CZ0560: HOW TO READ A MAGIC CARD

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CLAP AND SLATE
ROOM TONE

1) INTRO MURPH & RACHEL
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In Magic, reading the card explains the card… most of the time… as long as you read it correctly and you know what to look for. Today, we've brought in our resident rules expert Murph to go over some of the trickiest nuances in the Magic mechanical language and explain how those tiny wording changes affect how cards work. BUT FIRST:

CARD KINGDOM **ULTRAPRO #1** **PLAYMAT KICKSTARTER** **PATREON: JONATHAN BUND**

2) **MAIN TOPIC: HOW TO READ A MAGIC CARD**
This is an episode about the nuances of reading Magic cards, not necessarily about the parts of a Magic card. If you are a brand new player and are looking for that information, welcome! Check out the Learn to Play Magic video we made on the Magic YouTube channel. We'll put a link in the show notes.

WHAT'S A "SPELL"?
Outside the game, a spell is any nonland card. In game, a card is usually only a "spell" if it's on the stack.
- Ex: Counterspell
- Ex: See Double

COLON - ACTIVATED ABILITY
Let's start out with an easy one, we know that everything that comes before a colon is a cost, and everything else is an ability, but it gets a little trickier with keyworded activated abilities.
- Reckoner Bankbuster, where is the colon?
- Unearth and Encore are activated abilities, can't be countered, but can be Stifled.
  - Ex: Perennial Behemoth; Amphin Mutineer
- Escape is an alternate casting cost, can be countered
  - Ex: Uro, Titan of Nature's Wrath
- Planeswalker abilities are activated abilities too. Look at those colons!
  - Ex: Jace, the Mind Sculptor
- When in doubt, check those explainer texts!

Triggered abilities aren't as obvious as activated ones if you don't know what to look for. But the secret is: "when," "whenever," or "at."

- "[When/Whenever/At] [trigger condition or event], [effect]. [Instructions (if any).]"
  - Ex: Bojuka Bog
  - Ex: Rhystic Study
  - Ex: Phyrexian Arena
- This is important to know because…
  - It indicates whether you can respond or copy it
    - *Copy* > Panharmonicon; Strionic Resonator;
    - *Respond* > Stifle; Defabricate
    - *Prevent* > Torpor Orb; Hushbringer;
  - Kozilek, Butcher of Truth vs. Blightsteel Colossus
    - You can respond to the Kozilek shuffle effect and reanimate him at instant speed
    - You cannot respond to the Blightsteel shuffle, he never even hits the graveyard.
    - *This brings us to…*

IF - REPLACEMENT EFFECT

Sometimes instead. Replacement effects say if something would happen, this happens instead. Like many things in Magic, this sounds very simple but can get messy.

DAMAGE

Let's say you have cast a Lightning Bolt targeting your opponent. It normally deals 3 damage.

- Ex: You control Torbran, Thane of Red Fell
- Ex: You control Angrath's Marauders
- Ex: You control both.
  - For max Damage, first you want Torbran to replace it with 5 damage, then the Marauders double it to 10.
  - If the Marauders replace it first, it doubles to 6, then Torbran replaces it with 8 damage.
  - *Do you get to choose which order you replace the damage?*
    - *NO!*
- Whoever the damage is being dealt to, or the controller of the permanent that damage is being dealt to gets to choose
- Ex: You control Angrath's Marauders. Your opponent controls a Delaying Shield.
  - If all damage would be prevented, doublers/enhancers no longer apply

TOKENS

Let's say you have a triggered ability that makes a single treasure token tapped, like Gala Greeters.

- Ex: Parallel Lives > Instead, you make 2 tapped Treasure tokens.
  - 2 x Parallel Lives > Instead, you make 2; instead you make 4 tapped Treasure tokens.
- Ex: Academy Manufactor > Instead, you make a Food, Clue, and Treasure, ALL tapped.
  - 2 x Academy Manufactor > Instead, you make 1 ea.; instead you make 3 ea; all tapped

- ○ Academy Manufactor & Parallel Lives > Instead you make 2; instead you make 2 ea; all tapped

CARDS
- Ex: Abundance; Eruth, Tormented Prophet; Alhammarret's Archive;
- Dredge > If you would draw a card, you may mill X cards instead. If you do, return this card from your graveyard to your hand.
  - ○ Ex: Life from the Loam
  - ○ If you draw three cards from a spell, you can Dredge to replace one of them and draw 2
- Laboratory Maniac > If you would draw a card while your library has no cards in it, you win the game instead.
  - ○ Lab Man + Eruth, Tormented Prophet

MIDROLL POINT

ETB vs. ENTERS AS vs. ENTERS WITH
We've talked about ETB triggers, they say, "when ~ enters the battlefield, ~." It says when, so it's a trigger. There are other ETB effects that are NOT triggers.
- Choose a type > "as ~ enters the battlefield"
  - ○ Ex: Metallic Mimic;
  - ○ Metallic Mimic naming Dragon, does trigger Dragon Tempest.
- Clone > "enter the battlefield as a copy"
  - ○ This is the reason you can copy ETBs with clones.
  - ○ If it said, "When Clone enters, it becomes a copy of any creature" it would die to state based actions.
- Counters > "enters the battlefield with"
  - ○ Ex: Walking Ballista; Everflowing Chalice; Giada, Font of Hope;
- None of these are affected by Panharmonicon or Torpor Orb. They cannot be stifled.

