

THE DUEL

Before the duel begins, both players put up one or more cards from their decks as ante. Whoever wins the duel will get to keep the ante cards, so pay attention to the ante when you're deciding whether or not to duel a creature.

When the duel starts, your deck is shuffled and laid face down on the table. This is now your library—your draw pile. Right away, each player draws an opening hand of seven cards from his or her library. Near your library is the space for your graveyard, or discard pile. Most of the cards you bring into play will go into your half of the playing surface, which is called your *territory*. A few of your cards may go into your opponent's territory instead. If you play cards in enemy territory, you don't lose them; they are retrieved for you when the duel is over.

You are now ready to start the duel. Who goes first is determined at random.

The Phases of a Turn

Dueling players take turns, and each player's turn is divided into six smaller parts called *phases*. You might not always have something to do during a given phase, but that phase still happens. The phases always take place in the same order:

- 1) Untap
- 2) Upkeep
- 3) Draw
- 4) Main
- 5) Discard
- 6) Cleanup

Untap Phase

Your turn starts with your untap phase. Any of your cards that were tapped become untapped. (That is, of course, unless some card is preventing them from untapping.) If it's not your turn, your cards do not untap.

One important thing to remember is that untapping takes place instantaneously. There is no opportunity to do anything, not even cast interrupts. Also, for the purposes of the rules, all of the cards are considered to untap at exactly the same time.

In some cases, you will have to decide which cards to untap. You must make this decision at the very beginning of the untap phase, before anything is untapped. Some enchantments, like Paralyze, prevent a card from untapping normally. Instead, you will have an opportunity to untap the card in some other way. In the case of Paralyze, by paying four generic mana during the next phase, upkeep.

Untap is the only time that cards untap by themselves, but there are plenty of spells and effects that tap and untap cards at other times.

Upkeep Phase

After untap comes upkeep. Some cards require you to perform a particular action during this phase. Such cards will say what this action is and what the consequences are if you don't do it. If you don't have such a card in play, then you don't have to do anything during this phase.

If there are multiple cards in play which tell you to do something during upkeep, the player whose turn it is gets to choose in what order to do those things, within certain limits.

Effects that take place "at the beginning of upkeep" must happen first. Those controlled by the player whose turn it is come first (in whatever order she chooses), followed by those controlled by the other

player (also in the order the active player chooses). After those have all been dealt with come the normal upkeep effects. After all of these have been dealt with, the “end of upkeep” effects happen, in the same order as the “beginning of upkeep” effects (active player’s first, then the other player’s). This is true of all beginning of phase and end of phase effects.

During upkeep, both players are allowed to use fast effects—instants, interrupts, and effects listed on cards in play. You can’t use sorceries during upkeep. If a permanent has an upkeep cost, you cannot activate any of that card’s effects until you’ve paid the upkeep cost. This does not apply to continuous effects, but only those with an activation cost.

Draw Phase

Next, you draw one card from the top of your library. If you don’t have any cards left to draw, you lose.

One clarification—you don’t lose as soon as your library empties. You lose if and when you are required to draw a card from your library and have no card in your library left to draw. So if you just drew your last card, you’ll lose during your *next* draw phase unless you do something about it.

The player who goes first in any duel does not draw during her first draw phase. This is called the “play or draw” rule. You either play first or draw first, not both.

Just like during upkeep, some cards will tell you to do things during the draw phase. If there are multiple cards in play that do so, the player whose turn it is gets to choose in what order to do them.

The one exception to this ordering rule is that beginning of phase and end of phase effects occur in a predetermined order (as described in *Upkeep Phase*).

The act of drawing is considered to be a fast effect. Thus, both before and after the draw, both players are allowed to use fast effects. You can’t use any other spells during the draw phase.

Main Phase

The main phase is the phase you’ll do the most in. During the main phase of your turn, you can:

- cast spells,
- put one land into play, and
- make one attack.

You can do these in any order. The “cast spells” part of the main phase of your turn is the only time you can cast sorceries and permanents (creatures, artifacts, and enchantments). You can cast them before *and* after you put a land into play *and* before *and* after your attack. You can *not* cast them *during* your attack.

To help keep things straight, the main phase is split into three parts.

Main Pre-Combat is everything that happens before the attack. During this “sub-phase” you can put one land into play and cast all the spells you wish. (As long as you have enough mana to pay for them, you can cast all the spells in your hand if you want to.) Remember that land is not a spell, so putting a land into play is not considered casting a spell. It’s also not an “action” that your opponent can respond to.

Combat is the part of the phase that can get the most complicated. This is when you send some of your creatures over to attack the other player, and she uses her creatures to block yours and defend herself. In the meantime, you can both toss fast effects around like crazy. You don’t have to attack if you don’t want to. (You can also attack with zero creatures; that’s called a “null attack”.)

Main Post-Combat is everything that happens after the attack. If you didn’t put a land into play before the attack, you can do so now. Just like in pre-combat, you can also cast all the spells you can afford.

Both players may use all the fast effects they want to during the main phase.

Discard Phase

If your hand has more than seven cards in it at the end of your main phase, you must discard back down to seven during the discard phase. You can't discard if you have seven or fewer cards. (The cards in your graveyard, or discard pile, will always remain face up.)

You can look through either graveyard any time you wish. That's why your graveyard is required to be face up. Some spells even let you pull cards out of the graveyard – if one of these cards says “*your* graveyard” that’s just what it means; if it says “*the* graveyard” it means both!

Just as with upkeep and draw, some cards tell you to do things during discard, and if there are several of these cards, the player whose turn it is gets to choose what order to do them in.

Again, the exception to this ordering rule is that beginning of phase and end of phase effects occur in a predetermined order (as described in ***Upkeep Phase***).

Both players can use fast effects during the discard phase, but only before you discard, not after. (Technically, the discard is an end of phase effect.)

Cleanup Phase

This phase should really be called the “Heal Creatures and Clean Up Temporary Effects Phase,” but it just doesn’t sound as good. At the end of the turn, all surviving creatures instantly heal any damage they have taken. This applies to creatures on both sides; every critter heals back to full capacity at the end of each turn. No player can use fast effects during this phase.

In addition, all effects that last “until end of turn” wear off at the same time as the creatures heal.

One thing must be clarified. All of the “until end of turn” effects wear off simultaneously with each other *and* with damage, so a creature that is only alive at end of turn due to an effect – Giant Growth, for example – will survive; it won’t find its toughness dropping just before the damage goes away.

Anything that a card says happens “at end of turn” happens at the very end of the cleanup phase. These are considered end of phase effects, and the order in which they happen is the same. If any of the automatic effects cause damage or destruction, you do get the opportunity to use damage prevention, redirection, and regeneration fast effects.

This means that “at end of turn” effects last just slightly longer than “until end of turn” effects. It might not seem important right now, but it will.

This phase is instantaneous, like untap, so neither player can use fast effects. When the cleanup phase is over, so is the turn, and the next player’s turn begins immediately. There is absolutely no time “between turns.”

Basic Spellcasting

Casting a spell is what you do to take a non-land card out of your hand and put it into play. To cast a spell, you select the card, use mana to pay the casting cost, and lay the card down on the table. It’s a simple process, but it can get mighty complicated. We’ll start with the simple explanation.

One point to keep in mind throughout is that a permanent (creature, artifact, or enchantment) counts as a spell only while it’s on its way from your hand to the table. When it’s in your hand, it’s a *card*; while you’re casting it, it’s a *spell*; after it is successfully cast, it becomes a *creature*, *artifact*, or *enchantment* (though it also counts as a *card* again). Anything in your library or graveyard is a *card*; though some spells refer to a “creature” in the graveyard, you should treat these as if they say “card representing a creature.”

Casting Cost

First, let’s take a closer look at the casting cost. The casting cost is always written in mana symbols. For each of the five colors of mana, there is a separate, distinct symbol; each time that symbol appears, it represents one mana of the appropriate color. Numbers in gray circles represent generic mana, which can

be any color, any combination of colors, or colorless. To cast a spell, you must pay its entire casting cost. A spell with a casting cost that looked like one drop of water would require one blue mana to cast. A spell with a casting cost of one drop of water and a grey 1 would require one blue mana plus one other mana. This other mana could also be blue, or it could be black, green, colorless, or whatever. The generic mana doesn't even have to be all of the same type.

Remember, the color of mana required in the casting cost determines the color of the spell. Artifacts and lands are colorless, and artifact is not a color. If you used Thoughtlace to turn an artifact blue, it would be a blue artifact. Then, either Circle of Protection: Blue or Circle of Protection: Artifacts could stop damage from it. Colorless isn't a color, either.

Occasionally you will see X in the casting cost of a spell. This represents a variable amount of generic mana. For X spells, X can be any number, even 0. The text of an X spell will explain what the X represents. For example, the casting cost of the Disintegrate spell is X and a little fireball. The card text reads, in part, "deals X damage to target creature or player." So if you cast Disintegrate using four generic mana plus one red mana (the little fireball), the spell will deal 4 damage to the target of your choice.

