

Primed by Cortex

# MAGE

The Ascension



A guide to Cortex Prime system  
conversion of the game

## Credits

**Written By:** Rhinemann  
**Developed By:** Rhinemann  
**Edited By:** Rhinemann

## Special Thanks to:

Jeremy.Forbing, Miriam Robern, Vecna and the entire Cortex Prime discord for the input, brainstorming, advice and help.

Lynn Jones for Manual of Monsters, Minions & Mountebanks

Jeremy.Forbing, Lynn Jones, Miriam Robern and Jasmine Barlow for Cortex Lite.

Riley Routh for The Arcanist's Toolkit, specifically the SFX.

Miriam Robern for the Gear rules and SFX in the Emporium of the Speaking Lands.

Cam Banks for designing Cortex Prime.

This work is compatible with the Cortex Prime role playing game system, designed by Cam Banks, edited by Amanda Valentine, and owned by Dire Wolf Digital™©.

World of Darkness, Vampire: The Masquerade, Vampire: The Dark Ages, Victorian Age: Vampire, Werewolf: The Apocalypse, Werewolf: The Wild West, Mage: The Ascension, Mage: The Sorcerers Crusade, Wraith: The Oblivion, Wraith: The Great War, Changeling: The Dreaming, Hunter: The Reckoning, Demon: The Fallen, Mummy: The Resurrection, Orpheus, Exalted, Chronicles of Darkness, Vampire: The Requiem, Werewolf: The Forsaken, Mage: The Awakening, Changeling: The Lost, Hunter: The Vigil, Giest: The Sin Eaters, Demon: The Descent, Mummy: The Curse, Beast: The Primordial, Promethean: The Created, World of Darkness, Storyteller System™, Storytelling System™, and Storytellers Vault™ and their respective logos, icons and symbols are trademarks or registered trademarks of Paradox Interactive AB. All rights reserved.

— PRIMED BY —



**cortex**<sup>TM</sup>  
COMMUNITY

# Table of Contents

<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Awakened Affiliation</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>How It Works</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Focus</b>	<b>15</b>
Example characters	6	Descriptor	16
		Noun	16
<b>Game Rules</b>	<b>7</b>	Catchphrase	17
<b>Traits &amp; Dice</b>	7	Tradition	17
Your Total	7	Tradition	18
Your Effect Die	7	Convention	18
Opposition	7	Craft	18
Success	7	Craft	19
<b>The ST</b>	7	Paradigm	19
Sessions, Scenes, & Beats	7	Practice	19
Action Order	7	Instrument	20
Stepping Up & Stepping Down	7		
Doubling Dice	8	<b>Attributes</b>	<b>21</b>
Session Zero and Safety Tools	8	<b>Using Attributes</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Conflict Resolution</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>Rating Attributes</b>	<b>21</b>
Tests	8	<b>Attribute List</b>	<b>21</b>
Effect Dice	8	Mental Attributes	21
Heroic Success	8	Intelligence	21
Comparing Effect Dice	8	Wits	21
Plot Points	8	Resolve	21
Hitches	9	Physical Attributes	21
SFX	9	Strength	21
Peril	9	Dexterity	21
Spending Peril Dice	9	Stamina	21
Contest	10	Social Attributes	21
Engaging In A Contest	10	Presence	21
About Giving In	10	Manipulation	21
Interfering In A Contest	10	Composure	21
Group Contest	11		
Challenge	11	<b>Skills</b>	<b>22</b>
Challenge Pool	11	<b>Using Skills</b>	<b>22</b>
Peril & Challenge	11	<b>Rating Skills</b>	<b>22</b>
Taking Turns In A Challenge	11	<b>Specialties</b>	<b>22</b>
Challenge Outcomes	11	<b>Skill List</b>	<b>22</b>
Example Of Play: Test	12	Mental Skills	22
<b>Storyteller Characters</b>	<b>13</b>	Academics	22
<b>Extra</b>	<b>13</b>	Awareness	22
Creating An Extra	13	Computer	22
Using An Extra	13	Crafts	22
<b>Driven STC</b>	<b>13</b>	Esoterica	23
Drives	13	Investigation	23
Making A Driven STC	14	Medicine	23
Name (People) / Other Names	14	Occult	23
Example Driven STCs	14	Politics	23
Extraordinary Citisen	14	Science	23
		Scientific Specialties	23
<b>Distinctions</b>	<b>15</b>	Physical	24
Personality & Sleeper Life	15	Athletics	24
		Brawl	24

Drive	24	▲ Initiate	34
Firearms	25	■ Apprentice	34
Larceny	25	◆ Disciple	34
Stealth	25	● Adept	34
Survival	25	● Master	35
Weaponry	25		
Social	25	Prime	35
Animal Ken	25	▲ Initiate	35
Empathy	25	■ Apprentice	35
Expression	25	◆ Disciple	35
Intimidation	25	● Adept	36
Persuasion	25	● Master	36
Socialize	25		
Streetwise	25	Spirit	36
Subterfuge	25	▲ Initiate	36
<b>Optional Rule: Roles</b>	<b>26</b>	■ Apprentice	36
Roles And Specialties	26	◆ Disciple	37
Roles At Character Creation	26	● Adept	37
● Master			
<b>True Magick</b>	<b>27</b>	Time	37
<b>Using True Magick</b>	<b>27</b>	▲ Initiate	38
Affinity Sphere	27	■ Apprentice	38
Conjunctional Effects	27	◆ Disciple	38
<b>The Spheres</b>	<b>27</b>	● Adept	38
Rating Spheres	27	● Master	38
Sphere Talents	27		
Correspondence	28	Data (Correspondence)	38
▲ Initiate	28	▲ Initiate	39
■ Apprentice	28	■ Apprentice	39
◆ Disciple	28	◆ Disciple	39
● Adept	28	● Adept	39
● Master	28	● Master	40
Entropy	29		
▲ Initiate	29	Dimensional Science (Spirit)	40
■ Apprentice	29	▲ Initiate	40
◆ Disciple	29	■ Apprentice	40
● Adept	29	◆ Disciple	41
● Master	29	● Adept	41
Forces	29	● Master	41
▲ Initiate	30		
■ Apprentice	30	Primal Utility (Prime)	41
◆ Disciple	30	▲ Initiate	42
● Adept	30	■ Apprentice	42
● Master	30	◆ Disciple	42
Life	30	● Adept	42
▲ Initiate	30	● Master	42
■ Apprentice	31		
◆ Disciple	31	<b>Assets</b>	<b>43</b>
● Adept	31	<b>Using assets</b>	<b>43</b>
● Master	31	<b>Creating Assets</b>	<b>43</b>
Matter	31	Clues As Assets	43
▲ Initiate	32		
■ Apprentice	32	<b>Gear</b>	<b>43</b>
◆ Disciple	32	Gear SFX List	44
● Adept	32	General Gear SFX	44
● Master	32	Armor SFX	44
Mind	32	Clobbering SFX	45
	33	Combat Gear SFX	45
	33	Crafting SFX	45
	33	Dual Wield SFX	45
	33	Enchanted Weapon SFX	45
	33	Firearm SFX	46
	34	Mechanical SFX	46

Mobility SFX	46	<b>Character Advancement</b>	<b>60</b>
Sensor SFX	47	<b>Session Milestones</b>	<b>60</b>
Sharp SFX	47	<b>Unlockables</b>	<b>60</b>
Specialty Weapon SFX	47	Spend 1 XP to:	60
Stabby SFX	47	Spend 5 XP to:	60
Finding Gear	48	Spend 10 XP to:	60
Forging Gear	48	Spend 15 XP to:	60
Financing Gear	49	Spend 20 XP to:	60
The Financing Roll	49	Spend 25 XP to:	60
Stealing Gear	49	Spend 30 XP to:	60
Preparing For The Heist	49		
The Final Heist Roll	50		
Limitations On Stolen Gear	50		
<b>Signature Assets</b>	<b>50</b>		
Using Signature Assets	51		
Rating Signature Assets	51		
Signature Assets And SFX	51		
Sharing Signature Assets	51		
Dropping Signature Assets	51		
<b>Quintessence</b>	<b>52</b>		
Quintessence Pool	52		
<b>Paradox</b>	<b>53</b>		
Paradox Pool	53		
Optional Rule: Harsh Paradox	53		
<b>Talents</b>	<b>54</b>		
<b>Sample Talents</b>	<b>54</b>		
Magick Talents (Supernatural Talents)	55		
Sphere Talents	55		
<b>Consequences</b>	<b>57</b>		
<b>Complications</b>	<b>57</b>		
Creating Complications	57		
Worsening Complications	57		
Using Complications	57		
▼ Complication	57		
<b>Stress</b>	<b>57</b>		
Inflicting Stress	57		
Stressed Out	57		
Using Stress	58		
Recovering Stress	58		
<b>Trauma</b>	<b>58</b>		
<b>Character Creation</b>	<b>59</b>		
Step 0: Get a character sheet	59		
Step 1: Choose Distinctions	59		
Step 2: Assign Attributes	59		
Step 3: Assign Skills	59		
Step 4: Spheres	59		
Step 5: Assign Specialties, Signature Assets, and additional Powers	59		
Step 6: Assign SFX and Quintessence Pool	59		

# How It Works

---

In a tabletop roleplaying game, each player takes on the role of one or more characters. The characters adventure through an imaginary world (which can range from the fantastical to the mundane), and the players use the game's rules to determine the results of their characters' actions. In Cortex, everybody contributes to the story, but at some point you break out dice, contributing just enough randomness so no one knows what will happen until events unfold during play.

## Example characters

Throughout the book there will be examples of play included, those examples feature the same players, ST, and characters for consistency. They are:

**Rhinemann (he/him)**: A Storyteller.

**Lydia (she/her)**: Fashionista Hermetic mage with small stature and large personality.

**Aurelius (he/him)**: Studious Hermetic wizard balancing brilliance and madness and Lydia's grandson.

**Sebastian Armrock (he/him)**: An anxious Etherite Scientist, making machinery that works on dubious scientific theories, an old friend of Lydia's.

# Game Rules

The following chapter discusses the main chunk of game rules.

## Traits & Dice

Each character has a few different collections of traits, called trait sets. Each trait in a set is rated with a die size:

4, 6, 8, 10, or 12. Generally, larger die sizes make a trait more effective, so 6 is better than 4. Examples of trait sets used in Mage are attributes (Physical, Mental, and Social groups), skills (Physical, Mental, and Social groups), Spheres and signature assets (items or other factors that provide an advantage, such as Hidden Knife or Magnifying Glass). One example trait set for a character might be the attributes Intelligence 8, Wits 8, Resolve 8, Strength 6, Dexterity 6, Stamina 6, Presence 6, Manipulation 6, and Composure 6.

When you want your character to do something, if there's nothing getting in your way, you just do it. If there is opposition (such as an opponent, a difficult environment, or a time limit), you roll the dice for certain traits to figure out if you succeed or fail.

## Your Total

After rolling, you add two of the die results together for your total. (So if my highest rolls were a 7 on a 6 and a 3 on a 5, I'd probably want to add those two together for a total of 10.)

## Your Effect Die

After choosing die results for your total, you pick one of the other dice you rolled to be your effect die. This choice doesn't affect whether you succeed or fail. It's kind of like how a die for damage in the most popular fantasy RPGs is separate from your attack roll to hit.

## Opposition

When you roll, another player (often the Storyteller, or ST) builds their own dice pool and rolls it. You compare your roll's total to theirs, and the higher roll succeeds. The player who rolls first sets the bar for how difficult the opposition's roll should be, so that player wins ties.

## Success

If you win, the size of your effect die (not the number it rolled) determines how big of an effect your success had. You might say, "My effect die is 8."

For example, if you roll to hit someone with a weapon, your total determines whether you hit (like comparing an attack

roll to armor class in traditional fantasy RPGs), and your effect die would be how much damage you inflict. Your total tells you whether the story goes your way; your effect die tells you how far it goes.

## The ST

As in many tabletop role-playing games, one player takes on the role of the *Game Moderator*, or GM, called a Storyteller (ST) in Mage, rather than playing their own character. The ST frames scenes, portrays supporting characters (called STCs, or *Storyteller Characters*), controls the opposition (including rolling dice), and ends scenes.

The characters portrayed by everybody else are called *player characters*, or PCs.

## Sessions, Scenes, & Beats

Games are played in *sessions*. A session is just however long you and your group gather to play at a time, whether in-person or online.

Each session is divided into units of story and action called *scenes*, just like a play, film, or TV show.

Player actions take place in units of time called *beats*. A beat is simply how long it takes to complete one action or one piece of a larger action (including both the die roll to do something and the roll opposing it).

## Action Order

Normally, a player can just roll a test or describe their character's actions whenever it makes sense, as part of the game's ongoing conversation. When it's helpful to organize things a bit more, the ST can move things into *action order*.

When the game is in action order, the scene splits into *rounds*. A round is nothing more or less than the amount of time it takes for every participant in a scene to take one beat's worth of action (often called a *turn*).

Usually, the ST chooses one player to go first. After a player takes a beat, they choose who goes next. The ST and any STCs active in the scene get to take their own beats as well. Once everyone has taken a beat to do what they want to do, the round ends. Whoever goes last in a round chooses who goes first in the next round, which can be themself!

## Stepping Up & Stepping Down

The rules sometimes tell you to *step up* a die, changing it from a die of one size to one of the next larger size, (such as changing 4 to 6 or 8 to 10) or to *step down* a die (the reverse, such as 12 to 10).

When you step up a **12** in your dice pool, you keep the **12**, but add an extra **6** to your pool as well.

When you step down a **4** in your pool, you remove that die entirely.

## Doubling Dice

Sometimes, the rules tell you to *double* a die in your pool. When you double a die, you add another die of the same size to the pool before you roll.

### Session Zero and Safety Tools

Playing a tabletop RPG can become a bad experience if everyone involved isn't on the same page about the topics and themes they'll be exploring in play. The best way to align those expectations is usually having a formal process, making sure everyone has a chance to be heard and set appropriate boundaries. That process can be a part of a "Session Zero", a conversation before actual play begins that can also provide a chance to make characters together, discuss the game, build anticipation, and decide what kind of content should or shouldn't be a part of the game.

You should also use appropriate safety tools, such as [Lines and Veils](#), the X-Card by John Stavropoulos or Script Change by Beau Jágr Sheldon. Script Change is especially recommended, because the framework it provides can improve the experience of playing a tabletop RPG even when content concerns aren't an issue. What's important is choosing the tools that work for you and your group.

## Conflict Resolution

When you want your character to do something, if there's nothing getting in your way, you just do it. If there is opposition (such as an opponent, a difficult environment, or a time limit), you roll the dice with certain traits to figure out if you succeed or fail.

### Tests

The most basic kind of die roll is a *test*. You say you want to do something, and if it requires a roll, but it isn't directly against another significant character (like another PC), the ST just grabs some dice and rolls.

Usually the ST sets a *difficulty*, choosing two dice depending on how hard they think the roll should be:

<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	Very easy
<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	Easy
<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	Challenging
<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	Hard
<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	Very hard

For a test, the ST rolls first, their total sets the difficulty, and then you roll. If your total is higher than the difficulty total, you succeed; if it is equal or lower, you fail.

### Effect Dice

When you succeed on a roll, your effect die usually becomes an *asset* (a new temporary trait that benefits you) or a *complication* (a new temporary trait that makes things harder for your opposition).

Most rolls create some kind of complication or asset, but there are a couple other things you can do.

You might simply roll to change your situation, such as by opening a locked door. In this case, your effect die just measures your degree of success: a **4** might be getting the door open just a crack, while a **12** busts it wide open.

You might also roll to step down or end a complication; this is called *recovery*, and the rules for it are explained later.

### Heroic Success

When you succeed on a roll, if your total beats the opposing roll by 5 or more, you've scored a *heroic success*. This means that you not only achieve what you set out to do, but surpass your own expectations in doing so. For every 5 by which you beat the opposing roll, your effect die steps up by one size.

### Comparing Effect Dice

Even when you fail a roll against someone, your effect die still matters. If your roll fails, but your effect die is larger than the opposition's effect die, the opposition's effect die steps down.

### Plot Points

This game uses a special currency called *plot points* (abbreviated **PP**), which you can spend to affect the story. You'll likely earn and spend plot points all the time. Every player gets at least one **PP** at the start of each session.

The most important uses of plot points include:

- You can spend a **PP** to instantly create a **6** asset.

- When you add up die results for your total, you can spend one **PP** to add in the result from one additional die, increasing your total.
- You can spend a **PP** to make an asset useful to a whole group of people instead of just one.
- When an asset would go away at the end of a scene or session, you can spend a **PP** to keep it, starting the next scene or session with the asset still in play.

Unless specified otherwise, you can spend plot points at any time, even when it isn't your beat or turn.

Any unspent plot points are lost at the end of a session, so it's best not to hoard them.

## Hitches

When you roll 1 on a die, you can't count that die towards your total or use it for your effect die.

A die that rolls a 1 is called a *hitch*. When you roll a hitch, the ST can grant you a plot point to give you a **6** complication (which may step up a complication you already have).

When the ST rolls a hitch, it's called an *opportunity*. When the ST rolls an opportunity, you can spend a **PP** to step up an existing asset or step down a complication.

## SFX

Your character gains SFX, special effects that give you added influence over the story. These reflect your character's extraordinary abilities or their powerful role in the narrative. Many SFX require you to spend plot points to activate them. Other SFX allow you to impose a disadvantage on your character in order to earn **PP** or another reward. For example, the *Hinder* SFX lets you earn a **PP** by rolling a smaller die.

Using an SFX is always a choice; you are never compelled to activate your character's SFX, unless that SFX is a *Limit*. A Limit is an SFX which can be activated by the ST.

## Peril

The Peril serves as a combination of ambient threat level, ST resource, and pacing mechanic.

At the beginning of each session, the ST starts with Peril of at least **6**. If the session is of global or cosmic scale, the pool may start with 3 or 4 dice. If the session is a major breakpoint in a chronicle, the size of these starting dice might be **8** or even **10**.

The Peril sets difficulty dice for all tests. To set the difficulty, the ST picks up some or all the dice in the Peril pool and rolls them, taking two of the dice results and adding them together, as normal. The ST can spend a die not used in the

total and add its result to the total; this spent die is removed from Peril after resolving the outcome. The remaining dice, including the two that were added together for the total, remain in Peril.

The ST may spend a die from Peril to add it to a STC's dice pool, before the dice pool is rolled. This die is removed from Peril and doesn't go back in once the STC's roll is resolved. Peril dice may also be spent like **PP**, where a **6** from Peril is equivalent to a single **PP**. This usually happens when activating a STC SFX. If Peril only has larger dice in it, the next highest die must be spent in place of the **6**.

Peril increases when the ST activates hitches rolled by players. The ST adds a die of the same size as the one that rolled the hitch to Peril. Alternatively, the ST can use a smaller die to step up an equal or larger existing die in Peril by one step.

## Spending Peril Dice

In addition to spending a Peril die for anything a **PP** could normally accomplish, the ST can spend a die to do a variety of special actions. These vary depending on the game.

Some of the most common uses are:

**Creating a complication, asset, or scene distinction:** spend a die from Peril and create a Complication or Asset attached to the scene equal in size to the die spent. Or, spend at least a **8** and add a distinction to the scene that may be used by players and STCs alike.

**Interrupting the action order:** Spend a die from Peril equal to or greater in size than the largest combat or senses-related trait of the PC whose turn is up next. One of the ST's own STCs gets to go instead, and the ST then picks who goes afterward (not necessarily the player who was interrupted).

**Adding a new extra STC:** Spend a die from Peril and create an extra with a single trait rated at the size of the Peril die spent.

**Introducing a new minor STC or major STC:** If a STC who isn't present in the scene could conceivably show up, spend a die from Peril equal to that STC's highest rated trait and drop them into the scene, ready to act when the action order gets to them (which could be right away, if the ST is the one deciding who goes next).

**Splitting the group:** spend a **10** or a **12** from Peril and some environmental or narrative event takes place that divides the group into two (minimum one PC in each new group). The PCs have to spend time reuniting their group, which may lead to more problems.

**Ending the scene immediately:** spend **12** **12** from Peril and cut the scene off right there before it's resolved, with the ST deciding how it ends. Usually, the scenes should play out until there's a reasonable ending point, but this way

the ST can just smash cut to a new scene with plot threads dangling. Or stage an auto-win by the enemies.

## Contest

Playing Mage you may sometimes find yourself facing an important STC or even another player for something important. In those cases a simple test isn't enough, that's where contests come in.

Examples of contests include:

- Brawling a shapeshifting witch.
- Engaging in Certamen with a Tradition mage.
- Debating an Etherite on the properties of an arcade contraption.

A contest is a series of dice rolls between opponents, each trying to beat the previous roll until one side chooses not to roll and gives in, or fails to beat the previous roll and takes a complication or is taken out.

When a PC gets into a conflict over something they want, a contest determines if any other character can intervene, thwart, or oppose the PC. Contests are almost always initiated by a player, who picks up dice and essentially says, "I'm doing this. Who's stopping me?"

If no one opposes the PC, there's no need to roll dice – the contest's outcome is determined as if the player succeeded. If an effect die is required, use the largest die in the initiating player's dice pool.

### Engaging In A Contest

A PC initiates a contest when they state they want to do something, and another character (either another PC, or a STC) wants to stop them. The player who initiated the contest picks up the dice and rolls first, adding together two results for a total. If the opposing player decides against engaging in the contest after seeing the difficulty, the initiating character automatically succeeds in the contest. Otherwise, the opposing player assembles a dice pool and tries to beat the difficulty the initiating character set.

If the opposing character doesn't beat the initial difficulty, the initiating character wins the contest. If the opposing character beats the initial difficulty, the ball's back in the initiating character's court.

They can choose to give in, in which case they:

- define the failure on their own terms
- cannot immediately initiate another contest with the opponent, and
- get a **PP**

Otherwise, the opposition's total becomes the new difficulty, and the initiating character must roll again to try to beat it. Failing to beat the opposition means your opponent wins, giving them the opportunity to define how they stopped you.

