



HYBRID WEEK

MAGICTHEGATHERING.COM

ARCHIVES

TOURNAMENT CENTER

MAGIC ONLINE

GATHERER

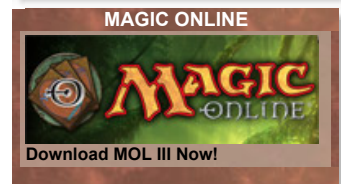
Home > Games > Magic > Magicthegathering.com



# Ask Wizards - March, 2008

Ask Wizards  
Monday, March 3, 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.



## March 31, 2008 – Magic Rules Corner

**Q:** If you have a **Kamahl, Pit Fighter** in play and you summon a **Kamahl, Fist of Krosa**, does the legend rule apply?

—Mr. Baleta, USA

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

The answer, with apologies to the underlying flavor involved, is no. The "legend rule"—rule 420.5e to its friends—states:

If two or more legendary permanents with the same name are in play, all are put into their owners' graveyards. This is called the "legend rule." If only one of those permanents is legendary, this rule doesn't apply.

The rule keys off of names, not anything else about the card, and the name of a **Magic** card is its full title. **Kamahl, Fist of Krosa** and **Kamahl, Pit Fighter** have different names, so the "legend rule" doesn't apply. This goes for any two legendary permanents that represent the same person or object in the storyline but have different names, no matter how similar their names are. This also means that **Clone** and other copy effects such as **Heat Shimmer** and **Sculpting Steel** can kill legendary permanents by copying them—the game sees two legendary permanents with the same name, so each is put into its owner's graveyard immediately.



In your games at home, of course, if everyone agrees to it, you're free to enforce house rules to keep this sort of thing from happening, and then it'll be up to you how far to carry it. Be warned, though—it's not always as simple as sharing part of their name, and the more storyline background you know, the deeper the rabbit hole goes.\*

Note that planeswalkers potentially sidestep this because their version of the legend rule (which doesn't currently have a catchy nickname) goes by subtype rather than card name (e.g., two or more planeswalkers with subtype **Ajani** rather than two or more planeswalkers named **Ajani Goldmane**). Currently that doesn't matter—there's only one planeswalker card with each subtype—but the option is there for future planeswalkers to have the same subtype but a different name.

\* **Rorix Bladewing** and **Bladewing the Risen** are clearly the same dragon, sure. **Crovax the Cursed** and **Ascendant Evincar** are also one and the same, even though their names are nothing alike, so hopefully you've boned up on your *Weatherlight* storyline before playing them together. Should they also be "legendary with" their *Planar Chaos* counterpart, **Crovax, Ascendant Hero**, or does the alternate-universe crossover allow them to meet face to face? What about **Memnarch** and the **Mirari**, given that **Karn, Silver Golem** made the one out of the

other? Or **Phage the Untouchable** and **Akroma, Angel of Wrath**? The two of them should be able to coexist, but should they each be "legendary with" **Karona, False God**, whom they (and a third character not depicted on a card) became when they merged together? Do **Dakkon Blackblade** and **Korlash, Heir to Blackblade** qualify because they seem to be holding the same sword, or is there a future-timeshifted exemption for that sort of thing?

The answer is that there are no good answers—that's one reason the **Magic** rules don't attempt to cover these scenarios. The Rules Corner takes no responsibility for any arguments that may arise if you try to adjudicate it, and we recommend just sticking with the rules. (But then, of course we do—we're the Rules Corner.)

*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](#).*

March 28, 2008



**Q:** Is **Tarmogoyf** (cardboard, ink, glue) safe for my infant to chew on?

—Mason, Brooklyn, NY, USA

**A:** From **Tom Wänerstrand**, TCG Operations Manager:

Our trading card games pass global toy safety regulations for heavy metals and other hazardous chemicals. The cards are nontoxic and completely safe for normal use and foreseeable abuse for children 8 years and older.

The cards are not made with food-grade inks or paperboard, and they are not designed to be mouthed like crib toys and pacifiers. We do not recommend allowing infants to chew on cards.

March 27, 2008



**Q:** Have you ever asked artists to experiment with a medium they don't normally use?

—Neil, Edmonton, AB, Canada

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

Hi Neil,

Actually quite the opposite is true. An art director's job is to decide and protect the look and feel of the brand (or setting or expansion or whatever) that he/she works on. A very large part of that is by the selection of, and communication with, a given project's roster of artists. If an artist has an established approach, you hire him/her, and then he/she turns in something with a very different approach, that artist has effectively undermined the AD's ability to art direct that part of the project. Chances are, the AD won't be very happy. I lovingly refer to this as "the ol' bait 'n' switch."

