:

"It's a little known fact that I was actually the model for Matt Cavotta's painting of **Goblin Piledriver** that he briefly referenced in his [recent article](#). No, I wasn't the goblin with the chin rings (I wish)...I'm actually the guy in the middle getting choked to death. It was rather painful to hold that pose for several hours, but well worth it.

"Okay, that's not really true. The lead designer of **Mirage** and **Visions**, Joel Mick, can claim the first occurrence of a designer's face appearing in a **Magic** card. Since **Jalum Tome** is named after him (his initials are

WHAT IS MAGIC?
CLICK HERE!

MAGIC ONLINE Customer Service Survey
Magic Wallpapers for your cell phone

PRODUCTS

RAVNICA **Core Set**
Ravnica: City of Guilds
All Magic products

RULES

Magic Core Game
Basic Rulebook
Comprehensive Rules
All Magic Rules

MESSAGE BOARDS

Magic All Magic message boards
COMMUNITY magicthegathering.com forum
Rules Q&A forum
Magic Online announcements

MAGIC ONLINE

MAGIC ONLINE
Download Now! Check server status
Magic Online Academy **Magic Online FAQ**

NOVELS

Ravnica: City of Guilds
Ravnica Cycle, Book I
by Cory Herndon
More fiction at LEGENDOLOGY

JLM, which makes Jalum if you try to pronounce it), someone thought it would be cute to fit him into the art of **Jalum Gifter** in *Unglued*. Since then, Richard Garfield has also found himself on the front of a card, with the aptly named **Richard Garfield, Ph.D.** appearing in *Unhinged*.

"There are also rumors of alternate art for R&D's **Secret Lair** that includes the five people who were in R&D at the time, but I can't talk about that (it's a secret).

"And a final bonus fact—there are actually three different tomes in **Magic** that are named after people who have influenced the game:"

- **Emmessi Tome** – MSE – Mike Elliott
- **Jalum Tome** – JLM – Joel Mick
- **Jayemdae Tome** – JMD – J. Michael Davis



March 28, 2005

Q: "I was wondering what the Riptide Project was - I have seen it on so many cards but all I know is that they have something to do with the Slivers. And what are the Slivers?"

-- Hans
Hampton Park, Victoria, Australia

A: From **Brady Dommermuth**, **Magic R&D**:

"The Riptide Project was a secret **wizards' school** on the continent of Otaria, where the *Odyssey* and *Onslaught* blocks took place. It was a joint effort of human and cephalid wizards, who were cooperating for the purpose of learning more about magic and about each other. Things went terribly awry at the Riptide Project when its wizards recovered the remains of a sliver, a creature seen previously only on Rath. The wizards replicated slivers and in so doing unleashed a force that overwhelmed them and escaped the Project's island sanctuary.

"**Slivers** are creatures of mysterious origin. They were first encountered by the *skyship Weatherlight* as it passed through ventilation ducts in Volrath's mountain **stronghold**. Each sliver is specialized for a particular purpose, but each has the ability to share its specialized purpose with all others in the vicinity. Only by separating the creatures from each other could the crew of the *Weatherlight* defeat them and survive."

March 25, 2005

Q: "What kind of debate went into making **Richard Garfield, Ph.D.** a blue card?"

-- Anonymous
Manila, Philippines

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

"As the designer of the card, I can tell you how it happened. The card started as a blue enchantment that made both players play **Mental Magic**. When we were thinking of ideas for Richard's card (we knew we wanted to make a real legend and Richard was the obvious choice) it dawned on me that the **Mental Magic** card was a perfect fit. I changed it to make it only affect the player controlling Richard for flavor reasons. It stayed blue as the original enchantment was blue, and Richard being blue (as he embodies many of the qualities of blue - see '[True Blue](#)' if you'd like more detail on blue's philosophy) seemed very natural."

March 24, 2005

Q: "Why is *Sixth Edition* sometimes referred to as 'Classic'?"