Contests go back and forth until one side gives in or fails to beat the difficulty. The winner can push the story forward with an advantage by giving the opposition a complication (or stress) using the effect die from their winning result. The opposing character, or another character in the scene, might still want to stop the initiating character, but the stakes have been changed in a meaningful way.

### About Giving In

Giving in during a contest may seem counterintuitive. After all, a player or the ST is choosing to lose and give their opponent what they want. However, they get a **PP** when they do this and get to describe the terms of the loss. It's possible the opponent's goal is to knock the character out, or trap them, or seize them, or worse. A player should never be forced to hand over control of their character as a result of giving in. That's what makes it different from being taken out or being given complications (or stress) – you have a say in how that outcome plays out.

### Interfering In A Contest

If a PC wants to get involved in a contest between two other characters, they can attempt to interfere—but it costs a **PP** and comes with a bit of risk. Usually this means the PC wants something neither of the other two characters wants, or maybe the same thing as one of them but on their own terms. After each side has rolled at least once, a player can spend a **PP** and describe how they're trying to get between the characters. The player rolls their dice and compares the total to the current difficulty in the contest.

If the PC doesn't beat the total, the characters ignore the interruption and, when the contest concludes, the winner gives the PC a complication (or stress) equal to their effect die for getting in the way. If the PC beats the total, they've stopped the contest in its tracks. No one loses, gives in, or takes any complications — yet.

If both sides are committed to continuing the contest, their players (or the ST if a STC is one of the contestants) each hand the interfering PC a **PP** and describe how they work around, over, or through them to continue their contest. Neither can give in until both have rolled again.

An interfering PC may elect to interfere again by spending another **PP**, but if either contestant rolls higher, they can inflict a complication (or stress) on the interloper equal to the contestant's own effect die—that means the interfering character may get two complications if they don't roll high enough.

## Group Contest

Contests can be used as a way to represent all-out scrambles for some kind of object, goal, or prize. One player initiates the contest, then any other character that wants to be involved in the contest can join in, one at a time as determined by the ST. The highest roller is the successful character. After the first roll to enter the contest, any character that chooses to stay in the contest takes a complication (or stress) if they aren't the winner. They may otherwise give in as normal.

If a PC loses in such a contest, the player should describe how things went badly for them. The winner chooses their effect die and gives it to all of the other contestants as a complication (or stress), but they can decide to make it a different type for each character if they like, though it still uses the same effect die to determine the size of the die.

## Challenge

Challenges represent problems that are many-faceted, presenting different, smaller issues to tackle before being fully resolved, or problems that are big or take a lot of time, therefore can't be solved with a test.

Challenges take place over several rounds. The challenge gets to act on its own turn and can either get worse or create problems for the PCs in response.

If there's no time-sensitive element to the challenge, success becomes a matter of how long it takes the players to overcome the challenge without getting taken out of the scene. The ST may declare that something happens after a certain number of rounds; if this happens, the challenge may be a failure.

## Challenge Pool

A challenge pool is a dice pool that represents the difficulty and duration of a challenge; it's rolled by the ST to set the difficulty for each PC's turn, and for the ST to roll against the PCs on the challenge pool's turn. To create a challenge pool, the ST chooses base difficulty dice the same way as they would in a test:

4	4	Very easy
6	6	Easy
8	8	Challenging
10	10	Hard
12	12	Very hard

Then, they add up to 3 additional dice of the same die rating depending on how long the challenge should take to overcome:

+1 die	Short
+2 dice	Medium
+3 dice	Long

## Peril & Challenge

You can use both challenges and Peril, spending Peril dice directly to create a new challenge. Dice spent in this manner go from Peril to the challenge pool, thus reducing the overall Peril of the session but creating specific, localized situations the players can directly affect.

## Taking Turns In A Challenge

Challenges use handoff initiative. The ST decides which PC goes first, but once a PC has had their turn, that player chooses which remaining PC goes next. Each player gets one turn per round. On a PC's turn, the ST rolls the challenge pool to set the difficulty, just like in a test.

Once every PC has had a turn, the challenge pool acts.

### The ST can choose to either:

- Target a player with a negative effect, or
- Strengthen the challenge pool by stepping up one of its dice or adding a 6
- Spend challenge pool dice in the same way as Peril

Once the ST has had their turn, it's back to the players. The player who went last in the previous round gets to choose who goes first, including nominating themselves.

## Challenge Outcomes

If a PC beats the challenge, they make progress, and compare their effect die to one of the dice in the challenge pool. If it's bigger, the challenge die is removed from the challenge pool. If it's equal to or smaller, the challenge die is stepped down by one step. If a challenge die would be reduced below 4, it's taken out of the pool.

If the PC doesn't beat the challenge, they fail to progress the challenge, and take stress (or a complication) of the ST's choice equal to the challenge pool's effect die.

Once the challenge pool is reduced to zero dice, the challenge is over, and the PCs have won. Alternatively, the ST may declare that something happens after a certain number of rounds. If this happens, the challenge may be a failure if players don't overcome the challenge in time.

## Example Of Play: Test

Lydia is going home late evening after shopping for fabric. Bob, the ST, tells Alice, Lydia's player, that a man is following her. Alice decides that Lydia doesn't want to tip off the stalker, but will read his aura. Bob thinks it's worth a test, and asks Alice to think about her dice pool, and grabs the dice from Peril, which is currently **10 10** and a **8**, and rolls 6,9 and 4, picking the best total of 10, and effect die of **8**.

Meanwhile, Alice has selected her dice, taking Spider in the Web (her distinction) **8**, Perception **8**, Awareness **6**, and Ars Potentiae (Prime) **6**, to get a reading of strange man's aura. She describes Lydia grabbing an amulet on her neck that looks like a burning spider, feeling its warmth and whispering a spell almost silently. Since Alice is attempting perception magick Lydia's Prime Perception SFX steps up Prime to a **8**.

Alice rolls **8 8 8** and **6** for 4, 3, 2 and 2, and picks the first two for a total of 7 and an effect of **6**. Her total is insufficient to beat Bob's roll, so Lydia fails to get a read on the man. Bob compares Alice's effect die to his, and since her die isn't greater the inflicted stress won't be shut down. Bob describes a street light flickering and Lydia losing sight of the man, unsure if he was ever even there, making Lydia **8** Rattled.

# Storyteller Characters

STCs are the characters that the ST incorporates into the session and gets to roleplay, for better or worse. Most sessions have at least one major character, who deserves a full-fledged character file, similar to those of the PCs. Sometimes, however, the STC just needs a couple of traits because the true opposition for the PCs is the STC's lieutenant or majordomo. In that case, they're the ones whose files are more detailed.

STCs can reappear session after session, plaguing the PCs at every turn. Even if you used the character's full stats in a previous session, you're under no obligation to re-use the same stats in another session. STCs don't follow the same rules as the players when it comes to character files or XP and advancement.

STCs are split into two specific types, listed here for easy reference. They will be explained further.

**Extras:** Unnamed background characters or support characters with only one trait.

**Driven STC:** An STC of varying importance and power that changes based on how the PCs interact with them.

## Extra

Extras are often background characters or support characters with only one trait. They can be contacts that provide information or services, or just flunkies at a character's beck and call. Extras can even include a group of people, such as a squad of soldiers, who mostly act as one character in the story.

### Creating An Extra

Extras need only a single die with a flavorful trait attached to them. That trait does not need to be equivalent to the PCs. Something as simple as Hired Assassin **10** or Cut-Rate Thief **6** works just fine. If you like, add another trait during play as things progress; you can upgrade any extra to a driven STC this way. If the extra is part of a character file, it might already have a die rating, so you can use that in a pinch.

### Using An Extra

Extras come into play as an additional die the ST includes in an opposition dice pool for a test. They can also gang up with a driven STC by adding their die to a STC's dice pool in a contest.

Extras acting as allies to the PCs might contribute their die to a PC as an asset, but doing so could put the extra at risk of taking a complication or being taken out.

Extras can be taken out by complications or stress higher than their base trait die.

## Driven STC

Driven STCs differ in power and their significance, but any driven STC is a more significant characters that interact with players more and can influence the story on their own.

### Drives

Each driven STC has a pair of drive traits, representing major personality traits that motivate the creature. When a drive fuels its actions, the STC can include that drive in its roll, but it can't include more than one drive in the same pool.

A drive consists of a short statement, such as "Liberate the Tribe", "Earn Others' Respect for My Achievements.", or "Defend Our Lair." For the most variety, utility, and dramatic interest, each pair of drives is designed so that the two motivations conflict with each other as much as possible. Drives are a useful trait to assign to any STC, especially if that STC is going to be a part of the game beyond a single scene.

A creature's interactions with the PCs can change the size of its drives, assuming the creature sticks around after its initial interaction with the PCs.

Drives Evolve. After the PCs engage with a creature or other GMC that has drives, at the end of the scene (or the end of session, depending on how quickly the GM wants the situation to evolve), the GM can step up one drive (to a maximum of **12**), but must also step one drive down (to a minimum of **4**). If a PC won a conflict against that creature, the GM can ask them to decide which drive would step up. Either way, the choice of which drives step up or down should reflect the events that took place.

These changes to drive die ratings are permanent until another effect alters them. Once a drive steps up to **12**, that creature emerges as a fully-realized major enemy, rival, or ally of the PCs, deeply motivated to pursue that drive at all costs.

While a creature has a **12** drive, the GM can step that drive back down to **10** at any time to end a scene in way that favors the creature. This could allow a creature to make an impossible escape, rescue an important character, defeat or capture a number of enemies, achieve a startling victory, attain a new level of power or influence, assume their final form, split up a group, conquer or destroy a crucial location, etc. However, it can't take out a PC or change the outcome of a previous conflict.

## Making A Driven STC

Every driven STC follows this pattern:

### Name (People) / Other Names

Challenge pool:

Drive: #1

Drive: #2

Traits

**SFX:** Descriptive and mechanical text

Challenge pool is the same pool that is explained in Game Rules, set by the same rules.

## Example Driven STCs

A storyteller can come up with a virtually infinite number of STCs, but the following section will provide examples of some STCs for inspiration.

Many more examples can be seen in Lynn Jones' [Manual of Monsters, Minions & Mountebanks](#)

### Extraordinary Citizen

Challenge pool: ♦ ♦

Drive: Satisfy Demands of Management ♦

Drive: Advance My Rank ♦

Any form of psychokinesis ♦

Intelligence ♦

# Distinctions

Who are you and where do you come from? What do others remember about you? How are you described to others in the tales told of your adventures? You are the grand sum of your distinctions. Every PC starts with three distinctions rated at  $\spadesuit$ . You always include one of your distinctions in your dice pool. Which one you choose may have a part to play in the outcome of your test, contest, or challenge.

Each distinction belongs to one of three groups:

- Your personality & life before Awakening
- The Awakened group you are affiliated with and your position in it
- Your focus through which you perform magick

Each of your distinctions benefits from the Hinder SFX by default, and may have a number of SFX locked as well.

## Personality & Sleeper Life

Who were you before you Awakened, and who are you now, having realised the inner workings of reality? Your personality & sleeper life distinction describes your life before Awakening and your main character trait or quirk that defines you as a person. Most PCs will have their vocation and some adjective or a catchphrase as a part of this distinction.

## Awakened Affiliation

Who are your people in the Awakened world? After you Awakened you changed, a truth of the world opened up to you, you now belong to a group of other Awakened or are fending for your own. Awakened affiliation distinction represents your position in the awakened world, your Tradition, Convention, Craft, as well as other partnerships in the supernatural world are described here, as well as your standing in those contexts.

## Focus

How do you do magick? There's more to magick than just Awakening and having the right Spheres. Every mage has a unique set of beliefs - their paradigm, ways to employ their magick - practice, and tools through which they do so - instruments, together they form your focus. Focus distinction explains how your character does magick.

## Creating Distinctions

Some players may have trouble creating distinctions on their own. For help in building distinctions, this section presents three tables and the guidelines for using them. The three tables are the Descriptor Table, the Noun Table, and the Catchphrase Table. You can use the tables however you want, whether as lists to pick from or as random tables you pull from by rolling dice, but there are suggested guidelines for using them below.

**To Make Your Personality & Sleeper Life Distinction,** choose or roll a descriptor from the Descriptor Table, and then add it to a noun. The noun can be one summarizing your character's ancestry, culture, career, heritage, or background (such as Swordsman, Parisian, Ranger, or Clone), or one you choose or roll from the Noun Table. Together, the descriptor and noun form your personality & sleeper life distinction. Alternatively roll from a

**To Make Your Awakened Affiliation Distinction,** choose or roll a group from the Tradition, Convention or Craft Table, and then add a descriptor to it. The descriptor can be one defining a, pursuit, quirk, reputation, or identity (such as Relentless, Treasure-Hunting, Agoraphobic, Monstrous, Bionic, or Egyptian), or one you choose or roll from the Descriptor Table. Together, the descriptor and noun form your second distinction.

**To Make Your Focus Distinction,** choose or roll a paradigm from the Paradigm Table and then add one or two practices and a number of instruments. Practice and instruments may be created by the player or rolled from respective tables. Practice makes your focus distinction. You are encouraged to add a more detailed description, including the instruments and the paradigm used for this distinction.

**To Use the Descriptors Table,** choose any descriptor on the table, or you can roll randomly. If you roll, first roll a  $\clubsuit$  and find the row for the resulting number. Then roll a  $\spadesuit$ , and find the column for that result. Your random descriptor is where the row meets the column.

**To Use the Nouns Table,** choose any noun on the table, or you can roll randomly. If you roll, first roll a  $\clubsuit$  and find the row for the resulting number. Then roll a  $\spadesuit$ , and find the column for that result. Your random noun is where the row meets the column.

**To Use the Catchphrases Table,** choose any catchphrase on the table, or you can roll randomly. If you roll, first roll a  $\spadesuit$  and find the row for the resulting number. Then roll a  $\spadesuit$ , and find the column for that result. Your random catchphrase is where the row meets the column.

**To Use the Tradition table**, choose any Tradition on the table, or you can roll randomly. If you roll, roll a 10 and find the row for the resulting number. Your random Tradition is on that row.

**To Use the Convention table**, choose any Convention on the table, or you can roll randomly. If you roll, roll a 6 and find the row for the resulting number. Your random Convention is on that row.

**To Use the Craft table**, choose any Craft on the table, or you can roll randomly. If you roll, roll a 12 and find the row for the resulting number. Your random Craft is on that row.

**To use Paradigm Table**, choose any paradigm on the table, or you can roll randomly. If you roll, first roll a 6 and find the row for the resulting number. Then roll a 4, and find the column for that result. Your random paradigm is where the row meets the column.

**To use Practice Table**, choose any practice on the table, or you can roll randomly. If you roll, first roll a 6 and find the row for the resulting number. Then roll a 4, and find the column for that result. Your random practice is where the row meets the column.

**To use Instrument Table**, choose any seven Instrument on the table, or you can roll randomly. If you roll, first roll a 10 and find the row for the resulting number. Then roll a 6, and find the column for that result. Your random instrument is where the row meets the column, repeat that 7 times to get your full instrument list.

## Descriptor

	1	2	3	4
1	Affable	Arrogant	Blunt	Bookish
2	Brooding	Charming	Conflicted	Creative
3	Dashing	Defiant	Dutiful	Earnest
4	Eccentric	Faithful	Fearless	Genius
5	Gentle	Grim	Icy	Insecure
6	Logical	Lonely	Loyal	Maverick
7	Misfit	Naïve	Nurturing	Optimist
8	Pacifist	Passionate	Pessimist	Quiet
9	Quirky	Reckless	Rude	Ruthless
10	Sarcastic	Shady	Stubborn	Tenacious
11	Thoughtful	Timid	Vengeful	Veteran
12	Weird	Wise	Young	Zealous

## Noun

	1	2	3	4
1	Artist	Assassin	Athlete	Believer
2	Bodyguard	Comrade	Crafter	Criminal
3	Deceiver	Detective	Diplomat	Expatriate
4	Expert	Extrovert	Freak	Fugitive
5	Gambler	Guard	Heir	Historian
6	Hunter	Imposter	Introvert	Inventor
7	Kid	Leader	Loner	Mediator
8	Mercenary	Nurse	Occultist	Outsider
9	Parent	Performer	Physician	Rebel
10	Refugee	Romantic	Smuggler	Spy
11	Student	Teacher	Thief	Traveler
12	Vagabond	Vigilante	Visionary	Warrior

## Catchphrase

	1	2	3	4
1	Act first, ask questions later.	Actually, that's a funny story...	Come at me!	Couldn't stop now if I tried.
2	I have a cunning plan.	I play to win.	I saw this coming.	I'm the best there ever was.
3	It's almost too easy...	I've seen this before.	Lead from the front.	Never give up.
4	Never tell me the odds.	No one's getting paid enough for this	Nobody asked for that.	Sacrifices must be made.
5	Someone had to do it.	Something doesn't feel right	Stop, or be stopped.	Perhaps there's a simpler way...
6	There's always a way.	Things can always get worse.	This is our destiny.	Time to rage!
7	Victory comes at price.	We didn't get dressed up for nothing.	We don't have time for this.	We have unfinished business.
8	Well, isn't this ironic?	We're better than this.	We've got this.	You haven't thought this through.

## Tradition

1	Akashayana/Akashic Brotherhood - Masters of mind, body, and spirit through the Arts of personal discipline. Affinity Spheres: Mind or Life
2	Celestial Chorus - Sacred singers who give a human Voice to the Divine Song. Affinity Spheres: Prime, Forces, or Spirit
3	Cult of Ecstasy/Sahajiya - Visionary seers who transcend limitations through sacred experience. Affinity Spheres: Time, Life, or Mind
4	Dreamspeakers/Kha'vadi - Preservers and protectors of both the Spirit Ways and the Earthly cultures that have been looted, abandoned, and oppressed. Affinity Spheres: Spirit, Force, Life, or Matter
5	Euthanatoi/Chakravanti - Disciples of mortality who purge corruption and bring merciful release from suffering. Affinity Spheres: Entropy, Life, or Spirit
6	Order of Hermes - Rigorous masters of High Magick and the Elemental Arts. Affinity Spheres: Forces
7	Society of Ether/Sons of Ether - Graceful saviors of scientific potential. Affinity Spheres: Matter, Forces, or Prime
8	Verbena - Primal devotees of rough Nature and mystic blood. Affinity Spheres: Life or Forces

## Tradition

- 9 Virtual Adepts – Reality-hackers devoted to rebooting their world.  
Affinity Spheres: Correspondence/ Data or Forces
- 10 Reroll

## Convention

- 1 Iteration X – Perfectors of the human machine.  
Affinity Spheres: Forces, Matter, or Time
- 2 New World Order – Custodians of social order and global stability.  
Affinity Spheres: Mind or Correspondence/ Data
- 3 Progenitors – Innovators dedicated to the potential of organic life.  
Affinity Spheres: Life or Prime
- 4 Syndicate – Masters of finance, status, and the power of wealth.  
Affinity Spheres: Entropy, Mind, or Primal Utility
- 5 Void Engineers – Explorers and protectors of extradimensional space.  
Affinity Spheres: Dimensional Science, Correspondence, or Forces
- 6 Reroll

## Craft

- 1 Ahl-i-Batin – Seers of Unity through Divine connection and subtle influence.  
Affinity Spheres: Correspondence or Mind (never Entropy)
- 2 Bata'a – Inheritors of voodoo, dedicated to restoring a broken world.  
Affinity Spheres: Life or Spirit
- 3 Children of Knowledge – Crowned Ones devoted to alchemical perfection.  
Affinity Sphere: Forces, Matter, Prime, or Entropy
- 4 Hollow Ones – Dark romantics laughing in the face of ruin.  
Affinity Sphere: Any
- 5 Kopa Loei – Defenders of Nature, the Old Gods, and their culture.  
Affinity Sphere: Any
- 6 Ngoma – African High Magi, sworn to restore what's been taken from their home and people.  
Affinity Spheres: Life, Mind, Prime, or Spirit
- 7 Orphans – Self-Awakened mages surviving in the shadows of other sects.  
Affinity Sphere: Any

## Craft

8 Sisters of Hippolyta – Guardians of the Sacred Feminine.

Affinity Spheres: Life or Mind

9 Taftâni – Middle Eastern mystics shaping the gifts of Allah and the Arts of man.

Affinity Spheres: Forces, Matter, Prime, or Spirit

10 Templar Knights – Bastions of chivalry in a corrupt age.

Affinity Spheres: Forces, Life, Mind, or Prime

11 Wu Lung – Preservers of heavenly wisdom, order, and nobility.

Affinity Sphere: Spirit, Forces, Matter, or Life

12 Reroll

## Paradigm

	1	2	3	4
1	A Mechanistic Cosmos	A World of Gods and Monsters	Aliens Make Us What We Are	All Power Comes from God(s)
2	All the World's a Stage	Ancient Wisdom is the Key	Bring Back the Golden Age!	Consciousness is the Only True Reality
3	Creationd's Divine and Alive	Divine Order and Earthly Chaos	Everything is Chaos	Everything is Data
4	Everything's an Illusion, Prison, or Mistake	It's All Good – Have Faith!	Might is Right	One-Way Trip to Oblivion
5	Tech Holds All Answers	Embrace the Threshold	Holographic Reality	Transcend Your Limits
6	Turning the Keys to Reality	We are Meant to be Wild	We are Not Men!	We're All God(s) in Disguise

## Practice

	1	2	3	4
1	Alchemy	Animalism	Art of Desire/Hypereconomics	Bardism
2	Chaos Magick	Craftwork	Crazy Wisdom	Cybernetics
3	Dominion	Elementalism	Faith	God-Bonding
4	Gutter Magick	High Ritual Magick	Hypertech	Maleficia
5	Martial Arts	Medicine-Work	Mediumship	Psionics
6	Reality Hacking	Shamanism	Voudoun	Weird Science
7	Witchcraft	Yoga	Reroll	Reroll

## Instrument

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Artwork	Blessings and curses	Blood and fluids	Body Modification	Bodywork	Bones and remains	Books and periodicals	Brain-computer interface
2	Brews and concoctions	Cannibalism	Cards and instruments of chance	Celestial alignments	Circles and designs	Computer gear	Crossroads and crossing-days	Cups and vessels
3	Cybernetic Implants	Dances and movement	Devices and machines	Drugs and poisons	Elements	Energy	Eye contact	Fashion
4	Food and drink	Formulae and math	Gadgets and inventions	Gems and stones	Genetic Manipulation	Group rites	Herbs and plants	Household tools
5	Internet Activity	Knots and ropes	Labs and gear	Languages	Management and HR	Mass media	Medical Procedures	Meditation
6	Money and wealth	Music	Nanotech	Numbers and numerology	Offerings and sacrifices	Ordeals and exertions	Prayers and invocations	Sacred iconography
7	Sex and sensuality	Social domination	Symbols	Thought-forms	Toys	Transgression	Tricks and illusions	True Names
8	Vehicles	Voice and vocalizations	Wands and staves	Weapons	Writings inscriptions and runes	Reroll	Reroll	Reroll

# Attributes

Attributes represent raw ability and essential traits every character possesses.

