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# Enchant Words

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Taste the Magic  
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PRO TOUR-VALENCIA

While back, in an article called [Spelling it Out](#), we tried to find the answer to the question, “What is a spell?” I think the article does a pretty good job in zeroing in on something that seems pretty darn huge. If you have not read it already, it might be a good idea to jump back and skim it before continuing on. Today we’re going to explore a question that seems like it’s less hairy: what is an enchantment? (Ah, but little is as it seems.)

Here’s what Dictionary.com has to say (relevant definitions only):

*Enchantment n.*

1. The art, act, or an instance of enchanting.
2. Something that enchants

Don’t you love it when the dictionary assumes you’ve already read every other entry? So here’s what it says about “Enchant.”

*Enchant v.*

1. To subject to magical influence; bewitch
2. To impart a magic quality or effect to.

Putting the two entries together, I think we get something darn close to what we’d expect for a fantasy world enchantment: an instance of magical qualities having been imparted, or something that imparts such qualities. I think this is just about right on for **Magic**, if we’re talking about Auras—spells with Enchant Creature, Enchant Player, Enchant Enchantment, and other Enchant Something abilities. These are cases where something, the creature, player, enchantment, etc. are being imbued with a new magical ability.

This definition seems to break down a little bit when we look at non-Aura enchantments. In these cases, it’s not all that clear what is being given the new magic qualities. **Bad Moon**, for example, does not say “Enchant black creatures,” though that is pretty much what it’s doing. But the spellcaster does not actually point her spell at black creatures. She’s not directly enchanting them. Instead, she’s creating a magical instance of the moon and *IT* is enchanting the creatures. This is more akin to definition #2 of Enchantment: something that enchants. In the case of **Bad Moon** and many other **Magic** spells (Muraganda Petroglyphs, Porphyry Nodes, Anthem of Rakdos, and Sacred Mesa all come to mind), the spell creates a magical version of an existing thing (an evil full moon, an ancient inscription, etc.) that recreates the enchanting effect of the real thing. Think of **Gerrard Capashen**, the dashing and charismatic hero of the *Weatherlight* Saga. When Gerrard roared into battle, it inspired his fellows. Some planeswalker way back when thought his inspirational cry was pretty potent and assimilated it, bottling it up in a dandy little one-mana spell called, appropriately, **Gerrard’s Battle Cry**. (See [What Is a Spell](#) for more on assimilation) The spell recreates a magical facsimile of Gerrard’s voice, and it, in turn, inspires the spellcaster’s own fellows.



Sometimes, as a spellcaster, you can even do a number on yourself. Cast **Hibernation’s End** or **Celestial Dawn** and you’ll magically recreate an event in which even you will become enchanted. Of course, not in the strict, rules lawyer, **Paradox Hazy** way—but enchanted nonetheless. In the case of **Hibernation’s End**, you’ll recreate the wild and wonderful wake-up call of the end of winter and you will feel refreshed, well-rested, and enchanted enough to summon up extra monsters to your side. **Celestial Dawn** is as enchanting and then some. Recreating the beauty of the Dawn inspires you, your monsters, your imagination, and your lands. Very enchanting indeed.

But what about the enchantments that don’t seem to be things at all, like **Stormbind** or **Enduring Renewal**? Was there an original stormbinding event that is being recreated in this spell? Is the **Enduring Renewal** a natural cycle in the *Ice Age* ecosystem? I tend to think not. Instead, they seem more like a persistent field of magical energy that mages can use as a tool. If you look through your binders or in gatherer for enchantments, I think you’ll find that a pretty good portion of the cards will fall into this category. **Hesitation**, **Broken Fall**, and **Sneak Attack** are other examples off the top of my head that have utilitarian qualities. It’s almost like they’re spells that just sort of hang out in the back of the spellcaster’s mind, waiting to be used when the proper situation arises. There does not seem to be any visual magic being created, no glowing stop sign, no illusory mattress upon which to fall—just a mental tool for a mage to use when needed. So, if we’re trying to find the “enchantment” in these, I guess I’d have to say that they’re spells that enchant a mage’s own mind. To add a wrinkle, we can look at a card like **Excavation**. This is similarly utilitarian, and does not really involve any creation of enchanting events, images, etc. But, somehow this spell wedges itself into the back of the mind of every spellcaster in the area.

Final Wrap-up

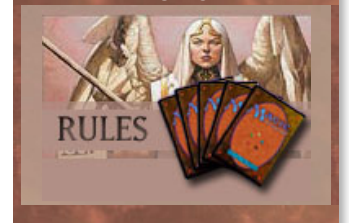
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The more I think about this, the more it seems like **Magic** wants to break away from the dictionary meaning of enchantment. I keep thinking of or stumbling upon cards that do not quite fit the definition... well, they don't fit without a good amount of hand-waving or deeply goobery justification (and I have not even gotten into the wacky *Future Sight* enchantments yet). In the end, I think the best way to summarize a **Magic** enchantment is a spell that creates a persistent field of magic that is neither a sentient (creature) nor a construct (artifact.) With a broad definition like this, we don't have to fiddle about figuring out what's enchanting who or who's enchanted and who's just hanging out at the Auramancer's house. Take **Emblem of the Warmind**, for example. The creature enchanted with the spell is clearly the guy who's enchanted, but does it, with its fancy flaming sigil overhead, in turn enchant its buddies. Or are they just naturally following the lead of the guy with the newfound energy (and sweet flaming crown)? The good news is that it doesn't really matter—it's an enchantment either way. The even better news is that, at your gaming table, you can explain it any way you want to. At my table, the rest of the team gets all hasty because they think copying the guy with the flames will somehow stoke up their own heads the same way.



