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Ask Wizards - January, 2008

Ask Wizards
Tuesday, January 1, 2008

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January 31, 2008

Q: Why do Lorwyn's elves have horns?
—David, Lynchburg, VA, USA

A: From **Brady Dommermuth**, **Magic** creative director:

As part of Lorwyn's "storybook" identity, David, we wanted the elves to personify the beauty and majesty of nature. We thought that by incorporating some kind of animalistic elements into the elves' morphology—preferably one that symbolizes dominion over the forest, like the stag often does—we would reinforce their connection to nature and natural systems as well as visually distinguishing them both from other Lorwyn races and from other planes' elves. My famously bad memory can't recall how the horns and "cleft foot" first appeared on the elves. I think it was the idea of Steve Prescott, one of Lorwyn's concept-illustration superstars, but it might have been a suggestion from then-art-director Jeremy Cranford that got the ball rolling. From the early horned-elf concepts, we pulled back slightly from satyr territory before finding a look that we felt communicated that the elves were the paragons of the natural kingdom.

January 30, 2008

Q: Was there ever any talk about making *Morningtide* an all-creature set, or doing a set with all creatures and tribal cards in the spirit of Legions?
—Craig, Kalamazoo, MI, USA

A: From **Alexis Janson**, *Morningtide* development team:

Funny you should ask that, Craig. I started working in R&D just as *Morningtide* was getting underway, and once I was up to speed, I asked that very question. A number of problems were quickly pointed out with making every card have a creature type.

For starters, requiring every card to have a creature type makes creative's job a lot harder—you simply have less possible concepts when naming cards and concepting art. This also means less overall variety in card concepts. Some cards demand a clean concept, free of any creature-type baggage—simple, elegant spells such as **Negate** and **Mind Spring**. Cards such as these are also prime for reprinting in future sets, and making them tribal severely restricts this.

There are also direct game play concerns—for example, development had already decided that lands with creature types were too powerful, but we knew we wanted to put lands in *Morningtide*.

Although all of these problems are addressable, R&D was excited with what the set was doing already. We felt that forcing creature types onto every card would damage the set more than it could hope to gain from an "all cards have a creature type" gimmick. It certainly doesn't roll off the tongue nearly as well as "all creature set"!

January 29, 2008

Q: If I copy a foil card with a nonfoil card is it considered premium by a Super Secret Tech?
—Przemysław, Gniezno, Poland

A: From **Mark Rosewater**, **Magic** head developer and *Un-Rules* Manager:

Przemysław,

Yes, it is. Why? Because the characteristics that matter in the *Un*-world (such as rarity, artist, border color, collector number, flavor text, contents of art, and premium-ness) are all added to the list of characteristics that the game cares about. Black-bordered **Magic** doesn't care about these things because there are no cards that make it care. Since these cards do exist in silver-bordered **Magic**, then we do care. My question for you is what is this Super Secret Tech card you refer to?

January 28, 2008 – Magic Rules Corner

Q: As a frequent player of **Magic**, especially **Magic Online**, I see the tricks that involve end-of-turn activations very often. My question is, why do the manlands reprinted in *Tenth Edition* (**Faerie Conclave**, **Treetop Village**...) fail to stick around to the next turn if they are activated at the end of turn? Is this a special rule or simply an MTGO glitch?
—Alvaro, Davie, Florida, USA



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

First off, for those who aren't aware of the "tricks" Alvaro is talking about, let's take a look at the difference between "at end of turn" and "until end of turn."



The end phase, the last phase of the turn, consists of two steps: the end of turn step, and the cleanup step. The cleanup step is when most of the things associated with the end of the turn usually happen—damage wears off, the active player discards down to his or her maximum hand size, and "until end of turn" effects end. Before any of that can happen, however, you have to get through the end of turn step.

"At end of turn" represents a delayed triggered ability that triggers at the beginning of the end of turn step. (We say "at end of turn" because "at the beginning of the end of turn step" is a mouthful.) Triggered abilities can always be responded to (unless they're mana abilities—see [the Rules Corner from December 1 of last year](#)), and the end of turn step exists so that there's a time when these abilities can trigger, be responded to, resolve, generate additional triggered abilities, put damage on creatures, etc. This, however, leads to the "loophole."

When the end of turn step begins, all "at end of turn" abilities trigger. Before they can resolve—and, after they can resolve, before the step can end—all players have the chance to play spells and abilities. So what happens if someone chooses to play a spell or ability—say, *Incandescent Soulstoke's*—that generates another "at end of turn" trigger?

The answer, weirdly, is that the ability won't trigger until the end of the *next* turn. This means that you can put a creature into play with *Incandescent Soulstoke* during your opponent's end of turn step, untap with that creature still in play, put another creature into play with the Soulstoke, and attack with both. At the end of your turn, you'll sacrifice both of them.

