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# Ask Wizards - July, 2007

Ask Wizards  
Sunday, July 1, 2007

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## July 31, 2007



**Q:** A friend of mine and me were looking at the tokens and tips cards from *Tenth Edition* and noticed that there are a total of 6 backs for these cards, as well as 18 fronts for them (6 tokens and 12 Tips & Tricks cards). Did you guys print each of the card fronts on each of the backs, or were you a bit more selective with it than that? I ask, because collectors such as my friends and anyone else out there are looking for a total of 108 different cards right now (18 card fronts multiplied by 6 card backs), and we'd love to know ahead of time if we're wasting our time trying to find them all. Thanks.

–Jerry, Fairmont, WV

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

Hi Jerry,

I'm glad the tokens have inspired such collecting zeal in you and your friends. There are 121 different ad cards, including the tokens. The catch is that there are some duplicates that aren't distinguishable from their counterpart. We didn't want people to feel the need to go collect each different card, and instead treated the fronts and backs independently. Some of the tokens do have all six backs, but others don't.

The other thing that will throw a curveball is that in different languages, there may be different numbers of "backs," since countries have different programs to promote. This was handled by their local offices, so it's hard to give a definitive count of how many unique tokens there are over all languages.

Good hunting!

## July 30, 2007



**Q:** Though I've had plenty of them ever since *Ravnica* went on sale, I only just now noticed something odd about the card *Disembowel*. What's with the weird artist attribution? Is Chengo McFlingers a "brush name"?

–Michael, Raleigh, NC, USA

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

Hey Michael,

One of our contractual points for artists is that they get to dictate their "display name." This could mean I decide to drop my first name for the credit line (ala Parente or DiTerlizzi), or add my first initial, or ask to be credited by a "brush name," as you put it. Any given artist could have a number of reasons for making these decisions. Distance the credit from another illustrator with the same name... keep one type of artwork away from another market of artwork (personal work versus commercial, for example)... Make it match their web site address... and so on. Whatever the reason, it is something contractual, and even if it were not, we would certainly honor it and take it seriously. Whoever painted *Disembowel* asked for his/her credit to read as Chengo McFlingers, and so it does.

JJ

## July 27, 2007



**Q:** Is Wizards planning on continuing to release the 16th card in booster packs of future sets? Since you only released about five tokens for *Tenth Edition*, it doesn't seem reasonable to assume that you're only going to be putting them in core set boosters since that would mean about five tokens released every two years or so. So, can we expect similar treatment in *Lorwyn* and other expert-level sets?

–Dan, Culpeper, VA

**A:** From **Aaron Forsythe, Head of Magic R&D:**

Dan,

I touched on this issue in both [my online chat](#) and my feature article [The Making of Number Ten](#): Yes, we will be continuing the Tips & Tricks cards and tokens into the *Lorwyn* block (which is as far ahead as we've worked at this point). The tokens will correspond to the tokens created by the cards in the block, and the Tips & Tricks won't necessarily cover basic gameplay like "the stack" and "parts of a turn" but will rather be an in-depth look into the new mechanics of the block.



For expert-level sets, the ratio of tokens to Tips & Tricks will be the opposite of what was in *Tenth Edition*, so expect to get two tokens for every one Tips & Tricks card in *Lorwyn*.

July 26, 2007



**Q:** I love the art of **Deathmark** and I'd like to know as much as I can about how that specific image came to be... What was the art description like? How much of the stunning result can be credited to the artist and how much to the person who wrote the description for that piece of art? Why was that specific angle used? How many sketches did it take to get to the final composition? etc...  
-Meelis

**A:** From **Jeremy Jarvis, Magic Art Director** (and illustrator of **Deathmark**):

Hi Meelis,

I just might have a bit of insight into **Deathmark's** illustration. : )

*Coldsnap* card concepting overlapped with *Time Spiral*, so while Brady was cranking away on the formidable task of overlaying a sense of 'world' on the very disparate TSP card file, Brandon Bozzi and Matt Cavotta were tasked with concepting all of CSP.

I was newly in-house as **Magic's** concept artist working with (then) Art Director Jeremy Cranford. I had already started my whiny grass-roots campaign to broaden our approach to spells. We knew this was going to be a notable card in CSP, needed to be punchy, but we weren't sure exactly what that meant.

Here is the card concept as written:

Color: Black Spell  
Setting: Ice Age setting. Lots of snow and ice  
Overview: This spell destroys white and green creatures.  
You can focus on a spell destroying a creature or you can approach it more abstractly if you think you can pull it off.

If you go more abstract, think of it as spell energy that eliminates white (light/law) and green (nature/life) creatures with the powers of darkness. Depict this in any way you wish.

Feel free to use or ignore the following suggestion:

Location: snowy village  
Action: Black tendrils rise from a well in a snowy village and pull down a flailing villager.  
Focus: the tendrils  
Mood: unwilling sacrifice  
Notes: "black tendrils" = evil magic, "villager" = order, good

Matt Cavotta has mentioned in his articles that he ends up on the receiving end of sticky concepts or tough assignments due to his knowledge of the game (in addition to "just" being an artist). That kinda happened here. Cranford tasked me with the card, probably more to shut me up about "broader spells" than anything else.

The concept as written is perfectly fine. It would have produced a good image, read well on the card, and certainly been "in palette" with how we have portrayed many black spells. I wanted something less scenic, splashier at a glance across the table, and a bit more fun with what a black spell could be. So basically I went a completely different direction. The visual of a central, bloody snowflake in that black boarder seemed hot to me. On closer inspection players can see it's someone who has actually been killed by bleeding out on a snow bank, so there's more of a literal payoff if you take the time to look at it, which I like.

