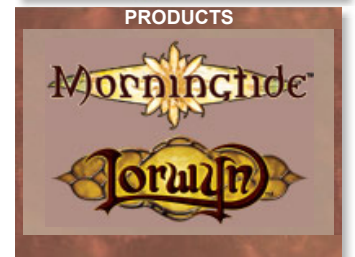


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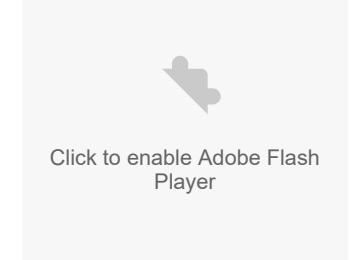
Ask Wizards - October, 2007

Ask Wizards
Monday, October 1, 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.



PRO TOUR-KUALA LUMPUR



Visiting Malaysia



MESSAGE BOARDS



October 31, 2007

Q: Is there any rhyme or reason for the order in which the keyword abilities appear in section 502, "Keyword Abilities," of the Comprehensive Rules? It's neither alphabetical nor chronological, and it doesn't group like abilities in any way I can discern.

—Jason, Brampton, ON, Canada

A: From Del Laugel, **Magic** senior editor:

Yes, Jason, there is a system.

When the first edition of the **Magic** Comprehensive Rules was released in April 1999, section 502, "Keyword Abilities," listed only nine abilities:

- 502.2. First Strike
- 502.3. Flanking
- 502.4. Flying
- 502.5. Haste
- 502.6. Landwalk
- 502.7. Protection
- 502.8. Shadow
- 502.9. Trample

The other keywords were mentioned only in the glossary, and some only in passing.

Banding, Bands with Other (Obsolete)

Banding is a static ability that affects the combat phase. "Bands with other" is a specialized version of the ability.

Yeah. Thanks. Once the rules team caught their breath, it didn't take long for them to add obsolete and set-specific keywords to the list. The added keywords appear in the order that they were released, and alphabetically within each set. (Rules that appear in italics below have since been removed.)

- 502.10. Banding *Limited Edition (Alpha)*
- 502.11. Bands with Other *Legends*
- 502.12. Rampage *Legends*
- 502.13. Cumulative Upkeep *Ice Age*
- 502.14. *Snow-Covered* *Ice Age*
- 502.15. Phasing *Mirage*
- 502.16. Buyback *Tempest*
- 502.17. Horsemanship *Portal Three Kingdoms*
- 502.18. Cycling *Urza's Saga*
- 502.19. Echo *Urza's Saga*

From then until now, new keyword abilities have just been added to the end of the list. We try to maintain the numbering system of the Comp. Rules where possible. If you come across a four-year-old reference to rule 502.30, we want you to be able to figure out what it means! (My personal favorites are 409.1 and 418.5, but I've been spending a lot of time in the 600s lately.)

- 502.20. Fading *Nemesis*
- 502.21. Kicker *Invasion*
- 502.22. Flashback *Odyssey*
- 502.23. Threshold *Odyssey*
- 502.24. Madness *Torment*
- 502.25. Fear *Onslaught*
- 502.26. Morph *Onslaught*
- 502.27. Amplify *Legions*
- 502.28. Double Strike *Legions*

502.29. Provoke	<i>Legions</i>
502.30. Storm	<i>Scourge</i>
502.31. Affinity	<i>Mirrodin</i>
502.32. Entwine	<i>Mirrodin</i>
502.33. Equip	<i>Mirrodin</i>
502.34. Imprint	<i>Mirrodin</i>
502.35. Modular	<i>Darksteel</i>
502.36. Scry	<i>Fifth Dawn</i>
502.37. Sunburst	<i>Fifth Dawn</i>
502.38. Bushido	<i>Champions of Kamigawa</i>
502.39. Soulshift	<i>Champions of Kamigawa</i>
502.40. Splice	<i>Champions of Kamigawa</i>
502.41. Defender	<i>Betrayers of Kamigawa</i>
502.42. Offering	<i>Betrayers of Kamigawa</i>
502.43. Ninjutsu	<i>Betrayers of Kamigawa</i>
502.44. Epic	<i>Saviors of Kamigawa</i>



Then came the *Ninth Edition* core set, which introduced two new evergreen keywords. Vigilance was put into the spot vacated by snow-covered when it became a supertype in the *Champions of Kamigawa* update to the Comp. Rules (the same update that changed the "legend rule" to what we use today and eliminated the Legend creature type), and enchant moved from type lines to rules text and became a keyword.

502.14. Vigilance	<i>Ninth Edition</i>
502.45. Enchant	<i>Ninth Edition</i>
502.46. Convoke	<i>Ravnica: City of Guilds</i>
502.47. Dredge	<i>Ravnica: City of Guilds</i>
502.48. Transmute	<i>Ravnica: City of Guilds</i>

Where's radiance, you ask? Let's take a trip back to the Comp. Rules glossary.

Ability Word

An ability word appears in italics at the beginning of some abilities on cards. Ability words are similar to keywords in that they tie together cards that have similar functionality, but they have no special rules meaning and no individual entries in the Comprehensive Rules.

And then substance happened.

502.49. Substance	<i>Mirage</i> (for the Magic Online release)
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Read my Ask Wizards response from [August 23, 2007](#) if you want to learn more. I'm happier if I don't think about that one too much.