Contrast this with *Amoeboid Changeling's* ability, which doesn't generate a delayed trigger and always wears off during the cleanup step. Despite the similarity of the templates, "at end of turn" and "until end of turn" represent very different conditions that require different treatment by the rules.

Now let's look at a few of the *Tenth Edition* "manlands" Alvaro is talking about:



Because they become creatures "until end of turn," there is no "loophole," and no way to ever get them to be creatures past the end of the turn in which you activate the ability.

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](#).

January 25, 2008



Q: I've been wondering for a while how the links to Gatherer (the card names you can click on) in the articles work. Does someone create each card link manually or is there some program that recognises the names and creates the links automatically? I ask because every now and then I enjoy seeing a random link in the middle of an unrelated phrase, like Dwarven BERSERKER.

Cheers!

–Luke, NSW, Australia

A: From **Monty Ashley**, Web Site Manager:

Luke,

The short answer is that it's done by magical elves. The longer answer is that I have a complicated system of macros that do my work for me while I sip nonalcoholic beverages. I'm glad that people find enjoyment in the occasional wrongly autocarded word. It makes me feel like I'm bringing people happiness.

In case you're interested in the details of the macro (and for the life of me, I can't imagine why you would be), the list of cards that gets links is "everything in Extended, plus a few popular old cards like **Nevinyrral's Disk**, minus cards that caused too many problems, like "Life" and "Dredge". Oh, and "Morningtide", which seems to have gotten mentioned a lot lately." Ideally, only card names that are correctly spelled and capitalized will turn into links, which cuts down on the number of times someone talks about a generic goblin king but gets a link to the **official one**. Then there's a pass where names like "Lin Sivvi" get links to the appropriate cardname, because writers hardly ever remember the "Defiant Hero" part of her name.

There are still a few bugs in the system, like when a writer mentions a pre-Extended card that contains the name of an Extended card within it, or when a sentence starts with a word that's also a card name so it gets capitalized (this is why I had to take **Forget** off the list, so now it causes a problem when it's supposed to be linked and I miss it). But I assure you the magical elves are working as hard as they can.

January 24, 2008



Q: What was the thought behind giving **Murmuring Bosk** the type forest while not giving the other Lorwyn Block dual-lands the same respective types? Does this have anything to do with the Onslaught Sac-Lands?

–James, Greenville, TX, USA

A: From **Devin Low**, **Magic** head developer:

One of the big mechanical themes of Treefolk in *Lorwyn* is that they have a unique symbiosis with **Forests**. To the Treefolk, sometimes **Forests** and Treefolk are the same thing. **Dauntless Dourbark** counts your Treefolk and your **Forests**. **Treefolk Harbinger** can fetch either Treefolk or **Forests**. **Timber Protector** makes both your Treefolk and your **Forests** indestructible. **Battlewand Oak** pumps up from Treefolk and from **Forests**. And you can find many more examples.

All of the *Lorwyn* race lands are exactly the same as each other, but each of the *Morningtide* race lands evolves from *Lorwyn* race land pattern in its own way. Since *Lorwyn* Treefolk are so mechanically intertwined with **Forests**, we decided to make **Murmuring Bosk** a **Forest** also. That way you can play combos of **Murmuring Bosk** with **Battlewand Oak**, **Dauntless Dourbark**, **Treefolk Harbinger**, **Timber Protector**, and many others. We saw the combo of **Murmuring Bosk** being a **Forest** and fetchlands like **Wooded Foothills** as an example of cool cross-block synergy.

January 23, 2008



Q: Why is **Nevermaker's** Evoke cost the same as his casting cost?

–Julien, Laval, Quebec, Canada

A: From **Mike Turian**, *Morningtide* lead developer, **Magic** R&D:

Nevermaker started life as a **1**, 1/1 flier with evoke **1** and "When **Nevermaker** leaves play, put target nonland permanent on top of its owner's library".

This card had two problems. First, its evoke cost of **1** made it similar to **Aethersnipe** in *Lorwyn*. They aren't identical but they were too close for our tastes. The second problem was that we weren't costing the "Put target nonland permanent on top of its owner's library" ability at the right spot. Comparing to other **Magic** cards like **Repel**, four mana seemed like the proper place.

That left us with a **1**, 1/1 flier with Evoke **3**. Play testing showed that as a two-mana creature **Nevermaker** generated a great deal of tempo. Too much tempo, so we first made it a 1/4 flier, then a 1/3 flier, and finally a 2/3 flier as we searched for the right spot for the card.