Here is the sketch:

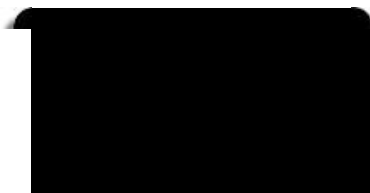


...which went fairly directly to final:



The most interesting thing to me is the response to this art. As with any sort of departure creatively, this art is polarizing. In our market research this art for **Deathmark** appeared on the lists of 'Best Art', 'Coolest Art' and 'Worst Art'. And I think I can live with that.

JJ





July 25, 2007



**Q:** Since *Coldsnap* is going to be Standard-legal for quite some time, what is the point of reprinting some *Coldsnap* cards like *Luminesce* in *Tenth Edition*? Isn't it redundant?  
—"A Dude"

**A:** From **Aaron Forsythe**, Head of **Magic R&D**:

Dude,

If the entire point of the core set was to make cards legal for Standard play, then, yes, it would be redundant. Well, only redundant up to a point; when *Coldsnap* rotates out of Standard in the fall of 2008, *Luminesce* and friends would no longer be legal unless they were available in the core set. So even that isn't a problem.

But the real answer is that the main point of the core set is to introduce the game and its concepts to new players. To that end, we're not shy about including cards that are currently in print to show off some of the most basic execution of important game elements, like countering spells (*Cancel*), mana-fixing (*Terramorphic Expanse*), and enemy color interactions (*Luminesce*).

July 24, 2007



**Q:** Months ago, on the [playmagic.com](http://playmagic.com) web site, several new *Tenth Edition* arts were seen on the cards displayed, including *Angel of Mercy*, *Firebreathing*, and *Shock*. One of these cards with new art shown was *Levitation*. Why was this art shown on this web site but then not used?  
—Urzasseditives, [magicthegathering.com](http://magicthegathering.com) forums

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

The answer is really an issue of timeline. We work well in advance of any given set's release, and often that set isn't the only thing in the works. Promo and alternate art is being commissioned concurrently, as well as the occasional special project. The [playmagic.com](http://playmagic.com) site is one of our ongoing efforts to have a new-player-accessible, best-foot-forward entry into the game. Before *Tenth Edition* we had a couple small waves of art commissions for endeavors of this nature (upcoming Flash tutorial, perhaps!), refreshing some art, re-concepting some illustrations etc. Many of which were just small tweaks, like having Heather give us a new take of her *Suntail Hawk* with a more readily apparent figure/ground relationship (brown bird on blue sky rather than the previous brownish sky or color field) for a better read-at-a-glance for potential new players. Re-concepting might be employed to get a new *Volcanic Hammer* that reads more as a spell to distance it from the "equipment" subtype. Not all of these illustrations we used in *Tenth Edition*, nor were they ever destined to be. The *Levitation* art you saw is one of these. These new illustrations and concepts will show up from time to time in appropriate (and maybe new!) venues. You haven't seen them all yet, but you'll be excited when you do!

Hell with it, here are a few new ones. Enjoy!







July 23, 2007



**Q:** *Dash Hopes* has one of my favourite pieces of art of any card in recent years, but I've heard that it was originally meant for another card. What card was that?

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

Hi John,

"Shelved" cards are often shelved so they can appear later in a more appropriate set, so I can't tell you mechanically what the card was, but we can certainly talk art and process for some behind-the-scenes action.

Here was the art description:

Color: White Enchantment

Location: see below

Action: This spell magically recalls a time in its caster's life when he/she was strongest and happiest. Represent this in a way of your design. One (maybe not so great) idea is to show an old man in the ruins of a castle, looking through a broken stained-glass window frame (with the leading left). Through parts of the window is a view of a grassy, sunny meadow on which a younger version of the man stands guard.

Focus: the magical recalling of better times

Mood: If only I could relive those days . . .



Okay, so I spoiled that its home was originally destined for a white enchantment, but that's as much as I can mechanically say.

On the art side, Zoltan and Gabor gave us a couple options. Here they are:



Once sketches are posted in our Multiverse, the **Magic** Creative team has the opportunity to comment.

I'll even show you those comments here:

(JJ is me, I was still lead concept artist at the time, BB is Brandon Bozzi who was part of Creative until he jumped ship for Randy's Digital Initiative (traitor!!!), and JC is Jeremy Cranford, (then) Art Director.)

JJ 11/15: B!

BB 11/9: I think 'A' reads much better. You can tell that they are the same guy and he looks like he's thinking of lost youth.

JJ: one artist in 50 can sell something with body language. they are... we should let them.

JC 11/19: I like "A"

Here's the between-the-lines: I was obviously hot for the more lyrical take. I loved the subtlety of it... Z&G really managed to capture a sort of quiet pathos. Brandon responded to the more direct take. I made a second plea for my favorite, and was outvoted.

Now, don't get me wrong, the option we went with is a wonderful and communicative piece of art, and Zoltan and Gabor painted the hell out of it, as they always do. But, yes, I was disappointed that we didn't go with the less direct more evocative illustration (IMO), so I immediately offered to buy the unused drawing from Z&G, and it remains one of my favorites in my collection.

JJ

July 20, 2007



**Q:** Now that the *Time Spiral* Block is done, what would a 1/1 colorless Sliver be if every other Sliver were on the field?

