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Ask Wizards  
Friday, June 1, 2007

# Ask Wizards - June, 2007

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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June 29, 2007

**Q:** In a number of articles and Ask Wizards responses, Multiverse comments have been shared with the public. However in a few of them (for example, Del Laugel's recent response about "untargetable") there seems to be quite a time gap between a few of the comments. Is this from editorial pruning of more confidential matters, or are cards just not discussed via Multiverse frequently?  
-Ian, Renton, Washington, USA

**A:** From **Kelly Digges**, **Magic** editor:  
Well, let me put it this way: As the editor of **magicthegathering.com**, I have never cut part of a Multiverse exchange (though the author giving me the multiverse quote may have trimmed it preemptively; I've honestly never checked). As an editor working on upcoming sets, I have seen cards sit in the file for weeks with no one commenting on them. Why does this happen?

One easy answer is that our Multiverse database has multiple fields. In Mark Rosewater and Aaron Forsythe's articles, you're generally seeing the Development Comments field, which is usually pretty lively, particularly very early and very late in the process (and, well, sometimes in between, too). Del, however, in her June 7 Ask Wizards answer, was quoting from the Templating Comments field, generally an altogether quieter place. These are comments that pertain not to what the cards will do, but to how they will be worded (though this has functional implications as well). For an example of a slow-paced "exchange" in the Templating Comments field, see Maelstrom Djinn:

Del 5/8: The more I see stuff like this, the more I think we're going to be stuck defining vanishing without a number in the Comp. Rules.  
Del 7/21: And vanishing with no number did wind up in PLC.  
Del 9/12: Cutting the morph reminder text to make this card fit.

"Del" is, of course, Del Laugel, and as you can see, this was not a very exciting templating discussion. During the same period, Brian Schneider (bs), Paul Sottosanti (ps), and Mike Turian (MT) were having a somewhat livelier huddle in the Development Comments field:

bs 6/13: tested this... is okay.  
ps 6/14: does this need to cost so much to hardcast? it doesn't actually do anything when you do.  
bs 6/16: true. it is obscenely expensive.  
MT 6/29: 8 mana.  
MT 7/9: 5/6.

That's not to say Templating Comments are always boring; for Angel of Salvation, for instance, they are significantly longer than the Development Comments.

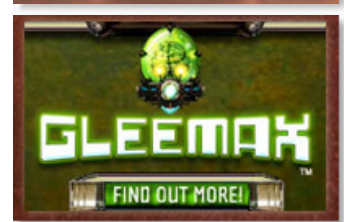
On the other hand, some cards are easy to design, develop, and template, and just don't need much attention. Developers and editors devote their resources to the problem cards. The entire Development Comments field on Logic Knot—once the card was finalized, that is—is a single comment from Devin Low:

DAL 7/3: Cute. Perks you up.

Now, that doesn't mean that nobody played it in their FFL deck or used it in a Limited playtest or discussed it in meetings or sent emails about it. Multiverse is just one of the places that we record discussions about cards, and it so happens that whatever discussion occurred about Logic Knot occurred elsewhere. The discussions about delve happened in the Multiverse files of other cards with the mechanic, for instance.

It's also worth noting that cards are more likely to see a lot of changes during periods when the whole set is under increased scrutiny—the handoff from the design to development and the handoff from development to editing being key points, with FFL tournaments also sparking a lot of comments. Around those times, it's not unusual for problem cards to get several new Multiverse comments per day. During lulls, there are fewer comments being made in the file as the developers focus their time on other sets—generally sets that are undergoing the handoffs I just mentioned.

Finally, of course, although I haven't seen this happen, there *are* times when we can't share full multiverse comments with the public, usually because they pertain to cards in upcoming sets, mechanics that weren't



used but that we're saving for later, or other sensitive information. What sort of information, you ask? Well, for instance, on one *Future Sight* card—

Wait... Nice try!

June 28, 2007



**Q:** Considering the language barrier, how do you translate into other languages card names / creature names / creature types that you've made up? I'm especially interested in the translations into German (because of Hans) and Chinese/Japanese (because of the pictographic nature of their written languages).  
-Travis, Panorama City, CA, USA

**A:** From **Matthew Roy**, Localization Project Manager:

Hi Travis,

Thanks for your question about translation and localization here at Wizards of the Coast. As you might guess, it can be quite challenging to translate terminology that is **Magic**-specific, but we have developed some procedures to make sure that the **Magic** look and feel lives on across the globe. Our standard practice is to work with teams of professional translators and **Magic** aficionados who receive a lot of information about **Magic** worlds and characters before they ever work on their translations. This information allows them to find creative expressions that work in their own languages, while our quality assurance checks allow us to be consistent and correct with regards to past **Magic** cards and current **Magic** rules across all languages.

