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Ask Wizards - February, 2008

*Ask Wizards
Friday, February 1, 2008*

Do you have a question about **Magic: The Gathering** or *Wizards of the Coast*? Send it, along with your name and location, to us via this [email form](#). We'll post a new question and answer each day.

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February 29, 2008



Q: I tend to always be the last one to get my pack opened in drafts. Is there a recommended way to open packs fast and effectively without damaging the cards?

–Adam, Jacksonville, FL, USA

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

Hi Adam,

"Popping" the packs has always been the most fun way to open them. I'm terrible at popping, though, so here is a more practical way to get inside your pack as fast as possible.

Grab the pack by the back tear flap. Holding onto the pack, take your teeth and crack the top seal. Next pull straight down on the tear flap.

This will turn you into a pack opening fiend.

Editor's Note: In order to make this process more clear, we have prepared a short video presentation. Enjoy!



Click to enable Adobe Flash Player

February 28, 2008



Q: What was the reasoning behind not reprinting **Stone Rain** in *Tenth Edition*? I always thought of that as a staple card, being the simplest form of land destruction around.

–Sean, Tucson, AZ, USA

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

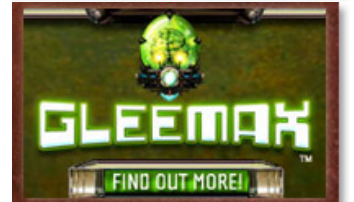
We change cards in Core Sets for change's sake sometimes just to keep things fresh. **Raise Dead** was replaced in *Tenth Edition* with **Recover**. **Wind Drake** moved to white and became **Wild Griffin**. And **Stone Rain** moved to black (albeit uncommon) to become **Rain of Tears** and was replaced in red with the equally simple **Demolish**. By removing a card like **Stone Rain** (or **Savannah Lions**) that sometimes shows up in tournament decks from the Standard environment, it allows us to make newer versions of those cards in expert-level sets at similar mana costs without worrying that we'll overload the environment with too much of a particular effect. We replaced Lions' slot in the environment with **Goldmeadow Stalwart**, hoping to encourage Kithkin decks. While we haven't released another good red three-mana land destruction spell since *Tenth* came out, chances



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are good that we will. And no **Stone Rain** means that a top-tier dedicated red land destruction deck shouldn't emerge if and when we do.

All in all, I expect **Stone Rain** to be in many more Core Sets, but *Tenth* was just its "day off."

February 27, 2008



Q: I don't know if it makes any sense to native English speakers, but I for one, was very puzzled by the name *Eventide*, revealed in a recent arcana. So my question is as simple as, is there a meaning behind that name?
—Øystein, Norway

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

I was hoping someone would ask this question, Øystein! As you probably know, *Morningtide* and *Eventide* are meant to be "bookend" titles, each adding meaning and significance to the other. *Morningtide* is the small set for the perpetually sunny, midsummer world of *Lorwyn*, and *Eventide* is the small set for the perpetually gloomy, dusk-shrouded world of *Shadowmoor*. In addition to their function as titles, though, both are real words—archaic but real! *Lorwyn* is inspired by British Isles folklore, and the Saxons that invaded and migrated to Britain measured time in "tides." They divided the day into three tides: morningtide, noontide, and eventide. (Notice it's "eventide," not "eveningtide," even though there's no such word as "morntide." Don't ask me why. English is weird, and Middle English is even weirder.) The convention of using "tide" to mean "time" was widespread during the sixth through twelfth centuries.

If you get yourself an unabridged dictionary, you'll find lots of "tides," many denoting holy days of some kind. The following words all actually existed: hallowtide, Bartholemewtide, Christmastide, Eastertide, Hocktide, Hollantide, Lammastide, Whitsuntide, Yuletide, vespertide, underntide, twelfthtide, michaelmastide, morrowtide . . . the list goes on and on. In fact, I suspect that a millennium ago, any word that would today end with "time" would have ended with "tide" instead. I've started adapting this in my own life, in fact. I now have snacktide and bedtide and peanut butter jellytide. True story.