—Alex, Black Lick, PA, USA

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

Let's say you had every Sliver in play (all 77 of them, including *Mistform Ultimus*), and you made a 1/1 colorless sliver somehow (perhaps by activating *Sliver Queen's* ability). That token would have the characteristics listed below (its power and toughness assume that you don't control a Swamp for *Sedge Sliver's* ability). It's a pretty strange beastie, since *Sliver Legion* makes it huge but *Dormant Sliver* makes it unable to attack. Still, it has some pretty crazy abilities. Here goes:

Flash

Absorb 1, defender, double strike, first strike, flanking, flying, frenzy 1, haste, lifelink, poisonous 1, provoke, reach, shadow, shroud, trample, vigilance

Protection from the color chosen for *Ward Sliver*

When this permanent comes into play, draw a card.

When this permanent comes into play, destroy target artifact or enchantment.

When this permanent comes into play, you may fateseal 1. (Its controller looks at the top card of an opponent's library, then he or she may put that card on the bottom of that library.)

Whenever this creature is dealt damage, put a +1/+1 counter on it. (The damage is dealt before the counter is put on.)

Whenever this creature deals combat damage to a creature, destroy that creature. It can't be regenerated.

Whenever a creature dealt damage by this creature this turn is put into a graveyard, put a +1/+1 counter on this creature.

Whenever this creature deals combat damage to a player, its controller may put a 1/1 colorless Sliver creature token into play.

Whenever this creature deals combat damage to a player, its controller may draw a card.

Whenever this permanent becomes the target of a spell an opponent controls, you may draw a card.

Whenever this creature becomes blocked, it gets +1/+1 until end of turn for each creature blocking it.

Whenever this creature becomes blocked, it gets +1/+1 until end of turn for each creature blocking it.

If this permanent would be put into a graveyard, you may put it on top of its owner's library instead.

At the beginning of your upkeep, this permanent deals 1 damage to you.

This permanent is colorless.

This spell can't be countered.

This creature can't be blocked except by Slivers.

This creature gets +1/+1 as long as you control a Swamp.

This creature can't be blocked except by two or more creatures.

①: If this permanent is in play, flip a coin. If you win the flip, remove this permanent from the game and return it to play under its owner's control at end of turn. If you lose the flip, sacrifice it.

①: This permanent becomes the creature type of your choice in addition to its other types until end of turn.

♣: Regenerate this permanent.

②: Regenerate this permanent.

②: This creature gets +0/+1 until end of turn.

②: This creature gets +1/+0 until end of turn.

②: This creature gets +1/+1 until end of turn.

♣: Regenerate target Sliver.

♣: Name a card. Target opponent reveals a card at random from his or her hand. If it's the named card, that player discards it. Play this ability only during your turn.

♣: Add one mana of any color to your mana pool.

♣: Target Sliver creature gets +X/+0 until end of turn, where X is the number of Slivers in play.

♣: Tap target permanent.

♣: This creature deals 2 damage to target creature or player and 3 damage to itself.

♣: This permanent deals 1 damage to target attacking or blocking creature.

♣: Target player puts the top card of his or her library into his or her graveyard.

②, ♣: Regenerate target Sliver.

Sacrifice this permanent: You gain 3 life.

Sacrifice this permanent: Add ♣♣ to your mana pool.

①, Sacrifice this permanent: Target Sliver creature gets +2/+2 until end of turn.

①, Sacrifice this permanent: This permanent deals 1 damage to target creature or player.

①, Sacrifice this permanent: Prevent the next 1 damage that would be dealt to target Sliver creature or player this turn.

①, Sacrifice this permanent: Each player discards a card.

- ② Sacrifice this permanent: This permanent deals 2 damage to target creature or player.
  - ② Sacrifice this permanent: You gain 4 life.
  - ② Sacrifice this permanent: Target player discards a card at random. Play this ability only any time you could play a sorcery.
  - ② Sacrifice this permanent: Draw a card.
  - ③ Sacrifice this permanent: Destroy target permanent.
- Pay 2 life: Return this permanent to its owner's hand.

Slivercycling ③

85/85

Thanks for your question, Alex!

July 19, 2007



**Q:** Several columns have mentioned a point in design where card numbers have been locked, but cards have not, generally in the context of a last-minute renaming. Why are card numbers ever locked? It seems like an incidental thing that can be changed at will, so why is it finalized before the set is?

–Alex, Waterloo, ON, Canada

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

The "card numbers" in your question are the collector numbers for the set. Mark Rosewater told the following story in [a recent column](#):

*"My favorite story about **Pernicious Deed** was that its name had to be changed at the last minute.... It was so late in the process that the card numbers had been locked down. That meant that we had to change the names but stay within the parameters of the card names before and after in its color (counting multicolor as a single color).... We had to be between **Overgrown Estate** and **Powerstone Minefield**."*

Mark used the same gimmick in the final design challenge of the Great Designer Search. It's a memorable puzzle. But it's not the whole story.

Almost every month, someone inside the Wizards of the Coast corporate offices "finishes" a **Magic** set. From the Design handoff to Development until the approval of the last Portuguese press sheet, **Magic** cards have more "it's done" moments than I can count.

Perhaps the most important day in a card set's life is the day the text leaves R&D for the first time. On that day, a card's collector number becomes its primary identifier. Those numbers are the same across all languages, and they conveniently correspond to the pages in the typesetter's file. Wizards policy prohibits changing those collector numbers after the start of typesetting. That way we all know we're talking about the same thing!

