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Ask Wizards - May, 2005

Ask Wizards
Monday, May 2, 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.

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May 31, 2005

Q: "I know **Memnarch** is a powerful artifact wizard. But who is he flavor-wise? Why is he an artifact? And why has he created the myr (if that was him)?"

--Pontus
St. Olof, Sweden

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

"That's a pretty big question, Pontus. **Memnarch** was originally created by **Karn** to watch over the plane of Argentum, a metal plane of **Karn**'s creation.

"But long after **Karn** left the plane to wander the multiverse, something happened to cause **Memnarch**'s sanity to erode. He began to reshape Argentum according to his increasingly strange whims, renamed it **Mirrodin**, and created the myr as his servitors and agents ('myr' is a made-up word that comes from the word 'myrmidon').

"For more about **Memnarch**'s origin and his descent into madness, check out the books [The Moons of Mirrodin](#) by Will McDermott, [The Darksteel Eye](#) by Jess Lebow, and [The Fifth Dawn](#) by Cory J. Herndon."

May 27, 2005

Q: "I was looking at the [Genju of the Falls wallpaper](#) and it was then that I noticed that it has three eyes. Two on the side and one in the center, which would seem to imply that it's an oni. Is this in fact the case?"

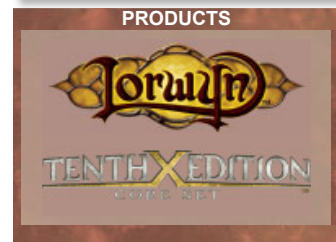
--David
Long Beach, CA

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

"**Genju of the Falls** isn't an oni, David, despite its third eye. It's missing the horns, as well as the homicidal tendencies and lust for power."



May 26, 2005



Q: "I'm a long time fan of the site and I read all the articles, but one thing bugs me: Why do some of you spell certain words wrong? (One example would be "color" as "colour".) Washington is still in the USA, right?"

--Eric

Newmarket, New Hampshire, US

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

"Eric, the reason for those spellings is that magicthegathering.com is an international site, with a massive international audience. The articles where you're running into alternate spellings are those by authors who come from countries where the words are spelled that way. ([Scott Wills](#) is the only weekly columnist that writes from another country, but there are other examples in the [feature articles](#) as well.) While some sites prefer to standardize their spellings to match their home country, this feels artificial to me for our site given how much international audience we have. Authors like Scott Wills and Matt Vienneau do spell those words that way, and readers from those (and other) countries do as well. Given that, I've never seen the need to change the spellings, though my opinion would change if our audience were almost exclusively American."

May 25, 2005



Q: "Why is it in all the pictures of the shoals ([Disrupting Shoal](#), [Shining Shoal](#), etc.) there are flying fish?"

--Bob J.

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

"Kind of a long story, Bob. We originally envisioned the kami as creatures that defied physics entirely -- really bizarre, insane things. One that really hit the right level of bizarre was [Teller of Tales](#), from *Champions of Kamigawa*. Jim Murray did a great job creating a creature with rich symbolism that you can't quite make sense of. Anyway, when it came time to concept the rest of the *Champions* cards, the kakuriyo fish from [Teller of Tales](#) found their way onto another card: Eerie Procession. I envisioned them as some kind of kami-heralds, or like a kind of surreal Greek chorus commenting on the Kami War. Then came the [Shoals](#). Spell cards are always tough to concept, and cycles of spell cards raise the stakes. Needless to say, when I told people that I wanted a cycle of cards to be represented by schools of crazy spirit-world fish, it was a bit of a tough sell. But I think it worked out in the end. Even I was surprised, though, when I first saw Dan Scott's '[barfing fish](#)' sketch."

May 24, 2005



Q: "You made [Timmy](#), [Power Gamer](#) in *Unglued*, and [Johnny](#), [Combo Player](#) in *Unhinged*. Are you going to make a card for Spike in the next Un-set?"

--Eric

Chicago, Illinois, USA

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

"I feel about the design of **Magic** sets much as Michelangelo felt about his sculptures. I do not create as much as I free the object trapped in the stone (literally for him and figuratively for me). So is Spike in Un-Set #3? Possibly. I haven't looked yet. That is, if there's a third set. Which I hope there will be (I'm squirreling cards away just in case). But it hasn't officially been decided yet."