Defining enchantments as persistent magic makes it a lot easier to explain a card like **Lucent Liminid**. If we were following the dictionary definition, we'd all have to wonder exactly what was being enchanted. It has no magical effect on any other mages, creatures, lands, etc. The only thing we could say is that it enchanted itself, that maybe the creature was just an immobile glass elemental that came to life when enchanted by the light of the sun goddess (goobery justification stripped right from the flavor text.) But that would lead us down a dangerous path of expecting other creatures to become "enchantment creatures" when they were enchanted by external magic.



No, I think it's best to smash "enchantment" and "creature" into one thing, one singular force of persistent magic. Both a creature and an enchantment are forms of persistent magic, and it should not be a stretch for us to accept that there is an intersection of the two. We have been accepting artifact creatures since the game was invented. In this case, the creature is not built with cogs and metal, but sculpted out of pure magic. (The hurdle we all need to leap before we swing over this mudpit is to accept that ALL artifacts, artifact creatures, creatures, enchantments, etc. are initially formed with the magic of mind and (sometimes) mana.) In the case of the Liminid, the magic does not take on a new form, like flesh or metal or fire. It is an elemental made of magic—like a **Fire Elemental** is made of fire.

You know, I thought my big tent definition of "persistent magic" would encompass everything, but **Magic** is a game that loves to break its own rules. I did not have to look farther than my own little stack of *Future Sight* cards to find the thorn in the side. **Bridge from Below** is a reaaaally long thorn that can skewer the sides of a long line of absolutes. The fact that this enchantment does nothing when it's cast and something when it's long forgotten is a pickle. Yes, its effect is persistent, but only when it's not actually magic anymore. If you had to cast the spell first, then destroy/sacrifice/forget it to use its effect, I'd be fine with it. **Magic** is full of spells whose magic lingers long after the initial effect has come and gone. But this thing works even if no magic ever happened. It's not going to play nicely with us today, but here's a goober take on it anyway, just for fun:

One needs only to be aware of the "Bridge," a gateway to the necromantic powers of the underworld, to open its dark doors. A fleeting thought, quickly forgotten, unlocks the door as easily as a long, drawn out ritual complete with skull drums and human sacrifice. Once the lock is opened, there is no stopping the wellspring of evil that will erupt from the darkness "Below."

Wow, that was a lot of peanuts covered by a lot of chocolate!

**Bridge from Below** has poked me in my other side too. It has raised the subject of other spell types with persistent effects. Instants and sorceries have had lingering effects since the old days. The oldest one I can think of is **Whiteout**. It has its bird-hater effect, but still flickers a bit, like that one ornery coal that can be nursed back to flame long after the fire went dead. We can lump in spells like **Hammer of Bogardan**, **Death Spark**, **Pulse of the Tangle** (and the other "Pulse of" spells), and even cards with flashback. Then there are the **epic spells**, (**Endless Swarm**, **Enduring Ideal**, etc.), sorceries that recast themselves every turn for the rest of the duel. Similarly, the recurring suspend spells from *Future Sight*, (**Chronomantic Escape**, **Reality Strobe**, etc.) continue on after their casting.



Does the existence of these "persistent" instants and sorceries crush our new definition of enchantments? (I remember discussing with the rest of the *Future Sight* Design team how the "re-suspend" spells played "like enchantments.") Or is there a simple explanation of the



flavor difference between a recurring sorcery/instant and an enchantment? It's hard to find one that is not tied to the rules of the game. Enchantments persist "in play" while the others have their effects, exit stage left, then have them again later. But what does this mean *in world*, rather than *in game*? We've already seen how spells like **Broken Fall** and **Sneak Attack** do not actually seem to "show up," so how is that different from a **Marshaling Cry** lingering in the back of a mage's mind, waiting to be flashed back? It may be that the Pulse spells, epic spells, flashback spells, and other spells that continue to have effects in the graveyard or out of play are not actually "persisting", but rather are ending completely and beginning again. It could just be that **Marshaling Cry** is an easy spell to snap off from memory, and does not actually have an effect that simmers on the

back burner.

As humans, we love to find ways to comprehend the incomprehensible by categorizing and generalizing. Unifying theory is a really tough thing to create without leaks and holes. **Magic** just might be one of those incomprehensibles that that we want really badly to put in boxes but find out later that it's oozing out the seams. Or, (and this is the optimistic goob speaking) maybe we just need to wait 'til Sorcery Week and Instant Week to dig into those card types and see if there's another layer of flavor that will explain the difference between a sorcery that does 2 damage every once in a while (**Arc Bolt**) and an enchantment that does 2 damage every once in a while (**Words of War**). D'oh! Those weeks already happened. Now I'm just hoping for Damage Prevention Week, because these thorns in my side are really starting to rankle.

*Matt Cavotta has always been a fantasy goober. At various points in his gooberhood, he has used his nerdy knowledge to become a professional goober. He went from scribbling pictures of his own **D&D** characters to illustrating books and cards for his two favorite games; **D&D** and **Magic**. Then he channeled his inner 7th level Illusionist/3rd level Bard and landed himself a job at Wizards as a writer. He continues to cast his illusion spells each morning, lest they find out he's just another goober.*



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