










The Prerelease draws near! Are you prepared? Have you been paying attention?

One reader sent me a letter last week asking a question that has probably been on the lips of quite a few people over the last month:









"I'm totally confused on the whole guilds thing in *Ravnica*. It seems like some kind of two-color groups, but I missed it if this was explained and am totally clueless on the guilds. Could you go into a little more detail please? How will they impact the cards, and the game? What do they mean? Why do they matter? Thanks."

--Chris

Okay, Chris, the important thing to know is that the concept of "guilds" has no mechanical impact on gameplay at all. Instead, it is a way to communicate the flavor of this set and the block as a whole. From the *Ravnica: City of Guilds* FAQ: "Each two-color combination in the **Magic** game is represented in the world of *Ravnica* by a guild – an organized association of people with common beliefs. Four of these guilds appear in this set and the remaining six will appear later in the *Ravnica* block."

Each card that is associated with a guild has its guild's symbol in the background of its text box (that looks really spiffy in foil). To be part of a guild, a card must have mana symbols of both of its guild's colors on it somewhere, or have the guild's keyword, or both. For example, the following cards would all be considered part of the Dimir (blue-black) guild: a card that cost   to play, a card that cost   to play, a black card with a  activation, a land that could produce  or , an artifact that cost   to activate, or any blue or black card with the transmute ability.

Again, the guild symbol doesn't actually mean anything during the game; it just looks cool and brings the world to life.

There are four guilds present in *Ravnica*—the Boros ( ), Dimir ( ), Golgari ( ), and Selesnya ( ). You can check out the story behind these guilds on the flavor page here. The other six guilds won't show up until the next two sets, so you should get comfortable with these four for the time being.

The next section is a must-read for anyone attending prerelease events, as it should clear up any confusion surrounding the mechanics in the set. Think of it as a comprehensive review.

How The Mechanics Work

Each guild has a keyword associated with it that only appears on cards of that guild's colors.

Radiance (red and white). Ironically, the first keyword is not technically a keyword at all, but rather an *ability word* (so named because it does not require reminder text or support in the comprehensive rules).

- All radiance spells have a single target (usually a creature). The spell affects that creature and each other creature that shares a color with it.
- If a radiance spell targets a black-green creature, it will affect black creatures, green creatures, black-green creatures, blue-black creatures, green-white creatures, and so on, as they each share at least one color with the target.
- Oftentimes creatures on both sides of the table will be affected by a single radiance spell.
- Only one creature is targeted. If that creature leaves play or otherwise becomes an illegal target, *the entire spell is countered*. No other creatures are affected.

- Rare cases may come up where the best play is to target your opponent's creature so that you get a positive effect (or vice versa). For instance, if you control three white creatures and three red creatures and your opponent controls a creature that is both white *and* red, you can play Rally the Righteous on *his* creature so that each of yours will untap and get +2/+0 until end of turn. Choose wisely!



Transmute (blue and black). Transmute is a tutoring mechanic that lets you turn spells in your hand into other spells with the same converted mana cost.

- The converted mana cost of Perplex is 3. That means if you transmute Perplex, you can get any card with a converted mana cost of 3, including cards that cost 2♠, 1♠♠, 1♣♠, 2♣, X♣♣♣, or 3.
- If you transmute and there are no cards left in your library of that mana cost, you find nothing.
- Transmute cannot be countered by things that counter spells.
- If you are playing with transmute cards, it will be beneficial to memorize the important cards in your deck of those particular converted mana costs. There is nothing more frustrating than having a transmute card in your hand and being unable to remember if there is anything worth using it for left in your library.



Dredge (black and green). Dredge is a replacement ability of cards in your graveyard. You have the option of "drawing" these cards again whenever you would draw a normal card.

- Any time you would draw a card, you have the option of dredging a card instead. To do so, you have to put some number of cards from your library into your graveyard (the number after the word dredge). If you do so, return the dredge card from your graveyard to your hand instead of drawing the normal card.
- You can dredge anytime you would draw a card, not just during your draw step.
- You can only dredge once per draw (or not at all), regardless of how many dredge cards are in your graveyard.
- Dredge cannot be responded to, as it doesn't use the stack.
- If you don't have enough cards left in your library to fulfill a card's dredge cost, you can't dredge that card.
- Milling yourself for some number of cards to get a card back may seem harsh, and in some ways it is. It is, after all, supposed to be a cost. There is significant risk to dredging too often, especially with the number of blue and/or black cards in the set that facilitate "decking." But the upside is that dredge feeds upon itself—the more cards you put from your library into your graveyard, the more options you have for future dredging.










Convoke (green-white). Convoke is a mechanic that lets you essentially use creatures as lands to cast certain spells. Each of your creatures that you tap as you play a spell with convoke reduces the cost of that spell.