When it comes to Chinese and Japanese alphabets, we have to take several factors into account: Does a single character have multiple meanings and pronunciations? If so, which character fits the meaning of the word and the tone of the **Magic** world the most? Are there a lot of people who might not be familiar with certain characters? Do we need to provide help with pronunciation?

Each language presents its own specific challenges. For German, those challenges might include making sure that the gender of our titles matches the gender of the characters in our art. We also have to deal with expansion rates. Translations usually expand in length, and we need to be able to accommodate that additional text. In the end, we strive to produce a game that is equally exciting and playable in every language.

Thanks/Danke schön/ありがとうございます !

June 27, 2007



**Q:** Matt Cavotta has often expounded on which cards feature his favourite art in the game, but what are some other Wizards peoples' favourites?  
-John, Ireland, UKA

**A:** From **Magic R&D**:

John,

Your question generated a lot of deliberation in the Pit. Here's what some R&D members had to say:

(Click their names to see the images.)

[Aaron Forsythe](#): *Ice Age Soul Burn*

[Matt Place](#): "Akroma, Angel of Fury is up there."

[Devin Low](#): Akroma, Angel of Wrath

[Kelly Digges](#): "Sliver Queen. It's the only **Magic** card that makes me feel tiny."

[Mark Rosewater](#): "It's a personal favorite: Maro."

[Brady Dommermuth](#): *Tenth Edition Story Circle* is one of my favorites for showing what **Magic** is about."



Maro art by Stuart Griffin

June 26, 2007



**Q:** When in the process of developing a new set do you come up with new keyword mechanics? What goes into the process of coming up with new keyword mechanics?

-Shylo, Cedar Hill, TN, USA

**A:** From **Alexis Janson, Magic R&D:**

Shylo,

Keyword mechanics are designed at all stages of a set's life cycle. For this discussion, I'm going to consider large non-keyword mechanics as well, such as spiritcraft, Thallids, and Slivers.

A lot of keywords are created early in set design, as expected. One of the first things a design team does is determine what themes and mechanics will lay the groundwork for a set. Sometimes a mechanic starts as a single card that turns out to be fun, interesting, and broad enough to turn into an entire mechanic. Mechanics also appear later in design, if the team doesn't feel like enough interesting things are going on. Mechanics can even get added in development for this reason—development is just as much about making the set fun and interesting as it is about game balance.

Most mechanics get designed in four stages. First, the team brainstorms and collects mechanic ideas. Next, we discuss the mechanics and select some number to try out. Cards are made for each of the mechanics, and we playtest them. We then discuss our play experiences and decide to either keep the mechanic or go back to an earlier step. We go through a surprising number of mechanics this way—I'd estimate that 80% to 90% of all mechanic ideas die before they see print or become individual cards or cycles instead of full-fledged mechanics.

June 25, 2007



**Q:** In the color pie (once [put up by Matt Cavotta](#)), each color has two keywords. Green has instinct (natural decisions) and interdependence (natural survival). For every other color, I understand how both keywords are a part of it. Except for interdependence in Green. Instinct would seem to be a much more prevalent part of the color, but for every other, there is equal importance. Please tell me what interdependence is, and how it is an essential part of what makes green green.

—Jason D.

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

Jason,

Each of the two words is playing up the conflict between that color and one of its enemies. Interdependence is the counter to black's parasitism (look at the picture—they're opposite one another). Green is about things living together in a shared ecosystem. Black is about things leeching power off of others. Green wants to support the entire system. Black wants only to support itself.

Other than white, green is the only color that looks after the group as a whole. This is, for example, why green has so many enchantments that grant everyone an ability. This is why green has lots of cards like Overrun that help the entire group. This is why green has a theme of overrunning the opponent with an army of small creatures.

Loving nature means appreciating the interdependence of all life. Thus, green pushes towards life. Black is willing to kill whatever it needs so that the individual gets what it wants. This is why black pushes towards death.



June 22, 2007



**Q:** How much would a spell with the text, "Draw 100 cards" cost?

--Dan

**A:** From **Noah Weil, Magic R&D:**




But seriously Dan, what you've got is unprintable. Logistically, it would be quite time-consuming and obnoxious to count out 100 cards. While I appreciate that the number makes it niche (as opposed to draw 20, which could go anywhere), the power level still implies broken and/or extremely unfun.

To explain, let's go with a common R&D puzzle. What's the mana cost of this card?

```
gg
?
Sorcery
You win the game.
```

The answer here is there is no correct casting cost for this card. No matter what you put in the upper right corner, this card should never be made. For one reason, as worded this card is intrinsically overpowered. It could cost ; we still make plenty of cards that let you cheat on mana. *Dream Halls*, *Sins of the Past*, *Fist of the Suns*, etc. all have their fans. A card like this not only looks savage next to those gems, it curtails future

design. Sure, you could have some hacky clause like "If you didn't pay  to play this card, it's countered." The editing and development teams could probably make a card that wouldn't break Standard or the Eternal formats wide open (although a mistake would be *very* unfortunate). Phage does say "you win the game" on it, and Legacy is as healthy as it ever was. Power-level arguments are just an aspect of this card's real issue, a concern Phage neatly avoids.