502.50. Bloodthirst	<i>Guildpact</i>
502.51. Haunt	<i>Guildpact</i>
502.52. Replicate	<i>Guildpact</i>
502.53. Forecast	<i>Dissension</i>
502.54. Graft	<i>Dissension</i>
502.55. Recover	<i>Coldsnap</i>
502.56. Ripple	<i>Coldsnap</i>
502.57. Flash	<i>Time Spiral</i>
502.58. Split Second	<i>Time Spiral</i>
502.59. Suspend	<i>Time Spiral</i>
502.60. Vanishing	<i>Planar Chaos</i>

The *Future Sight* set gave us a glimpse of the future—and the future is keyworded. This batch includes the last instances of a "new keyword for an old ability" that you'll be seeing for a while. Shroud moved into the spot vacated by scry when it got traded to the new rule 501, "Keyword Actions."

502.36. Shroud	<i>Future Sight</i>
502.61. Absorb	<i>Future Sight</i>
502.62. Aura Swap	<i>Future Sight</i>
502.63. Deathtouch	<i>Future Sight</i>
502.64. Delve	<i>Future Sight</i>
502.65. Fortify	<i>Future Sight</i>
502.66. Frenzy	<i>Future Sight</i>
502.67. Gravestorm	<i>Future Sight</i>
502.68. Lifelink	<i>Future Sight</i>
502.69. Poisonous	<i>Future Sight</i>
502.70. Reach	<i>Future Sight</i>
502.71. Transfigure	<i>Future Sight</i>
502.72. Champion	<i>Lorwyn</i>

502.73. Changeling	<i>Lorwyn</i>
502.74. Evoke	<i>Lorwyn</i>
502.75. Hideaway	<i>Lorwyn</i>

And that brings us up to the present day. You can also find the technical rules for keyword abilities by starting with the glossary entry in the Comp. Rules. Most of the time, though, reading the reminder text on new cards and printing out a copy of the [Keyword Cheat Sheet](#) from the [Magic rules page](#) will see you through.

* In the *Time Spiral Oracle* update, threshold became an ability word rather than a keyword. Its days in rule 502 are numbered.

October 30, 2007



Q: I would like to know why planeswalkers have a card frame that is very different from every other **Magic** cards. Red enchantments, instants, sorceries and creatures are all just as different from each other (different card type) as they are from planeswalkers, but they all share the same red frame, while the planeswalker has a distinct one. Why? Thanks.

–Mike, Bangkok

A: From **Jeremy Jarvis**, **Magic** art director:

Hi Mike (and everyone else who has written in with similar questions).

The short answer is that the new card treatment was necessary mechanically and simply because it is a new card type that interacts on the table in a new way.

The long answer is that we had problems that had to be solved:

1. Planeswalker cards want both more live art area AND more text space. Clearly this is not possible in the literal sense.
2. Elements that bear similarity to existing elements needed to be distanced visually for the sake of clarity. (for example, loyalty needed to be treated as its own thing rather than just another single # in a power / toughness box.)
3. They still needed to be color-affiliated, and work with our color-coding vocabulary. Example: we should hold onto our pinlines as a visual element.

Additional things that we wanted to solve:

1. NEW card type. These things needed to kick the door in when they showed up. Nice dramatic entrance needed here.
2. Texture coding. I'm a bit fan of how much we are able to communicate by a card, and its function just by the frame it appears in. One way we do this is with texture. Example: both lands and artifacts are colorless cards, but they are treated differently with texture, and rightly so. That brushed nickel card frame means more than simply colorless (if it were just colorless then **Ghostfire** could have been printed in a *Future Sight* timeshifted artifact frame. This, of course, would have sucked). I like the idea of texture visually denoting a specific card type. A color-codeable planeswalker texture.

People, we hit ALL of these points. Loyalty is related to P/T by its placement on the card, but clearly its own thing. The + and – shapes are related enough to the loyalty 'shield' to communicate connection and reinforce play function at the same time. We commissioned full art, and actually get to see more of it though semi-transparent text backgrounds that not only sacrifice no text space, but also reinforce the distinction of abilities with alternating transparency levels.

We managed to keep the pinlines. Color coding is clear. We have a new texture that communicates "planeswalker" and is for planeswalkers only. They make a statement on the table! These characters are larger than life. Too large, in fact, to be contained by the rigidity of the card frame, so they break it here and there, further distancing them from the normal rank-and-file creatures within **Magic**—distancing them even from the other notable personalities in **Magic** represented by legendary creatures.

The art rocks, the characters are punchy, and they visually play by their own rules, just as the cards themselves do.

That's how our new frames came to be.

JJ

October 29, 2007 – Magic Rules Corner



Q: My friend and I can't figure something out. Considering that the changeling ability grants all creature types to the card that has it, doesn't that mean that the card also counts, technically, as a Wall? And wouldn't this mean that all the changeling creatures can't attack as a result of this?

–Jarrod, OH, USA

A: From the **Magic** Rules Corner:

This is a question—say it with us now—that we've received a lot since *Lorwyn* came out. In fact, there's a whole sphere of related questions that have popped up that aren't actually questions about changeling, but questions about creature types that changeling has brought to the forefront. These two questions are basically asking the same thing as the first one, even though the questioners might not realize it:

October 29, 2007



If Conspiracy comes into play naming Shapeshifter as the creature type, will all your creatures have all

creature types?
—Michael, IA, USA

October 29, 2007

Since changeling gives a creature every creature type, I presume that would include the type of Flagbearer. And a Flagbearer has to be a target of a spell that could target it. So is this same ability true for changelings?
—Ryan, Klamath Falls, OR, USA

What all three of these questions, and many more like them, are really asking is this:

October 29, 2007

Does having a creature type bestow the mechanical traits associated with that creature type?

