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## Tall Tales

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Taste the Magic  
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The Celts had their Fomorians. Norse people had Jötuns. The Welsh called them the Wrnach. The Bible mentions Nephilim. Jonathan Swift called them Brobdingnagians. Ultimately, it was the Greeks who supplied us with our word for them, via their word *gigantes*:

# GIANTS.

### Color Me Redd

Giants in **Magic** tend to be strong, fierce, mountain-dwelling humanoids whose height ranges from about two to over ten times the height of a human adult. Giants are overwhelmingly red-aligned due to their hot tempers and craggy habitat, but there are white, green, and black Giants as well (not counting various blue shapeshifters).

In the *Lorwyn* block, this identity was stretched a bit. All the creatures in *Lorwyn* and *Morningtide* (and some of the noncreature spells!) are either changelings or are members of the eight main races. Red in *Lorwyn* and *Morningtide* is full of small (around 2/3 and smaller) creatures, having both flamekin and boggarts to round it out. And white in those sets has both kithkin and merrows filling up the small-creature slots. To give development the ability to create large (3/3 and up) ground creatures in red and white, giants were made to stretch across both colors.



Having a creature type stretch across an enemy color pair like red-white is always tricky. The values and principles represented by color wheel are a huge part of a creature's flavor, so having contradictory elements brought together can be a recipe for flavor confusion. Red is about passion and chaos, and white is about discipline and law! Red is about individual freedom and white is about community harmony! How could these come together to define the identity of giants? In these cases, we have to look to what the colors share—and surprisingly, the two colors overlap a good bit. Take a look at this chart.

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RULES

Feature of giants	Red giants	White giants
Strong emotions	Red giants express their strong emotions through their short tempers.	Lorwyn's white-aligned giants have fervently held beliefs. Their emotions are tied up in their judgments of the world.
Territoriality	Red giants are territorial because of their dedication to freedom of the individual.	White giants believe in order, which causes them to respect others' belongings—and defend their own.
One-track-mindedness	Red giants are passionate about whatever's on their mind, and are consumed with that subject.	White giants stubbornly resist changing their minds, believing their path to be the right one.

### From the Lorwyn Style Guide: The Nature of Giants

Lorwyn's giants live in areas far away from any other races' habitations, and that's no accident. The giants eschew the company of other beings and seek remote areas in which to stake out territory that's theirs and theirs alone. What motivates giants' reclusion?

*One-dimensional.* Each giant has one defining trait that shapes its personality. Just as giants are physically large, the concept, trait, or idea around which each is centered is also large. An angry giant isn't merely annoyed; she's a walking tower of rage. When a giant weeps, his sobs can be heard for days and from miles away. Everything giants do is big, loud, obvious, and extreme. Red-aligned giants are focused outward, white-aligned ones inward, but both are equally extreme in their traits.



*Territorial.* Lorwyn's giants need vast stretches of land to call their own, partly because of their size, but mostly because of their temperament. Giants are very particular about their surroundings, and the presence of other giants complicates that. Giants who live too close to each other invariably come to blows. Two giants wrestling to the death can and have leveled entire villages.

*Big Ideas.* Giants' one-note personalities lead them to extreme and absolutist ideas about things, which in turn drives them away from each other. Two giants are likely to end up fighting if the concepts or traits they embrace conflict. Battles between giants always end with one dead giant and a long, circuitous path of destruction in their wake.

## The Mechanics of Territoriality

Giants are really big. (I like to lead with the uncontroversial premises first.) This causes them, often, to be high mana cost creatures. This causes them, often, to be on the board in small numbers, even alone a lot of the time, as opposed to swarms of boggarts or armies of elves. When Lorwyn was first being designed, Giants had a theme of being powerful when they were in play by themselves, to turn this consequence of their bigness into a mechanical advantage. The creative team, in turn, built this "good by themselves" into the creative identity of giants, which led to their territoriality.

Giants require huge amounts of resources to live—they need vast quantities of food, water, land, and personal space to feel comfortable. A giant seeing another giant would naturally see a competitor for those



resources, and would either stay away from neighboring goliaths (by climbing high into remote mountain passes, for example) or would fight to claim the space as his own.

The "good by themselves" mechanic didn't make it into the set, as it turned out; while the creative team was busy building the style guide, the designers decided that it's more fun in a tribal set to encourage lots of something rather than only one of something. So cards like **Borderland Behemoth** seem to contradict the flavor of territorial giants (a fact which we tried to massage in the flavor text). That's the breaks sometimes—we have to make creative commitments in order to get the style guide ready on time, and sometimes that means the mechanics of the set diverge slightly in the meantime. But it's still true that a giant creature on the board is often the only one of his kind around, and the territoriality flavor was still a great launching-off point for the flavor text writers.