A: From **Darla Kennerud**, Executive Editor:

"With *Sixth Edition* the rules were streamlined and the idea of a 'Core Set' (as it's now called) was first tried out. We wanted to convey that the current edition was the foundation of the game and its place in the product line was more important than the actual number of the edition. 'Classic' was chosen to highlight the difference between that foundation set and the new sets. It was simply the first version of today's 'Core Set' label -- which we like even better."

March 23, 2005

Q: "I keep hearing about an *Invasion-Planeshift-Apocalypse* tournament being held on **Magic Online**, but I thought those sets weren't being sold anymore. How can I get involved?"

-- Gary Pratt
Sacramento, California

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

"That's right, we are running an IPA sealed deck tournament at 9:00 am PST April 2nd 2005. No need to buy any product; we'll provide the IPA product & prizes. All you need to do is qualify. In order to get invited, you can play in one of the 'IPA QT' events between 3/24/05 and 3/30/05. Top 4 finishers in each of these events will be invited to the IPA sealed tournament on April 2nd. All the details are [posted here](#). Have fun."

March 22, 2005



Q: "I understand it's important to let the artists go with their strengths, but do you ever give artists pieces you know they don't prefer, simply to see what they are capable of? If so, could you let us know what some of these pieces have been that worked out well in the past?"

--Craig
Aloha, OR, USA

A: From **Jeremy Cranford**, Magic Art Director:

"Hi Craig,

"That is a very good question. What kind of art director would I be with out challenging the artists?"

"Yes, I do try and give artists pieces that I know they'll have to stretch in order to make them work. Using two current examples, the first would be the Kamigawa swamp mural by Jim Nelson. He doesn't paint landscapes and I wanted to see how he'd handle a non-figurative assignment, and I think the final piece came out great. Then there was the **Hana Kami** in *Champions of Kamigawa* by Rebecca Guay. Rebecca is very good with figures but was a bit surprised when I assigned her an abstract Kami concept. It was a stretch from her normal work but again I think it turned out great.

"There are times when I'm not so lucky but I won't talk about those :)"

March 21, 2005



Q: "In the other sets all the goblins pretty much had the same look. Then *Champions* came out and the goblin race got a makeover! Why did you change the look of the goblins for the Kamigawa Block?"

--Chris Morewood
Girard, Pennsylvania, USA

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

"All goblins look the same, Chris? **Moggs** are hulking, no-necked thugs. **Kyren** are practically aristocratic -- they look almost like short elves with green skin. In our minds, goblins have varied pretty widely from setting to setting, so the **akki** didn't seem like much of a stretch to us. But back to your question: Almost everything in Kamigawa has some connection to Japanese myth or folklore, and that folklore doesn't really have any goblins, per se. In looking for a Japanese equivalent to goblins, concept illustrator Ittoku came up with an idea based on another mythological creature: the kappa. He drew a little, shelled goblin-like thing and scrawled 'FIRE KAPPA' next to it. We thought it suited the goblin 'ethos' quite well, and thus the akki were born."

March 18, 2005



Q: "Why is **Goblin Cohort** not 'Akki Cohort'? I thought all goblins were akki in Kamigawa?"

--Blair
Birmingham, AL

A: From **Brandon Bozzi**, Magic R&D:

"Thanks for the question Blair. The simple answer is all goblins in Kamigawa are akki, this one just doesn't happen to have akki in its name.

"We've done goblins in the past with a similar naming convention. Remember moggs? Some of them have 'goblin' in their name and some do not. For example, both **Raging Goblin** (*Exodus*) and **Slingshot Goblin** are moggs. So, when we introduce a new species of goblin, whether it be moggs, or **kyren**, or akki, the name of the species and 'goblin' are both fair game for card names."

March 17, 2005



Q: "I noticed that *Betrayers of Kamigawa* includes two creatures, **Matsu-Tribe Sniper** and **Takeno's Cavalry**, that have creature type Archer. Previously, when creature types were being consolidated, a number of older creatures, such as **D'Avenant Archer** and **Longbow Archer**, with creature type Archer were reprinted with creature type Soldier. Why the policy change? Are there any plans to make the old Archers back into creature type Archer?"