February 26, 2008



Q: In the past, release promo cards have been uncommon (**Azorius Guildmage**, **Sudden Shock**, **Shriekmaw**, etc.) but *Morningtide*'s is a rare. What prompted this change?
—Ian, Bellevue, WA, USA

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

The success of *Tenth Edition*'s Game Day made us (R&D, Brand, Organized Play, Sales, the whole darned company more or less) take a look at better supporting events that happened in stores as opposed to just those that happen in large convention halls. To that end, we "rebranded" the former "Release Events" as "[Launch Parties](#)" and changed the participation reward for them from an uncommon to a rare. It's not that big a deal for us to give out a slightly better prize; what we really want to see is more players going to and supporting their local stores. *Shadowmoor* and *Eventide* will continue the rare prizes for Launch Parties with some pretty sexy cards, if I do say so myself!

February 25, 2008 – Magic Rules Corner



Q: How does the **Reveillark** / **Body Double** combo work? I can't seem to figure it out.
—Anthony, Washington, D.C., USA

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

The combo you're referring to uses **Reveillark**, **Body Double**, and a sacrifice outlet to bring **Body Double** back from the graveyard as many times as you want, bringing some other creature along for the ride each time. Let's take a look at how the combo works.



Reveillark says, "When **Reveillark** leaves play, return up to two target creature cards with power 2 or less from your graveyard to play." The core of the combo revolves around the fact that, while **Reveillark** can't bring itself back from the graveyard, it can bring back **Body Double**, whose printed power is 0—and that **Body Double** can then copy the **Reveillark** in the graveyard. This means that when a **Body Double** that's copying a **Reveillark** goes to the graveyard, you can choose that same **Body Double** as one of the target creatures. All you'll need is a way to put **Reveillark** / **Body Double** in the graveyard at will. **Nantuko Husk** will do fine, but the more complicated version of the combo uses **Mirror Entity**. Here's the simpler version with **Nantuko Husk**:

1. Start with **Nantuko Husk** and **Body Double** (copying **Reveillark**) in play and another creature in your graveyard. (**Reveillark** will normally be in your graveyard as well.)
2. Sacrifice **Body Double** (copying **Reveillark**) to pay for **Nantuko Husk's** ability.
3. **Body Double** (copying **Reveillark**)'s "leaves play" ability triggers. **Body Double** is now in the graveyard, and its power is 0, so it's a legal target for the ability. Choose **Body Double** and another creature as the targets.
4. Return **Body Double** and the other creature to play. **Body Double** copies **Reveillark**. If the other creature has a "comes into play" ability, it triggers.
5. Sacrifice the other creature to **Nantuko Husk's** ability. If the other creature has a "leaves play" ability, it triggers.
6. You're now back where you started (except **Nantuko Husk** is bigger). Go back to step 1 and repeat as many times as desired.

The **Mirror Entity** variant works a little differently:

