

Psionics

Psionics is a term covering a whole range of mental powers, from telepathy to telekinesis.

Not everyone is capable of psi – only those born with the talent are able to use it. Possibly, only a small fraction of those ever realise their full potential.

Telekinesis

The first part of these rules deal with telepaths only, for those capable of telekinesis are a much rarer breed. The ability to use telekinesis is not always related to the ability to be a telepath.

Telepathic Power

The **power** of an individual represents their natural telepathic ability. Anyone who has telepathic potential must have a power of at least one. The maximum power normally possible is twelve. It is considered a +1 advantage per level of power to be a telepath.

Background Noise

Any telepath can hear a constant background noise made up of the jumbled surface thoughts of all living creatures. Anyone within a radius of five times the telepaths power, in metres, will be overheard. This noise is not normally useful, and is often distracting and annoying.

One of the first things a telepath is taught is the ability to block out this noise. Any telepath with a *meditation* skill of 25% or higher is capable of blocking out the noise at will. Very strong emotions can sometimes overwhelm this, and a skill roll of as much as 20 using will × meditation may be needed to block out such strong emotions.

Meditation is an average skill which can be learnt by anyone, and may often be employed by non-telepaths as a crude mind shield.

Telepathic Skills

There are three skills that a telepath needs to be able to fully realise their potential – **sense**, **control** and **alter**. Each is considered to be a hard skill. Any telepath can use sense, but a power of at least three is needed to be able to use control, and a power of at least five to be able to use alter.

As long as the telepath has the minimum required power, they can use any of the skills, even if they have no training in them.

Using Power

The power of a telepath not only limits what they are capable of, but can also be used to boost telepathic skills. Any skill roll for a telepathic ability can be boosted by spending a point of short term fatigue, which gives a bonus equal to the power of the telepath.

Multiple fatigue can be spent on a single roll.

Range

The distance between the telepath and the target is important. The difficulties for all telepathic skills is modified by +1 per metre of distance between the telepath and the target.

If the telepath is actually touching the target, with bare flesh, then the telepath gets a +5 bonus to their skill, as well as no range modifier.

Telepathic Attack and Defence

All the skills require the telepath to be inside the mind of the target in order to use them. If the target is unsuspecting, willing or otherwise incapable of defence, then this is automatic.

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It is possible for even a non-telepath to become aware of telepathic intrusion. If this happens, then the target has the option of trying to defend, in which case the telepath must overcome the defence before continuing. Situations under which this happens are described under the three skills.

A defending target can use either the meditation skill, or try to erect a mind shield against the attack. The latter is only possible by telepaths with the control skill, and is described later.

Each round the telepath tries to intrude, they get an attack roll, and the target gets a defence roll. If the attack doubles the defence, then the attack succeeds, and the telepath gains entry into the targets mind.

If the attack is greater than the defence, but not double it, then the telepath gets an *edge* equal to the amount they succeeded by. This edge acts as a bonus to the attack next round.

Example: The target rolls a defence of 15, and the telepath rolls an attack of 23, gaining an edge of 8. Next round, the defence is 18, and the telepath rolls 24, plus his edge, gives 32, giving an edge of 14. On the third round, the defence roll is 20, and the attack is 26 + 14 which is 40, enough to double the defence, so the mind is penetrated.

The defence ability of the target is equal to $\text{will} \times \text{meditation} + \text{power}$ (if any). Someone without the meditation skill can attempt a defence, but their ability is 0.

The attack of the telepath is equivalent to the $\text{will} \times \text{sense}$ of the telepath, modified by range.

Sense

The *sense* skill is probably the most commonly used, especially by low grade telepaths. For purposes of this skill, there are six levels of thought, from 0 to 5, with higher levels being harder to read.

0. Strong emotions.

1. Surface emotions.
2. Surface thoughts.
3. Reasoning behind surface thoughts.
4. Past memories.
5. Deep memories.

Unless the target is trying to hide their thoughts, strong emotions can be automatically sensed within $\text{power} \times 5$ metres, and correctly interpreted on a skill roll of perception \times *sense* equal to the distance in metres.

Trying to read anything other than strong emotions can be tricky. First of all, to read a given level of thought requires a minimum power of twice the level. Only a power 10 telepath can normally read deep memories.

Assuming that the target has no defence, or is willing, the difficulty is equal to ten times the level of thought, plus the distance in metres. The telepath gets a +5 bonus to the roll if they are physically touching the target with their bare skin.

