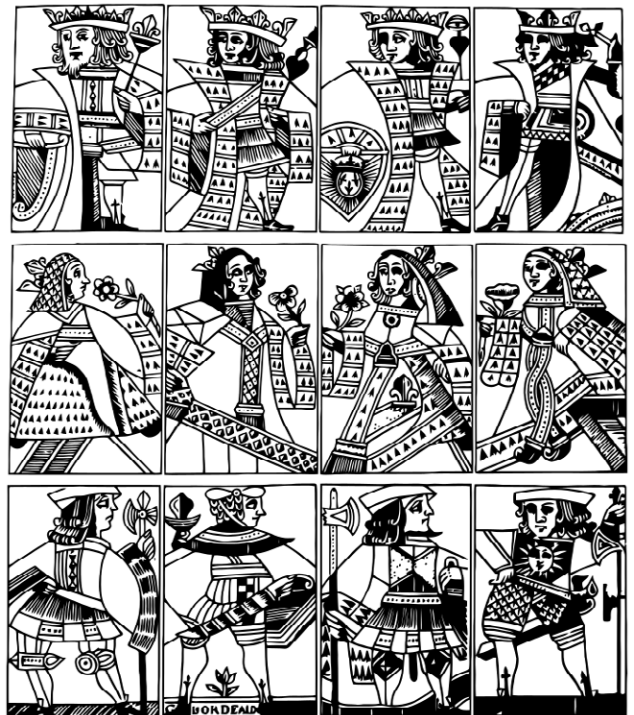


# META CARDS

## “MAGIC” ITEMS FOR PLAYERS

**M**AGIC ITEMS ARE THE BREAD and butter of swords and sorcery—enchanted amulets, empowered gemstones, divine blades—but when it comes to gaming, sometimes a little extra goes a long way. Meta Cards exist in the space between players and characters. Absentee Cards bring the spirit of an adventurer to the party in their absence; Memorial Cards provide nostalgic mercy for a player after suffering a loss.

This article addresses a meta concept: parts of the game that players receive for their characters to use.



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## META CARDS

This article covers two kinds of Meta Cards. Absentee Cards are special single-use tokens players get when a member of the party can't make the session but the game must go on! Their somber siblings are Memorial Cards, tokens received during character creation when a player's last adventurer has unexpectedly perished.<sup>1</sup>

### Absentee Card

*Wondrous item (Meta Card), uncommon*

When a player character is unavoidably absent, each attending player in the group receives this Meta Card at the beginning of the gaming session. Unless otherwise noted, you pay the resource cost for this Meta Card, it can only target your character, and playing it consumes your character's reaction.

### Memorial Card

*Wondrous item (Meta Card), rare*

You receive this Meta Card during character creation after your last character unexpectedly dies. Unless otherwise noted, you pay the resource cost for this Meta Card, it can only target your character, and playing it consumes your character's reaction.

## DESIGNING META CARDS

The defining part of a Meta Card is that it feels specific to the game it appears in. Although this article provides an array of default absentee cards and memorial cards to hand out for characters of at least 4th level, GMs should work with their players

<sup>1</sup> Players who hasten their characters to an unnecessarily early demise should not receive a Memorial Card.

### Open Game Content |

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and groups to make unique Meta Cards. Here are mechanical aspects to keep in mind during design:

### Naming & Special Effects

While they are technically not mechanics, these two elements are equally important. A good Meta Card speaks to what makes (or made) the character it's based on special. *Sergeant Murtaugh's Yell*, *Gizmo's Exploding Silverware*, and *Bai-Zao's Blighted Tread* are examples of Meta Cards that will stand out in player's minds and bring value to the game.

In addition to costing resources and granting bonuses, a Meta Card should have something fun and representative of the character as well—the first example would involve a player shouting like Sarge, another might have an innocuous object near one of the characters explode unexpectedly, and the last strips the away the land the character walks across of any ability to support plant life.

### Action & Duration

Most Meta Cards have an instant effect or a duration measured in rounds, but more potent memorial cards for high level characters may be in play for an entire game session.

### Resource Cost

While a Meta Card should always ultimately be beneficial, it should also have a cost for its use.

### Scaled Synchronization

One tenet suggested for all Meta Cards is to determine potency by half character level. Unless stated otherwise, how many dice to use, the duration of an effect, and the resource cost of a Meta Card are all equal to half the level of the character it represents.

### Target

Unless otherwise noted, a Meta Card can only benefit the character of the player that plays the card, and the character of the player that plays the card pays its resource cost. A creature can only be targeted by one Meta Card at any given time (with the exception of high-level Memorial Cards with durations that may last an entire game session).

## META CARDS BY ROLE

Below are some suggested benefits and resource costs for Meta Cards but GMs shouldn't be constrained by them—if a druid always casts *conjure animal* or a rogue is known for prodigious use of acid flasks their Meta Card should reflect that. What role best suits a character may not be listed in the suggested classes either and should be used based on tactics more than anything else (in some cases a single use of a class feature may be appropriate).