The cards are by no means final at that point. For some weeks afterward, R&D continues to change what needs to be changed, and the set editor coordinates that. *Apocalypse* was the first set that I led, so I got to be the one who told Mark what his options were for changing card names... more than a month before the final mana cost tweak.

I know an arbitrary deadline for finalizing collector numbers makes us sound inflexible, but R&D respects this line as a courtesy to the people we work with. If the need is great enough, though, any policy can be broken. Like the time I accidentally numbered *Sarpadian Empires, Vol. VII* as the first artifact card in the set because of the italic tags.... **Magic** cards are the most important thing we work on, and we'll do what it takes to make things right.

July 18, 2007



**Q:** Are there any employees of Wizards of the Coast who don't know how to play **Magic**?

–John, Ireland

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

Hi John,

Thanks for your question. The short answer to your question is yes, but there are a number of reasons why. First of all, since Wizards of the Coast makes many different products besides **Magic: The Gathering**, including **DUNGEONS & DRAGONS**, **Axis & Allies Miniatures**, **Star Wars Miniatures**, **DuelMasters**, **Neopets**, and many more, there are a lot of employees at Wizards whose focus does not involve **Magic: The Gathering**.

Of the Wizards employees who do work with **Magic**, there are some departments where knowledge of the game is essential, such as R&D. In other departments, including Sales, Finance, Production, etc., there are some people who are hired because of the skills and experience they have in their particular field who may not know how to play **Magic** when they are hired. For those individuals, Wizards of the Coast offers a number of programs so they can learn the game. One of those programs is our own version of Game Day, which is a day of learn-to-play sessions, strategy talks, and tournaments for Wizards employees. Another program pairs an experienced **Magic** player with a new **Magic** player for weekly game sessions. Regardless of skill level, everyone is also encouraged to attend our Employee Prerelease Events. These programs are not only a great way to get new and experienced players to increase their skills in and knowledge of **Magic**, they also allow people from different departments to learn the whole process involved in making the game.

July 17, 2007



**Q:** What exactly is the reasoning behind getting rid of the lord creature type? Shouldn't Goblin King and his lordly friends follow the regular race/class creature type model? Even if the Lord creature type doesn't interact with

anything, there are plenty of other creature types that don't, but aren't being removed.  
 –"Me," Simi Valley, CA, USA

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

Creature types are the most complicated and persistent problem I deal with. Technically speaking, a creature's subtypes are the only elements of a card where flavor and mechanics can't be separated. You could change a card's name, illustration, and flavor text, and the card's function would be unaffected. But changing its subtypes affects gameplay, which means lots of consideration and sometimes lots of argument.

**Magic** R&D discussed the Lord type at length back when *Tenth Edition* creature types needed to be settled toward the end of last year. No other type took more discussion and debate, in fact. In the end, we decided that the Lord type was too problematic to support. Here are some points that arose in the debate:

- There's simply not enough room on the type line to always give creatures each type they should have. In situations in which a creature card has too many types to print and we have to omit one, if Lord is one of the proposed types, it's usually the one that's least painful to omit. If you have to omit it sometimes, that creates inconsistency in its usage over time. Inconsistency is okay when it comes to flavor issues, but as mentioned above, creature types affect game play, and inconsistency in game play is terrible.
- For some players, "lord" is a gendered term that can be used only for male figures (lord and lady, for example). That means either all Lords must be male (which creates a sexist outcome), or we have female Lords, which some believe is incorrect language usage.
- Many consider Lord to be a "class" type like Wizard or Soldier. Others believe it's not really a class but a status, like Minion (this ties into the issue below of whether you use Lord as a mechanical or flavor-based term). Because there's limited space on the type line, creatures typically have only one class. Should a wizard lord be a Wizard or a Lord? If Lord is considered a status term rather than a class, the decision becomes much easier.
- If a card has a supported creature type in its name, it should have that type. There are a few exceptions—**Giant Spider** doesn't have the Giant type—but generally speaking if it's called a Goblin, it should have the Goblin type. If it's called an Elf, it should have the Elf type, and so on. That's just common sense. Trying to apply this common-sense rule for Lord, however, lands us in a world of trouble (see below).
- Some players use Lord to mean, "I give one or more abilities and/or a power/toughness bonus to a given class of creatures for as long as I'm in play." Other players use Lord to mean, "I give +1/+1 to a particular race of creatures." Others use it to mean, "My flavor is that I command others." Still others use it to mean, "I don't just command others; I'm at the very top." But all these usages are wildly inconsistent on existing cards (see below).



Here are some pre-*Tenth Edition* lists to give you an idea of the scope of the problem. These lists may not be 100% complete (especially the "command others" list), and they don't include **Mistform Ultimus**, but they should illustrate the issue nonetheless:

**These cards have "lord" in their titles and have the Lord type:**

Chaos Lord  
 Dralnu, Lich Lord  
 Keldon Warlord  
 Kobold Overlord  
 Lord of Atlantis  
 Lord of the Undead

**These cards have "lord" in their titles but don't have the Lord type:**

Balduvian Warlord  
 Cao Cao, Lord of Wei  
 Cateran Overlord  
 Dauthi Warlord  
 Eladamri, Lord of Leaves  
 Godo, Bandit Warlord  
 Konda, Lord of Eiganjo  
 Kuro, Pitlord  
 Liu Bei, Lord of Shu  
 Lord Magnus  
 Lord of the Pit  
 Lord of Tresserhorn  
 Phyrexian Plaguelord  
 Renegade Warlord  
 Sliver Overlord  
 Sun Quan, Lord of Wu  
 Szadek, Lord of Secrets