## Using Attributes

Attributes are the second PC's three primary trait sets, so they are to be used in every roll, as any action can fall into one of these areas: mental, physical and social, and a specific situation determines which exact attribute will be used.

Attributes serve as the second of the three Prime Sets used in every roll, rated from **4** to **12**.

The nine Attributes are split into three categories: Physical, Social, Mental.

## Rating Attributes

Attributes usually have a rating from **6** to **10**, although there are exceptions.

- 4 Poor:** Notably deficient in this area.
- 6 Typical:** An average degree of ability.
- 8 Excellent:** Above-average performance.
- 10 Remarkable:** Greatly above average.
- 12 Incredible:** Peak levels of ability.

## Attribute List

### Mental Attributes

Mental Attributes reflect your character's acuity, intellect, and strength of mind.

#### Intelligence

Raw knowledge, memory, and capacity for solving difficult problems. This may be book smarts, or a wealth of trivia.

#### Wits

Ability to think quickly and improvise solutions. It reflects your character's perception, and ability to pick up on details.

#### Resolve

Determination, patience, and sense of commitment. It allows your character to concentrate in the face of distraction and danger, or continue doing something in spite of insurmountable odds.

### Physical Attributes

Physical Attributes reflect your character's bodily fitness and acumen.

#### Strength

Muscular definition and capacity to deliver force. It affects many physical tasks, including most actions in a fight.

#### Dexterity

Speed, agility, and coordination. It provides balance, reactions, and aim.

#### Stamina

General health and sturdiness. It determines how much punishment your character's body can handle before it gives up.

### Social Attributes

Social Attributes reflect your character's ability to deal with others.

#### Presence

Assertiveness, gravitas, and raw appeal. It gives your character a strong bearing that changes moods and minds.

#### Manipulation

Ability to make others cooperate. It's how smoothly they speak, and how much people can read into their intentions.

#### Composure

Poise and grace under fire. It's their dignity, and ability to remain unfazed when harrowed.

# Skills

Skills represent natural talent, training, or experience of a character.

## Using Skills

Skills are the third PC's three primary trait sets, so they are to be used in almost every conceivable roll, and their usage is straightforward, flowing from the description of an action pretty obviously.

## Rating Skills

Every PC has at least a **4** in each skill, which represents being untrained. Proficiency and expertise are represented by ratings between **6** and **12**.

- **Untrained:** You have no idea what you're doing, and you're likely to create trouble when you try it, but who knows.
- **Competent:** Sufficient training to get by. You're comfortable doing this.
- **Expert:** Able to do this for a living. This is second nature to you.
- **Master:** One of the best in the field. Likely known to others who possess the skill.
- **Grandmaster:** One of the best in the world. Known even to those outside the field.

## Specialties

A specialty is a narrow area of concentration or focus. It provides a bonus **6** to any roll that falls into that narrow area. Specialties are attached to a skill the governs them, but can be used with a different skill if an appropriate narrative case can be made.

There is no set list of specialties, but the skill list that follows provides suggested specialties for every skill

## Skill List

Similarly to Attributes, Skills are divided into Mental, Physical, and Social categories.

## Mental Skills

### Academics

Higher education and knowledge of the arts and humanities. It covers language, history, law, economics, and related fields. Many magi develop aptitude in Academics to further their research into the Mysteries.

**Suggested Specialties:** Anthropology, Art History, English, History, Law, Literature, Religion, Research, Translation.

### Awareness

You've got uncanny perceptions. While alert folks spot everyday clues, your instincts cue in on the so-called supernatural side of life. Perhaps you've simply got that feeling about things – some people do, even if they're not Awakened as such. More likely, you've spent enough time around the magical world to sense its effects in your presence.

At lower levels, this Skill grants a nebulous perception of uncanny phenomena; higher ratings in the Trait reveal auras, expose the secretive Night-Folk, and open your eyes to the spiritual Periphery.

**Suggested Specialties:** Omens, Auras, Resonance, Weird Feelings, Mystic Instincts, Hidden Magic, Spiritual Vidare.

### Computer

Advanced ability with computing. While most characters in the World of Darkness are expected to know the basics, the Computer Skill allows your character to program computers, to crack into systems, to diagnose major problems, and to investigate data. This Skill reflects advanced techniques and tricks; most people in the modern world can operate a computer for email and basic Internet searches.

**Suggested Specialties:** Data Retrieval, Graphics, Hacking, Internet, Programming, Security, Social Media.

### Crafts

Knack with creating and repairing things. From creating works of art, to fixing an automobile, Crafts is the Skill to use.

**Suggested Specialties:** Automotive, Cosmetics, Fashion, Forging, Graffiti, Jury-Rigging, Painting, Perfumery, Repair, Sculpting.

## Esoterica

Esoteric knowledge comes in many forms: astrology, angelography, fortune-telling, yoga, herbalism, demonology, the lore of stones, even the secret code languages of occult societies. For centuries, such mysteries were the province of selected initiates; these days, it's relatively easy to find the basics in any decent bookstore or website. Even so, the deeper levels remain obscure to all but the most devoted students of the art. Anyone can take a yoga class in the modern world, but the more arcane applications of that art demand years of practice, study, and devotion.

Esoterica Knowledge reflects your pursuit of esoteric disciplines and, by extension, provides instruments for your magickal focus. The Skill's overall rating reflects your general knowledge of arcane subjects, whereas each specialty reflects your expertise within a certain field. Unlike the Occult – which reflects an understanding of “secret history” and shadow-cultures – Esoterica represents the practical application of unusual fields. Occult can teach your character who Aleister Crowley was, while Esoterica helps them understand what Crowley did... and to use those principles themselves.

Given an opportunity to study and practice an art, any character can learn Esoterica. Although such disciplines don't give magickal powers to unAwakened characters, the Knowledge lets them use mundane applications – teaching yoga classes, doing horoscopes, deciphering alchemical texts and so forth. Understanding the principles of bakemono-jutsu – the ninja “ghost technique” – won't make you invisible, for instance, but a specialty in that esoteric technique would let you add it to your Stealth Skill rolls.

**Suggested Specialties:** Yoga, Tantra, Herbalism, Kabbalah, Fortune-Telling, Hypnosis, Astrology, Celestiography, Demonology, Sacred Geometry, Gematria, Goetia, Prophecies, Omens, T'ai Chi, I Ching, Stone Lore, Alchemy, Symbolism, Transhumanist Theory, Esoteric Musicology, Bakemono-Jutsu, Iconology, Numerology, Voodoo, Crystalmancy, Tarot, specific arcane languages (Enochian, In-o-Musubi, the Language of Flowers, etc.).

## Investigation

Skill with solving mysteries and putting together puzzles. It reflects the ability to draw conclusions, to find meaning out of confusion, and to use lateral thinking to find information where others could not.

**Suggested Specialties:** Artifacts, Autopsy, Body Language, Crime Scenes, Cryptography, Dreams, Lab Work, Riddles.

## Medicine

Knowledge of the human body, and of how to bring it to and keep it in working order. Characters with Medicine can make efforts to stem life-threatening wounds and illnesses.

**Suggested Specialties:** First Aid, Pathology, Pharmaceuticals, Physical Therapy, Surgery.

## Occult

Knowledge of things hidden in the dark, legends, and lore. While the supernatural is unpredictable and often unique, the Occult Skill allows your character to pick out facts from rumor. Almost all magi develop at least some aptitude in Occult, to further their studies of the Mysteries.

**Suggested Specialties:** Neopaganism, Occult History, Conspiracy Theories, Secret Societies, New Age, Alternative Sciences, Mystic Lore, Folk Magic, Moral Panic, Urban Legends, Satanic Folklore, Pop-Culture Satanism, Actual Satanism, any specific occult discipline or field (Freemasonry, Voodoo, Stage Magic, etc.).

## Politics

General knowledge of political structures and methodologies, but more practically shows your character's ability to navigate those systems and make them work the way they intend. With Politics, they know the right person to ask to get something done.

**Suggested Specialties:** Bureaucracy, Church, Consilium, Democratic, Local, Order, Organized Crime, Scandals.

## Science

Knowledge and understanding of the physical and natural sciences, such as biology, chemistry, geology, meteorology, and physics.

**Suggested Specialties:** Almost any hard scientific field.

## Scientific Specialties

Common “respectable” Science variations practiced by Awakened characters include, but are not limited to, the following potential specialties:

**Aeronautics:** Design, construction, and operation of aircraft and other flying machines.

**Astronomy:** Study of stellar bodies, celestial mechanics, and outer space.

**Biology:** Research into the mysteries within Earth's organic life forms.

**Biopsychology:** Tracing (and often altering) the interplay between a living being's physical state and its psychological state.

**Chemistry:** Deciphering and manipulating the chemical codes within Earthly substances.

**Computer Science:** IT system languages, logistics, theory, advancement, and implementation.

**Cybernetics:** Research, development, and implementation of interconnected organic matter and machines.

**Electronics:** Harnessing and exploring the potential of electronic energies and devices.

**Engineering:** Design, research, and construction of essential structures. Engineering has many variations; if there's a structure involved in a project, then there's an engineering discipline involved in creating and maintaining that structure.

**Forensic Pathology:** Reconstructing evidence from scattered and fragmented clues.

**Genetics:** Research, analysis, and manipulation involving the literal "building blocks of life." consider this a soft science, those who manipulate identity, memory, and behavior find it extremely useful.

**Geology:** Study of earthly formations, materials, and phenomena.

**Psychology:** Study of human consciousness and behavior, and their related therapies.

**Hypermathematics:** Esoteric, arcane, theoretical, and sometimes absurd applications of advanced mathematical principles, often tied to the links between science, faith, and magick.

**Psychopharmacology:** Research, development, and applications dealing with the interplay between psychoactive substances and human/humanoid consciousness, perceptions, and behavior.

**Mathematics:** Study of equations, numbers, patterns, and the interplay between them.

**Psychoproduction:** Research into the multiple disciplines and effects of extraphysical consciousness co- and relocation. In plain English, the study of astral projection, multiple selves, and travel into the Digital Web.

**Metallurgy:** Research, refinement, and implementation involving the properties and functions of various metallic substances, alloys, and compounds... though not, unfortunately, musicians.

**Paraphysics:** "Proper" name for Dimensional Science, also known as the interrelationship between Earthly reality and the Otherworlds.

**Phylogeny:** Study of transition and transformation, their effects, and the potential uses of both.

**Physics:** Observations and research regarding the interrelationships between matter and energy. Theoretical physics deals with potential but currently unproven models of physics, whereas practical physics deals with known applications of established physics.

**Psychodynamics:** Study and application of human and humanoid mental processes – specifically the relationships between emotional responses, mental

health, physical state, and outward behavior. Although some Technocrats.

**Sociobiology:** Observation and manipulation of societies as extended organisms – composed of individual beings – that nurture, protect, and reproduce themselves.

By researching the tendencies of such organisms, sociobiologists strive to understand and influence societies... and the individuals within them.

**Xenobiology:** Study, analysis and understanding of alien organisms: monsters, spirits, mythic beasts, and other things conventional science does not currently accept as real.

Radical scientists – Etherites, Ecstatics, Virtual Adepts, and even some maverick Technocrats, among others – have dozens, perhaps hundreds, of other disciplines, ranging from Etherdynamics to Chaos Math to Coprophrenology (don't ask...). Naturally, such sciences are not generally accepted by the community at large; this, of course, just inspires their proponents to prove how true their theories really are...

## Physical

### Athletics

A broad category of physical training and ability. It covers sports, and basic physical tasks such as running, jumping, dodging threats, and climbing. It also determines a character's ability with thrown weapons.

**Suggested Specialties:** Acrobatics, Archery, Climbing, Jumping, Parkour, Swimming, Throwing.

### Brawl

Ability to tussle and fight without weapons. This includes old-fashioned bar brawls as well as complex martial arts. Almost every member of the Akashiana, and many other magi, train in at least basic self-defense.

**Suggested Specialties:** Biting, Boxing, Claws, Dirty Fighting, Grappling, Martial Arts, Threats, Throws.

### Drive

Skill to control and maneuver automobiles, motorcycles, boats, and even airplanes. The Skill relates to moments of high stress, such as a high-speed chase or trying to elude a tail. As well, Drive can reflect your character's skill with horseback riding, if appropriate to their history.

**Suggested Specialties:** Defensive Driving, Evasion, Off-Road Driving, Motorcycles, Pursuit, Stunts.

## Firearms

Ability to identify, maintain, and otherwise use guns. This Skill covers everything from small pistols, to shotguns, to assault rifles, and anything else related.

**Suggested Specialties:** Handguns, Rifles, Shotguns, Trick Shots.

## Larceny

Intrusion, lockpicking, theft, pickpocketing, and other (generally considered) criminal activities. This Skill is typically learned on the streets, outside of formal methods. However, stage magicians and other entertainers learn these skills as part of their repertoire.

**Suggested Specialties:** Breaking and Entering, Concealment, Lockpicking, Pickpocketing, Safecracking, Security Systems, Sleight of Hand.

## Stealth

Ability to move unnoticed and unheard, or to blend into a crowd. Every character approaches Stealth differently; some use distraction, some disguise, some are just hard to keep an eye on.

**Suggested Specialties:** Camouflage, Crowds, In Plain Sight, Rural, Shadowing, Stakeout, Staying Motionless.

## Survival

Ability to “live off the land.” This means finding shelter, finding food, and otherwise procuring the necessities for existence. This could be in a rural or urban environment. This skill also covers the ability to hunt for animals.

**Suggested Specialties:** Foraging, Hunting, Navigation, Shelter, Weather.

## Weaponry

Ability to fight with hand-to-hand weapons: from swords, to knives, to baseball bats, to chainsaws. If the intent is to strike another and harm them, Weaponry is the Skill.

**Suggested Specialties:** Chains, Clubs, Improvised Weapons, Spears, Swords.

## Social

### Animal Ken

Ability to train and understand animals. With Animal Ken, your character can cow beasts or rile them to violence under the right circumstances.

**Suggested Specialties:** Canines, Felines, Reptiles, Soothing, Threatening, Training.

## Empathy

Ability to read and understand others' feelings and motivations. This helps discern moods, or read deceptive behavior in discussion. It is not inherently sympathetic; one can understand another's positions without agreeing with them.

**Suggested Specialties:** Calming, Emotion, Lies, Motives, Personalities.

## Expression

Ability to communicate. This Skill covers written and spoken forms of communication, journalism, acting, music, and dance.

**Suggested Specialties:** Dance, Drama, Journalism, Musical Instrument, Performance Art, Singing, Speeches.

## Intimidation

Ability to influence others' behavior through threats and fear. It could mean direct physical threats, interrogation, or veiled implications of things to come.

**Suggested Specialties:** Direct Threats, Interrogation, Stare Down, Torture, Veiled Threats.

## Persuasion

Ability to change minds and influence behaviors through logic, fast-talking, or appealing to desire. It relies on the force of your character's personality to sway the listener.

**Suggested Specialties:** Confidence Scam, Fast Talking, Inspiring, Sales Pitch, Seduction, Sermon.

## Socialize

Ability to present themselves well and interact with groups of people. It reflects proper (and setting-appropriate) etiquette, customs, sensitivity, and warmth. A character with a high Socialize is the life of the party.

**Suggested Specialties:** Bar Hopping, Church Lock-in, Dress Balls, Formal Events, Frat Parties, Political Fundraisers, The Club.

## Streetwise

Knowledge of life on the streets. It tells them how to navigate the city, how to get information from unlikely sources, and where they'll be (relatively) safe. If they want to get something on the black market, Streetwise is how.

**Suggested Specialties:** Black Market, Gangs, Navigation, Rumors, Undercover.

## Subterfuge

Ability to deceive. With Subterfuge, your character can lie convincingly, project hidden messages in what they say, hide motivations, and notice deception in others.

**Suggested Specialties:** Detecting Lies, Doublespeak, Hiding Emotion, Little White Lies, Misdirection.

## Optional Rule: Roles

Instead of the menagerie of skills you may use roles. Each of the five roles – Scholar, Scoundrel, Scout, Soldier, and Speaker – represents a thematic grouping of training, skill, and experience. Your largest-rated role is usually how you best contribute to a group, whereas for smaller-rated roles, you’re usually better off relying on more proficient allies.

Scholar is your academic knowledge, including education, lore, the sciences, deduction, and research.

Scoundrel is your aptitude for trickery, crime, spying, sleight of hand, defeating security measures like traps or alarms.

Scout is your facility for exploration, perception, and survival, including tracking, navigation, animal handling, climbing, and simply noticing things.

Soldier is your skill and experience when it comes to wielding weapons, enduring hardship, providing security, and fighting in general.

Speaker is your affinity for communication, group dynamics, leadership, empathy, and various forms of self-expression, such as oratory, performance, and art.

Sometimes more than one role might apply. Sneak up on a poacher with Scout or Scoundrel? Give battlefield orders with SOLDIER or SPEAKER? In those cases, choose the one your character favors.

## Roles And Specialties

Specialties are no different when used with roles. For example, you might use Soldier to display your general prowess with weapons, but you might also have a specialty that you add when using certain types of weapons, such as Swordplay **6**, Shotguns **6**, or Plasma Rifles **8**. When you follow a trail through a dense forest, your dice pool might not only include Scout but also an extra die for your Tracking specialty.

## Roles At Character Creation

Assign the following die ratings to your five roles, in any order: **10**, **8**, **6**, **6**, **4**.

# True Magick

True Magick represents a character's ability to manipulate reality through their Awakened Will. Depending on the character's approach to magick alternative names for the trait set are possible, such as: Spheres, Enlightened Science, Ars Magia, Heka.

## Using True Magick

Whenever a PC is attempting working their Will upon the world they must determine the possibility of an effect based on the Sphere rank they possess and the descriptions of their abilities and add the Sphere employed in the effect to the dice pool.

Every Working of magick opens a mage to all of the associated dangers, such as Paradox.

## Affinity Sphere

The affinity Sphere is a mage's initial field of study and connection. It's a Sphere that a mage has the strongest connection to, the Sphere that is a mage's first connection to the greater truth of the world. The pull of an affinity Sphere can be felt from the childhood by most magi.

Every character has an affinity Sphere they choose at character creation depending on their Tradition and natural talent. Whenever a character is casting an effect that involves their affinity Sphere they may spend a **PP** to double the Sphere die in a roll.

## Conjunctional Effects

Despite being immensely powerful even on their own, different Spheres can be combined to achieve truly spectacular and complicated effects.

Casting a conjunctional effect is no different from using one Sphere for creating an effect, a player must evaluate their Sphere ranks and descriptions to determine whether a desired effect is possible, then add only one Sphere die to the pool. Seeing as there are multiple Spheres involved, the choice of a Sphere is up to the player. Normally they can simply choose the highest Sphere available for the best success potential, but it might be more beneficial to choose a lower Sphere for a specific SFX it might have or if it's an affinity Sphere and can be doubled.

## The Spheres

True Magick consists of 9 Spheres, each represents a character's ability to influence the specific area of the Tapestry.

## Rating Spheres

Spheres are ranked **4** to **12**, representing the depth and intricacies of the mage's understanding of it, and therefore their power to control it.

Powers provided by every Sphere's rank are unique, but tend to follow this overall progression:

- **Initiate:** An initiate grasps the essential principles and begins to perceive the ways in which that Sphere behaves. The mage can't alter anything just yet, but they can put their observations to good use.
- **Apprentice:** The mage begins to use the Sphere to make small alterations in their local reality. The mage begins to use the Sphere to make small alterations in their local reality.
- **Disciple:** Achieving a greater level of accomplishment, the mage can make notable changes to elements connected with the Sphere. Remarkable feats become possible, and the mage approaches the realm of true wizardry.
- **Adept:** An impressive command of the Sphere in question allows the mage to perform dramatic feats.
- **Master:** Magnificent feats become possible with such dominion within the Sphere. Literally godlike miracles greet the master of a Sphere, and Reality literally shapes itself to their whim.

## Sphere Talents

True Magick is a powerful trait set, so every Sphere has a number of talents associated with it. These talents are unlocked automatically as a character gains the corresponding Sphere rank.

The specific talents for every Sphere are given after the rank description, but they follow this overall structure:

**Sphere Perception:** Step up your lowest die on any roll to perceive any phenomena under the purview of Sphere or create a related asset.

You unlock this talent at Sphere rating **4** for that Sphere.

**Sphere Manipulation:** On rolls to create an asset that can be produced by a **6** or lower Sphere rating, add **6** and step up your effect die.

You unlock this talent at Sphere rating **6** for that Sphere.

**Sphere Control:** Spend a **PP** to create a **8** asset that can be produced by a **8** or lower Sphere rating.

You unlock this talent at Sphere rating ♦ for that Sphere.