- Even though it doesn't explicitly say so in convoke's reminder text, you may only tap untapped creatures that *you control*. The comprehensive rules make this distinction clear—reminder text is generally only a summary of how the mechanic works.
- While playing a spell with convoke, if you control a creature that taps to produce mana, such as Birds of Paradise, you can either tap it for mana or tap it to reduce the cost of the spell, but not both.
- Convoke can't reduce the cost to play a spell to less than 0, although you are free to tap more creatures than necessary.
- You can tap creatures to reduce generic costs as well as colored costs, including the "X" in Chord of Calling. If you have six lands and five creatures, you can cast Chord with X equaling as much as 8.
- You cannot "float convoke mana" by tapping creatures in response to them leaving play somehow. Convoke may only be used as you are playing a spell with convoke.



Hybrid cards (all guilds). The one new mechanic that runs through each guild is hybrid cards, such as Selesnya Guildmage. Hybrid cards have special "half-half" mana symbols that can be paid for with either of two colors of mana.

- If a card costs , you can play it for , , or .
- Hybrid cards are always considered to be both of their colors, regardless of what colors of mana were spent to play them. So you could play Slay on a Selesnya Guildmage that was played for .
- As you fan out your opening hand, make sure you are aware that you could have hybrid cards in it. It is possible to be fooled into thinking you can't play anything because you have all Swamps and green cards, when in reality one or two of them are green-black hybrids.
- There is no such thing as a  mana.  merely represents a cost that can be paid for using green mana or white mana.

Hopefully that's enough clarification to get you through the weekend's tournaments. I suggest reading tomorrow's Saturday School before leaving the house for even more clarifications, and remember to always ask a judge if you have any questions regarding how new cards work.

Is It All Guilds?



Just because the guilds are the focus of the new set doesn't mean every card is tied directly into the multicolored theme. We have already see interesting mono-colored cards previewed, including Telling Time, Carven Caryatid, and Galvanic Arc, and today I get to show off what may be one of the most splashy mono-colored cards in the set.



Even though Richard Garfield has been making cards for well over a decade, he is still not out of fresh ideas. He came up with convoke. He made the first Aura with a "comes into play" ability that led to the Galvanic Arc and Flight of Fancy cycle.

And he submitted one neat card in design that really caught my eye.

"Imagine a demon being hunted by knights," he explained to the group one day. The idea was simple—an undercosted creature whose balancing drawback was that he gave creatures *to your opponent*. The idea had been touched upon before in **Magic**, from the obscure Varchild's War-Riders to the core set staple Hunted Wumpus. But never in a way that was so clean. I really liked how Richard's card was like a little story in and of itself. "Will the knights ever catch the demon? If so, who will emerge victorious?"

The card was put into the file as something close to the following:

```
Demon Hunted by Knights
2BB
Creature - Demon
6/6
Trample
When CARDNAME comes into play, put two 2/2 white Knight creature tokens into play
under an opponent's control.
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As design began winding down, there was some concern that all of the interesting parts of the set were linked to the "guild model," and that there wasn't anything splashy in the regular old single-colored cards. We needed to find a rare cycle. As a designer and developer, I have found that recognizing a good idea is a skill almost as good as having good ideas. I immediately knew that we had the basis of our cycle right in front of us—Richard's Hunted Demon.

With Mark Rosewater manning the white board, we sat around a conference room one day shouting out numbers and abilities for our five new "hunted" creatures. A pattern emerged—there were five creatures, and each supplied your opponent with an increasing number of token creatures. The white one, for instance, gave your opponent just one creature, all the way up to the blue one, which gives five. Apart from that, anything went. The cost of the creatures ranges from two mana to five. The sizes and abilities of the tokens all vary. Sometimes the tokens have enough power to take down the

hunted creature, sometimes not. All we were looking for were exciting-looking cards that led to interesting game decisions, and I must say we hit the nail on the head.

In development, only two of the five changed at all, and those changes were very slight. Here, for example, is the white one in its glory, unchanged from design:



I can visualize it now... the great lammasu, flying around the Ravnican skies, hesitant to land for fear of running into the vile horror that stalks it from the ground, day and night...

I can imagine all segments of the audience enjoying these cards. They are large creatures for Timmy, efficient beaters for Spike, and a challenging puzzle for Johnny. They are tempting in both limited and constructed play. They do fascinating things in free-for-all multiplayer games. What's not to love?

Last Week's Poll

Which of the four guilds in <i>Ravnica</i> appeals to you the most?		
Dimir (blue-black)	8580	41.0%
Golgari (black-green)	5480	26.2%
Boros (red-white)	4058	19.4%
Selesnya (green-white)	2831	13.5%
Total	20949	100.0%

Even though I did the bulk of my design work on the Dimir cards, I am a huge fan of the Boros. Perhaps it's because they were the underdog going in—white-red was the least popular of all ten color pairs going in, and we wanted so badly to make it cool somehow.

This Week's Poll

Slightly off topic...

Do you ever rearrange the cards in your graveyard during a game?

Yes.

No.

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