

Magic

Of all the wondrous things in the universe, magic is the most deviously curious and fickle. Its mysteries are deep and its origins unknown, but what can be said is that none should cross into the path of magic who is not prepared to lose something along the way.

The Nature of Magic

Fundamentally, all magic is destructive. Even the most skilled mages are still, ultimately, destroying something in reality whenever they use it. For some this implication sees magic as something mortals should never dare to use, but for others, this just makes magic all the more potent, even when the magic turns on them, and turns their bodies to **Corruption**.

Corruption

In general, there are no limits to how much magic can be used. You could cast a million spells in a day, if you so chose. However, the destructive nature of magic is voracious, and even if you are using all your magic purely to destroy the world around you, it may still turn on you.

Whenever you use magic of any kind, there is a chance that you will receive what is called a Corruption. Your magic will begin to eat away at you, and this results not just in debilitating physical and mental detriments, but even the destruction of your own body, as the magic manifests some wicked part of your soul to break your body.

Manifesting a Corruption

Upon experiencing a Corruption, a practitioner must determine whether it is a Lesser or Greater Corruption. This is done by rolling dice to impose penalties on the practitioner's Talents. Specifically, the affected Talent (excluding Luck) is determined by rolling a 1d8, and the penalty is calculated by rolling either 1d4 or 2d4.

The result is subtracted from the respective Talent. If the same Talent is affected by subsequent Corruptions, the penalty die size increases, leading to potentially greater reductions in the Talent's score.

As a result of your Corruptions, your Talents may run into the negative. What occurs when this happens will vary by the Talent in question; the **Talents** section in the **Creating a Character** chapter will cover these in detail.

Defining your Corruptions

What specifically happens to you as part of your Corruption is entirely up to you. Sometimes your eyes might fall out of your head; sometimes, your arm is deformed into a grotesque otherworldly appendage. Other times, your eyes might simply change to some unnatural color. A good rule of thumb is to think of the Talent the Corruption affected; how does one's Intuition becoming corrupted manifest physically? And if your Corruption is Greater or Lesser, how does that change things?

Whatever the answer, keep this in mind: everyone will be able to recognize it for what it is, and not everyone is going to abide a monster, no matter what it looks like.

Healing from Corruption

In general, Corruptions never heal naturally. You will effectively have them forever, if you are unable to intervene through means like special Salves or Elixirs, or through the adoption of the Magical Arts themselves, so that you might make use of them...

Each Class of the Mage Archtype will have their own, unique way of dealing with Corruptions, many of which revolve around embracing them, rather than lamenting the myriad ways your body is being destroyed.

Types of Magic

Sometimes called “Schools”, there are four principle types of Magic: **Arcana**, **Runeweaving**, **Warding**, and **Enchantment**.

Arcana

The purest form of Magic, Arcana is the study of spellcrafting, and as a Skill is how adventuring mages will often contribute to their Party when all other Skills fail, improvising a spell to solve some issue or another. Arcana, unintuitively, is often the most dangerous kind of magic, particularly for the mere dabblers or hobbyists, as it has the highest chance of inducing a Corruption.

Whenever you attempt to cast an **improvised spell** (see Casting Spells), you will receive a Lesser Corruption if you come within 10 or less of the target number you need to reach. If you roll 5 or less, regardless, of your total, you will take a Greater Corruption.

Runeweaving

While magic is fickle and dangerous, it is curiously at its safest when you use it for the one thing it can do. Runeweaving is the practice of magical combat, and involves the manipulation of specific kinds of spells, called **Runes**, allow the mage to wield devastating power. No one can quite say where the Runes come from or what they even mean when they manifest as strange symbols, but their potency is not tampered by a lack of understanding.

But be wary, however, for even those who weave the Runes are not immune to Corruptions. Magic may turn on you for daring to use it at all.

In Combat, you will receive a Lesser Corruption if you roll a 1 when utilizing Momentum for any reason while casting a Rune spell. If you, in the same Action or Reaction, roll 3 1s in a row, you will receive a Greater Corruption.

Warding

Wards are truly a paradox in magic; as seeming variants of the Runes they too seem much less likely to induce Corruptions, but at the same time, they are defensive or even utilitarian in nature. While a boon for would be War Wizards and other such adventurers, it is a perplexing issue for those scholarly sorts that seek to understand what Magic actually is.

In Combat, you will receive a Lesser Corruption if you roll a 1 when utilizing Momentum for any reason while casting a Ward spell. If you, in the same Action or Reaction, roll 3 1s in a row, you will receive a Greater Corruption.