**Sphere Command:** Spend a PP to step up or double your Sphere die on a roll for an effect that can be accomplished by a 10 or lower Sphere rating.

You unlock this talent at Sphere rating 10 for that Sphere.

**Sphere Mastery:** Take 6 appropriate stress or complication to double your Sphere die for a roll. On a failure, step up the same stress or complication you took to activate.

You unlock this talent at Sphere rating 12 for that Sphere.

## Correspondence

### Connections and Dimensions

By manipulating the ties between places, objects, and people, the Correspondence Sphere allows a mage to sidestep distances, sense things that would normally be out of range, pull objects out of thin air, levitate or fly, or connect an Effect to some other place or character. Some magi proclaim this Sphere is proof that distance is an illusion, whereas others view it as the Art of pulling strings between different places and people.

Most Effects require touch or close contact, but Correspondence lets the mage reach across distances and affect hidden or faraway targets. Tenuous connections require several successes, but spanning close connections is easy for a mage who understands this Art.

On its own, Correspondence allows the mage to reach across distances, even to places they cannot see or touch. At Rank 6 or higher, they can grasp items and work with them from a distance. To manipulate other objects or beings in ways other than physical contact, however, that mage must combine Correspondence with another Sphere – typically a Pattern Sphere (Forces, Life, or Matter).

Despite its ability to warp space and distance, Correspondence deals only with whole Patterns, unless a target has been altered by another Pattern Sphere; Correspondence alone, for example, cannot teleport someone's head off – the mage would need to use Life magick to separate the head from its body. A gun, on the other hand, could be snatched away by a Correspondence/Matter Effect.

Mages who specialize in Correspondence tend to have a faraway look. To them, the separations of space and form are meaningless illusions that disappear when you understand how the universe truly fits together.

### 4 Initiate

#### *Immediate Spatial Perceptions/Landscape of the Mind*

Basic spatial understanding allows a mage to sense things in their immediate vicinity even if they cannot perceive them with their normal senses. Using that perception, they can estimate the distances between objects; intuitively find a direction (North, South, East, West); notice hidden objects or characters; and spot spatial instabilities – warps, anomalies, wormholes, etc. – especially the ones caused by other Correspondence Effects.

**Correspondence Perception:** Step up your lowest die on any roll to perceive any phenomena under the purview of Correspondence or create a related asset.

### 6 Apprentice

#### *Sense, Touch, Thicken & Reach Through Space/Correspondence Sensing*

That mage can now extend their senses across intervening space, sensing things in other locations. Such extensions, however, leave minor ripples in space... the kind noticed by Rank 4 Correspondence. Fortunately, they can also thicken space to cover their tracks.

By adding Life or Matter to Rank 6 Correspondence, the mage can grasp small items or organisms (housecat-sized or smaller) and then pull them through tiny holes in space. This lets them snatch business cards, guns, rabbits, and such from another location, apparently pulling them out of nowhere.

**Correspondence Manipulation:** On rolls to create an asset that can be produced by a 6 or lower Correspondence rating, add 6 and step up your effect die.

### 8 Disciple

#### *Pierce Space/Open or Close Gates/Co-locality Perceptions*

Now the mage can tear holes in space, large enough for them to step through. These minor gates are small and temporary, but they allow that character to step from one place to another, so long as they are alone and are lightly encumbered. (Teleporting large items, or while carrying heavy loads, demands Correspondence 10.) Scoping out the new location is a good idea, of course. A close, familiar destination is easier than a distant, unfamiliar one.

Using the Co-locality Perceptions Effect, the mage can also perceive several places at once. Those locations all appear as ghosts overlapping each other, as if they had been layered on top of the closest location.

In addition, by combining Correspondence 8 with Forces, Life, or Matter, the mage can move things around from a distance, levitating, manipulating or teleporting them without physical contact.

**Correspondence Control:** Spend a **PP** to create a **8** asset that can be produced by a **8** or lower Correspondence rating.

## 10 Adept

*Rend Space/Ward/Co-locate Self*

Creating larger holes in space, the mage can now open permanent gates between locations; isolate forces, spaces, objects, or people into their own tiny realms (by combining Correspondence **10** with Forces, Life, Mind, or Matter); and ward certain locations against specific Patterns (again, combining Forces, Life, Mind, or Matter with Correspondence) or Resonance energies (combining this Sphere with Prime **10**). This warding effect can impede or even block the forbidden elements from crossing into, or out of, the protected space. (For extensive details about wards, see the sourcebook How Do You DO That?)

Using the Co-location Effect, mage can also appear in several different places at once. To function, however, they must add Mind **4** to that Effect. Each self mirrors the original's actions unless they also add Life **6** to that Effect, granting independence to every self.

**Correspondence Command:** Spend a **PP** to step up or double your Correspondence die on a roll for an effect that can be accomplished by a **10** or lower Correspondence rating.

## 12 Master

*Spatial Mutation/Co-Location*

Distance and dimensions become child's play to a mage at this Rank. they can distort space; alter sizes and stretch or compress objects (Matter), bodies (Life), or forces (Forces); connect different Patterns to one another across intervening space; or even superimpose places or objects on top of one another (extremely vulgar). Combining this Rank with Life **8**, the mage may also expand their senses to perceive many different places at once.

**Correspondence Mastery:** Take **6** appropriate stress or complication to double your Correspondence die for a roll. On a failure, step up the same stress or complication you took to activate.

# Entropy

*Chance and Mortality*

Controlling the energies of probability and decay, an Entropy-schooled mage can manipulate random factors, observe and influence flaws within a system, tap into the energies of the Low Umbra, induce or remove corruption, and otherwise exert their Will through the unpredictable process of chaos.

Entropy describes what should or must happen, but not precisely when or how that result will come about (those are the province of Time). Fate governs blessings, curses, destiny, fortune, oaths, probability, luck, and intent.

This is no easy discipline. The Entropic mage assumes some of the Resonance of decay within their own Pattern, and bears the weight of mortality within their mind and soul. Still, the powers of this Sphere – though less obviously destructive than those of other Arts – give that mage subtle but pervasive control over Creation as a whole.

For obvious reasons, Entropy-schooled magi tend to be fatalistic, disassociated, or uncannily cheerful. To them, the saying "all things must pass" is no simple sentiment but an intrinsic fact.

## ▼ Initiate

*Sense Flaws, Fate & Fortune/Ring of Truth*

Basic Entropic understanding allows a mage to see the currents of probability, spot flaws in Patterns, and note the subtle yet telling details in a person's speech and behavior that suggest whether or not they're telling what they believe to be the truth. Although they cannot yet control such phenomena, the mage can predict dice throws, card draws, and other apparently random events; spot weak spots in objects, people, or arguments; and use those imperfect yet profound insights to their advantage.

**Entropy Perception:** Step up your lowest die on any roll to perceive any phenomena under the purview of Entropy or create a related asset.

## 6 Apprentice

*Control Probability*

Now the mage can control the factors they could only sense before. Pulling the strings of apparently random events, they can influence activities and results – directing the fall of dice or cards, repeatedly hitting weak spots, and directing people and things toward a conclusion of their choice. Of course, it is easier to control small events (the winner of a horse race) than large ones (causing a six-car pileup). In game terms, large alterations have higher difficulty than small ones do.

**Entropy Manipulation:** On rolls to create an asset that can be produced by a **6** or lower Entropy rating, add **6** and step up your effect die.

## 8 Disciple

*Affect Predictable Patterns*

Things eventually break down. At this Rank, the mage can control the speed at which material objects fail or decay. That is easier to do with complex machines (cars, computers) than it is with simple ones (walls, stones) – after all, more things can go wrong with complicated things.

At this Rank, the mage can also start controlling the fate and fortune of objects and people, giving them good or bad luck by controlling the probability of events around them. Again, large feats have higher difficulty than smaller ones.

**Entropy Control:** Spend a **PP** to create a **8** asset that can be produced by a **8** or lower Entropy rating.

## 10 Adept

### Affect Living Things

At this Rank, the mage assumes the awesome power of blessing, cursing, and conferring outright health or decay. By influencing the flow of entropy within a living body, that mage can grant outstanding vitality to, or inflict sudden disease upon, their subject. Such influence may grant long-term luck or misfortune. (GM's option as to how this manifests.)

**Entropy Command:** Spend a **PP** to step up or double your Entropy die on a roll for an effect that can be accomplished by a **10** or lower Entropy rating.

## 12 Master

### Affect Thought/Shape Memes/Binding Oath

The most esoteric applications of Entropy allow the mage to alter ideas, strengthening or breaking down concepts. Although they do not affect the actual workings of consciousness, they can cause synapses to misfire (thus confusing perceptions and mental processing, inflicting penalties on an enemy's dice rolls), bind someone to an oath, or degrade the patterns of thought. By doing so, that Entropic Master can create, perpetrate, reinforce, and undermine arguments, beliefs, and even memories.

To do such things, the Master merely speaks to, or glances at, the subject of their attention. Chaos Masters can scramble someone's perceptions with a few weird utterances, and Masters of Order can present arguments with apparently perfect logic. By offering compelling statements, the Master can create or destroy memes, thus influencing whole patterns of belief. An oath, meanwhile, ties the subject's fate to their loyalty; if they break the oath, then their luck goes really, really bad.

**Entropy Mastery:** Take **6** appropriate stress or complication to double your Entropy die for a roll. On a failure, step up the same stress or complication you took to activate.

# Forces

### Raising Storms

Although modern physics disputes the old lines between matter and energy, the venerable study of Forces transcends human politics. This Sphere commands the energies of Creation, and its specialists are among the most powerful magi alive.

On a metaphysical level, the Forces Sphere commands energetic Patterns: fire, air, momentum, gravity, radiation, light, sound, and radio waves... the kinetic elements that shape and channel Earthly forces. Quintessence flows within such Patterns, so a mage can conjure new forces simply by adding some Quintessence to "empty space." Different practices view such powers differently. Are they elemental spirits? Gods? Particles? Waves? Every Master has their or their own pet theory. In practical terms, however, this Sphere controls the Patterns of such forces - directing, transmuting, enhancing, or banishing their effects upon this world.

Simple manifestations and manipulations are limited to the lower Sphere Ranks, whereas large-scale Effects demand higher levels of expertise. Most large Effects can become Paradox magnets for careless magi. Masters of Forces tend to carry a palpable aura of energetic command, with a Resonance that often alters their environments in uncanny, elemental ways.

## 4 Initiate

### Perceive Forces

Unlocking basic perceptions of the elements, a Forces-savvy mage can sense the flow of forces in their environment. They can boost their perceptions into the infrared or ultraviolet spectrums, notice electrons, see in the dark, view X-rays, discern the flow of sound or radio waves, spot kinetic energies, and hear frequencies beyond the normal human range.

**Forces Perception:** Step up your lowest die on any roll to perceive any phenomena under the purview of Forces or create a related asset.

## 6 Apprentice

### Manipulate Forces/Elemental Touch

Although they cannot conjure energies just yet, the mage may now alter the flow of existing forces. Sound can be muted or amplified; shadows can be gathered, shaped, or dispelled. The mage can warp light to make things invisible, change their colors by altering the spectrum of localized light, or render them silent by bending sound waves in their vicinity. With a wave of their hand, they can disrupt electrical currents; flare flames; or direct the course of winds, momentum, or gravity.

Combining this Rank with other Spheres, that mage could also make an object (Matter) or organism (Life) attract or repel forces. Thus, they could weave minor protection spells or force fields... or, conversely, turn that target into a magnet (perhaps literally) for the forces in question.

Despite its powers, this Rank is limited in scale. Assume that the mage can command energies around a single human-sized character or within a small area (20' or less). To affect a larger area, you need a higher Rank in Forces.

**Forces Manipulation:** On rolls to create an asset that can be produced by a **6** or lower Forces rating, add **6** and step up your effect die.

## 8 Disciple

*Transmute Minor Forces/Telekinetics/The Dragon's Touch*

Now the mage can alter and invoke the energies they could only touch before. By adding Prime **6**, they may conjure winds, fire, electricity, gravitational wells, and so forth. Combining this Rank with Life or Matter, they can transform people into electricity (Life **12**/Forces **8**); change water into air (Forces **8**/Matter **8**), or attach elemental force to material forms – making them fly, pinning them to the ground, and having other, similar effects (generally with Life or Matter **8**). In addition, by adding an ephemeral Sphere to this Rank, they might erode or enhance energies (Entropy **8**); manifest thoughts into energies (Mind **8**); transmute spirit-stuff into physical energies (Spirit **8**); or set triggers for energy fluctuations at some later interval (Time **10**). At this Rank, the scale of effect grows larger, now encompassing several dozen yards or a handful of characters.

**Forces Control:** Spend a **PP** to create a **8** asset that can be produced by a **8** or lower Forces rating.

## 10 Adept

*Control Major Forces/Gift of Zeus/Weather-Witching*

Larger Effects become possible. Our mage may now use the lower-Rank Effects over larger areas – a mile or more – to change weather patterns; conjure darkness; drop or raise temperatures; protect locations... or destroy them; and otherwise employ the previous levels on a much greater scale. For obvious reasons, such Effects tend to be vulgar and have higher difficulty to achieve.

**Forces Command:** Spend a **PP** to step up or double your Forces die on a roll for an effect that can be accomplished by a **10** or lower Forces rating.

## 12 Master

*Transmute Major Forces/Conjuring Infernos*

With godlike power, a Forces Master works their Will upon vast areas. they can conjure tornados on a clear day, calm tides, and ignite the very air into a firestorm. Such magi earn the title “Nuke,” though few of them survive long enough to enjoy it. It’s easier to invoke such forces under the right conditions, of course – a cold snap comes more easily in winter than in summer – and such radical alterations have repercussions that often outlast the original Effect. In game terms, massive Forces spells should disrupt the weather and leave massive Resonance echoes behind.

**Forces Mastery:** Take **6** appropriate stress or complication to double your Forces die for a roll. On a failure, step up the same stress or complication you took to activate.

## Life

*The Living Form*

Life grows, transforming over time until some final incident renders it into inert matter. magi who specialize in Life, therefore, master the complex principles of organic transformation. Beginning with the simplest Patterns, they evolve their understanding toward godlike ends. A true Master, therefore, may end life, but they may also create it from pure energy (that is, from Quintessence) or turn it, literally, to dust.

Whereas other Spheres grapple with abstract theories, Life focuses on literally bone-deep facts. As a Life mage knows, however, those facts remain susceptible to change. In conjunction with other Pattern Spheres (Forces, Matter), life forms can be changed into elements, turned to stone or metal, or else created from such substances. Even without additional Spheres, however, Life allows a mage to transmute those life forms in startling, even apparently impossible ways.

As a whole, this Sphere embraces everything that has living cells within itself, even if that object is technically dead. Generally, assume that anything that is still alive enough to transplant, preserve, or cultivate is governed by Life Arts. If it is inert enough to be irrevocably dead, then it is governed by Matter. Thus, preserved blood and organs, still-living plants, live-culture cheese, and so forth contain Life, but cotton fibers, withered organs, or cut wood become Matter.

An organism that has been radically altered by Life magick (given new limbs or other characteristics that are not part of the creature’s original Pattern) suffers Pattern bleeding: an inexorable Quintessence leak that inflicts **6** Hurt stress per day. Unless the caster uses Prime magick to refill that Pattern with fresh energy, or alters that Pattern permanently, the damage continues until the subject dies.

Given their ability to heal illness, age, and harm, Life-skilled magi enjoy great health and vibrant beauty. Truly accomplished ones understand the mutable potential of organic existence and work to correct – or exploit – its ever-changing states.

#### 4 Initiate

*Sense Life*

Basic Life knowledge allows a person to read the presence and health of nearby life forms. With such knowledge, the mage can discern a living being's age, sex, and overall health. By combining those perceptions with other Spheres, they can also sense distant organisms (Correspondence 6), guess their potential for sickness or misfortune (Entropy 4), perceive them through past or future states (Time 6), or read the streams of Quintessence that bind them to the universe (Prime 4).

**Life Perception:** Step up your lowest die on any roll to perceive any phenomena under the purview of Life or create a related asset.

#### 6 Apprentice

*Alter Simple Life-Forms/Heal Self*

Simple organisms – viruses, mollusks, insects, plants, etc. – become clay in the mage's hands. They learn to adjust their Patterns (giving a crab wings, for example), and heal or kill them. Although they cannot yet transmute them into other states of being, they can cause flowers to bloom or wither, help trees bear fruit, and so on. Focusing on their own Pattern, they can also heal themselves or perform small alterations (hair color, skin tone, height, weight, and so on) to their basic form.

**Life Manipulation:** On rolls to create an asset that can be produced by a 6 or lower Life rating, add 6 and step up your effect die.

#### 8 Disciple

*Transform Simple Life-Forms/Alter Self/Heal Others*

Advanced understanding allows the mage to radically alter simple organisms (turning a tree inside out); transform one into another (changing fruit into insects); or – with Prime 6 – conjure them from raw energy.

Working with their own Pattern, that mage can work substantial alterations on themselves, growing gills, claws, armor and so forth. They remain essentially human, but begin to master the definition of “human.” Meanwhile, they also gain the ability to heal damage to other complex organisms, put them to sleep, or inflict harm upon their living Pattern forms.

**Life Control:** Spend a PP to create a 8 asset that can be produced by a 8 or lower Life rating.

#### 10 Adept

*Alter Complex Life-Forms/Transform Self*

At this Rank, the mage may enact radical changes on any complex organism – people, dogs, horses, and so forth. They can uplift other species with new limbs, opposable thumbs, increased brain capacity, etc., so long as they do not change their intrinsic nature.

Working with their own Pattern, that mage can transform themselves into other life forms of similar size and mass; they could become a Great Dane, for example, but not a hummingbird. The new body might require an adjustment period before the mind and reflexes reflect the new form.

**Life Command:** Spend a PP to step up or double your Life die on a roll for an effect that can be accomplished by a 10 or lower Life rating.

#### 12 Master

*Transform & Create Complex Life-Forms/Perfect Metamorphosis*

Now the Master of Life may adopt any form they wish to achieve and may transform other complex organisms the same way. His expertise allows them to make permanent changes to life-Patterns, create complex life-forms from energy (with Prime 6), give them consciousness (with Mind 12), transmute them into other elements (Forces or Matter 8) or raw energy (Prime 12), radically age or de-age them (Entropy 10 or Time 8), or instill them with spirits (Spirit 8 or 12). Without such measures, however, their creations remain mindless, soulless sacks of life – alive, but nothing more.

**Life Mastery:** Take 6 appropriate stress or complication to double your Life die for a roll. On a failure, step up the same stress or complication you took to activate.

## Matter

*Shaping the Materials*

To a mystic, nothing is truly inert. Still, the Sphere of Matter deals with substances that possess no active agency of their own – materials, not life forms or energies. The third aspect of the Pattern Trinity, Matter works best when combined with other Spheres. Prime and Matter create solid forms from energy; Correspondence and Matter connect objects across space; Entropy erodes or reinforces Matter; Forces transmutes inert elements into active ones. Spirit plus Matter renders ephemera into matter or matter into ephemera. Time alters the temporal state of Matter, and high-Rank Mind Effects (Rank 12) imbue inanimate materials with consciousness. Although Forces, Prime, and Spirit reflect primal energies and Life addresses organic animation, Matter represents the base of the physical world.

Matter-wise magi tend to share a literally hands-on approach to their Art. Solid workers of their practice, they favor practical results with even the most theoretical applications. Sometimes regarded as dull and simple by their more esoteric peers, these artisans merge quality and integrity with surprising levels of ingenuity.

## 4 Initiate

### Matter Perceptions

A Primary understanding of Matter allows the initiate to perceive the intrinsic properties of base materials – their underlying structure, innate properties, and integral stability or lack thereof. With that knowledge, they can view the material composition of an object, note its less-obvious structures, find its hidden layers or – when combining this perception with Entropy – spot its weak points. Combined with Life, this Sphere detects implants, enhancements, and other integrations of living tissue and inert materials.

**Matter Perception:** Step up your lowest die on any roll to perceive any phenomena under the purview of Matter or create a related asset.

## 5 Apprentice

### Basic Transmutation

With advanced knowledge, the mage can transmute one substance into another, so long as they do not alter its essential shape, temperature, or basic state (gas, liquid, solid). Depending upon that mage's practice, they might reshape lead into gold through alchemy, wood into stone through a hyper petrification process, or water into wine (and, with Life 8, wine into blood) through a sacred miracle. Rare and/or complex materials are more difficult to fabricate than simple ones; it is easier to turn stone into iron, for example, than into gold.

(On a related note, the mage cannot yet fabricate radioactive materials. Such elements merge their essence into the Sphere of Forces, and thus demand a greater level of expertise.)

When combined with other Spheres, this basic level of understanding allows a mage to conjure base materials from energy or dissolve them into Quintessence (Prime 6); transmute matter into living tissue (Life 10 or higher); move an object through space (Correspondence 6 or higher) or time (Time 8 or higher); change ephemera into matter and matter into ephemera, or awaken the slumbering spirit within material objects (Spirit 8 or higher). In all cases, Matter 6 allows the mage to work with simple, homogenous, non-living substances. Complex mixtures of various elements usually require Rank 8 or higher, although simple combinations (like those found in bread, milk, paper, or gunpowder) are possible albeit more difficult.

**Matter Manipulation:** On rolls to create an asset that can be produced by a 6 or lower Matter rating, add 6 and step up your effect die.

## 8 Disciple

### Alter Form

At this Rank, the mage can alter the shape of materials in whatever ways they desire, and they can temporarily transform their essential state into a different one – steel, for example, into fog or water into glass. (Permanent changes require Matter 12.) That crafter may change an item's density, fuse broken pieces together, or rip solid ones apart.

By mixing Matter 8 with other Spheres, the mage can join inert matter with living tissue, disintegrate it into dust, shift objects with the power of thought, or otherwise perform amazing transformations upon apparently solid materials.

