MCC Guidelines

(written by bravelion83, July 2019)

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1. General

The MCC (Monthly Card Contest) is a periodic custom card creation contest, characterized by its high formality. The MCC being very strict is one of its strengths and one of the reasons why it exists. This contest is for those people that like their custom cards to be judged with a rubric that's meant to prize custom card designs of a high quality level in all their little details, cards that could have been designed by R&D for real MTG. If you like your custom card contest to be strict and formal, this is the right contest for you. If you like a less strict contest, with more leeway for potential mistakes, inconsistencies, or just less realistic cards, you might prefer the other contests available here in the MTGNexus Custom Cards subforum, but we still absolutely welcome you in the MCC if you want to try it out. Everybody's welcome in the MCC, and there is no right or wrong in personal preference.

These guidelines are meant for everyone. Whether you're a player, judge, or host, there will certainly be valuable info for you here.

2. Changes to the guidelines and/or rubric

Temporary deviations from these guidelines should be done only for very important and justified reasons. Any permanent changes to these guidelines, and any changes to the rubric (whether temporary or permanent), must be properly and thoroughly discussed in the discussion thread before being implemented, first on a trial basis (at least one month) and only after that, if the trial went well, permanently. If the trial didn't go well, the proposed change should be further discussed in the discussion thread before trying it out again. If any change is being tried in the current month, the host should mention it explicitly in the OP of all that month's threads, including the judge signup thread and all round threads.

3. Structure of the contest

A typical MCC month will be made up of five threads, posted by the host at different times: the "judge signup thread" and one round thread for each of the four rounds.

3.1 - Judge signup thread

A few days before the start of the month, or at the latest together with round 1, the host creates a new thread called the "judge signup thread". That thread's OP should contain the following:

• An MCC banner, either the default one or a customized one.
• The month, and the title "Judge signup thread".
• An optional introductory paragraph by the host. If present, it should be in italics.
• A sample card for new judges to judge, designed by the host themselves and containing several intentional mistakes in multiple areas of the rubric. The more hidden those mistakes are, the better it is.
• A spoiler containing the text of the MCC rubric.

If you have already judged in the MCC, just reply to this thread and you'll become one of the judges for the month. If you have never judged in the MCC, you will have to judge the sample card before being accepted as a judge for the month. See "how you can become a judge" for more info.

The judge signups will stay open until a sufficient number of judges is reached, or until the design deadline for round 1, whichever comes first. If there are not enough judges as the round 1 design deadline comes, the host can look for more judges among the players, or turn to other people that they know and trust, asking for their availability to judge in the current month. If a player becomes a judge this way, their round 1 submission is ignored and treated as a "judge card", that is a card that a judge submits out of competition. Other judges may judge that card too if they wish, but only after they're done with their official bracket.

3.2 - Round threads

Every round thread should contain the following:

• An MCC banner, either the default one or a customized one.
• The month, round number, and round title (if existing).
• An optional introductory paragraph by the host. If present, it should be in italics.
• The challenges: in this order, the Main Challenge, then Subchallenge 1, then Subchallenge 2. All challenges should be bolded.
• An optional clarification spoiler for the challenges.
• A link to the discussion thread. This can be included within the clarifications spoiler.
• A spoiler containing the text of the MCC rubric.
• Two deadlines: the design deadline and the judging deadline.
• After the design deadline has passed, the host should edit the round OP to also include judging brackets, possibly also posting at the end of the thread as a separate post. As a host, the more visibility you give to judging brackets, the better it is.

Making the rounds increasingly difficult, so that round 1 has the easiest challenges and round 4 the hardest, is a very good idea for the host, but not mandatory.

In every round, players play by submitting cards that meet the Main Challenge and any number (that includes zero) of Subchallenges. Please don't make more than one submission post in any round thread. If you want to adjust or change your submission, use the edit function. You can edit or change your submission until the design deadline. If you edit your submission post after the design deadline, you will be DQ'ed, so please just don't do it.

If there is a tie in the first three rounds, all tied players will advance to the next round. If there is a tie for the winner in round 4, all tied players win the contest for the month ex-aequo.

3.2.1 - Round 1

Everybody can enter round 1 as a player. The more players enter, the more fun the contest is for everyone, so everyone interested is encouraged to play in round 1. As I've already said, we welcome everybody regardless of anything, including your experience as a custom card designer or as a contest player. Is it your first time? Doesn't matter! Come in and join the fun!

While there is no technical limit to the number of players that can enter round 1, an old guideline says that the number of players in round 1 should not be greater than ten times the number of judges for the month. That hasn't been a problem in years, and I don't think it will be a problem here on MTGNexus either. If anything, it's a problem that I would like to have, because it means we have a lot of players, and I always wish any month has as high of a player participation as possible.

In round 1, every player is judged by one judge. As the design deadline comes, the host divides the players in the most equal way possible (suggested method: at random) into a number of groups (brackets) equal to the number of judges. Each judge is then assigned one of those group of submissions to judge within the judging deadline. If there are at least five players per judge, the top 4 scoring players from each bracket advance to round 2. Otherwise, the lowest scoring player in each bracket is eliminated and all others advance to round 2.

