

Table of Contents

If You've Never Played Magic Before

- First Things First

- The Cards

 - Lands

 - The Colors of Mana and Magic

 - Spells

The Duel

- The Phases of a Turn

 - Untap Phase

 - Upkeep Phase

 - Draw Phase

 - Main Phase

 - Discard Phase

 - Cleanup Phase

- Basic Spellcasting

 - Casting Cost

 - Targeting

 - Fizzle vs. Cancel

- Introduction to Creatures

 - Power and Toughness

 - Summoning Sickness

 - Combat without the Complications

- Advanced Spellcasting

 - Cards' Special Effects

 - Fast Spells

 - Permanents

 - Resolving Spells and Effects

- Creature Abilities

 - Banding

 - First Strike

 - Flying

 - Landwalk

 - Protection

 - Regeneration

 - Trample

- Timing

 - Response Rule

 - Resolving Existing Effects

 - Resolving Fast Effects

 - An Example

 - Tapping as a Fast Effect

 - Damage Prevention

 - Going to the Graveyard

 - Triggered Effects

 - Fast Effects and Phases

- A Few Extra Rules

 - Cards Out of Play

 - Counters

 - The Graveyard

 - Forced Effects

Dueling In The Demo

- Strict Enforcement

- Deck Selection & Options

- Before the Duel Begins

- First Play and First Draw
- Mulligan
- The Dueling Table
 - Territories
 - Options
 - Hands
 - Situation Bar
 - The Phase and Combat Bars
 - The Showcase
 - Libraries
 - Graveyards
 - Life Registers
 - Mana Pools
- Using Your Cards
 - Land
 - Spells and Spell Chains
 - Card Effects
- Combat
 - Declaring Your Attack
 - Assigning Blocking
 - Resolution of Combat
- Miscellaneous Actions
 - Upkeep Effects
 - Drawing
 - Discarding
 - Sacrifices

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.

First Things First

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).

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.)

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 | 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 | 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 | 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 | 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 | 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.

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| Colorless | Some mana sources specifically generate colorless mana. This mana has no color at all. It can only be used as generic mana. |
| Generic | 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 summon a Hurloon Minotaur into play is two red mana and one generic mana. 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, 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 your opponent 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 her 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.

THE DUEL

Before the duel begins, both players put up one card from their decks as ante.

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 by the player who wins a coin toss.

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 of one water drop symbol would require one blue mana to cast. If that spell had a casting cost of one blue mana plus one generic mana, that 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.

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 one red mana. 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 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 vs. Cancel

If, for whatever reason, a spell fails for any reason, that spell is said to have “fizzled.”

Usually, unforeseen fast effects cause a spell to fizzle—a target is removed from play, for example, or protected from the spell somehow. When a spell fizzles, the card goes to your graveyard as if it had been countered, and the mana you spent is gone.

If you change your mind in mid-cast and decide not to use a spell, you can cancel it. The spell goes back into your hand as if nothing had happened, but the mana in your 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.

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): 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 Hurlloon 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) 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.

There's a progression to this attack thing.

- 1) **Begin Combat:** First, you announce that you are about to attack. (You and your opponent get a last chance to toss fast effects *before* combat officially starts.)
- 2) **Declare Attackers:** Next, you decide which of your creatures will attack and which will band with attackers to form groups.
- 3) **Fast Effects:** Both players get to use fast effects after the attackers have been declared.
- 4) **Declare Blocking:** Your opponent decides which of her creatures will block and which of your creatures each will block.

- 5) **Fast Effects:** Both players can use fast effects once the blocking has been declared.
- 6) **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.

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. Also, under normal circumstances, walls—creatures of the type "Wall"—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, somehow removing from the attack attackers that might otherwise be killed, 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 0 mana). 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, technically, part of the activation cost. It doesn't really matter, though, because *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...). 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 (Skull)(Skull), (Tap): Jumps up and down until end of turn. 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 symbol), 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 1: Prevent all damage against you from one black source. 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 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—it 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 tap effects 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 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:

- 1) 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.
- 2) 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.
- 3) 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.
- 4) 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 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.

DUELING IN THE DEMO

The dueling rules for *Magic: the Gathering* were originally developed for face to face play with physical cards. Computerized play is a thoroughly different situation, but the dueling rules are like the laws of physics—they're applicable everywhere, regardless. This section is meant to introduce you to the local dueling customs.

Strict Enforcement

As the game of *Magic* has developed, so have the rules. Earlier editions of *Magic* used slightly different sets of rules, and the wordings on the cards have also changed over time. The rules have gradually become clearer and the cards easier to understand, without substantially altering the game. In most cases, later editions of the rules have clarified the old rules rather than changing them.