#### From the Lorwyn Style Guide: Giants' Habitats

Giants dwell in isolation. The simplest ones find caves to live in, while contemplative or industrious giants build imposing stone forts. Most giants' dwellings have a dolmen-gate, a doorway made of three huge slabs of stone. The vast majority of giants' abodes are high in the mountain, often even above the cloudline. Many giants can step out of their dolmen-gates and look over a carpet of cloud.

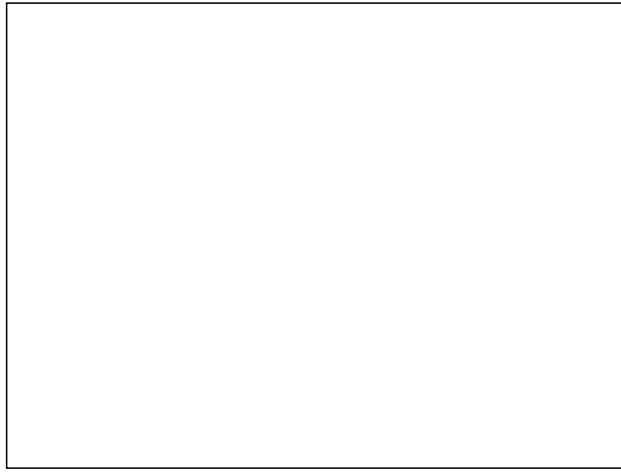
A giant's death is a major event for a region because giants' lairs are such storehouses of interesting and rare things. Great caravans of treasure seekers and merchants (particularly elves who seek hidden beauty) go forth to explore and loot the place.



### Why Giants Hate the Aspect Ratio

An *aspect ratio* is the ratio of an object's width to its height. If you've ever shopped for a TV or studied film, you probably know about aspect ratios. Standard-definition TV sets have an aspect ratio of 4:3, meaning their image width is slightly (one-third) wider than its height. Most high-definition TV sets have an aspect ratio of 16:9, almost twice as wide as they are high. Many movies are filmed in even wider formats, 1.85:1 or 2.40:1.

**Magic's** art box is approximately 2 inches by 1.5 inches (5 cm by 3.8 cm), giving an aspect ratio very similar to a standard-definition TV display. Like so:



You can see the problem. Giants are very tall. They're giant—it's their thing. When you show any creature on a piece of art with a 4-by-3 aspect ratio, you want to focus on that creature in the art, to make sure it stands out and makes clear what it is. Yet a giant's aspect ratio is more like this:



When shown in his full glory, a giant in the center of a **Magic** art box can look tiny, and can have wasted space on either side of him, both of which detract from a good, successful, powerful piece of giant art. Here are some handy rules of thumb for knocking your giant assignment out of the park.

**Crop.**



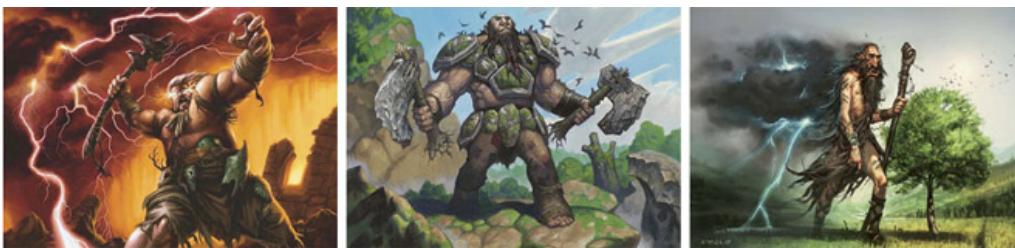
Show the head and torso of your giant, leaving the legs out of the picture, and trusting the viewer to figure out that it's tall using other cues. Depict just that widest part of the giant—its burly chest—since it does a pretty good job of filling that 4:3 frame. Show how massive it is by playing up the proportions of its head to its body. Cropping is one of the best ways to increase the impact of a large creature in a tiny art box.

**If you can't crop, hunch.**



If you'd rather not chop pieces off your giant, get him bent sideways somehow so he'll fit. Have him crawling around in the mountains, head-down in a full-on run, or slamming cracks into the streets of a city-plane. That way you'll be able to fit his lanky body down under the ceiling of the 4:3 frame. (Seeing a giant's feet in **Magic** art is actually pretty rare, considering **Hill Giant's** famous flavor text—hunching is one way that it happens.) As giants are meant to be terrifying, foul-tempered monstrosities, I don't recommend having your giant kneeling or sitting, unless that's the point of the card.

**If you don't hunch or crop, fill the box with active arms or other details.**



The cropping and hunching tricks can get old, giant in and giant out. Sometimes you want to show that giant in his full, upright glory. If you've decided you must show most of your giant inside the frame, and you don't want him bowing regally or picking up a quarter or something, then sure, show the whole guy and have him stand up proud. But do something interesting with the rest of the art box so that your beanpole doesn't get lonely in there. Spread his arms out. Give him some magic to wield mightily, or a couple of axes. Add in some environmental details around him to fill out the box and to create drama.

