

Ask Wizards - May, 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.

I understand that Evil Mark Rosewater is the evil twin of Mark Rosewater, but what is with the stash and goatee? Just because you are too lazy to shave doesn't mean that you're evil.

-Drew

May 30, 2008

Q: I understand that Evil Mark Rosewater is the evil twin of Mark Rosewater, but what is with the stash and goatee? Just because you are too lazy to shave doesn't mean that you're evil.

-Drew, Toms River, NJ, USA

A: From "**Evil**" Mark Rosewater, **Magic** head designer...of *evil*:

Dear Drew,

Evil twin prejudice isn't something you often hear talked about. For some reason, the only bigotry publicly embraced in this politically correct world is evil twins and the Nazis. So why not put the "stache and goatee" on all our pictures? Perhaps you could show us tying poor screaming damsels to railroad tracks or laughing "bwah ha ha" and rubbing our hands together.



If you stab us by fighting for the knife as we attempt to stab you, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh before we permanently scar you? If we accidentally eat the poisoned food we've prepared for you, do we not die? (Apparently, we don't.) And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?

My point here is that of all the readers that have read my two articles, you are the first, and only, to point out the stereotypical representation of my picture. You've emboldened me to take the next step. This morning I presented *Wizards of the Coast* with a class action suit representing all the evil twins that they have besmirched. I plan to use whatever money I win to torture the friends and family of all the **magicthegathering.com** staff.

Thank you Drew for helping me realize this injustice and take the first step.

"Evil" Mark Rosewater

Is the average converted mana cost of *Shadowmoor* higher than usual?

-Kostas

May 29, 2008

Q: I guess it's too soon for you to reveal such information... but is it just my idea or is the average converted mana cost of *Shadowmoor* is higher than usual? Maybe it's the previews that give this impression.

-Kostas, Greece

A: From **Monty Ashley**, **Magic** Web Team:

Kostas,

We received your question early in *Shadowmoor* previews, which means that your first impressions were probably colored by the splashiness of the cards we showed you. However, we thought it was an interesting question anyway, so we kept it in the back of our minds.

I'm pretty good with Excel, so after some time with publicly available card databases, I'm able to report that the average converted mana cost of cards in *Shadowmoor* (not counting Lands or other cards with no mana cost) is... 3.62.

So what does that tell us? On its own, not much. I checked *Lorwyn*, which has an average Converted Mana Cost (which I'm going to abbreviate to "aCMC" from now on) of 3.32. So it's up a bit from the previous large set. But *Ravnica: City of Guilds* had an aCMC of 3.79, so I'd say *Shadowmoor* is within the usual boundaries.

Naturally, I did some poking around to see what the highest and lowest aCMCs I could find were. *Scourge* clocks in at 3.94, which is pretty impressive. I was expecting *Prophecy*, with its cycles of Avatars and Winds, to be the highest, but it only had a 3.65. On the other end of the scale, *Tempest* was incredibly streamlined at 2.89. The lowest aCMC I found was actually Alpha, with 2.4. Remember, the highest mana cost was *seven*.

For what it's worth, the average Converted Mana Cost for all cards in **Magic** is a whopping 109.29. But it drops to 3.32 when you take out Gleemax. With that information, I'm willing to confidently state that *Unhinged* has the highest aCMC in the game.

In Devin Low's article Eight Trials: Color Pie in the Courtroom, Part 3 (Friday, May 23, 2008), who is your courtroom sketch artist? They captured it perfectly.

-Tyler

May 28, 2008

Q: In Devin Low's article Eight Trials: Color Pie in the Courtroom, Part 3 (Friday, May 23, 2008), who is your courtroom sketch artist? They captured it perfectly.

-Tyler, Chico, CA

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

Thanks, Tyler! That's one of my favorite images that we've ever run on the site.

That image was created by graphic designer Jen Page, whom you might know from her dossier here on the site. Or as the illustrator of Crown of Convergence. Or as Blue from Gamer Radio Zero. Or maybe even for her role in the independent film The Gamers: Dorkness Rising.

As per the instructions we sent her, Jen incorporated the art from Stern Judge and Giant Solifuge as the judge and a witness, respectively.

Monty Ashley took these reference photos of Mark Rosewater and Devin Low to help her out:



Jen settled on the poses she liked and went to town, going well beyond my expectations. The result is a fantastic "courtroom sketch" that made me giggle out loud when she sent it to me:



Jen has lots of other things on her plate these days, so she isn't usually available for us. In the past, though, she's created other great images for us:

"Or, if you like, you can continue imagining a ninja unzipping a boar suit just before he stabs you in the stomach."