If you're a longtime player, familiar with older rules, you might find that dueling now works differently than you expect. That's because the rules used are the official interpretations supplied by Wizards of the Coast. These up-to-date rules are ruthlessly enforced, and there is no room for negotiation, argument, intimidation of your opponent, or weaseling your way through loopholes.

Tough luck, all you whiny rules lawyers.

This demo and the full version of *Magic: the Gathering* enforce the official *Fifth Edition* rules.

Before the Duel Begins

There are a couple of minor things you must take care of before the actual duel begins—deciding who goes first and making sure both players are able to play.

Deck Selection & Options

When the demo begins, you see the **Deck Selection** window. The top two radio buttons control whether you play only a single match against one opponent or try your luck one at a time against every potential opponent.

Single Duel is the one-shot. You play one match against one deck.

Gauntlet is the long haul. You play one match against each wizard in the demo, until you lose a match.

The **Difficulty** (to the right) chronicles the level of difficulty of the upcoming match. This is based on the settings you make in the **Gauntlet Options**. (Click on the **Gauntlet Options** button to set them.) The options for the Gauntlet are as follows:

- **Match Size** is a choice between two options. You can either play every match as a two out of three contest or decide each match on the strength of a single duel. The latter choice adds to the **Difficulty**.
- **Enemy Level** affects how aggressively and how well your opponents play. The level you pick affects the **Difficulty** noted for the match.
- **Ante** is a checkbox that determines whether you play each duel for an ante card. Playing for ante adds to the **Difficulty** noted for the match.
- The **OK** button saves your settings and returns you to the **Deck Selection** window.
- **Cancel** undoes all your changes and returns you to the **Deck Selection** window.

You can also pre-set the **Dueling Options** (layout and such) using the **Dueling Options** button. These options are exactly the same as those you can set during a duel.

Below the first set of radio buttons is the **Opponent Deck** selection area. Use the options here to determine what deck your opponent will use in the next match you play. Click a radio button to select an option.

- **Random Deck** selects one of the decks at random from the selection list.
- The selection list allows you to select a specific deck for you opponent. Click on the scroll button at the right end of the list to review your choices, then click on one to select it..

Under the **Opponent Deck** selection area is the **Player Deck** selection area. This is where you choose what deck you'll be using in the match (or series of matches) you play. Click a radio button to select an option.

- **Random Deck** selects one deck from the selection list. This could be any of the creature or wizard decks, or it might be one of the decks you've built and saved.
- The selection list allows you to select a deck to use as yours. This works exactly like the one above.

When things are set up the way you want them, click the **OK** button to begin the first duel. If you decide, after all, not to engage in any duels, press **Cancel** instead.

First Play and First Draw

This procedure is new to the Fifth Edition rules.

In every duel, one player plays first and the other draws first. Who does which is decided by the player who wins a coin toss. The player who gets First Play does not draw a card during her first turn. Rather, she plays that turn with whatever cards are in her hand. The player who gets First Draw plays in turn after the first player, and she draws as usual.

Mulligan

To begin the duel, both players draw seven cards to fill their initial hands. If either player draws no land in this seven cards or draws all land, then that player has the option to declare a *mulligan*. There is no requirement to declare a mulligan, it is entirely the decision of the affected duelist.

If either player declares a mulligan, that player must shuffle her hand back into her deck and draw seven new cards to make an initial hand. The other player has the option to do so as well. Again, the other player is not required to redraw—it's optional.

If either player draws a mulligan hand a second time, that's just too bad. Each player has only one chance to redraw, and once that's used or waived, the duel begins.

The Dueling Table

All duels are conducted on the same table. Vital functions are performed automatically, and the layout is for the most part not configurable. In general, you can:

- right-click on any active area on the table (a card, for example) or on the table itself to open a mini-menu of options;
- click to activate some areas of the table (cards in your hand and mana sources, to name two);
- click and drag to move a card or window from place to place.

Read on for the details.

Please note that the **Dueling Table** description in this section refers to the *Standard* layout. The *Advanced* layout is a little different. All the necessary parts and functions are the same; they're just in slightly different places.

Territories

By far the largest areas of the dueling table are your territory and your opponent's. The lower territory is yours, the upper belongs to your adversary. These areas contain all of the cards in play.

When you right-click on either territory, a mini-menu pops open. Depending on the situation, one or more of these options is available:

Arrange Cards straightens up the cards in play in the territory where you right-clicked. This has no effect on the duel, it just makes things neater. (You can also double-click on a territory to do this.)

Cancel is a convenient way to cancel a spell or effect. You can sometimes use the **Cancel** button on the **Situation Bar** for the same effect.