Enchantment and Curses

Arguably the most useful kind of Magic, Enchantment allows the embedding of certain magical effects and, occasionally, spells into objects. While an enchanted sword or ring are common enough, Enchantment has seen extensive use in Warfare, with magic forming the first line of defense for fortifications.

Curses however, are a particularly devious kind of Enchantment that sees the debilitating effects of Corruption embedded into the enchanted object, and while some of the mildest curses only inflict those effects on those who so much as touch the object, the worst Curses are much deadlier, and far more sinister. Both Enchantment and Curses are covered in the **Crafting** Chapter.

Improvising Magic

Unlike many games with magic, outside of combat you will be completely **Improvising** a spell whenever you wish to cast one to solve some problem you might be facing. In general, you will not find there are any strict limits to what you can attempt to do with Magic in this way, but as you are Improvising, you are to adhere to the principle of Yes, And, and the agreed upon tone of your group's game, and naturally, you will be highly susceptible to the Corruption.

Once you have announced you are going to attempt a Spell, you should first clarify what it is you are going to do. Do not just say "I cast magic at it" to get out of a jam; be specific, and have logic to what you want to do. And most importantly, as you may already be familiar with from handling **Events** during your travels, do not expect to be able to just conjure fantastical riches out of thin air. You may well be skilled enough to make such things appear, but they will never quite be what you wanted. Remember, while magic will not always be able to solve *everything*, it can certainly *break* just about anything.

Fighting with Magic

In combat, magic is more specific and slightly limited, yet still allows the much of the same improvisational freedom in spell manifestation. You will be utilizing a number of specific Spells called **Runes** and **Wards** as though they are "prompts"; while each one has a specific effect, you can leverage the spells to do many kinds of things, limited almost only by your imagination. Combat Magic is covered in more detail in the **Spells** Section.

Touch Magic

For those who wish to go without either a Wand or a Stave, they will naturally be without a source of damage dice to utilize for their Spells. Such mages could, however, use their bare hands, and their damage dice will rely upon their **Hand-to-Hand** Damage dice, which is governed by the **Wrestling** Skill.

While such mages will never be without the ability to use their magic, they will be limited in terms of the ranges they can fight at to melee range, requiring physical touch to be able to release their spells. However, one should not fret. Mages who take to this style of magic are often not to be trifled with, and the terrifying Ursh, those bear pirates of the south, are especially dangerous when they've managed to take up magic.

Using Runes to Ward

When you are working to cast a spell, you are not limited in terms of defending yourself, and if you have nowhere else to place it, you might find Warding with it valuable. You may be in the process of conjuring a great Water Wave, but in a pinch, throw it into the air to absorb a Fire Blast.

If you have already begun to cast a spell and you are Reacting, you may use the spell to defend yourself, treating the damage rolled as defense. You can, optionally, use Runes when beginning with a Ward, if it fits how you want to defend yourself.

Welding Spells

As you weave together your spell, you are not limited to simply progressing through the same 3 spells each time; you can combine any Rune or Ward together; your only restriction is that you must follow the sequence Simple → Intermediate → Complex. When you do this with up to 3 different spells, this is called a **Weld**, and when you are utilizing the Elements, you will find that that they can be combined in a myriad of ways to gain a deeper advantage.

- **Elemental Welds**

A special kind of Weld, Elemental Welds allow you to combine different magical elements together to form new, **Magical Terrains**, that can have very potent effects on the battlefield. These are detailed later in this section.

Spells

It is said that every aspiring mage typically asks the same question, “How can there so few Spells?” As their mentors would then demonstrate, the small amount of Spells that are known are no less potent than a thousand.

Understanding and Using Each Spell

While there are two different sets of Spells, conveniently split in half between the **Runes**, which are more offensive, and the **Wards**, which are more defensive or utilitarian in nature, they will each follow a similar structure.

Each Rune or Ward comes as a pair of three separate Spells that naturally build into each other, which are considered the **Simple**, **Intermediate**, and **Complex** Spell respectively. To actually use them, you will progress in the sequence when you are either attacking or defending.

You'll start with a Simple spell rolling your Damage or Defense dice, and then, utilizing either Momentum or a subsequent Turn, progress to an Intermediate Spell, and then, in the same manner, to a Complex spell. At any time you can release the spell against your target. Once you have progressed to Complex, you can hold the Spell until your next Turn, upon which it must be released at the cost of one of your Action Dice.