**These cards have the Lord type, but don't have "lord" in their titles:**

**These cards don't have "lord" in their titles, nor do they have the Lord type, but they represent creatures in positions of command or rulership:**

Ambush Commander  
 Arcbound Overseer  
 Archangel  
 Aven Brigadier  
 Barbarian General  
 Cabal Patriarch  
 Cao Ren, Wei Commander  
 Captain Sisay  
 Centaur Chieftain  
 Chieftain en-Dal  
 Coffin Queen  
 Commander Eesha  
 Dwarven Lieutenant  
 Fascist Art Director  
 Flowstone Overseer  
 Garza Zol, Plague Queen  
 General Jarkeld  
 Goblin General  
 Goblin Marshal  
 Goblin Ringleader  
 Goblin Taskmaster  
 Goblin Warchief  
 Gorilla Chieftain  
 Huang Zhong, Shu General  
 Icatian Lieutenant  
 Jhovall Queen  
 Kavu Monarch  
 Kavu Primarch

Ancestor's Prophet  
 Assquatch  
 Benalish Commander  
 Caller of the Hunt  
 Catapult Master  
 Chorus of the Conclave  
 Crovax, Ascendant Hero  
 Darien, King of Kjeldor  
 Elvish Champion  
 Ghost Council of Orzhova  
 Goblin King  
 Gravespawn Sovereign  
 Jedit Ojanen of Efrava  
 Lovisa Coldeyes  
 Skirk Fire Marshal  
 Supreme Inquisitor  
 Tivadar of Thorn  
 Voice of the Woods  
 Zombie Master

**These cards don't have "lord" in their titles, nor do they have the Lord type, but they "buff" creatures of a particular kind in the same way "Lords" do:**

Ascendant Evincar  
 Auriok Steelshaper  
 Aven Brigadier  
 Balthor the Defiled  
 Blade Sliver  
 Brass Herald  
 Celestial Crusader  
 Chainer, Dementia Master  
 Daru Warchief  
 Field Marshal  
 Ixidor, Reality Sculptor  
 Kangee, Aerie Keeper  
 Kobold Taskmaster  
 Meng Huo, Barbarian King  
 Might Sliver  
 Nut Collector  
 Plated Sliver  
 Raksha Golden Cub  
 Sachi, Daughter of Seshiro  
 Seshiro the Anointed  
 Sinew Sliver  
 Sliver Legion  
 Sosuke, Son of Seshiro  
 Steamflogger Boss  
 Thelonite Hermit  
 Thrull Champion  
 Tolsimir Wolfblood  
 Undead Warchief  
 Verdeloth the Ancient

King Suleiman  
 Kjeldoran Skycaptain  
 Kobold Drill Sergeant  
 Krosan Warchief  
 Lady Zhurong, Warrior Queen  
 Latulla, Keldon Overseer  
 Lieutenant Kirtar  
 Loxodon Hierarch  
 Lu Meng, Wu General  
 Lu Xun, Scholar General  
 Major Teroh  
 Mistform Warchief  
 Mogg War Marshal  
 Ogre Taskmaster  
 Radiant, Archangel  
 Raven Guild Master  
 Razia, Boros Archangel  
 Orc General  
 Orcish Captain  
 Pianna, Nomad Captain  
 Pixie Queen  
 Princess Lucrezia  
 Ramosian Captain  
 Ramosian Commander  
 Ramosian Lieutenant  
 Ramosian Sergeant  
 Ramosian Sky Marshal  
 Revenant Patriarch  
 Riptide Director  
 Rogue Skycaptain  
 Ronin Houndmaster  
 Rootwater Matriarch  
 Savra, Queen of the Golgari  
 Seasoned Marshal  
 Shu General  
 Siege-Gang Commander  
 Sima Yi, Wei Field Marshal  
 Skirk Drill Sergeant  
 Sliver Queen  
 Sol'Kanar the Swamp King  
 Sorceress Queen  
 Squee, Goblin Nabob  
 Stern Marshal  
 Stronghold Overseer  
 Stronghold Taskmaster  
 Takeno, Samurai General  
 Vedalken Mastermind  
 Whip Sergeant  
 Wirewood Hivemaster  
 Wu Admiral  
 Yellow Scarves General  
 Zhalfirin Commander  
 Zhang He, Wei General  
 Zhao Zilong, Tiger General  
 Zhou Yu, Chief Commander

So now that you've seen these lists, do you have an answer for which of the creatures above should have the Lord type and which shouldn't? Chances are reasonably good that you don't. But let's say you do—that you're absolutely confident that your answer is the right one. Find someone else who also has "the answer." See if theirs is identical to yours. If it's not, what do you do? I'm guessing that when readers try to work out this problem for themselves, they'll encounter the same divisions of opinion that we did here at Wizards.