**Indicate scale.**



No matter what you do, you'll want to give clues that your giant is huge. The most common way of doing this is to juxtapose him with objects or creatures that we know the size of—and of course, show him towering over them. Birds are a favorite way to indicate scale (to the extent that we joke about "scale birds" all the time in the creative team), but when it comes to creatures as large as giants, people and even buildings can serve as comparative indicators.

**Keep the eyes and/or head small.**



One excellent clue for the viewer is the proportion of head size to body size and/or eye size to head size. Enormous creatures like giraffes or brontosaurus have tiny heads relative to their bulk and breadth. They also tend to have tiny eyes, like whales or rhinoceroses. You can use these artistic heuristics (rules of thumb) to help convince the viewer of the hugeness of your giant.

**Crazy up the "camera."**



One of the most powerful ways to illustrate your giant's gigantitude is to move the "camera," or the viewer's vantage point, in your piece. Use a subordinated viewpoint. Make that giant tower over the viewer. When your piece does this, the scale of the giant is presumed to be huge because the viewer is comparing the its size to *him- or herself!* We the viewers are (presumably) human-sized, and if we're looking up, then it must be *big*.

Let's take a closer look at Daren Bader's [Oathsworn Giant](#), a piece I'm fascinated with.



The viewpoint here isn't really subordinated—we aren't looking way, way up at the giant. But we're looking out at him from under the awning of a Ravnica market. We're just a street vendor of some kind, like the shadowed folks in front of us, hawking our wares. The way the giant's upper half catches the sun is a clue to how big he is. His height compared to our fellow vendors is another clue. The fact that he'd come close to hitting his head on that archway is another. And his height compared to the buildings across the alleyway is yet another. His wolf? Well, let's just say *his wolf* is pretty big in itself.

Giants can be long and lanky, which can be rough in an art box with 4:3 aspect ratio. But use these tips and I'm sure your giant will stand tall.



*Fomori Nomad art by Raymond Swanland*

### From the Lorwyn Style Guide: Giants and the Name Sleep

Giants' surnames reflect their self-image, temperament, purpose, or some combination of those things. These names are self-selected by the giants upon awakening from the Name Sleep.

Even in the best of circumstances, giants sleep a lot, and their dreams are rich and epic, full of narrative and symbolism. But the Name Sleep is fundamentally different. It is a trance-like hibernation during which the giant chooses a new purpose, a new identity.

A giant's first Name Sleep usually occurs at the end of adolescence. A Name Sleep can also be triggered by some life-changing event or trauma, or by the onset of a giant's old age. Young giants lack surnames. Some giants undergo this name sleep more often than others. For example, a giant dedicated to combat prowess who suffers a crippling leg injury might enter a name sleep to find a more inward, peaceful path. A giant's first name is generally two or three syllables. It serves as a familiar form of address for friends. All others use only a giant's surname. Two giants that share a surname invariably fight for it, much as two giants who claim the same territory do battle.

## Letter of the Week

Today's letter comes from Igor K., an artist who would love to do work for Wizards. He already sent a sample of his portfolio to [artdrop@wizards.com](mailto:artdrop@wizards.com) (which is the right first step), but he'd like to know what else he can do.

[T]his letter is not about my failed attempt at gathering attention to my art. It's about the yet unwritten article titled "How To Impress a Magic the Gathering Art Director in 34 Difficult Steps". You tend to drop hints here and there, taunting people with a mirage of a full article, but never give us anything substantial. I figured out that playing the game might help (addicted since Mirage), knowing how to hold a pen won't hurt (hi there, Mr. Obvious) and having some experience in deadline handling would be welcome (5 years of copying Dutch Old Masters counts?), but what more? As far as I'm concerned, it doesn't have to be a full article, maybe just a letter reply (picking my letter for the headline obviously). Anything coming for the source (or as close as you



can get) would be an immense help. Not to mention it would cut a considerable amount of torture and uneasiness from the lives of wannabe Magic artists.

Best regards,  
Igor K.

It's pretty common for people not to hear back from artdrop. Wizards' art directors are very busy, as you might imagine, and unfortunately there's just not time to reply to every submission that shows up in that inbox. But don't despair—instead, funnel your creativity toward coming up with other ways to get your work noticed. Submitting your portfolio to artdrop is the best first step, but if you're committed to working for Wizards it should be only a part of your multi-pronged attack.

Wizards is always looking for great artists, but the competition for working for us is pretty fierce. Look for more avenues to get your work in front of the right eyeballs, and to help distinguish yourself from the crowd. Impress other, established artists with your work, and get them to recommend you to the right Wizards people. Make a name for yourself by doing other published work that you can showcase. Get published in magazines of fantasy and sci-fi art, or in published art collections. Bring your portfolio to gaming conventions and look for opportunities to share your stuff with Wizards art directors. Think about it from the reverse perspective—if you were the art director and had a mass of submissions coming in all the time, what would *you* want to see? What would make your life better, considering how busy your day was? What kinds of things would stand out to you, and what would just make your eyes glaze over? Good luck!



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