Improvising Magic in Combat

As with magic outside of combat, you will be improvising the effects of your Spells as you fight. However, as each Spell that would be useful to you in Combat already exists as a Rune or Ward, the process is a bit different.

Each Spell should be treated as though it was a prompt, similar to Events you might see during your Travels, and one that you must follow much more closely. While you can conjure some truly spectacular things, including those that will make a real difference as you fight, do not expect to try and cast one of the Detonation Spells and somehow heal yourself for all of your Composure and Wounds; that's a fast way to blow yourself up.

Instead, think about the spell and what it means, both individually and as part of its pairing, and let this guide what happens as you cast them. Keep in mind that no matter what the spell does, it can never deal any direct damage greater than what you rolled for Damage.

Collaborating On Spellwork

As with your magic outside of combat, you will be collaborating with your Keeper and your Group on what sorts of things will occur. Depending on your game's tone or theme, you may well be able to do wacky and zany things. In others, though, such things can very easily ruin it for your friends. If you are unsure if something will fit, remember the golden rule: ***talk to your friends***.

Combining Spells

As you fight, you are not limited in terms of how you mix and match your spells, so long as they follow the sequence from Simple to Intermediate to Complex. Your only limit is that you can only begin a spell with a Rune if you are attacking, and likewise, you can only begin a spell with a Ward if you are defending. Additionally, it should be noted that when defending with Magic, any Rune you utilize will only contribute towards your Defense dice, but you may use its effects on your attacker if they are useful to you.

Holding Complex Spells

When you have fully cast a Complex Spell, you are eligible to hold onto it for some time for an additional effect. Inside of combat, this will only be for the duration of the Round, and upon your next Turn, you will have to release it at the cost of one of your Actions. Outside of combat, you can go for longer at the cost of -1 Composure for every 10 seconds. If you lose your Composure as a result of this, the spell will trigger on you. If this in turn deals damage to you in excess of half your maximum Composure, you will die, ***immediately***.

The Elements

As you fight, you will be conjuring many potential Elements as part of your Runes, but these are not only useful to deal damage. The Elements can be used outside of combat, and you will find that by combining certain ones, you can unleash powerful Magical Terrains and other effects on the battlefield.

However, do not feel obligated to make use of all of them. Pick your favorites, and work with your allies to have a good variety. Each option is discussed below, and all Elemental Welds will be discussed in the next section. (Refer back to **Wounds** for understanding what each damage type can deal)

- **Fire**
The most primordial and straightforward of the Elements. When Held, Fire can ignite flammable objects, and can burn hot enough to act as a Forge, in addition to providing +25 Insulation within 10ft.
- **Lightning**
The booming discharge common to storms, Lightning is powerful against those who wield magic. When Held, Lightning can reveal the location of obscured metallic objects.
- **Water**
Often considered peaceful, Water is deceptively powerful against magic users; appropriate given how often it and Lightning appear together. When Held, it can fill containers or irrigate the ground; it should only be drunk in desperation, however, for it will deal Damage.
- **Earth**
Considered the "weakest" Element, Earth can be prove quite useful for those dedicated to it. When Held, Earth magic can be used to eliminate one's tracks; so long as its normal for dirt to be on their path.
- **Frost**
Frost is as dangerous as magic as it is to the unprepared traveller. When held, Frost can freeze food and drink, which will thaw within a few days after the spell ceases. It also provides an Insulation of -25 within 10ft.
- **Air**
While one might not think so, Air can be just as useful to those wishing to keep a low profile, or to those who seek a more bombastic approach. When Held, Air can send sounds, voices, or other such things across distances, but no more than 3 miles.
- **Light and Shadow**
Unique among the Elements, for one cannot exist without the other. When Held, Light provides a Chatoyant Light source with an Emanation of 15; likewise, Shadow provides a Shadowed Light Source with the same emanation.
- **Blood**
Typically the sole purview of Necromancers, Blood can be very useful for those who wish to be selfless in healing others. Blood, when Held, allows the transfer of Composure from the Caster to anyone they wish, at a rate of 1 Composure per Second Held.
- **Metal**
An unusual Element, for whatever it is doesn't match any conventional metal you might find in the world, but this does not hinder its potency, and is a great companion in war. When Held, Metal can be used as mirrors to check corners or send signals across distances, and can act as a conventional Mirror, if desired.

A Note on Force Magic

A final form of magic one can use is **Force** magic. This is considered the sole "pure" form of magic, and as such it has no effect if Held. This does not limit its potency however, particularly in combat.