**Matter Control:** Spend a PP to create a 8 asset that can be produced by a 8 or lower Matter rating.

## 10 Adept

### Complex Transmutation

Complex and radical transformations now become possible, especially with the addition of other Spheres. Pumpkins can be changed into carriages (Life 6), people into thrones (Life 12), cars into robots (combinations of Forces and Prime), or thin air into banquets, so long as the mage does not mind racking up a little (or a lot...) of Paradox. Different principles can be combined in complicated ways, creating cybernetic machines or electrified gold. Complicated devices (guns, cars, computers) may be conjured out of empty space if the mage understands the principles behind such things (in game terms, possesses the proper Skills). As usual, though, complicated creations demand extended.

**Matter Command:** Spend a PP to step up or double your Matter die on a roll for an effect that can be accomplished by a 10 or lower Matter rating.

## 12 Master

### Alter Properties

With Mastery, the crafter can create substances that transcend the limitations of scientific possibility, conjure materials unknown to Earthly reality, or share the deadly legacies of radioactive matter. Such Masters can shape armor out of air (with Prime 6), turn vampires into lawn furniture (Matter 12), or melt steel with a thought (Mind 8). Again, such deeds remain incredibly vulgar, but they recall the godlike feats of legendry.

**Matter Mastery:** Take 6 appropriate stress or complication to double your Matter die for a roll. On a failure, step up the same stress or complication you took to activate.

# Mind

## Art of Consciousness

Human beings perceive reality through complex interplays of consciousness. The Mind-mage, therefore, alters the realities of their fellow beings. Skillfully applied, such Arts can make a sane man mad, soothe demented minds, or even shuck the boundaries of flesh.

Though limited in its physical capacities, Mind is the ultimate coincidental Art. Its Effects remain essentially invisible unless they are combined with other Spheres. And although Mind Adepts can leave their physical bodies behind, such abilities remain unseen by mortal eyes.

Drastic acts of mind control (suicide, for instance) have especially high difficulty, as do Mind-based attacks against Night-Folk or other magi with the Mind Sphere. Therefore, weak-willed people may be influenced easily; determined folks can shrug aside the influence of all but the most dedicated Will-workers.

Mind-based Effects are generally coincidental, although especially flamboyant feats might be vulgar instead.

Literally “thought-full,” Mind-savvy magi possess mental clarity and unnerving perceptiveness. Some appear to drift in a sea of distractions, but the majority of them view the world with laser-focus intensity that penetrates illusions to reach their deeper truth.

### 4 Initiate

#### Sense Thoughts & Emotions/Mind Shield/Empower Self

With basic mental magick, the mage learns to sense the emotions and surface impulses of other people. Although they cannot read specific thoughts, they are able to perceive psychic impressions about a person or (with Matter 4) a place or object. Through this perception, they can guess at the nature of weak Resonance signatures and read the stronger ones outright. Even without Resonance, that mage can scan auras, note mood shifts, discern truth from lies, or grasp someone’s overall state of mind by way of a successful roll.

Meanwhile, the mage also learns to shield their own mind from the thoughts and emotions of other people, constructing mental barriers around their aura, emotions, and consciousness.

On a related note, they also learn how to multitask and absorb data with startling acuity. For a scene or two, they can even create a Mind Empowerment asset that concentrates their mental faculties.

**Mind Perception:** Step up your lowest die on any roll to perceive any phenomena under the purview of Mind or create a related asset.

### 6 Apprentice

#### Read Surface Thoughts/Empathic Bond/Create Impressions/Mental Impulse

Now the mage begins to skim the contents of unshielded minds, discern emotional states, read memories that have been left behind on objects or places, and project single words or emotional impulses to other people. The simpler the emotional content, the easier it is to send or read; a flash of rage, for instance, is easy to project or receive, but the complex stew of reflective melancholy presents a challenge to inexperienced Mind-mages.

**Mind Manipulation:** On rolls to create an asset that can be produced by a 6 or lower Mind rating, add 6 and step up your effect die.

### 8 Disciple

#### Mental Link/Project Illusions/Dreamwalk/Psychic Blast

With increasing skill, the mage learns to link minds, forge telepathic communications, read or influence another person’s thoughts, craft mental illusions, enter someone’s dreams and explore dream Realms, and blast psychic assaults into an unwilling rival’s consciousness. At this stage, Mind attacks can inflict painful – though rarely fatal – damage. Combined with Correspondence, Forces, Matter, or Life, they are able to employ telekinesis, pyrokinetics, and psychophysical assault, influencing objects, elements, or people with the power of their mind. Unlike most other Effects, this sort of thing is not coincidental, although such talents do have a place within popular culture.

**Mind Control:** Spend a PP to create a 8 asset that can be produced by a 8 or lower Mind rating.

### 10 Adept

#### Control Conscious Mind/Alter Consciousness/Astral Projection

The fearsome power of Black Suits and psychic assailants allows the mage to command another person’s actions as well as their thoughts, alter their perceptions or mental state, and project their own mind from their physical form. At this Rank, a mage can change someone’s memories, drive them crazy (or sane), overlay their aura with a desired impression, and set up posthypnotic suggestions and commands. In addition, by using internal rather than external powers, they can project their astral form.

**Mind Command:** Spend a PP to step up or double your Mind die on a roll for an effect that can be accomplished by a 10 or lower Mind rating.

## 12 Master

*Control Subconscious/Forge Psyche/Untether Consciousness*

A true Mind Master commands not only their own conscience but other minds as well. They may alter someone's mind forever, raising (or lowering) their Traits, rewriting their personality, changing their Distinction Trait, or (with Life 10) switching their mind into another body. They can do the same things to their own mind as well, and they can untether that mind to explore the deeper reaches of astral space for hours or even days at a time. His greatest power, though, is the ability to fabricate entire consciousnesses, creating minds where no mind had been before.

**Mind Mastery:** Take 6 appropriate stress or complication to double your Mind die for a roll. On a failure, step up the same stress or complication you took to activate.

## Prime

*Essence of all Things*

By studying the raw energy of Creation, a student of the Prime Sphere learns to understand, manipulate, and absorb the Fifth Essence within all things. Also known as Odylic Force, Primal Energy, and Quintessence, this baseline energy fuels the Patterns of other forms – Forces, Life, Matter – and flows through the sublime essence of Spirit. A Prime-skilled mage, therefore, can create and destroy things at their essential level, power items of enchanted or Enlightened creation, and sustain their own life essence through their understanding of Primal Force.

Ripe with such energies, a Prime Sphere specialist pulsates with Primal Force. Unless they are working to suppress it (or has wiped their aura clean with high-Rank magicks), their Resonance bears strong signatures from their deeds. For better and worse, such a person embodies the primal Otherness that most magi possess – the sense of being something more than most people ever dream of being.

For an optional Technocratic approach to Prime, see Primal Utility, (pp. 526-527).

## 4 Initiate

*Etheric Senses/Consecration/Infuse Personal Quintessence*

A beginning study of Prime allows the mage to perceive and channel Quintessence from Nodes, Tass, Wonders, and magickal Effects. They may spot energetic ebbs and flows, can sense and at least try to read Resonance and Synergy signatures, and could absorb additional Quintessence into their personal Pattern as an asset.

When infusing their Quintessence into an object, that mage may also consecrate the object with their personal energy. When they shapeshift, steps sideways, or otherwise alters their Pattern's metaphysical nature, that consecrated object

will then change with their. In the process, it also picks up their personal Resonance... which, because it both identifies them and becomes essentially connected to them, is not always a good thing.

**Prime Perception:** Step up your lowest die on any roll to perceive any phenomena under the purview of Prime or create a related asset.

## 6 Apprentice

*Fuel Pattern/Construct Patterns/Enchant Patterns/Body of Light*

Attaining a degree of control over Prime energies, the mage may divert Quintessence into new or existing forms. Combined with other Spheres, this allows that mage to create new Forces, Life, or Matter Patterns (conjuring them from thin air), and to infuse existing items with Primal Force to strengthen them or enhance their protective or destructive power.

Weapons or attacks infused with Quintessence through Prime 6 Effects may hurt and substances infused the same way may protect against such harm. On a related note, they may also – with Life 6 for simple organisms, or Life 8 for complex ones – consecrate a living thing at this Rank, as if that life form were an object described above.

Through similar applications of energy, the mage can also conjure a simple Body of Light: an idealized self-projected from ephemeral energy. Although this Body of Light has no substance or special properties (unlike the astral form described in Chapter Nine, p. 477), it presents a glowing holograph of the mage themselves.

**Prime Manipulation:** On rolls to create an asset that can be produced by a 6 or lower Prime rating, add 6 and step up your effect die.

## 8 Disciple

*Channel Quintessence/Enchant Life/Energy Weapon/Craft Periaps & Temporary Wonders*

By tapping into the flow of Quintessence around them, the Prime-skilled mage can draw both free and raw Quintessence from Nodes, Junctures (special times), and Tass (solidified Quintessence)... and they may channel that energy into new and existing Patterns as well. With such powers, they could (with Life 8) pull small amounts of life force from a living sacrifice or (with Matter 5) from inert objects; instill Quintessence into a vessel called a Periapt; or – with other Spheres – craft temporary Talismans or Devices by infusing them with Primal Force.

In desperate circumstances, a Prime-schooled mage can also create temporary weapons out of pure concentrated energy – blasts of Quintessence or swords of light. Such weapons inflict 6 Quintessence on user per use... or, for weapons that last for a length of time, 6 Quintessence stress per

turn. Unless channeled through energy-guns or conjured as miracles among the faithful, such attacks are inevitably vulgar.

**Prime Control:** Spend a **PP** to create a **8** asset that can be produced by a **8** or lower Prime rating.

## 10 Adept

*Expel or Infuse Energy/Tap Wellspring/Craft Tass & Permanent Wonders*

The terrible power of draining Quintessence from objects or forces (though not yet from living things) can disintegrate those targets, consume them in Primal flames, or decay them almost instantly. Reversing that flow, the mage can create objects that cannot be broken, or bond organic and inorganic materials together to create cybernetic implants, nanotech, and other Wonders. At this stage, they are able to enchant items permanently and draw Quintessence from the energetic Wellsprings of exciting events. By infusing their personal Quintessence into a Periapt, the mage might use Matter **10** to create a Soulgem - a portable vessel that is filled with their own Resonance and energy.

**Prime Command:** Spend a **PP** to step up or double your Prime die on a roll for an effect that can be accomplished by a **10** or lower Prime rating.

## 12 Master

*Infuse or Withdraw Life Force/Create Node & Soulflower/Nullify Paradox*

A Prime Master can draw Quintessence from anywhere, at any time, and channel it into other vessels as well. A dark, vulgar aspect of that power allows them to obliterate a living being by consuming all of their life force, whereas the reverse of that power infuses them with life force so strong that they are essentially blessed. Combining that ability with Life **12**, they may turn complex organisms into Soulflowers - living Periaps who become walking batteries of boosted Quintessence. Such Mastery also allows the mage to create Nodes in significant places, and to nullify Paradox.

**Prime Mastery:** Take **6** appropriate stress or complication to double your Prime die for a roll. On a failure, step up the same stress or complication you took to activate.

# Spirit

*Art of the Otherworlds*

Reaching into the essence beyond Earthly life and matter, the Spirit mage explores the Otherworlds and deals with creatures beyond mortal understanding. One of the most primal forms of the mystic Arts, Spirit Sphere magick traffics in the hidden side of the natural realm. As a result, its Effects typically use the Gauntlet Ratings to determine the difficulty of their associated rolls.

Often affiliated with the shaman, Spirit magick is more eclectic than it often appears. A mage who specializes in this Sphere could be a primal devotee, a sophisticated theologian, a medicine-worker deeply versed in cultural traditions, an eclectic metaphysician, a modern Pagan, or anyone else who comprehends the rich world beyond material physics. Almost inevitably, they will look deeper than most modern people do, grasping for the spiritual forces behind apparently mundane events.

For an optional Technocratic approach to Spirit, see Dimensional Science, pp. 525-526.

## 4 Initiate

*Spirit Sight/Spirit Sense*

To most of humanity, the spirit world remains invisible. Not to a mage who knows the Spirit Sphere. Although they'll be most attuned to spirits with Resonance similar to their own, that mage can read the local Gauntlet's thickness, discern auras, sense spirits of all types, peek into the Penumbra through the Vidare (see Chapters Three and Four), and determine whether or not a material object has a spiritual component (as mystic Fetishes do).

Combined with other Spheres, that mage can spot forces, places, or items with unusual ties to the spirit world, such as Awakened objects, elemental spirits, possessed organisms, Shallowings, Nodes, and so forth.

**Spirit Perception:** Step up your lowest die on any roll to perceive any phenomena under the purview of Spirit or create a related asset.

## 6 Apprentice

*Touch Spirit/Manipulate Gauntlet*

Perception moves to contact. The Spirit-savvy mage can now reach through the Gauntlet for a turn or two; call across the Gauntlet; speak to spirit entities, or touch them for a brief moment; and thin or thicken the local Gauntlet. That said, a human mage cannot lower the Gauntlet to less than **10** within the mortal world.

By adding other Spheres, that mage could project thoughts across the barrier (Mind **10** or **12**); stir up elemental disturbances within the Otherworlds (Forces **6** or higher); imbue material objects with ephemeral power (Matter **6**); drain Essence from a spirit (Prime **8**); or help other living creatures sense or contact the spirit realms (Life **6**).

**Spirit Manipulation:** On rolls to create an asset that can be produced by a **6** or lower Spirit rating, add **6** and step up your effect die.

## 8 Disciple

Pierce Gauntlet/Step Sideways/Rouse & Lull Spirit

Now the mage can cross over, transmuting their living tissue to ephemera. They may carry a few material possessions, although transmuting them as well raises the difficulty of the roll. (Normal clothing and items step up the Gauntlet rating once; bulky clothing and items step up rating twice.) That traveler must step sideways on their own; bringing large items or other people across demands a higher Spirit Rank. Meanwhile, a combined Spirit ♦/Mind 6 Effect allows the mage to read Resonance, Synergy, and other spiritual energies (Essence, a spirit's place within a hierarchy, etc.).

At this Rank, a mortal mage can also harm an Umbral entity as if they were using Life ♦ against that entity. While Spirit 6 allows the mage to touch that entity, Spirit ♦ lets them actually damage its ephemeral Pattern's integrity the way that Life ♦ damages a physical creature's form.

By combining this Rank with Matter ♦ and Prime 6, the mage can also create short-lived objects from ephemera; such creations must be constructed as if they were material things, and they fade away at the end of the Effect's duration.

Finally, this Rank helps the mage rouse the slumbering spirits within objects or places, or else put active spirits to sleep. (See Awakening Substances in Chapter Nine, p. 443).

**Spirit Control:** Spend a PP to create a ♦ asset that can be produced by a ♦ or lower Spirit rating.

## 10 Adept

Rend Gauntlet/Seal Breach/Bind Spirit

As the mage approaches Mastery, they can tear Gateways in the Gauntlet, allowing groups or large objects to pass through... or close such breaches, too. Both applications, of course, are deeply vulgar.

At this Rank, the mage may also compel spirits to appear, bind them into Fetish objects, or tie them to certain spots or prisons. For obvious reasons, such bondage is risky, especially if the spirit is powerful. A brave or foolish Spirit mage can even turn themselves into a temporary Fetish, channeling a spirit entity into their mortal body; in such cases, they lose their ability to use true magick, but they may employ the capabilities of the spirit inside them. On the flipside, they can also exorcise a spirit that has possessed a mortal host. In all cases, the mage enters a series of resisted rolls against the spirit, pitting their Willpower against that spirit's own.

**Spirit Command:** Spend a PP to step up or double your Spirit die on a roll for an effect that can be accomplished by a 10 or lower Spirit rating.

## 12 Master

Forge Ephemera/Gilgul/Break the Dreamshell

The Spirit Master is now able to command ephemera itself, creating, challenging, and destroying spirit matter as they Will. With such power, they may create Realms, imbue or drain a spirit of Essence, instill a soul within an empty shell of Life or Matter, and bestow the awful sentence of Gilgul – the destruction of a mage's Avatar. Such powers are always vulgar and feature devastating consequences even when the mage succeeds.

This power also allows the mage to break the Dreamshell and venture beyond the Horizons, wandering into the Deepest of Umbrae.

**Spirit Mastery:** Take 6 appropriate stress or complication to double your Spirit die for a roll. On a failure, step up the same stress or complication you took to activate.

## Time

Tricking the Flow

The esoteric Arts of Time demand a flexible mindset. Possibly the most confounding Sphere, Time involves dizzying temporal metaphysics that defy the most apparently determined aspect of reality: time itself. Yet, initiates of this Sphere understand that time is fluid... difficult to manipulate, but not as rigid as it might appear.

In conjunction with other Spheres, Time allows a mage to set triggers on other Effects, stretch out their duration, see into other times and places, or otherwise warp the threads of time. When prolonging an Effect, they could either increase Duration, or else add Entropy ♦ in order to hold the Effect until a certain circumstance occurs.

It has been said that time travel is impossible; however, that is not entirely true... it is just extremely difficult. Effects that involve going backwards in time are always vulgar, and stack the effects of Paradox. No wonder people who go back in time rarely return to speak of it!

As one might expect, a mage who manipulates the Time Sphere tends to appear distant from the moment at hand. Although they might have excellent timing, their sense of the importance of past/present/future events seems to be a bit more... fluid than usual for a person living by the clock in today's world.

## 4 Initiate

### Time Sense

Temporal understanding begins with the mage's own perceptions of time. At this stage, they develop a precise internal clock and can spot the temporal ripples left behind by (or, in many cases, developing ahead of) Time Effects. Other phenomena, too, leave disturbances in the time-stream, and the mage can notice them as well. Combined with additional Spheres, this Rank allows the mage to detect the influence of the Time Sphere on other spells or Patterns too.

**Time Perception:** Step up your lowest die on any roll to perceive any phenomena under the purview of Time or create a related asset.

## 6 Apprentice

### Past & Future Sight Thicken the Walls of Time

Now the mage can look forward or backward through time. Although those impressions are fleeting, hazy, not entirely accurate, and bound by the limitations of that time and place (that is, what a bystander in that specific time and location could sense under the circumstances), they allow the Time-seer to catch glimpses of the past or future.

By itself, this Effect allows the mage to see in their present location only. By combining Past/Future Sight with other Spheres, however, they could read the probable past or future impressions of objects or places (Matter), living things (Life), and alternate locations (Correspondence). Entropy 6 even allows them to glimpse multiple futures and pick out the one most likely to occur.

Reversing their powers of perception, that same mage can thicken the walls of time, which makes other Time Effects more difficult.

**Time Manipulation:** On rolls to create an asset that can be produced by a 5 or lower Time rating, add 6 and step up your effect die.

## 8 Disciple

### Time Contraction or Dilation/“Bullet Time”/Rewind Time

Speeding or slowing their relationship with time, the mage can now gain multiple actions, slow other characters or phenomena, or rewind small snatches of time. Or else slow another character, object, or even themselves.

By rewinding time, the mage can also move their immediate surroundings – an Effect that pulls them out of the normal flow of time and allows them to retcon an action or two.

Combining this Rank with other Spheres, the mage can affect other Patterns (Forces, Life, or Matter 6), cast Effects across distance and time (Correspondence 8), move back in time while recalling events from the future they just left (Life

8)/Mind 4), or even invoke multiple probabilities (Entropy 8). Again, such attempts are Paradox magnets with awful long-term consequences.

**Time Control:** Spend a PP to create a 8 asset that can be produced by a 8 or lower Time rating.

## 10 Adept

### Time Determinism/Trigger Effect/Time Bubble/Anchor Point

Now the mage learns to withdraw themselves from the normal flow of time, hold Effects until they are triggered by events, or – by adding in Correspondence, Forces, Life, Matter, and/or Spirit – capture other beings or phenomena in bubbles of time. Thus, a mighty (vulgar) Time/Forces/Entropy Effect could capture a tornado and shunt it off into no-time space until some trigger sets it free. At this level of expertise, the mage can also set a temporal anchor point for themselves for when they dare to travel through time at Rank 12.

**Time Command:** Spend a PP to step up or double your Time die on a roll for an effect that can be accomplished by a 10 or lower Time rating.

## 12 Master

### Temporal Travel/Time Immunity

The “Dr. Who Effect” allows the mage to exist outside of time; immunize people, places or things from time’s passage; or travel forward or backward through time. Such godlike feats... feats that often cause a mage to become forever lost to history... are often best left to the GM’s discretion. Even for Masters, Time travel is a mysterious and maddeningly imprecise art. For extensive details about such things, see the sourcebook How Do You DO That?

**Time Mastery:** Take 6 appropriate stress or complication to double your Time die for a roll. On a failure, step up the same stress or complication you took to activate.

## Data (Correspondence)

### Accessing Reality Metacode

Data is reality. Anyone who thinks otherwise is fooling themselves. Although this reality extends only about as far as electronic data or media, that reach is damned near worldwide these days. And through that connection, Data Sphere specialists can find, contact, and reach out to anyone on the grid. All it takes is time and a little bit of information, plus the knowledge and the Will to work it properly.

A Technocratic refinement of the Correspondence Sphere, Data remains the province of the Virtual Adepts, the New World Order, and the various allies they choose to share it with. Like all Spheres, its properties are meta-physical,

extending beyond the realms of conventional reality. Although the Data specialist is, theoretically, just using the tools at their disposal, the greater reaches of this Sphere extend beyond the bounds of what should be possible, according to the Masses. It's not "magick", of course – stop thinking such unmutual thoughts! It does, however, pull the strands of Information-Age technology in some pretty impressive ways.

In most regards, Data functions like Correspondence with regards to the powers at its disposal. The primary differences come through the elements of connection and the methods of its employment. To use Data-based Effects, the technomancer must collate data about the person or location they're trying to reach, and then have gear in place that can reach the subject of their attention. The more expertise that specialist brings to bear on the situation (that is, the higher the Data rating they have), the easier it is for them to establish a connection with minimal amounts of data.