Why would you ever want to play a spell with an X of 0? Well, if your opponent has a Black Vise (an artifact which deals damage to you if you have more than four cards in your hand) in play, you might just want to get cards out of your hand, even if they don't do anything. Besides that, some spells can do useful things even when X is 0. For example, the spell Disintegrate mentioned above deals X damage to a target, but it also prevents the target from regenerating for the rest of the turn.

When you cast a spell with an X in the casting cost, you have to decide what X is at casting time and pay the appropriate amount of mana before the spell goes into play. You can't wait to see what your opponent's response is before deciding what you want X to be. Once you've given X a value, you can't change it later. The same rule applies to using the effects and abilities of cards in play that have an X in their activation costs; it also applies to other costs paid for a spell that aren't part of the casting cost, including splitting a Fireball between targets or pumping extra black mana into a Drain Life to deal damage.

Targeting

Some spells must have a valid target or you can't cast them. For example, you can't cast an enchant creature spell if there's no suitable creature on which to cast it. Likewise, you can't cast a spell that destroys target red permanent unless it's aimed at a red permanent.

Keep in mind, however, that you *can* cast a spell that needs no target (a "non-targeted spell") even if that spell will have no effect.

You must determine the target of a targeted spell at casting time. You can't change the target later, either. (Some cards can, though.)

If a spell or effect allows more than one target, you cannot choose the same thing as a target more than once *in the same activation*. For example, say you cast a Fireball spell and paid the extra mana to allow three targets. You could choose three different creatures as targets, but you could not pick two creatures and target one of them twice. This limitation does not apply to a spell or effect used at another time (even if it's the same effect). So you could (to continue the example) choose any or all of the three creatures as targets for a second Fireball.

Fizzle

If, for whatever reason, a spell fails without action from your opponent, that spell is said to have "fizzled."

Minor mistakes cause a spell to fizzle—choosing an illegal target, for example, or tapping the wrong mana. When a spell fizzles, the card is returned to your hand as if nothing had happened, but the mana in the mana pool is still there (since drawing mana from a mana source is a separate action from the casting of the fizzled spell). If this mana is not used before the end of the phase, it will cause mana burn.

If you change your mind about a spell after you've started casting it, you can always cause it to fizzle intentionally.

Introduction to Creatures

Creatures are usually your main line of attack and defense. Creatures come into play whenever a summon spell is successfully cast. Remember that summon spells become permanents, so creature cards remain in play, and you don't have to pay their casting costs again. Creatures can participate in combat—attacking, defending, and dealing damage to players and to each other.

Power and Toughness

All creatures have two numbers separated by a slash in the lower right corner of the card. The first of these numbers indicates the creature's power, which is the amount of damage that creature deals in combat. The second number represents the creature's toughness, or the amount of damage the creature can absorb before it dies. Lots of spells and effects change these numbers.

If a creature's power is 0 or less than 0, it is still capable of attacking and still deals damage—0 damage—in combat. Creatures with negative power do *not* deal negative damage.

It's important to note here that dealing 0 damage does *not* trigger effects that happen when something “deals damage to” or “damaged” something else. For example, if the Hypnotic Specter deals damage to a player, its triggered effect causes that player to discard a card from her hand. If she used the effect of a Sorceress Queen to change the specter's power and toughness to 0/2, the specter would deal 0 damage, and she would avoid having to discard.

Anything that refers to a creature's power or toughness means the current power or toughness, not the numbers printed on the card. For example, Dwarven Warriors has the ability to make a creature with power no greater than 2 unblockable. Suppose I have a Hurloon Minotaur (normally 2/3) enchanted with Giant Strength, which gives a creature +2/+2. The enchanted Minotaur is a 4/5 creature, and the Dwarven Warriors can't make it unblockable, even though the power actually printed on the Minotaur is 2.

If a spell is really intended to alter the power printed on the card rather than alter the creature's current power, it will say so. You won't run into this very often, but a few cards will say to actually change the power or toughness of a card to a specific value instead of simply adding to or subtracting from its current value. For example, Sorceress Queen has the effect (Tap symbol): Target creature other than Sorceress Queen becomes 0/2 until end of turn. If something changes a creature's power or toughness to a specific value, then it is as if the card had that number printed on it, and any pluses or minuses are applied on top of that. So if the Sorceress Queen zapped the Hurloon Minotaur with the Giant Strength on it, the Minotaur would become a 0/2 creature with a +2/+2 enchantment on it, making it 2/4.

When a creature receives as much or more damage than it has toughness, it has taken *lethal damage*, it dies, and it goes to the graveyard. Any non-lethal damage a creature receives is erased at the end of every turn (during the cleanup phase). Notice that all surviving creatures heal at the end of every turn, not just at the end of their owner's turn. Before a creature dies, many spells can prevent damage to the creature, redirect the damage somewhere else, heal some of the damage, or even regenerate the creature completely. On the other hand, none of these is any help once the card reaches the graveyard. The timing of when things reach the graveyard is important, so we'll get into detail about it later, in *Going To The Graveyard*.

Summoning Sickness

A creature can't attack during the turn it was summoned. Magic players have several nicknames for this, but “summoning sickness” will do for our purposes. Anything that brings a creature into play on your side causes it to have summoning sickness. Note that while you can't attack with a newly summoned creature, you can use it to defend during your opponent's next turn.

That isn't exactly all there is to it, but this explanation will do for the introduction. The full rules about summoning sickness are in *Advanced Spellcasting*.

Combat without the Complications

During the main phase of your turn, you may make one attack. When you do this, you can send some or all (or none—see the sidebar) of your creatures out to try to get through to your opponent. Either player may use fast effects during the attack, but those are the “complications” that we’re not going to talk about right now. No one can cast sorceries or permanents or put land into play during the attack.

Keep in mind that when you attack, you *always* attack your opponent. You can’t attack your opponent’s creatures, and you can’t attack yourself or your own creatures. On the other hand, casting a spell or using an effect is not an attack. You can cast spells that damage and destroy your own creatures, and you can use a card’s special effects against your creatures or yourself. Why would you want to do that? Usually you wouldn’t, but no matter how bizarre an action seems, someone can probably come up with some obscure circumstances under which it becomes good strategy.

Sometimes it can be useful to declare an attack with no creatures just to limit your opponent’s choices. For example, the spell *Siren’s Call*—which forces all of your opponent’s creatures that can to attack—can only be cast *before* the attack begins. If you suspect that your opponent has a *Siren’s Call*, you might declare an attack early in your main phase so that she has to either use the spell right away or not use it at all. Then you can attack with no creatures if she chooses not to use it. If you do this, it uses up your attack for that turn; you can’t declare an attack with no creatures and then declare another attack later in the same turn.

There’s a progression to this attack thing.

- 7) **Begin Combat:** First, you announce that you are about to attack. (You and your opponent get a chance to toss fast effects before combat officially starts.)
- 8) **Declare Attackers:** Next, you decide which of your creatures will attack and which will band with attackers to form groups.
- 9) **Fast Effects:** Both players get to use fast effects after the attackers have been declared.
- 10) **Declare Blocking:** Your opponent decides which of her creatures will block and which of your creatures each will block.
- 11) **Fast Effects:** Both players can use fast effects once the blocking has been declared.
- 12) **Resolution:** Finally, the combat damage assigned during the attack is resolved. This usually includes lots of fast effects, especially preventing and repairing damage before things die.

The minutely detailed breakdown of the attack sequence is in *Appendix A*. Refer to it when you have tricky questions. What follows is a simplified version that illustrates all the basics of combat.

Let’s assume that you’ve announced that you are attacking, and your opponent didn’t use any fast effects. Next, you **Declare Attackers**—pick which of your creatures are going to attack. This taps them. You must declare (and thus tap) all of your attackers now; you can’t add or subtract creatures later on. Those creatures which are already tapped or have summoning sickness can’t attack. Another exception to this rule is the “Wall” type of creature; under normal circumstances, walls cannot attack.

Once you’ve finished arranging your attack, both you and your opponent have a chance to use **Fast Effects**. The possible actions are almost infinite, but some of the most common efforts are to kill attackers early, raise or lower their power and toughness, remove them from the attack, and make them harder or even impossible to block.

Now comes your opponent’s turn to **Declare Blocking**—decide which of her creatures are blocking yours. Only untapped creatures may block; tapped creatures are unavailable. Keep in mind that your opponent gets to choose which creatures block which; you can’t launch an attack directly at any of your opponent’s creatures. Each of your opponent’s defending creatures can be assigned to block one of your attacking creatures. Multiple defenders can block one attacker, but one defender can’t normally be assigned to block multiple attackers. Defending doesn’t tap a creature.

Here's an important rule. Once an attacking creature is blocked, it stays blocked—*no matter what* happens to the blocker. Killing or removing the blocker doesn't unblock the attacker—neither does casting a spell which, if cast earlier, would have made the block illegal, nor does otherwise changing the attacker's abilities. So, for example, you can still use Jump to give a creature flying after the block has been declared, but it won't do any good.

After the blocking has been determined, it's time for more **Fast Effects**—the second round of combat effects. Again, the possibilities are endless. Likely actions are changes to power and toughness, removing attackers for their own protection, and damaging creatures to ensure their demise.