"gg" is about the least interactive card in the history of the game. Combos are ok in small amounts, but a one-piece combo is anathema to everything **Magic** tries to do. Imagine this exchange:

Friend A: "I got out my *second Mana Echoes* at just four life. He had a *Trained Armodon*, and you know I was scared of *Giant Growth* or *Berserk*..."

Friend B: "Or even *Feral Instinct*!"

Friend A: "Right, but he didn't have any of that. I got to start my turn at 1 life. I had all these lands in play from his *New Frontiers*, so I tapped 12 *Mountains* and played *Firecat Blitz* for 10. That was worth a lot of mana, so I tapped two more *Mountains* and played another *Firecat Blitz* for 200."

Friend B: "You attacked for 200!? That's pretty awesome!"

Friend A: "I couldn't, he had *Barbed Foliage* out! Instead I tapped my last *Mountain* and sacrificed everything to flashback one of the *Blitzes*."

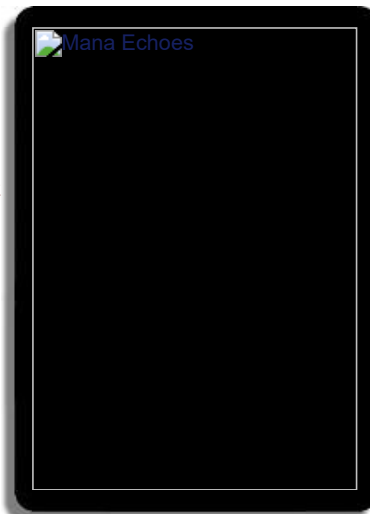
Friend B: "How much mana did you have then???"

Friend A: "Good question! At the end I had 225 cat tokens, 9,922,500 colorless mana, and a single red. So I hit him with a *Blaze* for nine million."

Friend B: "Nine *million*?"

Friend A: "It was a little excessive since he was at 63, but why not, right?"

Friend B: "So... awesome..."



Indeed it is, Friend B. R&D loves cards that can create a story, which "healthy" combo cards do. How many games is it worth playing to get a story like the above? The more implausible the situation, the more thrilling when you pull it off. Contrast with the "gg" card above.

Friend A: "I was on the ropes, but I got enough mana to cast gg. So I did."

Friend B: "yawn:: Well played."

It's not engaging, it's not exciting, and it's certainly not clever. Back to the original card, "draw 100 cards" is about half a step away from "win the game". You're not playing this to refuel, you're playing it solely to draw every combo piece with quad *Force of Will* backup. While we appreciate the thought experiment, these kinds of cards do not promote good game play. As worded, no mana cost would be appropriate. Thanks for the excellent question, Dan!

June 21, 2007



**Q:** Why did you choose to print cards in *Time Spiral* and *Planar Chaos*, such as *Spirit Loop* or *Needlepeak Spider*, that you knew would need immediate errata upon the release of *Future Sight* and the keywording of lifelink, reach, shroud, and deathtouch? Why print cards that you knew would have Oracle text different than their printed text by the end of the block?

—Cailean, Ottawa, ON, Canada

**A:** From **Kelly Digges**, **Magic** Editor:

Good question, Cailean. (How do you pronounce that, by the way?)

This is an issue that's rubbed some people the wrong way—including some people here at Wizards. Let me walk you through our usual policy as well as the reasons why *Time Spiral* block is an exception.

We do try to avoid changing a card's Oracle text within its own block. If nothing else, we do this to make Limited play run as smoothly as possible. We avoid this most of the time by making Oracle-changing rules alterations and adding new keywords for either the core set or the first set in a block.

For *Time Spiral* Block, however, the eponymous set's "past" theme made new keywords and major changes a bad fit—a *really* bad fit. But the final set's "future" theme made them practically a must. If we were going to introduce new keywords, even for old abilities, *Future Sight* was the place to do it. Ultimately, we decided that the past / present / future structure of the block was more important than other considerations, and thus we had to decide what to do about cards like *Penumbra Spider* and *Stonewood Invocation*. What were the options?

Well, we could have just not put any cards in *Time Spiral* or *Planar Chaos* that had the abilities we were going to keyword in *Future Sight*. The only problem with that is that it pushes cards out of sets for reasons that aren't intrinsic to the sets, the play experience, or the cards themselves. Plus, it cuts off a lot of excellent nostalgia-driven design space, as these lines of text have been used many times (that's why we keyworded them!). Oh, and during *Time Spiral* design (and even during *Planar Chaos*), there was no final list of things that would be keyworded for *Future Sight*, so vetting the previous sets for cards that had the future keywords wouldn't have been possible anyway.