The fact that **Nevermaker's** Evoke cost equals its mana cost felt good because the overall card was exactly what we wanted. Looking at *Morningtide*, there are examples of cards whose evoke cost is more than (**Reveillark**), less than (**Offalsnout**), and the same as (**Nevermaker**) their mana cost, but all of them went through extensive playing before reaching their final costs.

January 22, 2008



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 Manager 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 Ultimius**), 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**.

(This answer originally ran on October 11, 2007. Since then, an additional seven Changelings have been printed in *Morningtide*.)

January 21, 2008 – Magic Rules Corner

Q: **Frogtosser Banneret** says that Goblin spells and Rogue spells you play cost 1 less to play. Would a Goblin Rogue therefore cost 2 less to play? Also, if used in conjunction with **Latchkey Faerie**, would the prowl cost only be 1U? –Jack, St. Louis, MO, USA

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

Cost reduction mechanics can be powerful, but they can also be a little confusing. For comparison, let's take a look at two cards from the past that reduce the cost of more than one type of spell:



Thunderscape Familiar (and the rest of the *Planeshift* Familiars), like the *Morningtide* Bannerets, lists the two cost-reduction clauses as a single ability. **Grand Arbiter Augustin IV**, on the other hand, spells them out separately. And that's exactly what determines whether you're able to "double up."

The *Planeshift* Familiars and the *Morningtide* Bannerets will each only ever reduce any given card's cost by 1, because each one lists the cost reduction as a single ability. **Frogtosser Banneret** will reduce any Rogue and/or Goblin's cost by 1, whether it's a Faerie Rogue, a Goblin Warrior, or a Goblin Rogue. **Grand Arbiter Augustin IV**, however, will reduce a nonblue white spell by 1, a nonwhite blue spell by 1, and a white-blue spell by 2. (Why go

one way sometimes and the other way other times? That's a design / development call, but we can assure you that there are good reasons to go with each of the two different wordings.)

Do note, however, that multiple Bannerets in play can reduce the cost of a single card by more than 1.

Then there's the other part of your question. **Latchkey Faerie** will only cost 2 to play normally, but how much will it cost to prowl? The key is that prowl is an alternate cost to play **Latchkey Faerie**—"you may play" **Latchkey Faerie** for its prowl cost if you dealt damage to a player this turn with a Faerie and/or Rogue. Although **Latchkey Faerie's** prowl cost will not technically change (just as its mana cost doesn't change), it will cost 1 less to play for its prowl cost, for a total of 1.

Evoked is also an alternate cost, so **Brighthearth Banneret** will reduce the cost of your **Errant Lunks** and **Nevermakers** whether you play them or evoke them. Reinforce, however, is an ability, not an alternate cost—so **Ballyrush Banneret** will reduce the cost of **Burrenton Bombardier** by 1, but the cost to play its reinforce ability will remain the same.

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January 18, 2008



Q: I was wondering what language of cards you hand out on the pro tour? Does it depend on location, always English, or do you have a variety?

—KJ, USA

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

When we use cards at a Pro Tour (for instance, Booster Draft) we only use English cards. For smaller events—such as [Pro Tour Qualifiers](#) and [Prereleases](#)—policies vary from country to country and event to event, so check with your tournament organizer if you're worried about the language barrier.

January 17, 2008



Q: Back during *Time Spiral* block, you answered the question of what a plain vanilla 1/1 sliver would look like if every other sliver were in play. *Lorwyn* block seems like a good place for a twist on that question. Here it is: If I had every card from the *Lorwyn* block in play that affected a creature type and I played a plain (french?) vanilla 1/1 changeling, what would happen and what abilities would the creature have?

—Sebastian, San Diego, CA, USA

A: From **Kelly Digges**, editor of [magicthegathering.com](#):

It's been a while since we've done a laborious "count 'em up" Ask Wizards... too long, if you ask me! Let's start with a couple of caveats.

First, you said "*Lorwyn* block," but for right now *Morningtide* isn't out yet. I decided to answer the question anyway because it's fun, and perhaps revisit it later taking *Morningtide* and all of its class creature types into account.

Secondly, this question is interesting for what it *doesn't* ask. It doesn't ask what happens when I play other spells with this 1/1 token with changeling in play (such as with **Peppersmoke**, **Nova Chaser**, **Spellstutter Sprite**, **Fodder Launch**, or **Thundercloud Shaman**), in the graveyard (relevant for **Boggart Birth Rite** or **Warren Pilferers**), in my hand (to reduce the cost of **Silvergill Adept** or **Squeaking Pie Sneak**, for instance), or in my library (to search out with **Faerie Harbinger** or any of the other harbingers). Note that this means that it misses tribal instants and sorceries entirely.