...and the answer, categorically, for every such question you can possibly think of, is *no*.

Walls can't attack because they have defender, not because they're Walls, and being a Wall doesn't give you defender (even though every "natural" Wall has defender). Being a Shapeshifter is different from having changeling (just ask Vesuvan Shapeshifter). It's not the Flagbearer creature type that forces your opponent to target your Standard Bearer, it's the line of text on the card that says so. (Note, however, that changelings *are* Flagbearers, and are thus on the target list if **Standard Bearer**, **Coalition Honor Guard**, or **Coalition Flag** is in play.)

Further: Changelings are Samurai, but they don't have bushido. They're Ninjas, but they don't have ninjutsu. Being Spiders doesn't let them block creatures with flying any more than being Kor lets them redirect damage. Oh, and they're also Bird Angel Dragon Faerie Bats, but that doesn't mean they can all fly. And so on...

All that said, the confusion is understandable, because this wasn't always the case. Once upon a time, certain creature types—Wall and the now defunct Legend—had rules associated with them. Walls couldn't attack (they are, after all, *Walls*), and two Legends with the same name couldn't be in play at the same time. The rules formerly covered by the Wall type are now handled by the defender keyword, and the "legend rule" is now handled by the legendary supertype. When these changes were made (with the release of *Champions of Kamigawa*), it meant that there were no longer any creature types with rules baggage, which in turn meant that some creature-type-changing cards could stop making silly exceptions (or doing silly things, like killing two creatures with the same name). Take a look at **Mistform Ultimus** in its original and *Time Spiral* "timeshifted" forms:



The original had to devote an entire line of text to counteracting the rules baggage of one of its creature types, but now that Wall is just another creature type, that isn't necessary (and, as a bonus, this change allowed the creation of creatures with all creature types that weren't legendary, such as, oh, say, all the *Lorwyn* changelings).

In these happy days, creature types serve exactly two purposes on a card: one is flavor, and the other is to serve as a marker for other cards to refer to.

The Magic Rules Corner is a weekly feature dedicated to answering your rules questions. For more help with Magic rules, check out the [rules page](#) and the [Rules Q&A Forum](#).

October 26, 2007

Q: I was playing a friendly game and tapped a forest to put green mana in the pool. Then I said I was going to play a **Meekstone** and held the card up to show my opponent before placing it on the table. He took the card from my hand and tore it into pieces. He argues I don't own a **Meekstone** anymore so I can't use the mana in

my mana pool and so I take 1 point of mana burn. I argue that when I declared I played the **Meekstone** even though it didn't touch the table it was then considered "in play." Does the effect of the **Meekstone** come into play?

—Steve, Kirkland, WA, USA

A: From Michael "elf" Feuall, **Magic Online** developer:

Thanks for asking, there are however only two cards that officially work when torn up: **Chaos Confetti** and **Blacker Lotus**. Given your opponent's actions I think it would only be fair for you to treat your **Meekstone** as if it was either of those cards. So, either add four mana in your pool of the color of your choice or, more fun, sprinkle the ripped up pieces across the board and destroy anything they touch.

-elf

October 25, 2007



Q: I noticed in [a recent Magic Arcana](#) that you quoted Dune ("Usul has called a big one") without actually referencing where it came from. I love bizarre references and nerdy inside jokes, but tell me this: what do your editors think of these kinds of things? What is the point of publishing material that only a subset of your audience will even understand?

—Ender, Cedarville, OH

A: From **Kelly Digges**, editor of **magicthegathering.com**:

If a tree falls in the forest, and no one is around to hear it, and it hits a mime, does anyone care?

Er, what I mean is, that's a valid question, and it comes up all the time in comedy circles. Jokes that very few people will get are sometimes called "one-percenters." (Outlaw motorcycle gangs are sometimes also called "one-percenters," but that's not really relevant to this discussion.)

Personally, I'm completely in favor of dropping in one-percenters at every opportunity, largely because of what a friend of mine calls the Inverse Population Law of Humor. (She calls it a law, but it's really more of a guideline.) This states, broadly, that as the number of people who will find something funny gets smaller, the degree to which they'll find it funny gets larger. There are a few reasons for that, I think:

- You get to feel smart because you got it.
- You get to feel special because it feels aimed at you.
- You're not expecting it. Humor relies in part on the element of surprise ("Our chief weapon is surprise, surprise and fear...."), and the more obscure a joke is, the less likely you are to hear anyone make it, and thus the more it surprises you when someone does.

The best one-percenters are, you might say, bigger on the inside than they are on the outside, like the TARDIS—they pack a lot of comedy into a small space for those who get the joke. The best part is that if they're short, they're funny if you do get them and almost invisible if you don't; they have their own Somebody Else's Problem field.

For instance, there's a *Simpsons* episode that refers to two fictional spin-off TV programs: *Son of Sanford and Son* and *After Mannix*. To get *Son of Sanford and Son*, all you really need to know is that there was an old sitcom called *Sanford and Son*, and it helps to be familiar with the cheesy old "Son of" naming convention for movie sequels, which gave us such gems as *Son of Frankenstein* and *Son of Godzilla*. This is probably worth a chuckle even if you don't know *Sanford and Son*.

But *After Mannix*? As far as I can tell, it's a nod to the long-running detective show *Mannix*... and to Dougal Dixon's groundbreaking *speculative zoology* book *After Man*, a reference guide to fictional animals of the future, which I happen to have on my shelf. Now, you can get that joke if you just know *Mannix*... but it only has its full impact if you're also a speculative zoology nut like I am. How many people get both sides of a joke like that? Not many. And how did it make me feel to be one of the few? So awesome!