CAST vs. PLAY vs. PUT
CREATURES
- *Casting a creature is how creatures normally enter the battlefield, but there are lots of cards that put creatures directly onto the battlefield, bypassing the stack entirely. When you "put" a creature, you don't trigger anything that cares about casting.*
- Descendants' Path vs. Lurking Predators
- Beast Whisperer > Triggers on Descendants' Path, but not Lurking Predators
- The Great Henge > Triggered by either effect
- MDFCs
  - ○ Can you *cast* Lisette, Dean of the Root from your graveyard with Muldrotha? Yes!
  - ○ Can you *put* Lisette, Dean of the Root into play from your graveyard with Reanimate? No!

LANDS

- *Playing a land is like "casting" a spell. It's the "official" way to get lands into play. Putting a land into play is like putting a creature into play. You don't trigger anything that cares about playing.*
- Growth Spiral vs. Explore
- Horn of Greed; Burgeoning > Triggers on Explore land, but not Growth Spiral land
    - Are NOT doubled by Ancient Greenwarden
- MDFCs
    - Can you *play* Bala Ged Sanctuary from your graveyard if you have a Crucible of Worlds? Yes!
    - Can you *play* Bala Ged Sanctuary from your library with Oracle of Mul Daya? Yes!
    - Can you *put* Bala Ged Sanctuary onto the battlefield with Growth Spiral? No!
    - Can you bring back Bala Ged Sanctuary from your graveyard with Splendid Reclamation? No!

TARGET vs. NO TARGET
TARGET
- Target is what we're familiar with. Auras, most removal spells, pump spells, and equip abilities all target.
- Target means you must select when the spell or ability is put onto the stack.
- How to treat spells that target
    - Yawgmoth, Thran Physician > Says "up to one target" so it does not require a target to activate, but can be fizzled if the target is removed
    - Decimate > Must have all targets, but will resolve as much as possible if it still has targets
        - Casualties of War > Choose one or more
    - Cryptic Command > Bounce, Tap > Can be fizzled if you remove bounce target, the spell no longer has any target
    - Bonecrusher Giant > Adventure spells can be fizzled if you remove targets. The whole spell will go to the graveyard.
    - Capsize > If the target is fizzled, it will not be bought back.
NO TARGET
- If it doesn't explicitly say "target," it gets around shroud, hexproof and protection
    - EX: Sandstone Oracle; Tragic Arrogance; Council's Judgment; Druid of Purification
        - Often "choose" is used instead of target
        - Careful though! Vaevictis Asmadi, the Dire says "choose target"
    - Clones

END STEP vs. END OF TURN
To the untrained ear "at the beginning of the next end step" sounds like a longer version of "until end of turn." But one is a trigger (it has "at") and one is not.
END STEP
- End step triggers can be "countered" with Sundial of the Infinite
    - Let them go on the stack, then end the turn. They will think they've triggered and won't trigger again.

- - Ex: Sneak Attack
      - This is an example of an old cards that says "until end of turn," It has since been errata-ed to say "at the beginning of the next end step"
    - There is always a Clean Up/Discard to hand size
  - If you activate one of these abilities at the beginning of their end step, you will keep them until the next end step, as you will be past "the beginning."
    - Ex: Kiki-Jiki, Mirror Breaker; Dress Down;

END OF TURN
  - Until end of turn effects wear off no matter what. A turn has gotta end!
    - Ex: Heroic Intervention; Insurrection; Act on Impulse;
  - If you threaten a creature and then phase it out, you still lose control of it at end of turn. It will phase back in on your untap step, under its owner's control.
  - If you threaten a creature and then donate it to another player, you don't lose control of it because it doesn't exist on your board anymore. The player who received it as a donation, keeps it.
  - If a card gives you the ability to cast a card and explicitly says "this turn" or "until end of turn," you must obey timing restrictions. If it doesn't, cast it upon resolution of the ability.
    - Timing Restrictions > Narset, Enlightened Master; Codie, Vociferous Codex; Dauthi Voidwalker;
    - Right now > Etali, Primal Storm; Zethi, Arcane Blademaster (Chun-Li, Countless Kicks)

EASY PHRASES TO MISS
Sometimes reading the card correctly is just not missing a word or two. Here are some little words that make a BIG difference.
EACH
  - Ex: Unnatural Growth; Koma, Cosmos Serpent;
UP TO
  - Ex: Apex Altisaur; Dance of the Manse;
MAY
  - Ex: Consecrated Sphinx vs. Archmage Emeritus
OTHER/ANOTHER
  - Ex: Elas il-Kor, Sadistic Pilgrim; Saryth, the Viper's Fang;
ONE OR MORE
  - Ex: Toski, Bearer of Secrets vs. Tadeas, Juniper Ascendant (Dhalsim, Pliable Pacifist)
  - Grim Hireling; Professional Facebreaker
COMBAT DAMAGE
  - Ex: Notorious Throng vs. Ceremonial Knife vs. Professional Facebreaker

3) **TO THE LISTENERS**
Magic is complicated! What cards have you gotten hung up on? What wording nuances are or were most confusing to you?

CARD KINGDOM #2 **ULTRA PRO #2**

4) <mark>THE END STEP</mark>
Something cool outside the world of Magic

5) CLEAN-UP STEP
Big thanks to our amazing team here at The Command Zone! **Damen Lenz; Eric Lem; Megan Yip; Gaurav Gulati; Jordan Pridgen; Jamie Block; Arthur Meadowcroft; Manson Leung; Jake Boss; Sam Waldow; Evan Limberger; Craig Blanchette; Katie Cole; Mitch Trafford; Gabriel Pozos; Josh Lee Kwai; and Jimmy Wong.**

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