Concede announces to your opponent that you're giving up, accepting a loss rather than continue this duel. You must confirm this decision.

Done signals that you're finished with the current phase or spell, or that you do not wish to take advantage of the current opportunity to use fast effects. However, this option does not simply move you on to the next phase or action. Rather, it tells the "referee" that you do not intend any action until (1) you reach a phase that has a **Stop** on it, (2) an action or decision is required (during your turn, this can be the case in *every* phase), or (3) you are able to use a fast effect. (Note that "able to" means that you have a fast effect handy *and* you have the mana available to use that effect.) You can sometimes use the **Done** or **Cancel** button on the **Situation Bar** for the same effect.

Duel Options opens the **Dueling Options** window, which allows you (within limits) to customize the look of the **Dueling Table**. The details are in the next section, conveniently titled *Options*.

Go to ends the current phase and moves you on to the next one.

Help opens the **Dueling Help** window. This functions exactly like you expect Windows Help to.

Minimize shrinks the Magic: The Gathering window so that you can temporarily pursue other Windows functions.

Show ID Tags toggles the display of each card's unique ID code. This can be useful when you need to determine exactly which of several otherwise identical cards is the target of a specific spell or effect.

Show Invisible Effects toggles the appearance of those effect cards (the temporary yellow cards that pop up all the time) that are not normally displayed.

Every card in play or in your hand has one or more uses. Most cards have a primary use—for instance, you are most likely to use a basic land to generate mana. To use a card for its primary use, just click on it. Right-clicking on a card also opens a mini-menu.

Help opens the **Dueling Help** window. This functions exactly like any Windows Help.

Show ID Tags toggles the display of each card's unique ID code.

Show Invisible Effects toggles the appearance of those effect cards (the temporary yellow cards that pop up all the time) that are not normally displayed.

Don't Auto-Tap marks a land to be ignored—not tapped for mana—when you auto-cast any spell or effect. The only way to tap a locked land is manually, by clicking on it.

View Full Card displays the card in the **Showcase**. (When you're using the **Advanced Layout**, this opens a temporary **Showcase** in which to display the card.

Options

The options in the **Dueling Options** window are a convenient way to customize the **Dueling Table** a bit—for those of you who would like to.

The top box, **Layout**, contains two radio buttons. You can use these to modify the overall organization of the dueling area.

- **Standard** returns the dueling display to the standard layout. This includes a permanent **Showcase**, but the territories are slightly smaller to compensate.
- **Advanced** streamlines the dueling area. The **Showcase** is removed (though it appears when necessary), and the other parts of the interface are rearranged to allow the largest possible territories.

Just below the layout options are a few check-boxes. These modify the way certain things are represented during the duel.

- **Show Cue Cards** controls the appearance of the tiny hints that pop up when you position the mouse cursor over an active location. If you don't like the little tips, toggle the cue cards off.
- **Show Abilities** determines whether each creature's abilities (flying and such) are marked on the card by ability icons. If you want to see these reminders, toggle this option on.
- The **Show Power/Toughness** check box determines whether or not the *current* power and toughness of each creature is displayed on the card in play. (The **Showcase** always shows the *original* power and toughness.)
- **See Next Draws** has no effect during the duel. Rather, this controls whether, at the end of a duel, you get to see the next cards you and your opponent would have drawn. (Some players like to know.) You cannot toggle this option off in the demo.

The box in the lower portion of the window is relevant to the appearance of the background in your territory. (You cannot do anything to change the background in your opponent's territory.) The list on the left simply allows you to pick the predominant color of your background. The list on the right includes the different types of background art available for each color. Select one option from each.

When you're satisfied with the settings, click the **OK** button. If you decide to abandon your changes, click **Cancel** instead.

Hands

A small window floating over your territory contains representations of the cards in your hand. Only the title bar of your opponent's hand is visible; this is to keep you aware of how many cards are in that hand. If a card allows you to see the cards in your opponent's hand, the window opens to display them.

For reasons that will become obvious the first time you play a duel, both these windows are movable. To move a **Hand** window, click and drag on the bar at the top of the window. The **Hand** window has a maximum size. If there are too many cards in your hand to display all at once, use the scroll arrows at the top to see the rest.

At any given time, some, all, or none of the cards in your hand might be useable. Just for starters, you must have enough mana available, it should be the right phase, and often there needs to be a legal target in play. When all the necessary conditions are met, a card in your hand is useable, and therefore will be highlighted as such.

Click on any highlighted card in your hand to begin casting that spell or, in the case of land, to put it into play. Once you've selected a spell to cast, you must draw enough mana—from your mana pool, land in play, or other mana-producing cards—to power the spell.