We could have approached it from the opposite direction—excluded from *Future Sight* any keywords for abilities we'd already used in the block. But I hope you can see why it would be bad to let the existence of a relatively small number of cards dictate choices that would affect an entire set—and beyond. And of course, once we put the keywords in *Future Sight*, and keyworded prior examples of those abilities throughout the game's history—that was a big part of the point of the keywords in the first place, particularly reach—the only sensible choice was to provide new Oracle text for cards with such abilities in *Time Spiral* and *Planar Chaos*.

Ultimately, the choice we made was the one that made sense for this block and for the game in the long term. The difference in Oracle text won't make any difference the vast majority of the time—and looking back on this later, *Penumbra Spider* won't look so different from its fellow keywordees in prior sets.

June 20, 2007



**Q:** I've been wondering. What do you say to your parents when you win a Pro Tour?  
—Alvin, Hong Kong, China

**A:** From **Mike Turian**, **Magic** Developer and winner of Pro Tour—New York 2000:

Hello Alvin!

When I won the Team Pro Tour in New York I was working at my uncle's computer company in Pittsburgh. I had called in sick from a New York area code on Friday so that I could play with Scott Johns and Gary Wise in the event.

Shortly after the event ended on Sunday I got back into the car with finalists Andrew Johnson and Andrew Cuneo for the 8+ hour drive back to Pittsburgh. That Monday morning I awoke to three calls from my mom, my grandfather, and my uncle... all yelling at me for calling in sick when really I had gone to New York!

While I am sure that my whole family was proud of my accomplishment, it sure did take a while for them to admit it.

June 19, 2007



**Q:** I've been wondering. What do you say to your parents when you win a Pro Tour?  
—Alvin, Hong Kong, China

**A:** From **Randy Buehler**, Vice President of Digital Games and winner of Pro Tour—Chicago 1997:

Mine already knew because they were listening to the live webcast. (Yes, we did those way back in 1997, though it was audio-only back then.) My wife was actually the first one I called and she had also been listening online. Interestingly, cell phones weren't all that common back then so it took a good hour to get through awards ceremonies, interviews, etc. before I had time to track down a pay phone. By then she had already talked to my parents, who were excited (\$25,000 will do that) but quite confused as to the details. They knew I played this card game, but before I won the PT I'm sure they saw it as just another in a long series of games / hobbies / obsessions for me.

June 18, 2007



**Q:** I've been wondering. What do you say to your parents when you win a Pro Tour?  
—Alvin, Hong Kong, China

**A:** From **Scott Johns**, **magicthegathering.com** Site Manager and winner of Pro Tour—New York 2000:

Alvin, let me tell you, that's a fun phone call to make. I can't speak for any of my co-worker Pro Tour champions, but in my case the immediate aftermath of winning was a complete whirlwind. Within seconds of the winning play, you're whisked up into the awards ceremony, lots and *lots* of photos, and a sea of people shaking your hand and congratulating you. Somewhere in the midst of that I managed to borrow a cell phone from a friend, as I didn't have one of my own at the time. My parents answered the phone together and were clearly excited since I hadn't called them yet. They were definitely hoping for good news since they were hearing so late in the day.

I don't remember my exact words but I definitely remember that more than anything else, in my case it was a sense of relief. Before winning at Pro Tour—New York 2000 with teammates Mike Turian and Gary Wise, I'd been to Pro Tour Top 8s four different times before, and all four times I was eliminated in the first match. Worse, the first three times I didn't even win a *game*! Making the Top 8 can be exhilarating, but washing out repeatedly was definitely getting frustrating. In fact, I remember pretty clearly that on the ESPN show for the event we won, one of the commentators remarked, "You can practically see the monkey sitting on Scott's shoulder." When I told my parents that we had won the whole thing, I remember my mom let out a scream that knocked the cell phone's speaker out for a moment.

I'm sure something so personal is different for each person, but for me it was an incredible rush, one I won't ever forget. That I got to do it with the help of two friends as part of a team made the experience even better.

June 15, 2007



**Q:** I have a question I've been thinking about for a while. I imagine that the designers/developers receive a certain sense of pride when they see that a card he or she designed made it into tourney play—the type of card that everyone plays if playing that color, but no one cries "broken" or concedes as soon as it hits the table. I'm curious, do the artists get this same sort of feeling when they realized they illustrated a card like this? I was wondering if you could provide any insight to this matter.

Thank you,  
Avi

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

Hey Avi,

It's always dangerous to generalize out what 'artists' feel. But hell with it, I have a big mouth. Here we go:

I'm going to say "No with a but."