Speaking for myself as an illustrator, I've always tried to give ADs I've worked for every confidence in the level of finish they will receive in my chosen medium (watercolor) and to present a body of work that speaks to how I approach the assignments I'm given (slightly left of center, or a bit crazy, if you prefer).

As an AD, I expect the same courtesy from illustrators that I work with on any given set. I also go to great lengths to try to assign each and every card to an illustrator whose approach best suits that particular assignment, and then let them shine at what they do. So, no, I would never ask them to do something other than what they are great at!

March 26, 2008



**Q:** Since you guys came out with a set with all creatures, how do you feel about a set without any creatures?

—Charles, Raleigh, NC, USA

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

Hi Charles,

**Legions** was famously popular, but the "no-creature set" doesn't sound like a very fun **Magic** set to me. Artifact, enchantment, instant, lands, planeswalkers, and sorceries (and sometimes tribals) are each awesome card types, and creatureless decks are an important part of what **Magic** is all about. But creatures have ranked consistently as **Magic**'s overall most beloved card type for over a decade, from **Alpha** to **Invasion** to **Legions** to **Time Spiral** to **Morningtide**. In addition to a brave few planeswalkers, creatures are also the source of most of **Magic**'s personalities and characters. **Brion Stoutarm**, **Doran, the Siege Tower**, and **Goldmeadow Stalwart** give **Lorwyn** a lot of its personality, and that personality would be sadly absent if the a set was filled with **Nameless Inversions**, **Austere Commands**, and zero creatures.

March 25, 2008



**Q:** Does Ask Wizards ever edit questions? Like if they ask one relevant question that you want to answer, but the rest are just silly/pointless/overlong? or what if they have typos or not good grammar? Or if they go off on random tangents (by the way, love what you did with **Morningtide**, **Lorwyn** block drafts are really fun)? I could also see you shortening questions if they just started using statements that didn't matter, rather than questions. It seems like sometimes you would just want to shorten the questions so it doesn't get bogged down with inanities or the questioner's opinion (really didn't like **Bog Hoodlums**, though. What were you thinking?). So I guess the ultimate question is, does Ask Wizards edit questions they receive?

—Charlie, La Mesa, California, USA

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

That's a great question, Charlie, in more ways than one.

I'm certainly willing to edit Ask Wizards questions for length or clarity, particularly in the sorts of cases you describe. All of those are potential reasons to edit a question, and I'd need a good reason to preserve typos, tangents, statements, or opinions that don't support the main question. I also edit for style—italicizing set names, adding em-dashes or en-dashes as appropriate in place of double hyphens, spelling out card names in full and adding autocard links, etc. I also convert the location format to the one we use. If it's just a case of sentence fragments or awkward phrasing, though, I'll generally leave it unless it impacts readability.

So, if I were to edit a question—let's take yours, for example—for style only, it would come out looking like this:

Does Ask Wizards ever edit questions? Like if they ask one relevant question that you want to answer, but the rest are just silly / pointless / overlong? Or what if they have typos or not good grammar? Or if they go off on random tangents? (By the way, love what you did with *Morningtide*; *Lorwyn* block drafts are really fun.) I could also see you shortening questions if they just started using statements that didn't matter, rather than questions. It seems like sometimes you would just want to shorten the questions so it doesn't get bogged down with inanities or the questioner's opinion. (Really didn't like *Bog Hoodlums*, though. What were you thinking?) So I guess the ultimate question is: does Ask Wizards edit questions they receive?  
—Charlie, La Mesa, CA, USA

For most questions, that's where I stop, because people who are asking answerable questions (as opposed to chiming in with opinions or complaints) tend to be pretty concise as far as what they want to ask.

That said, it's not all that uncommon to see tangents that aren't really part of the main question. Although **Magic** R&D loves hearing feedback both positive and negative, if an opinion isn't related to the topic at hand, it's not worth preserving in the question or addressing in the answer. If the opinion is directly related to the question, however, it's probably worth keeping. In some cases, it may be the whole reason the question is being asked.