### ARCANE CHARACTERS (BARDS, SORCERERS, WIZARDS)

**Resource.** The character sacrifices a spell slot of a level equal to half character level. A character without spell slots sacrifices all of its Hit Dice and can't regain Hit Dice on its next long rest. You cannot play this card if you have less than half your maximum Hit Dice.

#### Benefits:

- The duration of a spell being cast by the target increases by 1d4 rounds per level of the expended spell slot.
- A spell being cast by the target is cast as if a spell slot two levels higher was used.
- When based on a character of at least 3rd level, a memorial card may grant the target free concentration on one spell it is casting or a spell being cast on the target.

### COMBATANT CHARACTERS (BARBARIANS, FIGHTERS, MONKS)

**Resource.** The character or one willing ally of the player's choice that their character can see or hear takes a penalty to attack rolls equal to half the character's level, or the target takes a penalty to its AC equal to the character's proficiency bonus.

#### Benefits:

- Before making an attack roll with a weapon, playing the card turns the attack into an automatic critical hit.
- The target's weapon attacks deal an extra 1d8 damage per -1 resource cost.
- An attack that would have been a critical hit against the target misses instead.

### DIVINE CHARACTERS (GOOD CLERICS, PALADINS)

**Resource.** The character or one willing ally the character can see or hear sacrifices all of its Hit Dice. You can't play this card if the target has less than half its maximum Hit Dice.

#### Benefits:

- The target heals 1d12 hit points for every two sacrificed Hit Dice.
- The target gains 3 temporary hit points per sacrificed Hit Die.
- When based on a character of at least 5th level, a Memorial Card may cast *revivify*.

### NATURE CHARACTERS (DRUIDS, MONKS, RANGERS)

**Resource.** The character or one willing ally the character can see or hear takes a -1 penalty to saving throws per two character levels.


#### Benefits:

- The target gains a bonus to one ability score equal to character level (this must be a different ability score than the resource cost).
- The target's speed increases by 5 feet per two character levels and it gains advantage on either Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) checks.

### DEVIOUS CHARACTERS (EVIL CLERICS, NECROMANCERS, ROGUES, WARLOCKS)

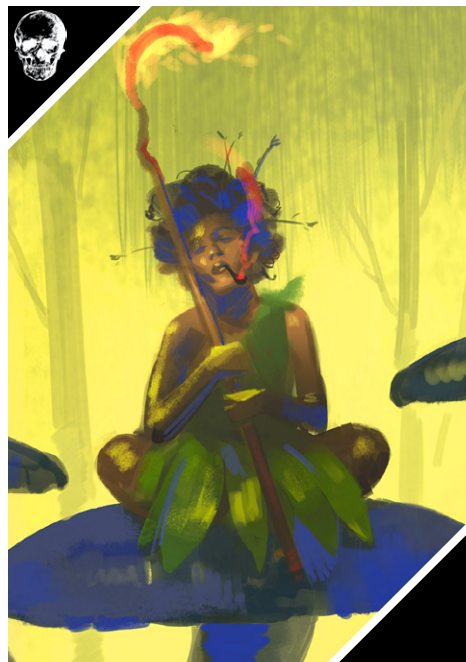
**Resource.** The character takes damage (1d4 for a weaker benefit, up to 1d8 for a stronger benefit). Additionally, it may or may not be possible to magically heal this damage, depending on the card's potency.

#### Benefits:

- The character's melee and spell attacks deal extra necrotic damage dice equal to the Meta Card's resource cost.
- For the duration the character heals half as much damage as it deals with attacks against living creatures.
- Reroll a failed ability check that used a skill the character was proficient in and frequently used. 

