Here’s an overview of how spellcasting works in D&D 5th Edition. First we’ll go over the classes, then we’ll explore the various mechanics surrounding spellcasting.

### CLASSES:

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#### ***First off, Wizards.***

At Lv1, you know 6 spells chosen from the wizard list, along with 3 cantrips. For every additional level of Wizard you obtain, you can add another 2 spells into your spellbook. However, after every long rest, you can only prepare a number of spells equal to (Wizard Level + INT modifier). Which means that eventually, you will end up with way more spells in your spellbook than you can prepare each day. So, it will be up to you to ‘guess’ which spells you would be needing later in the day, because you can only cast spells that have been prepared (Ritual spells are the exception to this and I will cover that aspect later on). So going with the above formula, a lv1 wizard with an INT of 16(+3) can prepare a maximum of 4 spells after a long rest.

It’s like if you would own 6 shirts that you keep in your closet, but you don’t know yet which one you’ll wear to work this morning. Your bag can only contain 4 shirts, so you have to decide which 4 you’ll bring with you that day. The other 2 will be unavailable to you until after the next long rest.

Wizards must have access to their spellbook to be able to change their prepared spell after a long rest. If you were to lose or misplace your spellbook, you CANNOT change your prepared spells, however you can keep using those that have been prepared already.

Wizards can also add more spells to their spellbook if they come across scrolls inscribed with spells contained on the Wizard spell list. It costs 50gp and 2h per spell level to copy a spell into your spellbook, and you must make an INT check with a DC of 10 + the spell’s level. So trying to copy a 2nd level spell in your spellbook, you must make an INT check and get a total of 12 or higher. Whether you succeed or fail, the scroll is consumed during the process.

Once you hit level2 and you pick one of the Schools in the PHB, spells will cost half the gold and take half the time to copy if they are of the school you picked.

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#### ***Bards, Sorcerers, Rangers (once you hit lv2),***

#### ***Arcane Trickster (Rogue archetype, once you hit lv3),***

#### ***Eldritch Knight (Fighter Archetype, once you hit lv3).***

These classes and archetypes know a fixed number of spells that increases each level as per their class progression table. You do not need to prepare spell, as you have access at all times to all the spells that you have learned so far. Whenever you gain a new level in one of these classes, you can opt to swap one of your already known spells for a new one.

To keep with the shirt comparison, these classes only own a few shirts, but they carry them around at all times.

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#### ***Clerics, Druids, Paladins.***

You have access to the entirety of your class’s spell list, as long as you have spell slots of that level (defined by individual class, in case you are multiclassing). So if your class progression table shows that you have spell slots of 3rd level, it means you can prepare and cast any spell on your class’s list of 3rd level or lower. After every long rest, you can change the list of spells you will have prepared for that day.

For instance, a lv5 cleric has spell slots of 1st, 2nd and 3rd level, so this means you can prepare any spell of 3rd level or lower. The number of spells you can prepare is based on your class level and your spellcasting attribute. For Clerics and Druids, you can prepare (Druid level + WIS modifier) spells every day. Paladins can prepare an amount equal to half their paladin level, rounded down + their CHA modifier, with a minimum of 1 spell regardless of level and charisma.

These classes also have access to additional spells (Domain for Cleric, Circle for Druids and Oath for Paladins).

Whenever you reach a level that grants you such additional spells, they are considered to be always prepared and do NOT count towards the limit of spells you can prepare each day, effectively giving you an expanded pool of spells you can choose to cast from.

Clerics, Druids and Paladins don’t own any shirts. Instead, they get to go to the store every morning to pick a new handful of shirts for the day.