Here's your question with the interjections stripped out:

Does Ask Wizards ever edit questions? Like if they ask one relevant question that you want to answer, but the rest are just silly / pointless / overlong? Or what if they have typos or not good grammar? Or if they go off on random tangents? I could also see you shortening questions if they just started using statements that didn't matter, rather than questions. It seems like sometimes you would just want to shorten the questions so it doesn't get bogged down with inanities or the questioner's opinion. So I guess the ultimate question is: does Ask Wizards edit questions they receive?  
—Charlie, La Mesa, CA, USA

Elaborative statements can go either way. Often they're just redundant, but sometimes the extra statements—although not directly part of the question—help reveal some of the assumptions underlying it. Those assumptions can then be addressed. This is often the case in rules questions with statements about the expected outcome or the underlying rules. If those statements are correct, they can be confirmed; if they're incorrect, the Rules Corner can correct them in addition to answering the question (particularly useful if the answer would be something along the lines of "Yes; see rule 418.5b"). Yesterday's Rules Corner question is a good example of this—we left in the full question, complete with some incorrect assumptions, so that the answer could be more comprehensive.

The real death knell for anything past the core question, besides being unrelated entirely, is being repetitive. Let's check back in on your question:

Does Ask Wizards ever edit questions? Like if they ask one relevant question that you want to answer, but the rest are just silly / pointless / overlong? Or what if they have typos or not good grammar? Or if they go off on random tangents? I could also see you shortening questions if they just started using statements that didn't matter, rather than questions.  
—Charlie, La Mesa, CA, USA

This is probably where I'd stop in your case, although if the topic were more sensitive I might decide that the now-final statement doesn't do enough to justify being that tongue in cheek.

Once again, though, the majority of questions go through step 1 and stop—they are ready to be answered and published on the site with only minor corrections for style. To make me go through all of these steps while answering a question, someone would almost have to be trying!

(Some questions do get an additional step of editing so that they appear in extremely abbreviated form on the front page, but that's mostly for looks.)

## March 24, 2008 – Magic Rules Corner



**Q:** If my opponent drops a *Garruk Wildspeaker*, and I respond by casting *Incinerate* on Garruk, does my opponent have the ability to save his planeswalker by adding a counter? A friend of mind says that he does as he "has priority" in that situation, but judging from my MTGO experience it seems to me that A) planeswalker abilities are cast at sorcery speed and therefore cannot be used while *Incinerate* is on the stack and B) even if he attempted to add a counter first, *incinerate*, being an instant would be able to be cast in response and would resolve (killing Garruk) before the counter would have a chance to be added.  
—Rob, Philadelphia, PA, USA

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

The answer to your question hinges on a few finer points of timing—finer points that are usually glossed over in the course of play. The short version is that you're right about A, you're wrong about B, and yes, your opponent can keep Garruk from dying to *Incinerate*, but not quite in the way you describe. Let's get into the finer points of timing that shed light on why.



As you say, planeswalker abilities can only be played when you could play a sorcery—on your main phase when the stack is empty (with the additional restriction of only once per planeswalker per turn). This means that Garruk's +1 ability can't be played while *Incinerate* is on the stack. The trick, however, is that it doesn't need to be, and the reason for that has to do with *priority*. The player who has priority is the only one who can play spells and abilities, and priority may be passed back and forth dozens of times even within a single turn.

After a spell or ability resolves, the active player—the player whose turn it is—receives priority. This means that the active player has a chance to play another spell or ability before anyone else does, which means in this case that the player who played Garruk—if he suspects that you have *Incinerate*—can immediately use Garruk's +1 ability.

Now, he'll have to pass priority before that ability can resolve, but playing *Incinerate* in response to Garruk's ability still won't help you. Planeswalker abilities work like any other activated ability—costs are paid as the ability is put on the stack, and effects happen when the ability resolves. The +1, weird as it is, is a *cost*—it's before the colon—which means that as soon as the ability has been played, it's too late to catch Garruk at 3 loyalty.

Let's break down the sequence of events during Player A's main phase:

- Player A plays *Garruk Wildspeaker* and passes priority.
- Player B passes priority. (*Incinerate* won't help because Garruk isn't in play yet.)
- *Garruk Wildspeaker* resolves. Player A receives priority.
- Now, Player A can either pass priority or play another spell or ability.
  - If Player A passes priority:
    - Player B plays *Incinerate* targeting Player A. Player A can't respond by playing any of Garruk's abilities because there's a spell on the stack. Player B redirects the 3 damage to *Garruk Wildspeaker*, who ends up with 0 loyalty counters and dies.
  - If Player A plays *Garruk Wildspeaker*'s +1 ability:
    - Player A puts the ability on the stack and puts a loyalty counter on Garruk, then passes priority.
    - Player B responds to the ability with *Incinerate* targeting Player A. If there are no responses, Player B redirects 3 damage to Garruk. Garruk takes 3 damage and survives with 1 loyalty counter.