After many, many hours of disagreement and discussion over where and how Lord should be used, we had an hour-long group meeting about the issue. The next day I sent the following email to the other members of **Magic R&D**:

*"Tenth Edition creature types need to be locked in today. I appreciate everyone talking through the issues around the Lord type yesterday; it's a big headache and lots of people had lots of valid points.*

*I'm intending to go with the 'cut the Gordian knot' option: eliminate the Lord type. Every other option just has too many pitfalls, such as "Lord of the Pit" getting the Lord type and "Kuro, Pitlord" not getting it, or having to decide arbitrarily whether the Lord type begins at the Major General or Lieutenant General level of command.*

*In the end, I wasn't compelled by the counterarguments to the "players will call them lords anyway" position. Eliminating the Lord type more or less counts on the fact that players will continue to use Lord when chatting about Goblin King, for example, and that when it comes to the gray areas that we can't fully resolve on cards, players' emergent consensus will compensate.*

*I wouldn't seriously consider eliminating the Lord type unless I truly believed Lord will live on as player slang, in the same way that "fatty" or "weenie" do. I fully endorse inclusion of "lord" in any glossaries we publish (in starter-level materials, online, wherever). In my mind the "lord" entry would look something like this:*

"Lord." Player slang that refers to a creature that gives a bonus to all creatures with a particular creature type or characteristic. For example, Goblin King is a "lord" because it gives all Goblins +1/+1.

*Thanks to everyone for your help and feedback. If you think I'm making a terrible, terrible mistake that you simply can't abide, come talk to me ASAP."*

Needless to say, no one came to talk to me any further about the Lord type, and I took that as an indicator that even if the decision wasn't perfect, there was no other decision that we thought was clearly better. I hope this response has at least given you the impression that we don't make these decisions quickly or capriciously.

July 16, 2007



**Q:** Do you think person X has first-person authority as to whether he/she is a Spike, Timmy, or Johnny? Basically, how accurate is our ability to self-report?

–Ryan, Fullerton, CA, USA

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

Ryan,

How accurate are people at self-reporting? It varies. On one survey we asked people to rank their own **Magic** playing skills, and ninety percent listed themselves as above average. In general though I find that most people have some sense of what psychographic they fit into. The thing that tends to throw people off is when they have negative perceptions of one of the groups and purposely place themselves somewhere else. I do believe the test tied to my last column on the psychographics ([Timmy, Johnny and Spike Revisited](#)), was pretty accurate. In addition, many players don't really understand the finer points of the psychographics (another reason to read the column if you haven't) and thus misreport themselves. Finally, people really want to self-identify into a single group when the majority of players are hybrids (usually with one group being dominant). If you're unsure about your self-reporting, talk with your friends. If they agree with your reasoning, odds are you're self-reporting correctly.

July 13, 2007



**Q:** One of my favorite parts of **Magic** is discovering cards that make me ask, "Can they do that?" Stuff like the Leylines, **Panglacial Wurm**, or most of **Future Sight**. From the other side of the table, what's it like making "Can we do this?" cards? And since you guys have to get things by rules and development, what are some of the really out-there ideas where you did ask, "Can we do this?" and got a flat "NO"?

–Mitchel, Alameda, CA, USA

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

Mitchel,

While the big "NO" happens all the time, I'm hesitant to reveal what has been declined for one simple reason: I plan on eventually doing it. Yes, the rules and development can slow me down but I believe persistence and a good idea will always win out. Perhaps we don't know how to do what we want with the rules as of today, but that doesn't mean we can't find a new way to attack the problem or wait until some advances in the rules allow us to do what is now impossible. Other things that are declined come from a worry that the ideas are too crazy for the game. But as the *Un*-sets have taught me, what seems crazy today might not seem so crazy tomorrow.

July 12, 2007



**Q:** When is *Tenth Edition* legal for Constructed?

–Anthony, Somerville, MA, USA

**A:** From **Scott Larabee**, DCI Program Manager:

*Tenth Edition* becomes legal for all Constructed formats on July 20, 2007. In Standard, *Ninth Edition* will no longer be legal when *Tenth Edition* becomes legal. Please note that if your National Championship starts *on* or *after* July 20, *Tenth Edition* (not *Ninth*) will be used for your Nationals for the Standard format portion of the event.

July 11, 2007



**Q:** When choosing people for a design team, would you rather have a philosophy major (i.e. someone good at arguing) or someone who has played (and won at) competitive **Magic** for several years? Do the two usually come together?

–Matt, Lindon, UT, USA

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

Matt,

So you're asking would I rather have someone like Randy Buehler or someone like Randy Buehler. Hmm, tough choice. The answer is that a good design team wants a mix of all sorts of designers. Being able to argue is a good skill. Having a good understanding of how cards from the past had played or how different metagames have played out is valuable. Each offers many interesting skills for a design team.

But not to avoid the question, if a supervillain held my loved one hostage (Gottlieb—don't get any ideas) and forced me to choose between a philosophy major and a competitive **Magic** player, I'd choose the competitive **Magic** player. Why? Because one of the most valuable skills to have in design is a good understanding of what **Magic** has done before, and the competitive player is a better bet to have that skill.

July 10, 2007



**Q:** I keep seeing cards ending in things like "*il-Dal*", "*en-Vec*" and "*il-Kor*." I was wondering: what do the "*il-*" and "*en-*" mean?

—Anh Vu Doan, Berkeley, CA, U.S.A.

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

On the artificial plane of Rath, the Kor, the Vec, and the Dal were three humanoid races who resisted the tyranny of the evincar, an overlord appointed by Phyrexia (Volrath, Davvol, and Crovax all served as evincar of Rath at various times). The "*en-*" and "*il-*" prefixes designate status. The designations originated with the Vec but came to be used by others in Rath as well. Those who are "*en-Vec*" are in favor with and accepted by the Vec, and the "*il-Vec*" are out of favor with, cast out of, or enemies of the Vec. The same goes for "*en-Dal*," "*il-Kor*," and other such usages of the "*en-*" and "*il-*" designations.