In many situations, it matters quite a bit which of your mana is used and which remains available. If you are not in one of those situations, however, and don't care to manage your mana, you can "auto-cast" a spell by double-clicking on it. This is a convenient shortcut, but keep in mind that you momentarily give up control over which of your mana is used. All land except those marked "Don't Auto-tap" is fair game. Non-land mana sources are never auto-tapped.

Remember, for cards with X in the casting cost, you must determine the value of X at casting time. If you double-click to "auto-cast" an X spell, *all* of the mana you have available in your pool and from (unlocked) land sources will be put into that spell.

When you must choose a card to discard from your hand, you click on it as if you meant to cast it.

This is just a quick overview; for the details of spell casting, read the section *Spells and Spell Chains*.

Situation Bar

Between the two territories (usually) is the **Situation Bar**. This is nothing more than a reminder to you of what is going on. You can't do anything with it, it just gives you information. Depending on what else is on the screen, this bar moves so as to always remain visible.

At the rightmost end of this bar is a button that reads **Done** or **Cancel**, depending on the situation. Clicking either is the same as selecting the option of the same name from the mini-menu. As we mentioned before, be careful about this.

The Phase and Combat Bars

The **Phase Bar**, which runs from top to bottom of the screen just to the left of the territories, is the central control for the progress of the duel. Though there are other ways to move through the phases of your turn—mini-menu options and the **Situation Bar**—the **Phase Bar** is probably the most convenient.

First and foremost, the current phase is always highlighted. The top half of the bar represents the phases in your opponent's turn, while the lower half represents your turn. For novice players especially, this can help guide you as to what actions are and are not possible at a given time.

You can move forward ("run") to any phase by clicking on the icon for that phase. (You can also do this by right-clicking on the phase and selecting **Run to** from the mini-menu.) This is a little less simple than it might sound. Whenever you want to, you can click on any phase on either side of the bar. This instructs the computer—acting as referee—that you do not intend to do *anything* until the phase you clicked on. The duel blithely skips through all the intervening phases, then stops. There are a few exceptions, of course.

- If there are any required actions to perform during a specific phase (dealing with upkeep effects, for example), movement through the phases will stop at that phase until you do what is necessary.
- If your opponent does something that requires or permits a response (casts a spell, uses a fast effect, declares an attack, or whatever), movement through phases stops so that you have a chance to respond.

- If you have placed a **Stop** on a phase, progress pauses at that phase.

When the duel pauses to take care of something like this, your original “destination” phase is forgotten. The situation has changed, and your intentions probably have, also.

Now, you might ask, what is a **Stop**? That’s another function of the **Phase Bar**. You can right-click on any phase and select **Mark** from the mini-menu to put a **Stop** on that phase. This is a lasting instruction that you do not want the duel to pass that phase until you have had a chance to do something. Specifically, that phase does not end until you tell it to manually; it cannot pass automatically.

It is important to remember that there is no way to “back up” a phase. Thus, if a situation arises in which you would normally say to your opponent, “Wait a minute. Before the end of that phase, I want to use a fast effect,” you must prepare for that ahead of time. This is what Stops are designed for.

Stops are especially necessary for those fast effects that must be used before combat begins. Once the Combat sub-phase begins, it is too late to use these effects. A Stop on your opponent’s Main Pre-Combat sub-phase is always a good idea.

Attentive players will notice that there is no icon for the Cleanup Phase. That’s because there are no actions you or your opponent can take during this phase.

The **Combat Bar** is a miniature **Phase Bar** that appears during an attack. It functions in exactly the same way as the larger bar; you can even use **Stops**. This bar has only five icons, representing the sub-phases of combat.

The Showcase

To the left of the **Phase Bar**, in the center, is a big card. As in some other screens, this is the **Showcase**. Whenever the mouse cursor pauses long enough over a card in play, in a visible hand, or even in a graveyard, that card is displayed here. Cards drawn into your hand are displayed when you draw them.

If the whole text of a card does not fit into the text area of the **Showcase**, you can fix that. Right-click on the text area, then click on the **Expand** toggle. This causes the text area to grow, when necessary, to display the entire card text. If the expanded box becomes annoying, you can always toggle **Expand** off again.

Note that the **Showcase** always displays the original card text. Any changes made to a card after it was put into play—modifications to the power, toughness, color, or what have you—are noted on the representation of the card in play, not here. The **Showcase** is a display only; it has no other function.

If you’re using the **Advanced** layout, the **Showcase** only appears when you call it, and is otherwise absent. Note that it will normally disappear in a few seconds, but the **Showcase** will not leave the screen if you place the mouse cursor over it. Clicking on it, however, makes it disappear.