Elemental Welds

While not all of the Elements will weld with each other, you will not find yourself wanting. The Elements can be Welded either as part of a Spell (just swap elements) or inadvertently through Warding. In this list, each Spell that may affect a number of Positions on the Combat Grid will be dependent on the spells that collided. Simple Spells are worth 1, Intermediate 2, and Complex 3.

- **Molten Terrain**

Earth and Fire combine to warp the terrain into molten lava, adding +65 Difficult Terrain to some number of Positions, that deals 1d10 Fire damage to any who fail the save; if two Complex Spells resulted in this terrain, the difficulty increases to +85. This terrain can be destroyed with Water magic.

- **Steamburst**

Fire and Water combine to burst into a cloud of fog or steam, adding the **Obscured** Tag to some number of Positions. This fog will last a number of Rounds equal to the Spell that created it. EG, a Complex spell would allow the fog to last 3 Rounds. This can be ended early if targeted with Air Magic.

- **Rust Wave**

Water and Metal combine as a corrosive acid; when combined intentionally, the spell will deal double damage to Structures and Vehicles. When combined as part of a Ward, the spell will reduce the Defense of all combatants in the same position as the defending Mage; the amount will be equal to the damage that was not negated by that Mage.

- **Bloodmire**

Blood and Earth combine to form a bloodmire – a sapping swamp of blood and muck; some number of Positions gain +65 Difficult Terrain, and failing the saving throw will reduce Composure by 1d10. This terrain can be destroyed with Frost Magic.

- **Stormcall**

Air and Lightning combine to call forth a terrible storm. On the ground, Dwarves and any who attempt to cast Metal spells will have a 50% chance of being randomly struck by a 1d10 Lightning Bolt; in the air, some number of Positions will be affected by +65 Turbulence, in addition to the possibility of being struck by lightning each Round, regardless of whether they are a Dwarf or using Metal magic.

- **Night Wind**

Shadow and Air combine as the Night Wind, a dark, light sapping cloud that will randomly shift Positions. Any who occupy the same position as the Night Wind will enjoy +15 to any attempt to Hide, but will also be considered *Blind*, and take -10 to all attempts to Attack or Defend. It will disappear after 1 Round.

- **Ice Forge**

Frost and Metal combine to forge great barriers of ice. When used intentionally, a mage can select where they may add Cover within 1 Position of themselves in any direction; this Cover will have an SP total equal to the damage or defense of their Spell, and may Cover 1 Combatant. If this cover is attacked with Fire, it will take double damage.

- **Blood Lash**

Blood and Lightning combine to form a blood lash; a terrifying display of magical might. When used intentionally, the attacking mage may double their damage against any who have received at least a d10 *Sapped or Paralyzed Wound*, and may double how many targets they can hit at once per their Spell.

- **Eclipse**

Light and Shadow combine to warp the battlefield with a disorienting and stark black and white contrast; some number of Positions will be affected by +65 Difficult Terrain, and failing the saving throw will reduce any attempt to React that Round by -10.

- **Mirrorbeam**

Light and Metal combine to form a Mirrorbeam, greatly empowering the Light. Any Wound caused or exacerbated by the spell will be bumped up one additional size.

Runes

The Runes are your offensive spells, and will be at their most potent when attacking. All Runes will allow you to immediately roll your Damage Dice. Each individual Rune will have a number associated with it; this is both its "sequence number", meaning which must go first, second, and third, and tells you how its default effects work.

Conflagration

These Runes conjure an explosive force that is especially effective against large creatures. Take uses of Momentum equal to each level used against creatures at least 2 sizes larger than yourself.

1. **Pop**
2. **Burst**
3. **Blast**

Projectile

These Runes conjure a progressively powerful and precise projectile of magical force. Each level increases Wound Size by 1, and your Action by its number. Missile never misses; it will always deal a minimum of one damage.

1. **Ball**
2. **Bolt**
3. **Missile**

Resonance

These Runes conjure the devastating sounds of the Elements you channel through them. Reduce your opponents Action by 5 with each use, and cut any Sound Effects they are affected by in half. Toll deals double damage against magically created barriers or objects.

1. **Chime**
2. **Peal**
3. **Toll**

Detonation

These Runes conjure a larger and larger font of magical energy that explodes on command, hitting many enemies at once. All Elemental Welds double their effects, and add an additional target equal to the Spell's sequence number.