May 23, 2005



Q: "I was looking at the picture of [Naturalize](#) from the *Onslaught* block, and was wondering if the character is Kamahl, holding what I think it is his old barbarian sword? And how did Kamahl switch to his new weapon, that magical staff?"

-- Luke K.

Millburn, New Jersey, USA

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

"That is meant to be [Kamahl](#) in the *Onslaught* [Naturalize](#), Luke. He's shown destroying a Pardic sword by infusing it with green mana, thereby causing the Krosan Forest to subsume it. That sword does resemble his own sword, the one the [Mirari](#) was eventually attached to, but it's not. It's just a sword in the style of the Pardic tribes. As for the staff, Kamahl takes up a staff as a kind of symbol of his new dedication to the Krosan Forest and to green mana in general. What happened to Kamahl's sword? To learn that you'll have to read the [Onslaught novel trilogy](#), written by J. Robert King."

May 20, 2005



Q: "How do you choose the theme for any particular week, and how do you select which weeks will have themes?"

--Carlos

Guatemala, Guatemala

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

"Good question Carlos. First off the easy part: theme weeks happen every other week, so that part is just formula. The only time this gets wonky is when we run into preview weeks. We don't run themes during preview weeks since the previews themselves are basically the theme. Once previews are over we skip a week and then head back to running themes every other week."

"When it comes to selecting what those themes actually *are*, there are several things at work. First off, I try to lean pretty heavily on set-specific themes whenever a new set hits the site. For example, after the *Betrayers* previews we had Ninja Week. *Fifth Dawn* was followed immediately by Machine Week, and *Champions of Kamigawa* had Spirit Week soon after its previews were over. However, that's just one layer. We also have several super themes that go across sets. Creature types are the most common theme (followed by mechanic-based themes), but if you look back through the history of theme weeks I bet you'd be able to predict some of the ones still coming up. For example, we've had Combo Week and Control Week so far. We've also had several theme weeks dedicated to specific sets, such as *Legends* Week and *Ice Age* week. Probably the highest profile of these ongoing theme arcs were the color weeks, such as Blue Week, Black Week, etc. (While we're on that topic I'll let you in on a secret... we aren't done with these yet!)

"As you can see, there's a lot going on, and that's just with the systematic themes. We also run plenty of themes that are completely different, such as Mulligan Week, Name Week, or Puzzle Week. In addition to all that, there's also the question of each week's Feature Article. Normally I schedule those out about a month or two in advance. Since I often tie the theme and feature article together in some fashion, those Feature Article slots also have a lot of influence on which themes get selected from week to week. Lastly, whenever possible I also try to space them out so that we aren't repeating *types* of themes too closely together. (You wouldn't see two set weeks close together, for example.)

"Once all that is out of the way, the final question for me is how deep a potential theme is (IE, how many columns can be on-theme, and also what possible tie-ins there are for Magic Arcana or other elements on the site.) I look for themes that allow at least one column per day to be on-theme (at which point the question of who writes on which days comes into play), and one which is open-ended enough that you'll get several different approaches to it over the course of the week.

"And then, even after all that, believe me when I say I'm only just scratching the surface! I'm sure it seems like a pretty simple process to most readers, but there's a *lot* that goes into each choice!"

May 19, 2005



Q: "I noticed that *Unhinged* cards have words behind their set number. Examples of this are *Cheap Ass* (5/140 Phyrexian), or *Johnny, Combo Player* (35/140 Djinn;). Are they meant to form sentences if put in a correct order?"

--Bob

Noordwijk, The Netherlands

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

"Bob,

"Let me start by stressing that anything I say about *Unhinged* or *Unglued* or any Un- set needs to be taken with a grain of salt. (Hint: stop staring at your *Unhinged* basic lands.) So, that said, no, of course the words have no relevance. I think it's a printing error."

May 18, 2005



Q: "We've been to Mirrodin, we're on Kamigawa, and next we'll be visiting Ravnica. Not counting the core sets, any idea how long before things go back to Dominaria where things all started with **Magic**? Or is **Magic** going to be plane-hopping for many years to come?"

--Josh

Stuart, Florida

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

"**Magic** is going to be plane-hopping for many years to come, Josh, but Dominaria is certainly one of the planes to which we could hop. In fact, we talk often about whether we should return to any given world we've already visited and how much time should pass before we do so. Dominaria sometimes comes up in those talks, even though it's a complete mess after the Phyrexian Invasion, the *Mirari* Wake, *Karona* . . . anyway, all I can say is that you'd be amazed by how many years ahead we've planned, but also by how many times those plans change each year."