Of course, there is such a thing as *too* obscure a reference. But the more unobtrusive it is, the more obscure it can be. If a single person in the audience laughs, it might be worth it in the end.

We have several writers here on the site who delight in obscure references. If you think moments like the nod to *Dune* in that *Arcana* are unusual, perhaps it's because the rest have slid right past you—like General Chang, invisible yet eloquent—to hit their intended targets.

October 24, 2007



Q: Is the *Lorwyn* card **Imperious Perfect** actually supposed to be Imperious Prefect?

—Joe, Bremerton, WA, USA

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

Nope, "Perfect" is perfectly right. Elf society on Lorwyn is tiered according to physical beauty—the more attractive you are, the higher you rank. Elves of the lower ranks are called "faultless," "immaculate," or "exquisite," while the highest rank is called "perfect." Perfects are the equivalent of elvish kings or queens on Lorwyn, and rule other, lesser elves with an air of imperious grace.

October 23, 2007



Q: **Mosswort Bridge**—what's it supposed to be? I mean, the other hideaway lands obviously resemble creatures, but when I look at the bridge, I just see a bridge. Ending in a tree. Where's the animal?

—Nefrubyr, **magicthegathering.com** forums

A: From **Jeremy Jarvis, Magic** art director:

What the Hell Was Jarvis Thinking?! #4: Mosswort Bridge

Can't see the forest for the trees, eh? It's a bit subtle for sure. So long as the art reads "across the table" as a distinctive shape, I'm all for twisting people's arms into some close inspection of the illustration for a belated pay-off.

In fact, here's the sketch for the piece:



My original concept was that rather than a pair of glowing eyes or some such indication being visible amidst the ivy under the bridge, the creature indication would be the shadow stretched across the ground, cast from the tree blocking the end of the bridge. It's a fun idea, and creative was willing to go along with it, but in the end I had to call shenanigans on myself. There's just no way anyone was going to get that, especially at card size, no matter how diligently they pored over the art.

I still wanted to keep a less literal solution than showing the tr... the whatever sort of mythical thing is associated with a bridge... peeking out from under it. I kept the blocked-bridge-that-is-avoided-by-the-natives feel, but now, look closely at that "tree" reaching up at the end of the bridge:



We're seeing just a part of something that is sleeping or immobilized for the time being—perhaps biding its time, looking forward to the day when it can unearth itself, shake off the moss, crack its stiff knuckles and tromp about the land once again.

October 22, 2007



Q: I had a question for you about cards that have a mandatory effect when they come into play, like [Cloudchaser Eagle](#) and its ilk. The fact that it doesn't say "you may" looks like you definitely have to destroy one if you can. If you can't, though, can you still play the Eagle? I think you can, but I've had friends argue otherwise.

—Jeff, Bethlehem, PA, USA

A: From the **Magic** Rules Corner:

[Cloudchaser Eagle](#)—and friends like [Cloudchaser Kestrel](#), [Nekrataal](#), and [Viridian Shaman](#)—operate in a strange little pocket of the rules. They have the word "target" on them, and long experience has (we hope) hammered home the fact that you can't play a spell without any legal targets. But you're absolutely right—[Cloudchaser Eagle](#)'s ability is mandatory (most comes-into-play abilities are), and yet it can be played legally when there are no enchantments in play. Let's take a look at why.

Rule 409, Playing Spells and Activated Abilities, lays out the guidelines for—brace yourself—playing spells and activated abilities. [Cloudchaser Eagle](#)'s comes-into-play ability is a triggered ability (you can tell because it says "When," "Whenever," or "At"), but rule 410.4 specifies that a player putting a triggered ability on the stack makes all the same choices he or she would make when playing an activated ability. Choices like what, you may ask? Why, choices like choosing a target. Rule 409.1c reads, in part:

If the spell or ability requires any targets, the player first announces how many targets he or she will choose (if the spell or ability has a variable number of targets), then announces the targets themselves. A player can't play a spell or ability unless he or she chooses the required number of legal targets.

The crucial distinction here is that [Cloudchaser Eagle](#), when you play it as a spell, doesn't have any targets. It follows the usual rules for playing a creature spell, and that generally means it can be played during your main phase when the stack is empty with no other restrictions. When you play [Cloudchaser Eagle](#), if it isn't countered, it resolves and comes into play (creature spells, like artifact, enchantment, and planeswalker spells, come into play when they resolve).

[Cloudchaser Eagle](#)'s triggered ability, on the other hand, does follow rule 409.1c. Its trigger condition has been met, so its ability triggers, and that means you need to make any and all choices you would make when playing a spell. The only choice in this case is what to target—and again, the ability is mandatory—so when [Cloudchaser Eagle](#) comes into play, you must choose an enchantment to be targeted. If the only enchantments in play are under your control, you'll still have to destroy one of them.

But what if there aren't any enchantments in play at all? Because rule 409.1c doesn't precisely apply (you don't have any choice about trying to put [Cloudchaser Eagle](#)'s triggered ability on the stack), rule 410.4 steps in:

If no legal choice can be made (or if a rule or a continuous effect otherwise makes the ability illegal), the ability is simply removed from the stack.

So **Cloudchaser Eagle** comes into play on an enchantmentless board, its ability is put on the stack, and then its ability is taken right back off the stack because it doesn't have any legal targets. Bear in mind that this rule also applies if there is an enchantment in play but it isn't a legal target (because it has protection from white, perhaps).

The same process applies to any permanent with a comes-into-play trigger that requires a target.