The artist version of the sort of validation you are talking about usually comes from knocking a painting out of the park—perhaps seeing it in an ad or featured on a booster wrap due to the strength of their skill. The artists aren't given the card mechanics or even rarity of the cards they are painting, so everyone is trying their best at all times. Like all art (speaking of unsafe things to generalize about), it is a rewarding experience both personally and professionally when the painting goes well, and disappointing when it does not... card mechanic notwithstanding.

**BUT:**

Are there upsides for the artist when a card of theirs turns out to be hot and balanced? Absolutely! It is more likely for their original painting to be sold to a collector. Prints and white-backed artist proofs move more rapidly. Organized Play might take note and send them to an event somewhere nice. I got a sweet trip to Kobe back in my freelancing days simply because I had happened to have painted both **Loxodon Warhammer** and **Lightning Greaves**, which were both hot at the time. So yes, there is some sort of validation in painting a hot card mechanically, but in my mind, it's primarily financial. And you show me an artist who seeks strictly financial validation, and I'll show you a sad, sad person.



**June 14, 2007**

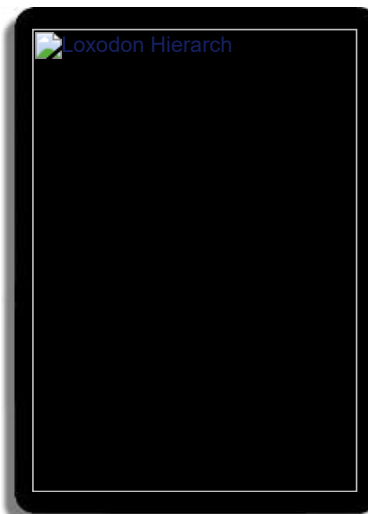
**Q:** The word "loxodon" is the scientific genus name for a species of shark. With that in mind, how did the Loxodon elephant creatures get their name? Just curious!  
—Michelle, Dorset, England

**A:** From **Doug Beyer, Magic Creative team:**

True, "Loxodon" as a genus signifies a sliteye shark, but the word "Loxodonta" is the genus for African elephants. As you suspect, Michelle, we often use a genus or other scientific name for a group of animals and tweak it into the name of a creature race. Some other examples:

**Anurid:** from Anura, the order of amphibians that includes frogs  
**Aven:** from Aves, the vertebrate class that includes birds  
**Cephalid:** from Cephalopoda, the mollusk class that includes squids and octopuses

Thanks for your question!



**June 13, 2007**

**Q:** What areas of study would you suggest if I wanted to pursue a career in the creative design field?  
—Cavan, Oshkosh, WI, USA

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

Cavan,

There's no exact study for creative design. For **Magic** design in particular I recommend taking courses that help you learn how to communicate (verbally and in writing) your ideas and develop the ability to argue your point, the ability to understand structure and the ability to think creatively. Many fields will help you with these skills.

Probably the more important skill is playing a lot of games such that you begin to understand games as a whole. To do this you have to spend time with other gamers, not just playing but talking about the observations you have. The best education I got in game design has been playing and talking games with the rest of R&D (all hardcore gamers).

**June 12, 2007**

**Q:** Why is it that art gets replaced some times when cards are reprinted? What kinds of factors lead to new art on old cards?

—Matt J., Washington DC, USA

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

Hey Matt,

It can be a number of things that lead us to commission new or alternate art for a given card.

Could be quality issues.

Could be contract issues.

Sometimes a card's illustration is too tied to a past narrative arc or a past setting, which worked at the time but now feels forced or irrelevant.

Could be that particular card is a good venue for a new direction (broader spell concepts, for example).

I would say that most of the time, it is simply an aesthetic judgment call. It's the art version of casting a movie—what fleshes this particular set out in the way that works, feels, communicates, and looks best.

June 11, 2007



**Q:** Is "zombie" a race or a class?

—Burgess, Iowa City, IA, USA

**A:** From **Doug Beyer**, **Magic** Creative team:

Hi Burgess,

Brains.

I mean, race. Mostly.

We prefer creature types to denote either what you are (your race, like Goblin) or what you do (your class, like Warrior). Most of the time this is a fine system, since most creature types only make sense as one or the other. This has allowed us to give most sentient creatures both a race and a class these days.

Braaaains.

Er, what I meant to say was, there are a few wrinkles in the system.

Zombie is one of few creature types that can function as a third option—what we call a "status type," meaning a creature type that can modify another creature type or explain relationships of the creature to other creatures, but that doesn't logically preclude the card from having some other race or class. **Festering Goblin** is still a goblin after it is turned into a zombie. So its race is Goblin, and its status is Zombie. It doesn't have a job, as many goblins and zombies don't—its whole nature is summed up by its goblinness and its zombieness. But if **Festering Goblin** is a Goblin Zombie, and **Accursed Centaur** is a Zombie Centaur, then does that mean **Scathe Zombies**, which are the reanimated corpses of humans, should be a Human Zombie?