Libraries

Immediately above and below the **Showcase** are two piles of face-down cards. These are the dueling decks, each of which is now considered to be a player’s *library*. Whenever you draw a card, you draw from the library on your side. The number of cards left in your library is represented—inexactly, as in real life. If you must know, you can right-click on a library to find out the exact number of cards left in it.

Remember, when there are no cards in a library, that player cannot draw and will likely lose during his or her next draw phase.

You cannot manipulate your library unless a card specifically instructs you to do so.

Graveyards

Next to each library is an area for discarded cards—a *graveyard*. Each player has a graveyard, and taken together, these comprise *the* graveyard. When a card is discarded or removed from play, as when a creature is killed, it goes into the graveyard. Cards which are removed from the game entirely do not go into the graveyard.

You can click and hold on either graveyard to view its contents. You can't rearrange or remove the cards in any graveyard unless a card specifically instructs you to do so. You can also right-click on either graveyard to see a reminder of what cards you and your opponent have put up as ante or view cards removed from play or out of the game.

Life Registers

Farther from the **Showcase** than the two card piles are the two **Life Registers**. These simply note how much life each duelist has at the moment. Whenever one (or both) of these is zero or less at the end of a phase or the end of combat, the duel is over.

Poison counters, if a player has accumulated any, are displayed here.

You can right-click on either life register and select **Flip Over to Face** if you'd rather see your opponent's face.

Mana Pools

Between the **Life Registers** and the **Phase Bar** are the two **Mana Pools**. Any mana that has been generated but not yet used is represented here. (Note that, technically, all mana passes through the pool as it is generated and used. Normally, however, this is neither visible nor significant.)

When you choose to cast a spell or use an effect that has a mana cost, you may choose which of your mana to use and in what way:

- If there is mana in your pool that you wish to use, click on the area next to the appropriate color button or on the button itself to apply that mana one at a time.
- To use all of a particular color, double-click in the area representing that color.

Using Your Cards

Knowing what's what on the dueling table is all well and good, but the cards are the important thing.

One thing to keep in mind throughout is to make sure your mouse cursor is actually over the card you intend before you take an action. Sometimes, the cards can get awfully close together, and one bad accident might cost you the duel.

For convenience, the cards you can use at any moment during the duel are highlighted. For example, if you have no cards yet in play, all of the land in your hand is highlighted, since those are the only cards you can do anything with at that moment. Of course, just because you *can* use something doesn't mean you *should*.

If you need to read a card to be reminded what it is and can do, move the mouse over it. The full card is displayed in the **Showcase**.

Land

You can put one land into play during the main phase of your turn. If you have a land in your hand, click on it to put it into play. You can also double-click, but the effect is the same.

Once a land is in play, you can tap it for mana at any time. Simply place the mouse pointer over the land you want to tap and click.

Some lands have effects other than, or in place of, providing mana. You're prompted to choose when you click on that land. It's as simple as that. If the effect is a targeted one (damage prevention, for example, which targets damage), you also need to choose a target. When you're prompted, click on any valid target—a card, a damage marker, or whatever.

Spells and Spell Chains

By now you know that the term 'casting a spell' means putting any non-land card into play from your hand (and *only* from your hand; putting cards into play from other places, like the graveyard, is not considered casting a spell). Any card you can cast is highlighted. Click on it to cast it. You're prompted to provide mana to pay the casting cost. At this point, you can draw mana from your pool, directly from land (though the mana does momentarily pass through your pool), or from any other source you have. Any X cost is defined by the amount of mana you tap now.

Alternatively, you can double-click on a card in your hand to "auto-cast" it. The casting cost is taken from your pool and available land sources automatically. If there is an X in the cost, *all* of the mana in your pool and available from (unlocked) land sources is funneled into the spell. This can be very convenient, but it takes away your control over what mana is used for the spell. If you want to reserve a particular amount or color of mana for future use, auto-casting is not a good idea.

When an X cost is what you want it to be, there are two ways to stop adding mana to the spell. One is to right-click on a blank area of your territory—anywhere that won't be mistaken for an attempt to get mana will do—then choose **Done** from the mini-menu. The other method is to click on the **Done** button on the **Situation Bar**. You can also click on the current phase on the **Phase Bar**, but be careful—you don't want to accidentally move on to the next phase before you intend to. (Of course, if you're using all your available mana for X, it's obvious when you're done.)

If the spell is a targeted one (like Lifelace or Lightning), you need to choose a target (or targets). When you're prompted, click on any valid target—a card, a damage marker, or whatever. If your opponent is a valid target, her **Life Register** flips over. To target your opponent, click on the face instead of a card.

If there are any other decisions to make for the spell (the power and toughness of a Shapechanger, for example), you must make these when you cast it. Once you've finished defining the spell, a *spell chain* begins.

A spell chain is the spell being cast, plus any interrupt spells or effects used to counter or modify it, plus any spells used to counter or modify *those* spells, and so on until both players have had enough. Your spell is not considered successfully cast until all this mess is resolved. Let's go over the way this works once more. (As usual, 'you' refers to the player casting the spell in the first place.)

- 1) First, you do everything that's necessary to cast the spell, targeting and all. If neither you nor your opponent is capable of doing anything to affect or interrupt the spell, that's it; the spell is successfully cast. Otherwise, if one or both of you have response options, the **Spell Chain** window opens. The spell in progress and any cards it will affect directly (targets) are displayed.

- 2) You have the first shot at adding to the chain. This is your *only* opportunity to use interrupts (whether spells or card effects) that target the original spell directly. Once you either use or decline this chance, you limit yourself to using interrupts that target other interrupts in this spell chain—both yours and your opponent’s—for the rest of this chain. (Remember also that only those interrupts that target spells are viable for targeting the spell being cast, since that card is not yet a permanent of any type.) If you do use any interrupts, they are added to the window. If you choose not to, click the **Done** button (or use the mini-menu).
- 3) If you use an interrupt, that interrupt is added to the chain. Once again, you and then your opponent have a chance to use interrupts that target this interrupt. As long as at least one of you chooses to use an interrupt, the chain goes on to another step and continues to grow. Both players always have an opportunity (though not necessarily the resources) to respond to any action the other player takes. Remember, though, that as long as any interrupts remain unresolved, neither you nor your opponent are permitted to target the original spell with anything. You can only target the latest spell or effect in the process of being cast.
- 4) If you chose not to interrupt your own spell in the first place, or once your interrupt and all the attendant interruptions have been resolved, your opponent has her chance to use an interrupt that targets the original spell. If she does so, her interrupt and its chain of interruptions are tracked in the **Spell Chain** window.
- 5) If both of you have declined this opportunity, or once both interrupts and any interruptions to them have all been resolved, that’s the end of the chain and the original spell is either countered or successfully cast.

After the spell chain resolves and if the card successfully enters play, any continuous or triggered effects caused by the card being in play happen. This includes paying any additional (non-casting) costs of putting the card into play (sacrificing a creature is a likely example).

Next, a new spell chain begins, made up of any instant spells or fast effects used or cast in response to the original spell (plus any interrupts to those). There are less restrictions on the targeting of instants. Essentially, players take turns casting instants in response to each other’s instants. When both decide that no more instants are forthcoming, the chain of instants resolves last-to-first—the last instant takes effect first, then you work backward through the chain.

Card Effects

By ‘card effects’ we mean any of the built-in effects of any permanent already in play. (Though some spells are fast effects, card effects are never spells.) You already know how to use the effects of land cards. Not surprisingly, every other permanent works the same way.

Once a permanent is in play, any continuous effects of that card are active all the time. The single exception is the continuous effects of artifacts. When an artifact is tapped, its continuous effects cease. This does not apply to artifact creatures, of course.

As for the non-continuous effects, you can use those any time the rules allow. Simply place the mouse pointer over the card you want to use and click. If there’s only one possible effect, that’s all you need to do. If there are multiple possibilities, you’re prompted to choose. (Effects which are not at present possible or allowed are listed, but greyed out.) As with the casting cost of a spell, you’re prompted to pay all of the activation costs of the effect immediately. If tapping the card is part of this cost, the card becomes tapped. Any X cost is defined by the amount of mana you tap now.

When an X cost is what you want it to be, there are a couple of ways to announce it. One is to right-click on a blank area of your territory—anywhere that won’t be mistaken for an attempt to get mana will do—then choose **Done** from the mini-menu. Another is to click on the **Done** button

on the **Situation Bar**. You can also click on the current phase on the **Phase Bar**, but be careful not to click on any other phase; you don't want to end the phase, you just want to stop adding mana to a spell. Of course, if you're using all your available mana for X, it's obvious that you're done when you run out of mana sources.

If the effect is a targeted one (like the Prodigal Sorcerer's damage), you also need to choose a target. When you're prompted, click on any valid target—a card, a damage marker, or whatever. If your opponent is a valid target, her **Life Register** flips over. To target your opponent, click on the face instead of a card.

If there are any other decisions to make regarding the effect (a color choice, for instance), you must make these when you activate the effect. Once you've defined the effect, its spell chain begins.

Once the spell chain that the effect begins is resolved, then and only then does the effect take effect.