*The **Magic Rules Corner** is a weekly feature dedicated to answering your rules questions. For more help with **Magic** rules, check out the [rules page](#) and the [Rules Q&A Forum](#).*

October 19, 2007



Q: What is the proper way to discard a card when I am required to discard one card at random?

–Frodo B., Guatemala

A: From **Matt Place, Magic R&D:**

The most popular way to “randomly” discard cards is to let your opponent pick them from your hand (without letting that player see anything but the backs of the cards).

Another way, preferred in tournaments, is to use a die. To pick a random card from a seven-card hand, set the hand on the table in a stack and roll a 10-sided die. If a 1 is rolled, discard the top card; if a 4 is rolled, discard the fourth card from the top. If an 8, 9 or 10 is rolled you re-roll.

Here in R&D we want our result to be as close to “truly random” as we can get, so we use a wind tunnel. We attach a thread to the end of the tunnel and take a measurement of the turbulence on the end of the thread. We then look at the twentieth decimal place of that result and use it to pick which card to discard, simple as that!

October 18, 2007



Q: I was wondering why both **Goldmeadow Stalwart** and **Flamekin Bladewhirl** were printed. It seems strange that there would be a 2/2 for 1 mana and a weaker 2/1 for 1 mana with the same drawback and no other abilities.

–Jeff, San Francisco, CA, USA

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

Typo.

Thanks for asking,

Mike Turian

Alright, alright... it wasn't a typo at all. The "reveal" cycle of creatures had the red creature being a 1/1 double striker for . Unfortunately, playtesting showed that this was too powerful and we would need to find a different card.

We wanted to offer the Elemental tribe an aggressive alternative to the more expensive evoke creatures and at the same time a cheap creature to champion. We bounced around a few ideas but decided that having a 2/1 to finish the cycle was the way to go.

I like how it points out that white is the go-to color for efficient weenies while still offering a good alternative if you are looking for a red beatdown creature.

Thanks for asking,

Mike

October 17, 2007



Q: Why did you decide to do two blocks of two sets, rather than one block of four sets? Did the freedom of being able to present different themes between the smaller sets appeal to designer / creative instincts? Or was it because having one block of four sets feels too hard to stretch a theme over?

–E

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

There are a number of reasons we tried doing two two-set blocks (*Lorwyn* and *Shadowmoor*) versus one four-set block but let me give what I consider to be the most important one: I believe it is much easier to do two two-set blocks than a single four-set block that will engage the audience for all four sets. Normally in blocks we spend a lot of energy to make the third set matter. This isn't to say that we can't ever create a four-set block that can work, but I wanted to give us more time to figure it out before we tried it.

October 16, 2007



Q: If boggart society requires its members to share experiences and sensations with everyone, and selfishness is the only real transgression, why are boggarts primarily black-aligned?

–Wes, Berea, KY, USA

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

Boggarts are innately covetous, selfish, and hedonistic, but some begrudging allowances have to be made so they don't completely destroy themselves and each other. The sharing requirement is so explicit precisely

because no boggart would share anything if given a choice, and in fact many boggarts have risked everything to have something to themselves, something about which no one else knows. Some are caught and ostracized; many aren't.

The larger issue is that most black-aligned beings aren't so completely selfish that they must make every decision with only their own interests in mind (especially on Lorwyn). Even someone extremely selfish will make decisions that seem to consider the needs and desires of others, often so the selfish one can serve their own interests further in the long term. In the case of boggarts, begrudgingly sharing one thing means getting to have lots of other things later.

October 15, 2007 – Magic Rules Corner



Q: Spells have controllers while they're on the stack, right? And in *Lorwyn*, some spells have creature types. So, do effects that count 'the number of [creature type]s you control' count spells on the stack? Does *Lys Alana Scarblade* count a resolving *Eyebright's Ending* when it's determining just exactly how much -X/-X is?
 –Andrew

A: From the **Magic Rules Corner**:

The tribal type raises many questions, and we've seen this one more than most. With Elves and Goblins (and, thanks to changeling, Beasts and Slivers and Jellyfish) that aren't creatures, what does it mean to control an Elf?

There are two separate issues here: what it means to control something, and what it means when a creature type is listed on its own. (And if that seems pedantic, just remember—here at the **Magic Rules Corner**, being pedantic is pretty much our job.)

You're correct that spells have controllers when they're on the stack. *Izzet Guildmage*, for instance, copies "target [instant / sorcery] spell you control." (Why does it say "spell"? We'll get to that in a moment.) So there's no question that you control *Eyebright's Ending* while it's on the stack... but the answer to your question is no. *Lys Alana Scarblade* only counts Elves in play.

Why? Read on.

See, the word "Elf"—or any creature type—on its own doesn't actually mean any card with that subtype. Let's check out rule 200.9 in the [Comprehensive Rules](#), shall we?

200.9. If a spell or ability uses a description of an object that includes a card type or subtype, but doesn't include the word "card," "spell," or "source," it means a permanent of that card type or subtype in play.

So the word "Elf" on its own means a permanent with the Elf subtype, just like "creature" means a creature in play. (That rule might seem a little obtuse, but it's there to prevent us from having to say "creature permanent" on a lot of cards; it's a sensible default to set, since most cards refer to things that are in play.)

That means that Elf spells on the stack—like Elf cards in your hand, graveyard, and library—are *not* counted by effects like *Lys Alana Scarblade*'s. However, you can discard any card with the subtype Elf to pay the cost of the *Scarblade*'s ability.