If you're playing against planeswalkers, make sure your opponents are very clear about when they're passing priority—you may be able to catch their planeswalkers with lower loyalties than they'd like. If you're playing with planeswalkers and plan to use a "+n" ability the same turn, it's safest to do so right away without passing priority.

*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](#).*

March 21, 2008





**Q:** Why do we tap clockwise rather than anti-clockwise? Is it just arbitrary?

--Tom  
London, England

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

Hey Tom,

There is no official rule about which way to tap **Magic** cards. Originally there was no symbol to indicate "tap." For instance, the Alpha through Unlimited *Prodigal Sorcerer* reads "Tap to do 1 damage to any target." In Revised, the "crooked T" symbol was introduced and *Prodigal Sorcerer* became "T: Do 1 damage to any target."

In Fourth Edition the "crooked T" was replaced and the art designer came up with the international  symbol. As I understand it the  is a clockwise arrow because it looked more natural as clockwise. A counterclockwise arrow on the left side of the card wasn't as appealing.

I remember playing when my opponent would use beads to indicate tapped status of their cards, primarily as a way to reduce wear. In fact, while doing the research to answer your question I discovered that Mark Rosewater was originally a "beady." The bead trend was short-lived in **Magic** as card sleeves were developed to protect individual cards. Just as I have known people to play all of their permanents upside-down or with their lands in front of their spells, it is mainly convention that keeps people turning their cards clockwise.

(This question and answer originally ran on January 18, 2007.)

March 20, 2008



**Q:** Historically (by my account) Standard has been two blocks of three sets plus a core set. With *Lorwyn* block having only two sets, I'm lost about what is rotating out. Won't *Time Spiral* block and *Coldsnap* rotate when *Shadowmoor* comes out, or will they still be around?

—Andy

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

Although we addressed this question last September, many of the sets in question didn't even have names yet, so we figured we'd remind everyone what's happening with Standard this year. Admittedly, it's a little weirder than usual, but the usual rotation principles apply with two caveats:

1. *Coldsnap* rotates with *Time Spiral* block in all Constructed formats (**except** Block Constructed, where *Coldsnap* is part of *Ice Age* block).
2. *Lorwyn* block and *Shadowmoor* block rotate together in all Constructed formats (**including** Block Constructed, where both are part of *Lorwyn / Shadowmoor* Block).

Currently, Standard consists of *Coldsnap*, *Time Spiral*, *Planar Chaos*, *Future Sight*, *Tenth Edition*, *Lorwyn*, and *Morningtide*. Here are all of the Standard legality changes in 2008:

- May 2, 2008: *Shadowmoor* becomes legal. Nothing rotates out.
- July 25, 2008: *Eventide* becomes legal. Nothing rotates out.
- October 3, 2008: *Shards of Alara* becomes legal. *Coldsnap*, *Time Spiral*, *Planar Chaos*, and *Future Sight* rotate out.

The second and third sets in the *Alara* block, codenamed "Paper" and "Scissors," will not cause anything to rotate out of Standard when they're released in winter and spring of 2009, as normal. *Tenth Edition* will remain in Standard until the next core set is released in summer of 2009, also as normal.

This is also as good a time as any to remind you that sets are now legal in Constructed on their release date, so *Shadowmoor* will join Standard as soon as it's released on May 2.

March 19, 2008



**Q:** When designing the final two sets (*Shadowmoor* and *Eventide*) of this massive standard block, was the sheer volume of playable cards taken into consideration, or will earlier sets like *Coldsnap* and *Time Spiral* lack the same synergy with the new block as the more recent ones like *Future Sight* would have?

—Dan, Honolulu, HI, USA

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

Dan,

You're making a correlation that I don't think exists. Card pool size and synergy do not necessarily oppose one another. In fact, the larger the card pool size, the more potential for some synergy to exist because there are just more card combination possibilities. That said, I do believe designers are more conscious of designing synergy between sets that bump up against one another, partly because there's a desire to build interblock synergy and partly because those are just the sets that were designed chronologically closest to the present set (remember that future large sets are designed earlier than the small ones) and thus are more on their mind.