"(3) You may make that permanent a blue 3/3 giant wizard penguin creature with the abilities of swimming and '2: target land is an island' until end of turn. "Swimming" is like flying, but with islandwalk too. The permanent retains its other types, colors, and abilities as well."

Thanks, Jen!

I notice that sometimes you guys don't do much with the site for a day or two. I understand it's hard to maintain a site like this so it's perfectly understandable, but out of curiosity what are the top reasons why you sometimes take these "breaks"?

-Eric

May 27, 2008

Q: I notice that sometimes you guys don't do much with the site for a day or two. I understand it's hard to maintain a site like this so it's perfectly understandable, but out of curiosity what are the top reasons why you sometimes take these "breaks"?

-Eric, Zephyrhills, FL, USA

A: From **Monty Ashley, Magic Web Team:**

Here, presented in convenient list form, are the top six reasons why we might not have an update when you check the web site:

1. What year is it? Check your calendar. If it's before 2000, chances are the web site doesn't exist yet. If it's after 2057, the Internet doesn't exist any longer because world has collapsed into a postapocalyptic world of motorcycles and spiky shoulderpads, and you'll have to settle for our Braincast, which should be beaming content directly into your cerebellum.
2. Catastrophe! Sometimes there's a power outage or a snowstorm and we can't update the site. We're very sad when this happens, because we almost never get told "It's too nice a day to come into work." No, we only get to stay home when it's miserable outside. It's hardly fair.
3. It is a holiday. I realize that almost everyday is probably some kind of holiday. For example, today, May 27, is "National Grape Popsicle Day" (according to the unbiased people at the Popsicle company). But there are specific holidays on which Wizards of the Coast is closed, so the web site staff doesn't come into the office. The most recent one was Memorial Day, which took place yesterday. The next one is July 4, and then Thanksgiving (the fourth Thursday in November, and also the Friday after it).
4. Maybe it's not really a new day. Check your watch. Maybe you already read today's articles a few hours ago and now you're reading them again, thinking that it's tomorrow already.
5. It's the end of the year. Wizards of the Coast closes for the week between Christmas and New Year's, so we just shut down the web site for two weeks. It's not a complete closure, because we run two "best of" weeks, but it's not new stuff.
6. Weekends. Yes, strange as it may seem, for two days out of every seven, we don't do a thing! Well, unless there's an event with coverage. Which there fairly frequently is. For example, Pro Tour-Hollywood just happened, so we actually had quite a lot of updates on Saturday and Sunday. Still, I'd have to say that the top reason we sometimes don't have updates for a day or two is that we're just not in the office seven days a week.

Thanks for writing!

Why didn't you guys print Spawnwrithe tokens?

-Jay

May 23, 2008

Q: Why didn't you guys print Spawnwrithe tokens? It would be great to be beating down with a horde of Spawnwritthes. I really think Wizards missed an opportunity here.

-Blake, IL, USA

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

You can still beat down with a horde of Spawnwritthes. They'll just look like M&M's, or dice, or whatever else you've got within arm's reach.



Spawnwrithe is a cool card that brings out the Johnny in all of us. If you get a Spawnwrithe card in a *Shadowmoor* booster pack, you're excited about it. And if you get a token as the sixteenth card in a *Shadowmoor* booster pack, you're excited about that, too. To explain why the overlap is bad, I'd have to take you to . . .

The Land of Rules We Don't Expect You to Know

Magic is a game with nearly 10,000 unique game pieces. The **Magic** Comprehensive Rules have a word count of over 80,000 -- and introduction that discourages people from actually reading them. It's not reasonable to expect players to know all the rules and card interactions before they're allowed to have fun. Over the years, editors and rules managers have compiled the secret list of rules that we don't expect people to learn right away (or perhaps at all). Cards are subtly reworded so that players can pick up these rules as they go along.

The "printed text" of a Spawnwrithe token threatens to bring a couple things on that secret list of rules into the open. I suggest that most of you skip the rest of this and go read the Arcana or something while I explain why.

When an effect puts a token into play as a copy of something, it checks the "copiable values" of eleven of that object's characteristics: name, mana cost, color, card type, supertype, subtype, expansion symbol, rules text, power, toughness, and loyalty. The token adopts those characteristics as its own copiable values, which is what makes creatures like Spawnwrithe and Sprouting Phytohydra continue to multiply long after the original card has left play.

This means that Spawnwrithe's ability creates a token with the following characteristics:

Name	Spawnwrithe
Mana cost	2G

Most tokens don't have mana costs. Those that do were all created by abilities that include the word "copy."

