

Magic

Magic is what lurks at the very edge of understanding and perception, and those that seek after its secrets tread a thin line between insanity and madness.

Nevertheless, there are those who dare to unlock its secrets, and such are normally known as wizards, sorcerers, or a multitude of names meant more to decry rather than describe. Such labels though are just that, labels, subjective in the mind of the speaker.

Anyone can learn to use magic, though that doesn't mean that anyone can use it well, or would want to. Those who know its ways tend to try to keep them secret, handing out titbits of lore to their apprentices bit by bit. A village which has someone capable of calling on the wind and rain may not be uncommon, and it can be sometimes difficult to tell apart those who practise the arts of herbs and alchemy from those who know *true* magic, but those people who have a true understanding of many facets of the Other World are rare indeed.

But with such understanding, there is a price.

The Price of Magic

Magic is unnatural to the normal mind, and much of the power which is used in the formation of magic must be drawn from *somewhere else*, whether it is the land of the dead, the abode of the gods, or somewhere in between is not known. To have a true understanding of the craft requires a certain *outlook* on the world which others lack.

The more a wizard shapes the forces of magic, the closer to true understanding they will get, but also they will find themselves further from the views of normal men.

Insanity

Every character who uses magic will eventually begin to go insane, a process which is measured by the character's *insanity*. Everyone begins with an insanity of zero, but whenever a spell is fumbled, this will go up, possibly having detrimental mental effects on the character.

Going insane though brings the character closer to an understanding of magic, and is therefore also beneficial. The character's current insanity score is added to all rolls to cast spells, and to gather essence (more of this later).

Exactly what effects insanity will have on a character's mental health will be described later.

Words

Before magic can be shaped and used, the **Words** to command it must be known. The Words of magic have two categories - commands and forms.

In order to affect the world with magic, both a command word and a form word must be used together. Using *Destroy* and *Animal* together would harm or kill an animal for example.

There is no definite list of Commands and Forms, for many have been created over time by many different wizards, with little thought to consistency. Many Words overlap in their use, and some are subsets of others.

An example list of Words are as follows.

Command Words

Create

Creates something out of nothing, or to put back together something which is broken. Creating physical objects from nothing is very difficult, and usually not worth it.

2 Magic

Destroy

To harm or destroy an object.

Hide

To hide or confuse one or more properties of an object, such as to cause someone to be seen.

Know

Reveals knowledge about an object or person.

Summon

Bring something which exists elsewhere to the wizard. It can also be used to shape and mold things which exist all around into a more useful, concentrated form. It is most often used to form elemental spirits from natural materials.

Form Words

Air

Affects the air and weather, allowing the summoning of rain, wind and clouds, or the banishment of them.

Animal

Can be used against non-sapient creatures, for good or ill. Has no effect on dragons, but will affect most other magical creatures made of flesh and bone.

Darkness

Control of the night and cold, it isn't quite the opposite of fire, since fire is more elemental fire rather than heat.

Earth

Control of the ground, and things within it. Controlling or destroying it can cause earthquakes, bringing down buildings, or scattering an army.

Fire

Heat and flames, though destroying fire will do that and no more – it is not possible to make things cold with this Word.

Man

Sapient creatures such as men or giants.

Necromancy

Calling forth the souls of the dead.

Plant

Trees and herbs.

Water

Rivers, seas and water.

Learning Words

Each Word is treated as a separate skill, with commands being *hard*, and forms being *average*. Normally, to start learning a Word a character must learn them from someone. The easiest way to know a Word is to start the game with them already known. To start with one Word known costs one point of advantage. The second Word costs two points, the third three etc.

Points may begin being placed into these skills during adolescence.

When using Words in casting a spell, the total score is equal to intelligence × command + will × form + insanity + 2d10!

Essence

While Words represent the knowledge of being able to use magic, there is also the requirement to draw on the power necessary to power the spell.

Essence is the name given to the power which must first be gathered. Often, essence will be gathered over a period of time, normally minutes, but possibly over hours.

The rate at which essence is gained is based on the character's skill with the form, plus their insanity plus their *essence* skill, if they have it. This latter skill is not known by many wizards, its use only being common practise amongst the followers of the Cult of Ashek. Knowing this (hard) skill at the start of the game is considered a four point advantage, and such a character is considered to be a follower of Ashek.

Character's without the *essence* skill can still gather essence – their essence skill is merely zero.

Using Magic

Casting a spell is a three fold process.

1. Decide on the level of the spell, and over what period of time the spell will be cast. Taking longer is easier, but wizards don't always have the luxury of time.
2. Gather the essence. An essence roll is made, and each point over the spell difficulty gains 1 point towards casting the spell. When a number of points equal to the spell difficulty have been obtained, the spell can be cast.
3. Casting the spell. The gathered essence is released, and a roll to cast the spell is made.

Deciding on the Spell

This is almost an obvious step. There are no specific spells, but there are many guidelines given at the end of this section on what is possible, and the difficulty of tasks. The character must decide what is to be done (together with what Words are to be used), and the level of difficulty of the attempt.

Once a difficulty is known, they can decide how quickly to try to gather the essence necessary – very slow, slow, or fast.

The essence difficulty is equal to the difficulty of the spell for slow attempts, half the difficulty for very slow attempts, and twice the difficulty for fast attempts.

Gather the Essence

The wizard's ability to do this is rolled with:

Intelligence × essence + will × form + insanity.

If the essence is being gathered very slowly, then a roll is made every 15 minutes. For a slow gathering of essence, a roll is made every minute, and for a quick attempt to gather essence, a roll is made every combat round (5 seconds).