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#### ***Warlocks.***

Warlocks operate on a slightly different system than the rest of the spellcasters. They also know a certain amount of spells per their class progression table, however they have a very limited amount of spell slots to cast such spells. However, they regain their spell slots after a short rest, which means that they can still have a decent amount of slots to cast from throughout the day, if your Dungeon Master grants you several short rests. Their slots also increase in level as the warlock becomes more powerful, increasing by 1 every odd warlock level, topping at 5th level once you hit lv9. Unlike other full spellcasters, warlocks do not have spell slots of 6th through 9th level. Instead, they have a class feature called Mystic Arcanum that you obtain at 11th, 13th, 15th and 17th level. On each of these levels, you choose a single spell from your spell list of the appropriate spell level (6th at 11, 7th at 13, and so on). You can cast each of these spells once per long rest without expending a spell slot.

### THE VARIOUS ASPECTS OF SPELLCASTING:

#### ***Cantrips.***

#### Nearly all spellcasting classes (sorry, Rangers and Paladins!) have cantrips on their spell lists. These are spells that your character has cast so often, you can cast them with your eyes closed. This means that you can cast them as often as you wish, all day e’ery day, without the need to expend spell slots. **The damage of cantrips are based on your total character levels, not just spellcaster levels.** Such damage gains an increase at 5th, 11th and 17th levels. So this means that if you have 16 levels of Fighter and 1 level of Wizard, you will cast your cantrips as if you were a 17th level character, meaning you get the maximum effect out of them. Even characters with no spellcaster levels at all benefit from this, if you gained some cantrips through a Feat. Unlike spells of 1st level or higher, cantrips cannot be exchanged upon gaining more levels.

#### ***Spell slots.***

This is what confuses some of the newcomers. Previous editions might have had you prepare the spells directly, and you needed to prepare it more than once if you wanted to cast it more than once. Thankfully, D&D 5th edition doesn’t quite work this way. Instead, imagine your prepared or known spells as a [vending machine (](http://i.imgur.com/ue8a1o1.png) <http://i.imgur.com/ue8a1o1.png> ) And your spell slots are the currency with which you can ‘purchase’ (cast) the spells.

On the picture linked above, some of these spells can be cast at a higher level, granting benefits to the spell, whether it be more damage, or more targets, or longer durations, typically. If you want to cast a spell, you have to expend a spell slot at least of an equal level with the spell you wish to cast, or, if you want to cast it at a higher level, a spell slot of the appropriate level must be used instead.

For instance, you want to cast the 1st level spell Mage Armor. You must expend a 1st level spell slot.

Instead, you wish to cast the 3rd level spell Fireball but as a 5th level spell to cause more damage, so you must expend a 5th level spell slot.

Some spells grant no benefit from being cast using a higher level spell slot, however if you only have higher spell slots remaining, you still can cast the spell using a higher level spell slot. For instance if you wish to cast the 1st level spell Mage Armor, but only have spell slots of 2nd and 3rd level remaining, you can still cast it, but the potency or duration of the spell is not increased. You also do not ‘get the change back’, meaning if you cast a 3rd level spell using a 5th level slot, you do *not* recuperate a 2nd level slot.

Also note that spell slots cannot be combined together to create a higher level slot. So if you have a 1st and a 2nd level slot remaining, you cannot cast a 3rd level spell with them.

Using these spell slots, you can cast your known/prepared spells in any manner you wish. You can use ALL the slots to cast the same spell over and over if you fancy, or you can cast a little bit of this and a little bit of that, or use them with all different spell, the choice is yours. If you know spells A, B, C, D and you have 3 spell slots available, you can cast ABB, or AAD, or ACD, or CCD, or any combo you wish.

All spellcasters (except Warlocks) regain their expended spell slots after completing a long rest. Warlocks regain them on a short rest, as mentionned above.

Wizards and Land Druids have a class feature that lets them regain some spell slots once per long rest, after completing a short rest. The amount is half their Wizard or Druid level, rounded down, and you can regain that many slot levels, up to a maximum of 5th level slots. So a lv9 Wizard could regain 9/2 = 4.5 rounded to 4 levels worth of slots, in any combination he wishes. He could regain a 1st and a 3rd, or two 2nds, or four 1sts, or a single 4th, or any other combination that totals no more than 4.