--Chris
Columbus, Ohio, USA

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

"Chris, **Magic's** creature types are -- how do I put this delicately? -- problematic. Little thought was given to them in the early days, then there were various attempts to clean them up. Some of these attempts were partially successful, some were, um, well intentioned. Then came *Onslaught*, which upped the stakes on the whole issue. The *Onslaught* block made players pay attention to creature type, and the flaws and weirdness became all the more apparent.

"One of the problems with creature types is that we're very hesitant to change anything 'retroactively.' In other words, now that we support the Archer type, it's very unlikely that we'll comb through the 10,000 distinct cards in **Magic** and put Archer on the ones for whom it makes sense. Instead we'll simply apply Archer as appropriate going forward, and **Magic's** past will remain the messy, patchwork beast that it's been for many years. I know that may not sound ideal, but the alternative is far worse -- asking players to memorize Oracle from month to month so they can track the changes we've made."

March 16, 2005



Q: "Have there been other single artworks that have been split up and put on a number of different cards like **Akroma** and **Phage**, Tony Robert's promotional lands etc., and what cards are they on? Do you commission the art intending to crop the image in different spots, or is the decision made after seeing the art?"

--Adam
Bathurst, Australia

A: From **Jeremy Cranford**, **Magic** Art Director:

"Hello Adam,

"I'm glad you notice these cards. They are planned and commissioned that way. There are lots of them around if you look. I think the first mural used for several cards were the "[Ice Age](#)" [Plains](#) land cards by Chris Rush. All of the basic lands were painted as one mural and then cropped into 4 cards. The forest painting by Rob Alexander was at least 4 feet long!

"There is the set of [Nim zombie cards](#) by Adam Rex, the [Great Machine](#) by Greg Staples and Steve Tappin, and the [Brothers Yamazaki](#) by Ron Spears.

"And that's just a start, I'm sure there are more. I'm always looking for places to slip this sort of thing in when I can!"

March 15, 2005



Q: "I noticed that in the *Betrayers of Kamigawa* art there are a lot of creatures with 'floating things' hovering above them, usually numbering in 3s. All of the Baku have them, but so does **Gnarled Mass** and **Bile Urchin**. What is the flavor behind these floating things hovering around all of these spirits?"

--Tim

A: From **Brady Dommermuth**, **Magic** R&D:

"Glad you noticed, Tim. Early in Kamigawa world design, we weren't sure whether all the kami would end up looking bizarre enough -- whether it would be clear that they're otherworldly creatures. So we designed a 'visual cue' -- a common element that all kami would share. The floating objects are that visual cue. Where did they come from? Concept illustrator Ittoku produced a sketch that would eventually become the **Myojin of Cleansing Fire**, and it had floating, flaming heads around it. (To see that early concept sketch, [click here](#).) When a second concept illustration featured strange things floating around a central figure, we knew we had found our cue and ran with it."

March 14, 2005



Q: "When will we find out what Bob Maher's Invitational card does?"

--Matthew
Tampa, Florida, USA

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

"Hi Matthew,

"Bob Maher's invitational card is in the first standalone set slated for the fall of 2005 - *Ravnica: City of Guilds*. He ended up submitting a 2/1 with the ability 'During each upkeep you reveal the top card of your library and must pay life equal to the card's converted casting cost and put it in your hand.' There have been some tweaks to the card in development, and I am confident the card is better than ever. I've cast it dozens of times, and killed probably almost as many. I hope you enjoy the card as much as we have!"

March 11, 2005



Q: "What was the first 'infinite' combo discovered in **Magic** that you know of?"