Because Data depends upon technological methods of information and connection, a target who's not on the grid cannot be affected by this Sphere. Given the current (and growing) extent of information technology, however, the Data can reach most people within the industrialized world... especially if they participate in social media, modern banking, or government processes.

A Data specialist knows their way around the technology of our age. Though they might not be the humorless grunt so often associated with number-crunching disciplines, they've certainly got intense focus, an eye for detail, and a ruthless capacity for exploiting the bounds and bindings of information technologies.

## 4 Initiate

*On the Ones and Zeros*

Through a haze of code, the Data initiate begins to see the interconnectedness of all things. Bringing that esoteric level of comprehension to the world beyond their keyboard, the specialist can determine the exact distance between points or the connections between visible objects. Their understanding allows them to work on base-level projects without instruments, thanks to a growing familiarity with relationship information.

**Data Perception:** Step up your lowest die on any roll to perceive any phenomena under the purview of Data or create a related asset.

## 5 Apprentice

*The Reach and the View*

With a few quick calculations, the specialist can assess theoretical and practical space – assessments that allow them to perceive what's happening elsewhere. Expanding the metaphysical elements of this discipline, this understanding allows the agent to see and touch places in other areas of the world, so long as he they instruments that allow them access to distant locations.

Combining Data with other Spheres, the specialist can extend the practical range of Technocratic Effects. Matter allows them to modify Union tech from a distance; Mind lets them communicate with agents or targets worldwide; Forces lets them attack distant targets; and Entropy allows them to predict and alter probability patterns and spot flaws in objects that they can perceive. As with regular Correspondence, the operator's Data Rank must be equal to, or higher than, the highest Rank in a connected Effect.

**Data Manipulation:** On rolls to create an asset that can be produced by a 6 or lower Data rating, add 6 and step up your effect die.

## 6 Disciple

*Quantum Teleportation/Firewalling/Surveillance Hub*

Advanced Data transfer techniques allow the specialist to more or less sidestep conventional physics of spatial dimensions. In practical terms, this allows them to download themselves into quantum teleportation mode; erect firewalls of particle physics that effectively ward objects, places, or people; and divide their perceptions across a multilocational surveillance hub. Combined with other Spheres, this expertise helps the agent move things, forces, and living beings through intervening space.

Again, however, these Procedures demand the appropriate gear on either side of the Effect. Such violations of conventional physics demand the proper technology.

**Data Control:** Spend a PP to create a 8 asset that can be produced by a 8 or lower Data rating.

## 10 Adept

*Between Space/Dimensional Cohabitation/Multilocation Access*

With such technology in place, the expert specialist can open quantum gateways between locations, create pocket dimensions between conventional space-time continuums, and disperse holographic manifestations of themselves into several concurrent locations. With the appropriate Life, Mind, and Primal Force Procedures, those manifestations can even become as solid as the agent themselves and perform different tasks in the finest Agent Smith tradition.

**Data Command:** Spend a **PP** to step up or double your Data die on a roll for an effect that can be accomplished by a **10** or lower Data rating.

## 12 Master

*Redistribute Physical Properties/Fold Space/Hyperdispersed Perceptions*

Data Mastery merges conventional physics with sophisticated hypermath. The few specialists at this level can stack physical locations into the same space, alter the spatial dimensions and properties of a target, or disperse their perceptions into so many concurrent locations that a specialist may truthfully be said to have eyes and ears everywhere.

**Data Mastery:** Take **6** appropriate stress or complication to double your Data die for a roll. On a failure, step up the same stress or complication you took to activate.

# Dimensional Science (Spirit)

*Parsing Alternate Reality Spectrums*

Based upon the Tychoidian cosmology theories of the Void Engineers, Dimensional Science posits an Anthropic Principle Field in which the conscious human mind exerts a degree of control over its metaphysical reality space. Because of that Principle, lesser subdimensions have collected outside of Earthly space, losers in some contest of metaphysical Darwinism. The entities native to those subdimensions – extradimensional entities, or EDEs – strive to pass the Earthly barriers and infect the human world. And that's where Dimensional Science comes in, a method of asserting the Enlightened elements of the Anthropic Principle and keeping those EDEs out of human space.

In game terms, Dimensional Science is largely the same as the Spirit Sphere. Like other Technocratic Spheres of Influence, however, its Effects are bound to technological gear and viewed through a lens of science, not mysticism. Although Void Engineers still apply the term Umbrae to these subdimensions (considering them mathematical shadows of the human Consensus), the Dimensional Specialist's approach lacks animistic reverence, even though it features scientific awe.

Unlike Data, Dimensional Science remains largely exclusive to a single Convention: the Void Engineers. In many regards, it's a well-kept secret, propagated only through intense training at VE facilities. The Dimensional Specialist, then, is a man or woman of intense focus within a multilevel framework of thinking and perception. By outside standards, they appear paranoid... but of course, if you knew the things they know about the pervasive nature of subdimensions and EDEs, you'd be paranoid too...

## 4 Initiate

*EDE Scan/Evaluate Gauntlet/Map Dimensional Region*

Through applied principles and technologies, the specialist learns to perceive EDE presence and potential incursions, evaluate the characteristics of alternate dimensions and thickness of the barrier that keeps them outside the Consensus, and perceive the essential terrain in the pocket dimensions on the other side of that Gauntlet.

**Dimensional Science Perception:** Step up your lowest die on any roll to perceive any phenomena under the purview of Dimensional Science or create a related asset.

## 6 Apprentice

*Dimensional Vibration/Modify Dimensional Gauntlet/Transdimensional Field*

At this level of expertise, the specialist can use radiation pulses, hypermath, and samples of transdimensional matter to grant access to those alternate dimensions. With the correct instruments, that specialist can send out artificial ripples into nearby subdimensions in order to attract EDEs and leave signals for other Dimensional Specialists.

Thanks to the hypermathematical models and recordings involved in Dimensional Science, a specialist can also manipulate the Gauntlet, raising or lowering it, even as low as 0 – a feat mystic mages cannot duplicate. The Gauntlet 0 Effect lasts for only one scene, but it counters the punishment of the Dimensional Anomaly (that is, the Avatar Storm) if that phenomenon is still in play. However, the specialist themselves still suffers feedback damage as they work the Effect. (In game terms, they take the usual Avatar Storm damage, though they prevent other characters from taking it during that scene.)

On a related note, the specialist learns to also surround themselves (or, with the appropriate Spheres, other people or objects) with a transdimensional field; this, in turn, allows them to interact with subdimensions on a limited level (brief touch) without suffering harm from the Dimensional Anomaly.

**Dimensional Science Manipulation:** On rolls to create an asset that can be produced by a **6** or lower Dimensional Science rating, add **6** and step up your effect die.

## 8 Disciple

*Dimensional Shift/Manipulate Paraphysical Phenomena/  
Phase Disruption Field*

Increased understanding allows the specialist to step sideways into alternate dimensions, manipulate the paraphysical matter (that is, ephemera) of those dimensions, and – with the correct weaponry – send out destructive phase disruption fields of vibrations that disorient, injure, or disintegrate EDEs. (In short, their attacks can harm spirit entities.) Thanks to the Stun/Kill/Disintegrate settings on those weapons, they can choose whether to inflict different levels damage on Umbral targets... and although EDE's experience all forms of damage the same way, dimension-hopping humans and Deviant werebeasts do not.

**Dimensional Science Control:** Spend a **PP** to create a **8** asset that can be produced by a **8** or lower Dimensional Science rating.

## 10 Adept

*Alter Dimensional Topography/Dimensional Gateway/  
Stabilize Dimensional Field*

Increased understanding and appropriate technologies help the specialist make lasting changes to alternate dimensions. Reworking the paraphysical constraints of a given space, they may craft pocket domains and dimensional walls in order to block or catch EDEs. A skilled specialist can do this even from the Earthly side of the Gauntlet, thus avoiding the effects of the Dimensional Anomaly. Using similar techniques, the specialist can also carve out rapid-transit paths; in game terms, this Effect cuts down the specialist's travel time within the Otherworlds.

The specialist can also open large gateways into the subdimensions, although the people passing through those gates suffer the effects of the Anomaly unless the Gauntlet has already been lowered to 0 by a Dimension Science **6** Procedure.

Channeling Primal Energy (Quintessence) through appropriate technology, the specialist can also strengthen the Enlightened Anthropic Principle enough to prevent Void Adaptation.

**Dimensional Science Command:** Spend a **PP** to step up or double your Dimensional Science die on a roll for an effect that can be accomplished by a **10** or lower Dimensional Science rating.

## 12 Master

*Anthropic Field/Breach Spatial Horizon/Cosmogenesis*

Utilizing the ultimate applications of Anthropic Principle Fields, the specialist can generate their own Anthropic Field (with the right instruments, of course) that allows them to venture beyond both Horizons and venture into the Deep Universe. By crafting a reality bubble around themselves, that specialist can keep other Earthly beings alive with them as well and can engineer and pilot vehicles for Deep Universe travel.

Employing the arcane technologies of Cosmogenesis, that Master Specialist may also engineer and create Horizon Constructs and custom-designed and constructed EDE organisms. They must employ Primal Utility energies as well (often including Life and Matter if the EDE construct is to survive outside the subdimensions... that is, if it's going to be more than simple ephemera), but these cosmic computations allow Void Engineers to harness powers not unlike those of legendary gods.

**Dimensional Science Mastery:** Take **6** appropriate stress or complication to double your Dimensional Science die for for a roll. On a failure, step up the same stress or complication you took to activate.

## Primal Utility (Prime)

*Investing Essential Energies*

To the Enlightened Hypereconomist, Prime is not some ephemeral energy bubbling up from the cracks of the world. Instead, it's an energy field generated by Homo economicus: the ambitiously conscious human being who acts to further their self-interest. Related to the VE theory of Enlightened Anthropic Principle Fields (although they don't know it by that name), the Syndicate's hypereconomic theories see Quintessence energy rising from human interest and activity. People literally invest themselves in such ventures, and although they might not see the energy they create through such transactions, they can feel it... hence the sensations involved in feeling valued or worthless.

Whereas other Technocratic Conventions stick close to the "essential energies" model of Prime, the Syndicate's Primal Utility specialists understand the Sphere differently. In game terms, the applications are more or less the same. For a Syndicate character, however, Prime flows through investing and withdrawing energetic currency through Ventures (value-generating Nodes) that manipulate the metaphysical economies of human value. By accessing what they call "creation's credit rating", the hypereconomist controls that currency, investing it where it does the most good... for them.

Perhaps the greatest edge granted to those who understand Primal Utility comes from the aforementioned Ventures. By investing in a Venture, the hypereconomist can draw Primal

Energy (Quintessence) from a mundane business. In game terms, that business becomes a Node; if the character has a lasting personal connection with that Venture, then he's got access to that Node as well. Only a character with at least one dot in Primal Utility can access the Quintessence from that Venture; another mage might sense the energies but remain unable to access their power.

Prime-savvy hypereconomists always watch for invisible bottom lines. Attuned to the effects of Market Correction (Paradox) and the perpetual exchange of energies conducted through human intercourse (sexual and otherwise), they can spot value – or the lack of it – in the least obvious situations, and he knows how to get the most for their investments in whatever form they might manifest.

#### 4 Initiate

*Create Primal Utility/Deposit Primal Utility/Exploit Primal Venture*

Assessment analysis gives the hypereconomist a view of Prime flows, Resonance signatures, and applied metaphysical processes (that is, magick) in their vicinity. As with all other Technocratic Sphere Effects, this demands the correct instruments and training, although certain practices and instruments (especially dominion and hypereconomics) simply give the specialist a hunch about the energies in play. Some specialists see colorful flows of energy but dismiss such visions as simply mental constructs for an otherwise invisible process.

As with Prime 4, the hypereconomist can also invest such energies and can utilize the Prime Force generated by Ventures as well as other, more mystical sources of Quintessence.

**Primal Utility Perception:** Step up your lowest die on any roll to perceive any phenomena under the purview of Primal Utility or create a related asset.

#### 5 Apprentice

*Create Gadgets/Perfect Material Exploitation/Primal Innovation*

Through sophisticated uses of instruments and principles, the hypereconomist can modify existing materials with an energized-value buzz; they can even create something from nothing, thanks to the principle of increased worth. In game terms, this allows them to use the normal Prime 5 Effects, although the character still needs to have some technological source to facilitate their conjurations.

**Primal Utility Manipulation:** On rolls to create an asset that can be produced by a 5 or lower Primal Utility rating, add 5 and step up your effect die.

#### 8 Disciple

*Create Stable Extraordinary Devices/Living Asset Exploitation/Use Currency & Primal Storage*

Utilizing energetic manifestations called Currency (in mystic terms, Tass), plus efficient managerial skills, the specialist can employ a team to create permanent Devices with their Currency, restore their personal stock (Pattern) with Currency, and drain or refill Devices and storage batteries called Matrices (that is, Periaps) with their available Currency.

**Primal Utility Control:** Spend a PP to create a 8 asset that can be produced by a 8 or lower Primal Utility rating.

#### 10 Adept

*Create Tass/Exploit Opportunity/Liquidate Assets*

Skillful use of hypereconomics now allows the specialist to create Currency from free-flowing energy. Typically, this Tass involves precious materials, paper money, credit cards, or other items of value (paintings, stock certificates, bearer bonds, drugs, etc.). Unlike mystic mages (or other Technocrats), however, they can use only the energy generated by Primal Utility activities... and not, for example, charge up their Platinum card at the nearest Node.

By exploiting the Primal Opportunities called “wellsprings” in superstitionist jargon, that hypereconomist can also draw energy out of an exciting event rather than a consistent source.

On the flipside, they can also destroy material objects while divesting them of their value (Quintessence). Although the specialist cannot access this energy, they can keep other people from utilizing those resources. (“I’d sooner burn this warehouse down than let you have it...”)

**Primal Utility Command:** Spend a PP to step up or double your Primal Utility die on a roll for an effect that can be accomplished by a 10 or lower Primal Utility rating.

#### 12 Master

*Create Living Assets/Generate Primal Conflux & Ventures/Liquidate Living Assets/Market Compensation*

Like Mastery of the mystic Prime, Mastery of this Rank allows the specialist to create permanent Devices, open new Confluxes (Nodes) and Ventures, liquidate living things (typically through vulgar applications of disintegration technology – although they could simply shoot someone and then burn the body), and negate the effects of Market Correction (Paradox) as if he were a Master of Prime Arts... though, of course, they have more technological finesse.

**Primal Utility Mastery:** Take 6 appropriate stress or complication to double your Primal Utility die for a roll. On a failure, step up the same stress or complication you took to activate.

# Assets

A conveniently prepared spell, a friend in the right office or a perfectly practiced gunplay trick, mages are a crafty bunch, able to find advantages in the moment or prepare for virtually any situation using their numerous unusual skills and magickal powers. These beneficial circumstances are represented through assets. Assets are narratively significant traits that improve your chances of influencing a story to your benefit.

Giving an object a die rating by creating an asset means that this object is a significant part of the story. Most objects in the game are color, setting, or flavor rather than an asset; if it's something that exists in the story, something the Storyteller or players are using as part of their description, then it should be a part of narrating the outcome of a test or contest, but it doesn't confer any more dice.

## Using assets

During play, a player can add as many of their fictionally appropriate assets to a dice pool as they'd like. Since they spent a **PP** to create the asset, there's no need to spend another to use it.

Assets belong to the character of the player that created them, and by default can't be included in anyone else's pool. An asset created to help another character belongs to that character and can't be used by the creator's character. Spend an additional **PP** to declare an asset to be open and usable by any character in the scene, including GMCs.

Assets — also called temporary assets when they need to be distinguished from signature assets — last until the end of the scene, unless something in the story makes them no longer relevant, or they're stepped down or eliminated.

The player may spend an additional **PP** to keep the asset around through to the end of the session.

## Creating Assets

There are several ways for players to create assets during play:

- A player can spend a **PP** and create a **6** asset with a name they come up with.
- Some SFX allow for stunts — assets that start with a **8** die rating.
- A player can create an asset greater than **6** and without spending a **PP** by making a test or a series of tests.
- When the narrative situation calls for it, the Storyteller may declare that a **6** asset is created for free as part of

a successful test that wasn't made explicitly to create an asset.

### Clues As Assets

Anytime a PC wants to get a read on somebody, case a scene, spot something out of the ordinary, or generally just use their senses, they're creating an asset.

The Storyteller usually calls for the roll, though it's just as valid for a player to ask for it. The difficulty for an asset test is set by rolling a straight **6 6** — unless the Storyteller decides otherwise. A player's dice pool for the test is assembled from appropriate traits.

With a successful test, the PC gains some crucial information. If the PC spends a **PP** after succeeding at the test, they can bank the asset until they need it, give it to another character, or keep it for longer.

With a failed test, the PC doesn't gain any useful advantage. If there are complications, they generally represent the consequences of poking around places trying to find stuff out.

### Gear

Assets created by tests are called gear. The test may reflect your character actually making the gear or pulling it out of a bag or buying it in a shop. Whatever the story details, gear starts with a die roll.

To create an asset by attempting a test, a player declares what their character does to create the asset and assembles an appropriate dice pool. The Storyteller rolls to set the difficulty, usually with something basic like **6 6**.

When creating a gear asset, you may add an SFX by stepping down your effect die or selecting an additional effect die of **4** or larger. If your effect die is higher than the asset cap, you can add SFX to step it down to match the asset cap.

The GM may offer you a limit to add to your Gear. If your test creation roll succeeded, accept that limit to step up your effect die. Adding an SFX and accepting a limit essentially balance each other out.

The GM may also offer you a limit on a failed roll, in which case you can accept the limit to get the gear asset after all, but you do not step up the effect die.

If you roll a hitch in creating gear, the GM may activate it to add a limit to your gear, in which case you gain a **PP** and do not step up the effect die.

Gear can be used by one person for one scene. This allows you to make gear in one scene to be used in a later scene. You may spend **PP**s as normal to use gear for more than one scene or to open up the asset for everyone's use.

Gear assets can be retained for the next session by spending a **PP**. You may spend this **PP** at the end of the previous session or at the beginning of the current session.

## Gear SFX List

The following SFX can be attached to gear assets or signature assets. They also may be used for STCs if the STCs are presumed to use the gear with those SFX.

The SFX are grouped into different rough categories thematically for convenience.

Despite the names and some flavour implied in the SFX, they can be renamed and reflavoured to match the gear concept you have in mind, in that case it would be preferable for the renamed SFX to have the original name in the parentheses at the end.

### General Gear SFX

Some SFX are universal, so let's start ones that can be attached to any gear.

**Awkward:** Gain a **PP** when you set aside the largest die in a pool that includes this asset. You may use that die as your effect die.

**Comfy:** When you use this asset to recover a complication, spend a **PP** to step up your effect die.

**Conspicuous (Limit):** Gain a **PP** when this asset attracts unwanted attention.

**Cornucopia:** Spend a **PP** when feeding friends and allies to add a **6** and keep an additional effect die for each person you are providing a Well Fed asset.

**Delicate (Limit):** Any hitch (or opportunity, if it's GMC gear) may shutdown this asset. Restore via test; when you do, step up its die rating.

**Subtle:** When you roll to hide this asset or when you bring it out of hiding, spend a **PP** to double its rating.

**Finicky (Limit):** Double this asset's die when it's put to use, but both 1s and 2s count as hitches.

**Flashy (Limit):** When you use this asset, gain or step up the Priority Target complication to step up your effect die.

**Power Requirements (Limit):** Gain a **PP** and shutdown the asset when this asset's power source runs out. Recover at scene end.

**Single Use:** Add an additional die to your total and eliminate this asset.

**Shoddy:** Attempts to shutdown this gear do not need an effect die larger than its rating; just beating the difficulty will do. When it is shutdown, gain a **PP**. Recover at scene end.

**Spread Targeting:** Step down your largest effect die to select an additional effect die.

**Supercharged:** Add a **6** to Peril to double this asset for a single roll.

### Armor SFX

There's a multitude of ways to protect oneself from damage, and these SFX will make protecting yourself easier (or harder in interesting ways).

**Ablative:** Step down this asset to ignore incoming Harmed stress or an injury-related complication. Recover the asset via a repair test.

**Authoritative:** When you lean on the authority indicated by this armor's insignia, add a **6** to Peril and double this asset.

**Encumbering (Limit):** When this armor's weight and construction interferes with your movement, give its die to your opposition to roll as a complication and gain a **PP**.

**Eye Slits (Limit):** When you don't see something important because of your armor's decreased visibility, gain a **PP**.

**Ill-Fitting (Limit):** At the end of any physical exertion in this armor, gain a **PP** and the complication Chafing **6**.

**Loud (Limit):** When the noise of your armor draws unwanted attention to you, gain a **PP**.

**Reactive:** When this armor's external explosive charges reduce the energy of incoming attacks, step down this asset to step down an incoming complication. Recover whenever the charges are replaced.

**Revealing:** When you enter a fight in which this armor's design exposes your body to danger but makes you look good doing it, gain a **PP**. At the end of the fight, step up any Harmed stress or injury complication you took.

**Shock Absorbent:** Step down the effect die of any complications you suffer from blunt or crushing attacks.

**Supple:** When you move through tight spaces or employ acrobatics, spend a **PP** to double this asset.

**Spikes:** When physically attacked in melee combat, spend a **PP** to inflict the complication Gouged by Spikes **6** on the attacker. This complication cannot be stepped up by this SFX.

**Turnblade:** Spend a **PP** to rename a complication involving grievous puncture or laceration injuries to bruising or concussion.

## Clobbering SFX

Blunt force trauma, bludgeoning damage. Clubs, maces, or even a very lucky crowbar, these SFX will make them hit sure and hard.

**Bonebreaker:** Spend a **PP** to step up Harmed stress or an injury complication you inflict that involves broken bones.