March 18, 2008



**Q:** If Wizards were to print a functional variant of the card *Paralyze* today what color would it be? Would it be blue or white? What about 5 years ago? And just for fun, what about 5 years from now?

—Chris, Kinston, PA, USA

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

Five years ago, the answer was simple—the effect was blue. Back then, blue both kept things from untapping and was the color of taxing. Since then, taxing has been shifted in the color pie from blue to white (blue had too large a percentage of the pie so some of its stuff had to be auctioned off). Blue is still king of keeping creatures locked down although white gets to dabble in it. This leads me to believe that the effect could be done in white. The effect could also be done in white-blue. And finally, the effect could probably be done in white-blue hybrid, as we allow a little bit of bleed in hybrid and allowing blue to tax isn't horribly out of flavor

given that blue still keeps its toe in this ability (mostly with **Mana Leak**-type counterspells). As far as five years from now? My best guess is tri-hybrid black-red-green.

### March 17, 2008 – Magic Rules Corner



**Q:** Neither ripple nor hideaway state that you can choose the order of the cards you put on the bottom of your library. Different tournaments I've been in have ruled differently about whether you can. What's the verdict? Is it implied that you can, and you just didn't have room, or are you meant to keep them in order?

–Raymond, Winter Park, FL, USA

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

Both ripple (rule 502.56 in the Comprehensive Rules) and hideaway (rule 502.75) actually do include the phrase "in any order" in the full explanation of how they work in the Comp. Rules, but the phrase was omitted from the reminder text for length. However, there is also a general rule that covers this situation:

217.2d If an effect puts two or more cards on the top or bottom of a library at the same time, the owner of those cards may arrange them in any order. That library's owner doesn't reveal the order in which the cards go into his or her library.

Cards that put multiple cards on the top or bottom of a library as a matter of course—such as **Abundance** or **Peer Through Depths**—generally include the phrase "in any order" for clarity, but in reminder text there isn't always room unless it's vital to what the mechanic does (see, for instance, **scry**). There are also cases where this comes up as a result of multiple cards' interactions (for instance, multiple **Slivers** are destroyed by a **Wrath of God** with **Pulmonic Sliver** in play). In any case, rule 217.2d ensures that these cards would work the same without that text—it's just there to help.

Note that cards that instruct you to "look at" the top cards of your library are a different matter. Many of them—look at **Sage of Epityr**, **Sensei's Divining Top**, or **Gilt-Leaf Seer**—include the phrase "in any order," but if they don't, rule 217.2d does *not* apply, and the cards go back in the same order. This is pretty unusual, but it does happen. The *Eighth Edition* printing of **Orcish Spy**, for instance, got reminder text making this explicit:



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](#).

### March 14, 2008



**Q:** You're out at a coffee shop or restaurant playing **Magic** with your friends. Some people walk by and say "What kind of game is that?" In real language, not press release-speak, what do you answer?

–Alex, Jersey City, NJ, USA

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

Depends on the person, Alex. With adults, I say something like this: "It's a fantasy-themed strategy game called **Magic: The Gathering**." [Wait for blank stare.] "It works sort of like baseball cards—you buy a pack not knowing what'll be inside, and you use the cards in the packs to build your collection. But then you choose cards out of your collection, make a custom deck with them, and play your deck against someone else's." [Brief pause, followed by optional elaboration:] "I actually like the playing part more than the collecting."

With younger people, I might say something like, "Do you know about *Pokémon* or *Yu-Gi-Oh!* cards? [If yes:] Those are kiddie versions of **Magic**. [If no:] It's sort of like a cross between poker and chess, with a fantasy theme." And regardless of the person's age, if they linger for a moment, or if they raise a brow, the next thing I say is, "Want to play?"

### March 13, 2008



**Q:** Why not put the guild mana symbol (the tree with sun around it) in the upper corner as the mana cost,

rather than the ugly half and half symbol you have on the [Selesnya Guildmage preview card](#)? It would have looked so much better!

—Chris, USA

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

I agree that it would've looked pretty cool to use the guild symbols as hybrid mana symbols, Chris, but that would have doomed hybrid cards to exist only in *Ravnica*! The hybrid symbols were designed to be "setting-neutral" so we won't have to go back to *Ravnica* if and when we want to do more hybrid cards some day. As for "ugly," I'll just ask you to reserve judgment until you have the cards in hand, because seeing things onscreen can give you a skewed perception.