--Aran
London, England

A: From **Charlie Catino**, **Magic** R&D:

"It depends on what your definition of 'infinte' is. :-). But let's not get the Mathematics PhD's discussing this - that wouldn't be entertaining and would probably take a large number of years. Actually, in the playtests before **Magic** was printed, we were allowed to play with as many copies of a card as we wanted (no '4 of' limit). One deck abused the combination of **Time Walk**, **Regrowth**, and **Timetwister** to gain infinite (or, at least, a very large number of) turns, and then win with some big creature attacking for many turns in a row. Another early playtest deck included a lot of control, **Timetwister**, **Regrowth**, and **Swords to Plowshares** so as to slowly remove all the creatures from the opponent's deck and then either run them out of cards or kill them with a **Llanowar Elves**. However, the first infinite (or at least a very large number) combo to hit the big time in **Magic** started with **Ice**

Age and the favorite combo piece: **Enduring Renewal**. For those that don't know this card, it was an enchantment that whenever one of your creatures died it went back to your hand. Also, whenever you drew a card, you would show your opponent and if it was a creature you would discard it. This drawback didn't slow the **Enduring Renewal** decks down much, however. Combine the enchantment with **Ashnod's Altar** (sacrifice a creature to get 2 mana), and **Ornithopter** (the first 0 cost creature) and you had infinite (or at least a very large number of) mana. Now if you can generate infinite (or at least a very large number of) mana, it wasn't too hard to figure out a way to win (**Fireball**)."

March 10, 2005



Q: "I am very curious who the most prolific **Magic** artists are, and also if there are any left from the game's earliest days?"

--Tim
Milford, Connecticut

A: From **Jeremy Cranford**, **Magic** Art Director:

"Hi Tim,

"This is similar to the 'who has painted the most **Magic** cards' question. I haven't answered that question before because I'm not 100% sure of my database's accuracy with the older data. However, with that said, according to my records the top 10 most prolific **Magic** artists as of today are:

1. Pete Venters: 241 cards illustrated
2. Ron Spencer: 205 cards illustrated
3. Kev Walker: 204 cards illustrated
4. Mark Tedin: 172 cards illustrated
5. Dan Frazier: 159 cards illustrated
6. John Avon: 156 cards illustrated
7. Carl Critchlow: 155 cards illustrated
8. Doug Shuler: 148 cards illustrated
9. Greg Staples: 147 cards illustrated
10. Rob Alexander: 140 cards illustrated

"As for the original artists who worked on **Magic**, you can still find pieces done by Mark Poole, Douglas Shuler, Anson Maddocks, Dan Frazier, Mark Tedin, Chris Rush and Brian Snoddy in our current releases."

March 9, 2005



Q: "Why didn't you make **Mirror Gallery** a Legendary Artifact?"

-- Martin
Adelaide, South Australia

A: From **Henry Stern**, **Magic** R&D:

"Thanks for the question Martin, we have certainly received this one a lot. If **Mirror Gallery** were a 'Legendary Artifact' it would still be subject to its own rule. Thus the Legendary text would not mean anything. We felt this could confuse some people. 'Why does it say Legend, and then make the Legend rule not apply?' In general, we like to remove all superfluous text from cards."

March 8, 2005



Q: "I've just noticed a small spaceship piloted by a goblin in the art of **Blast from the Past**. The same spaceship looks crashed in the art of **Old Fogey**. Are these the same spaceship? If so, I'm not sure I understand the connection?"

--Karsten
Karlsruhe, Germany

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

"Sorry this little 'Easter egg' didn't come through more clearly, Karsten. The goblin in **Blast from the Past** is flying by in a **Time Machine**. In **Old Fogey**, the same **Time Machine** has crash-landed. The idea behind **Time Machine** is that a creature will visit the future, whereas on **Blast from the Past** and **Old Fogey**, you're revisiting the past. "

March 7, 2005



Q: "In a [previous Ask Wizards](#) Mark Rosewater gave a list of black characters that were likeable. In this list you included the cast of *Seinfeld*, save Kramer. I'm curious to know, then, what color you consider Kramer to be?"

--Scott
Oregon, USA

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

"Scott,

"You've asked a tough question. Kramer has attributes of both green and red. He is very much a creature of nature as he follows his instincts without question. The red part of him comes from the amount of control his emotions have over him. Name the emotion and it has driven Kramer to do crazy things. Red/Green seems

even more natural if you think it as the antithesis of blue. Kramer is not driven in any way by his intellect. He never thinks about the course of his actions before committing to them. Given all of that, I would have to go with Red/Green."