#### ***Proficiency Bonus.***

Since this term is used a bit in the upcoming parts, we’ll go over this right now. Proficiency Bonus denotes how ‘experienced’ your character has become with things he’s good at. The higher your level, the higher your Proficiency Bonus becomes. This bonus is based on your total character levels, and you can refer to any class’s progression table to determine it. A lv9 Fighter has a proficiency bonus of +4, and a Fighter2/Monk4/Wizard3 multiclass character has a total of 9 character levels, so his proficiency bonus would also be +4.

#### ***Spell Attack Modifier, Spell Save DC.***

These two terms will come back frequently throughout your spellcasting career. Some of your spells will require you to make an Attack Roll (ranged or melee, as the spell specifies), which some others will require the target(s) to make a Saving Throw. If you must make an Attack Roll, you must roll a d20 and add your proficiency bonus and your class’s spellcasting ability modifier – INT for wizards, Arcane Tricksters and Eldritch Knights, WIS for Clerics and Druids, and CHA for Bards, Sorcerers and Warlocks. If the total of your roll is equal or higher than your target’s Armor Class, your spell hits and deals the damage specified in the spell info.

So, a lv1 Wizard with an INT of 16 (+3) would attack by rolling 1d20 and adding +5 to the roll (2 from Proficiency and 3 for INT).

For spells requiring a Saving Throw (all the spells are very clear which one is used, Attack or Saving Throw), the target must make a Saving Throw using the appropriate attribute (again, the spell will state which one needs to be used) and meet or beat your Spell Save DC. This number is calculated by adding your spellcasting attribute modifier and your proficiency bonus to 8. So again with the same wizard as above, his Spell Save DC would be 8+2+3, so 13. If he casts Burning Hands at a group of foes, each of them included in the flame’s area must make a Dexterity Saving Throw and get a result of 13 or better to mitigate the damage taken. Any result of 12 or below means full damage is taken from the flames.

Note that any Ranged Spell Attack done while having any enemy within 5’ of you causes your attack roll to be made at Disadvantage, even if that enemy is not your target. The Feat Crossbow Expert will negate this penalty thanks to its 2nd bullet point.

Also, unless it is explicitely stated in the spell’s info, or unless you have a class feature that says so, you never add your spellcasting ability modifer to the damage of your spells, unlike attacks made with weapons.

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#### ***Ritual Casting.***

Some classes have Ritual Casting as a class feature - Bards, Clerics, Druids and Wizards. Warlocks do not innately have that class feature, but there is an option that you can pick that will allow you to, and there is also a Feat that grants you the ability to cast Rituals.

Spells in the PHB’s Spellcasting Section that can be cast as a Ritual will be indicated as such:

*IDENTIFY*

*1st-level divination (ritual)*

Such spells can be cast without expending a spell slot. You simply add 10 minutes to the spell’s casting time to cast them as a Ritual. So it makes them inefficient to use during combat, but it adds a lot of utility outside of combat, at no cost other than the extra 10 minutes it takes you.

-If among a Bard’s known spells is one that can be cast as a Ritual, the Bard can cast it either normally by using a spell slot, or as a Ritual by adding 10 minutes, and not using a spell slot.

-Warlocks who went with "Pact of the Tome" and who picked "Book Of Ancient Secrets" as in invocation, as well as anyone who picked Ritual Caster feat, can cast any spell with the ritual tag contained in their spell book without expending a spell slot.

-Wizards who have Ritual spells inscribed in their spell book can cast them without using a spell slot, even if these spells are not among those prepared for the day – this adds a ton of utility to wizards and vastly expands their spellcasting options!

-Clerics and Druids can cast spells as Rituals, however they must have them prepared to be able to cast them, unlike wizards.

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#### ***Concentration.***

#### Some spells require you to Concentrate on them after casting them. If so, it will be indicated along with the spell's duration.

*Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute*

You can only ever have one Concentration spell active at a time. Note that it does not prevent you from doing anything else. Moving, talking, attacking, casting any non-concentration spell, all of this is permitted. If you are Concentrating on a spell, and you wish to cast another Concentration spell, the effects of the first are ended before the effects of the second one occur. For instance, if you were concentrating on a spell that caused the target to make Saving Throws at Disadvantage, and you cast a second Concentration spell that forces the same target to make a Saving Throw, they would roll it normally, as the Disadvantage from the original spell does not affect them anymore.

You can end a Concentration Spell at any time you choose. If any effect or spell causes you to become Incapacitated, you automatically lose your Concentration.

Whenever you take damage, you must make a Constitution Saving Throw, and the DC is either 10, or half the damage sustained, whichever is higher. Each source of damage is counted independantly. So if a dragon blasts you in the face for 40 damage, you must make a DC20 Constitution Saving Throw. If 5 rats hit you for 1 damage each, you must make 5 separate Constitution Saving Throws, DC10 for each one of them. If you fail the Saving Throw, you lose Concentration.

Note that if you Ready a spell, even one that normally does not require Concentration after being cast ("I'm Readying Grease to cast beneath the first enemy who walks within melee range of our Fighter.", you are considered having cast the spell as normal (which means, you expend your spell slot as normal, regardless of what happens afterwards), and you are required to hold Concentration on your spell until it goes off (*picture someone having knocked an arrow on a bow and keeping the bow drawn, but holding off on letting the arrow go*). If you get hit between the time of the casting but before you release the spell, you must make a Constitution Saving Throw (as explained above). If you fail, the spell fizzles and ends. You can hold onto a Readied spell until the beginning of your next turn. If you have not cast it before your next turn begins, the spell ends.

Sorcerers have a Metamagic option available to them that allows them to cast a normally single-target spell onto two different targets, if this spell happens to be a Concentration spell, you can still cast it on both targets, however if you were to lose Concentration, the effect ends on both targets as well.

#### ***Action/Bonus Action/Reaction.***

The majority of the spells have a casting time of either 1 Action, or 1 Bonus Action. A few have a casting time of Reaction, along with a certain required trigger.

You can, during the same turn, cast two spells, however the requirements are that if you cast a Bonus Action spell of 1st level or higher, the other spell that you can cast in that same turn MUST be a cantrip with a casting time of 1 Action.

There are some exceptions to this, such as the Fighter's Action Surge feature, which gives you an additional Action on the turn you use it. If you use this, then you can cast two spells with a casting time of 1 Action without requiring that one of them be a Cantrip.

*(*[*Just keep in mind the Action/Bonus Action requirements if it applies.*](http://www.sageadvice.eu/2015/04/17/action-surge-spell-3/)*)*

ACTION AND BONUS ACTION ARE NOT INTERCHANGEABLE. You cannot use your Action to cast a spell with a casting time of Bonus Action, nor do the opposite.

Reaction spells will be cast when a certain trigger is met (For instance, you may cast the Shield spell after being hit by an attack, in an attempt to cause the attack to miss). You may cast these Reaction spells at any time if the trigger is met, during anyone’s turn, even your own, provided that you have not used your Reaction yet – remember, you only ever have one reaction per full round, and if you use it, you regain it at the beginning of your turn. These spells do require you to expend a spell slot to cast them.

### ***Anatomy of Casting a Spell.***

Each spell has a combination of Verbal and/or Somatic and/or Material components. Verbal obviously means the words that activate a spell, the Somatic part is the magical gestures, hand waving and finger wiggling, and the Material is either the raw components, or it can be substituted by a spell focus.