Speed	Difficulty	Interval
Very slow	× ½	15 minutes
Slow	× 1	1 minute
Fast	× 2	1 round

Whenever a roll is made, for every point over the difficulty that is rolled, then one point of essence is gathered. As soon as a number of points equal to the *spell difficulty* (not essence difficulty) have been gathered, then the spell is ready to be cast.

If an essence roll ever fails, then no essence is gained towards the spell, plus the fumble number is raised by one for all further essence rolls, and for the spell roll itself.

If an essence roll is fumbled, then the spell attempt immediately fails. The wizard gains one insanity point for every 20 points of essence they have so far gathered, or part thereof, and must make an immediate check for insanity (see later).

Cast the Spell

Actually casting the spell takes one round,

4 Magic

regardless of how long was spent gathering essence. The spell is normally cast on the round *after* enough essence has been gathered, though it may be cast immediately on the same round at a further +10 to diffi culty.

If the spell casting roll is successful, then the spell is cast and will immediately being to take effect. If the roll is failed, then the spell fails, and any essence is lost.

Spells

When a wizard casts a spell, the spell is created spontaneously, crafted so as to do what the caster wishes at that moment. Individual spells do not have to be learnt beforehand – as long as the wizard knows the correct Words, then anything can be attempted.

What follows then is a list of guidelines to give ideas about what can and can't be done, and how diffi cult various effects are to achieve. Effects are listed by form.

Common Modifiers

Range and Area

The following table gives modifiers to spell diffi culty based on the range to target for the spell, and area covered. Some effects will be local area (and therefore use the *local area* column), and others will be wide are. The spell guidelines will say what sort of effects are which.

<i>Range and Area Modifiers</i>		
<i>Modifier</i>	<i>Local Area</i>	<i>Wide Area</i>
+0	3m	100m
+5	15m	500m
+10	50m	2 km
+15	100m	5 km
+20	150m	10 km
+25	200m	20 km
<i>extra +5</i>	+50m	+10 km

Quantity

The number of things affected or summoned.

<i>Quantity Modifiers</i>	
<i>Modifier</i>	<i>Number</i>
+0	1
+5	3
+10	6
+15	12
+20	24
+25	50
<i>extra +5</i>	× 2

The number of things affected.

Elementals

Elementals are physical manifestations of spirits using basic materials such as earth, air, fi re and water. Instead of describing the process of calling each elemental type individually under their respective forms, a generic description is given here.

The Words to use are *summon* and the correct form (either earth, air, fi re or water). The base diffi culty to summon a single elemental of the weakest type is 20. Each level of the elemental beyond this adds a further +10 to the diffi culty. Descriptions of each of the types of elemental are given at the end of the magic section.

Summoned elementals last until either they are destroyed, or the next sunrise or sunset, whichever comes sooner.

Air

The Word of Air gives power over the weather and sky. All forms of weather effects are governed by this Word, including rain, snow and lightning.

General Weather Changes (*summon + air*)

Changes to the weather are on a five point scale, with level one being a slight manifestation of an effect, to level five which is an extreme effect. All such effects are wide area, and last until the next sunrise or sunset.

The difficulty of a change is equal to ten times the level of effect, taking the highest of what the weather currently is, and what is desired.

For example, on a day with a light wind (level two), to change it to a raging gale (level five), would be difficulty 50. To change the gale back to a gentle breeze (level one), would be difficulty 50 again, even though the desired effect is only level one.

Every aspect of the weather must be changed individually, and making multiple changes with one spell adds the difficulties.

The different aspects of the weather for the purposes of this spell are wind, rain, heat, cold, cloud and fog.

Heat and cold are separate features. Level zero of both are the same. Level five heat would be blistering heat, while level five cold would be frigid arctic cold. Zero is a comfortable twenty degrees.

Rain can be either actual rain, or snow, depending on prevalent temperature.

Call Lightning (*create + air*)

This is an example of a much more direct

manipulation of the weather, calling down a massive lightning strike over a small area. It is treated as a local area effect, with a base difficulty of 30, with modifiers to both range and area.

There is a further +1 to the difficulty for each +1 damage the strike does. All creatures within the area have a 50% chance of being hit (higher if they are tall, or wearing metal armour, or lower if they are keeping low to the ground), and suffer damage from a lightning strike if they are hit.

The spell lasts for at least one round, and the wizard gets a chance to continue the spell by making a stamina roll of difficulty 10. Each further round, the difficulty increases by 5. Failure means that the caster gains one level of long term fatigue, and the spell continues unless the wizard is unconscious, at which point it ends.

Earth

The Word of Earth covers everything to do with the ground, especially rock and earth.

Magesmiths

Another type of magic is that practised by the magesmiths. These people work *virtues* into weapons and armour in a way to greatly improve them above and beyond that possible by mundane means.

Magesmithing requires one skill – *magesmith* – which is a hard skill, which can only be learnt by learning from someone who already knows it.

It is suggested that the rules on the mundane crafting of weapons and armour are read in the Equipment section before proceeding here.

Virtues

There are five basic virtues which can be crafted into an item during its creation. The difficulties for

6 Magic

these work in the same way as for the difficulties in making items – points above the required difficulty go towards completion of the task. Each skill attempt takes a week, or a day if the difficulty is doubled.

The difficulty of each virtue is equal to $5 + 5/\text{level}$.

Sharpness

Each level of sharpness gives +1 to damage for a weapon.

Blade turn

Each level gives +1 to the defence of the weapon, or to attempts to dodge or soak damage for armour.

Quickness

Each level gives +1 to the initiative bonus of the weapon.

Toughness

Each level gives +1 to the toughness of the weapon.

True Blow

Each level gives +1 to the attack bonus of the weapon.