March 4, 2005



Q: "I have been trying to find out what 'DCI' stands for. I have played **Magic** for a long time and I have asked others who have played for longer and I still cannot find out what DCI stands for."

--Matthew
Ft. Drum, New York

A: From **RE Dalrymple**, Senior Manager, Organized Play Operations:

"DCI stands for Duelists' Convocation International. A long time ago, in a play environment far, far away (back in 1994-95), it was actually known as just the DC, or Duelists' Convocation. Quickly, though, to recognize the international aspect of the game, the title was modified to be the Duelists' Convocation International. Some of you may even have seen the original membership cards that had the whole name spelled out on the face, no logos-and four-digit membership numbers. When the Pro Tour started to pick up speed, and when in-store sanctioned tournaments began to explode in 1996, we began the process of creating logos, making our membership cards have color, and establishing a look and feel for the DCI. Spelling out Duelists' Convocation International took up a lot of space, and nobody really referred to us as anything other than the DCI, so we dropped just about all references to the old Duelists' Convocation International in late 1997, early 1998."

March 3, 2005



Q: "My question has to do with the flavor behind the card **Final Judgment**. The card itself features O-Kagachi, the kami that all other kami came from. Because I don't believe that R&D would have missed this, I ask what the reason was behind keeping the card from being Arcane?"

--Tony
Chandler, Arizona, USA

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

"Tony, the Arcane subtype represents spirit-world spells -- magic wielded by the kami. **Final Judgment** shows a great kami, but it's not meant to represent spirit-world magic, but rather a spell that recreates a pivotal moment in the Kami War. O-Kagachi isn't just the kami of all kami. It's the very embodiment of the barrier between the utsushiyo and the kakuriyo, the living essence of the difference between the two worlds. So when the O-Kagachi is directly involved, distinctions between the material and spirit worlds blur almost to meaninglessness. And the more those distinctions blur, the more angry and unstable O-Kagachi becomes."

March 2, 2005



Q: "How many times during the history of **Magic** have you intentionally created an infinite combo? I know that the **Stations** from *Fifth Dawn* were intentional, but are there any more intentional infinite combos?"

--Bryan, USA

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

"Bryan,

"How many have I created? One. Ironically, you named it. This might seem weird at first blush, but the designers don't tend to specifically design cards to interact with other specific cards. Rather we try to make each card open-ended enough that it has the potential to combo well with other cards. This doesn't mean we ignore the existence of other cards (In *Mirrodin*, for instance, we had to be conscious of the cheap artifacts as we had so many cards that cared about artifacts), but we don't create them to specifically work with a single other card. The metaphor I like to use is that we design tools. We have a general idea of how the majority of people are going to use the tools, but we don't flinch we people find other ways to use them. The open utility was built into the design. And yes, people will use our tools in combinations to do all sorts of cool things. But we don't have to know what that cool thing is in order to design them. Figuring out the cool interactions, that's your job."

March 1, 2005



Q: "Given the new legend rule, do you plan to 'unban' **Lin Sivvi** from Masques block?"

--Alex Rodgers
New Zealand

A: From **Aaron Forsythe**, **Magic** R&D:

"That move was on the table, and was actually submitted to the DCI as a recommendation from R&D earlier last month. Many of us thought the way you did--without the old Legend rule making the Rebel-on-Rebel mirror match being a coin flip, **Lin Sivvi**, **Defiant Hero** loses a lot of the power of what makes her a ban-worthy card. But after some heated discussions, we backed off and are leaving her there. She's still too good against every non-**Rising Waters** deck, and with the best white answer to her in the format--**Mageta the Lion**--getting significantly weaker with the legend rule change, **Lin Sivvi** ends up not being weakened enough."



[WHAT'S NEW](#) [CORPORATE INFO](#) [WHERE TO BUY](#) [INTERNATIONAL](#) [SUPPORT](#) [SITE MAP](#) [PRODUCT LIBRARY](#)



© 1995-2005 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](#)