Braaaaaaaaaains.

I mean, it's a gray matter.

I mean, it's a gray AREA. The default type of zombie is one made from a human corpse, and since the type Human junks up the type line and (at this writing at least) adds very little mechanical benefit, we leave it off. Besides, sort of the whole point of zombies is that they are horrible, unthinking undead riven of their former humanity. So no, Human Zombie is out. Centaurs, on the other hand, maintain a lot of their centaur-ness when they get turned into zombies—they retain their horse bodies and humanoid torsos, and presumably their disdain for saddles, so that type sticks around. Also, since that particular card's name is **Accursed Centaur**, our meta-rule of "if a supported type is in the card name, it should be in the type line" kicks in. In these cases, the Zombie type serves to denote creature's undead status more than its essential nature.

But most of the time, Zombie serves as a race. Zombie is the creature's essence. Zombie is never a class—you don't take up zombiehood after taking some classes at the Y. Zombie means that a horrible transformation has happened to your very being. Zombiehood takes over your former nature and replaces it with an unlife of mindless\* slaving. So then, in general, how do we decide where and how to use the Zombie creature type?

Brains.

No, really, we use our brains. On a case-by-case basis we try to capture the essence of the creature, do justice to the mechanical intent of the card, and maintain some semblance of common sense. Creature types are especially tough—full of pitfalls and consistency issues. In the meantime, we shuffle always, moaning, toward the mouthwatering goal of systematicity, wary ever of the shotgun-headshot of self-contradiction.

Thanks for your braaaains, Burgess.

\* Note that some zombies actually have jobs. **Yixlid Jailer** is a Zombie Wizard. **Zombie Assassin** is a... well, yeah. So some zombies are actually sentient enough to have their professions spelled out. These are the exception, but hey, kind of by definition, just about every card in **Magic** is an exception to some rule or another.

June 8, 2007



**Q:** What happens when I enchant a **Little Girl** with **Pollenbright Wings**? Do I get a Saproling, or a half-Saproling?  
—Felipe

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

Felipe,

As the Un-Rules Manager (I got the job because I was the only one willing to do it), let me walk you through what happens. Your **Pollenbright Winged Little Girl** deals ½ damage to your opponent. **Pollenbright Wings** then puts half of a 1/1 green Saproling into play. For most purposes this makes it act like a ½ / ½. For example, if you deal damage with half of a Saproling token, it deals ½ damage. If your half of a Saproling token is **Swords to Plowshare**, you get half of 1 life, a.k.a. ½. The only difference is the token is half a creature. You cannot sacrifice it to a cost that requires sacrificing a whole creature such as **Goblin Bombardment**. You can, though, sacrifice two half tokens to get one activation of **Goblin Bombardment**.

It's that simple.

June 7, 2007



**Q:** Why did you keyword the ability "can't be the target of spells or abilities" as shroud? Doesn't the normal word "untargetable" work just as well? I would argue "untargetable" is much more intuitive than "indestructible" (for instance, a newer player wouldn't know that lethal damage destroys a creature, which indestructible would thus prevent). I'm pretty sure someone on the inside suggested "Quagnoth is untargetable." I want to know how and why he/she was voted down. P.S. Is this a Vorthos issue, or a Melvin one?  
—Chuck, Antioch, CA, USA

**A:** From **Del Laugel, Magic** Senior Editor:

Much of this discussion happened in print, so I'll let you see for yourself how it went.

I'll start with the templating comments on Quagnoth's Multiverse record. Del is me, DAL is head developer Devin Low, MLG is rules manager Mark Gottlieb, and AF is director of **Magic** R&D Aaron Forsythe.

DAL 6/28: Please remove Untargetable reminder text. The word is fine on its own.

Del 7/21: Reminder text is necessary to explain where the ability works.

MLG 9/1: I renew my objection to the phrase "Enchanted creature has untargetable." (Not on this card, obv, but it's a side-effect of this keyword.)

AF 9/9: Let's discuss making it like indestructible. Makes so much more sense.

Del 9/11: Indestructible is a real word that we use to mean exactly what the dictionary says it means. The game rules also say that objects not in play can't be destroyed. Neither of those statements is true of untargetable. And most importantly, indestructible isn't a French vanilla keyword. :/ Without that benefit, there's no compelling reason to change away from the established template of "CARDNAME can't be the target of spells and abilities." (I make no secret of my preference for the status quo in this case.)

Del 9/14: Untargetable was kicked back to Creative for more name options.

Del 9/14: Creative kicks it back as untargetable. Revised the reminder text though -- this is probably printable.