Once a creature has been declared as an attacker or blocker, the only ways to get it out of the combat are to remove it from play, kill it, change its controller, or use a card that specifically says that it removes the creature from combat. Untapping an attacking creature doesn't stop it from being an attacker or prevent it from dealing damage; it just makes it untapped. Tapping a blocking creature doesn't stop it from being a blocker, either, but it does prevent it from dealing damage.

Any combatant (attacker or blocker) that is destroyed or takes lethal damage from a fast effect before the damage dealing step goes to the graveyard. This takes the creature out of play, so it won't deal damage during the attack. Similarly, a creature that is returned to its controller's hand or removed from the game entirely before the damage dealing stage doesn't deal damage. The same goes for any creature that changes controllers during the attack (though if it was tapped, it stays tapped until the new controller's next untap phase).

Lastly comes the **Resolution** step. Once the blockers have been assigned and all the fast effects have been resolved, the creatures actually deal their damage. Each creature deals damage equal to its power. Attacking creatures deal their damage to the defenders blocking them, while defenders deal their damage to the attackers they block. Note that a blocking creature absorbs *all* of the damage the attacker deals, even if it is more than enough to kill it. The "extra" damage doesn't go anywhere—it's blocked (unless the attacker has trample, explained later).

Damage dealt by attacking and blocking creatures in combat is called *combat damage*. This is to differentiate it from other types of damage. Damage caused by fast effects or spells is never combat damage.

If more than one defender blocks a single attacking creature, whoever controls the attacking creature gets to split its damage as desired among the defenders blocking it.

Attacking creatures that aren't blocked deal their damage to the defending player. That's the whole point, isn't it?

All damage is dealt in sequence. Creatures with first strike deal their damage first—all at exactly the same time. Any creature that takes damage equal to or greater than its toughness has taken lethal damage, goes to the graveyard, and is no longer part of the combat. Next, the survivors (those without first strike, that is; the first strike creatures do *not* deal damage twice) get their turn—again, simultaneously.

At any time that a creature (or player) receives damage, there's an opportunity for damage prevention fast effects. These include any fast effects that prevent damage, heal damage, regenerate creatures (if they've taken lethal damage), or redirect damage to another target. During a damage resolution step, neither player may use any fast effects except damage prevention effects and the interrupts that target them.

Finally, the damage is actually dealt—all at exactly the same time. Any creature that takes lethal damage goes to the graveyard.

Advanced Spellcasting

You already know the basics of how to cast a spell. Now let's look a little more closely at spells and their results, starting with the fast effects built into many permanents. Permanents are the cards that stay in play once cast—enchancements, summons, and artifacts. Lands are also considered permanents, even though they aren't cast as spells.

The terminology is important here. Once a permanent comes into play, it's not a spell anymore (lands never were); it's just a permanent. Thus, a permanent can't be the target of anything that only targets spells. For example, Spell Blast is an interrupt that can counter any spell. You can cast Spell Blast on a summon spell while it is being cast, but once the creature has been successfully summoned, it is no longer a spell and you can't affect it with a Spell Blast.

Cards' Special Effects

Some permanents have special fast effects listed in the text box. Abilities are listed first, and continuous effects are also listed in the text box, but you can tell a fast effect because it always has an activation cost (even if it's zero). A continuous effect is always active, unless it's on an artifact (*not* an artifact creature) and the artifact becomes tapped. On the other hand, to activate a card's fast effect, you must pay the activation cost for that effect.

This sort of fast effect is not a *spell*. Only playing a non-land card from your hand counts as a spell.

Activation costs are usually written in the format [cost]: [effect]. Everything before the colon is the activation cost. There might be other costs of using that effect (sacrificing a creature, for example), but these are not part of the activation cost. All costs are paid at the same time as the effect is activated. The main difference between an activation cost and a casting cost is that activation costs can include the tap symbol. Just as on a land, this means that you must tap the card as part of the cost of activating the effect.

Some permanents generate mana. When used in this way, they are considered mana sources. Nothing can interrupt the process of drawing mana from a mana source.

You can't use a card's effects unless you are the controller of that card (we know, it seems obvious, but you know how some people are...). 'Controller' is defined in the glossary. Essentially, if you put a card into play and no one has taken control of it from you, you are that card's controller.

If you take control of a permanent, you're just getting control over the permanent itself. Any enchantments on that permanent stay with it, but they don't change controllers. For enchantments with a continuous effect, like Holy Strength, this doesn't make a difference; they're always working, no matter who controls them. But for enchantments with an activated effect, like Firebreathing or Regeneration, it makes a big difference. Only the controller of the enchantment can activate it, no matter who controls the permanent.

Using the fast effects of a permanent is always optional; you don't have to use a card's special effects unless you want to. Unless the card specifies otherwise, you can use a special effect any time you can use an instant, such as during your opponent's turn. Some special effects specify that they are played as interrupts; this means you can play them whenever you could play an interrupt. Don't worry too much about this distinction just yet; the difference won't be important until later, when we start worrying about timing. Even though these effects are played like instants or interrupts, it's important to remember that they are *not* really instants, interrupts, or any other kind of spell, so things that affect instants, interrupts, or spells won't work on them. They are fast effects, however, and can be interrupted.

Here's a quick example. Suppose you have a creature card that says Ò(Skull)(Skull), (Tap symbol): Jumps up and down until end of turn.Ó You can pay two black mana and tap the card, and then the creature will jump up and down until the end of the turn.

If the activation cost of an effect is only mana (no tap), you can use it as many times as you want in the same turn, so long as you have enough mana to pay for it. (If the cost includes a tap symbol, of course, you can only use it once at a time, since it's impossible to tap a card twice without untapping it in between.) For example, Circle of Protection: Black says Ò1: Prevent all damage against you from one black source.Ó If someone attacks you with a Drudge Skeletons and two Scathe Zombies, you can put three mana into the Circle and prevent the damage from all three of those black creatures. But if you only have three untapped lands, you might decide to only use the Circle against the two larger creatures and take the 1 damage from the Skeletons, so that you'll have one mana available to power the Circle later if you need it to prevent something nastier.

If an effect has an activation cost that can be paid multiple times, you can *not* choose to pay the cost many times as a single activation. For example, Pestilence says (Skull): Pestilence deals 1 damage to all creatures and players. Each time you pay one black mana, you cause 1 damage. You can't pump two, three, or even more mana into a single activation to deal more than 1 damage at once. Therefore, each point of damage must be dealt with (or prevented) separately. For example, say you're dueling a Witch. You have a Pestilence in play, but she has several Drudge Skeletons (a 1/1 black creature that can regenerate for one black mana). If you power up the Pestilence, the Witch must spend one black mana to regenerate each Skeletons *each time* you deal 1 damage. If you have enough untapped swamps, then the Witch will run out of mana and have to start losing Skeletons (and all the other creatures in play are going to get fried, too).

Some creatures have effects that let you increase their power or toughness or both. For example, Frozen Shade (0/1) has the following special effect: (Skull): +1/+1 until end of turn. This means that for every one black mana you spend, the Shade gets +1/+1, but this bonus wears off during the cleanup phase. You can spend as much black mana as you like to increase the Shade's power and toughness each turn. Some players call these creatures "inflatable" because you can pump them up. This effect can be used even when the creature is tapped.

Keep in mind that you can activate a special effect any time that fast effects are legal, including in the middle of an attack. It's usually best to wait until after blocking is declared to pump creatures up, because you can put the mana where it will do the most good. For example, if you have two Frozen Shades and attack with both of them, you shouldn't inflate them just yet. If your opponent blocks one of them with a small creature, you can pump just enough mana into it to kill the blocker and put the rest of your spare mana into the unblocked one to deal as much damage to your opponent as you can.

It's important to remember that if a permanent has an effect with the tap symbol in the cost, you only get to use that effect when you tap it specifically to pay for the effect, not when you tap it to attack or it is tapped by some external effect. For example, if you choose to declare a Prodigal Sorcerer as an attacker, the Sorcerer becomes tapped, but this does not let you use its effect to deal 1 damage to a target.

Depending on how you and your opponents play, you can generate some pretty complex timing issues with fast effects. The rules are clear, but we'll wait for a discussion of those until the section on timing.

Fast Spells

Instants, interrupts, and sorceries are the fast spells—temporary spells that go to the graveyard as soon as they are cast. Sometimes their effects last only until the end of the turn, especially in the case of instants. Other times, the effects of such spells may be permanent; these effects last until the end of the duel. For example, Thoughtlace is a blue interrupt that permanently changes the color of another card in play to blue. In contrast, Giant Growth is an instant. It gives a creature +3/+3, but this bonus wears off during the cleanup phase.

The effects of a fast spell are always permanent if it modifies another card, even if the spell itself doesn't say so. Thoughtlace fits into this category, because it changes the color of its target. Blue Elemental Blast, though, doesn't modify its target's counters or destroys it. That's a one-time effect, not a change. If I cast Blue Elemental Blast on an Uthden Troll, it destroys the Troll once and that's it. If the Troll regenerates, the Blast doesn't come back to destroy it a second time.

Though these changes are "permanent," they only last as long as the target remains in play. If the target leaves play in any way (goes to the graveyard, goes back into someone's hand, or is removed from the game), then the effect ends. If the card is later returned to play, it will start fresh. Cards have no "memory" of what happened to them last time they were in play.