Combat

At least part of the point of having creatures in play is so that you can have them engage in combat. We've explained the concepts and the rules of combat elsewhere; what follows is more of a how-to than anything else.

Declaring Your Attack

Once you've clicked on the combat sub-phase, your next step is declaring your attack. At this point, the **Combat Bar** takes the place of the **Phase Bar**. This functions exactly as the **Phase Bar** does, except that it marks (and controls) your progress through the sub-phases that take place during an attack.

Those of your creatures which are able to attack are highlighted. Just click on any of your available creatures to add it to the line-up. (If you click on a creature that is not capable of attacking at the time, nothing happens.) As soon as you add the first creature to the attack, the **Combat** window opens. Your attackers line up on your side, and the space on the other side is reserved for (potential) blockers.

Be careful! Once you have added a creature to the attack line up, there is no way to change your mind and remove it.

If you select a banding creature for the attack, you can choose to have it band with another attacker, rather than attacking on its own. You're prompted to decide this. If you wish to band the creature with another, click on the attacker with which the creature you're ordering around is to band. Otherwise, click the **Done** button. (To skip the option and have the creature not band, you can also double-click.)

Don't forget—banding creatures don't share abilities. If you band a creature without flying with a creature that has flying, you essentially ground the flyer, making its ability useless. The same goes for landwalk abilities. Creatures with first strike still deal their damage first, but those banded with them deal theirs at the normal time. Trample, protection, and regeneration are unaffected.

Note that some cards might force your creatures to attack; in this case, those creatures are highlighted differently, and you must add them to the **Combat** window.

Satisfied with the line-up? Use the **Done** option on the mini-menu, the **Done** button on the **Situation Bar**, or click a sub-phase on the **Combat Bar**. Now, your creatures become “attacking creatures” and can be the targets of the appropriate fast effects.

Between the attacking player declaring attackers and the defending player assigning blockers, there's a chance for both players to use fast effects. There's no difference between the way you cast and use these fast effects and any other fast effects.

Assigning Blocking

Just because you, as defending player, have creatures with which to block doesn't mean you must use them. After your opponent has finalized and announced her attacking line-up, you are allowed to declare your blocking strategy, even if you have none.

All the attacking creatures are shown in the **Combat** window. To make one of your creatures a blocker, click on it. Next, click on the attacker you want your blocker to block. It's as easy as that. One thing to remember is that you can block an attacking creature with as many of your creatures as you like.

It is neither necessary nor possible to band creatures together when blocking. Unless you have a blocking group going up against a banded attacking group, banding is irrelevant—you get to disburse the damage to your blockers anyway. If the attackers are banded, however, your opponent divides up the damage dealt by her attackers—unless at least one of the blockers in your group has banding.

As with declaring attackers, be careful. If you put in a blocker, but then change your mind about it, there is no way for you to remove it from the skirmish line.

Note that some cards might force your creatures to block; in this case, those creature are highlighted differently, and you must put them into the **Combat** window, sometimes blocking predetermined creatures.

When you're finished, use the **Done** option on the mini-menu, the **Done** button on the **Situation Bar**, or click on the **Combat Bar** to signal that you're done. Now, your creatures become "blocking creatures" and can be the targets of the appropriate fast effects.

Between the end of the assignment of blockers and the beginning of resolution, there's a chance for both players to use fast effects. There's no difference between the way you cast and use these fast effects and any other fast effects.

Resolution of Combat

When all the fast effects are done, the combat is resolved. If combat damage is done to any creature or player, there is an opportunity to use damage prevention effects. Afterward, creatures that still have lethal damage go to the graveyard, triggering any graveyard effects. Combat ends with the resolution, and the Main Post-Combat sub-phase begins.

Miscellaneous Actions

Spellcasting and combat are the activities that will likely take up most of your dueling time, but there are a few other things you need to know how to do. We've collected them all here, for reference.

Upkeep Effects

If there are upkeep effects you must take care of, you know it because the **Phase Bar** stops at your Upkeep Phase. If you don't already know what the effects are, look around both territories. Any of the cards which is highlighted at this point has an upkeep effect. Mandatory effects are highlighted differently from optional effects.

You cannot move on to the draw phase until you have dealt with all of the mandatory effects, but you can ignore optional effects (this is tantamount to choosing not to use the ignored effect.). To choose an effect, click on the highlighted card. If there is no decision involved—as with damage effects like Wanderlust and Cursed Land—that’s all there is to it; the effect takes place. If there is a choice to make—as whether to untap a Brass Man or a creature burdened with Paralyze—you are presented with the choice.