So. You have one of every *Lorwyn* permanent card that cares about creature types in play, and I play an imaginary 1/1 changeling with no other abilities. (As it happens, there's a card in *Morningtide* that comes very close to fitting the bill; it has another ability, but not one that really affects this example—unlike, say, **Shapesharer** or **Mirror Entity**.)

The first things that happen are triggered abilities that trigger when you (or other players) play a [creature type] spell: **Battlewand Oak** gets +2/+2, and you'll have the options to pay 2 to gain 2 life with **Bog-Strider Ash**, put a +1/+1 counter on **Elvish Handservant**, put a 1/1 Elf Warrior creature token into play with **Lys Alana Huntmaster**, tap something with **Merrow Reejerey**, have a player lose one life with **Quill-Slinger Boggart**, and give something +3/-3 with **Thorntooth Witch**. Not bad for one spell!

Then, the spell will resolve and your changeling will come into play. Interestingly, there are zero creature type-based "comes into play" triggers in *Lorwyn*—the reasoning being that "when you play a [creature type]" triggers interact better with tribal instants and sorceries.

Once your changeling is in play, it will make your **Jagged-Scar Archers** and your **Dauntless Dourbark** bigger (and no, I'm not going to calculate how big—I leave that as an exercise for you, the reader). Oh, and don't worry, your **Dauntless Dourbark** already has trample, just as your **Kithkin Greatheart**, **Boggart Sprite-Chaser**, and **Blind-Spot Giant** were already "on."

The changeling itself will be an indestructible 10/10 with shroud, trample, and deathtouch thanks to the eight "race lords" (**Imperious Perfect**, **Incandescent Soulstoke**, **Mad Auntie**, **Merrow Reejerey**, **Scion of Oona**, **Timber Protector**, **Sunrise Sovereign**, and **Wizened Cenn**) and that *other* "lord" in the set, **Wren's Run Packmaster**. Not too bad.

Meanwhile, of course, **Nath's Buffoon** and **Warren-Scourge Elf** will have protection from your changeling. Good thing they're on your side (although since it has trample, one doesn't suppose you'd mind too much).

Now, of course, you'll have a lot of options. **Elvish Branchbender**, **Harpoon Sniper**, **Silvergill Douser**, and **Immaculate Magistrate** all just got a little bit better (again, I'm not going to give hard numbers here—sorry). Unfortunately, you're also going to find a number of abilities that are useless because of the shroud granted by **Scion of Oona**. You won't be able to regenerate your

changeling with **Mad Auntie** or give it protection with **Sygg, River Guide**. You also won't be able to give it another +1/+1 and islandwalk with **Streambed Aquitects**, lifelink with **Nectar Faerie**, or +1/+0 and flying with **Lowland Oaf**, but those three would only have been relevant this turn if you were somehow able to attack with it. If Scion of Oona weren't in play, you could have held **Goatnapper** in your hand to give it haste... or use **Shapesharer** to turn it into a copy of **Changeling Berserker** and go to town. Curse you, Scion of Oona!

If you do find a way to attack with your changeling (up to and including waiting a turn), it can pump up **Cenn's Heir**, and it will have to be blocked by two or more creatures thanks to **Caterwauling Boggart**. If it connects, you'll get a 1/1 Goblin Rogue token courtesy of **Boggart Mob**. If it somehow manages to die on the way in (not an easy thing for an indestructible 10/10 with shroud to do), you'll draw a card thanks to **Kithkin Mourncaller**.

On the other hand, if you don't want to attack, there are other options. You could tap it and another Merfolk to give **Benthicore** shroud; it and two other Kithkin to give **Cloudgoat Ranger** +2/+0 and flying; or just it to put the top card of target player's library into their graveyard with **Drowner of Secrets**.

If you do tap it, whether to attack or to use an ability, you'll be able to gain 1 life with **Judge of Currents** (though not prevent damage to the changeling with **Wellgabber Apothecary** because of **Scion of Oona** and then untap it at the end of your turn with **Merrow Commerce**. (Funny, those last three are all Merfolk...)

All that said, the magic may not last. If you get tired of your shiny new changeling, you'll have numerous options for sacrificing it. Remember, though—you can only sacrifice it to one effect, so choose carefully. You could sacrifice it to give **Facevaulter** +2/+2, to give any Giant +3/+1 with **Hearthcage Giant**, to make **Marsh Flitter** a 3/3, or to deal 2 damage with **Tar Pitcher**. You could also pay $\{M\}$ and sacrifice it with **Guardian of Cloverdell** to gain 1 life. If none of those excite you, you could always attack with **Wanderwine Prophets** and sacrifice the changeling to take another turn after this one.