The "*il-*" designation was most commonly used for those who had betrayed their people by serving the evincar, and sometimes for those who had been pressed into the evincar's service against their will. Many such individuals lived in the so-called "**City of Traitors**," a settlement inside the mountain that housed **Volrath's Stronghold**.

Despite the resemblance to French words, "*en-*" and "*il-*" are pronounced "en" and "ill," not "ahn" and "eel." The term "*en-Kor*," for example, does not sound like "encore."

July 9, 2007



**Q:** Why do **Magic** cards smell so good when you open them? Seriously, I love that smell.

—Justin, Bremerton, WA, U.S.A.

**A:** From Tom Wänerstrand, TCG Operations Manager and print geek:

I too enjoy the smell of a freshly opened pack.

That buttery goodness you smell is a special varnish that is applied during printing. We use this to protect the cards from wear and give them all those wonderful playing card characteristics. Wizards uses several different varnishes for card products, depending on the desired look and feel.

**Magic** has had more or less the same formula applied since the beginning, with minor variances attributable to different suppliers.

Cheers,  
—TRW

July 6, 2007



**Q:** How exactly do you go about creating names for legendary creatures?

—Dan, Placerville, CA, U.S.A.

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

Legends (by which I mean, for the purposes of this answer, "legendary creature cards") are always exciting cards to name. Legends are **Magic's** heroes and villains, the larger-than-life figures that stride its limitless planes. Naming them is a different process from naming a regular creature card, because it's about communicating the power and grandeur of these heroes rather than about summing up the type or species of the creature. It all comes down to a proper name, and often an epithet.

Sometimes the proper name part is easy from my end, because the legend represents an important character from the **Magic** storyline. "Hmmm... what to name this three-color legend designed to represent a young Mishra? How about... Mishra?" But other times the proper name is tougher. When the card represents an all-new character unconnected from the present novel storyline, the name is Creative's to make up.

Take **Korlash**, **Heir to Blackblade** as an example. The card was designed as a sort of spiritual descendant of Dakkon Blackblade, creator and original wielder of the dreaded soul-sucking sword Blackblade. We knew the card was very black-aligned, so we came up with harsh-sounding syllables to get across the nastiness of this soulless, zombified villain. Khvash. Rukkor. Golguth. Dakkon XII. We settled on Korlash because it had good harshness of sound combined with quick-to-read, unambiguous spelling. But because "Korlash" all by itself wouldn't conjure up the necessary gravitas all by itself, or tell the story of where he got that badass greatsword, the next thing to create was the epithet.

An epithet is a short, descriptive phrase associated with a proper name. Epithets have been popular in history to distinguish historical leaders with common names, like Richard the Lionheart or Catherine the Great (as opposed to, say, Richard the Omnipotent and Catherine, Angel of Wrath)—and furthermore, in just a few words, they establish the importance and character of the figure. **Magic** uses epithets the same way. That epithet has to get across a large amount of character in a very short name bar, and also, sometimes, has to portray the character difference when two cards represent the same person.



Think of the epithet as a lightning-quick bio of the legend. "**Mishra, Artificer Prodigy**" tells you not only that this represents Mishra and that he's an artificer, and a good one; it implies also that this is Mishra near the beginning of his artificing career. He isn't "Mishra, Arch-Artificer" or "Mishra, Destroyer of Argoth"; this is him as a young man, long before his competitive streak with his brother Urza was inspired by a little trip to the plane of Phyrexia. It's Mishra as a promising pupil of Tocasia, fascinated by archaeology and the artificing secrets of the ancient Thran Empire. The epithet establishes all of this—well, a lot of it—in just two words.

The epithet serves the same biographical purpose on a non-storyline legend. "**Korlash, Heir to Blackblade**" tells a micro-story about someone named Korlash who is associated with something called the Blackblade. He doesn't have "Blackblade" as a last name, as Dakkon did, but rather has somehow inherited the Blackblade. There's a micro-story there. That phrase, combined with the art of a huge guy in black armor hefting an enormous black sword, provides enough of the micro-story that you can figure out who this Korlash is and what he's about, and be proud to slap him down onto the table in front of a pile of Swamps.

Naming legends is fun business. It's the heroes' opportunity to take the spotlight—the time when we get to put words to the grand figures of the **Magic** multiverse.

July 5, 2007



**Q:** The ten guilds from *Ravnica* block all have strongly established, distinct identities. Did any of the guilds go through any major thematic changes from the conception stages, or did they all end up pretty much as originally envisioned?

—John, Ireland

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

Because each guild's identity was derived from the convergence of its two colors, our initial conceptions of each guild more or less held true throughout the process. We just know the five colors that well! The visual identities of the guilds changed and evolved over the course of the worldbuilding process, however, as did the nomenclature associated with each guild:

- The Golgari and the Orzhov had their names switched fairly late in the worldbuilding process. The idea that the Orzhov used a veneer of religion to reinforce their lopsided social order was also a relatively late addition.
- The Simic were the toughest guild to develop by far. Cytoplasts were a very late addition to the worldbuilding. One reason for the difficulty was because I felt it was important to avoid the easiest and most obvious solution for the Simic, which was a Dr. Moreau-esque group full of hybridized animals. I wanted to avoid this because of the coincidental abundance of anthropomorphized animals in the blocks that preceded *Ravnica*. But it was also important to try to find alternatives to "technology" in order to differentiate the Simic from the Izzet.
- The following placeholder names for the guilds were already in place by April 2004. See if you can match the placeholders to the guilds: Berserkers, Bio-Engineers, High Judges, Proliferators, Puppeteers, Steam Wizards, Bloodmongers, Zealot Army, Eco-Collective, Slavers.

