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A Walk Through the Cold

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Latest Developments
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The [Coldsnap prerelease](#) is essentially upon us all! Hopefully at this point, playing the cards is quickly becoming a priority for all of you as opposed to just reading about them, so I'll try to split the difference by *writing* about stuff that will help you *play* the cards this weekend!

Here, then, is my very own condensed, annotated *Coldsnap* FAQ, complete with last-minute preview card...

Snow and the Snow Mana Symbol

The snow-covered supertype has been renamed "snow." All *Ice Age* and *Alliances* cards that used the term snow-covered are receiving updated wordings in Oracle.

Snow-covered land was one of the bizarre new things that debuted in *Ice Age* and never realized its full potential. We aimed to rectify that by having snow matter in a whole slew of new ways, including letting other kinds of permanents besides lands be "snowy." Of course, our creative team blanched at the idea of having things be labeled "Snow-covered creatures" ("Why don't they just shake the snow off themselves?" they asked.), so we changed the supertype to the much shorter—and much more vague—"snow." So there are snow lands, snow creatures, snow artifacts, and snow enchantments in *Coldsnap*, including reprints of the original five Snow-covered lands.



* Like "legendary," the supertype snow may appear on any card that becomes a permanent. Unlike "legendary," "snow" has no particular meaning or rules associated with it.

* Some lands with the supertype snow, such as Snow-Covered Forest, also have the supertype basic. Since these are basic lands, you may have any number of them in a Constructed deck in any format in which the *Coldsnap* set is legal.

* In Limited events, you can't add basic snow lands to your deck from outside your card pool. You may add only lands named Plains, Island, Swamp, Mountain, and Forest, as normal.

* Effects that target nonbasic lands can't target basic snow lands.

The *Coldsnap* set features a new mana symbol. The snow mana symbol is denoted as {S} and resembles a snowflake. It is used only in abilities, not in cards' mana costs.

* {S} in a cost represents a single generic mana, similar to the symbol {1} in a cost. It can be paid with one mana of any color, or one colorless mana, as long as that mana was produced by a snow permanent.

There are several snow permanents other than lands that are capable of producing mana—something to keep an eye out for this weekend.

* {S} is not a color, you can't add {S} to your mana pool, and "snow mana" is not a type of mana.

The snow mana symbol is my pick for the coolest new thing in the set. It functions in some ways like a color without actually messing up your mana, and allows us to put weird "snowy" abilities on creatures that might not otherwise get those abilities "in-color."

Cumulative Upkeep



Cumulative upkeep is a mechanic featured in the Ice Age and Mirage (TM) blocks.

Cumulative upkeep was another *Ice Age* mechanic that we felt could be expanded upon.

Minor additions have been made to the rules for the cumulative upkeep ability in order to clarify how some Coldsnap cards work. The official rules for the cumulative upkeep ability are as follows:

502.13.
Cumulative Upkeep

502.13a
Cumulative

upkeep is a triggered ability that imposes an increasing cost on a permanent. "Cumulative upkeep [cost]" means "At the beginning of your upkeep, put an age counter on this permanent, then sacrifice this permanent unless you pay [cost] for each age counter on it." If [cost] has choices associated with it, each choice is made separately for each age counter, then either the entire set of costs is paid, or none of them are paid. Partial payments are not allowed.

Example: A creature has "Cumulative upkeep {W} or {U}" and two age counters on it. When its ability next triggers and resolves, the creature's controller puts an age counter on it and may then pay {W}{W}, {W}{W}{U}, {W}{U}{U}, or {U}{U}{U} to keep the creature in play.

The important thing to know about cumulative upkeep is the order in which you handle paying—or not paying. Let's look at the Owl Keeper, for instance. You play him on turn 3, and then pay his upkeep for the next five turns before running out of mana. What happens on the sixth turn?

His cumulative upkeep ability triggers at the beginning of your upkeep. The first thing you do when it resolves is add another age counter, taking the total up to six. Then you decide if you are going to pay or not. In this example you can't pay, so the Owl Keeper is put into your graveyard and you get *six* bird tokens... even though you only paid his upkeep for five turns!

* Note that the decision to track cumulative upkeep using counters was made when the "Sixth Edition rules" (and the original version of the Oracle card database) were released in 1999. The Coldsnap set is the first since that time to feature cumulative upkeep cards, so this may appear to some players to be a rules change.

Bring dice or coins!

"Slowtrips"

In a throwback to the Ice Age block, some Coldsnap cards say "draw a card at the beginning of the next turn's upkeep." These cards set up a delayed triggered ability that triggers at the beginning of the very next turn. It doesn't matter whose turn it is.

I'll admit that I was one of the people pushing to bring back "slowtrips" as a way to recapture the old school feel of the set. Was it necessary mechanically? Not at all. But it helps capture a feeling of the past in a way that "normal" cantrips could not.

Enough with these "retread" mechanics... let's talk new stuff!



Previewed in Lotus Noir magazine





Previewed in Scrye magazine

Recover

As I discussed last week, the recover mechanic is a nod to old "graveyard order matters cards" without actually having the graveyard order matter.

Recover is a triggered ability that works from the graveyard.

The official rules for the recover ability are as follows:

502.55. Recover

502.55a Recover is a triggered ability that functions only while the card with recover is in a player's graveyard. "Recover [cost]" means "When a creature is put into your graveyard from play, you may pay [cost]. If you do, return this card from your graveyard to your hand. Otherwise, remove this card from the game."