1. Start with **Mirror Entity** and **Body Double** (copying **Reveillark**) in play and another creature in your graveyard.
2. Figure out how many times you want to repeat the loop.
3. Activate **Mirror Entity** with X = 0, but don't pass priority afterward. It's normal to pass priority after playing a spell or ability, giving your opponent a chance to respond, but you always have the option to retain priority (in fact, that's the default—see rule 409.1i). On **Magic Online**, hold the CTRL key while you play the spell or ability. In paper **Magic**, simply announce that you're retaining priority.
4. Repeat step 3, activating **Mirror Entity** as many times as you want to repeat the loop, retaining priority each time. There's no such thing as infinity in **Magic**—you have to announce how many times you're doing something. You can, however, choose any number for this. When you're done, pass priority. Assuming your opponent has no responses, here's what will happen:
5. The first activation of **Mirror Entity** resolves, making all of your creatures 0/0. **Mirror Entity** and **Body Double** (copying **Reveillark**) go to the graveyard for having 0 toughness (along with any other creatures you control). It doesn't matter that **Mirror Entity** is now in the graveyard—all of the activations are still on the stack and will still resolve.
6. **Body Double** (copying **Reveillark**)'s "leaves play" ability triggers. **Body Double** is now in the graveyard, and its power is 0, so it's a legal target for the ability. Choose **Body Double** and another creature as the targets.
7. Return **Body Double** and the other creature to play. **Body Double** copies **Reveillark**. If the other creature has a "comes into play" ability, it triggers.
8. The next activation of **Mirror Entity** resolves, making all of your creatures 0/0. **Body Double** (copying **Reveillark**) and the other creature are put into the graveyard for having 0 toughness. If the other creature has a "leaves play" ability, it triggers.
9. Repeat steps 6 through 8 each time **Mirror Entity's** activated ability resolves.



In either variant, the net result is that **Body Double** (copying **Reveillark**) and another creature go to your graveyard, return to play, and go back to your graveyard as many times as you want. Actually winning the game with this interaction we leave as an exercise for the reader.

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](#).

February 22, 2008



Q: So let's say you are journeying to a remote **Tropical Island**. Upon your arrival, you are astonished to discover that it is inhabited -- by the survivors of a 1993 shipwreck who have been happily playing with Alpha for the last fifteen years, blissfully unaware of every card that has been printed since that time. You are a practical traveler, so you naturally have a copy of every **Magic** card ever made in your backpack.

What is the first card that you show these people?
—Ira

A: From **Ken Nagle**, **Magic** R&D:

Dear Ira,

Having endured the traumatic experience of having a thousand **Magic** cards spoiled all at once (which is what happens when you get hired by R&D and have to catch up with all the future sets R&D is about to release or is still working on), it would definitely be unfun to subject these players to such a nightmare. **Magic** cards are released in more 'digestible' one-set chunks for good reason.

The first new card shouldn't be brain-melting – no **Mindslaver** or **Time Stop**, cards that (in my opinion) appeal more to designers than to players. 'Strictly better' cards may or may not appeal, depending on the player. Planeswalkers have flavor and power but require the most rules explanation of any potential choice. The card that screams loudest to me off the top of my head for this role is **Elvish Champion**. These players have presumably experienced **Lord of Atlantis + Merfolk of the Pearl Trident** and **Goblin King + Goblin Balloon Brigade + Mons's Goblin Raiders** (this is actually the entire list of combos). "Elf-matters" is an axis they would immediately understand, enjoy, and could drop right into a deck they already have (**Llanowar Elves + Elvish Archers**).

The two other candidates I thought of while writing this were **Lightning Helix** and an equipment card, likely **Nightmare Lash**.

February 21, 2008



Q: How come the red, black and blue shapeshifters have activated abilities that require mana to get a "french vanilla" ability while the white and green shapeshifters have the abilities for free?

–Raynell

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

Hi Raynell,

The shapeshifters you are referring to started out as enchantments that would wake up for 1 mana. For example **Game-Trail Changeling** was 3GG, Enchantment, G: **Game-Trail Changeling** becomes a 4/4 creature with trample until end of turn. While I enjoyed this twist on Changeling, it meant that these cards wouldn't get bonuses from so many of the cards in *Morningtide*. For instance, the Bannerets wouldn't make them cost less and cards like **Bramblewood Paragon** wouldn't give out their +1/+1 counters. As enchantments they weren't working out well.

Once we turned them into creatures it was no longer necessary to maintain all of their activated abilities. Deathtouch and First Strike are both abilities that are interesting to be able to activate or not. We wanted **Mothdust Changeling** to help out Merfolk by giving them another way to tap creatures. **Changeling Sentinel** and **Game-Trail Changeling** were both made static abilities because Vigilance and Trample are fairly restrictive abilities and therefore didn't need activation.