Situations that require players to know a token's mana cost (or converted mana cost) are rare, but intuition usually leads to the right answers. If a Spawnwrithe token is enchanted with Essence Leak, you'll have to pay 2G or sacrifice it. If you sacrifice a Spawnwrithe token to Burnt Offering, you'll add three mana in any combination of B and/or R to your mana pool.

Color	Green
Supertype	(none)
Card type	Creature
Subtype	Elemental
Expansion symbol	Rare <i>Shadowmoor</i> symbol

Expansion symbol is on the list because of three cards from the early years of Magic: Apocalypse Chime, City in a Bottle, and Golgothian Sylex. This situation makes the Rules Team very unhappy. Nothing else in the game draws a distinction between different printings of a card with a given name.

The **Magic** Comprehensive Rules, or Comp. Rules for short, are a bit vague about whether the color of an expansion symbol is also copied, but **Magic Online** says that it is so I'll go with that.

Rules text	Trample Whenever Spawnwrithe deals combat damage to a player, put a token into play that's a copy of Spawnwrithe.
Power	2
Toughness	2
Loyalty	(none)

Now imagine opening a *Shadowmoor* booster pack and seeing a Spawnwrithe token with a mana cost printed in the upper right corner and a rare expansion symbol. That's an opportunity I'm glad to have missed.

You can read the "Copying" section of the Main Rules FAQ thread in the Rules Q&A forum to learn more.

I've noticed that the *Tenth Edition* card Paladin en-Vec has a flavor text both in Oracle and in the sortable spoiler. Why does it have one while there is no flavor text on the actual card?

-Laurent

May 22, 2008

Q: I've noticed that the *Tenth Edition* card Paladin en-Vec has a flavor text both in oracle and in the sortable spoiler. Why does it have one while there is no flavor text on the actual card?

-Laurent, Halle, Belgium, Europe

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

Hi Laurent. Most cards in *Tenth Edition* have reminder text that explains how abilities like flying, first strike, or (in Paladin en-Vec's case) protection work. Premium foil *Tenth Edition* cards, however, have no reminder text, which in some circumstances creates room for flavor text for that foil version. You can tell if a piece of flavor text only appears in a *Tenth Edition* card's foil version by looking up the card in Gatherer. If the flavor text is in brackets, it's foil-only -- and you won't see that flavor text on the regular version of the card.

Regarding the Arcana which revealed the *Morningtide* Fat Pack and its contents, the page is quoted "Two card boxes with panoramic art (see below) by Steve Prescott". However, the artwork is not there. Is it possible to see this great artwork exclusive to the fatpack?

-Mike

May 21, 2008

Q: Regarding the Arcana which revealed the *Morningtide* Fat Pack and its contents, the page is quoted "Two card boxes with panoramic art (see below) by Steve Prescott". However, the artwork is not

there. Is it possible to see this great artwork exclusive to the fatpack?

-Mike, Uniontown, PA, USA

A: From **Monty Ashley, Magic** Web Team:

Yes it is. First, though, I'd like to answer the question you *didn't* ask, which is "How come the artwork wasn't there in the first place?" The answer is "I forgot to put it there. Sorry about that."

Whew! Feels good to get that off my chest. Now here's the long-overdue *Morningtide* Fat Pack panoramic art:



What does glamer mean? Was it a misspelling of glamor (or glamour)?

May 20, 2008

Q: What does glamer mean? Was it a misspelling of glamor (or glamour)? Is it pronounced so that it rhymes with gamer? Can I really send you an email that is nothing but questions? Can you sense my sincerity?

-Chris, Houston, Texas, USA

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

"Glamer" means "a charm or trick on the eye," and technically speaking "glamour" is the same word. But "glamour" has largely lost its illusion/magic-related meaning (as in "faerie glamour") and is instead known to most people as meaning "ostentatious beauty" or "sex appeal" (like the magazine). So we decided to use the rarer spelling, "glamer," to put some distance between the modern meaning of the word and its older meaning. For etymology nerds like me, it's interesting to note that "glamer" comes from the Scottish "glammar," whereby it connects with seemingly unrelated words like "glaucoma" and "grammar."

The new *Shadowmoor* cards like Dawnglow Infusion completely confuse me. I understand what the cards say and how they are supposed to work (i.e., you get two effects if you spend two types of mana). But in the case of Dawnglow Infusion, for example, if you spend both green and white mana, how do you calculate X for both life-gaining effects? How do I actually spend both green mana and white mana for the colored mana cost? I can't spend it twice. Please help my hurting brain.

-Ken

- RULES CORNER **May 19, 2008 – Magic Rules Corner**

Q: The new *Shadowmoor* cards like Dawnglow Infusion completely confuse me. I understand what the cards say and how they are supposed to work (i.e., you get two effects if you spend two types of mana). But in the case of Dawnglow Infusion, for example, if you spend both green and white mana, how do you calculate X for both life-gaining effects? How do I actually spend both green mana and white mana for the colored mana cost? I can't spend it twice. Please help my hurting brain.

-Ken, Katonah, NY USA

A: From the Magic Rules Corner:

There are five such cards in *Shadowmoor*: Repel Intruders, River's Grasp, Torrent of Souls, Firespout, and Dawnglow Infusion. Each of these has the potentially confusing trait of containing exactly one hybrid mana symbol in its mana cost, but Dawnglow Infusion adds two additional wrinkles: its mana cost contains X, and its two effects are exactly the same (and both based on what you pay for X). Let's start by looking at a different member of the cycle, Torrent of Souls. We'll get back to Dawnglow Infusion in a moment.

To clear up the first potential point of confusion, it doesn't matter that Torrent of Souls only has one (b/r). It doesn't care that you paid mana of the appropriate color to satisfy its colored mana requirement, only that you paid mana of that color to satisfy any part of the cost to play it. For example, if you pay BBBBR to play Torrent of Souls, you will get both effects.

With that out of the way, let's look at the four things that can happen when you play Torrent of Souls depending on which colors of mana you spent to play it.

If you paid...	B but not R	R but not B	BR	Neither R nor B*
Then...	Return up to one target creature card from your graveyard to play.	Creatures target player controls get +2/+0 and gain haste until end of turn.	Return up to one target creature card from your graveyard to play. Creatures target player controls get +2/+0 and gain haste until end of turn.	Nothing happens!

* Wondering how that might happen? Perhaps you played Torrent of Souls without paying its mana cost because of Memory Plunder or Spinerock Knoll, or perhaps your Torrent of Souls is a copy made by Twincast or by Wort, the Raidmother granting it conspire.

That same basic process applies to all of the members of this cycle, so keep it in mind while we take a look at Dawnglow Infusion again:

The fact that the two effects are the same may seem a little weird at first glance, but it's that X in the mana cost that's really muddling things up. The important point here is that the value of X is determined only once for the whole spell, and it's determined completely separately from the question of whether or not you paid G and/or W.

When you play Dawnglow Infusion, you'll pick a value for X long before you pay the costs to play the spell. When the spell resolves, it will look back and ask three things:

1. What's the value of X?
2. Was G spent to play this spell?
3. Was W spent to play this spell?

Then, you'll gain X life if you spent G + X life if you spent W. So if you chose X=5 and then paid Dawnglow Infusion's mana cost with GGGGGW, the spell will see that X=5, that you paid G, and that you paid W. You'll gain 5+5 life, for a total of 10. The spell doesn't care which color of mana you used to pay the (g/w) portion of its cost.

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.

What is your policy regarding reminder text for "evergreen" keyword abilities?

-Josh

May 16, 2008

Q: What is your policy regarding reminder text for "evergreen" keyword abilities? I know that, previously, the policy was to print the reminder text for the first year of the keyword's existence, and from then on leave it out (aside from core sets). However, in *Shadowmoor*, the cards Runes of the Deus and Shield of the Oversoul have reminder text for double strike and indestructible, respectively. Both abilities which have been around for several years, and have since seen print without the reminder text. Has there been a change in policy, and if so, what is the new one?

-Josh, Gaithersburg, MD, USA

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

Thanks for noticing! Here's an excerpt from the policy statement about reminder text on **Magic** cards. The green text is new for *Shadowmoor*.

General Reminder Text Philosophy

Expert **Magic** players are expected to learn the rules of the game. Reminder text should be avoided except in the specific situations outlined below. Reminder text "creep" is a dangerous thing because (a) cards have limited space and (b) players could come to attribute rules meaning to reminder text (and conversely, to believe that the absence of reminder text functionally changes cards). On the other hand, experienced players should be able to figure out the basics of how new mechanics in expert-level sets work using only the cards as a reference.

Beginning **Magic** players are expected to be able to play cards from the core set and commons from expert-level sets without stopping the game to consult a rulebook. As a result, reminder text is more prevalent in core sets than in expert-level expansions.

Recurring keyword abilities

1. All keyword abilities have reminder text in core sets.
2. Established keyword abilities don't have reminder text in expert-level sets. See #4 for exceptions to this rule.
3. A new recurring keyword ability gets reminder text in expert-level sets for at least one year after its introduction. However, several situations can lead to reminder text being used for two consecutive blocks (for example, a keyword is introduced in the middle of a block, only a small number of cards with the ability exist, etc.).
4. Common cards with certain mechanics that appear at low frequency get reminder text in expert-level sets. Those mechanics are reach, lifelink, deathtouch, double strike, indestructible, and shroud. Outside of core sets, uncommons and rares with these abilities wouldn't have reminder text.

I've been reading most of the hybrid articles for Hybrid theme week, and they all primarily say that

hybrid is where two colors overlap as opposed to "Chinese menu" multicolored cards. Is this true for enemy colored hybrids as well?

-Devin

May 15, 2008

Q: I've been reading most of the hybrid articles for Hybrid theme week, and they all primarily say that hybrid is where two colors overlap as opposed to "Chinese menu" multicolored cards. Is this true for enemy colored hybrids as well? If so, then what exactly are these overlaps, and if not, what makes an enemy colors hybrid?

-Devin, Denver, CO, USA

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

Dear Devin,

While I can't reveal our entire plan, I can tell you this: Modern **Magic** Design recognizes that many players, for example, adore black-green decks. To make our players happy, we've drifted further toward treating the ally and enemy color pairs as equals. *Apocalypse* was the first giant step. Later, *Ravnica* perfectly balanced all the color pairs as guilds.

Ally color and enemy color differ only in a couple ways:

- We print significantly more ally color cards than enemy color cards. We do this because the integral message that "white and green love each other" via Wilt-Leaf Liege is more important for new **Magic** players to learn than the message that "white and black CAN love each other" via Desolation Angel.
- Every ally color hybrid "hates" their common enemy. Both red and green hate blue (Vexing Shusher).
- Every enemy color hybrid "loves" their common ally. There's currently no **Magic** card printed that explores this design space.

As far as the different kinds of multicolor cards we design, I like breaking them up into categories:

Overlap – Both colors can do the effect. Using hybrid mana, you might design a card like Boros Recruit since r/w share first strike. For gold, you could design a powerful version of the same card like Boros Swiftblade, again since red and white share double strike. This is my favorite kind of hybrid card.

Unique – If an effect is brand-spanking new and never been on a Magic card before...the first duty is to decide what color gets to do that effect. A hybrid color pair could be that choice! It's difficult to argue about color for cards like Shadow of Doubt, Wheel of Sun and Moon, or Dovescape when no other card before has the effect "All spells are birds." This is *Shadowmoor* Lead Developer Aaron Forsythe's favorite kind of hybrid card.

"Chinese Menu" – Take an effect from color A, then another effect from color B, and you've created a Chinese Menu-style gold card. The shining example here is Lightning Helix. Only gold cards can do this; hybrid cards don't get to. Whenever you see a Chinese Menu-style hybrid card like Orzhov Guildmage, there's most likely a colored mana snuck in there to make it a "gold card in disguise". If not, you've discovered what we call a...

Bleed – A color is doing something it's not supposed to be doing. For more about color-bleeding in hybrid in *Shadowmoor*, check out Mark Rosewater and Devin Low's articles.

The cycle of cards which became more effective in proportion with a particular basic land type has me a little confused. Could you give some details about this cycle?

-Gabriel

May 14, 2008

Q: The cycle of cards which became more effective in proportion with a particular basic land type had me a little confused at first. There are the *Shadowmoor* original sorceries (Red with Jaws of Stone and Green with Howl of the Night Pack) and the reprints (Blue's Flow of Ideas, and Black's Corrupt) from various sets. All of them are Sorceries, but none of the three White sorceries in *Shadowmoor* had effects based on the number of Plains you had. Then I noticed Armored Ascension, which is a completely different card type.

Could you give some details about this cycle?

–Gabriel, Baytown, TX, USA

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

Development started from the concept of a cycle of "Corrupts," meaning cards that rewarded you for having many, many basic lands of the same type, with the actual card Corrupt being the poster child. *Ravnica's* Flow of Ideas was the next card suggested, and it made a lot of sense. We talked about cards like Spitting Earth and Beacon of Creation, but they didn't fit in quite right.

Seeing as reprints weren't going to be the answer, we set out making new cards. Jaws of Stone and Howl of the Night Pack are descendants of Spitting Earth and Beacon of Creation. For white, we just couldn't come up with a sorcery we liked. We already had making tokens, and no one wanted it to gain life. So instead of making a bad white sorcery, we decided to break the cycle a little and have the white one be a powered-up version of Blanchwood Armor. The pureness of the cycle was just not as important as making each card as awesome as it could be.

How do people in R&D pronounce the hybrid mana symbols?

–Will

May 13, 2008

Q: How do people in R&D pronounce the hybrid mana symbols?

–Will, New Haven, CT

A: From **Monty Ashley**, **Magic** Web Team:

Will, that's an excellent question. As it turns out, not everyone in R&D pronounces them the same way. We made up some cue cards of hybrid mana symbols and showed them to R&D members to see how they'd pronounce them. Enjoy!

Looking at some of the hybrids for black and red in the new *Shadowmoor* set, I've noticed that there's a difference between damage and life loss. It should seem obvious, I guess, but could you explain how different they really are?

–Brett - RULES CORNER **May 12, 2008 – Magic Rules Corner**

Q: Looking at some of the hybrids for black and red in the new *Shadowmoor* set, I've noticed that there's a difference between damage and life loss. It should seem obvious, I guess, but could you explain how different they really are?

–Brett, Quakertown, PA, USA

A: From the Magic Rules Corner:

The relationship between damage and loss of life is a causal one. In other words, loss of life isn't damage, but, as Sygg, River Cutthroat's reminder text says, "Damage causes loss of life."

Damage has different results depending on what it's being dealt to. Two weeks ago, we discussed the rules for damage dealt to creatures in order to explain how wither works, and last November, we talked about damage dealt to planeswalkers, both in combat and out of combat. Let's round things out by talking about damage dealt to players.

As the Comprehensive Rules put it (both in rule 215.2 and in the glossary entry for damage), "Damage dealt to a player causes that player to lose that much life." As you've noticed, though, damage isn't the only thing that can reduce a player's life total. Costs and effects that read "lose life" or "pay life" don't deal damage, and that loss of life can't be prevented or otherwise altered by effects that prevent or replace damage.

So, in a nutshell:

- Damage can be prevented and redirected, while loss of life can't.
- Anything that specifically refers to damage (such as Furnace of Rath) isn't talking about loss of life.
- Anything that specifically refers to loss of life (such as Sygg, River Cutthroat) is talking about any loss of life, whether it's caused by damage or not.
- Paying life causes a player to lose that much life, but a player can't pay more life than he or she has. For example, a player with 5 life who was the target of Tyrannize would have to discard his or her hand.

Lastly, note that if an effect sets a player's life total to an amount lower than his or her current life total, that player loses life equal to the difference (and the reverse is also true). This matters for any effects that care about loss of life (such as Wound Reflection).

*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.*

Was there a conscious decision to make *Lorwyn* the first ever block without a single Dragon?

–Greg

May 9, 2008

Q: Was there a conscious decision to make *Lorwyn* the first ever block without a single Dragon?

–Greg, Athens, OH, USA

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

I'm sorry, Greg. I don't know what you're talking about. There are twenty Dragons in *Lorwyn* and *Morningtide*. (Is that joke old yet? Yes? Can we stop telling it?) Anyway, it's not like we set out to withhold awesomeness or anything. But the more that *Lorwyn* came together, the more two different forces pushed dragons out of the set: First, *Lorwyn*'s storybook feel made gigantic, predatory threats like dragons seem really out of place and disruptive to establishing the world's identity. Second, and more importantly, every single creature slot in the block was needed to support its tribal theme, which is why the block isn't just devoid of Dragons, but also of Bears, Trolls, Hounds, and every other creature type outside of *Lorwyn*'s eight tribes.

"I've noticed that the ending suffix of spells "pertaining to the elf race" has changed over time. Cards have been printed with both "elven" and "elvish", and the terms seem to be used interchangeably. For example, Elven Warhounds and Elvish Fury both came out in *Tempest*." --Matthew Chicago, IL **May 8, 2008**

Q: I've noticed that the ending suffix of spells "pertaining to the elf race" has changed over time. Cards have been printed with both "elven" and "elvish", and the terms seem to be used

interchangeably. For example, Elven Warhounds and Elvish Fury both came out in *Tempest*.

--Matthew
Chicago, IL

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

Hi Matthew,

Good question. There have been three policies, sort of, for the usage of "elven" and "elvish" on **Magic** cards. You might think of them as having defined three eras.

The Unenlightened (aka "Devil-May-Care") Era

In the earliest days, there wasn't really a policy at all. "Elven" and "elvish" were indeed used interchangeably. Elven Riders from *Legends* stood side-by-side with Alpha's Elvish Archers. Why one and not the other? No reason other than the personal preference of the designers and editors at the time. It was chaos, I tell you. Cats and dogs living together. Mass hysteria. Clearly there was need for a policy.

The Dual (aka "Elvenish") Era

Beginning around *Fallen Empires* and continuing through sometime before *Onslaught*, both words were used for particular purposes. The word "elven" was used to describe anything that was produced, used or manufactured by elves, such as Elven Fortress or Elven Warhounds. "Elvish" was used to describe an elven person or something derived directly from an elf, such as Elvish Berserker or, if you squint, Elvish Fury. See also the flavor text of cards like Argothian Elder -- the language of elves is almost universally described as "elvish." But then again, see the Fifth Edition Wall of Brambles. Sigh.

The Contemporary (aka "Elvish is King") Era

These distinctions and corner cases were later seen as pretty dumb. A "rite" is elven, but "fury" is elvish? Beginning with approximately *Onslaught* (during a big, tribal revival of elfkind), "elven" was retired and everything is now called "elvish," whether it's an elf person, an elf-created spell effect, an elf-forged sword or a house party attended by elves.

Note that Elven Riders was reprinted in *Onslaught* alongside Elvish Warrior and other "elvish" names. I believe that was just an exception for the sake of the reprint and not a change in the policy. These days it's all "elvish," all the time. Thanks for your question!

(This question and answer originally ran on January 12, 2007.)

When do *Eventide* previews start?

--Brandon

May 7, 2008

Q: When do *Eventide* previews start?

--Brandon, Fletcher, NC, USA

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

Ah, spring, when a young player's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of **Magic**. The birds are singing, the sun is shining (well, not in the Seattle area, but somewhere), *Shadowmoor* packs are popping open in a shower of hybrid goodness...

...and of course, it's the perfect time to start thinking about previews for the *next* set!

I kid, I kid. This year's unusual release schedule has made it a little tricky to know what to expect and when, and we're here to help.

You've got a nice long while to enjoy *Shadowmoor* before we start gearing up for *Eventide* and whatever changes it has in store. Week 1 of *Eventide* previews begins Monday, June 30 here on magicthegathering.com.



Were Twilight Shepherd, and Midnight Banshee designed as part of a cycle, a reflection, or separately?

–Joey

May 6, 2008

Q: Were Twilight Shepherd, and Midnight Banshee designed as part of a cycle, a reflection, or separately? They seem to share a lot of characteristics. 3WW vs 3BBB, 5/5, Twilight vs. Midnight...

–Joey, Des Plaines, Illinois

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

Joey,

I feel like giving you an honest answer is going to burst a bubble, so I'm going to answer it this way: Twilight Shepherd and Midnight Banshee weren't consciously designed to be a reflection or part of a cycle. Subconsciously... Who knows? They were both the creation of the same designer, Ken Nagle.

My friend and I somehow always seem to have the same argument almost every other day: what exactly does "indestructible" mean in **Magic**? We both agree that it cannot be destroyed by most spells, but it can be removed from the game or put on top on the owners library etc. The only thing we can never agree on is whether or not the creature would be killed if it has a toughness of 0.

- **RULES CORNER** **May 5, 2008** – **Magic Rules Corner**

Q: My friend and I somehow always seem to have the same argument almost every other day: what exactly does "indestructible" mean in **Magic**? We both agree that it cannot be destroyed by most spells, but it can be removed from the game or put on top on the owners library etc. The only thing we can never agree on is whether or not the creature would be killed if it has a toughness of 0.

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

The release of *Shadowmoor* brings us Shield of the Oversoul—the first common card that can make a creature indestructible—and that's raising questions of what exactly being indestructible means.

Let's start by looking at what exactly "destroy" means. When a permanent is destroyed, it's put into its owner's graveyard, but that doesn't mean that every permanent that's put into a graveyard is destroyed. In fact, **there are exactly two ways for a permanent to be destroyed**:

- It can be destroyed by a spell or ability that specifically uses the word "destroy" (like Terror does).
- It can be destroyed by the rules of the game if it's a creature and it's been dealt lethal damage (damage greater than or equal to its toughness).

A permanent can go to the graveyard or be removed from play otherwise in many ways, but only these two are "destroying" it. That means that being indestructible—much like regenerating—can stop either of those two things from happening, but it can't help against anything else.

With that in mind, let's look at the glossary definition of "indestructible" from the Comprehensive Rules:

If a permanent is indestructible, rules and effects can't destroy it. Such permanents are not destroyed by lethal damage, and they ignore the lethal-damage state-based effect (see rule 420.5c). Rules or effects may cause an indestructible permanent to be sacrificed, put into a graveyard, or removed from the game.

The "rules" part of "rules and effects" refers to the rule that says that a creature with lethal damage on it is destroyed. (In **Magic**, damage doesn't kill creatures; state-based effects do.) The "effects" part refers to more straightforward cases such as Terror that actually say "destroy." In other words, as you pointed out, a **creature that's indestructible isn't destroyed for having lethal damage on it, and effects that say "destroy" don't destroy it.**

Being indestructible doesn't protect the creature from leaving play in other ways. As you and your friend agree, **it can still be removed from the game** (say, with Last Breath), **returned to its owner's hand** (with Unsummon, for example), **put on the top or bottom of a library** (with Æthertow or Condemn, perhaps), etc. Sacrificing a permanent doesn't destroy it, either, so **neither regenerating nor being indestructible can stop a sacrificed permanent from going to the graveyard.**