3.2.2 - Round 2

Round 2 is open only to the players who advanced from round 1. Players that have been eliminated or that didn't participate in round 1 can't post a card submission for round 2.

In round 2, judging works exactly like round 1. Every player is judged by one judge. As the design deadline comes, the host divides the players into brackets in the most equal way possible (suggested method: any way that works to have all players judged by a different judge than in round 1), one bracket per judge. If there are at least three players per judge, the top 2 scoring players from each bracket advance to round 3. Otherwise, the lowest scoring player in each bracket is eliminated and all others advance to round 3.

3.2.3 - Round 3 (or "the versus round")

Round 3 is open only to the players who advanced from round 2. Players that have been eliminated or that didn't participate in round 1 can't post a card submission for round 3.

In round 3, judging works differently than earlier rounds. Every player is judged by multiple judges, usually two. As the design deadline comes, the host divides the players into 1-vs-1 pairs, assigning each pair to two judges in any way that works to have all players judged by different judges than in round 2, and possibly also round 1 (that's not always possible though). Then the scores are summed and the player with the highest combined score from each pair will advance to round 4.

If there is an odd number of players in round 3, a situation that's not desirable but that might happen, one of the "pairs" will actually be a group of three players. In such a bracket, depending on the needs of the specific month, the host can choose to let only the top scoring player advance to round 4, or the top 2.

3.2.4 - Round 4 (or "the finals", or "final round")

Round 4 is open only to the players who advanced from round 3. Players that have been eliminated or that didn't participate in round 1 can't post a card submission for round 4.

In round 4, judging works differently than earlier rounds. Every player is judged by every judge, with no brackets needed. Then the scores are summed and the player with the highest combined score will be officially declared the winner of the month by the host.

4. Recommended card formatting

The recommended way to format your card submissions is as follows. Not following this formatting in your submission might cause point deductions in the Quality section of the rubric. The aim of this formatting is to generate a text card that's the most similar to a real MTG physical card.

• First line: card name (in bold), followed by a space and then the mana cost (in mana tags, with mana symbols in the correct order).

• Second line: this is the type line. Supertype(s), then card type(s), then an em dash (–), then the subtype(s), and finally the rarity. Single spaces are there between each element and the next.

You can do the em dash in various ways, also depending on the OS you are using. In Windows, for example, you can use the key combination CTRL + minus sign on the numeric pad, or copy and paste it from the Character Map. A normal dash, or minus sign (-), is an acceptable substitute, but the em dash is better because it's what is actually used on printed MTG real cards. Magic Set Editor (MSE) also automatically uses the em dash when you export cards for the web.

For rarity, you should include the initial of the word (C for common, U for uncommon, R for regular rare, and M for mythic rare) in round brackets. The use of different brackets, colors, bold, italics, or any additional formatting for rarity is not technically forbidden but heavily discouraged.

• Third and following lines: this is the rules text. Write it as it would be written on a real MTG card, including (but not limited to) proper line breaks and ability order, up-to-date wording, and reminder text if needed.

• Following lines: this is the flavor text. Please don't use any flavor bar. Remember the flavor text is always in italics, and that if it's a quote the attribution must go on a separate line, right after an em dash (again, a normal dash is an acceptable substitute, but not encouraged) and without any space between the dash and the name.

• Last line: power and toughness if the card is a creature, starting loyalty if it's a planeswalker. Please don't include any additional formatting. No square brackets, or any kind of brackets, for a planeswalker's starting loyalty, just the number with no additional formatting. That's true also for loyalty costs.

A few examples from real MTG cards (a common creature, an uncommon noncreature, a rare land, and a mythic planeswalker), taken from the most recent set at the time of this writing (M20). Mana tags are there to show you how to use them. You make italics with the [i] [i] tags.

Griffin Protector:

Griffin Protector [mana]3W[/mana]
Creature – Griffin (C)
Flying
Whenever another creature enters the battlefield under your control, Griffin Protector gets +1/+1 until end of turn.
"Here is a companion who will never falter, no matter how desperate the battle!"
–Ajani Goldmane
2/3

Overcome:

Overcome [mana]3GG[/mana]
Sorcery (U)
Creatures you control get +2/+2 and gain trample until end of turn. *(They can deal excess combat damage to the player or planeswalker they're attacking.)*
"Forward! Until the horizon is ours!"
–Khemses, charioteer

Lotus Field:

Lotus Field
Land (R)
Hexproof
Lotus Field enters the battlefield tapped.
When Lotus Field enters the battlefield, sacrifice two lands.
[mana]T[/mana]: Add three mana of any one color.

Chandra, Awakened Inferno:

Chandra, Awakened Inferno [mana]4RR[/mana]
Legendary Planeswalker – Chandra (M)
This spell can't be countered.
+2: Each opponent gets an emblem with "At the beginning of your upkeep, this emblem deals 1 damage to you."
-3: Chandra, Awakened Inferno deals 3 damage to each non-Elemental creature.
-X: Chandra, Awakened Inferno deals X damage to target creature or planeswalker. If a permanent dealt damage this way would die this turn, exile it instead.
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5. Roles

5.1 Host

5.1.1 - General

The host is the person responsible for running the contest in the current month. They're the highest ranked among the three roles. A host can't participate in the contest during the month they are hosting, but they're expected to be one of the judges for the month.

5.1.2 - Duties of the host

• Being always respectful to players and judges.
• Always respecting the broader forum rules.
• Creating all challenges for all rounds in the month.
• Posting the judge signup thread and all the round threads at the proper time.
• Deciding proper design and judging deadlines and posting them in the round OP.
• Enforcing the deadlines as best they can.
• In rounds 3 and 4, calculating the sum of the scores that each player got from each judge, to see who advances (round 3) or who is the winner of the month (round 4). Posting such results in the round thread is strongly advised but not mandatory.
• As the design deadline comes, creating judging brackets for every round. The advised method is at random in Round 1, and in any way, random or not, that minimizes the number of players judged by the a judge that has already judged them in following rounds.
• Being one of the judges for the month.
• The host can set up a private discussion thread via pm with the judges of the month, to have a quick way to coordinate with judges, exchange communications, allowing judges to ask for advice if they have any difficulty with one or more of their cards, etc... Creating such private thread is advised, but not mandatory.
• In the judge signup thread and each round thread, the host should always use a banner at the top. They can choose to either just use the default MCC banner, or create a customized banner for all month or for each different thread. In a customized banner, the acronym MCC must be present , while the month, the year, and the title of the round (if it exists) can be there but it's not mandatory. If the host uses customized banner, they must give proper credit to the artist.
• Checking the site, and in particular the current round thread and the discussion thread, at least once a day, if possible, to promptly answer any question that might arise about the current round.
• Granting time extensions to players or judges when they're needed.

5.1.3 - A note about mistakes in challenges

Mistakes can and will happen. If the host realizes that they have made an unintended mistake in one or more of the round challenges, they can correct their mistake. If they choose to do so, they should do it as soon as possible after they realize their mistake and they must adjust the deadlines if needed, to allow at least three or four days for the contestants to correct, adjust, or change their submissions. In this case, the host should give ample notice of their mistake. They should post in the discussion thread a detailed

explanation of it and add that same explanation to the round OP, also implementing the eventual deadline adjustment. The host is also invited to sent a pm to all the involved contestants to make sure they are aware of the adjustments.

5.1.4 - How you can become host

Usually a few days before the beginning of any month, a moderator posts in the discussion thread asking who's available to host the contest for the month that's about to begin. If you want to be the host, post a reply to that message in the discussion thread and wait for the moderator's confirmation. As soon as it comes, you become the official host for the month. It's advisable that before answering the moderator's post you already have an idea of all the challenges you want to do throughout the month. You can work out details later, but you should already have at least a vague idea of the challenges and theme of your month. It's highly advisable that you have both played and judged a few times before becoming a host, to get the gist of how it works, but it's not mandatory.

5.2 Judge

5.2.1 - General

The judges are the people who apply the rubric to the round's submissions, give them scores, and decide based on the scores who advances to the next round (in rounds 1, 2, and 3) or who wins the contest for the month (in round 4). Being a judge is a job that requires seriousness, fairness, objectiveness, responsibility, and a good amount of time and patience. It's also often a thankless job, but a very needed one. Without them, the contest simply couldn't run.

5.2.2 - Duties of a judge

• Being always respectful to players, other judges, and hosts.
• Always respecting the broader forum rules.
• Being as fair and objective as possible in their judgments.
• Respecting judging deadlines. If you're a judge and you know you will not be able to make it on time, you should contact the host via pm or in the discussion thread as soon as you know. The host can give you a time extension, usually of a day.
• Contacting the host for any doubt or clarifications they might have about the challenges, either via pm or in the discussion thread.

5.2.3 - How you can become a judge

Possibly a few days before the beginning of the month, or at the latest together with round 1, the host posts a thread called "judge signup thread" (see "structure of the contest" above). If you have already judged in the MCC before, just sign up there and you're in. If you have never been an MCC judge before, you will find a sample card in that thread. Try to judge that card applying the rubric, and post your sample judgment in that thread. The host will reply to you as soon as possible in that same thread, giving you their

feedback and accepting you as a judge for the month if they're satisfied with your sample judgment, or asking you to make some modifications to it if they're not. In this last case, it essentially becomes a back-and-forth between you and the host, with you posting your modified sample judgment and the host giving you feedback and either accepting your application or asking for more modifications. The cycle repeats until the host is satisfied with your sample judgment and accepts your application as a judge. You will have to judge the sample card only the first time you apply as a judge.

It's highly advisable that you have played a few times before becoming a judge, to get the gist of how it works, but it's not mandatory.

5.3 Player

5.3.1 - General

The players are the people who participate in the contest by sumbitting custom cards that meet the challenges the host created. Players are also very needed. Without them either, the contest couldn't run.

5.3.2 - Duties of a player

• Fair play.
• Being always respectful to opponents, judges, and hosts.
• Always respecting the broader forum rules.
• Making sure that your submission meets the Main Challenge in both letter and spirit.
• Always meeting the design deadline. After the design deadline, you're not allowed to post or edit your submission. If you post your submission after the design deadline, your card will simply not be taken into consideration by the host when creating judging brackets. If you edit your submission post after the design deadline, you will be DQ'ed for the month.
• Accepting the judges' scores and judgments. Under ordinary circumstances, a player can't appeal the scores and/or the judgment of their card. If a player thinks that there are problems with the scores and/or judgment of their card, they are allowed to contact the judge either via pm or in the discussion thread (NEVER in the round thread!) to ask for further explanations and/or explain their own reasons. The judge can choose to adjust their scores and/or judgment if they want, but they're not required to. If they choose to do so, they must do it within the judging deadline. The judge has the final say on whether to do that or not. Both the player and the judge are expected to keep a polite and civil tone throughout their discussion. Remember that all scores and judgments are automatically final in the moment of the judging deadline, even if the host hasn't posted the next round yet.

5.3.3 - How you can become a player

Round 1 is always open to everyone who's not already the host or a judge for the month, so if you want to play in the current month, just remember to post a card in Round 1. Your card must meet the Main Challenge and any number (that includes zero) of Subchallenges. Later rounds (2, 3, and 4) are only open to players who advanced from the previous rounds.

5.3.4 - External help

All cards you submit to this contest must be your own creation. If you have troubles with finding the correct wording for your card, first try to look for similar cards on Gatherer, Scryfall, or other card databases. Then, if you still have trouble, you're allowed to pm a rules guru or an experienced MCC judge to ask for advice. They are not required or forced to give you advice in any way, but if you ask politely, most will. That's the only case when outside help is allowed.

5.3.5 - Renders

You may include a render in your submission, but if you choose to do so, always remember the following:

• You must always give proper credit to the artist.
• You must still include the text card in your submission. The render does NOT substitute the text card. It's something you can do *in addition to* the text card, NOT in its place.
• Only the text card will be judged. The render will not be judged, nor it will modify your judgment in any way. Judges will only consider the text card, and will just ignore the render while judging.

5.3.6 - Design notes and other content in submission posts

Those are forbidden. Your submission post must include only your text card and the optional render. Nothing else can be included, unless explicitly required by the round challenges. That includes design notes, links, explanations of mechanics or lore, and anything else you might come up with. Including things other than your text card and the optional render is a cause for DQ, so just don't do it.

6. The rubric

6.1 - Text of the rubric

Design
(X/3) Appeal: Do the different player psychographics (Timmy/Johhny/Spike) have a use for the card?
(X/3) Elegance: Is the card easily understandable at a glance? Do all the flavor and mechanics combined as a whole make sense?

Development
(X/3) Viability: How well does the card fit into the color wheel? Does it break or bend the rules of the game? Is it the appropriate rarity?
(X/3) Balance: Does the card have a power level appropriate for contemporary constructed/limited environments without breaking them? Does it play well in casual and multiplayer formats? Does it create or fit into a deck/archetype? Does it create an oppressive environment?

Creativity
(X/3) Uniqueness: Has a card like this ever been printed before? Does it use new mechanics, ideas, or design space? Does it combine old ideas in a new way? Overall, does it feel "fresh"?
(X/3) Flavor: Does the name seem realistic for a card? Does the flavor text sound professional? Do all the flavor elements synch together to please Vorthos players?

Polish
(X/3) Quality: Points deducted for incorrect spelling, grammar, and templating.
(X/2) Main Challenge (*): Was the main challenge satisfied? Was it approached in a unique or interesting way? Does the card fit the intent of the challenge?
(X/2) Subchallenges: One point awarded per satisfied subchallenge condition.

Total: X/25
*An entry with 0 points here is subject to disqualification.

6.2 - Detailed explanation of the rubric

First, a note. Half points are totally allowed, and all judges use them. Some judges also use quarters of point for even finer evaluation. While that's technically allowed, it's also not advised.

Design

Here the initial idea for the card is judged. In the classic saying "idea and execution", this is the "idea" part.

(X/3) Appeal: *Do the different player psychographics (Timmy/Johhny/Spike) have a use for the card?*

The typical way to judge this area is to reserve one point for each psychographic, then evaluate how each of them sees the card and whether they like or not and how much, with zero meaning they don't care at all, and one meaning they are excited to play it. This is a practical way that some judges use, but it's far from the only way. Another way keeps into account that not every card is for everyone, and that there is nothing wrong with a card that only one of them likes, if they really like it. So you can divide the score into four parts, one for each psychographic and one for "how does the card's intended audience like it?". Another method is to start from the full three points and apply deductions depending on how much each psychographic likes the card. As you can probably imagine, this area might be the most controversial in the whole rubric, with different judges having widely different ways of judging. There is no recommended method here. Every method is valid, as long as the scores are properly justified in the judgment and the criteria that each single judge uses, whatever it is, is consistent throughout their bracket.

The gendered names are also another thing that every judge can use however they want, according to their own sensibility. Some judges use pronouns according to the Timmy (Timmy, Power Gamer), Johnny (Johnny, Combo Player), and Spike (Spike, Tournament Grinder) cards from the Un-sets, using he/him for Timmy and Johnny, and she/her for Spike. Other judges write out Timmy/Tammy and Johnny/Jenny. Others write Txmmy and Jxnny. Others do something else, different from all of those. There is obviously no right method for this either, just remember to be as inclusive as you can, regardless of your role in the contest.

Finally, remember that Mel/Melvin and Vorthos are NOT psychographics, but aesthetic profiles. That's a different thing. So you should NOT judge here whether Mel/Melvin and Vorthos like the card. You can talk about Mel/Melvin in Elegance, Viability, or Balance. You can talk about Vorthos in Elegance or Flavor.

(X/3) Elegance: Is the card easily understandable at a glance? Do all the flavor and mechanics combined as a whole make sense?

This section is about the card at a holistic level. A high-scoring card in this area feels like a cohesive whole of mechanics and flavor, where the mechanics enhance the flavor and vice versa. Also, its text is not too long. If you need a limit, try to copy and paste the text of the card in MSE (Magic Set Editor), in the proper frame, and remember that the card with the smallest text printed in the M15 frame is currently Animate Dead from Eternal Masters: 10 lines with two line breaks. A font smaller than that is definitely microtext, and should be penalized here. Finally, consider if the text of the card is as easy to understand as possible, even and mostly to the unexperienced player. A good guideline is that if you need to reread the card multiple times just to understand what it does, it should score low here.

Development

Here the way that initial idea has been developed into an actual MTG card is judged. In the classic saying "idea and execution", this is the "execution" part, from a mechanical point of view.

(X/3) Viability: How well does the card fit into the color wheel? Does it break or bend the rules of the game? Is it the appropriate rarity?

This section cares about whether the card is fully within the limits of the color pie, or if it's a bend or, worse, a break. Remember that a bend is a card that does something that a color rarely does, or doesn't do at all, but doesn't undermine the indended weaknesses of each color. A break is a card that does undermine its colors' weaknesses. Both should be penalized here, but a bend less than a break. Other things this section cares about are whether the card is at the appropriate rarity, and whether it works within the rules.

Judges should apply point deductions ranging from -0.5 to -1.5 for each problem they find in this area, depending on its severity.

(X/3) Balance: Does the card have a power level appropriate for contemporary constructed/limited environments without breaking them? Does it play well in casual and multiplayer formats? Does it create or fit into a deck/archetype? Does it create an oppressive environment?

This section is about the power level of the card in all different formats: limited, constructed, casual, multiplayer. For limited, the focus should be more on draft than sealed. For constructed, it should be more on Standard than older formats, even if a card being relevant in older formats without breaking Standard is obviously a huge plus here. For casual, the most important thing is that the card is not unfun or oppressive in kitchen table MTG, and remember that is the most played "format". For multiplayer, remember that Commander is an important part but far from the only multiplayer format. Two-Headed Giant and Free-For-All multiplayer both exist too, as well as Archenemy and other variants.

Don't make the mistake of thinking that a card must be viable in all formats to score high here. Not all cards are for all formats, just like not all cards are for everyone (see Appeal). Each card has its own job, and what's important is that it does that well. A card can be only playable in limited, but that doesn't mean it isn't balanced. In the same way, a card doesn't need to be playable in older formats like Modern, Legacy, or Vintage to be balanced. Actually, that's a very high bar. If every card had to be playable in older formats, MTG would be a very different game, provided that it still exists.

Another thing to remember here is that a card that's too weak, so weak that nobody will ever play it not even in limited or in the sideboard, is only slightly better than a card that's too strong and potentially bannable. That's because a card that's too weak won't cause any damage to the game, while a card that's too strong can break formats and indeed cause damage to the game as a whole. The latter is definitely a problem in this area, and should be penalized accordingly, but a card that's too weak should also be penalized here.

Here is also the right place to consider whether the card fits into some existing deck archetypes, and if it does, whether it enhances or hinders them. The latter isn't necessarily a problem, as the card could be used as a sideboard card against that archetype. Even better is a card that has the potential to create a completely new archetype that doesn't exist yet.

Finally, consider whether the card's mana cost and eventual other costs feel right. Remember: a single mana can make the difference between an unplayable and a broken card.

Card databases like Gatherer and Scryfall are perfect to find similar cards to compare yours with.

Judges should apply point deductions ranging from -0.5 to -1.5 for each problem they find in this area, depending on its severity.

Creativity

Here the originality and the creative elements of the card are judged. In the classic saying "idea and execution", this is the "execution" part, from a creative point of view. This includes creativity in both mechanics (Uniqueness) and flavor (Flavor).

(X/3) Uniqueness: *Has a card like this ever been printed before? Does it use new mechanics, ideas, or design space? Does it combine old ideas in a new way? Overall, does it feel "fresh"?*

This section is meant to prize mechanically original cards and cards that are memorable or have their own clear identity thanks to their mechanics. The more mechanically similar real cards exist, the more points will be deducted here. A full zero here should be reserved for cards that are identical word-by-word to an already existing card and functional reprints of already existing cards. A functional reprint is a card with the same mana cost, colors, card types, rules text, and power and toughness (if applicable) as an already existing card. For creatures, don't keep into account creature types when determining if a submitted card is mechanically identical to an already existing card. Colorshifts (for example Disenchant and Naturalize, or Prodigal Sorcerer and Prodigal Pyromancer) are not functional reprints, but still very unoriginal, and will also get very low scores in this area. Here too, card databases like Gatherer or Scryfall are very useful to both players and judges.

(X/3) Flavor: Does the name seem realistic for a card? Does the flavor text sound professional? Do all the flavor elements synch together to please Vorthos players?

The things that matter here are the card name, the flavor text, the type line (supertypes, card types, and subtypes if they are flavorfully relevant), the mechanical flavor (how well the mechanics of the card represent its flavor), and the overall card concept.

Judges should apply point deductions ranging from -0.5 to -1.5 for each problem they find in this area, depending on its severity.

Judges should only penalize the lack of flavor text on a card if there would be room for it on the card. To check that, the use of software like MSE (Magic Set Editor) is highly recommended, for both players and judges. Also, remember that planeswalkers have no flavor text, so if the submission is a planeswalker card, it can't be penalized for not having flavor text.

Polish

This is essentially a catchall section for the rest: editing and challenges.

(X/3) Quality: Points deducted for incorrect spelling, grammar, and templating.

Any mistake, no matter how little, in English orthography, grammar, or spelling will be punished here, as well as card formatting and current MTG templating. "Current" means as of the most recent real MTG set. If changes to templating are shown during the previews of a real set, and unless otherwise specified by the host, you can use both templating styles, old and new, until that set's Prerelease, that is until we can play with the real physical cards. Starting with that set's Prerelease, only the new templating will be accepted, and if you still use the old one after that, you will suffer point deductions here.

Point deductions in this area should range from -0.5 to -1 for each mistake depending on its severity.

The minimum points you can get here is zero, that means no negative scores. Judges can't deduct more than the 3 full points in this section.

*(X/2) Main Challenge (*): Was the main challenge satisfied? Was it approached in a unique or interesting way? Does the card fit the intent of the challenge? (*An entry with 0 points here is subject to disqualification.)*

Here we judge how the submission fits the Main Challenge, in both letter and spirit. This is NOT intended as a yes/no category, or at least it depends on what the Main Challenge is. Sometimes it's indeed a yes/no challenge, but it in many cases it might not be. That's when this category being a spectrum become relevant. 2 points mean that the Main Challenge is fully met, in both letter and spirit. 0 points mean that neither the letter nor the spirit of the Main Challenge are met, and a card that scores zero here will be DQ'ed (see "Disqualifications" below). If only the letter of the Main Challenge is met but not the spirit, or vice versa, points deductions should be applied here, ranging from 0.5 to 1.5 points depending of how serious the infraction is. Essentially, the first question here cares about the letter of the Main Challenge,

while the last cares about the spirit. The middle question is meant to prize cards that meet the Main Challenge in a creative and unexpected way, that might not be obvious the first time you read it.

(X/2) Subchallenges: One point awarded per satisfied subchallenge condition.

Exactly like the Main Challenge section, this isn't supposed to be yes/no either. One point is reserved for each Subchallenge. 1 point means the Subchallenge is fully met, with no doubts. 0 points mean the Subchallenge is undoubtely failed. If only the letter of the Subchallenge is met but not the spirit, or viceversa, a 0.5 points deduction can be applied here. Repeat this for both Subchallenges in the round.

Notably, getting a full zero here is NOT a cause of DQ. It simply means you've completely failed both subchallenges in both letter and spirit, but you will suffer no other consequences.

6.3 - Brief history of the rubric

This rubric has been created by two experienced MTGSalvation users that have been heavily involved in the MCC under all three roles for years (IcariiFA and bravelion83). One of them (bravelion83) is the same one writing these guidelines and FAQ. Those users came up with this rubric based on the previous rubric and on discussion with other interested users in the MTGSalvation MCC discussion thread. It was first adopted in the MCC on MTGSalvation in November 2015, hosted by IcariiFA and judged by bravelion83. The (back then) new rubric was further tested in December 2015, hosted by bravelion83 and judged by IcariiFA, and became the fully official rubric right after those two successful months of testing, in January 2016, with bravelion83 judging. IcariiFA and bravelion83 hosted again respectively in February (with bravelion83 judging) and March 2016, to make sure that everybody in the community understood it correctly. Everybody did, and so this has been our official rubric since then.

The main changes compared to the previous version of the rubric were an overall rewording and the reorganization of the different sections of the rubric into the four macroareas of Design, Development, Creativity, and Polish. A Main Challenge section (under Polish), that wasn't there before, was also added. That required a readjustment of the maximum scores in each section, so that the maximum total score (25) didn't change from the previous version.

The rubric has undergone no changes in the migration from MTGSalvation to MTGNexus (August 2019).

6.4 - A note about subjectivity in judging

Uniformity of scores and judgments among different judges would be ideal, but a little subjectivity in judging will always be there, simply due to the fact that different judges are different people, and no two human beings are the same or see things in the exact same way. Hopefully it's just a little subjectivity and not too much. We are only humans, and perfection doesn't belong either to us or to the world we happen to live in. Yet, this doesn't mean we shouldn't strive towards it. By the way, this is one of the reasons why later rounds in a month have multiple judges judging the same cards, to try to compensate for this inevitable subjectivity in judging.

7. Disqualifications (DQs)

The following are the only admitted reasons for a judge to DQ a card:

• A full zero in the Main Challenge section. In this case, the DQ must be thoroughly explained by the judge that issued it in their judgment of the card, under the Main Challenge section. Then the host, as the creator of the challenges, may ask a judge to reconsider a DQ, explaining their reasons to the judge. This should happen via pm. Ideally, an agreement can be found between the host and the judge in this case. If that's not possible, the host's word prevails, but only after a proper discussion. No host should undo a DQ just because they feel like it, and no judge should issue a DQ in the first place just because they feel like it. A DQ is a serious matter, and only intended as a last resort.

• A player editing their submission post after the design deadline without having been publicly authorized by the host. In this case, no appeal can be made.

• A player posting no text card in their submission. If you choose to include a render in your submission, remember that it doesn't substitute the text card, that must also be there. In this case, no appeal can be made.

• A player posting anything in addition to the required text card and the optional render. This includes design notes and everything else you can think of. A submission post must include only the text card and the optional render. In this case, no appeal can be made.

• The submission goes against the forum rules. If the DQ is due to breaking the forum rules, that's a bigger issue that involves moderators and potentially admins. Please just don't do it.

No other reasons for DQs are allowed, with no exceptions.

8. Miscellaneous notes

Real life always comes first, but please do your best to respect deadlines, whether you're a player or a judge. They're there for a reason: to keep the contest going without excessive delays.

Ideally the contest should finish at most a few days (maximum a week, hopefully less) into the following month.

Fair play, correctness, honesty, inclusion, keeping a civil tone, having fun, and respecting the broader forum rules are all equally important values in the MCC. Everybody is expected to behave accordingly, regardless of whether they are host, judge, or player.

Remember: in the MCC we judge cards, not people. We judge a custom card design, not its designer as a person. And always remember that in the end, it's just a game.

MCC Frequently Asked Questions
(written by bravelion83 in July 2019, based on the old FAQ on MTGSalvation)

What is the MCC?
The acronym stands for Monthly Card Contest, and that kinda says everything. It's a custom card creation contest that you can find every month in the MTGNexus Custom Card subforum. In it, players compete to create custom MTG cards based on different challenges in a series of elimination rounds. It's characterized by its high strictness and formality, that are a feature and not a bug. It's the most strict and formal custom card creation contest on MTGNexus. But don't be scared by this! We welcome everyone!

How many people can play in the MCC?
There is no limit to the number of players in round 1, though an old guideline said 10 x the number of people who sign up as judges. Nobody has ever been turned away in the whole history of this contest on MTGSalvation, and I don't expect that to happen here on MTGNexus either.

How do I participate in the MCC as a player?
Just submit a card in round 1 and you're in. Later rounds are only open to players who advanced from earlier rounds.

Can I join the current MCC that is in progress?
Only in round 1. Not in later rounds. If you miss round 1 on one month, you will have to wait until the next month. I'm sorry. But while you wait, why don't you check the other contests that are going on around here?

Is a signup required as a player?
No. Anyone can post in round 1 as a player. Your post in round 1 counts as your signup as a player for the month.

Is a signup required as a judge?
Yes. If you want to be a judge for the month, you will have to sign up in the "judge signup thread" until signups are open (until we get enough judges or until the design deadline of round 1, whichever comes first).

Grammar and spelling have nothing to do with design, why should I be docked points for it?
True, spelling has no reflection on your abilities as a designer. But the fact of the matter is that those sorts of errors are both impossible to ignore and easy to correct. We could go on and on about this, or you could take a small fraction of the amount of time it would take to post a complain about it to just check over your card when you submit it. Also, while misprints and typos do happen sometimes in real MTG too, remember that Wizards has a whole team of editors checking every card before it leaves the building. They pay attention to these things, and so should we.