They will be shown as such in the spell’s information block: *Components: V, S, M (a pinch of powdered iron or iron filings)*

Any spell with a V component means that it cannot be cast if you are unable to speak, or are in a zone of magical Silence. Spells with a S element require at least a free hand, so if you are a cleric holding a shield and mace, you will need to ditch one of them before you can cast such a spell. Some Dungeon Masters will also prohibit a bound or shackled spellcaster from casting spells requiring somatic components.

Material components are always indicated if they are needed. They are mostly for flavor and lore. If your character has purchased or obtained a component pouch, it is assumed that any component with no indicated value is contained in the pouch.

Any spell with a component that has a gold value next to it is absolutely required to cast such spell – though some Dungeon Masters (ask them first!) will allow a spellcaster to simply pay the value in gold coins, if he does not want to force his players to go search for these components.

For spells that have a component with a gold value and no other indication, and simply possessing such item is sufficient to cast the spell as many times as you wish (Such as Identify: V,S,M (a pearl worth at least 100 gp and an owl feather)

Some spells have a component with a gold value, but it is also specified that the item is consumed upon casting the spell, so such spells will require a new component each time you wish to cast it.

(Such as Raise Dead: V,S, M(a diamond worth at least 500 gp, which the spell consumes)

### ***MULTICLASSING INTO DIFFERENT SPELLCASTER CLASSES:***

Okay, this is getting a little bit more tricky, so re-read this a few times over if you need to.

Everything I will mention here can be found on p164 (the right half of the page)-165 (the spell slot table) of the PHB.

First off, you determine your overall spellcaster level.

For each level of Bard, Cleric, Druid, Sorcerer and Wizard, add 1.

Take your levels of Paladin and/or Ranger, divide by 2, and round down, then add.

Take your levels of Eldritch Knight (Fighter archetype) and/or Arcane Trickster (Rogue Archetype), divide by 3, round down, then add.

So if you are a Druid4, Paladin 5, and Eldritch Knight7, your spellcaster level would be 4 + 5/2(rounded down to 2) + 7/3(rounded down to 2) = 8.

Refering to the p165 chart, a lv8 spellcaster has four lv1 slots, three lv2 slots, three lv3 slots and two lv4 slots.

Now, you need to refer to the invididual class progression tables to see how many spells of each class you know/can prepare.

As a Druid4, you know 3 druid cantrips, and you can prepare (Druid level+WIS modifier) druid spells every morning. Note that as a Druid4 by itself, you cannot cast any spell higher than 2nd level, so any spell you prepare must be of 1st or 2nd level.

Then as a Paladin5, the class progression table shows you can only cast 1st and 2nd level spells as well. And Paladins prepare every morning (CHA modifier + 1/2 your Paladin level, rounded down - minimum of 1 spell).

Then as an Eldritch Knight7, their spellcasting table shows that you would know 2 wizard cantrips, and 5 wizard spells. Those 5 spells would always be considered prepared, you do not need to prepare them like an actual wizard. And again, the table shows you can only cast 1st and 2nd level spells.

So, notice that none of your classes allow you to cast any spell higher than a lv2 spell, however you have spell slots of 3rd and 4th level. This is normal. This simply will allow you to cast your lower level spells at a higher level, however your basic understanding of magic does not permit you to learn more complex spells for now.

Also, when you have more than one spellcasting class, it is important to keep the spell lists separate, as the spells will be relying on the respective spellcasting attribute for each class.

For instance, you could prepare Cure Wound as either a Druid spell or a Paladin spell. However, if you were to cast it as a Druid Spell, the attribute modifier would be your Wisdom, vs Charisma if you were to cast it as a Paladin spell.

**Warlocks:** Warlocks are kept separate from other spellcasting classes, as their magic system is entirely different. You do not count your warlock levels when determining your spellcasting level, and their warlock spell slots are also kept separate from those you obtained per the p165 table. However, do note that you CAN use the warlock spell slot to cast spells from other classes, and it also works the other way around. And remember that warlock spell slots are regained on short or long rest, unlike all the other classes who only recuperate them after a long rest.