

Old Empire Sorcery Guide



Magic: *“The art of producing marvellous results by compelling the aid of spirits or by using the secret forces of nature...”*

Entropy: *“A measure of unavailable energy, energy still existing but lost for the purposes of doing work...”*

Chambers' 20th Century Dictionary

Casting Spells

For the purposes of “Old Empire” a magic-user (MU) or magician is defined as one who draws upon arcane powers and uses esoteric formulae to achieve supernatural and extraordinary effects. A magician may be distinguished from a Priest or Holy Mystic (whose miraculous powers are bestowed by supernatural beings) by his or her esoteric formulae or Spells. Spells are written in a codified form and draw upon cosmic entropy for power.

Spells are Cast by the magician performing the appropriate physical rituals and mental exercises. These are typically intricate, arduous and rather enigmatic. They require disciplined training and diligent practice in addition to natural (psychic) talent to master.

During the casting process the magician accumulates energy from the ubiquitous source of cosmic entropy and calls upon an inner reservoir of personal power (MANA) at the moment of casting to integrate and energise the occult mechanism defined by the chosen spell. This process is seriously impaired by the presence of iron, with interference

increasing exponentially with the solid angle occluded in close proximity to the MU. In consequence a magician must minimise the amount of iron within about 1 metre while casting spells; failure to do so will dramatically increase the chance of a miscast spell. In practice this means that a magician must eschew the wearing of armour with an iron content, and restrict the amount of iron equipment carried, although a few relatively-small objects cause only negligible interference.

The natural (psychic) talent of a character is represented by their Intelligence requisite (INT). The magician's inner reservoir of power is quantified by Mana Points. This reservoir is determined by their acquired level of experience and their Intelligence. Mana is depleted by spell-casting activities and replenished by rest or meditation.

The mechanics of spell-casting vary from spell to spell, but in stress situations there is always a d100 roll to check for errors in casting. A serious mistake will result in a miscast spell and a potentially serious brainstorm for the errant magician, as some fraction of the accumulated energy is dissipated mentally and physically by the spell-caster. The chance of miscasting a given spell depends on a number of factors. The results of a Klutz (as miscasts are commonly known) are highly variable.

Most spells require 1 combat round per level of complexity to complete the spell ritual, but **NO ENERGY IS COMMITTED** until the moment of casting. Thus, at any point the magician may "drop" the spell without loss of Mana and with no chance of a Miscast. A magician may commit the Mana for spell generation but delay casting the spell for 1 round per level of experience. Thereafter "holding" the spell costs 1 endurance point per round. However, once committed a spell **MUST** be cast, and it can no longer be dropped and the Mana recovered. While holding a committed spell a magician will automatically Klutz if his/her concentration is disturbed (e.g. hit by weapon or spell, barged by companion etc.). Once a spell has been successfully cast and the energy is dissipated into the spell effect, there is no possibility of a Klutz effect. Most spells dissipate their energy instantaneously, while others take a short interval to do so and the magician may still Klutz if disturbed in this phase. If so the spell may operate partially or malfunction depending on an adjudication from the GameMaster.

A magician who decides to cast an alternative spell during the work-up ritual of another spell may not use any part of this work-up for the replacement spell; he/she must drop the first ritual (at no Mana cost) and begin again with the newly-desired spell. A magician whose concentration is seriously disturbed while working-up a spell may drop the spell without injury or Klutz depending on the result of a saving throw.



Orders of Magic

All magicians are familiar with ALTERATION, the most basic Order of Magic. It governs the manipulation of the properties of an object, entity or a zone with respect to the rest of the Universe. Such properties might include location, bodily function, attributes and so forth.

All other magical arts are divided into ten specialised Orders of Knowledge. All magicians will be generally familiar (to a greater or lesser degree) with all the Orders, to the extent that they may read and cast any written spell. However, most magicians specialise in two Orders during their training - one MAJOR order and one MINOR order – with which they are sufficiently familiar to be able to research their own original spells.

Major Orders

- EVOCATION:** The physical manifestation of energy in characteristic forms such as Fire, Lightning, or Force. The most powerful offensive option, consisting primarily of direct-attack spells.
- ENCHANTMENT:** The direct influence and control of minds external to the MU. A far more subtle option, with great scope for the manipulating mind.
- CONJURATION:** The summoning and control of creatures and elemental forces by the MU. Initially only minor works possible, but eventually a most powerful area of magic.
- ALCHEMY:** The formulation and manufacture of exotic materials and magic potions by the MU, often leading to strange experiments concerned with the essential forces of nature.
- BLACK MAGIC:** The dark arts of Necromancy, Neuralgipism, Sacrificial magic, Rune magic and other evil practices. Instruction is forbidden by the Magician's Guild, and may only be obtained from outcasts. This option contains many powerful and dangerous sorceries.

Minor orders

- ABJURATION:** The arts of warding and protection against physical and magical attacks. An important option for those in hazardous environs. Abjurers also have the skill to carve protective amulets.
- DIVINATION:** The arts of uncovering what is hidden and discerning that which is unknown; knowledge which is often prized by adventurers. Diviners can also carve wands to detect certain things.
- ILLUSION:** The direct influence of what is perceived by minds external to the MU. A natural option for Enchanters or those wishing to deceive ...
- WHITE MAGIC:** The arts of repairing and healing physical injuries. Initially only minor works are possible, but a highly valued area of magic.
- DEMONOLOGY:** The dire arts of summoning and controlling beings from Elsewhere. This order is only taught to experienced MUs; otherwise instruction must be obtained from outcast warlocks and witches.