Some interrupts can counter a spell as it is being cast. If a spell is countered, it goes to the graveyard with no effect. The caster of the countered spell still has to pay the casting cost. Only an interrupt can counter a spell, and a spell can only be countered as it is being cast. Once both players say they don't want to cast any more interrupts, the spell (assuming it survived) changes from "being cast" to "successfully cast." Once a spell reaches this point, it can no longer be interrupted or countered. (It can still be responded to.)

Some interrupts modify a permanent spell as it is being cast. In this case, the change also applies to the permanent created by the spell. Consider Thoughtlace again as an example; if you cast Thoughtlace on a summon spell that is being cast (perhaps to save the summon spell from being countered by a Blue Elemental Blast), then the creature created by the summon spell will also be blue.

You can cast sorceries only during the main phase of your turn, and even then you can't cast them during an attack. Sorceries are powerful spells that can raise the dead, destroy lands and creatures, and wreak general havoc. They're powerful, which is why the opportunities for casting them are so limited.

Permanents

Creatures, artifacts, and enchantments are normally brought into play by permanent spells. You can cast permanent spells only during the main phase of your turn, and even then not during an attack. Once you have successfully cast a permanent spell, the card remains in play to represent whatever the spell brought into being. A permanent in play is no longer considered a spell, but rather an artifact, enchantment, or creature.

Permanents remain in play until they are killed, destroyed, disenchanting, or otherwise removed from play—or until the duel ends. You can't just choose to get rid of a permanent once you have created it, even if it starts to do you more harm than good. Remember that land cards are also considered permanents, although they are never spells.

A word to the wise: be sure to read your permanents carefully before putting them into play! Some permanents have special effects that affect only your opponent, but some of them will affect you, too. For example, Manabarbs causes 1 damage to a player whenever he or she taps a land for mana—either player! Be sure you're not hurting yourself worse than your opponent when you put a permanent into play.

Now let's look at each of the types of permanents in greater detail.

Land

Land is pretty simple; you already know everything you need to know about it. However, there are a couple of things we want to repeat in detail, just to be clear.

Putting a land into play is *not* a spell or a fast effect, so it cannot be done in response to anything nor can it be responded to or interrupted.

If a land has a special ability that does not require an activation cost at all, then that ability is continuous—always active—even when the land is tapped.

Summon Spells

Summon spells bring creatures into play. We've already covered quite a bit about creatures, but there are still a few more details.

As you've already learned, summoning sickness prevents a creature from attacking during the turn it is summoned. If a creature has a special effect that includes the tap symbol in its activation cost, you can't use that effect during the turn the creature is summoned, either. If an effect's activation cost doesn't have the tap symbol in it, you can use it right away. You'll also remember that an effect that doesn't require an activation cost at all is always on, even when the creature is tapped.

Summoning sickness lasts until the creature begins a turn in play and under your control—usually your next upkeep phase after you summon it.

Summoning sickness does *not* tap a creature! This is one of the most common mistakes that new players make. Also, despite the name, summoning sickness applies *any time* a creature comes into play on your side. It doesn't matter whether the creature got there by means of a summon spell, via a spell that brings a creature into play from the graveyard, by you destroying a Control Magic that your opponent had cast on one of your creatures earlier in the game, or whatever. All that matters is whether it has been in play under your control *continuously* since your most recent untap phase.

It doesn't even matter whether the card was a creature at the start of the turn. Suppose I have four swamps in play. At the start of my main phase, I lay down another swamp, and then I cast Kormus Bell, which turns all swamps into 1/1 creatures. The four swamps which I had at the start of my turn can attack, even though they weren't creatures at the beginning of the turn, but the swamp that I just played can't, because it hasn't been in play since my last untap phase.

All summon spells say "Summon <creature type>" between the picture and the text box. This is because a few spells affect all creatures of a given type. For example, if you cast a spell that had some effect on all Bugs in play, it would affect all cards that said "Summon Bug."

Some summon cards say "Summon Wall." Walls are special creatures that lack the ability to attack. Many walls have a power of 0, while others can actually deal damage. Even if a wall can deal damage, it can't attack; it can only be used to block an attacking creature. For all other purposes a wall is a normal creature, so it can be enchanted, killed, and so on—just like other creatures.

Some players think of wall cards as a wall surrounding the wizard. That's not the best image to use, though, because it makes you think that one wall should be able to block a whole army of attacking creatures. Walls block just like any other creature, so each wall can normally only block one attacking creature. If you need an image, think of it as a small wall placed right between one attacking creature and you. Also, even though walls can't attack, they can still be tapped by other cards. And a creature that is tapped can't block, even if it's a wall.

Artifacts

Artifacts are magical devices that have certain effects on the game. Unlike other types of spells, artifacts are colorless; they can be cast with generic mana (mana of any color, colorless, or any combination thereof). Some artifacts have one or more continuous effects; these are active whenever the artifact is untapped and in play. Other artifacts require you to pay an activation cost to trigger their effects. If an artifact's effect doesn't have an activation cost listed, it's continuous. Unlike creatures, artifacts *can* be used during the same turn they come into play.

For example, if you had enough mana, you could cast a Rod of Ruin and then immediately pay three more mana to tap the Rod and deal 1 damage to a target. You don't have to wait until the Rod has been in play at the beginning of your turn, like you would if it were a creature.

Some artifacts, however, are also creatures. These say "Artifact Creature" as their spell type. Artifact creatures are not immune to summoning sickness; they follow the same rules as other creatures, so an artifact creature can't attack or use effects that require tapping it during the same turn it is brought into play. Despite this, artifact creatures are *not* summon spells—they're artifact spells.

It is possible, though bizarre and unlikely, for other types of permanents to become artifacts while still keeping their original type (Artifact land? Artifact enchantment? Why not?). Usually, whatever spell causes this will also turn the card into a creature, but that might not always be true. In any case like this, the card does not suffer from summoning sickness unless it is a creature. As regards effects, it follows the rule for artifact creatures—tapping it won't turn off continuous effects.

Tapping a non-creature artifact always turns its continuous effects off. Tapping an artifact creature doesn't *necessarily* turn its continuous effects off, since artifact creatures follow the creature rules when it comes to effects. A tapped artifact creature can still use a special effect, as long as that effect doesn't have a tap symbol in its activation cost.

Enchantments

There are many kinds of enchantments. Some of them target a particular type of permanent already in play—creatures, artifacts, lands, or even other enchantments. It's pretty obvious which of these are which; the types say "Enchant Land," "Enchant Creature," and so on. These enchantments are considered targeted spells; you can't cast them if there is no valid target in play.

Targeted enchantments are also called *local* enchantments.

Not only can you cast a targeted enchantment without a valid target, but a targeted enchantment that was successfully cast can stay in play without a valid target. If a card leaves play for any reason, any enchantments on it go to their owner's graveyard. Also, if the enchanted card somehow changes so that it's no longer a legal target for the enchantment, the enchantment goes to the graveyard.

For example, Mishra's Factory is a land that can temporarily change into a combination land/artifact creature called an Assembly Worker. You can cast an enchant creature spell on an Assembly Worker, but during the cleanup phase, when the Assembly Worker stops being a creature and goes back to being Mishra's Factory, the enchant creature card will be buried and sent to the graveyard. Similarly, if you have a Black Knight (which has protection from white) with Giant Strength, which is a red enchantment, on it, and someone casts Sleight of Mind to change your Knight's protection to from red instead of from white, the enchantment's target will no longer be legal, so the enchantment will be buried.

Other enchantments just say "Enchantment" as their spell type. These are *global* enchantments. They *always* go into play in your territory. Global enchantments don't require a target.

Unlike many other cards, enchantments never tap. Even if an enchantment is on a tapped creature, it's still active.

Special cards with the type "Enchant World" are treated like global enchantments, except that only one enchant world may be in play at a time. If an enchant world is brought into play while another is already in play, the one already in play is buried.

Resolving Spells and Effects

"Resolving" a spell or effect means trying to complete it successfully. Often, this includes dealing with a batch of interrupting spells. The details on resolving batches and spell chains are a little later, in ***Timing***. Right now, we've got a few general rules about resolving to introduce.

When resolving a spell or effect, you must complete as much of the effect as possible, except in cases when one part of the effect is a prerequisite for another. For example, consider an effect that says "Tap target creature. *Card* deals 1 damage to that creature." Even if the target creature is already tapped when this effect is resolved, the effect will still deal 1 damage to that creature. By contrast, let's say there's another effect that says "Tap target creature to have *card* deal 1 damage to that creature." If the target creature is already tapped when this effect resolves, the second part of the effect is ignored, because the first part of the effect is a prerequisite for the second.

Note also that some spells or effects that appear to have a prerequisite may not actually have one. The first part of a spell or effect sometimes requires sacrificing a permanent, paying life, or removing counters from a card. These are *costs* that must be paid when the spell or effect is played (and thus are still paid even if the spell or effect is countered or fails); they are not prerequisite effects.