Del 9/19: Now shroud.

Between those last two comments, an email thread ensued:

**From:** Beyer, Doug  
**Date:** Friday, 15 Sep 2006  
**Subject:** FUT word issues

There are a few word issues with FUT that have come up. I've heard thoughts from many of you —I'm doing a bit of a word issue roundup here in this email.

Untargetable keyword

Nothing is awesome. "Elusion" would be my favorite candidate—yes, really—if it didn't sound almost exactly like "illusion," a very prevalent blue creature type. "Elusiveness" is clunky and long, and "elusive" has some of the same adjectival problems that "untargetable" has. Avoidance doesn't sound cool enough, stealth wants a different mechanic to be on, immunity implies things that it doesn't do, evasion already means something, shield is a piece of equipment, etc., etc. Brady and I have more work to do on this today.

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**From:** Laugel, Del  
**Sent:** Monday, September 18, 2006  
**Subject:** Re: FUT word issues

I've said this to some of you, but I'll repeat for the group: The downside of choosing "untargetable" is that a few years down the road, we're going to have to explain to newbies why

"Counter target spell" really does counter their spell that says "untargetable" on it. Are the benefits of adding this mechanic to the French vanilla recipe really worth the confusion of trading in the status quo? (Mark Gottlieb has some research on past "untargetable" effects, but I'll let him decide whether to introduce that material into the discussion.)

---

**From:** Low, Devin  
**Sent:** Monday, September 18, 2006  
**Subject:** Re: FUT word issues

Untargetable getting countered by "Counter target spell" sounds really awful to me. For this reason, and because Magic's other core set keywords are almost all flavor-based (flying, regeneration, fear, first strike, haste), not mechanic-based (Cycling), I think we should go with a flavorful keyword instead of "Untargetable." Elusive sounds like some kind of unblockability to me. I would look to more. Something to do with shields or shielded sounds good if the equipment thing can be surpassed.

---

**From:** Beyer, Doug  
**Date:** Mon, 18 Sep 2006  
**Subject:** RE: FUT word issues

Thanks for the feedback, all.

Del, after much word-wrangling—

\* Untargetability keyword -> Shroud.

June 6, 2007



**Q:** What gives? We've been asking you guys to use **Spirit Link** as a keyword, and then you do.... but you change it to lifelink or something like that. Why would you do that? Wouldn't it make sense to use the word that everyone knows already? When you guys keyworded fear, you didn't keyword it "horrific" or something. Why the annoyance?

—Brandon

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

Brandon,

The ability granted by the card **Spirit Link** and the ability on **Exalted Angel** are, while similar, not the same ability. The former always allows you, the controller of the enchantment, to gain the life regardless of the creature's controller. The latter always gives the life to the creature's controller. If your opponent steals the creature, he begins getting the life.

We didn't name lifelink "spirit link" because it doesn't do what **Spirit Link** does. Note that in Oracle, **Spirit Link** does not grant lifelink. Because it was close we kept the "link" part of the name.

June 5, 2007



**Q:** As part of the recent Oracle update, one of the changes that probably went largely unnoticed was **Master of Arms**. His activated ability gained the sentence "Prevent all combat damage that creature would deal this turn." I understand why this change was made—that's the way the card worked originally at the time the card was printed because back then tapped blockers didn't deal damage. But what about players who aren't familiar with the pre-*Sixth Edition* rules? To them, the change is not intuitive nor is it in any way reflected by the card. Was this a concern amongst the folks who made the change? Can we potentially expect other changes in the future like this to restore cards to the way they originally worked when printed? (The way all artifacts used to "turn off" when tapped comes to mind.)

—Josh, Stuart, FL, USA

**A:** From **Kelly Digges**, **Magic** Editor:

Okay, there are some things you have to understand about templating meetings before I can answer this question (those are the meetings where we decide how cards should be worded, whether for new sets or for Oracle updates).

One thing to realize is that these meetings are attended by a small cabal of templaters; the majority of R&D just doesn't care whether **North Staris** worded properly or not (hint: it wasn't, but it is now). Those of us whose job or inclination is to worry about such things gather for irregular meetings, lit only by the glow of the ~~crescent moon~~ fluorescent lighting. Meetings for new sets are quite focused, but meetings for Oracle wordings tend to wander a bit as issues with one card point to issues with others.

Another thing to keep in mind is that when you've been locked in a room for an hour discussing card #51 and its impact on all three cards that care about expansion symbols, some very strange things start to sound like good ideas. Some of these oddities shimmer and vanish as soon as we emerge from the meetings, like a dream forgotten upon

waking; others stand up in the harsh light of reality as, yes, good ideas after all.