**This Supplies....:** When you exploit your leverage, spend a **PP** to step up your effect die.

**Unbalanced (Limit):** Step down the largest die in your pool before you roll to step up your effect die after.

**Reach:** Step down your effect die to win a tied test or contest round.

**Spiked:** Step down this weapon to step up Harmed stress or any injury complication it inflicts. Recover at end of scene.

**Weighty:** Gain or step up Tired stress to step up your effect die.

## Combat Gear SFX

Gear that exists to cause harm has a number of shared SFX.

**Defensive:** When fighting defensively, double this weapon's die and step down your effect die.

**Disarm:** Double this asset when you roll to disarm an opponent; on success, inflict no stress or complication but shutdown their handheld asset. They may restore via test or hitch (or opportunity, if they're a player character).

**Intimidating:** Double this asset's die when rolling to intimidate and gain or step up the complication Priority Target **3**.

**Keep At Bay:** Gain a **PP** when you use your weapon to inflict a complication limiting a target's movement instead of injuring them.

**Knockback:** Spend a **PP** to apply an extra effect die, stepped up, to inflict the complication Knocked Back.

**"Non-Lethal":** Step up the effect die when inflicting a complication for deterrent injury (nausea, pain, shock); the complication is eliminated at the end of the scene. If you roll a hitch, do not step up the effect die; inflict Harmed which must recovered as normal.

**Offensive:** When fighting offensively, spend a **PP** to step up your effect die.

**Out of Ammo (Limit):** gain a **PP** when this weapon runs out of ammunition. Step down the asset for any roll where you use it without ammunition.

**Ornamental (Limit):** When you use this weapon in an actual fight, gain a **PP** when you swap out its rating for a **4**.

## Crafting SFX

These SFX are for gear that helps you produce more assets, enhance other assets or make an impression with your craft quality.

**Craftmaster Quality:** When you use this tool to work without haste or interruption, step up the effect die.

**Detailing Tools:** When you create an asset and your effect die is higher than the cap, earn a **PP** and step down your effect die.

**Mass Production:** When you use this tool to create an asset, use a second effect die to create a second asset for free.

**Precision Instruments:** When you are building or creating with this asset, spend a **PP** to prevent a hitch from being activated. You may spend multiple **PP**'s for multiple hitches as long as you do not botch.

**Straw to Gold:** The quality of this tool makes up for inferior materials. Spend a **PP** to step up an asset you are consuming in a crafting roll.

## Dual Wield SFX

For assets that represent a pair of weapons made to be used in tandem the following SFX can be applied for more interesting outcomes.

**Double Parry:** When you cross your weapons to ward off a powerful attack, add an additional die to your total and step down this asset for the remainder of the scene.

**Dual Attack:** When you attack with both weapons simultaneously, spend a **PP** to double this asset.

**Dual Wield:** When you wield a weapon in each hand on a roll to inflict stress, step down the largest die in a pool to keep an extra effect die.

**Main Gauche:** When you surprise your opponent with your second weapon, roll this asset's rating and add it directly to your total. Then add the die to Peril. You may do this after you roll your pool.

**Riposte:** When you successfully defend against an attack, spend a **PP** to inflict a complication equal to your effect die.

## Enchanted Weapon SFX

**Blessed:** When this item is used against cursed or undead targets, step up your effect die.

**Demanding (Limit):** This weapon makes demands at awkward moments; when it does so, earn a **PP** and

shutdown the asset. Restore via test or otherwise fulfilling the weapon's demand.

**Electrified:** Spend a **PP** to wreath this weapon in electricity. On any subsequent attack roll, each metal target (or target wearing metal) adds a **6** to your attack pool and allows you to use an additional die as an effect die. Once this effect is used, the weapon's charge is grounded.

**Flaming:** Spend a **PP** to ignite this weapon. While ignited, step up its effect die for targets who can be burned. The weapon's die is added to any roll to detect you or attack you at range.

**Freezing:** Spend a point to freeze this weapon. While frozen, step up its effect die for targets who can be injured by its extreme cold. On a hitch, the weapon has thawed out.

**Ghostblade:** When fighting ghosts or other undead, double this asset.

**Horrific (Limit):** When this cursed asset whispers terrible secrets on how to destroy your opponent, double its die and gain or step up the complication **Horrified**.

**Loyal:** Spend a **PP** to return the weapon to your hand. If you do this as part of an attack (their head just happened to be in the flight path) or to create an asset (it is pretty impressive), step up your effect die.

**Magebane:** Select an additional effect die to inflict the **Drained** complication on a spellcasting target, then add that die to Peril.

**Seeking:** Speak a target's name to the weapon and spend a **PP** to double the asset's die against them.

**Singing (Limit):** When this weapon decides to break out in song (it just does that) and gives away your position, embarrasses you, or otherwise inconveniences you, gain a **PP**.

**Spellslicer:** Spend a **PP** to add to your roll a die that matches every die in the opposition's pool representing something magical.

**Thirst Cursed (Limit):** Every dawn, gain or step up the complication **Bloodthirst**; you may roll **Bloodthirst** in any roll with murderous intent. When you kill with this weapon, eliminate **Bloodthirst**.

## Firearm SFX

When you want your firearms to have more fire in your arms grab an SFX from here.

**Armor Piercing Rounds:** When using armor piercing rounds, spend a **PP** to add a die to your pool of equal size to the opposition's die representing armor.

**Black Powder (Limit):** When your powder gets wet, earn a **PP** and shutdown this asset. Recover at end of scene.

**Pray and Spray:** Add a **6** to Peril to double this asset.

**Recoil:** Step up your effect die on this roll, then give it to your opposition to roll in their next action.

**Roomsweeper:** Spend a **PP** to add a **6** to your pool for every additional target in front of you. Keep an extra effect die for each target after you roll.

**Scope:** When you are able to aim without haste or interruption, step up your effect die.

**Silencer:** Spend a **PP** to add a **6** to your pool for every potential witness in earshot. Keep an extra effect die to inflict the complication **Unaware** on each target.

**Special Ammo:** When using special ammunition, spend a **PP** to step up your effect die.

**Warped Aim:** When shooting at range, gain a **PP** to step down this asset's die.

## Mechanical SFX

The SFX for more complicated creations of mechanics or magick.

**Full Auto:** Double this asset's die for a single test or contest, then step down the asset.

**Interference (Limit):** When this piece of gear interferes with other technology that you or an ally needs, add its rating to the opposition pool and gain a **PP**.

**Jammed (Limit):** Gain a **PP** when this asset stops working right as you need it. Shutdown the asset and restore it via test or opportunity.

**Some Assembly Required (Limit):** In any scene, declare that this gear will only be useful if it's properly set up. Shutdown the asset. Recover with a test where you properly set it up and step it up.

## Mobility SFX

Exoskeletons, flying carpets, enchanted clothing, and teleportation routes, all of them can help to move, and with these SFX they can move you even better.

**Evasive Maneuvers:** When you use this item to slow down pursuers, step down this asset for the scene to step up your effect die.

**Grapplehook:** When you hook this asset onto an item, person, or bit of landscape, gain a **PP**. This asset is attached until you make a successful roll to close the distance or to detach.

**Hello There:** When you use this item to travel at surprising speed or in a surprising manner, spend a **PP** to join a scene in progress.

**Maneuverable:** When you use this item to create an asset for moving into an advantageous position, spend a **PP** to step up your effect die.

**Poof:** Spend a **PP** when you use this asset to escape. You immediately leave the scene and cannot be targeted; you give in to any contest you were in. You may spend another **PP** to describe your new location and re-enter the scene.

**Sharkskin Gloves:** Spend a **PP** to double this asset when climbing.

**Ta Da:** When you use this item to make an impressive entrance, gain a **PP**.

**Vault:** Spend a **PP** to double this item when using it to vault over or around obstacles.

## Sensor SFX

These assets exist for getting more information about their surrounding, which can be a great way to make the scenarios players are engaged in more detailed and developed.

**Data Firehose (Limit):** Gain a **PP** when you get distracted by the torrent of information this asset delivers to you.

**Hard Ping:** When you use this asset to find someone or something such that they will know you are looking, add a **C** to Peril and double this asset.

**Heads Up Display:** When another player creates an information asset and shares the details, gain it for free and step up the asset.

**Heuristic Algorithm:** When you trust this asset to synthesize an answer for you, double its die for a roll in which both 1s and 2s count as hitches.

**Passive Scanning:** Spend a **PP** to reveal an exploitable detail that your passive methods have uncovered.

**Recon:** When you scout an area with a test, keep a second effect die to create an asset for a helpful item or situation you find.

**Tracker:** Spend a **PP** to step up your effect die when inflicting the complication Being Tracked.

## Sharp SFX

Slashing damage, swords and axes. Add these SFX for some extra sharp edge.

**Barbed:** When recovering complications inflicted by this weapon, both 1s and 2s count as hitches.

**Bloodletter:** When you make someone bleed, add a **6** to Peril to use an extra effect die to inflict a Bleeding complication. Activate later opportunities to step up the complication.

**Cavalry Blade:** When you use this weapon in mounted combat, step up your effect die.

**Serrated:** Step up your effect die when you attack an unarmored combatant.

**Shieldsplitter:** When you leave yourself exposed to perform a powerful strike against a shield or armored target, step up your effect die and give the largest die used in your total to your opposition to use in a subsequent roll to attack you.

## Specialty Weapon SFX

Hypertech, unorthodox magick, clever applications of physics and more, here are the SFX to get weird.

**Entangling:** Spend a **PP** to step up your effect die when inflicting an Entangled complication or similar.

**LASERSWORD:** Spend a **PP** to use this weapon to cut through any object. If that object is represented by a trait, double this asset in the test to shutdown that trait.

**Monowire:** Add a **6** to Peril to double this asset. On a hitch, you or an ally gain Hurt equal to the highest Peril die without removing that die from Peril.

**Nonlinear:** Use the curve or flexibility of this weapon to circumvent defenses and spend a **PP** to double this asset's die.

**Swordbreaker:** When fighting against a longsword, step up your effect die when you target the weapon for a complication or shutdown.

**Trapping Hook:** Use the hook of this weapon (like a khopesh) to trap an opponent's limb or weapon and step down your effect die to add a third die to your total.

**Whipcrack:** On a successful attack, spend a **PP** to give everyone else in the scene Rattled **6**.

## Stabby SFX

Piercing, stabbing and poking, rapiers, spiers, and sharpened staff points, all can make use of these SFX.

**Perforation:** When you step up Hurt or a related complication that you inflicted, step it up again.

**Poison Injector:** Add a **6** to Peril to use an extra effect die to inflict a Poisoned complication. Activate later opportunities to step up the complication.

**Snap Off Blade:** When you stab a target, snap the blade off the hilt and leave it in their body. Select a second effect die to create the complication Embedded Blade Shard and eliminate this asset.

**Sticky (Limit):** When this weapon gets stuck in a target, gain a **PP** and shutdown this asset. Recover with a test or opportunity.

## Finding Gear

When adventurers search for useful items – usually after a successful encounter – they can make a basic roll to determine if they find something helpful that isn't secured or hidden away. A successful roll means they discover a useful item that can be used as an asset. By spending a **PP**, they can add this item to their character sheet for the remainder of the session (and potentially beyond).

This “loot roll” doesn’t represent what gear a defeated enemy might have, but rather if the character finds something they’re looking for – whether on a fallen foe or lying around the area. Like any other roll, it follows strict rules: if a desired item couldn’t reasonably be found (like a laser rifle in a castle’s garbage heap), the roll isn’t allowed. Rolls are only made for items that could plausibly be present, but in a fantasy dungeon, the items adventurers typically want are usually hidden somewhere.

Players must specify exactly what they’re searching for – whether it’s a sword, a well-fitting suit of armor, a helpful potion, or an intact spellbook. They might explain why such an item could be there, describe how they’re searching, or offer some combination of both. Generally, more detail is better.

The GM may also set an upper limit on the item’s effectiveness to reflect the usefulness of what can be found. Often, it’s easiest to establish a general cap for the entire session – for instance, limiting any found item’s rating to **8**. Locations designed to store specific items might allow for a higher cap.

For difficulty, the GM can roll Peril, telling the player the target number they need to beat.

The player assembles a dice pool as usual. Scene distinctions related to the encounter can be applied here: if the distinction is helpful, it’s rolled as a **8** if it’s a hindrance, it’s rolled as a **4** and gives the player a **PP**. For example, a Haunted Armory could be rolled as a **8** due to the availability of various weapons, or as a **4** if everything is damaged and neglected. The player chooses how the scene distinction applies.

If any dice roll a 1, it could trigger a trap or cause the player to encounter rot and decay. For example, a display case with the captain’s armor might be trapped with poison darts, weapon racks could collapse due to dry rot, or cursed alchemical ingredients could harm the player. Give the player a **PP** when this happens, then either impose a **3** complication or add the rolled 1 to the doom pool.

If the player’s roll beats the difficulty, they find what they’re looking for and gain it as an asset, with a rating equal to the effect die or the cap, whichever is lower. This asset can be used for one scene – either the current one or a future scene. To keep the asset for the entire session, the player can spend a **PP**. If, for example, a player searches for a sword but

only rolls a **4** effect die, they might decide it’s not worth keeping.

Players can trigger the Hinder SFX during a gear roll to gain a **PP**, then use that **PP** to keep the asset for the rest of the level.

If a player has plenty of **PP**s, they can spend one to keep an additional effect die, acquiring two assets instead – for example, both a Forbidden Grimoire **8** and a Ceremonial Dagger **6**. Keeping both items for the session would cost two additional **PP**s.

If a player fails their roll not only do they not find what they are looking for, it means that this the asset a player attempted to find isn’t there to find for anybody. No second attempts, though the search can be resumed after the next encounter.

## Forging Gear

Whether they once trained as blacksmiths, have knowledge of herbs and nature, or managed to escape captivity by crafting an unstoppable suit of armor, creator-characters are a beloved archetype in many stories – and they’re a lot of fun to role-play.

Creating items for later use is a fundamental part of Cortex gameplay. Typically, it involves a quick, straightforward test, but this mechanic can be expanded to add more depth to the game. One way to do this is by crafting assets to create other assets. For instance, you might travel to gather Golden Wheat **8** and Ambrosial Honey **6**, then return to bake Blessed Bread **10** using those assets. By introducing challenges and drama into the stages of this process, crafting the ultimate item can unfold into its own storyline.

This rule provides guidelines for using assets to make other assets and for setting caps on assets created through tests. In essence, to forge exceptional gear, you first need to gather exceptional materials. The more resources you collect (and the more effort you put into obtaining them), the more impressive the final product can be.

When crafting, characters gather or produce intermediate assets to contribute to the test for creating the final item as an asset. These intermediate assets could be materials, fuel, blueprints, or access to facilities like a forge.

Larger and more numerous dice increase the chance of achieving a heroic success, which can enhance the effect die. Even if your dice pool only includes a few **10**s, a heroic success might lead to a **12** effect die.

Powerful items also require equally exceptional materials, meaning the cap on the final asset is no more than one step above the largest material asset used. If the effect die exceeds the cap, reduce it according to any special effects (SFX) involved.

There's no minimum rating requirement for intermediate assets, but once used in crafting, they're removed from the character sheet.

Asset Cap	No of Materials	Materials Rating
4	0	—
6	1	—
8	2	6
10	3	8
12	4	10

## Financing Gear

This framework allows players to hire craftspeople when they can't create needed assets themselves.

Most of the time, craftspeople are happy to supply PCs with standard, unremarkable items at reasonable prices. Players can spend a **PP** to turn these into **6** assets or make a “shopping” roll to purchase assets based on their effect die, possibly limited by an asset cap. These options are for standard, “off-the-shelf” items that come without special effects (SFX). If players want something more unique, they'll need to commission a custom piece, which these rules cover.

When commissioning gear, players need to fulfill the crafter's specific requirements. Often, one or more of these “requirements” will involve paying a fee, which could be in the form of money, rare luxuries, or even social influence. Other common requests include gathering rare materials necessary to create the item. The crafter might also ask the PCs to perform classic heroic deeds, such as dealing with bandits who threaten their village or delivering a letter to their estranged daughter.

## The Financing Roll

The financing gear system shifts the asset creation roll to the start of the process, rather than the end. The character commissioning the item assembles a dice pool that represents their financial resources and negotiating skills, then rolls as usual to set a total and select an effect die.

The effect die from this financing roll determines the rating of the crafted asset. Special effects (SFX) can be added by reducing the effect die or by selecting additional effect dice larger than **4**.

Rather than comparing the financing roll's total to a difficulty, the total indicates both the number and complexity of the crafter's demands.

Total	Demands	Rating
20+	1	—
16-19	2	6
8-15	4	8
2-7	6	10

Most demands will eventually require rolls, but they're also opportunities for role-playing beyond the dice: each demand can become a small scene with character interactions and world-building, while some may even lead to full side quests. The GM will add the appropriate die rating to any roll made to fulfill the task.

The GM may also allow one or more demands to be completed by spending existing player assets in exchange for the new item. For example, the crafter might require the Fat Sack of Coin the player has, or request an introduction to the new local lord, using up a boon earned previously. Players could even start the negotiations by offering that coin bag or proposing that they help the crafter secure a position at the castle. Any assets used this way must be rated at least as high as the rating indicated in the demands table.

Once all tasks are completed, the crafter finishes the commissioned gear. There's no need for the GM to roll for the crafter's success in creating the item; completion is guaranteed. The commissioned item can be used in a single scene – typically the one it was crafted for. To use it throughout the session, the player can spend a **PP**.

## Stealing Gear

Not all valuable items can simply be found, forged, or bought – sometimes, the best gear is already owned by someone else, and our heroes might need to... acquire it by stealth.

This rule isn't meant for pilfering everyday items that can be found easily; for those, a single roll can suffice, with the effect die determining the stolen item's rating. Filching, on the other hand, is for making off with bigger, more valuable items.

Stealing significant gear is often a multi-step process that could take up much of a session. When the whole group is excited about playing out a heist, this can add a lot of fun to the game. However, if only one player is interested in this, the process might slow down the session for others. Be sure to pace it with the group's interest in mind.

## Preparing For The Heist

Eventually, players will make a single roll to seize the item and escape. Before that final moment, though, there are a few steps to handle first.

To start, the players need to identify the location of the item they plan to steal. Discovering who owns the item and where it's kept can require a single roll, multiple tests, or even a contest, depending on the story and session pacing. If the players already know the item's location, no roll is needed – they can proceed to the next step.

Strategic players may also “case the joint”, using surveillance and planning to determine the best timing, entry route, and any other helpful details. This phase consists of rolling to create assets like a Guard Rotation Schedule **6** or Facility Map **8**. Casing the joint is optional but can provide a significant advantage.

The next step is gaining access to the item itself. Similar to locating the item, this can involve a single test, a sequence of tests, a contest, or even a challenge. Here, the GM can use difficulty dice, the doom pool, or a group of guards representing the location's security. Any assets generated from casing the joint will be helpful in this stage.

## The Final Heist Roll

Once the groundwork is complete, the player can make the final roll to steal the item. Assets gained during planning and casing typically don't apply to this roll, as they were only used to get close enough for the attempt.

If the roll is successful, the player obtains the item and escapes. However, any complications (or “hitches”) might mean they were identified, pursued, or suffered some minor injuries in the process.

If the roll fails, the player doesn't get the item – or the GM might still allow them to take it, but with a disadvantage that could cause problems later. Failed rolls with complications could also result in being identified, pursued, or injured.

The effect die from this final roll determines the rating of the stolen asset. Players can add special effects (SFX) to the item by stepping down the effect die or adding other effect dice rated at **6** or higher. Alternatively, they may choose to apply one of the limits listed below to increase the effect die rating.

## Limitations On Stolen Gear

Stolen items often come with drawbacks. Here are three examples, each of which can also be used as special effects (SFX):

**Hot Item (Limit):** Gain a **PP** when this item's prior owners (or its prior prior owners) show up at the worst possible moment.

**Monogrammed (Limit):** When someone assumes you're this item's proper owner, double this asset's die in a roll; afterwards, gain the complication Mistaken Identity.

**Surprise Requirements (Limit):** When you discover this item requires something to operate, shutdown the asset and gain a **PP**. Recover via test.

## Signature Assets

Signature assets are assets that have become permanent traits for a character, playing an ongoing and essential part in their story. Usually, they cover anything that gives you an advantage and isn't covered by your other trait sets.

Note that your signature assets do not include all of your character's gear or other advantages. When something is an asset, it just means that it's so important to your character's story that you gain an extra die when using it.

Most signature assets break down into one of five categories: items, creatures, places, people, and rotes. Example signature assets for each category are listed below.

**Things** are the most common form of signature asset, including items or equipment that you own, carry, or have access to. Examples include Magic Carpet, 1971 Dodge Challenger, Universal Translator, My Family's Heirloom Sword, Handheld Medical Scanner, Chainsaw, Laser Pistol, etc.

**Creatures** include pets, mounts, animal companions, familiars, and the like. Examples include Armored Warhorse, Well-Trained Bloodhound, My Cat Snowball, Ornery Camel, Baby Dragon, Tamed Pterodactyl, Pocket Monster, etc.

**Places** represent advantages gained from being in or having knowledge of a certain location. Examples include Seaside Hideout, Private Library, Special Forces Bar, Pocket Dimension, Hidden Glade, PANIC ROOM, MY Queen's Palace, My Uncle's Army Surplus Store, Satellite Hq, etc.

**People** are minor GMCs who can be relied upon to help you, at least occasionally. Examples include My Squire, Robot Bodyguard, Mob Informant, Hairy Alien Co-Pilot, Kid Sidekick, Psychic Little Sister, Wizard Mentor, Fence Who Doesn't Ask Questions, etc.

**Rotes** are magickal effects that were practiced to the point of expertise and come naturally. Examples include Creo Fulmen, Videte Per Materiam, Telekinesis, Intellego Magica, Aurelius' Minor Combat Adjustments, etc.