Except in the case of targeted enchantments, after a spell or effect has been resolved, you do not constantly recheck to see if the targets of that spell or effect remain valid; the effect continues to work *even if* the target becomes illegal after the spell or effect resolves. For example, words like "target creature" do not mean that the target has to remain a creature for the effect to continue working. A good way to think of this is as if the first instance of "target creature" in an effect actually said "target creature, which is a token or a card" and all later references to that creature actually said "that token or card." This rule does not apply to enchant cards (enchant creature, enchant land, etc.), which do continuously recheck to see if their target is legal, and which are buried if their target becomes illegal.

That's a little obscure, so let's try an example. Say you have a White Knight in play (a creature with Protection from Black). You cast the blue instant Jump, giving the Knight flying until the end of the turn. Next, you cast the blue enchant creature spell Unstable Mutation on it, to give the Knight +3/+3. Later (*not* in response to the enchantment), your opponent uses a Sleight of Mind to change the White Knight's protection to Protection from Blue. The protection causes the Unstable Mutation to go to the graveyard, since the Knight is no longer a valid target for that enchantment. However, the effect of the Jump stays in force, because all that matters to an effect is that the card was a valid target when the effect took effect.

The characteristics of the source of an effect (for example, color, power and toughness, controller, etc.) are determined when the spell or effect is announced. These characteristics can only be modified by interrupts that target the spell or effect. These characteristics cannot be modified by interrupts that target the source of an effect, so after an effect using the ability of a permanent has been announced, interrupts that affect that permanent do not modify the effect. All other characteristics are determined when a spell or effect resolves.

A spell or effect containing the phrase “when *card* is put into the graveyard” locks in which player is the controller of *card* when *card* is on the way to the graveyard. Thus, any spell or effect that targeted or affected “*card*’s controller” would affect whichever player controlled it when it went to its owner’s graveyard—not necessarily its owner.

Creature Abilities

Okay, you’ve got power and toughness figured out. You know how to use fast and continuous effects. Creature type is a snap. Now comes the part of the text box that we haven’t covered yet—abilities.

Many creatures have one or more of the following special abilities. Abilities are the first thing listed in the text box of the creature’s card. Abilities have no activation cost; they’re a built-in characteristic of the creature, and thus are always in effect. (Not all of the possible abilities are described here, just the most common ones.)

Note that if a creature is given the same ability more than once, the additional copies of the ability stay in effect, but are often useless. For example, a creature enchanted with two Flights doesn’t fly extra high; it’s treated just the same as a creature that has flying once, and a spell that removed the flying ability would remove *both* copies. On the other hand, a creature that naturally had Protection from Red and was enchanted with a Blue Ward to add Protection from Blue would have protection from both colors.

Some enchantments, instants, and effects can grant and steal these special abilities. If a creature has an ability conferred on it or taken away, it is almost as if the text in the text box had actually been changed. We say “almost” because the difference becomes extremely important if someone takes control of that creature.

For example, if you cast Control Magic on your opponent’s Drudge Skeletons, which has a built-in version of regeneration, you control the Skeletons *and* you can regenerate it with black mana. On the other hand, if you cast Control Magic on a creature that’s been enchanted with a Regeneration spell, the regenerating ability is part of the enchantment, not part of the creature, and your opponent still controls the enchantment; you can’t regenerate the creature, but she still can.

Let’s start with banding, since it’s the most often misunderstood ability.

Banding

During an attack, attacking creatures with the ability *banding* may join forces with other attacking creatures, thus attacking as one.

When blocking, the existence of a banding creature in a blocking group (more than one creature blocking the same attacker) allows the defending player to decide how to divide up the damage from the attacker between the creatures in the blocking group.

During an Attack

You can form a band of attacking creatures out of any number of creatures that have banding—plus one creature that doesn’t have banding. Essentially, you group banding creatures with any creature that has already been declared as an attacker. You must declare which creatures you want to band when you declare your attack; attacking bands can’t form or disband after your opponent declares the blocking.

When your banded group of creatures attacks, your opponent’s creatures have to block this band or let it through as if it were one creature. If a defending creature blocks any of the banded creatures, then it blocks them all.

Here's an important rule. Normally, no one has to decide how damage caused by a blocker is portioned out—one blocker can't block more than one creature. However, if the attacking "creature" is a banded group, someone has to decide where each 1 damage from the blocker damage goes. Any damage this defending creature deals gets distributed among the creatures in the attacking band as the *owner of the band* chooses.

Banding does *not* allow creatures in a band to share other special abilities. Thus, a flying creature banded with a non-flying creature would attack as a non-flying group.

When Blocking

Defending bands follow a different set of rules.

Regardless of whether any of your creatures has banding, you may always block a single attacker with multiple creatures. The difference banding makes is in damage apportionment.

When multiple creatures block a single attacker, if even *one* creature in that defending group has banding, then the defending player gets to decide how the attacker's damage gets distributed. For example, you can block one really big attacker with four creatures. If even one of your defenders has banding, you get to decide how the attacking creature's damage gets assigned. This is a great way to keep blocking creatures alive.

Remember, though, that only creatures that could legally block the attacking creature on their own can band together to block the attacker. For example, banding does *not* allow non-flying creatures to band with a flying creature and block a flying attacker. This is very important and often misunderstood. Defensive banding has no bearing on which blocks are or aren't legal; every blocker must block as an individual, just as if none of them had banding. Defensive banding *only* affects the damage distribution.

Because defensive banding doesn't matter until damage dealing, it's possible to change who is going to assign damage to a group of blockers by giving something the banding ability *after* the defense is chosen, or by killing something with banding before damage dealing.

For example, suppose you attack with your Sengir Vampire, which has already grown to 6/6 from killing things. The Priestess you are dueling blocks with a Mesa Pegasus (1/1 flying, banding) and two Serra Angels (4/4, flying). She's hoping to be able to kill the Vampire and spread the damage safely among her Angels, so she doesn't lose any creatures. You, however—being the sneaky sort—cast Terror on the Pegasus before damage dealing, burying it. None of the blockers left has banding, so you now get to assign the damage and will undoubtedly put all 6 damage onto one Angel (to kill it). If the Priestess had a Helm of Chatzuk in play, though, this strategy wouldn't work, since she could use the Helm's special effect to give the Banding ability to one of the Angels after the Pegasus died.

This damage-sharing ability only applies to combat damage (damage done by creatures in combat). Other damage, like that from Lightning Bolts, still hits only the creature it targets.

There's one more thing to keep in mind about damage distribution. Further on, you'll read about the rule that says if a creature regenerates during combat but before the damage resolution step, then it doesn't deal or receive any damage. This applies to banded creatures as well; the regenerated creature is still part of the band, but you aren't allowed to assign any damage to it. You have to split the damage among creatures that didn't regenerate. If all of the blockers regenerated, then the damage can't be assigned to any of them and it just goes away—unless, of course, it was from an attacking creature with trample, in which case it spills over to the defending player.

First Strike

During the attack, creatures with *first strike* deal all their damage before creatures without first strike. If a first strike creature deals enough damage to destroy the opposing creature (regardless of whether it's attacking or blocking), the first strike creature doesn't take any damage, since the other creature dies before getting a chance to strike.

For example, if a White Knight (2/2, first strike) blocked a normal 4/1 creature, the 4/1 creature would take 2 damage and die before it was able to deal its 4 damage to the Knight. First strike isn't a guarantee

of survival, though; if the Knight tried to block a Giant Spider (2/4), the Knight would still deal its 2 damage first, but that wouldn't be enough to kill the Spider. The Spider would then get to deal its 2 damage to the Knight, and the Knight would die.

One way to help out your creatures with first strike is to damage whatever they're fighting, or reduce its toughness somehow, before damage dealing begins. Suppose you block a Giant Spider with your Black Knight (2/2, first strike). Just like the White Knight mentioned above, the Black Knight will die, since it can't kill the Spider. Suppose, however, that you soften the Spider up by hitting it with a Lightning Bolt before damage dealing. After your Black Knight deals 2 damage to it, the Spider will be 2/4 with 5 damage, so it will die before it can deal damage back to the Knight.

If two creatures with first strike oppose each other, they deal their damage simultaneously, but before anybody else. Giving a creature that already has first strike an extra first strike enchantment *doesn't* make it any faster.

Flying

Only creatures with the ability *flying* (or web, but that's getting ahead of ourselves) can block other creatures with flying. Flying creatures *can* block grounded (non-flying) creatures.

If you attack your opponent with a creature that can fly, and none of her creatures can fly, your creature gets through unblocked no matter how many nasty creatures she has. Even better, any untapped flier you have can still block her non-fliers when it's their turn to attack.

Flying is called an "evasion ability" or "stealth ability," since it allows a creature to evade or sneak past blockers. There are two important points to remember. A flying creature can block either a flier or a non-flier, and a flying creature can't be blocked by a non-flier, even if its controller would like it to be. You can't "turn off" an evasion ability. Thus, you can't choose to make a flier a non-flier and blockable by your opponent's non-fliers.

Landwalk

Some creatures have a special stealth ability called *landwalk*, although the cards don't actually say "Landwalk." Instead, they say "Swampwalk," "Forestwalk," "Islandwalk," or the like. Creatures with a particular landwalk can't be blocked if the player they are attacking has a land of that type in play.

For example, Shanodin Dryads is a 1/1 creature with forestwalk. If you have a Shanodin Dryads in play, your opponent has at least one forest in play, and you decide to attack with your Dryads, your opponent can't block it. Even if your opponent has Shanodin Dryads or other creatures with forestwalk in play, she still can't block your Dryads.

That last bit confuses some players. If a creature with flying can block another flying creature, then why can't a creature with forestwalk block another creature with forestwalk? The real answer is, "because the rules say so." But if you want it to make sense, think of it this way: being able to sneak through the forest or ooze through the muck of a swamp doesn't make it any easier for the creatures to see or catch someone else who is also sneaking through the trees or oozing along.

Protection

Creature cards that read "Protection from" a particular color are practically immune to creatures and spells of that color. As an example, we'll use the color blue, but protection works the same way if the creature has protection from any other color.

(It's possible to have protection from just about anything: artifacts, creatures, spells—you name it. Protection from a color is most common and easily understood, so we're using that as our example.)

A creature with protection from blue has the following abilities:

- It can't be blocked by blue creatures.

- Any damage it takes from a blue source, including any blue attacking creature that it blocks, is reduced to 0.
- No blue spells or effects can specifically target it. Any blue spells or effects that don't target that creature in particular (such as a blue spell that affects "all creatures") still affect it, but if the spell deals any damage to the protected creature, that damage is reduced to 0.
- No blue enchantments can be played on the creature. Any blue enchantments already on the creature are destroyed when it gets protection from blue.

So, for instance, if you power up a Pestilence, the Priestess' White Knights (which have protection from black) will be fine. The effect of Pestilence is non-targeted, so the damage will reach the Knights, but the damage will be reduced to 0 by their protection. On the other hand, if she plays Wrath of God (a white spell that buries all creatures in play), your Black Knights (which have protection from white) will be buried along with everything else, since the effect is non-targeted and doesn't deal any damage. Protection doesn't save the creature from being put in the graveyard through means other than damage. Just remember that protection is not complete invulnerability, and you should have no problems.

If, when attacking, you band a non-protected creature with a creature that has protection from some color, your opponent can block the non-protected creature with something of that color, and the blocker will indirectly block the protected creature. That's the only way (short of enchantments) that a Black Knight and White Knight can ever fight each other. If that happens, you can assign all of the damage to the protected creature, which will reduce the damage to 0.

Regeneration

Some creatures have the ability to regenerate, usually with an activation cost attached. If such a creature takes enough damage to send it to the graveyard (lethal damage), you can pay the activation cost for its regeneration ability and prevent it from dying—keep it from reaching the graveyard. This erases all the damage done so far this turn to the creature.

Regeneration is not one of the "damage prevention" fast effects that you are allowed to use during damage prevention steps. You can use regeneration only at the time when a creature is about to go to the graveyard.

Keep in mind that this ability doesn't allow regenerating creatures to come back from the dead; if you don't pay for the regeneration, the creature goes to the graveyard and stays there like any other creature.

For example, Drudge Skeletons is a black 1/1 creature with the ability (Skull): Regenerate. If your Skeletons card takes lethal damage, no matter how much, you can save it from going to the graveyard if you pay one black mana. If it is killed again the same turn, you may spend another black mana to regenerate it again. If you don't pay this cost, it goes to the graveyard and stays dead.

You can also regenerate a creature that's been hit with a spell or effect that destroys it or "kills" it, even though those effects don't deal actual damage. For example, if I block a Battering Ram (which destroys walls that block it) with my Wall of Brambles (which has a built-in regeneration ability), the Wall will be destroyed at the end of combat, but I can pay one green mana to regenerate it.

A regenerated creature doesn't actually go to the graveyard, so it won't trigger any effects—good or bad—that would have been caused by it going to the graveyard. Examples of these include Creature Bond (an enchantment that deals damage to a player when the enchanted creature goes to the graveyard), Sengir Vampire (a creature which gains a +1/+1 counter whenever something it damaged that turn goes to the graveyard), and Soul Net (an artifact which lets you pay one generic mana to gain a life whenever a creature goes to the graveyard). None of these special effects will happen if the creature regenerates.

When a creature is regenerated, it returns to life tapped and fully healed. All of the enchantments on the creature remain. Not only this, but all special effects that were applied to the creature remain, as well. The only thing regeneration does is allow the creature to ignore any damage it has taken so far this turn. This rule can both help you and hurt you. For example, if a fast effect gives your creature +3/+3, and then you have to regenerate it, the creature will still have the +3/+3; that's a help. However, if a fast effect reduces your creature to 0 toughness, and you try to save it from the graveyard by regenerating it, the

creature will still have 0 toughness; it will just keep trying to go to the graveyard until you run out of mana or give up and stop regenerating it.

Creatures killed while they are tapped can still be regenerated.

If a creature gets hit with a card that “buries” the creature, it can’t regenerate and goes directly to the graveyard. The same is true for any creature that is sacrificed. You can’t regenerate a creature that is removed from the game, either; such a creature must be set aside and returned to its owner only when the game is over. (Note that some cards say that they ‘destroy’ or ‘kill’ a creature. This is the same as if the card read “deals lethal damage to” the creature. You cannot use damage prevention effects to lessen this damage, but the affected creature can be regenerated.)

Once a spell or effect that buries a creature is successfully cast, *nothing* can prevent that creature from going to the graveyard. Of course, you can still try to prevent or counter the burial with interrupts *before* it is successfully cast.

Note that you can’t regenerate something just because you want to. You can only regenerate something if it is about to go to the graveyard. You could cast a Regeneration enchantment on one of your opponent’s creatures and activate it to save the creature from the graveyard if you wanted to keep the creature alive for some reason, but you couldn’t activate it when the creature was healthy as a sneaky way to tap the creature.

If a creature regenerates during combat but before the damage dealing step, then it doesn’t deal or receive any damage. This rule means that it is always possible to stop a creature from damaging you or another creature during the damage dealing part of the attack – if you have a way to destroy it. If the creature doesn’t regenerate, it goes to the graveyard; thus, it doesn’t deal damage. If the creature *does* regenerate, it’s prevented from dealing damage by this rule.

For example, if a Witch’s Drudge Skeletons (a 1/1 creature with the ability to regenerate for one black mana) is attacking you, then before the damage dealing part of the attack, you have time to use a fast effect to destroy the Skeletons. If you have a Royal Assassin, which can destroy any tapped creature as a fast effect, then you can use your Assassin on the Skeletons now, since it’s attacking and thus is tapped. Since the Skeletons has just been hit by an effect that is trying to destroy it, the Witch must decide whether or not to regenerate her Skeletons. If she doesn’t, then the Skeletons will be sent to the graveyard immediately, before the damage dealing part of the combat. Thus, the Skeletons will not be able to deal damage in combat. If the Witch regenerates the Skeletons, then, by the previous rule, the Skeletons will not be able to deal or receive damage during the damage dealing part of the attack.

Regenerating stops the creature from dealing or receiving damage, but it doesn’t stop any special effects the creature has. Since the creature is not removed from the attack, any special effects caused by its attacking or blocking will still happen – even if those effects include damaging some target.

To continue the same example, if the Skeletons card had had a Venom on it (an enchantment that causes all non-wall creatures blocking the enchanted creature to be destroyed at the end of combat) and you had been silly enough to block the Skeletons with your Royal Assassin before destroying it with the Assassin’s special ability, then the Assassin would be destroyed at the end of combat (by the Venom effect), even though the Skeletons was destroyed and dealt no damage in combat – and *regardless* of whether the Skeletons regenerated.

Trample

In combat, any “extra” damage beyond what is needed to kill a blocking creature doesn’t carry through to damage the defending player. Normally, only unblocked creatures can ever damage an opponent. Creatures with the ability *trample* get around both these restrictions.

If an attacking creature has trample, it can roll right over defending creatures and deliver any unabsorbed damage to the defending player. For example, if your opponent’s Scryb Sprites (1/1) blocked your War Mammoth (3/3, trample), the Sprites would die and the “extra” 2 damage would carry through and hit your opponent. This damage is called trample damage.

Trample only matters when an attacking creature with trample is blocked. Trample has no effect when the creature with trample is defending or using a special ability. Also, if all the blockers of an attacking creature with trample are removed before damage dealing, the attacker will deal its full damage to the defending player—even though it's still considered blocked—since there is nothing to absorb any damage. So if the Sprites that blocked the Mammoth had been killed by a Prodigal Sorcerer before damage dealing, the Mammoth would have dealt all 3 damage to the defending player. Even if the Sprites were regenerated from the Prodigal Sorcerer's hit, the Mammoth would still deal all its damage to the player, since a creature that regenerates before damage dealing can't have any combat damage assigned to it.

The damage from a creature with trample will only spill over if the blocking creature actually takes lethal damage. Reducing or preventing the damage will reduce or prevent the spillover. If the blocker has an ability or enchantment that reduces the damage it receives to 0, such as protection or Uncle Istvan's special ability, then there will be no damage left to spill over and the defending player won't take any damage. Similarly, if a 2/2 Ogre blocks a 3/3 War Mammoth and you use a Samite Healer to prevent 1 damage to the Ogre, then no damage will spill over to the player. Regenerating the blocker doesn't prevent the damage, though; if you regenerate a creature with trample damage on it, the extra damage will still move to the defending player.

When you're resolving combat damage from multiple creatures, trample damage is always assigned last. That way, the maximum amount of damage gets through to the defending player. This may not make much sense if you haven't read about combat yet, but it's important.

Timing

Usually, figuring out what happens in what order during a duel—and what you are and are not allowed to do at certain times—is pretty easy. Sometimes, though, things can get complicated. **Magic: the Gathering** has strictly enforced timing rules that cover every situation. You don't really need to know the timing rules, since you can't do anything about them, but if you don't understand something that happened to you in a duel, the answer might be here. Also, knowing the rules can help you use them to your advantage. Fair warning: these timing rules might be a little difficult to understand if you haven't already played at least a couple of duels.

A couple of general comments are in order before we begin. First, all of the fast effect timing rules apply equally to spells and to non-spell effects. So whenever you see "cast" in this section, it really means "cast a fast effect spell or activate an effect." Second, keep in mind that playing a land is not casting a spell, and thus it doesn't follow the spell rules. You can't respond to or interrupt someone putting a land into play, and you can't play a land as a response to your opponent's actions or during the casting of a spell.

Drawing mana from a mana source is neither a spell nor an effect. You cannot respond to or interrupt the use of a mana source.

Response Rule

Every time you take an action during your turn, both you and your opponent have an opportunity to *interrupt* it with interrupt-speed fast effects. Once all the interrupts have been resolved, the action either is countered or succeeds. If it is successful, both you and your opponent then have an opportunity to *respond* to it with instant-speed fast effects. The same opportunities exist during her turn.

Responses count as actions, so it is possible to respond to a response, respond to a response to a response, and so on. It is also possible to interrupt an interrupt and interrupt a response, but you cannot respond to an interrupt.

Although the interruption and response steps are not always evident, especially if no one chooses to use them, don't take that to mean that they're not there. Most of the time, your opponent won't respond to every single action you take, but she still has the opportunity.

Damage prevention is a special type of response step that only occurs at specific times.

The tough part is figuring out what happens—resolving the effects—after everyone is done tossing fast effects around.

Resolving Existing Effects

Before you get too excited about resolving all kinds of fast interrupts and responses, you need to resolve the existing effects. This includes the continuous effects of permanents in play—the ones that are always on and have no activation cost—and the results of previous effects that have already been resolved. That way, you'll know exactly what state everything is in when you start to resolve the fast stuff. Normally, this isn't a problem—but what happens if you cast an enchantment that changes one of your opponent's lands into an island, and on the next turn your opponent casts an enchantment on the land to turn it into a mountain, and then on the next turn you cast another enchantment on the land to turn it back into an island? None of these enchantments were countered or removed, so they're all sitting there on top of the land. Obviously, the land can't be both an island and a mountain at the same time!

Whenever you have multiple existing effects in play, apply them in the order that they occurred. So, your first enchantment would change the land into an island. The next turn, when your opponent casts her enchantment, the land would turn into a mountain. Later, when you cast your second enchantment, it would turn into an island again. Even though the first two enchantments end up being irrelevant, they remain on the land. After all, there are ways to turn your opponent's enchantments against her, and you wouldn't want to miss the opportunity to do that, would you?

The order in which the spells are cast can sometimes make a difference even for permanents that aren't placed on top of the same card. For example, consider Conversion, which turns all mountains into basic plains, and Phantasmal Terrain, which turns the land it enchants into a basic land of the caster's choice. If you have an island that's been turned into a mountain with Phantasmal Terrain, and someone then casts Conversion, the phantasmal mountain will be turned into a plain. If the Conversion was cast first, however, and then the Phantasmal Terrain, the land would stay a mountain.

Remember, though, that putting a land into play is not a casting; thus a mountain brought into play after the Conversion is in play would become a plain immediately; it would require an effect cast after the Conversion to make it a mountain again.

Resolving Fast Effects

Now that we've got existing effects out of the way, here comes the fun part—resolving all those fast effects. First, let's talk about interrupts.

You can use an interrupt whenever any player takes an action—casts a spell or uses an effect. The interrupt happens *before* that action is successfully completed, and might prevent it from completing successfully. Note that you only have one chance to interrupt any particular spell or effect. Once you choose not to do so, you cannot change your mind later.

Interrupts always happen *faster than instantly* and are the only type of effect that can truly counter another effect, though not all of them do. Interrupts are resolved immediately after they are cast, unless they themselves are interrupted. If one interrupt interrupts another interrupt, the second interrupt is resolved first. That way, it can truly interrupt the first one. This is how interrupt stacks (batches) are born, and how they are resolved—the last one cast takes place first, then you work your way backwards to the first one. (That's called the LIFO rule—"Last In, First Out".)

If both players decide to interrupt the same spell or effect (yes, you can interrupt your own spells), the player who took the action in the first place gets to go first. For example, say you cast a Gray Ogre (a red creature), and your opponent wanted to interrupt that casting. Before she has a chance, you have the option to interrupt your own summon spell. You decide to use Thoughtlace, turning the summon spell into a blue spell and, consequently, the Ogre into a blue creature. Now, you have the option to interrupt your interrupt, which you decline.

Your opponent, who wanted to use a Blue Elemental Blast (an interrupt that can counter any red spell) to destroy the Ogre, looks momentarily frustrated. Your Thoughtlace makes the Ogre an illegal target for her interrupt. Her face brightens, however, when she remembers that she, too, can interrupt your

interrupt. She casts a Counterspell on your Thoughtlace. Now, once the interrupts resolve, she will be able to use her Blue Elemental Blast. She now has a chance to interrupt her Counterspell, which she declines. You may interrupt her Counterspell, but you also decline. The interrupts are resolved, and the Gray Ogre remains red—but is *still* not successfully cast.

Now comes your opponent's turn to interrupt the original spell. Feeling confident because you have already used your one chance at interrupting your own spell, she casts her Blue Elemental Blast. She has a chance to interrupt her action, and she declines. What she has forgotten is that now you have the option of interrupting her interrupt. You cast your own Counterspell on her Blue Elemental Blast. You and then she now have the chance to interrupt the Counterspell, which you both decline. The interrupts resolve, and the Gray Ogre is (finally) successfully cast.

An important thing to notice in that example is that no more than two interrupts—one of yours and one of your opponent's—ever target the same spell. (If you were playing with more than two people involved, each one could use an interrupt.) Each interrupt stack was resolved before another could begin, and both were resolved before the original action could take effect.

Got that? Now let's look at the other type of fast effect.

You can cast an instant—a non-interrupt fast effect—at any time during your turn when fast effects are allowed. You can also cast an instant during anyone's turn in response to any action, including another instant. The only exception is that you can't cast an instant as an interruption to an action, only as a response. You can also cast an instant in response to your opponent announcing her intention to end most (but not all) phases.

Any fast effect that is not cast as an interrupt is considered an instant. Even a card that says "Interrupt" is used as an instant if it is cast in response to an action, rather than as an interruption to that action. These are called "non-targeted interrupts" because they are not interrupting (aimed at) a specific spell or effect.

If a player casts an instant in response to an action, either player may respond to that response (because the response itself is an action), which creates a "batch" of responses. Such a batch of instants' responses to responses is resolved last to first (LIFO), just like an interrupt stack. Unlike during an interrupt stack, however, in a batch of instants the active player (whose turn it is) always has the first chance to respond to any action.

The player whose turn it is has an advantage with this sort of thing. If both players want to cast a response spell at the same time, the one whose turn it is always gets to go first—just like interrupts. However, instants also resolve in last-to-first order like interrupts. Be careful of the timing.

For example, say you summon a creature, and you know your opponent has Terror (an instant that buries one non-black, non-artifact creature) in her hand. You have a Deathlace (an interrupt that changes the color of a card in play to black), but forget to cast it as an interrupt to your summon spell. Once your creature is in play, you *could* respond to your own spell by casting the Deathlace on it. In that case, because the Deathlace would not be cast as an interruption to the spell, it would be treated as an instant. If your opponent responded by casting the Terror, the spells would form a batch and resolve in last-to-first order. The Terror would resolve first and bury the creature before the Deathlace took effect. Being a smart **Magic** player, you would wait until she cast the Terror, then use the Deathlace—*not* to interrupt the Terror, but as an instant targeting the creature. The effects resolve last to first, so the creature becomes black, and is an illegal target for the Terror.

One question that's been asked many times is whether you can ruin your opponent's spell by casting Mana Short (an instant that taps lands and drains the mana pool) at just the right time. The answer is no. Since you can't interrupt a mana source, and tapping a land for mana is always a mana source, you can't wait for your opponent to tap a bunch of land and then cast Mana Short right before she casts her spell.

If your opponent casts a permanent, you can't interrupt that with any fast effect that targets the permanent, because the permanent isn't in play until the spell resolves successfully. So, for example, if you cast Immolation on one of her creatures, she can't cast Disenchant on the Immolation until after that whole batch of effects has resolved and creatures are checked for lethal damage. If the Immolation drops

the creature's toughness to 0, it will die before she gets a chance to use the Disenchant. Disenchant isn't damage prevention, so she can't cast it to save the creature.