February 20, 2008



Q: When do the *Shadowmoor* previews start?

—Niklas, Fredrikstad, Ostfold, Norway

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

Shadowmoor previews start on March 31.

...

That didn't seem like much of an answer, did it? I mean, it answered your question with the pertinent information, but it was really terse. How about this: I can tell you that *before* the regular *Shadowmoor* previews start (on March 31), there will be two sneak-previewy things. But I won't tell you when those will be. I'm pretty sure you'll know them when you see them.

That's better.

February 19, 2008



Q: I'm an amateur programmer myself, so I enjoyed Monty Ashley's recent response regarding the website's macros. It occurred to me that if the writers enclosed all official card titles in square brackets, or something similar, then your macros would be able to positively identify everything that needs to be linked. Just a thought.
–Adrian, Salt Lake City, UT, USA

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

Actually, that idea came up this weekend as I was editing coverage for **Pro Tour–Kuala Lumpur**. It seems that several of our coverage writers have written for other sites where they do exactly that to mark out autocard links—and wanted to say how nice it is that they don't have to do that for us. The system you describe would have distinct advantages, as you say, but it would mean that writers—or, ahem, editors—would have to find every card name in an article (of which there are frequently more than fifty) and type brackets around them (with no errors, or time reserved for errors to be caught later). The simplicity is appealing, but the time and effort, we feel, are better spent elsewhere (like, you know catching the occasional wacky things our autocard macro does...).

February 18, 2008 – Magic Rules Corner



Q: Because **Murmuring Bosk** is a forest, does this mean it's a basic land? Does this mean that creatures that destroy non-basic lands, or gain power/toughness based on the presence of non-basic lands are not affected by or can not affect **Murmuring Bosk**? Most importantly: can you have more than 4 of them in a given deck?

–Drew, Brampton, ON, Canada

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

The short answer is no. **Forest** is a land subtype that grants the ability to tap for green mana. **Basic** is a supertype that serves as a tag for certain abilities and lets you put any number of copies of certain cards in your deck. **Basic** and **Forest** are often found together right on the type line:



However, there are also some **Forests** that aren't basic:



Note the lack of the word "basic" on **Murmuring Bosk** and **Breeding Pool** (although note also that this is unreliable for older cards). Being a **Forest** doesn't make **Murmuring Bosk** basic, nor does being a **Forest Island** make **Breeding Pool** basic. When an effect looks for basic lands, it means exactly that—lands with the supertype basic. When an effect looks for nonbasic lands, it means lands without that supertype. And when an effect looks for **Forests**, it means lands with the **Forest** subtype, regardless of whether they are basic or not.

In other words, **Treefolk Harbinger** can go get a **Murmuring Bosk**, but **Wanderer's Twig** can't. **Boggart Loggers** and **Incendiary Command** can both destroy it. And like all cards other than basic lands (okay, and **Relentless Rats**), you are definitely limited to 4 of them in a deck.

On the plus side, it's the only three-color-producing land that triggers **Battlewand Oak**, and that definitely counts for something.

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February 15, 2008



Q: With all of the talk of creature types and flavor, I have to ask, has the creative team ever considered doing half-breed creatures? An "Elf Human Warrior" for a half-elf, for example? Half-breeds tend to be something of a staple in other fantasy settings, after all.
—Brandon, Florence, KY, USA

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

Oh, the poor, poor type line. So important, so full of possibility, so . . . very . . . small. We have talked a little about creatures of more than one race, Brandon, but never for long. That's because the type line is simply too

small to accommodate a full execution of such a plan, and we'd rather not do it at all than do it halfway (because halfway would involve lots of arbitrary decisions that wouldn't make sense to players).

The brevity of the type line has been the deciding factor in a number of weird issues over the years. For example, when we were streamlining the rules for the *Sixth Edition* release, some were excited by the possibility of turning the type line into a "keyword line"—for example, the type line of **Bladewing the Risen** might have looked like this:

Creature • Legendary • Dragon • Zombie • [Flyer] • [Reanimator] • [Male]

To use a more current example, to be as true to the *Time Spiral* block character **Radha** as we possibly could, her hypothetical keyword line would be quite long:

Creature • Legendary • Human • Elf • Warrior • Druid • [Keldon] • [Female]

The terms in brackets would appear or not depending on how much information each of us thought the type line should contain. Some thought it would be a way to clean up the text box, for example, by moving simple keyword abilities there. Obviously, all this thinking happened very early on in the process, during an "anything goes" brainstorming period. We quickly sobered up, though, when we realized how few words the type line could hold, as well as how ugly and labor-intensive it would be to allow the type line to expand vertically to accommodate more terms.

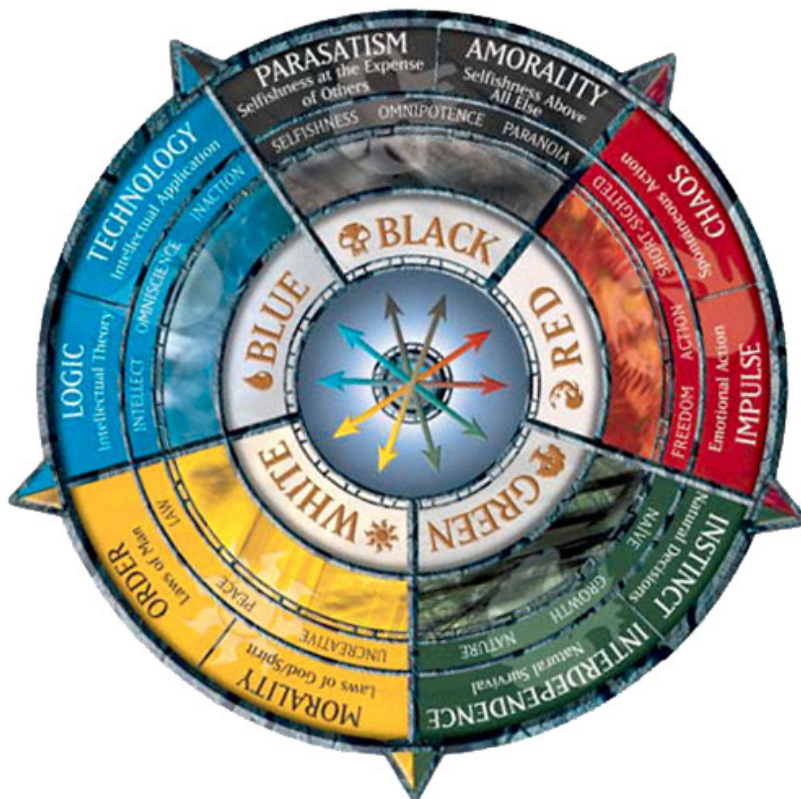
February 14, 2008



Q: In his article [Magic Style Guide \(Part 1.5\)](#), Matt Cavotta has the best representation of the color wheel I've seen. Is there a link to a larger version of it, so I can read all of the elements on it more clearly? Thanks.
—Eddie, Lexington, VA, USA

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

Even before I called up that article, I knew exactly which image of the color wheel you meant. It's a memorable one. Although it's since been supplanted by the version from the Tenth Edition starter game (which shows the relationships between the colors with less complexity but has the advantage of including art to get a feel for the colors right away), because of its complexity it remains an intriguing way of viewing the color wheel. Here it is:



(Click to Rotate)

Click through to rotate the wheel so that each color is on top. It's easier than rotating your computer screen! The red text will appear upside down, but that's just because red is so crazy and chaotic! Or something.

And since I mentioned it, here's the color wheel from the Tenth Edition starter game:

naming a creature Coca-Cola Drinker.) Some words are too obscure or hard to say, although we'll put just about any dictionary word in a card name—even words that are only in the old, dusty dictionary that you can only find in the back of the antique books store with the crotchety, half-crazed proprietor who's probably a witch.

Beyond that, there are a host of other factors that can kill a potential card name—mechanical confusion, setting incompatibility, creature type contradiction, and more. If there were an article called "[Name Killers](#)" on this web site—and I'm not saying there is, but hey, you know, if—I might expect it to be about that very topic.

Finally, Charles, we'll never use the word floopnamble on a **Magic** card. *It knows why.*

shakes fist

February 11, 2008 – Magic Rules Corner



Q: I attack with **Preeminent Captain** with a **Veteran's Armaments** in play. I put a **Mosquito Guard** into play attacking with the Cap's ability and attach the Armaments to it. Does the Armaments' ability trigger and give the Guard a bonus?

—Brendan, Coeur d'Alene, ID, USA

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

Well, there's good news and there's bad news. The bad news is that the answer is no—while you can attach the **Veteran's Armaments** to the freshly tapped-and-attacking **Mosquito Guard**, the attack trigger granted by **Veteran's Armaments** will not trigger. The good news is that if the **Veteran's Armaments** is already attached to a creature that attacked and triggered that ability—say, that **Preeminent Captain**—that creature will, or at least can, count the **Mosquito Guard** in its bonus. That's because the **Mosquito Guard** is *attacking*, but it didn't *attack*. Wha...? We'll explain.



In **Magic**, "attack," as a verb, has a very specific meaning: to be assigned as an attacker during the declare attackers step. Creatures that are put into play tapped and attacking—such as Ninjas put into play with their ninjutsu ability, **Preeminent Captain's** backup buddies, or the Kithkin Soldier tokens from **Militia's Pride**—are attacking creatures, but for the purposes of attack triggers, they never attacked, as outlined in rule 308.4. This also means that **Preeminent Captain** and **Militia's Pride** do not combo as well as you might like with **Windbrisk Heights**, which only counts creatures that were assigned as attackers.

A similar rule applies to creatures put into play blocking, such as the token from **Flash Foliage**. It's blocking, but it never blocked. Strange but true!

But as we said, the good news is that you can get your new attacking creature to "count" for other attack triggers that count up attacking creatures, such as that of **Cenn's Heir** or a creature equipped with **Veteran's Armaments**. Put the **Cenn's Heir** / **Veteran's Armaments** trigger on the stack first, followed by the ability that's going to put a creature into play tapped and attacking. The second ability will resolve first, so when the first ability resolves, it will "see" the new creature. This is similar in concept to the trigger-stacking in [a previous Rules Corner](#) involving **Briarhorn** and **Pandemonium**—since you control all the triggers, you can stack them in the order you want. (And note that since **Veteran's Armaments** grants the triggered ability to the creature, you control all the triggers here even if the **Veteran's Armaments** is controlled by someone else.)

Not exactly simple, but there you have it!

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February 08, 2008



Q: Is there a name for the creature **Nath of the Gilt-Leaf** is riding, or is it just a random steed?

–Doma, Crest Hill, IL, USA

A: From **Jenna Helland**, **Magic** creative designer:

Hi Doma,

That's a cervin—an elf's first choice in transportation. Prized for their beauty and gentle temperament, cervins are graceful deer-like animals that remain calm during combat. Cervins roam wild in the Gilt-Leaf and are easily trained, but elves prefer to ride a pure-bred domestic over a wild-born animal. When breeding cervins, the elves track bloodlines, and the most perfect mounts are gifts to the most perfect elves.



Some elves who are lower in the social hierarchy ride [vinebred](#) cervins because they're deemed more acceptable than riding a flawed cervin.