(This question and answer originally ran on September 14, 2005.)

March 12, 2008



**Q:** Is there a reason that when I type in **Arcbound Ravager** in Gatherer and narrow it down to a *Mirrodin* Block search that nothing comes up?

—Tyler, Bayport, MN, USA

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

Why yes, there is! This is a good [Gatherer](#) usability tip, so listen up.

In Gatherer, sets and formats appear in one dropdown menu (this may not always be the case, but it is right now). If you select *Darksteel* and type in "Ravager", **Arcbound Ravager** appears. If you select Extended (or Legacy or Vintage), **Arcbound Ravager** appears. But if you select *Mirrodin* Block, to which *Darksteel* belongs, poof, no **Arcbound Ravager**. So here's my question for you: Did you select a set, or a format?

That's a trick question, sort of. Although *Mirrodin* block is a collection of sets, that's not what Gatherer is searching when you select it from the menu. Gatherer is searching the *Mirrodin* Block Constructed format, which includes all of the cards in *Mirrodin* block—except those that have been banned in the format... like **Arcbound Ravager**.

For most blocks, these two things are exactly the same (which is why they haven't been bundled out into separate searches). No cards have been banned in *Time Spiral* Block Constructed, for example, and in fact no cards have been banned in Block Constructed more recently than *Mirrodin* block. But for *Mirrodin* block and a few others, there's a banned list that keeps cards from appearing when that format is selected. For the complete set of Banned & Restricted Lists, click [here](#).

In general, when you're trying to find a specific card, don't select special options like sets or colors (I usually click "Clear Form"). That way, even if you've got a detail wrong (or elements of a previous search still selected), the card will still appear.

March 11, 2008



**Q:** I am hosting a casual tournament at home. What kind of background music by which artist would you recommend?

—Rudolf, Zeeland, Netherlands

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

Why yes, Rudolf, I will gladly expose my personal musical tastes to public ridicule! Seriously, though, what I don't know is whether you're looking for random music to play while you and your buddies hang out and play **Magic**, or whether you're looking for an unofficial **Magic** "soundtrack"—a playlist that feels like the score to a fantasy movie. If you're after the second thing, I refer you to my esteemed former colleague Monte Cook's [recommendations](#). As for the first thing... I can't build you a playlist—I would fuss with it for hours!—but here are 10 of my favorite artists of the moment—stuff that you might catch me listening to while playing: Amon Tobin, Beck, Bjork, Chemical Brothers, Four Tet, Gnarls Barkley, Goldfrapp, Radiohead, To Rococo Rot, and Underworld.

March 10, 2008 – **Magic Rules Corner**



**Q:** If I'm going to use reinforce and I have a banneret in play that reduces play costs how come the reinforce cost is not reduced, or for Elementals if I have a Smokebraider how come I can not use the mana effect to play the reinforce? The Smokebraider does state that it is used for Elemental abilities. Any help? Thanks!

—Matt, Seattle, WA, USA

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

There are actually two things going on here—one reason why the Banneret doesn't reduce reinforce costs, and an additional reason why Smokebraider can't pay for them. We'll cover the Banneret first because it's a little simpler.





Reinforce is an activated ability that you can play when the card with reinforce is in your hand (note the colon in reminder text—the easiest way to spot activated abilities). The cost of the ability is to discard the card and pay some amount of mana. Although the card comes from your hand, you don't actually play it. Ballyrush Banneret reduces the cost of Kithkin spells and Soldier spells you play by 1 and would reduce Burrenton Bombardier's cost by 1 if you were playing it, but you're not playing it—you're playing an activated ability.

The obligatory caveat here is that evoke and prowl, while looking somewhat similar to reinforce, are in fact alternative play costs. You play the card for its prowl cost or evoke cost instead of playing it normally, and that means that Bannerets will reduce the overall cost of playing something for its prowl cost or evoke cost.

Clear? Okay, now for the trickier one.