This also means that *Rootgrapple* isn't ever "a Treefolk" (and thus won't let you draw a card unless you control a Treefolk permanent such as *Dauntless Dourbark* or *Lignify*), and playing *Tarfire* will not let you put a +1/+1 counter on your *Knucklebone Witch* (and wouldn't even if *Knucklebone Witch* didn't say "in play," because "Goblin" means "Goblin permanent," which *Tarfire* isn't).

Here's a handy chart explaining the different uses of "Elf" you may encounter on cards.

If a card says...	It means...	That's...	Which, for instance...
Elf	Any noninstant, nonsorcery Elf (an Elf permanent)	In play	Counts for X in <i>Lys Alana Scarblade</i> 's ability or is championed by <i>Wren's Run Packmaster</i>
Elf spell	Any nonland Elf	On the stack	Triggers <i>Lys Alana Huntmaster</i> 's ability
Elf card	Any card with the subtype Elf	Not in play or on the stack	Is discarded to pay for <i>Lys Alana Scarblade</i> 's ability or searched for by <i>Elvish Harbinger</i>
Elf creature	A creature with the subtype Elf	In play	Gets +1/+1 if <i>Imperious Perfect</i> or <i>Elvish Champion</i> is in play
Elf permanent card	An Elf card that could be in play	Not in play or on the stack	Is put into play with <i>Skyshroud Poacher</i> , as of the Future Sight Oracle update *
Elf source	Anything with the subtype Elf that's the source of damage or of an effect	Anywhere	Can't deal damage to or target (or be the source of an ability that damages or targets) <i>Nath's Buffoon</i> because of its protection from Elves

* *Skyshroud Poacher* searched for an Elf card as printed, but was updated to read "Elf permanent card" to accommodate tribal.

Of course, you can substitute any creature type for "Elf" in the above table. Even Goat.

And there you have it!

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October 12, 2007



Q: **Mistform Ultimus** is now obsolete, and I couldn't be happier; the changeling cards in *Lorwyn* are a lot cooler than Misty ever was. My question, however, is this: What went into the decision to make Misty a chump? Did you finally get tired of having an eternal footnote?

—Anthony, Washington, D.C., USA

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

I'm sure Mark Rosewater will cover this in his inevitable Changeling Week column, but I'll sum it up. When we decided we needed some number of creatures that had multiple relevant types, we tried our best to dance around **Mistform Ultimus**, coming up with a bunch of solutions that didn't read well, didn't play well, or didn't work within the rules.

Eventually we just decided to go the **Ultimus** route, a fine choice seeing that the **Ultimus** is a well-liked card. We have to reuse the ideas people like; if we didn't, we'd never have made a second rare **Dragon** to follow up **Shivan**. Did other **Dragons** lessen the coolness of **Shivan**? Sure, a little, but they upped the coolness of **Magic** as a whole by way, way more.

As to your comment about footnotes, it's probably even worse now. Instead of one footnote, we have twenty (fourteen creatures and six instants).

October 11, 2007



Q: I saw that **Goatnapper** steals a goat but there are no goat cards in *Standard* or in *Lorwyn*. Are there going to be some cards that are goat type?

—Brian, Renton, Washington, USA

A: From **Jake Theis**, Creative Director for **Magic: the Gathering**:

Hey Brian,

There are actually 13 different "goats" in *Lorwyn*. The changeling ability grants all creature types to a creature, and as it turns out, Goat is one of those types. Those that went to the Prerelease found out that being changeling is a huge advantage when your opponent is trying to hit you with **Eyeblight's Ending** or when you have an **Imperious Perfect** in play. It also can be a drag when those kleptomaniacal boggarts are looking for a fresh source of wool.

If you grow weary from stealing your opponent's horned, cloven-hoofed changelings (and **Mistform Ultimus**), there are also two printed goats to grab in **Magic**. Can you name the functionally identical ungulates? [Click here!](#)



And, courtesy of the [recent creature type update](#), the Goat tribe boasts four more genuine members: Battering Craghorn, Crested Craghorn, Colos Yearling, and Wild Colos.

October 10, 2007



Q: Was there a specific reason to make "this land comes into play tapped" part of the hideaway ability? Couldn't Hideaway have done without it, with the lands in question additionally having the restriction?

—Peter, Leiden, the Netherlands

A: From Del Laugel, **Magic** editor:

The reason is the length of the text, plain and simple. The ideal template for the hideaway lands was about two lines too long to print. Moving the "comes into play tapped" ability into the hideaway reminder text saved a line on the cards.

In a similar compromise, the last ability of this cycle of lands checks whether the condition is true as the ability resolves. The preferred template would have restricted when the ability could be played (for example, "[cost]: [effect] Play this ability only if [condition]."). That saved the other line, but it also made **Mosswort Bridge** and **Howltooth Hollow** easier to disrupt.

Even with those changes, the English rules text on the printed hideaway cards is as tiny as it's allowed to be. That minimum font size is enforced so that the German rules text will be legible without a magnifying glass.



October 9, 2007



Q: If you receive hundreds of questions each day, why do you only answer one each day?

–Filipe, Portugal

A: From **Kelly Digges**, Editor of magicthegathering.com:

While we don't usually receive quite that many questions in a day, we certainly do get more than one, so your question stands. The simplest answer: there are a lot more of you than there are of us, and it's a lot easier for you to ask a question than it is for us to answer it.