Given all this, you can perhaps begin to imagine the conversation that follows when something like **Master of Arms** comes up. Taking a cue from Mark Rosewater and a few liberties with the dialogue, it went something like this:



**Templater A:** So, **Master of Arms**. Its ability doesn't do anything as written.

**Templater B:** But when the card was printed, tapped creatures didn't deal damage.

**Templater C:** We could leave it. It wouldn't be the only casualty of changing rules. Remember **Interdict**?

**A:** [sheds single tear]

**B:** But this ability doesn't even make sense. It doesn't make a difference if you tap a blocker, and I'm worried that someone reading this will think it does.

**Templater D:** Well, it does in multiplayer. (But not much.)

**A:** Okay, so we could... we could have it make the tapped creature deal no damage this turn.

[everyone ponders]

**C:** What if they untap it? That's a functional change. Makes it, well, a little better. (But not much.)

**B:** That's probably fine.

**D:** Still... "That creature deals no combat damage this turn as long as it's tapped"?

**A, B & C:** Ugh.

**C:** Hey, why stop there? What if a blocker taps for some other reason? "Tapped creatures blocking **Master of Arms** don't deal combat damage"!

**B:** We could make a little pocket of pre-*Sixth Edition* rules for this guy to live in...

**C:** "Tapped blockers deal no combat damage."

**D:** [giggling] "Spells are resolved in batches"!

[everyone ponders]

**A:** So... "Prevent all combat damage that creature would deal this turn"?

**B:** Yeah.

**C:** Yep.

**D:** Sounds good.

No, don't worry, we were never seriously considering resolving spells in batches—and similarly, we're not planning on changing the way old artifacts work (or don't) when tapped. When *Sixth Edition* rules were introduced, artifacts that were commonly "turned off" by being tapped—**Howling Mine** comes to mind—received errata to keep them that way, and the rest were accepted as functional changes under the new rules.

Generally, we try to get cards as close as possible to their printed wordings while accepting that the rules have changed around them. Those rules changes affect some cards more than others. In some cases—like **Interdict**, or the versions of **Dark Ritual** printed as a "mana source"—there's just nothing reasonable we can do. In other cases—like **Master of Arms**—we can make a small, fairly unobtrusive change to restore functionality, and we've judged that that breeds *less* confusion than cards with puzzling abilities hinging on obsolete rules. What do you think?

June 4, 2007



**Q:** Is there a list of all the types of counters (time, charge, +1/+1, arrow) currently in use in **Magic**? I was looking through the Comprehensive Rules, and while there's a full listing of creature types, there isn't a list of counter types.

—Eric, Charleston, SC, USA

**A:** From **Doug Beyer**, **Magic** Creative team:

Eric, as Isaac Newton once said (quoting Bernard of Chartres before him), we are like "dwarves standing on the shoulders of giants," accomplishing great things in virtue of the deeds of previous generations. I'm not sure why Newton or Bernard were so concerned with primarily red-aligned creature types; I would have thought of them as thoroughly blue mages. Perhaps Newton was all about the fiery beatdown before his *Principia* days.

Anyway, I think we can accomplish something even more profound by standing on the shoulders of wombats. Specifically one Doctor Wombat, Mark Gottlieb, who compiled this list for me of the 94 counter types in **Magic** as of *Future Sight*. Thanks for your question!

+0/+1	elixir	paralyzation
+1/+0	energy	petal
+1/+1	fade	pin
+0/+2	fate	plague
+2/+0	feather	poison
+1/+2	flood	polyp
+2/+2	fungus	pressure
-0/-1	fuse	pupa
-1/-0	glyph	rust

-1/-1	gold	scream
-0/-2	growth	shell
-2/-1	healing	shield
age	hourglass	shred
aim	hunger	sleep
arrow	ice	sleight
arrowhead	incubation	soot
blood	infection	spore
bounty	intervention	storage
carrion	javelin	study
charge	ki	theft
corpse	luck	tide
credit	magnet	time
cube	mask	training
currency	matrix	trap
death	mine	treasure
delay	mining	velocity
depletion	mire	verse
devotion	net	vitality
divinity	omen	winch
doom	ore	wind
dream	page	
echo	pain	

June 1, 2007



**Q:** I was looking through the *Future Sight* sortable spoiler and noticed that all of the mechanics but three from the *Ravnica* block were worked in there. What happened to haunt, replicate, and radiance? The others are all there, and it seems like hellbent has been doing pretty well for itself. Did those three mechanics have so much design space that you want to save them for later, so little that you didn't want to use them at all, or did they just not fit with the rest of the set?

–Jeff, Bethlehem, PA, USA

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

Jeff,

We noticed the same thing while we were working on design. In fact, for a short while we had a replicate card in the file. In the end, we decided to make the best cards we could and not worry about giving every mechanic a cameo. Will we see any of these three mechanics again? I'm sure we'll see replicate. I'm much less sure about haunt and radiance.



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