On [October 15, 2007](#), we explained the difference between "Elf," "Elf spell," "Elf card," etc. As a recap, "Elemental" refers to an Elemental permanent in play, "Elemental spell" refers to something on the stack with the Elemental subtype, and "Elemental card" refers to a card with the Elemental subtype that's not in play or on the stack—in other words, in a library, hand, or graveyard, or the removed from the game zone. The mana Smokebraider provides can be used to pay for "Elemental spells"—which, as we just determined, playing a card's reinforce ability isn't—or "activated abilities of Elementals." However, a Brighthearth Banneret in your hand isn't an "Elemental" due to rule 200.9 in the Comp. Rules—even though it does have the subtype Elemental, it would be referred to as an "Elemental card." Strange but true—Smokebraider can't pay for reinforce costs.

*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](#).*

March 07, 2008



**Q:** I'm extremely curious how you guys decide what an amount of mana gets you. How do you decide 4 mana gets you a 2/10 white rare? or that green can get a 2/3 common for 2 forests? Is there a guide you follow or do you just wing it then playtest??

—Cody, Hazleton, PA, USA

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

As a player, I had determined that **Magic** designers and developers had mapped every mana cost onto a grid along with every possible effect in the game. Determining the mana cost of a card was presumably as simple



as searching an Excel spreadsheet.

If that weren't true, then perhaps there was a formal language for generating cards. Without shifting completely into a computer science graduate course, a card would begin as:

[colorless mana][colored mana]  
1/1  
[keyword ability]

If the colored mana cost included white, you could 'roll' flying, first strike, or vigilance for the keyword ability. Adding more colorless mana nets you more power and toughness. Extrapolate this to the Nth degree and you can generate every creature card in **Magic** (along with all the ones we haven't printed yet!).

But to answer your question, we follow more closely to philosophical rules instead of hard numeric boundaries. For example:

Numerical Approach	Philosophical Approach
"White can get a 2/2 for  with two keyword abilities."	"White gets to have <b>awesome, fun weenies.</b> "
"Green can get a 4/4 for  with additional upside."	"Green gets to have <b>awesome, fun fatties.</b> "

While it's true that strictly adhering to the numerical approach can be a means to achieve the philosophical approach, the ultimate goal for this kind of development work in **Magic** is fun. There are spectacular examples all across **Magic** of cards that break power curves, color pie, and/or philosophy simply because they are flavorful and fun, such as **Form of the Dragon**. The more fun a card is, the happier we are to charge less mana for it so it gets played more often, and the more smiles appears on players' faces.

I can cite in-depth, card-specific examples that demonstrate this phenomenon in action, but those stories are best saved for the [one design article](#) I manage to hijack once per year.

We can't make every card cost zero mana, nor can we make them all sixteen mana. We can't make every card bad nor can we [make every card good](#). In the end, I found out during my development work on *Eventide* from lead developer Matt Place that "**Magic** cards cost what they cost," and as unscientific as that sounds, it's actually the most succinct, correct, even romantic way to think about it.

March 06, 2008



**Q:** Help me settle a dispute with another member of my **Magic** group. Is **Oona's Blackguard's** name pronounced like Blag-erd or Black-Gard?  
—Matt, Carlsbad, NM, USA

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

That's been bothering me, too, Matt. I pride myself on correct usage of language, but I certainly don't want to cling to an obscure (and unphonetic) pronunciation if there wasn't reason to. Thus far, I've tended to say "black-guard" but feel a little guilty about it.

Well, I've got good news: according to *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, both pronunciations are correct.

(And, for those who've been wondering, the dictionary also gives several definitions of the word. The relevant one is "a rude or unscrupulous person"—in other words, a rogue.)

So, hooray, everyone's right for once and we can all go have some cake!

...Of course, that doesn't settle the question of how the discerning linguaphile *should* pronounce "blackguard." Ultimately, it comes down to a matter of personal choice. If you want everyone to know what card you're talking about, you should probably go for "black-guard," which we're guessing is how most English-speakers pronounce it (although this may be different across the Atlantic—if so, please chime in on the forums and say so!). If, on the other hand, you'd prefer something a little more archaic, even jaunty, you're certainly not wrong if you slur it all together like—well, like a blackguard.

March 05, 2008



**Q:** I know Wizards has officially adopted the 'Race Class' system, does that mean you will never print a card with just a class?  
—Levi, Owatonna, MN, USA

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

Never is a long time, Levi. But even if it weren't, we already have a handful of creatures that have a class and no race, such as **Order of the Ebon Hand**, whose differing art versions prevent it from having a particular race. There are also many cards that generate tokens whose race isn't specified. In general we want most creatures to have a race, however. In some alternate **Magic** universe, creature cards could represent more general versions of things. For example, **Staunch Defenders** could simply represent a social role, and could show humans in its illustration one year, kitsune the year after, and leonin next. But that decision would have to have been made about 15 years ago. For now, the creatures without a race type will remain few and far between.