July 3, 2007



**Q:** When designing new cards, how heavily does multiplayer balance weigh in your minds? Do you ever find yourselves toiling over whether to print the words "each other player" or "target player" on a card? What sort of criteria, if any, do you use to make that decision?

—Paul, East Lansing, MI, U.S.A.

**A:** From **Kenneth Nagle**, R&D Design Intern:

Hi Paul,

We design different kinds of **Magic** cards to make different players happy. Since I have personally played more hours of multiplayer **Magic** than 1v1 **Magic**, I absolutely do design cards specifically for multiplayer, free-for-all in particular, because I am one of the players that those cards make happy—cards like **Decimate**, **Forbidden Orchard**, **Wall of Shards**, and **Hunted Horror**. That's why my favorite creature type is **Lhurgoyf**!

R&D designers, developers, and editors as a whole are quite sensitive to the gameplay changes between 1v1 and multiplayer. That's why we test the Two-Headed Giant Sealed formats you may have experienced at Prereleases, not only for card balance but to discover which previously unloved cards become superstars.

R&D does follow some trends when it comes to global effects and the targeting of potential multiplayer cards. The multiplayer-friendly version usually wins out unless there's a good reason otherwise, such as maintaining a tight cycle or a specific gameplay scenario or interaction we want to preserve.

### Unnerve / Cabal Conditioning vs. Plague Wind / Syphon Mind

All these cards are detrimental to your opponents. However, the templating of **Plague Wind** and even **Syphon Mind** to some extent also hose your teammates. If these two cards were brand new designs being printed in *Lorwyn*, I would bet money that **Plague Wind** would read "Destroy all creatures your opponents control," and **Syphon Mind** would read "Each opponent discards a card. You draw a card for each card discarded this way," even though **Syphon Mind** is perfect as is.

### Glorious Anthem vs. Crusade

In an interesting upset, **Glorious Anthem** was voted into *Ninth Edition* over its rival **Crusade**. This tells us in R&D that many of our players are willing to spend an extra mana for a beneficial card that can't potentially backfire by helping the opponent. We call this "all-upside" in R&D, and we charge you an extra mana for it.

However, **Glorious Anthem** is not actually as "all-upside" as it could be from a multiplayer perspective. One multiplayer experience, seen this weekend at [Pro Tour—San Diego](#) as well as around numerous kitchen tables, is for you and your friend to both build Sliver decks, team up against two other friends who might not have been as ingenious, and win with super-powerful Slivers that aren't possible in a 1v1 duel. However, Slivers are inherently dangerous because they can backfire if your opponent is also playing Slivers! The same is true for cards like **Leyline of the Meek** and **Muraganda Petroglyphs**. By contrast, **Glorious Anthem** can't help your opponents, but it also can't help your teammates very much either.

It is possible to make an even more "all-upside" version of **Glorious Anthem**. Take a look at **Imperial Mask**, the "more all-upside" version of **Ivory Mask**:



The **Magic** Comprehensive Rules do support the game term 'teammate', but it's not currently implemented as much as I'd hope for a number of reasons, including confusion and text length. If you like the design and template of **Imperial Mask** and would like us to print more cards like it, let us know!

### Compulsive Research / Careful Consideration vs. Sift / Harmonize

There is an ongoing debate in R&D whether card drawing should target a player or not. Design-minded Mark Rosewater and I believe this creates good gameplay politics among teammates or enemies, and occasionally decking an opponent with a card drawing spell makes for good stories. Development-minded Aaron Forsythe believes that these are extraneous words, an obvious question with an obvious answer ("I target myself with **Ancestral Recall**"), and that stalling out and then decking your opponent with your own card drawing spells shouldn't be possible, as it removes the need to play win conditions such as **Millstone**.

So Paul, as I hope you can see, we do keep Multiplayer in mind. Just between you and me, the 1v1 "normal" way to play **Magic** is just way less fun!

July 2, 2007



**Q:** In the article [Counter Intelligence](#) from 2005, Mark Rosewater wrote: "All costing of counterspells are influenced by the existence of **Counterspell**. If the card is worse than **Counterspell** it tends to cost less than two blue mana. If it's better, it costs more than two blue mana." However, in the latest sets R&D seems to have abandoned this rule. An obvious example of this would be **Cancel** from *Time Spiral*, which does exactly the same as **Counterspell** for one more mana. Why has R&D changed this policy?

-Asger, Copenhagen, Denmark

**A:** From **Aaron Forsythe**, Director of **Magic** R&D:

The easy answer is that we change lots of "policies" all the time. In R&D, policies are little more than guidelines for our actions at any given moment in time, and from set to set and year to year those guidelines shift.

In the specific case of **Cancel**, we simply faced facts and admitted to ourselves that we believe **Counterspell** is too good to print and that we have to bite the bullet and redraw the line. A previous R&D team had to go through the same experience years ago when they decided to print **Shock** in *Stronghold*, putting the nail in the coffin of any hopes for a return of **Lightning Bolt**. It isn't an easy task-none of us enjoy making cards that are strictly worse than other popular, well-known cards-but in the best interest of the game we have to do it.

I was pleasantly surprised to see that **Cancel** was one of the most popular common cards in *Time Spiral*, which said to me that most of the audience didn't see it as a letdown. I'm sure a large number of readers disagree that **Counterspell** is too good to print, but the fact is that even with worse permission than that, blue remains a powerful force in Standard and Block Constructed play. **Counterspell** is hardly a "vital" card to the color.



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