<p><b>ABSENTEE</b></p> <p><b>BEFEV'S FERVOR (Barbarian 4th)</b></p> <p><i>Target:</i> Your character or one creature that your character can see or hear</p> <p><i>Duration:</i> 2 rounds</p> <p><i>Resource Cost:</i> -2 to AC</p> <p><i>Benefit:</i> The target's weapon attacks deal an additional 2d4 damage so long as something inspiring and grammatically incorrect is yelled with each attack.</p>	<p><b>MEMORIAL</b></p> <p><b>GAO'S MOBILITY (Druid 4th)</b></p> <p><i>Target:</i> Your character or one creature that your character can see or hear</p> <p><i>Duration:</i> 2 rounds</p> <p><i>Resource Cost:</i> -2 to INT saving throws</p> <p><i>Benefit:</i> The target's speed increases by 10 feet and if the target hoots sufficiently, it is also targeted by the <i>jump</i> spell.</p>	<p><b>ABSENTEE</b></p> <p><b>VICTORIA'S WARNINGS (Paladin 4th)</b></p> <p><i>Target:</i> Your character or one creature that your character can see or hear</p> <p><i>Duration:</i> Instantaneous</p> <p><i>Resource Cost:</i> Target sacrifices all of its Hit Dice (if it does not have at least 2 Hit Dice you cannot play this card)</p> <p><i>Benefit:</i> You sternly warn the target of an impending danger or folly and it gains 12 temporary hit points.</p>
<p><b>MEMORIAL</b></p> <p><b>AURELIA'S MELODY (Bard 4th)</b></p> <p><i>Target:</i> Your character</p> <p><i>Duration:</i> Spell's normal duration</p> <p><i>Resource Cost:</i> Sacrifice a 2nd level spell slot, or sacrifice all your Hit Dice (if you do not have at least 2 Hit Dice you cannot play this card) and you do not regain Hit Dice next long rest</p> <p><i>Benefit:</i> A concentration spell targeting you no longer requires concentration and remains in effect until its normal duration expires or until you stop humming.</p>	<p><b>MEMORIAL</b></p> <p><b>D'THUL'S VICIOUSNESS (Fighter 4th)</b></p> <p><i>Target:</i> Your character or one creature that your character can see or hear</p> <p><i>Duration:</i> 2 rounds (cost) and instantaneous (benefit)</p> <p><i>Resource Cost:</i> -2 to attack rolls</p> <p><i>Benefit:</i> Play this card when the target is about to make an attack roll with a weapon. The attack roll is an automatic critical hit so long as the target gives a lurid, detailed description of the devastation it delivers.</p>	<p><b>MEMORIAL</b></p> <p><b>MAZZIL'S RAW INSIGHT (Ranger 4th)</b></p> <p><i>Target:</i> Your character or one creature that your character can see or hear</p> <p><i>Duration:</i> 2 rounds (cost) and instantaneous (benefit)</p> <p><i>Resource Cost:</i> Disadvantage on WIS and CHA saving throws</p> <p><i>Benefit:</i> The target's DEX increases by 4. On its turn, the target must explicitly and in an overly-concise manner explain the nuances of each of their actions in excruciating detail.</p>
<p><b>ABSENTEE</b></p> <p><b>CLENDER'S ANXIETY (Cleric 4th)</b></p> <p><i>Target:</i> Your character or one creature that your character can see or hear</p> <p><i>Duration:</i> Instantaneous</p> <p><i>Resource Cost:</i> Target sacrifices all of its Hit Dice (if it does not have at least 2 Hit Dice you cannot play this card)</p> <p><i>Benefit:</i> After walking out of the room and asking where something is located, the target heals 2d12 hit points.</p>	<p><b>ABSENTEE</b></p> <p><b>AGEN'S CLAPBACK (Monk 4th)</b></p> <p><i>Target:</i> Your character or one creature that your character can see or hear</p> <p><i>Duration:</i> 2 rounds (cost) and instantaneous (benefit)</p> <p><i>Resource Cost:</i> -2 to DEX saving throws</p> <p><i>Benefit:</i> Play this card when the target successfully hits a creature with a melee weapon attack. The creature makes a DC 13 STR saving throw or is stunned until the end of the target's next turn. If the target "claps back," the creature has disadvantage on its saving throw.</p>	<p><b>ABSENTEE</b></p> <p><b>TUCKER DID WHAT? (Rogue 4th)</b></p> <p><i>Target:</i> Your character</p> <p><i>Duration:</i> Instantaneous</p> <p><i>Resource Cost:</i> 2d4 damage</p> <p><i>Benefit:</i> Reroll a CHA (Deception) or CHA (Persuasion) check. You have disadvantage on your next CHA check or CHA saving throw.</p>





<div>MEMORIAL</div> <div>TIONA’S ENDLESS FOCUS (Sorcerer 4th) <i>Target:</i> Your character <i>Resource Cost:</i> Sacrifice a 2nd-level spell slot, or sacrifice all your Hit Dice (if you do not have at least 2 Hit Dice you cannot play this card) and you do not regain Hit Dice next long rest <i>Benefit:</i> As long as you keep your hand raised you gain the benefits of <i>detect magic</i>, do not need to concentrate on the spell, and can use a bonus action to sense detected auras.</div>	<div>ABSENTEE</div> <div>XYROTH’S CURSED WORDS (Warlock 4th) <i>Target:</i> Your character <i>Duration:</i> 2 rounds (benefit) and instantaneous (cost) <i>Resource Cost:</i> 2d6 damage that cannot be healed magically <i>Benefit:</i> You must berate the enemy or the situation your character is currently in to play this card. Your spells deal an additional 2d6 necrotic damage (if an area spell, only one target chosen by you takes this extra damage).</div>	<div>MEMORIAL</div> <div>STEPHNI’S IMPATIENCE (Wizard 4th) <i>Target:</i> Your character <i>Duration:</i> Instantaneous <i>Resource Cost:</i> Sacrifice a 2nd-level spell slot, or sacrifice all your Hit Dice (if you do not have at least 2 Hit Dice you cannot play this card) and you do not regain Hit Dice next long rest <i>Benefit:</i> When you are casting a spell you can play this card by standing up abruptly and throwing it onto the table. The spell is cast as if you used a spell slot two levels higher than normal.</div>
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