Reading thoughts up to level 2 takes a round, level 3 thoughts take up to a few rounds, level 4 about a minute and level 5 several minutes.

If the telepath tries to read anything deeper than surface thoughts, they have a chance of being noticed by the target. The target can use their perception with either the meditation skill, or sense skill, whichever is higher. The telepath rolls their intelligence \times sense as an opposed roll, without a range penalty, but at -10 per level beyond level three, and success means they were not noticed.

Control

With the *control* skill, the telepath is able to affect the perceptions of the target, controlling their senses and making them see and hear things which aren't there. It cannot be used to control the targets emotions or thoughts, and neither can it be used to alter the memory of things the target has already seen.

A telepath must have a minimum power of 3 in order to learn the *control* skill. Teeps with a power of one or two lack the innate ability to use it.

A telepath must be inside the mind of a target in order to affect their perceptions, by overcoming any defences as described earlier. Once inside the target's mind, they can alter what they feel, see and hear, to a greater or lesser degree.

As for the sense skill, what can be achieved is rated on a scale of one to five, and a power of twice the level is needed to achieve a given effect.

1. Minor details - hiding a small key from sight, hearing the murmur of voices round a corner (what was that noise? Nothing - just out gassing).
2. Hiding an uninteresting person from view, changing someone's clothes.
3. Hiding things which are unlikely to be overlooked (but not things that wouldn't be overlooked).
4. Causing the target to feel pain (what Lyta did to Bester's Bloodhounds). Causing a single major change in perception - making it hot when its cold, masking out the noise of several people talking.
5. Full illusion - what was done to Bester in *A Race Through Dark Places*.

If the target believes that what they are seeing is an illusion, then they can either try to ignore it, or kick the telepath out of their mind.

The difficulty for the telepath is ten times the level of the effect, with a perception × control roll. The target must make a perception × observation roll of 30 + the amount the telepaths roll was made by in order to notice discrepancies.

Mind Shields

Anyone with the control skill can erect a permanent shield against mind attack without too much problem. Simply roll will × control, add the power

of the telepath, and the result is the telepath's defence against all mind attacks. A new roll is required next time the telepath wakes from sleep.

This single value is used against all attacks on the telepath's mind - further rolls are not made. It is best if the GM makes this roll in private, so the player does not know whether it was good or bad (and therefore keep on making further attempts until a roll up is gained).

Fatigue can still be spent to give a further bonus to this roll, but the fatigue is not gained back until after the shield expires.

Shielding Other Targets

It is possible for a telepath to shield the mind of multiple other people, whether they are telepaths themselves or not. All the people to be protected must be within one metre per power level of the telepath. Each shielded target (beyond the telepath herself) gives a -3 penalty to the shield.

A telepath cannot have more than one shield up at once, so this automatically replaces her own normal shield. Multiple shields by multiple telepaths do not add together, but must be penetrated individually.

Inflicting Pain

Any telepath of power eight or more can inflict pain in a target. Assuming they have penetrated the target's mind, a will × control roll is made against the target's will × stamina.

Equalling or exceeding the stamina of the target causes significant pain to be felt, enough to distract the target (-5 to any actions performed that round). For every five full points above the stamina roll of the target, one short term fatigue level is caused. Loss of more fatigue than the target has results in unconsciousness.

Alter

The *alter* skill is used to alter the memories of the

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target. The memories to be altered must first be found, using *sense*, and then they can be changed to suit the needs of the telepath. The difficulty of the alteration depends on the type of memory, and how much it is being changed. Whether a memory is a surface thought or a deep rooted memory doesn't make a great deal of difference. Deep memories have links to a large number of other memories, but tend to be rarely accessed directly, and will also be less distinct than more recent memories, making them easier to change without being noticed.

Surface thoughts have few links to anything else, but because they are 'in use' changing them can be tricky without simply causing confusion on the part of the target. An easy way to disable someone however is to alter their surface thoughts to something ridiculous, which can utterly confuse them.

The base level of difficulty is how important the memory is to the target.

1. Not at all important. Memory of seeing a stranger that did nothing unusual.
2. Something which the target will remember and note, but which isn't important. What they did last night for example (assuming neither the original nor changed memory is unusual).
3. Something the target has to deal with, but which isn't important to them personally (these aren't the droids you're looking for).
4. Important memories or opinions. Changing memory of something important and noteworthy, such as seeing a murder last night.
5. The person's identity, and those of their family and close friends.

The base difficulty is equal to ten times the level, as for *sense* and *control*.