Can I include Design notes/Flavor notes/Art description?
No, unless the round challenges specifically and explicitly ask for it. Cards submitted in the MCC should be evaluated as though they're being taken out of a booster pack and seen for the first time. All the elements of the card should be able to stand on their own. Another reason for this rule to be inflexible is to avoid giving a potentially unfair advantage to native or fluent English speakers.

Do the cards I submit in the MCC need to be in English?

Yes, with no exception. If you're not a native English speaker, don't worry and just do the best you can. If it can encourage you, the person writing these very notes is not a native English speaker.

Which wording are we using?

Always the most up-to-date as possible. If a previewed card reveals a new wording, between that preview and its set's Prerelease you can use either the old or the new wording. After the Prerelease, that is after we all have had a chance to play with the real physical card, only the new wording will be accepted, and if you still use the old one, your card will be penalized in Quality.

What is a render and how do I make one?

A render is a mockup of your card with art. To make one, the most widely used program is called Magic Set Editor (MSE) and it's free. You can find it very easily just by googling it.

Are renders required?

No. They are optional but not required.

Do I need artist credit if I choose to make a render?

Yes, always. If you have a render, you must credit the artist properly, possibly by name. The name given should be able to lead people to that artist without effort, so if you're pulling art off of DeviantArt or someplace similar you should include the URL where you've found the image at the very least.

Do you need to have a render to get a perfect score?

No. In fact, the render is just ignored during judging, and this is exactly one of the reasons why. We don't want to require a render to get a perfect score because that would penalize people who can't see images in a potentially unfair way. Also, while art is certainly an important part of a MTG card, this is a contest about your skills in custom card design, not about your skills in using card rendering or image elaboration software.

If I don't submit a render can I make a text card with 15 lines?

No. Both players and judges are heavily encouraged to use software like Magic Set Editor (MSE) to verify whether you're dealing with microtext. In that case, point deductions will be inevitable. As a guideline, remember that the card with the smallest text that has been actually printed in the M15 frame is Animate Dead from EMA: 10 lines of text with two line breaks.

How do I become a judge?

To limit complaints about scores, we want to make sure that our judgings are all up to certain standards. This isn't meant as some sort of punishment or criticism of potential judges, just as a way to keep things as civil and fair as possible. See the "how you can become a judge" paragraph in the MCC guidelines for more info.

How do I become a host?

See the "how you can become host" paragraph in the MCC guidelines for more info.

What do I get for judging or hosting an MCC?

You don't receive anything tangible, just the pride for doing it and knowing that you just were a big help in running an event.

Can I judge and play (or host and play) in the same MCC?
No, with no exception.

I feel that the score my card received was completely unfair! What should I do to challenge it?
First, in this contest "completely unfair" and "challenge" are just bad words. Judgments are final as of the judging deadline. Sometimes they won't be perfect, but that's ok. We are humans, perfection doesn't belong to either ourselves or the world we live in. What you can do is sending a pm to the judge explaining your reasons in a polite and civil way, but don't expect anything to change. The judges aren't required to adjust or change their judgments based on your pm, but they can if they want and if the judging deadline hasn't passed yet.

Okay, maybe my card wasn't the best, but my opponent's card was horrific and it beat mine! Can I challenge the score of my opponent's card?
No. Again, you can send a polite and civil pm to the judge, but don't expect anything to change. In this case specifically, please contact the judge via pm and NOT in the discussion thread. Discussing an opponent's card is, on the surface, just as valid as discussing your own, but the potential bad feelings just aren't worth it.

Yes I know, I was late to the round, but I had a really important engagement and my internet glitched on me when I got home (or whatever other excuse) just in time to post my card. Can you accept it, please?
No. The design deadline is there for a reason. Remember that real life always comes first, and that this is just a game. There are more important things in life, and those must always take priority. Don't worry, and we hope we'll see you again next month.

Can I edit my card even after I have submitted it?
If the design deadline hasn't passed yet, then sure, edit whatever you want in your submission, or even change it completely. If the design deadline has already passed, no. In fact, if you edit your submission post in any way after the design deadline has passed, that's a cause of DQ.

I'm trying to make my card work but I just can't get the wording right. What should I do?
The rules gurus and the MCC judges are allowed to help you on your card text, preferably via pm. Any other kind of external help is not allowed.

Can I get help on other parts of my card?
No. MCC cards must be created on your own, meaning that design, balancing, and any other part of your submission must be your idea and yours alone. The only exception is the one in the previous question.

Where can I learn about MTG card design in general?
You can find all kinds of useful material on the internet. Personally, I advise following Mark Rosewater (Maro for short), MTG's current Head Designer, who writes articles (Making Magic) and does podcasts (Drive to Work) about it. You can find all his articles and podcasts on the official MTG Wizards website. He also has a Tumblr blog (Blogatog) where he answers all kinds of questions about MTG design and more.

Thanks for reading. Hopefully you've been to find in these guidelines and FAQs the answer to your questions. If you didn't, or have any more questions, feel free to ask in the discussion thread.

See you in the MCC!