## Using Signature Assets

A signature asset belongs to a PC and is recorded on their character file – it doesn't need to be created during play and it gives the player an extra die to include in their dice pools when they can justify their use. Unlike skills or attributes, signature assets are about things a PC has or people they know, not about qualities innate to them. These assets are a great way to further reveal a PC's personality as a means of representing heirlooms, signature rotes or unique weapons or special relationships.

Signature assets can be temporarily knocked out, eliminated, rendered unusable, or damaged during play; but as they're a featured element of the PC's character file, the player can recover the signature asset between sessions or by spending a **PP** at the beginning of the next scene (with some narrative justification for getting it back/fixed).

## Rating Signature Assets

Signature assets begin with a **6** die rating but can be stepped up during play. They aren't tied to a distinction, attribute, or skill, but may complement any one of those traits. The die rating of your signature asset represents how much the asset can help you, as well as your own bond with it.

- **6** Something helpful and everyday, or that you've grown accustomed to.
- **8** Something special and interesting, or that you have a strong connection to.
- **10** Something rare and potent, or that you are defined by.
- **12** Something truly unique and powerful, or that transcends even your innate abilities.

## Signature Assets And SFX

Some assets may be as simple as a die rating, but on some players can unlock SFX. There are no default SFX for signature assets, so a conversation with a Storyteller about appropriate options should be had before an SFX is added.

## Sharing Signature Assets

A signature asset is made up of two things: your connection to something, and the something you're connected to. The die rating belongs to your connection, not to the thing itself. You and another character might both possess a signature asset, but at different die ratings.

Signature assets cannot be shared between PCs; if someone "borrows" a signature asset from a character (picking up the other character's heirloom sword, driving their custom sports car or referencing their grimoire), the borrower must spend a **PP** to create an asset as normal to get any benefit

from the asset borrowed, and the asset is rated at **6** like any other **PP** created asset.

## Dropping Signature Assets

At any point during the scene a player can choose to lose a signature asset narratively justifying it. In that case you gain XP equal to the price of the signature asset lost.

# Quintessence

---

Quintessence is the raw material of reality. Technocrats refer to it as Primal Energy. It is what flows through the patterns of reality and what makes magic possible. The primal force, quintessence can not truly be divided, measured or contained. The patterns of all supernaturals, mortals, inanimate objects, and the whole of the Tellurian is woven from Quintessence. The term literally translates to “Fifth Essence”.

Quintessence is the same thing as Chi, Sekhem, and Gnosis. Glamour is a form of quintessence, just as diamonds are a form of carbon. Vitae is theorized by mages to be fused with Quintessence, thus explaining its supernatural properties.

## Quintessence Pool

Every mage has a Quintessence pool. Your Quintessence pool is the free flowing Quintessence that your Avatar can accumulate and safely use, it acts as a Recourse, which means you can expend any amount of dice to roll separately, adding to the result. You can get a maximum of 10 dice in your Quintessence pool through Character Advancement.

When casting a spell, you may set aside any number of Quintessence dice before rolling. After the dice pool for the spell was rolled, the player must roll the Quintessence dice set aside and add the highest result die to the total. After that the dice set aside are considered spent and must be recovered later.

Quintessence dice may have tags attached to them, corresponding to the type of resonance of Quintessence.

# Paradox

Paradox is the collective force of consensual reality fighting back against the enlightened will of the mage.

A useful analogy is to imagine the Tellurian as a huge body of water. Most people move with the currents of reality, floating along on a cushion of their own belief. Some of these sleepers, Hedge magicians or simply the heroically lucky, learn to dip their hands in and alter the flow, but they cannot redirect the river. Vampires and werewolves are predators, fast and agile in the waters of reality, but still confined by the flow of belief. The Mage, however, sees the river for what it is, and can push the water around as they choose.

Paradox is the inertia of 6 million gallons of belief. Mages who change reality with vulgar magic are pushing the river in ways it does not want to go, and risk being drowned by the current. Coincidental magic uses the flow of reality, rather than fighting against it, and can easily avoid Paradox, but even coincidence can risk paradox if it is unbelievable to the local sleepers.

Paradox can take a variety of forms. Backlash, reality directly attacking the offensive mage, can cause temporary, long term, or even permanent wounds, flaws, or oddities. Quiet, a magical form of madness, forces the offending mage to resolve their guilt over disjointing reality. Exceptionally offensive mages can be catapulted into Paradox Realms, or hounded by Paradox spirits.

## Paradox Pool

Mages accumulate Paradox into a dice pool from different sources, they are as follows:

**Casting vulgar magick:** Whenever a Sleeper witnesses you using Magick in obvious ways, the player adds **6** to Paradox and gains a **PP**.

**Hitching while casting a spell:** Whenever a player rolls a hitch, the Storyteller may add that die to Paradox instead of Peril, paying for it as normal.

**Special circumstances:** Certain special circumstances like encounters with Mad Ones may inflict Paradox in unusual ways too.

### Optional Rule: Harsh Paradox

If a Storyteller wants the vulgar magick to be more punishing they may decide to add the effect die of the spell to Paradox instead of a **6**.

The Storyteller is able to use Paradox dice from to cause different effects. The most common uses for Paradox dice are:

**Burn:** Roll Paradox or a part of it to inflict stress of your choice.

**Paradox Flaw:** Spend a die from Paradox and create a Complication attached to the character equal in size to the die spent.

**Paradox Spirit:** Spend a die from Paradox equal to the spirit's highest rated trait, and any number of dice in addition, and drop them into the scene, ready to act when the action order gets to them (which could be right away, if the Storyteller is the one deciding who goes next). All additional dice spent will constitute the Spirit's boss pool.

**Quiet:** Spend any number of dice from Paradox to create a crisis pool of the same dice value representing the character's Quiet.

**Paradox Realm:** Spend a **10** or a **12**, and any additional number of dice from Paradox to separate one player into a Paradox realm, every additional die spent will constitute the Realm's crisis pool.

# Talents

In addition to Hinder each character has a handful of SFX, reflecting special capabilities associated with their many different abilities, these are called talents. These A PC also has at least one Limit. A Limit is a special type of SFX that imposes a disadvantage on your character in order to earn them **PP** or another reward. Whenever you gain a Talent or Limit, you can rename it to better suit your character.

## Sample Talents

When you create a new character, they gain two of the following SFX of your choice (in addition to the *Hinder* SFX all characters receive):

**Adaptable:** Step down and double one die of your choice in your pool.

**All-Out Attack:** Spend a **PP** to target multiple opponents when you roll to inflict Hurt. For each additional target, add **6** and keep an extra effect die.

**Brilliant Under Pressure:** Spend a **PP** to add your Rattled or Tired to your roll to create an asset. If the action succeeds, step down the stress you used.

**Combat Veteran:** When your roll to inflict Hurt or Rattled during a battle includes Firearms or Weaponry, step down the largest die in your pool to add **8**. If your roll succeeds, step up your effect die.

**Distracting Presence:** When you roll to inflict Unsound by distracting someone, add **6** and step up your effect die.

**Strong Empathy:** Step up Empathy on a roll to create an asset related to trust, reading people, or reassurance.

**Energetic:** When you would take Tired stress, spend a **PP** to step down the stress you take. If this steps the stress down below **6**, you take no stress at all.

**Flash of Insight:** When you fail a test to obtain information, you may spend a **PP** or take Unsound **6** to obtain that information by other means.

**Have a Little Faith:** When you would take Rattled stress, spend a **PP** to step down the stress you take. If this steps the stress down below **6**, you take no stress at all.

**Hinder:** Roll **V** instead of **8** for a distinction to earn a **PP**.

**In Harm's Way:** When another character near you takes stress, you can step down the stress they would take, then take **6** stress of the same type yourself.

**Impossible to Ignore:** Spend a **PP** to target multiple opponents when you roll to inflict Unsound. For each additional target, add **6** and keep an extra effect die.

**Inspiring Leadership:** Add a **6** and step up your effect die when you roll Social skills to create assets for allies.

**Keen Intellect:** Add a **6** and step up your effect die when you roll Mental skills to create an asset related to recalling or researching information.

**Master Plan:** Spend a **PP** to add a die to your pool equal to the largest complication anyone has in the scene. After the roll fails or succeeds, step down that complication.

**Misdirection:** When you use Social skills on a roll related to escape, deception, or stealth, step down the largest die in your pool to add **8**. If your roll succeeds, step up your effect die.

**Outmaneuver:** When your roll to inflict Hurt or Tired while outdoors includes Athletics, step down the largest die in your pool to add **8**. If your roll succeeds, step up your effect die.

**Peacemaker:** If you have Hurt stress inflicted by another character in the scene when you roll to de-escalate a conflict, double Empathy in your dice pool. If the roll still fails, take Rattled **6**.

**Push Through It:** Before you roll a dice pool including a Physical skill, spend a **PP** to recover Hurt and step up a Physical attribute for that roll. Take Tired **6** stress if the roll succeeds, or **8** if it fails.

**Reassuring Comrade:** Step up or double Empathy in your dice pool when helping others recover Rattled. You can also spend a **PP** to step down your own or a nearby character's Rattled.

**Reckless Gambit:** When you roll dice, add a die to your pool equal to the largest stress or complication anyone has in the scene. Take a complication at **6** if the roll succeeds, or **8** if it fails.

**Reliable Memory:** Spend a **PP** to reroll a dice pool focused on memory or recall that included Intelligence.

**Skill Focus:** When your pool includes a specialty, you can replace two dice of equal size with one die one step larger.

**Sudden Yet Inevitable:** When someone betrays you or deceives you, or you betray or deceive someone, spend a **PP** to create a **8** asset related to having planned for it.

**Team Player:** When you witness an ally rolling a heroic success, you can step down your own or another witness's Rattled.

**Tough:** When you would take Hurt stress, spend a PP to step down the stress you take. If this steps the stress down below 6, you take no stress at all.

**Trained Physician:** Step up or double Medicine in your dice pool when helping others recover Hurt. You can also spend a PP to step down your own or a nearby character's Hurt.

**Undaunted Determination:** Step up or double Stamina for one roll. If the roll fails, take Tired stress equal to the largest die in your pool.

**Vicious Contempt:** When you roll to inflict Rattled with mockery or contempt, add 6 and step up your effect die.

**Vigilant Eye:** Spend a PP to double Investigation in a pool related to following a trail, aiming at a distant target, or spotting something far off.

**Watch It All Burn:** Add a die to your pool equal to the largest stress or complication anyone has in the scene and step up your effect die. Succeed or fail, take Unsound 6.

You can spend points to take one or more of these SFX at character creation or later

## Magick Talents (Supernatural Talents)

These are the examples of magick-related and supernatural SFX available to mages to inspire the players and Storytellers.

**Advanced Necromancy:** Spend a PP to use both Matter and Life when your action is related to animating the dead.

**Area Effect:** When your effect targets an area or a number of creatures, spend a PP to add a 6 and keep an additional effect die for each additional target past the first.

**Conjunctional Effects Mastery:** When performing a conjunctinal effect add two or more Spheres to a dice pool and step each Sphere down by one for each additional Sphere beyond the first.

**Destructive Proclivities:** When you include a Sphere to destroy an object, spend a PP to step up your effect die.

**Enchant Patterns:** When your effect includes Prime 6 or higher spend Quintessence to inflict 6 Hurt stress.

**Fast Casting:** When your action includes a Sphere, you can gain a 6 complication to inflict 6 Hurt stress.

**Instrument Arsenal:** Spend a PP to create a 8 Instrument asset for a particular type of magick.

**Paradox Contaminating:** When your action includes Prime 12 or higher, you can inflict Paradox on a target besides yourself.

**Paradox Transmitting:** When your action includes Prime 12 or higher and you have the Paradox Contaminating SFX you can recover one Paradox die level for each Paradox die inflicted.

**Primal Channeling:** When your action includes Prime 10 or higher you can recover one Quintessence die for each step of Stress you inflict.

**Pushing Through:** Whenever you take stress caused by a Sphere, spend a PP to step it down. At the end of the session, if you still have stress on that Sphere, step it up.

**Quick Curse:** When your action includes a Sphere, you can gain a 6 to keep a second effect die as a complication on a nearby character.

**Reckless Casting:** Step up or double any Sphere for one roll. If the roll fails, add your Sphere die to Paradox.

**Rein In:** When you include a 10 or 8 Sphere, gain a PP and step it down. You can recover it by activating an opportunity rolled by the GM.

**Swift Warding:** When your action includes a Sphere, you can gain a 6 Moving Too Fast complication to keep a second effect die as a Magical Aegis asset.

**Talent for Growth:** When you succeed at a test including a Sphere, spend a PP to create a Watch And Learn 8 asset. Anyone can use this asset alongside a 4 or 6 Sphere.

## Sphere Talents

Sphere talents are a special case of supernatural talents that are unlocked automatically as you advance your understanding of magick.

**Sphere Perception:** Step up your lowest die on any roll to perceive any phenomena under the purview of Sphere or create a related asset.

You unlock this talent at Sphere rating 4 for that Sphere.

**Sphere Manipulation:** On rolls to create an asset that can be produced by a 6 or lower Sphere rating, add 6 and step up your effect die.

You unlock this talent at Sphere rating 6 for that Sphere.

**Sphere Control:** Spend a PP to create a 8 asset that can be produced by a 8 or lower Sphere rating.

You unlock this talent at Sphere rating 8 for that Sphere.

**Sphere Command:** Spend a PP to step up or double your Sphere die on a roll for an effect that can be accomplished by a 10 or lower Sphere rating.

You unlock this talent at Sphere rating 10 for that Sphere.

**Sphere Mastery:** Take 6 appropriate stress or complication to double your Sphere die for a roll. On a failure, step up the same stress or complication you took to activate.

You unlock this talent at Sphere rating 12 for that Sphere.

# Consequences

While playing Mage characters may face consequences of dealing with the danger. Hits of fiery bolts, stress after an all nighter, twisted ankles, this is what the following chapter will describe.

## Complications

A complication is an unhelpful temporary trait that the opposition includes in their dice pool to make the opposed roll harder for the character with the complication. Complications are given descriptive names and a die rating, starting at **6**.

### Creating Complications

When a player rolls a hitch on any of their dice, the Storyteller can hand over a **PP** and to create a complication instead of adding that die to Peril. This doesn't affect the success or failure of the roll – a complication means something else has gone wrong, making life difficult.

Complications start at **6**, and additional hitches in the same roll step up the complication without the Storyteller giving the player more **PP**. The Storyteller may choose to create multiple complications if there is more than one hitch, but each new complication requires handing over a **PP**. If the player rolls a botch, the Storyteller creates a **12** complication without giving the player a **PP**, and steps it up for each hitch past the first.

Complications are persistent and last until either the PC has recovered from them, or the complication is made irrelevant.

### Worsening Complications

Whenever a player or the Storyteller has the option to give a character a complication, they can instead choose to step up an existing complication, making it worse for the affected character.

Generally, only one complication applies to a specific hindrance or problem. To make a complication worse, it should be stepped up.

### Using Complications

Whenever a player or the Storyteller is rolling against a character that has a relevant complication, they may add it to their dice pool. Doing so doesn't cost anything, and there's no limit to how many applicable complications can be included in a dice pool, nor is there a limit on how many complications a character can have.

## ▼ Complication

If a complication is stepped down to a **4**, the very next time the complication might affect your character, you add it to your own dice pool and earn a **PP** (much like a distinction being used with the Hinder SFX).

Immediately after it's used this way, it's stepped down to zero and eliminated—unless the dice come up with one or more hitches, in which case the Storyteller may choose to activate them and step up the complication to 6 or more.

## Stress

In addition to complications each character also has four stress tracks, these represent a type of a complication that is likely to occur often and will be used often, and thus have some additional rules.

In addition to complications being used to represent temporary traits that hinder the character's actions stress is a measure of your damage and injury. There are four types of stress:

**Harmed:** Pain and injury.

**Unsound:** Confusion and brain fog.

**Rattled:** Fear and anxiety.

**Tired:** Exhaustion.

## Inflicting Stress

Whenever a character fails an action that causes harm as a consequence they receive a **6** die of appropriate stress. Being a target of a successful attack inflicts stress equal to the effect die of the attack. Some SFX can also inflict stress upon a character.

Whenever stress is inflicted, check your stress die, if the stress die rating is equal to or greater than the new stress die, step up your stress die, if the stress die rating is lower than the new stress die or the PC has no stress, inflict stress equal to the new stress die.

## Stressed Out

If any stress die rating is ever stepped up past **12**, the character is taken out (or stressed out) and no longer takes part in the scene. By default, you can't spend a **PP** to delay this effect, though certain SFX may allow to do that. When you're stressed out, you are assumed to have **12** stress for the purposes of taking any additional stress, even though you can no longer act in the scene.

## Using Stress

Just like a complication, whenever a PC engages in a test or contest where their stress would make things more difficult for them, the Storyteller (or an opposing PC) can add the stress die to their opposition pool as if it were an asset.

Stress rated at **4** functions just like a complication rated at **4**: it goes into a player's dice pool instead of being added to the opposition dice pool and earns the player a **PP**. Right after that test or contest, it either goes away or — if the player rolls a hitch on one of their dice — gets stepped up as the injury gets worse.

Only one type of stress can be used against a character at any given time, unless the Storyteller pays the player a **PP** to add an additional stress die to the opposition dice pool. Characters can be affected by both stress and complications at the same time, however.

## Recovering Stress

All stress die ratings are always stepped down by one during any scene specifically framed to act as a rest period, downtime, or transition between action-heavy scenes. If a character takes stress in one scene from a battle, and the next scene is another battle soon after the first without any time spent resting up, then no stress is recovered.

To recover any remaining stress, characters can attempt a recovery test vs a dice pool consisting of the stress die and a base difficulty of **3 3**. The Storyteller may rule that other traits affect the roll, similar to a standard test. The PC or their circumstances must be capable of improving the situation to make a roll.

When the test is complete, one of the following happens:

- If the PC beat the difficulty and the effect die is greater than the stress, the stress is eliminated.
- If the PC beat the difficulty and the effect die is equal to or smaller than the stress, the stress is stepped down by one. Time must pass before another test can be made to recover the stress.
- If the PC failed to beat the difficulty, the stress remains as it is.
- If the PC beat the difficulty but rolled a hitch, the Storyteller may hand over a **PP** and introduce a new stress or complication related to the one that was just recovered.
- If the PC failed to beat the difficulty and rolled a hitch, the stress is stepped up by one step for every hitch rolled.

## Trauma

Trauma is long-term stress. Any time a PC's stress is stepped up past **12**, they're stressed out of the scene, and they gain **1** trauma of the same type of stress that just increased. Trauma functions just like stress but is much harder to recover.

During any scene in which a character is stressed out and has taken trauma, additional stress to the character goes directly to trauma. Once trauma is stepped up beyond **12**, the character is permanently out of options — they're dead, hopelessly incoherent, lost to their own psyche, or whatever seems most appropriate.

If the next scene is a recovery, transition, or otherwise restful scene in which the PC can be taken care of or allowed to recuperate, the PC's stress automatically steps down by one, but the trauma remains at the level it was at the end of the previous scene. Recovering trauma requires a test using any appropriate traits vs a base difficulty of **4 6** plus the trauma die.

When the test is complete, one of the following happens:

- If you beat the difficulty, the trauma die rating is stepped down by one.
- If you fail to beat the difficulty, the trauma does not get any better or worse. You can't try to recover that trauma again until time passes.
- If you beat the difficulty but roll a hitch, the GM may hand over a **PP** and introduce either a complication that will hinder the PC in the next scene or inflict stress of a different type than the trauma that was being recovered, starting at **6** (or stepping up by one if the PC already had stress of that type).
- If you fail to beat the difficulty and roll one or more hitches, the trauma gets worse, stepping up by one for each hitch rolled. If this steps the trauma up past **12**, that's all, folks.

# Character Creation

## Step 0: Get a character sheet

TODO.

## Step 1: Choose Distinctions

- One for your personality & sleeper life.  
Examples: *Rebellious Ex-Barista, Insecure Artist...*;
- One for your Awakened affiliation.  
Examples: *Hermetic Adept Major, A Verbena Witch, A NWO Agent...*;
- One for your focus.  
Examples: *High Ritual Magick, Witchcraft, Dominion...*;

## Step 2: Assign Attributes

Each attribute defaults to  $\heartsuit^4$  and you have 12 points to step them up.

Maximum attribute value at character creation is  $\heartsuit^{10}$ .

## Step 3: Assign Skills

Each Skill defaults to  $\heartsuit^4$  and you have 16 points to step up skills.

Maximum skill value at character creation is  $\heartsuit^{10}$ .

## Step 4: Spheres

You have 6 points to spend on sphere rating, starting on  $\heartsuit^4$ , maximum Sphere rating at character creation is  $\heartsuit^8$ .

At least one point must be assigned to Tradition's affinity Sphere, to reflect your training in Tradition's specialty.

## Step 5: Assign Specialties, Signature Assets, and additional Powers

Players have 9 points to spend on these options:

- One point to buy a Signature Asset;
- One point to step up a Signature Asset;
- One point to buy a Specialty;
- Two points to buy a new Sphere;
- Two points to step your Sphere up;
- Two points buy a new locked SFX;

At character creation Signature Assets may not be larger than  $\heartsuit^8$ .

## Step 6: Assign SFX and Quintessence Pool

Write down your SFX. Assign  $\heartsuit^6$  to the Quintessence pool, this is your Quintessence pool size.

# Character Advancement

Milestones are a way to track progress and earn experience points (XP) that players then use to unlock character upgrades, as well as story unlockables and other narrative benefits in Mage.

Characters have two milestones. Often, one is shared by the entire group, while the other is chosen personally.

## Milestones have three different levels:

**1 XP:** can be hit as many times as it applies (or once per test or contest)

**3 XP:** can only be hit once per scene

**10 XP:** can only be hit once per session

## Session Milestones

GMs can offer milestones at the start of a session or reveal them after major turning points in the session's ongoing narrative. