

IF YOU'VE NEVER PLAYED MAGIC BEFORE...

...you're exactly the person this chapter is meant for. Those who *have* played the Magic: The Gathering card game will feel comfortable entering a duel; they already understand what all the cards are about, what life totals and mana are, and all that. This is for the rest of us. (If you run into a term that's not explained fully, don't worry; everything is covered in the *Glossary*.)

First Things First

Whenever you run into one of the denizens of Shandalar, your foremost option is to duel the thing. That means entering a one-on-one contest of magical skill against it. Both of you are carrying a deck of cards around with you, and you'll use that deck to fight. The different cards in your deck represent the various creatures, spells, and artifacts you'll use against your opponent, and the lands from which you can draw the magical energy—mana—to summon those creatures or cast those spells and artifacts.

Players begin with a set amount of life—a life total. In the course of the duel, you will try to whittle your opponent down to 0 life while protecting yourself. The one who reaches 0 first loses the duel. (It's actually a little more complicated than that, and there are other ways to win, but we'll get to that later.) If you have the right cards and play well, you can even add to your life total during the duel. (This extra life won't carry over to the next duel, except under special circumstances).

You damage your opponent by casting spells, attacking with your creatures, or using the magical effects of other cards in play. When your opponent tries to damage *you*, you can defend yourself with other spells, block or destroy your opponent's creatures, or even turn her own cards against her.

To play, each player needs a deck of cards. (If you own no cards, you lose every duel before it even starts.) You start the game with barely enough to squeak by, and you can build your deck (depending on the availability of cards) according to your personal tastes. That's described in *Building Your Deck*.

The Cards

There are two basic types of cards: spells and lands.

Lands

Lands are easy to spot; they say "Land" in between the picture and the text box. Lands are the most common kind of card, since they usually provide the mana, the magical energy, for all your spells. During a duel, you can lay out one land per turn, and you may use the land for mana as soon as it is in play.

To get mana from a land, you have to "tap" that land. Tapping a card means turning it sideways. This indicates to you and to your opponent that the card's effects have been temporarily used up. Don't worry; your cards will untap at the beginning of your next turn. The tap symbol on a card indicates that if you use that card to generate a particular effect, then you have to tap it. Whatever effect that card generates is listed right after the tap symbol.

When you tap one of your lands, one point of mana is added to your mana pool. You can then use this mana to cast spells.

There are a few special types of land which don't give you mana. For example, Oasis is a land that you can tap to prevent damage to a creature, but it doesn't give you any mana. Always read the card if you're not sure; if a card can be tapped for mana, it will say so. If it doesn't say so, then it can't.

Remember the very first rule of Magic: if a card contradicts the rules, then the card takes precedence—the card is always right.

You get mana from a land *only* when you intentionally tap the land for mana. If some spell happens to tap one of your lands, that doesn't generate any mana. Also, the land can only produce mana at the time you tap it; if something forces the land to stay tapped, then the land can't generate any more mana.

Tapping a land for mana is considered a *mana source*, which cannot be interrupted. (We'll explain what that means later.)

There are five different types of basic land, each of which produces mana of a different color. Plains produce white mana; islands, blue; swamps, black; mountains, red; and forests, green.

The Colors of Mana and Magic

Corresponding to the five types of basic land are the five different colors of spells, each of which has a particular character. There are also "colorless" and multicolored spells. We'll discuss spell color in greater detail later, but for now, here are the basics.

White magic draws its vitality from the untouched, open plains. Though white magicians focus on spells of healing and protection, they also devote plenty of time to the chivalrous arts of war. White's traditional foils are black and red.

Blue magic flows from the islands and thrives on mental energy. Other wizards fear the blue magicians' ability with artifice and illusion, as well as their mastery of the elemental forces of air and water. Blue's traditional foils are red and green.

Black magic's power comes from the swamps and bogs; it thrives on death and decay. Many wizards shun black magic's self-destructive nature even as they long for its ruthlessness. Black's traditional foils are green and white.

Red magic feeds on the vast energy boiling deep in the heart of the mountains. Masters of earth and fire, red magicians specialize in the violence of chaos and combat. Red's traditional foils are blue and white.

Green magic gets its life from the lush fecundity of the forest. Like nature itself, green magic can bring both soothing serenity and thunderous destruction. Green's traditional foils are blue and black.

Note that mana and land are not the same thing. Mana can come from other source besides land; Llanowar Elves, for example, is a creature that you can tap for one green mana. This is why the rules refer to "green mana," "blue mana," and so on, instead of "forest mana," "island mana," and such.

There are also "colorless" mana and "generic" mana, which aren't in the color chart because they don't count as colors.

Some mana sources specifically generate **Colorless** mana. This mana has no color at all. It can only be used as generic mana.

Generic means mana "of any color". For some spells, the color of the magic simply isn't important.

Spells

Now that you've identified the land cards, everything else is a spell. Notice that none of them actually say "spell" on them; that's because there are six different types of spells, and it's important to know which type you're casting. Spells are labeled by type, in the same place that lands are, as instant, interrupt, sorcery, enchantment (or "Enchant *something*"), artifact, or summon *something*. The main differences between these various types are laid out below. These differences are important and will be referred to over and over throughout the section on dueling.

There are a few things that all spells have in common; one is the casting cost. This is the cost, in mana, to cast the spell that the card represents. For example, the cost to bring a Hurloon Minotaur into play looks like two little fireballs and a grey 1. This means that you need two red mana and one generic mana to summon this creature. One way to get this would be to tap two mountains and a forest.

Another common feature is the border. The border of a spell serves as an easy visual reminder of the color of the spell. A spell's color is technically defined as the color of the mana required to cast it, not counting the generic mana. The Hurloon Minotaur requires red mana, so it is a red spell when cast and a red creature while in play. The border helps you remember its color. Colorless spells (and land cards, which are colorless) will normally have a grey or brown border. Some spells change the color of other cards. (During a duel in Shandalar, a card's *current* color is always indicated by its border.)

It's important to remember that only certain parts of a spell card have any bearing on the duel. The card's name, art, flavor text, and artist's name don't influence what a card actually does. For example, if you look at the picture on a Frozen Shade card, it looks as if the creature is floating. This may fool you into thinking that a Frozen Shade can fly, but since the text box doesn't include the word 'Flying', the Shade isn't considered a flying creature. And even though the flavor text on the Gray Ogre says something about refusing to eat vegetarians, it can still damage other creatures and your opponent, no matter what their eating habits are.

Also, cards don't interact in any way based solely on their names. Ironroot Treefolk doesn't take extra damage from a Fireball, even though trees burn well. You can play Terror against a Wall of Stone, although it might seem odd for a block of stone to die of fright. An Air Elemental can benefit normally from Firebreathing, a creature can have both Holy Strength and Unholy Strength at the same time, and so on. Just keep in mind that it's magic, so it doesn't have to be reasonable—the rules have to make sense, but the story told by the cards doesn't.

Instants

Instants are one example of what are called “fast effects”—one-shot effects that are done with as soon as they are cast (though the changes they cause can linger after them). You can cast fast effects during both your turn and your opponent's turn.

The primary use for fast effects, though not the only one, is to “respond to” other spells and actions. For example, say your opponent in a duel casts a big Fireball at one of your creatures. Her Fireball will deal enough damage to kill the creature, unless you do something about it. Since the Fireball is a spell, you can respond to it with fast effects (thus adding to the “spell chain” or “batch” that started with the Fireball). You could cast the instant Giant Growth on the creature, making it powerful enough to survive the damage from the Fireball. Of course your opponent could, in turn, use fast effects of her own.

You can use instants to *respond to* spells, but you can't use them to *interrupt* fast effects. The difference is significant.

Interrupts

Interrupts are also fast effects, but they are “faster” effects than instants. Any time you could use an instant, you could also use an interrupt. The main difference between instants and interrupts is that you can also use an interrupt to (oddly enough) interrupt a spell or fast effect (some fast effects are not spells, but we'll get to that later) you or your opponent is casting. Put another way, you can interrupt an instant, but you can't instant an interrupt.

For example, if a Witch starts to cast a Sengir Vampire (a powerful creature that you *don't* want around), you might be able to cast the interrupt Counterspell. The Counterspell would cause the Witch's spell to fail, thus preventing the Sengir Vampire from ever coming into play. You can also use interrupts to interrupt other interrupts, so she might then Counterspell your Counterspell (and so on). The first interrupt simply added to the spell chain (spell chains, like all the other complicated parts, are explained later). The second interrupt, however, wasn't aimed at the original spell; thus, it created a “batch” or “interrupt stack” (which, naturally, is explained in detail later).

If an interrupt doesn't have a specific target, it is considered an instant.

Sorceries

A sorcery is also a one-time spell, like an instant or interrupt, but it is not a fast effect. The difference is that you can only cast sorceries during your own turn, and then only during the main phase. (Once again, that's explained in the next section.)

Enchantments

Any card that has the word ‘Enchantment’ or ‘Enchant’ as the first word in its type is considered an enchantment. Every enchantment is a “permanent”—a spell that remains in play after it is cast. Once a

permanent is in play, you don't have to pay its casting cost again. The permanent will remain in play until it is destroyed. You can cast permanents only during your turn.

Enchantments affect other things in play, and most of them can only be cast if there is a legal target for them. (They're called *targeted* spells.) For example, Holy Strength is an "Enchant Creature" type, and therefore must be cast on (target) a creature. The exceptions are cards that say simply "Enchantment" or "Enchant World" as their type. These two types affect the duel as a whole, and they do not require targets.

Targeted enchantments are *local*. Non-targeted enchantments are *global*.

Artifacts and Artifact Creatures

An artifact is a magically created device or non-living creature with magical powers. All artifact cards have the word 'artifact' somewhere in their type. These generally require generic mana to cast. Artifacts are permanents, so they stay in play once they've been successfully cast, just like enchantments. You can cast artifact spells only during your turn. Artifacts don't usually need to have targets.

Most artifacts have special effects. Some of these are "always on" (continuous), and some are activated only when you want them to be—and when you pay the activation cost for that effect. (We'll explain activation cost later, along with effects; it's a lot like the casting cost.) If a non-creature artifact becomes tapped for any reason, the continuous effects cease. Also, you can't use the other effects until it becomes untapped—even if its activation cost does not include the tap symbol. Most artifacts' effects that require an activation cost can be used immediately after casting (unlike creatures).

An artifact which is also a creature (has power and toughness) is called an artifact creature. Artifact creatures are cast like artifacts, not summoned like creatures. (That's important because some interrupts affect only summon spells, so they wouldn't hurt your artifact creature.) However, they *are* creatures, so they're subject to "summoning sickness" like summoned creatures. Unlike other artifacts, artifact creatures do not stop working when they become tapped; their continuous effects remain active, and you may still use their effects with activation costs that do not include the tap symbol. Artifact creatures are affected by spells and effects that target or affect either creatures or artifacts—since they're both.

Summon Spells

By far the most common type of spell is the summon spell. A summon spell calls a magical creature into play. It's a permanent, like enchantments and artifacts, so the creature stays around until your opponent (or you) figures out how to get rid of it. You can cast summon spells only during your turn.

Creature cards will have numbers in the bottom right-hand corner. These are the power and toughness ratings. Any card with numbers in that corner is a creature. The numbers indicate the creature's attack strength (power) and defense strength (toughness). Power and toughness are explained in detail in the next section. Creatures are the only things that can attack your opponent and block her attacks, though they're not the only way of inflicting damage.

For summon spells, everything after the word 'summon' is the creature type. Other types of spells don't have this extra sub-type. The reason creatures have types is that some cards affect all creatures of a particular type; for example, the Goblin King gives all Goblins a bonus. The type is the *only* thing that matters for these effects. The Goblin Rock Sled looks like a Goblin, and it even has 'Goblin' in its name, but the card type is "Summon Rock Sled" and not "Summon Goblin." This means that it isn't really a Goblin, and it isn't affected by the Goblin King. Similarly, the Goblin King itself is "Summon Lord," so it doesn't give itself a bonus.

A creature cannot attack during the turn it is brought into play. This is called "summoning sickness". Once the creature has begun a turn in your control, it is no longer sick.