**Q:** I've noticed that Wizards does not seem to have a wording policy for spells that can't be countered. *Gaea's Herald* in *Eighth* dropped the "by spells or abilities", and it was left off in *Tenth Edition*. *Wreak Havoc* however does have the extra text, has less space available for it, and is from an expert-level expansion. The Herald is in core sets, which should have more explanation on them. So what gives?

–Marc, USA

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

The answer to your question is found not on the cards but in the rules: As a spell or ability that has one or more targets resolves, the first thing it does is check whether all of its targets are still legal. The spell or ability is countered if all its targets, for every instance of the word "target," are now illegal. A couple of examples are helpful at this point.

Example: *Aura Blast* is a white instant that reads, "Destroy target enchantment. Draw a card." If the enchantment isn't a legal target during *Aura Blast*'s resolution (say, if it has gained protection from white or left play), then *Aura Blast* is countered. Its controller doesn't draw a card.

Example: *Plague Spores* reads, "Destroy target nonblack creature and target land. They can't be regenerated." Suppose the same animated land is chosen both as the nonblack creature and as the land, and the color of the creature land is changed to black before *Plague Spores* resolves. *Plague Spores* isn't countered because the black creature land is still a legal target for the "target land" part of the spell.

What does all that have to do with *Gaea's Herald* and *Wreak Havoc*? Well, that rule means that it's possible for a spell to be countered by the rules of the game. If a card contradicts the **Magic** game rules, the card wins. That's why *Wreak Havoc* needs the extra text.

The story behind *Gaea's Herald* is really the story of *Clone*. There was a time when the Oracle wording of *Clone* made it the one and only targeted creature spell. The *Planeshift* *Gaea's Herald* was printed during those dark days. Then Paul Barclay wrote sensible rules for copy effects, and *Clone* began its quest to reenter the core set. With no targeted creature spells remaining in the Multiverse, *Gaea's Herald* could lose its extra text.

And then the tribal card type was introduced, and *Root Sliver* noticed that *Nameless Inversion* is a Sliver. *Root Sliver* has gained the extra text that *Gaea's Herald* had lost.



**Q:** What happens if you champion a token? Can you do it in the first place? And if you can, and do, what happens if the champion creature dies?

–Eric, Hamden, CT, USA

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

Yes, you absolutely can champion a token if it has the characteristics required by the creature with champion—an Elf Warrior token for *Wren's Run Packmaster*, for instance, or any creature token for *Changeling Titan* and the other creatures with changeling and "champion a creature".



Let's take a quick look at what "champion a creature" actually means:

502.72a Champion represents two triggered abilities. "Champion an [object]" means "When this permanent comes into play, sacrifice it unless you remove another [object] you control from the game" and "When this permanent leaves play, return the removed card to play under its owner's control."

That first triggered ability, in *Changeling Titan*'s case, requires that you remove a creature you control from the game (or sacrifice *Changeling Titan*, but we're not planning on doing that). A creature token is a creature, so if you control it, you can remove it from the game when the Titan's first champion trigger resolves.

The question then, of course, is: what happens next? The answer lies in rule 216.3:

A token in a zone other than the in-play zone ceases to exist. This is a state-based effect. (Note that a token changing zones sets off triggered abilities before the token ceases to exist.)

(The parenthetical part of that rule makes sure that when your Goblin Rogue token goes to the graveyard, **Boggart Shenanigans** triggers, for instance.)

Removing the token from the game satisfies the champion creature's requirements—it doesn't matter that the token ceases to exist immediately afterward. So your champion creature is in good shape. If and when the champion leaves play, the second triggered ability that makes up champion triggers, but there's no removed card to put back into play—the token no longer exists. That ability still triggers and still resolves, but when it resolves it won't do anything. So you won't get a card back, but on the plus side, you didn't lose a *card* in the first place.

*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](#).*



[Discuss](#) on the message boards



[Submit a question](#) to Ask Wizards



[Ask Wizards](#) archive

---

[About Us](#) | [Jobs](#) | [New to the Game?](#) | [Find a Store](#) | [Press](#) | [Help](#)

---

© 1995-2008 Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. All Rights Reserved.  
[Terms of Use](#) - [Privacy Statement](#)