May 17, 2005



Q: "I have recently come back to **Magic**. I started when *Unlimited* was in print and stopped just after *Visions*. I just came back and find all sorts of new creature abilities in the newest expansions. Which is great...but where are all the old abilities? Specifically Banding, Flanking, and Phasing? Are my cards with these abilities still legal in certain formats? I'd hate to think my *Arabian Nights* *Camel* deck will never see the field of battle again..."

--Jeff

Wilmington, DE

A: From **Worth Wollpert**, **Magic** R&D:

"Hi Jeff!

"Your question is one we get pretty often. The short answer to your question is: Yes. Your banding, phasing, flankers will (for the most part) always be legal in a format called Type 1 or Vintage. We ban or restrict cards here and there in Vintage, but in general if we print a card, it will be legal in Vintage forever. We tend to rotate our other formats though, and sadly I don't recall Camel or any card with phasing being legal in our other

popular formats, Standard and Extended. Never fear though, every time we print a set there is a chance that we'll bring back an old favorite (thereby making it legal again in Standard and Extended for years to come). Also, that's just sanctioned formats. If you're just sitting down with your buddies you certainly don't need to follow tournament guidelines when it comes to which sets are acceptable, just make sure to check with your buddies first!

"For reference, the list of what sets and cards are legal for which formats can be found here:
<http://www.wizards.com/default.asp?x=judge/resources/banned>

"Thanks!"

May 16, 2005

Q: "What is the current status of You Make The Card 3?"

--Nick
Arlington, Texas, USA

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

"Nick,

"Since this is Ask Wizards, I'll try to give the short answer. You Make the Card 3 is late because of me. While I do feel 'You Make the Card' is important I've had to prioritize it behind 'I Make the Cards'. (One of the downsides of my new job is that I have a lot more responsibilities than I used to.) I am working on it and I hope to finish before the month is out."

May 13, 2005

Q: "Why do sets go out of print? Why not just keep selling all of them?"

--Jon
Honolulu, Oahu, USA

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

"It would be logistically impossible for real world retailers to stock boxes for dozens and dozens of **Magic** sets at once. But what about online – why don't we keep selling online *Invasion* block packs? Besides being a strategy game, **Magic**'s also a collectible game whose sets are fun to seek out and assemble. It's important to us that the cards and sets that players have worked hard to collect maintain their value over time. If you have a set of *Legends* or *The Dark*, or Online *Apocalypse* that you've collected, that's pretty damn cool. But if we kept selling *Legends* and *The Dark* and Online *Apocalypse* today, anybody could get a set, and there wouldn't be as much value and coolness for the guy or girl who worked to collect it when it was on sale. "The same guidelines that protect past collectors will protect current collectors in the future. As *Onslaught* gets harder to find on stores shelves over time, your own *Onslaught* collection becomes more important. 5 years in the future, *Onslaught*'s really really harder to find on shelves. 5 years after that, *Onslaught* boxes are harder to find at all. Keeping *Onslaught* packs out of print helps maintain that importance and value of your collection now and over the course of the future."

May 12, 2005

Q: "Is there any significance to all the Oni having three eyes?"

--Rodrigo, Washington

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

"That detail comes straight from the folklore, Rodrigo. There's actually a lot of variety in the way demons are represented in Japanese mythology, but they're most often shown with three eyes and horns. For gameplay purposes, we like it when all cards of a particular kind have a common visual cue, so we made three eyes a rule for Kamigawa oni."



May 11, 2005

Q: "Is there a place where I can find a list of all the artists who have done art for Magic and their contact info?"

-- Ben
Washington, D.C.

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

"There is no official web site listing all **Magic** artists but there is a pretty good unofficial list on the Wizards of the Coast message boards. Here is the URL:"

<http://boards1.wizards.com/showthread.php?t=240651>

May 10, 2005



Q: "I have been playing **Magic** for about four years now and, though I have never been an exceptional player, I do have this talent for remembering large databases such as **Magic** cards and rules, Simpsons quotes, and pop songs. I feel that this would be a good quality for becoming a **Magic** judge. How would I go about seeking this sort of thing? Is it a paying job? Do I need to be an exceptional player?"

