

When copying an object, the copy acquires the copiable values of the original object's characteristics and, for an object on the stack, choices made when casting or activating it (mode, targets, the value of X, whether it was kicked, how it will affect multiple targets, and so on). The "copiable values" are the values derived from the text printed on the object (that text being **name**, **mana cost**, **card type**, **subtype**, **supertype**, **expansion symbol**, **rules text**, **power**, **toughness**, and/or **loyalty**), as modified by other copy effects, by "as... enters the battlefield" and "as... is turned face up" abilities that set characteristics, and by abilities that caused the object to be face down. Other effects (including type-changing and text-changing effects), status, and counters are not copied. A copy acquires the color of the object it's copying because that value is derived from its mana cost. A copy acquires the abilities of the object it's copying because those values are derived from its rules text.

An object that enters the battlefield "as a copy" or "that's a copy" of another object becomes a copy as it enters the battlefield. If the text that's being copied includes any abilities that replace the enters-the-battlefield event (such as "enters the battlefield with" or "as [this] enters the battlefield" abilities), those abilities will take effect. Also, any enters-the-battlefield triggered abilities of the copy will have a chance to trigger. When copying a permanent, any choices that have been made for that permanent aren't copied. Instead, if an object enters the battlefield as a copy of another permanent, the object's controller will get to make any "as [this] enters the battlefield" choices for it.

To copy a spell or activated ability means to put a copy of it onto the stack; a copy of a spell isn't cast and a copy of an activated ability isn't activated. A copy of a spell or ability copies both the characteristics of the spell or ability and all decisions made for it, including modes, targets, the value of X, and additional or alternative costs. Choices that are normally made on resolution are not copied. If an effect of the copy refers to objects used to pay its costs, it uses the objects used to pay the costs of the original spell or ability. A copy of a spell is owned by the player under whose control it was put on the stack. A copy of a spell or ability is controlled by the player under whose control it was put on the stack. A copy of a spell is itself a spell, even though it has no spell card associated with it. A copy of an ability is itself an ability. If a copy of a spell is in a zone other than the stack, it ceases to exist. If a copy of a card is in any zone other than the stack or the battlefield, it ceases to exist. These are state-based actions.

Some effects copy a spell or ability and state that its controller may choose new targets for the copy. The player may leave any number of the targets unchanged, even if those targets would be illegal. If the player chooses to change some or all of the targets, the new targets must be legal. Once the player has decided what the copy's targets will be, the copy is put onto the stack with those targets.

If an effect refers to a permanent by name, the effect still tracks that permanent even if it changes names or becomes a copy of something else.

Deathtouch | Defender | Double Strike | Enchant | Equip | First Strike | Flash | Flying | Haste |  
Intimidate | Landwalk | Lifelink | Protection | Reach | Shroud | Trample | Vigilance

The values of an object's characteristics are determined by starting with the actual object. For a card, that means the values of the characteristics printed on that card. For a token or a copy of a spell or card, that means the values of the characteristics defined by the effect that created it. Then all applicable continuous effects are applied in a series of layers. Within layers 1-6, apply effects from characteristic-defining abilities first, then all other effects in timestamp order. Within layer 7, apply effects in a series of sublayers in the order below in timestamp order. The layers are in the following order:

- Layer 1: Copy effects are applied.
- Layer 2: Control-changing effects are applied.
- Layer 3: Text-changing effects are applied.
- Layer 4: Type-changing effects are applied, including effects that change an object's card type, subtype, and/or supertype.
- Layer 5: Color-changing effects are applied.
- Layer 6: Ability-adding and ability-removing effects are applied.
- Layer 7: Power- and/or toughness-changing effects are applied.
  - 7A: Effects from characteristic-defining abilities are applied.
  - 7B: Effects that set power and/or toughness to a specific number or value are applied.
  - 7C: Effects that modify power and/or toughness are applied.
  - 7D: Power and/or toughness changes from counters are applied.
  - 7E: Effects that switch a creature's power and toughness are applied.

The application of continuous effects as described by the layer system is continually and automatically performed by the game. All resulting changes to an object's characteristics are instantaneous. If an effect should be applied in different layers and/or sublayers, the parts of the effect each apply in their appropriate ones.

Within a layer or sublayer, determining which order effects are applied in is usually done using a timestamp system. An effect with an earlier timestamp is applied before an effect with a later timestamp. A continuous effect generated by a static ability has the same timestamp as the object the static ability is on, or the timestamp of the effect that created the ability, whichever is later. A continuous effect generated by the resolution of a spell or ability receives a timestamp at the time it's created. An object's timestamp is the time it entered the zone it's currently in, unless it's an Aura, Equipment, or Fortification that's attached to another object or player. If an Aura, Equipment, or Fortification becomes attached to an object or player, the Aura, Equipment, or Fortification receives a new timestamp at that time. If two or more objects would receive a timestamp simultaneously, such as by entering a zone simultaneously or becoming attached simultaneously, the active player determines their timestamp order at that time.

Within a layer or sublayer, determining which order effects are applied in is sometimes done using a dependency system. If a dependency exists, it will override the timestamp system. An effect is said to "depend on" another if (a) it's applied in the same layer (and, if applicable, sublayer) as the other effect; (b) applying the other would change the text or the existence of the first effect, what it applies to, or what it does to any of the things it applies to; and (c) neither effect is from a characteristic-defining ability. Otherwise, the effect is considered to be independent of the other effect.

An effect dependent on one or more other effects waits to apply until just after all of those effects have been applied. If multiple dependent effects would apply simultaneously in this way, they're applied in timestamp order relative to each other. If several dependent effects form a dependency loop, then this rule is ignored and the effects in the dependency loop are applied in timestamp order.

Some continuous effects affect game rules rather than objects. For example, effects may modify a player's maximum hand size, or say that a creature is indestructible. These effects are applied after all other continuous effects have been applied.