Choosing your Orders of Magic

Thus there are ten orders of magic available for to by a budding MU. Assuming that he/she is not a disciple of the black arts then there are sixteen possible options to consider. The most popular adventuring choices are probably

EVOCATION/ABJURATION: giving firepower + defensive spells

EVOCATION/DIVINATION: giving firepower + investigation

ENCHANTMENT/ILLUSION: giving subtle attack/defence spells

CONJURATION/ABJURATION: elemental forces + defence spells

ALCHEMY/DIVINATION: experimentation + investigation

Magicians may occasionally choose to study three Minor Orders and no Major Order – for instance ABJURATION, DIVINATION and WHITE MAGIC

Research and Development

All spells are characterised by five parameters

- (1) The ORDER of magic (11 possibilities)
- (2) The LEVEL of complexity (0-9)
- (3) The MANA COST to the magician (0-10+)
- (4) The WORK-UP time (instant-100 rounds+)
- (5) The SPELL EFFECT (specific results, duration etc.)

Player-magicians have carte blanche to specify the spell effect that is the object of their current research in their chosen orders. The GameMaster decides the parameters appropriate to this goal. These parameters remain secret while the magician spends time and money in research, with each week of game-time resulting in a **d100** roll and a report on progress from the GameMaster. Players must beware of researching highly complex spells early in their career as long periods of fruitless work can easily follow.

Magicians who have obtained a written copy of a spell may circumvent this long procedure and may learn the spell (regardless of order) after a few weeks of study. Once learnt, a spell is committed to memory permanently and may be recalled at any time.

If a written copy of the desired spell is not available it is generally most profitable to develop a simplified working version and then refine more sophisticated variants from this, enhancing whichever parameters are desired. The GameMaster adjudicates all such refinements with regard to the MU's INT, experience level, and d100 roll.

Techniques exist for reducing the Mana cost or work-up time of developed spells; these usually involve specifying a particular point of reference for the spell ritual (typically a specially-prepared ring or wand). The disadvantage of this technique is that without the critical item the spell is useless, and if the item is lost then all such spells will have to be re-written after considerable time and effort.

Further details of spell research and options must be solicited from the GameMaster on an individual basis.

Written Magic

Any magician has complete recall of any spell previously learnt at any time (when fully conscious etc.); such spells may be cast whenever the MU has sufficient Mana available and the required material components (if any). All magicians also have the ability to WRITE MAGIC and set down spells which they know in an esoteric codified form; this written spell (or CABBALA) may be stored singly as an enchanted scroll or incorporated into a codex with other cabbala.

The cost to inscribe a spell in this form (quills, inks, embellishments, papyrus or vellum, etc.) is :

10 GP plus 10 GP per level of spell complexity.

The time and effort involved is

1 HOUR and 1 END point plus

1 HOUR, 1 END point, and 1 MANA level of spell complexity.

At any subsequent time the magician may read the scroll or page as part of the casting ritual for the spell recorded thereon, and cast the cabbala without expending any personal Mana. Once the spell has been cast the scroll or page will immediately crumple into ashes. Since no Mana is committed when casting a cabbala, a magician cannot miscast in the normal fashion and interruptions or mistakes result only in the premature disintegration of the scroll.

There are certain restrictions in the writing of magical spells: those spells with mutable and specific end results must have these completely specified at the time of writing (e.g. Locate Object, Clairvoyance, Phantasmal Force, Polymorph, Teleport, etc.) and NO BLACK MAGIC may be set down in this fashion. Despite these technicalities, the ability to store spells imbued with Mana is an invaluable asset to the magician, who is rarely seen without a tome of spells or scroll of some kind.



General Background – Chittagong Magicians

Children who by test, or serendipitous discovery, display an aptitude and talent for the occult arts may be accepted by the Magician's Guild (or an individual sorcerer) as pupils indentured for 9 years of instruction and service. Those who truly have talent will graduate from this education as apprentices in the arts of magic; the fate of those who fail need not concern us here. A graduating apprentice must then select a Major and a Minor order for future study, and will be assigned to an experienced magician for a further period of 3 years of service and specialised instruction. At the end of this period an apprentice will qualify as a Magician in his/her own right, capable of casting and writing simple spells. The nascent MU must then decide whether to renew the apprenticeship for a further period of study or leave the educational cloisters in search of fame and fortune. All player-Magicians choose the latter course and commence their adventuring careers with a few spells in their selected fields of expertise, and perhaps some miscellaneous spells of basic magic.

Once abroad in the wide and wicked world, an MU will not find a ready welcome at every door as all magicians are held in superstitious fear by the uneducated; the more profound the ignorance the greater the dread generated by a sorcerer, and it is widely believed that all magical powers are derived from traffic with demons or the restless dead. For these reasons an MU is likely to be virtually disowned by his/her own family, and most magicians disguise their profession whilst travelling. Only in the cosmopolitan city of Chittagong, that clearing-house for trade between the Northern World and distant lands, is there an established Guild of Magicians and a greater acceptance of the respectability of the Magical arts. Even so, most magicians keep the company of their peers and study quietly in sober and secluded dwellings.

Very few seek to trouble them there.