Damage dealt by fast effects is applied and must be reckoned with as soon as the effect takes place, *not* at the end of the batch. Whenever damage is dealt, everything pauses for a damage prevention step.

Keep the following guidelines in mind when resolving fast effects:

- 13) Damage is resolved and creatures are checked for death whenever any effect resolves. This includes checking a creature whose toughness is lowered due to an effect. If a creature's toughness drops to 0 or less, or it is "destroyed" or "killed" during a batch or stack, it goes to the graveyard unless it is regenerated. "Buried" creatures cannot be regenerated. Any regeneration and death effects take place right away, before the resolution of effects continues.
- 14) Every effect that deals damage (*not* "destroys" or "kills") generates a damage prevention step. Everything else goes on hold for a moment while you deal with damage prevention, healing, and redirection. (This happens before the regeneration noted above.) Normally, you can't begin any new spells or effects until the entire batch has finished resolving, but damage prevention is the exception to every "you can't cast spells now" rule.
- 15) Remember that destroying the source of an effect doesn't prevent the effect itself from happening. (Once a grenade has been lobbed, it does no good to shoot the creature that threw it.) The only way to actually counter an effect is with an interrupt that prevents the effect from being launched.
- 16) Removing or altering the target of an effect, on the other hand, can sometimes prevent the effect. If the target of an effect disappears or becomes invalid before the effect is resolved, that effect fails; you can't choose a different target once the effect is cast.

Last, but not least, spells and effects that affect both players at the same time always resolve their effect on the active player (the player whose turn it is) first. A player can never lose the game *during* the resolution of a spell or effect, however. That means that if both players lose the game (other than as a result of being reduced to 0 life or less) during the resolution of a single spell or effect, the game is a draw.

An Example

An example would probably be pretty welcome about now. Let's say that you have a Grizzly Bears (2/2) in play, and you want to attack with it. Your opponent has a lot of creatures to block with, but none of them fly. So you cast Jump, a blue instant that grants flying until end of turn, on the Bears. Your opponent *interrupts* by targeting the Jump with a Red Elemental Blast (REB), a red interrupt that destroys any blue spell being cast. You respond by targeting the REB with a Blue Elemental Blast (BEB), a blue interrupt that destroys any red spell being cast.

Neither of you wants to cast more interrupts, so the REB and BEB resolve. The REB tries to interrupt and destroy the Jump, but the BEB interrupts and destroys the REB before it can do its job. This means the Jump is successfully cast. That doesn't make the Bears airborne yet, though.

Your opponent *responds* to the Jump by casting Terror (an instant that buries a creature) on the Bears. You respond to the Terror by casting Unsummon, a blue instant that allows you to take a creature back into your hand, on that poor, beleaguered Bears. You'd both love to go on like this forever, but for now you're out of mana. It's time to resolve this batch.

The last in was the Unsummon, so it resolves first and returns the Bears to your hand. Next comes the Terror. Since the Bears isn't around anymore, the spell fails and goes to the graveyard. Your opponent can't choose a new target for it; the target must be announced at the time the spell is cast. Finally, the Jump is cast at the Bears. Without a target, this spell also fails.

Note that the REB and BEB are both resolved *before* the Terror is cast. Thus, the Terror was actually cast in response to the Jump, once your opponent determined that the Jump had made it through the interrupts without being countered—since instants can't be cast in response to interrupts.

Remember that if any of these fast effects had dealt any damage, the damage would have been applied immediately and would have generated a damage prevention step before resolution could continue.

Tapping as a Fast Effect

As we noted before, if you have a permanent with a tap ability in play and someone casts a spell to tap that card, they don't get to use the special ability and the card being tapped doesn't force you to use the ability. The ability is only powered when you tap the card specifically to pay for the ability.

However, if you want to use the ability at that moment, you probably can! Your opponent's spell (unless it's an interrupt) won't be resolved until you have the chance to respond with as many fast effects as you want, so your permanent won't be tapped yet.

Using the tap ability of a non-land permanent is an instant (unless it produces mana), so you can respond to your opponent's spell by activating this ability, tapping the card yourself to pay the tap cost. When the effects finally resolve in last-to-first order, your opponent's spell will just be trying to tap an already-tapped card, which doesn't do anything. (No, it won't untap it again, even if the spell was Twiddle; when you cast Twiddle, you announce whether you're tapping or untapping, and you can't change it later even if you want to.)

If your opponent's spell *was* an interrupt, then you wouldn't be able to respond by using a non-interrupt fast effect like the tap effect, but you could still interrupt her interrupt with some other interrupt.

Damage Prevention

At any time when damage is done to a creature or player—and *only* when damage is done—a damage prevention step occurs. During this step, as you've already learned about the damage prevention step in combat, only damage prevention effects (including prevention, healing, and redirection) can be used.

Regeneration is *not* damage prevention. After the damage prevention step, if a creature still has lethal damage, it may be regenerated.

A single damage prevention step occurs after any damage dealing step in combat (either damage dealing from first strike creatures or normal damage dealing) in which any creature or player is damaged.

A single damage prevention step also occurs after the resolution of any spell or effect in which any creature or player is damaged.

Damage dealt by fast effects is applied and must be reckoned with as soon as the effect takes place, *not* at the end of the batch. Whenever damage is dealt, everything pauses for a damage prevention step.

Even in the midst of a batch of effects, there is a damage prevention step after resolving any single spell or effect that damages or destroys one or more permanents. All permanents destroyed by the spell or effect are processed in that single damage prevention step.

Going to the Graveyard

To reiterate in exact terms, a permanent is never “on the way to” the graveyard. At the end of the appropriate damage prevention step, if it has lethal damage or is the target of a successfully cast “destroy” or “kill” spell or effect and is not regenerated, it is in the graveyard. If it is the target of a successfully cast “bury” spell or effect, it is in the graveyard. Otherwise, the permanent is still in play.

The fact that a permanent is either in play or in the graveyard, never “on its way” from one to the other means that a permanent that has taken lethal damage may still be sacrificed. Of course, the timing of the sacrifice effect must be legal.

A spell that will not become a permanent (an instant, interrupt, or sorcery) goes to the graveyard once it has been resolved successfully or countered; it does not go to the graveyard as soon as it is played.

Token creatures sent to the graveyard are momentarily put into the graveyard before being removed from the game. Hence, token creatures sent to the graveyard *do* generate effects that are triggered by creatures being put into the graveyard.

Triggered Effects

Triggered effects are effects that only happen or can only be used when a certain event occurs—for example, the Sengir Vampire gets +1/+1 when a creature it damaged is put into the graveyard.

To clarify, triggered effects that are triggered by an event that occurs during the resolution of a spell or effect (in the middle of a batch, for instance) happen at the time the triggering event occurs; they do *not* wait until the end of the batch or stack.

A damage prevention step occurs for any triggered effect that causes damage.

Fast Effects and Phases

When the player whose turn it is declares the end of a phase, the other player can use fast effects in response to this announcement. Any such response cancels the end of the phase, thus giving the active player additional opportunities to take actions during that phase.

Certain effects can only be used or must be used during a particular phase (for example, untapping a Brass Man during the upkeep phase). All such effects are treated as if they were instants. Any of these effects that does not have an activation cost can only be used *once* during that phase.

Untap costs (like that for Brass Man) are an exception to the “once per phase” rule. Untap costs can be paid multiple times during upkeep. (For example, if your opponent used Twiddle to tap your Brass Man after you had paid to untap it, you might want to pay—and untap it—again.) Remember, though, that you must always pay either the entire untap cost on a permanent or none of it.

Remember also that if a permanent has an upkeep cost, you may not use any ability of that permanent that requires an activation cost until you have paid the upkeep cost of that permanent.

A Few Extra Rules

As long as there are loopholes in the rules, some people will try to twist them to their advantage. Over time, the complexity of card interactions (and human nature) has forced Wizards of the Coast to issue several rules clarifications and interpretations of the cards. Where possible, the new rulings have been integrated into the rules you’ve already read. A few didn’t really fit anywhere else, and the most important of these appear below.

Note that the game software strictly enforces all the rules, so you don’t really *need* to know these. If you don’t understand why something works the way it does, however, the answer might be here.

Cards Out of Play

Unless specifically stated on the card, spells and effects do not interact with cards that are not in play. For example, a spell that says “destroy all islands” only affects islands in play.

Cards that are not in play have no “memory” of whether they were ever in play nor of anything that may have happened to them while they were in play (including the effects of interrupt spells).

Counters

All counters with the same name represent the same type of counter, so any effect that affects a certain type of counter affects all counters of that type, regardless of the source of the counter.

The Graveyard

Cards sent to the graveyard are always put on the top of the graveyard. If multiple cards go to the graveyard at exactly the same time, the owner of the cards chooses the order in which they are put in the graveyard.

You can't reorder cards in the graveyard unless a spell or effect specifically allows or instructs you to do so.

Forced Effects

If a card instructs or forces a player do something, that player must try to follow the instructions using his or her existing resources (creatures in play, mana in the mana pool, etc.), but that player is *not* required to cast spells or use effects to get those resources unless specifically instructed by the cards to do so.