February 07, 2008



Q: Hello, I have a question about draft on nationals. Since Lorwyn and Shadowmoor are two different blocks, which of these are we going to draft?

–Ivan, USA

A: From **Scott Larabee**, DCI program manager:

Hi, Ivan. The country coordinators in each region will determine which mix will be used at each country's Nationals. For smaller countries that have only one draft, only *Shadowmoor* / "Doughnut" will be drafted. For Nationals that have two drafts, country coordinators can choose to have both drafts be *Shadowmoor* / "Doughnut" or to have one *Lorwyn* / *Morningtide* and one *Shadowmoor* / "Doughnut" draft. To see which mix will be used at your National Championships, keep checking for the fact sheet for your country at the [Magic Nationals Page](#).

February 06, 2008



Q: I have noticed in various articles the set after Shadowmoor being referred to as both "Donut" and "Doughnut." What's the proper spelling of the codename?

–Eric, Hamden, CT, USA

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

The proper spelling is "Doughnut," as senior editor Del Laugel has consistently reminded people throughout the set's time in R&D. In fact, R&D members who use the improper spelling have doubtless had a hard time finding the set at all, given its expansion code (DOU). I've tried to adhere to the proper spelling consistently when the set's codename has appeared here on the site. I can find only one article on the site where it's spelled "Donut," and that was a simple oversight on my part.

But wait, you might find yourself saying, nuts to the codename! Shouldn't we know the real name by now?

To which I might reply: *Watch that attitude, bucko.*

Of course, that's not entirely fair, especially given that I put those words in your mouth in the first place, so I'd probably add: *Good question. Stay tuned.*

For more about "Doughnut" (formerly "Sandwich"), you might (re)read Mark Rosewater's pre-*Lorwyn* article [Two Plus Two](#).

February 05, 2008



Q: I was looking at the Morningtide cards on the Morningtide minisite and began to wonder how exactly decide between creature types such as "warrior" and "soldier", or between "wizard" and "shaman". These creature classes seem very similar, and I would be interested to learn what factors are taken into account when choosing a creature's class.

—Tom, Stone, Staffordshire, UK

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

Tom, first I'll point to my [12/18/07 Ask Wizards response](#), which lays the groundwork for your question! Shaman and Wizard are meant to demonstrate differences between the five colors in the same way that Warrior and Soldier are. Whereas Warrior and Soldier are the fighting classes, Shaman and Wizard are the casting classes, and their distribution across the colors is the same: Shamans tend to be red- and/or green-aligned, Wizards tend to be blue- and/or white-aligned, and black "casters" can go either way depending on black's cultures in a given setting.

Because the so-called "race-class model" wasn't enacted until 2002 or so, those color distributions get fuzzier as you go back through **Magic's** history. Some posters on our message boards have pointed out, for example, that past cards include a fairly high number of red-aligned Soldiers. Generally speaking, though, the logic above guides our creature-type decisions going forward.

The basic guidelines for these four class types (soldier, wizard, warrior, shaman) can change depending on a particular block's structure or setting. For example, in *Lorwyn*, creature types were assigned not along color lines but along tribal lines instead. I thought it would help each tribe's flavor to have either Warriors or Soldiers, and either Shamans or Wizards, not both. So, for example, although black can go either way on both the fighter and caster types, it goes one way for the fae and the other way for the boggarts. It gets a little stranger for the tribes that bridge "enemy" colors such as Treefolk and Giants. Treefolk are Warriors and Shamans because those types best fit their culture in my opinion. But Giants were designed to be iconoclastic, idiosyncratic, and individualistic, so their fighters are all Warriors, but their casters include both Wizards and Shamans.

February 4, 2008 – Magic Rules Corner



Q: If I make **Mutavault** into a creature, and it dies, but comes back into play via **Crucible of Worlds**, would it still be a creature? What about through returning it through a **Recollect** then normal play?