* You get only one chance to use a card's recover ability. After a card with recover is put into your graveyard, any creature put into your graveyard from play causes the recover ability to trigger. When the ability resolves, either you pay the recover cost and return the card to your hand, or you don't pay and the card is removed from the game.

* If a creature with recover is put into your graveyard from play, it doesn't cause its own recover ability to trigger. Similarly, if another creature is put into your graveyard from play at the same time that a card with recover is put there, it won't cause that recover ability to trigger.

* If multiple creatures are put into your graveyard from play at the same time, the recover ability of a card already in your graveyard triggers that many times. Only the first one to resolve will cause the card to move somewhere. By the time any of the other triggers resolve, the card won't be in your graveyard anymore. You can still pay the recover cost, but nothing else will happen.



Ripple

Ripple is not a mechanic we have touched upon here at magicthegathering.com... yet. The ripple mechanic rewards you for having lots of copies of the same card in your deck—something that shouldn't be uncommon in the all-*Coldsnap* Limited format. And just about every ripple card is common... Gotta collect 'em all!

Ripple is a
triggered
ability of a

spell that works when you play that spell.

The official rules for the ripple ability are as follows:

502.56. Ripple

502.56a Ripple is a triggered ability that functions while the card with ripple is on the stack.

"Ripple N" means "When you play this

spell, you may reveal the top N cards of your library, or, if there are fewer than N cards in your library, you may reveal all the cards in your library. If you reveal cards from your library this way, you may play any of those cards with the same name as this spell without paying their mana costs, then put all revealed cards not played this way on the bottom of your library in any order."

502.56b If a spell has multiple instances of ripple, each triggers separately.

* When you play a spell with ripple, the ripple ability will resolve before the spell does.

* If you choose to reveal cards, you may play any or all of the revealed cards with the same name as the spell. Any cards you don't play, including those with the same name, will be put on the bottom of your library in any order.

* For each revealed card you choose to play, follow all the normal steps for playing it, though you won't have to pay its mana cost. Any additional costs are paid as normal. All cards played this way go on the stack on top of the original spell, then all abilities that trigger when you play the new spells (including their ripple abilities) go on the stack on top of them.

It's possible to have some amazing turns when you ripple into ripple into ripple. That's a lot of bang for a small amount of mana!



Previewed in InQuest magazine

Double-Pitch Cards

A cycle of Coldsnap cards let you remove two cards of a specific color in your hand from the game rather than pay their mana costs.



Now *that's* a pitch spell!

The design team wanted to make a cycle of pitch spells as an homage to the groundbreaking popular *Alliances* cycle (including the renowned *Force of Will*), but we were beaten to the punch by *Mercadian Masques* (*Cave-In*, *Unmask*, etc.) and *Betrayers of Kamigawa* (the Shoal cycle). We needed a new angle, and the answer was simply that "bigger is better." Instead of removing one card of a color from your hand to play the spell, you have to remove two.

Soul Spike has some similarities to the powerhouse *Visions* spell *Fireblast* in that you have to be wary of a tapped-out opponent's ability to deal four or even eight damage at the drop of a hat. Of course, sacrificing two Mountains from in play is a much easier cost to pay in the late game than ditching two black cards from your hand, but I'm sure most of you are capable of building black decks that draw extra cards.

The life swing that happens when an instant-speed Drain for four takes out a key attacker can derail even the fastest aggressive deck's entire game plan, which makes Soul Spike a much more reasonable early play than *Fireblast*. After all, the early game is when cards in hand are easier to come by and decisions on what to throw away are easier to make.

Be wary of the black mage—your life total is no longer safe!

- * You may pay the alternative cost rather than the card's mana cost. Any additional costs are paid as normal.
- * Paying the alternative cost doesn't change when you can play the spell. A creature spell you play this way, for example, can still only be played during your main phase while the stack is empty.
- * If you don't have two cards of the right color in your hand, you can't choose to play the spell using the alternative cost.
- * You can't remove a card from your hand to pay for itself. At the time you would pay costs, that card is on the stack, not in your hand.

That's it for my quick walk-through of mechanics—make sure you're familiar with this material, then get out to your local Prerelease and kick some icy butt!

Last Week's Poll:

How many *Ravnica*-block dual lands do you own?

1-4	5079	27.1%
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0	3322	17.7%
5-8	2813	15.0%
20-39	2173	11.6%
9-12	1885	10.1%
13-19	1808	9.6%
40+	1662	8.9%
Total	18742	100.0%

I wasn't sure what to expect with these results, although I'll admit to being curious as to whether people that opened only a small number of the lands in packs tended to keep them or trade them away.

This Week's Poll:

Were you playing Magic when the *Ice Age* set was released?

- Yes, I've been playing continually since then.
- Yes, on-and-off since then.
- Yes, but I don't play any more.
- No, but I have since acquired a decent number of *Ice Age* and *Alliances* cards.
- No.

[Submit my Vote](#)

*Aaron Forsythe was a professional **Magic** player and Internet columnist prior to leaving Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to join Wizards of the Coast. His first duty here was Content Manager of this very website, a job that required him to do actual work as opposed to playing games all the time. So when a position opened in R&D, he jumped at the chance. He is now director of **Magic** R&D., and still plays **Magic** in his free time when he's not busy playing **Magic**.*



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