--Adam
Tempe, AZ

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

These are some of the good qualities for a **Magic** judge, but it requires more than just knowledge of the rules. 'A judge must possess certain abilities that go beyond the game aspects. A good judge must have team spirit, for even in small local tournaments he may be working with other people, such as the Tournament Organizer and the Scorekeeper. A judge must also be patient and open to communication: most of his activities will involve communicating with other people, such as players, fellow judges and other members of the tournament organization.'

"To become a certified judge seek out any certified judge in your area - you can find them most easily at pre-releases, qualifiers, and Regionals events. They will get you started and be able to recommend you to a judge that can test you for certification. See www.wizards.com/judge for more information."

May 9, 2005



Q: "Why was Rochester draft dropped from Premier Events after [Nagoya](#)?"

--Ivan
Zagreb, Croatia

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

"We went back and looked at the number of events that are sanctioned by the DCI and it turned out that no one ever plays Rochester Draft except when we force them to. PTQ Top 8's plus the Rochester Pro Tours and Grand Prix are the only Rochester drafts that ever happen. In fact, even when Pro Tour players get together to practice for a Rochester Draft event, they often just decide to booster draft instead since that format is more fun. So all in all we concluded that everyone seems to enjoy booster draft more, so we're switching all our draft premier events to the format that players actually seem to enjoy and care about."

May 6, 2005



Q: "What is the flavor behind the 'Shade' mechanic? Or more specifically, why does black get the 'C': +1/+1 mechanic?"

--Alex
Columbus, OH

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

"Alex, [shades](#) are malevolent ghosts that consist of elemental shadow. When infused with black mana, their shadow substance grows larger and more powerful."



May 5, 2005



Q: "When a game of **Magic** is about to start, what would be considered 'etiquette' when opponents must shuffle each other's library? Is there a standard, respectable way to do it without getting an angry glare from a hardcore player?"

--Will
Philadelphia, PA, USA

A: From **Michael Turian**, **Magic** R&D:

"Whatever you do don't throw their deck on the floor. The times I have tried this after yelling '60 card pickup!' my opponent somehow missed the joke."

"Most people won't care how you shuffle their deck but a few people out there are quite picky. If they strike you as someone who will complain do 1 or 2 pile shuffles. After the pile shuffles go ahead and riffle shuffle your opponent's library three times. As long as you don't riffle shuffle too hard no one should complain about your randomization process."

May 4, 2005



Q: "Maybe my friends and I are crazy, but we feel there are hidden messages in the art of the *Unhinged* basic land. The swamp seems to say 'RIP,' the forest seems to say 'Life,' and we think the island says 'Sage.' Anyway, I just wanted to know if this is correct, and if so what does it say on the mountain and plains?"

--Al
Queens, New York

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

"Al,

"If you put the five *Unhinged* lands together based alphabetically on the last letter of the middle initial of the artists, the words hidden in the art spell out 'Live Life, You Ripe Sage.' Or possibly not."

May 3, 2005



Q: "On Card of the Day ([March 4th, 2005](#)), you showed two different images for **Soldevi Adnate**, and I was curious why cards don't get more than one image now, like they did in some of the older expansions?"

--Alex
Grand Junction, Colorado, USA

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

"Hello Alex,

"The main reason we don't print two different images for the same card is that the art for a specific card becomes a symbol that you can recognize at a glance and know what that card's ability is in game play. We found that if you have two images representing one card that it creates confusion during game play. This is why we've stopped doing two pieces of art for the same card (with small exceptions like the **Brothers Yamazaki** in *Champions of Kamigawa*).

"We also print alternate versions of the art on the current prerelease cards, so you can see a different artist take on the same assignment."

May 2, 2005



Q: "How come there isn't a discussion thread for Ask Wizards and Card of the Day? Everything else, including Magic Arcana gets a thread!"

--the **Magic: the Gathering** message board community

A: From **Monty Ashley**, Managing Producer for [magicthegathering.com](#):

"Well, the problem is that most of the time, Ask Wizards and (especially) Card of the Day don't really lend themselves to much discussion. You look at Card of the Day and say, 'Huh. That's interesting,' and move on. But that's no reason not to have a place to discuss them, so from now on, the Magic Arcana discussion thread is renamed the [Magic Arcana, Card of the Day, and Ask Wizards thread](#)."



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