The order in which you click on upkeep effects can be important. There is a specified order, but players have some discretion to work within this framework. Note that all upkeep effects are considered fast effects:

- Beginning of upkeep effects controlled by the player whose turn it is come first, in whatever order that player decides.
- Beginning of upkeep effects controlled by the other player are next, in whatever order that player decides.
- Upkeep effects controlled by the player whose turn it is come first, in whatever order that player decides.
- Upkeep effects controlled by the other player are next, in whatever order that player decides.

Special note: Since you can use some upkeep effects (but not “beginning of upkeep” or “end of upkeep” effects) more than once, this simple ordering might be upset. For example, if you have a Brass Man in play and choose to pay one mana to untap it during you upkeep, your opponent might perform a few of her upkeep effects and somehow tap your Brass Man. At that point, you regain control and must decide whether to untap the Brass Man again. She cannot continue with her upkeep effects until you do so.

- End of upkeep effects controlled by the player whose turn it is come next, in whatever order that player decides.
- End of upkeep effects controlled by the other player are last, in whatever order that player decides.

How can the order in which these things are done matter? Well, say you have an Armageddon Clock in play, the clock has enough counters on it to kill you at the end of your upkeep, and the global enchantment Energy Flux is in play. You could pay four mana apiece to remove enough counters from the clock to save yourself, then pay the two mana required by the flux to keep the clock in play so it will damage your opponent. Well enough, but you could also save yourself by choosing to deal with the flux cost first, then simply not pay it. The clock is buried, and you need not pay any mana to remove its counters. If you’re clever, you can find all sorts of ways to use this to your advantage.

Once you have taken care of all of the required effects, you can proceed to the draw phase. Remember, though, that by doing so you are choosing not to use any of the optional effects left unused.

Drawing

When your Draw Phase begins, the single card that you normally draw is pulled from the top of your library and left face down in your hand. Both before and after you actually draw, there is an opportunity for both you and your opponent to use fast effects, including those that affect the draw itself. Some of these effects, like the mandatory draw caused by the Howling Mine, add cards to your to draw. Some, like the optional effect of the Island Sanctuary, could cause you to “sacrifice” a draw as part of their cost. If this is the case, you’re prompted to choose which draw card to sacrifice. Click on the face-down card you wish not to draw, and it is returned to the top of your library. If an effect adds to your draw, the additional cards are drawn into your hand, still face down, automatically.

When the time comes to actually draw the card or cards into your hand, you do so by clicking on the face down cards one at a time. *Each time* you draw a card in this way, it is considered a fast effect. (Which means that both players may respond to it if they choose.)

Effects that cause you to draw cards during other phases work in the same fashion. You always have a chance to use fast effects before you draw.

Discarding

Sooner or later, everyone ends up having to discard. If you have more than seven cards in your hand when the discard phase rolls around, the phase won't end until you've tossed the extra card or cards. To do so, click on the card you decide is most disposable. Be careful! Once discarded, a card goes immediately to the graveyard. (No, you can't regenerate it, and no, this doesn't trigger graveyard effects.) If you must discard more than one card, repeat the process.

If a spell or effect forces you to discard, what you must do depends on the type of discard demanded. Any discard "at random" takes care of itself; you needn't take any action. If you are allowed to choose which card (or cards) leave your hand, you do so in the same way as you would during the discard phase; just click on your least useful cards, one at a time.

Sacrifices

Many card effects and some spells require that a permanent (normally a creature, a land, or an artifact) be sacrificed as part of the cost. For example, to use the effect of Feldon's Cane, a player must sacrifice the cane itself.

When the need arises to sacrifice something, you are notified. To select and sacrifice a permanent, move the mouse pointer over an appropriate card (you cannot sacrifice a creature if the effect requires a land, for instance) and click on it. Be careful! Wrongful sacrifices are not easily undone.

If a spell or effect that requires a sacrifice is legal at the time, a creature that is about to die can be sacrificed just like any other creature. For example, say you have a Lord of the Pit (a black creature that forces you to sacrifice one of your other creatures during upkeep or take 7 damage) and a Brass Man in play. During your upkeep, you choose to untap your Brass Man. In response, your opponent fires a Lightning Bolt at the Brass Man. In response to this, you could sacrifice the Brass Man to prevent the damage from the Lord of the Pit, and her Lightning Bolt (as well as the untapping of the Brass Man) would fizzle for lack of a legal target.

The chosen permanent goes to the graveyard immediately. (Yes, this triggers graveyard effects.) There is no chance for damage prevention or regeneration since, technically, no damage has been dealt. Sacrifices, because they are costs and not actions, cannot be interrupted (though the spell or effect the sacrifice is a cost of might be interrupted). Thus, for example, you cannot choose to sacrifice a creature, then use Unsummon to save it from the graveyard.

The End