

# Stealing and Magic: the Gathering

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The worst crime against a Magic player that is actually relevant to being a Magic player is theft. You can and should take precautions against theft, but we also need to commit ourselves to be moral. We need to make a personal commitment to not to steal from others when given the opportunity.

People tend to want to be moral and it's not just sociopaths who steal from others. Regular people for one reason or another decide to steal from others. Most people who steal think it's "no big deal." They hate murderers, dirty cops, and corrupt politicians like everyone else—but stealing a Magic card, Magic deck, or Magic collection isn't important enough to really worry about. This attitude is completely irrational. Murderers, dirty cops, and corrupt politicians have similar attitudes. Everyone hates the "real bad guys" but refuse to admit that they might be one of them. It's time to stop making excuses to hurt others and make a commitment to be a better person.

I will discuss why theft is wrong and how inappropriate thoughts and emotions cause people to steal from others.

## ***Why theft is wrong.***

**First, we have property rights.** Property is a very convenient way to organize society. I own my own clothes so that I can take care of my own clothes and have something to wear. I have my own home so that I can take care of my own home and have a place to live. I have my own money so that I can manage my own needs and buy things that I can afford.

Without property rights it could be very difficult to clothe myself, live in a home, and manage my own needs. Other people could take my clothes, food, home, or money. Without property rights we would not be able to work for a living. I would work to make money to get food and so on, but other people could take my money or food.

The more people steal from others, the more property rights are violated and destroyed. If people steal from you every second, then there will be no point in saying that you have property rights. Stealing is self-defeating in that it disrespects rights that it requires. People who steal from you have to rely on property rights or there would be no point to stealing. They want to take your Magic cards, but taking your cards would be pointless if they would just be stolen again. People who steal need everyone else to be well behaved and they want to be the lucky few who are willing to cheat the system.

Property rights are not absolute. If someone is starving to death and has no legal way to attain food, then stealing might be necessary. However, people who steal your Magic cards are probably not stealing for that reason.

**Second, stealing hurts people.** The ways that stealing hurts people might be countless, but I will mention three:

1. People often have to work for their property and stealing means that you are willing to make

- them waste their time at work just so you can take their stuff.
2. Stealing is invasive. You not only have to violate someone's right to property, but you have to violate their personal space.
  3. Stealing is disrespectful. Stealing treats someone as a meaningless object that exists only to benefit others. People are important and they should be treated as being important. If you really think that people aren't important, then murder, slavery, and rape would no longer be wrong. All of the horrors that need to be avoided are based on the belief that people are important.
  4. People who have their stuff stolen can suffer emotionally. The pleasure and excitement attained from stealing is insignificant to the amount of harm and suffering it causes.

## ***Inappropriate Thoughts and Emotions Cause Stealing***

Consider the following common thoughts that commonly go through someone's head when they steal:

1. I want that, so I should take it.
2. It will be fun to steal this and share it with my friends.
3. Someone stole from me, so I should take from someone else.
4. That person hurt me, so I should hurt them back.
5. I don't like that person, so it's okay for me to steal from him or her.

I will consider why each of these thoughts is inappropriate.

### **I want that, so I should take it.**

This is the most common thought associated with theft and theft wouldn't make much sense without it. However, the thought is still inappropriate because it suppresses relevant information. Yes, it might be good for *you* to get someone when you steal. However, it is bad for *someone else*. You aren't the only person who matters. Other people are just as *real* as you are.

Our society can make it difficult to see other people as *real* and important. It can be difficult to realize that when others get hurt, it's bad for the same reason as when you get hurt. The more time we spend watching television and on the internet, the less time we spend feeling connected to other people, and others might no longer “feel” real to us. We might start to have a harder time feeling empathy towards others.

Spending time with friends and family can help us learn to love other people and realize their importance, but we have to realize that strangers are also important. Friends and family aren't just important because we enjoy spending time with them. They are important because they have minds, thoughts, and dreams, just like everyone else.

Imagine that it was appropriate to steal just because it's a way to get what you want. In that case we would have to admit that it's appropriate for others to steal from us for the same reason. If Martha things she should steal from others and steals Chris's Magic cards because she wants them, then she has to realize that other people who want her cards should steal from her—But there's no way she would think that.

### **It will be fun to steal this and share it with my friends.**

Some people realize that other people matter—such as their friends. The most enjoyable experiences we have tend to be with others we care about. Stealing is most enjoyable when done with friends because we think our friends are important and deserve happiness. However, this thought is inappropriate because strangers are important as well. Our friends aren't the only people who matter.

**Someone stole from me, so I should take from someone else.**

When we face injustice and have our stuff stolen, we might decide we deserve to own those things and can even things out by stealing from others. However, this is not justice. If \$100 is stolen from you and you steal \$100 from someone else, then you are no better than the thieves who stole from you. You might deserve the \$100 that was stolen from you, but the people you could steal from also deserve their money. Again, you aren't the only person who matters. We need to realize that everyone counts.

**That person hurt me, so I should hurt them back.**

If someone hurts you, then there is a sense of justice in revenge. We think that they deserve punishment or have a duty to compensate us. There are at least two problems with this thought. One, our personal sense of justice is biased towards ourselves. Someone who insults us might not think it's a big deal, but we might think it's a very big deal. We tend to exaggerate the harms done to us by others, and we tend to dismiss the harms we do to others as being less significant than they really are.

Two, punishment is best served by the justice system not only because a third party could see things more clearly, but also because guilt must be determined. It is possible to attribute guilt to the wrong person.

**I don't like that person, so it's okay for me to steal from him or her.**

The idea here is that you want something and you think someone else doesn't deserve it. However, the people we don't like have value like everyone else. We don't have the right to decide that others aren't important based on our personal preferences. Again, we aren't the only person who matters. The harm done even to those we dislike matters and should be avoided.

## ***Conclusion***

Stealing violates people's rights and disrespects people who are important. Theft tends to be based on an irrational belief that we are more important than everyone else. Everyone matters including strangers and people we dislike. To steal from others is to hurt them to benefit yourself, but they matter just as much as we do. We know that it's wrong for others to steal from us, but it's wrong for us to steal from others for the same reason.

A commitment to be moral can be aided through moral philosophy, which helps us decide what counts as immoral, and find ways to motivate ourselves to be a better person. The link below are my thoughts on moral philosophy.

- [Free Introduction to Moral Philosophy Ebook](#)