Shadowmoor's -1/-1 counter theme brings your final question to the forefront. Can an indestructible creature be killed if it has a toughness of 0 or less? Think back to the definition of "destroy." Having 0 or less toughness doesn't cause a creature to be destroyed; it causes it to be put into its owner's graveyard as a state-based effect (that's rule 420.5b). The same is true for two or more legendary permanents with the same name, two or more planeswalkers with the same subtype, and Auras that aren't enchanting anything or are enchanting something illegal. **Being indestructible won't keep a creature from going to the graveyard for having 0 toughness or for having the same name as another legendary permanent.** Note, however, that if an indestructible 2/2 is the target of Puncture Bolt, it won't be put into the graveyard, as it's now a 1/1 with 1 point of damage on it. The fact that its toughness was reduced doesn't matter, only that its toughness is still above 0.

Two other points while we're on the subject:

Being indestructible isn't the same as regenerating. Regenerating a permanent *replaces* the event of that permanent being destroyed with something else: removing all damage from the permanent, tapping the permanent, and (if it's in combat) removing it from combat. Some creatures, such as Mossbridge Troll, regenerate every time they would be destroyed. This means, first, that anything that would destroy the creature instead has the effects that regeneration normally does; and second, that effects such as Terror's will still destroy it, because Terror says, "It can't be regenerated." Neither of these things is true of an indestructible permanent. It's also worth noting that an indestructible permanent never regenerates, because it's never the case that it "would be destroyed."

Being indestructible doesn't prevent damage, nor does it counter spells. If a creature with lifelink deals 3 damage to an indestructible 3/3 creature, the controller of the creature with lifelink will

still gain 3 life (and, unless the creature with lifelink also had wither, the indestructible creature will have 3 damage on it until the end of the turn). If an indestructible green and/or white creature is the target of Gloomlance, it won't be destroyed, but its controller will still have to discard a card. If an indestructible creature takes damage equal to or greater than its toughness, then stops being indestructible later in the same turn (say, because the Shield of the Oversoul enchanting it is destroyed by Gleeful Sabotage), it will be destroyed. The same is not the case if it's destroyed by a "destroy" effect and later stops being indestructible—"destroy" effects only care whether the permanent is indestructible at the particular moment they try to destroy it. Finally, **if a source with wither deals damage to an indestructible creature, that many -1/-1 counters will be put on the indestructible creature.** If this reduces the creature's toughness to 0 or less, it's put into its owner's graveyard just like any other creature.

Indestructible, yes. Unkillable? Not so much.

*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.*

Who designs the abilities for **Magic Online**'s Vanguard cards?

–Doc

May 2, 2008

Q: Who designs the abilities for **Magic Online**'s Vanguard cards?

–Doc, New York, NY, USA

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

Dear Doc M.C.,

I do!

Actually, **Magic Online** Vanguard Avatar final abilities involve quite a few people. The creative team selects the "most flavorful" and "most renderable" characters, I select from the list what I believe will make for the most appealing avatars and abilities, and the **Magic Online** programming team lets me know what abilities are and aren't doable online. **Magic** developer extraordinaire Erik Lauer helps balance abilities and starting hand / life totals.

That said, it's no accident that two of my first ever card designs, Stonehewer Giant and Maralen of the Mornsong, ended up becoming the *Morningtide* avatars. How lucky! :D

If you have any complements, complaints, or concerns regarding **Magic Online** Vanguard Avatars, I want to hear them. Send me an email!

Not many things can actually fly, but a set needs lots of creatures with flying. Do you ever find it hard to find flavour justifications for large numbers of creatures with flying?

–Pegaweb

May 1, 2008

Q: Not many things can actually fly, but a set needs lots of creatures with flying. Do you ever find it hard to find flavour justifications for large numbers of creatures with flying?

–Pegaweb, Adelaide, South Australia

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

Although from an outside point of view the **Magic** worldbuilding process may seem intensely creative (and parts of it are), the truth is that a few key parts of the process are very systematic. In creating worlds for **Magic**, we work backward from the needs of cards in lots of different ways. One example is what has come to be known as "The Grid." In our worldbuilding process, The Grid has the five colors of mana as its rows, and its columns are labeled "small," "medium," "large," "small flying,"

"medium flying," and "large flying." We know that if any box in The Grid is blank by the time we finalize the world's style guide, we have created a problem that will have to be solved by a card conceper or illustrator down the line. Yes, this does create a little pressure to find enough options for flying creatures in a given setting, but it's also a way to make sense of a given setting in a way that's right for **Magic's** needs.

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