Of course, when your changeling goes to the graveyard, some other things are going to happen. You'll be able to put a +1/+1 counter on **Knucklebone Witch**, deal damage to a player with **Boggart Shenanigans**, and get a 1/1 Elf Warrior token from **Prowess of the Fair** (yes, Elves show up coming and going). Once it's in your graveyard, you'll be able to gain more life from **Elvish Eulogist**, then either remove your changeling from the game to pump **Scarred Vinebreeder** (yawn) or play it again with **Horde of Notions** (fun!).

Finally, of course, if you do leave it in there (perhaps you're out of mana?), you can start everything again on your next upkeep... by returning it to your hand with **Wort, Boggart Auntie!**



January 16, 2008

Q: Why did you choose to specify a creature type for the Champion ability? Why not make it like kinship and allow the player to champion any creature that shares a type with the champion?
—Dale, Rochester, NY, USA

A: From **Devin Low, Magic** head developer:

Hi Dale,

At different points during development, champion cards just said "upgrade" (the mechanic's placeholder name, meaning "upgrade" any creature with the same subtype). At other points it said "upgrade Kithkin" meaning that it specified you could only upgrade a kithkin creature. As Mark Rosewater [explained on Monday](#), part of the overarching block design was that players should not notice class creature types like Wizard or Shaman at all during the first *Lorwyn* set. That way when *Morningtide* suddenly made class types very relevant, it would be a very noticeable difference in game play. With this in mind, if we had written champion to say "RFG any creature matching any subtype of Wanderwine Prophets," we would have had to keep all classes off of all champion creatures. For example, Wanderwine Prophets would be simply a Merfolk, instead of a Merfolk Wizard. This was not an awesome solution in the context of the overall race-class model, and especially since Wanderwine Prophets being a Wizard is cool when *Morningtide* is around.

The other big reason to say "champion a Goblin" instead of just "champion" (and match any matching subtype), is that it leaves us more design space for the future. A very minor evolution is that *Morningtide* champion creatures like Unstoppable Ash now do say "champion a Treefolk or Warrior" instead of just "champion a Treefolk." And in the future, you could hypothetically champion even more things.

January 15, 2008

Q: I noticed that the Lorwyn tribes have counting effects that count the number of that tribe that you control. While I was playing against an onslaught tribal deck, I noticed that the cards counted the number of that tribe in play. What led to that change? —Ronald, Toronto, ON, Canada

A: From **Devin Low, Magic** head developer:

'Sup Rontario,

It's true: In *Onslaught* tribal effects often affected or counted all your opponents' creatures of that tribe as well. For example, **Aven Brigadier** says "Flying. All other Bird creatures get +1/+1. All other Soldier creatures get +1/+1." But in *Lorwyn*, the tribal effects almost always look at just your side of the board, as with **Sunrise Sovereign** saying "Other Giant creatures you control get +2/+2 and trample." The change was a conscious one, and there are 2 big reasons:

1) Flavor. When your **Aven Brigadier** is fighting for you, why is he pumping your opponents' guys? It gets even more jarring when your 3/5 Brigadier fights your opponent's 4/5 **Aven Fateshaper** in combat... and then your opponent's **Aven Fateshaper** gets pumped up to 6/7 by your **Aven Brigadier**, and kills your **Aven Brigadier** with that bonus. What

is the deal there?? **Sunrise Sovereign** helping your own Giants and stomping your opponent's Giants is much better flavor.

2) Reducing Annoying Gameplay. It's just annoying when MY **Aven Brigadier** helps my OPPONENT's guys. It's a total feel-bad. When I have two random Elves and my opponent's **Timberwatch Elf** starts giving out +3/+3 instead of +1/+1 because of MY elves, that is really annoying too. The *Lorwyn* philosophy clears this up too.

The *Lorwyn* cards that notice your opponents' tribes mostly do so on cards that are explicitly there to combat those tribes, such as **Nath's Buffoon** or "lover-haters" who combat an enemy tribe while also benefitting from members of that tribe that you play yourself, such as **Quill-Slinger Boggart**.

January 14, 2008 – Magic Rules Corner



Q: Do changelings have all classes in addition to all creature types?

– Art, USA

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

This is a common misconception about the class focus of *Morningtide* that we'd like to get cleared up before the [Prerelease](#). (And you're all going to the Prerelease, right? Take a look at Noah Weil's [Prerelease Primer](#) if you're not sure what to expect.)

The answer to your question is that **classes are creature types**.

Magic flavor (these days, at least) makes a sharp distinction between races and classes—between what a creature is, like Kithkin or Goblin, and what a creature does, like Soldier or Rogue. The majority of sentient creatures in **Magic** have both a race type and a class type, and while the flavor of the game distinguishes between them, the rules don't. The 216 creature types of **Magic** all appear in one list—whether Ape or Archer, Monk or Moonfolk, Whale or Wizard—and cards with changeling have all of those types.

This also means that when a card tells you to choose a creature type, you can choose any type, race or class. When you reveal the top card of your library for a card with [kinship](#), it can match either the race or the class of the kinship card.

On the other hand, **Forest** and Equipment aren't creature types, even though **Dryad Arbor** is a Land Creature — Forest Dryad and **Obsidian Battle-Axe** is a Tribal Artifact — Warrior Equipment. A subtype is only a creature type if it appears on the list of creature types in the Comprehensive Rules. This means that cards with changeling don't have land types such as Island or Locus, enchantment types such as Shrine or Aura, or artifact types such as Equipment or Contraption.

Have fun at the Prerelease with those Elf Elemental Faerie Giant Goblin Goat Kithkin Merfolk Rogue Shaman Shapeshifter Soldier Treefolk Warrior Wizards (etc.)!

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January 11, 2008



Q: What is with the sudden policy change as far as spoilers go? You are releasing card previews faster than the rumor mills can keep up. How did you all come to the decision to make the card preview archive?

–Jase, Spokane, WA, USA

A: From **Scott Johns**, [magicthegathering.com](#) site manager:

Hi Jase,

There are actually several different things going on that have led to the new approach you're noticing. First, the idea of the card preview archive on its own isn't adding any new preview cards, it's just giving us a chance to put all the official previews we release to other publications (magazines and web sites) and on our own site in one handy central location once they've been officially spoiled. Prior to doing this there wasn't any real way on the Wizards site to actually see what cards Wizards had decided to officially preview in other publications. This way readers can keep up on all the latest official previews in one convenient place.

Second, we're trying out a new approach where we basically are combining minisites and product pages for each expansion. In the past minisites have been great for teasing out information before a set comes out, but then all that content and design work goes to waste after the set's live because at that point almost everybody is going to the product page instead since that's where all the resources are. With this new approach the idea is to have one central place to look for any given expansion, and to design them so that they're useful both before and after the set becomes public. That applies to your question because once *Morningtide* goes public, that "Card Preview Archive" page will instead become a visual spoiler for the entire set.

Another factor is that we're now translating these combined minisite / product pages into other languages. Now that minisites are translated, having a card preview archive (and, later, the visual spoiler) gives us the chance to show all these official preview card images in multiple languages.

All that said, we are actually showing more preview cards on our site compared to recent sets of this size because we've added the daily card previews you're seeing on the right of the page, which are in addition to the normal daily column previews. The main thing I wanted to play with there was the chance to show context. With the old system, for example, you would have seen Stonehewer Giant in a vacuum. But by showing Obsidian Battle-Axe in the daily card preview on the same day as Stonehewer Giant we get to show you one of the reasons we think Stonehewer Giant is so awesome. The daily card previews help in other ways as well and so far we think they're another great way to help get people excited about getting out to the [Prerelease](#), so it's something we're trying out. Judging by response we've seen so far I think it's been a popular improvement.

Does that mean we'll do things exactly this way next time? For now even I don't know that, but what I can tell you is that we're always looking for better ways to get you what you're looking for and hopefully keep surprising you along the way from time to time in the process. As readers have seen with preview changes or surprises like [Temple Garden](#), [Damnation](#), and now the card preview archive, we're always looking for fun new ways to help show off our upcoming sets so that you can get as excited about them as we are.

January 10, 2008



Q: Wizards gives its fans the opportunity to respond to articles on the message boards, but does anyone from Wizards read the replies? In only a few cases have I ever seen someone from Wizards reply or acknowledge that they've seen the community's reaction.

—Andrew, UK

A: From **Dave Guskin**, Communities Web Developer:

There are a few different ways in which Wizards employees interact with the community through the message boards.

The Communities Management team here at Wizards makes it their job to direct questions from fans to the appropriate people, be it representatives of **Magic Online** to members of R&D. Sometimes it's easier to have a few specific and very visible people on the forums catch frequently asked questions in order to present them more clearly to the decision makers.

In addition, there are quite a few sections of our site watched more closely by Wizards folks. Designers, developers, and producers reply to conversations about digital games such as *Uncivilized: The Goblin Game*. Some staff members write blogs on the new [Gleemax.com](#) site that aggregate some of their thoughts on community posts they've read. Finally, Customer Service, in the form of WizOs, Adepts, and CSRs, will reply to specific concerns or complaints on the message boards.

Authors of articles on this site are always reading their responses and often address them in later articles. Remember, most of the authors here at [magicthegathering.com](#) have day jobs as well as writing gigs—if they spent all of their time replying to the message boards, they wouldn't be able to do their jobs!

January 9, 2008



Q: Yesterday's Ask Wizards question was answered by somebody called "The Reaper King." Who the heck is that?
—Fabian Rockwell, San Diego, CA, USA

A: From [magicthegathering.com](#) staff:

Well, we usually avoid these sorts of "gimmicks" on Ask Wizards, but in this case we had someone who was uniquely well suited to answer the question. The Reaper King is, you might say, intimately acquainted with the *Shadowmoor* expansion symbol. He's also likely to make your acquaintance on an ad card at the [Morningtide Prerelease](#) January 19 and 20, which looks a little something like this:



Anyway, we were happy to host him here on Ask Wizards, and we're sure he was kidding about "harvesting" us.

Pretty sure, anyway.

January 8, 2008



Q: You announced the *Shadowmoor* logo in an arcana, but you didn't show the set's expansion symbol. Was that on purpose, or just a goof?

—Irving Leskowitz, Knoxville, IL, USA

A: From **The Reaper King**:

The symbol is below. [The Arcana](#) has been updated. Those responsible for the oversight have been... harvested.

Behold:



January 7, 2008 – Magic Rules Corner



Q: I know that Tarmogoyf's power and toughness while in the graveyard is the same as one in play. Would this apply to Golgari Grave-Troll?

– Dave, Albany, MN, USA

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

You're correct that a **Tarmogoyf** in your graveyard—as well as one in your hand, in your library, removed from the game, or in any other zone—has the same power and toughness it would have if it were in play. However, the same does not apply to **Golgari Grave-Troll**.

Tarmogoyf works the way it does because it has a *characteristic-defining ability*, or CDA. These are "intrinsic static abilities that define the object's colors, subtypes, power, or toughness," according to rule 405.2, and they apply in every zone of the game.

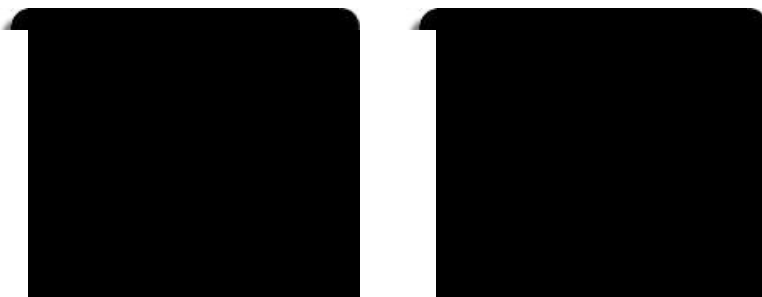
(Those of you who've been playing for a while may recall hearing that a **/** creature is treated as 0/0 when it's not in play. This was the case until the *Future Sight* Comprehensive Rules update, when power and toughness were added to the list of characteristics in rule 405.2. The result is a more consistent rule, but also creatures whose power and toughness may change when you're not expecting them to. To reiterate, any rulings you encounter indicating that **/**s in power and toughness are treated as 0 when the creature isn't in play are outdated and should be disregarded.)

So, what do characteristic-defining abilities look like?



The above three cards all have characteristic-defining abilities. The Courier can be searched for with **Demand**, **Treefolk Seedlings** will count the number of **Forests** in play to determine its toughness even when it's in your graveyard (although not if the **Forests** are), and, as you probably know if you've played **Lorwyn Limited**, **Woodland Changeling** is equally good at being searched for by **Elvish Harbinger**, pumping up **Elvish Handservant**, or coming back for more with **Boggart Birth Rite**.

Now, let's look at some things that *aren't* CDAs and don't work in zones other than where they usually would.





Urskog is pretty complicated when you delve into it, but for this example all you need to know is that it's only a **Swamp** if it's in play (it also only affects other lands that are in play, but that would be true whether it had a characteristic-defining ability or not—for more on this, see [the Rules Corner from October 15](#)). Characteristic-defining abilities only affect the object they're on, so the Tomb's ability is not a CDA.

But **Pride of the Clouds** power- and toughness-pumping ability only affects the card it's on. Why isn't it a CDA? Because it doesn't *define* a characteristic, it only changes it. And because it's not a CDA, it only applies while **Pride of the Clouds** is in play (and, of course, it only counts creatures with flying that are in play).

Now let's look at **Golgari Grave-Troll**:



The Troll's printed power / toughness is 0/0, and it has an ability that puts +1/+1 counters on it as it comes into play. This is a static ability (note the "as") that replaces how **Golgari Grave-Troll** comes into play; it only applies as **Golgari Grave-Troll** is coming into play from another zone. A Grave-Troll that's not in play is a 0/0.

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](#).

January 4, 2008



Q: One of the favorite occupations of today's players and developers is mocking yesterday's players and developers. It seems ludicrous that anyone played with **Healing Salve**, or that R&D thought banding was a solid idea. In ten years, what aspects of today's play environment will players and developers be mocking?

—Brian, Fort Myers, FL, USA

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

While it is true that we sometimes enjoy poking fun at our predecessors (I mean, seriously, **Tolarian Academy**?), most of us working on the game these days understand that we are standing on the shoulders of giants. For each card they screwed up on, they got a fifty correct, and the game has thrived because of them. As to your specific points, it isn't ludicrous that people play with **Healing Salve**; after all, we timeshifted it in **Planar Chaos** as **Healing Leaves**, and people played it in Limited. This says to me that it has use in "underpowered" environments, which includes most people's lunchroom and kitchen table games. Also, there was no "R&D" per se when banding was invented, just Richard Garfield and his pals. I can appreciate the attempt to make a flavorful mechanic that captured white's feel of unity and organization in combat, and the fact that it was too cumbersome and confusing was enough reason to eventually retire it. Not a bad process at all.

Just as those before us believed, I can't see any aspect of the game that looks to me like we don't know what we're doing or that we're screwing up on. We're proud of everything we release, and put a ton of effort into every decision

we make, all in the best interest of the game. I'm sure players and developers will get even smarter as the years go on, and some stuff that was made in the past few years will be frowned upon in the future, but I can't identify what it is at this moment.

I mean, if I could identify it, I'd fix it!

(This question and answer originally ran on November 20, 2007.)

January 3, 2008

Q: Who, exactly, is "magicthegathering.com Staff"? From certain feature articles to some coverage articles and most Arcana articles, this pseudonym is oft used. Who can we, the readers, give credit to for these fine bits of work?
—Chuck, Illinois

A: From **magicthegathering.com** staff:

Good question, Chuck—if that is your real name. We use this pseudonym any time that the author is less relevant to you, the audience, than the content of the piece. When does this happen? Let's see...



Maybe the item on the front page is just a link somewhere else (event coverage, minisites, sortable spoilers, podcasts), and crediting everyone who worked on what we're linking is redundant or impossible. Take a look, for instance, at the front page of the [Planeswalkers Minisite](#), which our feature article slot has linked to recently. It features art by Aleksí Briclot, web development by Monty Ashley, design by our art staff, and links to a puzzle by Mark Gottlieb and properly credited articles written by Brady Dommermuth, Mark Rosewater, and Doug Beyer (oops, wait, that's next week...). We don't have room to list everyone who worked on the minisite, so who should we credit for putting the link on the front page? The answer is, "WHAT ARE YOU DOING READING AN AUTHOR ATTRIBUTION?!" GO LOOK AT PLANESWALKERS!"

The item in question might be a regular feature that isn't always penned by the same person. The vast majority of Magic Arcana have been written by Doug Beyer, but not quite all of them, and every Friday is a wallpaper made by one of our in-house art staff, and some Arcana are just links to things anyway, and Doug's role on Arcana might change now that he's [taking over Taste the Magic](#). Do you need to know all that? Nope! You just need to know that when you click on a Magic Arcana, you get something official, professional, and factual penned by someone here at **magicthegathering.com**.

In some cases—like this one, even if it is a bit tongue-in-cheek—the person saying something isn't nearly as important as what's being said. An announcement about a column is probably penned by Scott Johns or Kelly Digges, but that isn't always the case—and it doesn't really matter. What matters is the announcement. Similarly, **magicthegathering.com** Staff's close personal friend Event Coverage Staff posts decklists, pairings, and other general info, as well as the wrap-up about the winner at the end. It doesn't matter whether Greg Collins wrote the wrap-up or which one of the coverage team typed up the decklists—and the Top 8 players themselves wrote the majority of the text in the Top 8 Player Profiles.

Rather than track—and expect you to track—which person or people wrote each of these blurbs, posted each of these links, or made each of these announcements, we use a single author attribution that can deliver all sorts of news, from big to small, with a relatively neutral "voice."

(This question and answer originally ran on September 7, 2007.)

January 2, 2008

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:

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

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
 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

Chainer, Dementia Master
Daru Warchief
Field Marshal
Ixidror, 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

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.

(This question and answer originally ran on July 17, 2007.

January 1, 2008



Q: Is "zombie" a race or a class?
—Burgess, Iowa City, IA, USA

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

Hi Burgess,

Brains.

I mean, race. Mostly.

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

Braaaains.

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

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

Braaaaaaaains.

I mean, it's a gray matter.

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

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

Brains.

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

Thanks for your braaaains, Burgess.

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

(This question and answer originally ran on June 11, 2007.)



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