—Scott, Alexandria, Virginia, USA

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

Whenever anything becomes something else in **Magic**, there's potential for mischief. The short answers here are "no" and "no," because any time anything leaves play and then returns, it's treated by the game as something entirely new. This is true whether it goes to the graveyard and is put back into play; goes to the graveyard and is played from the graveyard; goes to the graveyard, returns to the hand, and is played normally; is returned to its owner's hand from play and then replayed; is removed from the game and immediately returned, such as by **Momentary Blink** (it's been a while, but we worked in **Momentary Blink** again); is removed from the game and returned to play later that turn, such as by **Astral Slide**; or is removed from the game and returned at some later time, such as by **Supreme Exemplar's** champion ability or the "storage" ability of **Colfenor's Urn**.

Because it's treated as a new object, a **Mutavault** that becomes a creature, leaves play, and then returns to play will not be a creature—its ability will have to be activated again.

(The one exception to this involves the old phasing ability—when something phases out and then phases back in, it's still treated as the same thing. This is one of those reasons why phasing was retired.)



While we're on the subject, that fact that **Mutavault** (and other "manlands" such as **Treetop Village**) is "naturally" a land but can become a creature results in all kinds of strange stuff even just in *Lorwyn* block.

For one thing, it's interesting to note that there's no rule that says that +1/+1 counters have to be on creatures. Thus, as mentioned in a recent Card of the Day, you can pile +1/+1 counters on your **Mutavault** while it's a creature (say, with **Incremental Growth** or **Immaculate Magistrate**), and they'll still be there to make it bigger the next time you turn it into a creature. (They will not, however, do anything while it's not a creature—it'll just be a land with +1/+1 counters on it, which is funny but doesn't accomplish anything).

Weirder: say a **Shapesharer** turns itself into a copy of **Mutavault** while the **Mutavault** is a creature. **Shapesharer** copies everything that's printed on **Mutavault**, but it doesn't copy any effects that are affecting that **Mutavault**—such as its own ability that turned it into a creature. This means that the **Shapesharer** will become a copy of **Mutavault** that's *not* a creature (but can still be turned into one as normal), which is a pretty weird way of dodging any removal, such as **Shriekmaw** or **Tarfire**, that was aimed at **Shapesharer** as a target creature.

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February 1, 2008



Q: One thing MaRo goes on about is the fact that R&D now tries to make blocks connected. The first block to do this was *Ravnica*. It obviously supported Kamigawa. *Time Spiral* had some obvious support for *Ravnica* in having multiple dual lands and interesting multicolor card. Now I know that the R&D idea wasn't formed when Kamigawa was released, so I ask this: What are some of the cards in *Ravnica* that supported *Time Spiral*'s themes?

—Sawin

A: From **Mark Rosewater**, **Magic** head designer:

Sawin,

The key to creating interblock synergy is making sure that the themes can cross-pollinate. The more linear a theme (that is, the more a theme requires particular cards to work) the more that theme needs to be pre-laid into the previous block. This is why, for instance, we had to make sure that the eight supported races of *Lorwyn* (well, and the five supported classes of *Morningtide*, but that was a gimme) showed up in *Time Spiral* block. Since both *Ravnica*'s two-color theme and *Time Spiral*'s nostalgia theme were very modular (the themes didn't beget narrow card choices) we didn't need to be as blunt in creating synergy. This means there are a lot of tiny nudges throughout all the expansions pushing towards the block before and after but no large overarching themes were needed.

Since you asked for examples, the best ones I can think of are creating Izzet's "instants and sorceries matter" theme knowing that we had mechanics like buyback, flashback and storm coming and putting hellbent into Rakdos in *Dissension* knowing that madness was around the bend. Some of the themes like thallids and Saprolings came later in the process but we knew that it would blend nicely into Selesnya's army building theme and play well with convoke. The key is that *Ravnica* / *Time Spiral* synergy required a lighter touch than *Time Spiral* / *Lorwyn* synergy.



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