Every Ask Wizards question we answer first has to be assigned to the appropriate Wizard, which takes a nonzero amount of time (especially if it's not immediately clear who's best equipped to answer it). Then there's usually some amount of research, discussion, and consulting of notes (and sometimes much crazier things like counting all the bugs on Xantid Swarm, as [Doug Beyer did on May 25](#)). After that, they still have to actually write the thing. The process all told can easily take an hour for a good, involved question and answer—and this from people whose actual job descriptions keep them busy enough working on design, development, editing, rules, and creative elements for the actual cards. And after that, it still has to be routed back through me for an editing pass, and then on to Monty Ashley, who posts it to the site (which, again, takes a nonzero amount of time).

The end result of all this is that there's some arm-twisting and some time-crunching involved in making Ask Wizards happen on a daily basis as things stand. Getting more questions through the pipe isn't worth the time and effort it would take to do so. Let me be clear, though, that Ask Wizards as it stands is worth the time and effort. Keep the questions coming!

If you're looking for more answers, it's possible your questions have been addressed before. Try our [searchable Ask Wizards archive](#), or search the whole site using the bar at the very top of the page. Between Ask Wizards, [Making Magic](#), [Taste the Magic](#), [Latest Developments](#), and [Magic Arcana](#), there are lots of tidbits to check out.

October 8, 2007 – Magic Rules Corner



Q: If I play **Phthisis** to target my opponent's **Darksteel Colossus**, what happens? **A:** My opponent loses 22 life.

B: I wasted my time; the spell does nothing because the Colossus is indestructible. **C:** I can't target the Colossus because it can't be destroyed. –Robert, Ft. Walton, FL, USA

A: From the **Magic** Rules Corner:

Okay, first off, let's take a look at both of these cards:



The first thing to note is that **Phthisis** says "target creature," with no targeting restrictions. When targeting choices are restricted, the card will say so (the way that **Death Rattle** says "nongreen creature" and **Terror** says "nonartifact, nonblack creature"). So you can definitely target the **Darksteel Colossus** with **Phthisis**, which eliminates your Option C. Next question—will that actually do anything?

So you target **Darksteel Colossus** with **Phthisis**. Assuming nothing else happens to counter the spell, **Phthisis** resolves.

When a spell resolves, you perform all of the actions listed on it in order. If a spell tries to do something that's impossible, it does only as much as is possible. For instance, if you played **Mind Rot** targeting a player with only one card in hand, he or she would discard that card, and the second discard would be ignored. If you played **Mind Rot** targeting a player with no cards in hand, the spell would resolve, but nothing would happen.

When you try to perform the first part of **Phthisis**'s effect—destroy target creature—nothing will happen, because the Colossus can't be destroyed. But the second part of **Phthisis** doesn't say that the creature actually has to be destroyed. The spell is still resolving, and it will still try to do as much as it can—and that means, in this case, 22 life down the drain.

Happy Colossus hunting!

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October 5, 2007



Q: How do you decide whether an ability will have a 'may' on it (i.e. may draw a card, may gain life, may destroy something) versus not giving the choice?
--Avi, Elgin, Illinois

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

That's a question I've seen before, but not on **magicthegathering.com**. It was the topic for a Tuesday **Magic** Meeting last year. Here's the handout I took to that meeting:

When are abilities optional? That is, when do we use "you may"?

April 12, 2005

Older cards (say, pre-2001) maintain their printed functionality.

Activated abilities are generally mandatory. We figure that you wouldn't have played the ability if you didn't want the effect. However, if the ability depends on cards in a hidden zone (usually your hand), it's optional so that a judge doesn't need to verify that you can't do the effect.

{T}: You may put a creature card with converted mana cost equal to the number of charge counters on **AEther Vial** from your hand into play.

You aren't required to find cards when you "search" (unless you're searching for just some number of cards) so most search abilities don't have to use "you may." They're optional either way. However, 31 cards in Oracle, including many in recent sets, do have optional search

abilities. For some reason, this template just makes sense to players with the "you may" there to reinforce the rules.

When **Goblin Matron** comes into play, you may search your library for a Goblin card, reveal that card and put it into your hand. If you do, shuffle your library.

Triggered abilities that act as drawbacks are mandatory, for obvious reasons.

When **Balduvian Horde** comes into play, sacrifice it unless you discard a card at random.

Triggered abilities that allow you to draw cards are always optional because forgetting to draw a card carries more severe penalties than forgetting other effects. This template change kicked in around *Seventh Edition*. (We're just stuck with older cards like **Thieving Magpie**.)

[snipped an excerpt from the Floor Rules]

Triggered abilities that act like one-time activated abilities are optional.

Whenever **Dromar, the Banisher** deals combat damage to a player, you may pay {020U}. If you do, choose a color. Return all creatures of that color to their owners' hands.

Other triggered abilities are usually optional, for several reasons:

(1) To avoid backing up during games. The poster child for this is Soul Warden, which is mandatory, in a multiplayer game. Backing up isn't fun. Your opponent has been making decisions based on an inaccurate picture of the game state. If you forget about a beneficial effect, then you alone should suffer.

Whenever a player plays a blue spell, you may gain 1 life.

Whenever you play a Spirit or Arcane spell, you may put a ki counter on **Blademane Baku**.

(2) To avoid screwing yourself (without hurting the card in multiplayer, junking up the text, etc.).

When a creature with converted mana cost 6 or more comes into play, you may return **Dragon Breath** from your graveyard to play enchanting that creature.

Imprint -- When **Duplicant** comes into play, you may remove target nontoken creature from the game.

(3) To give players more options. If there's some possible scenario where choosing not to use the ability is the correct play, why not let players do that? (This is the same reason why we prefer "target player" over "target opponent" or "you.")

(4) To save people who don't know the rules from thinking that they can't play **Bladewing the Risen** without a Dragon in the graveyard. This isn't a high priority for the templating team, but it's a nice added bonus. :)

When **Bladewing the Risen** comes into play, you may return target Dragon card from your graveyard to play.