1. **Crickle**
2. **Crackle**
3. **Boom**

Deluge

These Runes manipulate your chosen Element into devastating, continuous flow of energy that can hit many enemies at once. Add an additional target equal to the Sequence Number, and drop all those who don't negate the Spell with -5 Movement per level used. Wave will hit all Targets in a single Position, and can double your Defense total if used to Ward.

1. **Stream**
2. **Flood**
3. **Wave**

Wards

The Wards are your Defensive and Utilitarian spells, and will be at their most potent when you either need to defend yourself, or when you need to gain an advantage in the fight. If you are Reacting, you can begin to roll your Defense dice.

Mirth

These Wards force your opponent to hear a progressively distracting and terrifying laugh. Impose a limit on your Target's Momentum by the sequence number for the Round; Grin will inflict the **Stunned** Wound if they fail a +65 Composure save.

1. **Giggle**
2. **Guffaw**
3. **Grin**

Glyph

A most versatile set of Wards, they allow you spontaneously create magical objects, markings, barriers and shields and manipulate the shape of your spells. When using Doodle or Sketch in a Rune, use your Defense dice to attack; anything you create with Glyph uses the total rolled for the Spell as its SP, which doubles if you used the full sequence.

1. **Scratch**
2. **Scribble**
3. **Sketch**

Tempo

These Wards give you a modicum of control over your target's perception of time. Your Spells are experienced in slow motion; reduce their Movement and add the sequence number as a cost to shift Positions. Turn allows you to divert your attacker's attack to another target, if the full sequence was used.

1. **Tick**
2. **Tock**
3. **Turn**

Lurk

These Wards can be used to enhance an ally's or your own stealth or disrupt your enemy's concentration. Add the sequence number as a bonus to your Stealth or force a target to roll their Stance dice against your damage die. Silence, if the full sequence is used, will let you eliminate all Sound effects in a Position, beneficial or otherwise.

1. **Sit**
2. **Still**
3. **Silence**

Aviate

These Wards together might grant you a small amount of Unnatural Flight, but can also be used to juggle... Begin Unnatural Flight with a movement speed equal to the sequence number multiplied by 10. Against targets, increase their Elevation by an amount equal to the sequence number, and reduce their Action die by that number. Drop them at any time, including mid-spell, to deal immediate fall damage.

1. **Flutter**
2. **Flap**
3. **Fly**

Magic in Practice – Examples of Improvisation in Combat

Below you will find a series of examples of the kinds of wondrous and terrible things you could accomplish with your magic.

As the battle rages, Elara extends her hands, as brilliant light and deep shadow emerge with a terrible din. Suddenly, the battlefield transforms—colors drain away, leaving only harsh whites and deep blacks. Confused, the Goblin raiders stumble and misfire, while Elara's allies, now almost invisible in the shifting lights and shadows, strike with deadly precision.

In the shadowy ruins, Thalen chants under his breath, tracing slow sigils in the air. The air thickens around the charging knight, who slows dramatically, his movements becoming sluggish as if underwater. Thalen steps aside easily, avoiding the slow-motion strike and counterattacking with a well-placed thrust to the knight's armor.

As the band of goblins charges through the narrow mountain pass, Maela begins her incantation. With a flick of her wrist, she releases the Pop—a small burst of fire at the goblins' feet, startling them and halting their charge. Sensing an opportunity as they regroup, she escalates to the Flood spell. The small flames sputter and hiss, giving way to a sudden rush of water cascading down the rocks, sweeping the confused goblins off their feet in a powerful, churning torrent.

In the dense forest, Ivar finds himself outnumbered by marauding elves. He strikes a nearby tree trunk with a Chime, sending a disorienting hum through the air that causes the elves to clutch their ears in pain. Capitalizing on their disorientation, Ivar redirects his magic; the ground beneath his feet barely touches as he lifts into the air, carried by a gust that whistles with the continuing eerie tone, allowing him to soar above his foes and escape their encirclement.

During the siege of the castle, Sorcha prepares her magic from atop the battlements. She conjures a series of small, crickling energies that dance around the assaulting soldiers, making them wary and distracted. As the energy grows in intensity, she lifts her Wand and shapes them into a sketch of arcane symbols that embed upon the gateway below; the door will not fall.

Far below the dragon as it prepares attack, Elowen acts quickly to protect their self and their companions. A cool shimmering light builds from their staff as they manipulate their magic with their off hand, circling back and forth as though stroking a cat. As the fire erupts from the dragon's maw, Elowen completes their Ward, enveloping the party in a cool bubble of shimmering light that falters against the dragonfire, but does not fail.