The part about 'If you forget about a beneficial effect, then you alone should suffer' got a lot of support during the meeting, especially from the normally mild-mannered Mike Turian. Having to remind your opponents to kill you is one of the most miserable, unfun experiences you can have in a **Magic** game. And not reminding opponents about mandatory effects is cheating. The cards should prevent players from being in those situations.

Only one policy change did come out of the meeting: Comes-into-play effects are generally mandatory now. Players are unlikely to forget to draw cards from **Flight of Fancy**, for example, because they had to read the spell before playing it anyway.

That covers the basic policy, but no explanation of **Magic** templating is going to be completely consistent with the printed cards.

(This question and answer originally ran on January 4, 2006.)

October 4, 2007



Q: Why were there three weeks of *Lorwyn* previews and not the typical two?

—Andrew, Downers Grove, IL, USA

A: From **Kelly Digges**, editor of magicthegathering.com:

Hi Andrew! Although you're correct that most sets have two weeks of previews, that's only the case for small sets (which, of course, most sets are). Large sets—typically released each fall—have three weeks of previews as a rule, not counting extra goodies like *Lorwyn's* [Planeswalker Minisite](#) or the [special preview](#) for *Ravnica* two years ago (wow, has it really been that long?). *Future Sight* and *Planar Chaos*, the last two small sets, had two weeks of previews each, but *Time Spiral* had three. Similarly, the upcoming *Morningtide* set will have two

weeks of previews after our winter break, and *Shadowmoor*, which was announced in [today's Arcana](#), will have

Wait, it looks like I have *three* weeks of previews scheduled for next April. That's funny... Maybe Mark Rosewater [knows something about it](#)...

October 3, 2007



Q: How does planeswalker loyalty fit into the color pie? So far it looks like **red** and **black** are more loyal than **green**. Why is that? Why does the black planeswalker have high loyalty at all? It seems at odds with the 'me first' attitude of black.

—Ira, Renton, WA, USA

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

As an abstract concept, loyalty exists in different ways across all the colors. Which color helps determine the source of the loyalty—whether it's a result of a friendship, a debt, a common cause, or an alliance of convenience, for example. In the same way that first strike can be represented by a creature outmaneuvering or outreaching an enemy in a variety of ways, loyalty can stand in for whatever relationship with the planeswalker you're imagining when you play.

October 2, 2007



Q: As a big fan of black and of tribal I have to know why Zombies were not chosen as a tribe for *Lorwyn* and if there was any thought given to putting them in.

—Mike, New Castle, PA, USA

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

Hi Mike. Once we had established a list of the creature types we thought might be cool to include in *Lorwyn*, it became clear pretty quickly that *Lorwyn* wanted to be "its own place." Words like "folklore" and "storybook" started cropping up in *Lorwyn* conversation from very early on. The general feeling of the world became an important criterion in deciding which types on the list we would include and which we would leave out. Zombies certainly have a significant history, but when the picture of the world started to come into focus in our minds, rotting undead creatures just felt wrong, out of place in the idyllic world of *Lorwyn*. As you see more of the set and can get a better idea about *Lorwyn*'s identity, I think you'll agree.

October 1, 2007 – Magic Rules Corner



Q: I'm sure you've already gotten 20 of these since Rosewater previewed **Mirror Entity**, but how many creature types are there, anyway? With a **Coat of Arms**, even if you only had two copies of **Mirror Entity**, what would they gain?

—Eric, Renton, WA, USA

A: From the [magicthegathering.com](#) Rules Corner:

This is a question we've gotten "a few times" since the changeling keyword—which grants the creature it's on every creature type in all zones—was [previewed a week ago](#).

To answer your first question, as of the [Grand Creature Type Update](#), there are 216 creature types in **Magic**... but unfortunately, that's probably not going to yield the answer to your second question that you were hoping for.

Let's look at **Coat of Arms** again:



Each creature gets +1/+1 for *each other creature* in play that shares a creature type with it—*not* for each creature type they share. So in your example, if the two copies of **Mirror Entity** are the only creatures in play (and their activated ability hasn't been played), each of them is a 2/2.

This can get a little confusing to figure out when there are lots of creatures with multiple types in play. Let's say you have four creatures: one **Youthful Knight** (a Human Knight), one **Loyal Sentry** (a Human Soldier), one **Skyhunter Patrol** (a Cat Knight), and one **Mirror Entity** (a Shapeshifter with changeling, and therefore with all creature types). You also control **Coat of Arms**, and (lucky you) your opponent controls no creatures. How much of a power/toughness boost does each of these creatures get?

The trick is to look at each creature separately and ask how many of the other creatures in play share a creature type with it. **Youthful Knight** is a Human Knight, so it has a fellow Human in **Loyal Sentry**, a fellow Knight in **Skyhunter Patrol**, and a fellow Human Knight in **Mirror Entity**, for a total of +3/+3, making it 5/4. **Loyal Sentry** sees a fellow Human in **Youthful Knight** and a fellow Human Soldier in **Mirror Entity**, but it doesn't share a creature type with **Skyhunter Patrol**. It gets +2/+2, making it 3/3. **Skyhunter Patrol** is in a similar situation, sharing creature types with **Youthful Knight** and **Mirror Entity** but not **Loyal Sentry**, for +2/+2. **Mirror Entity**, of course, gets +3/+3, sharing a creature type with every creature in play that has a creature type. And if you activated **Mirror Entity's** activated ability, all of your creatures will get +3/+3.

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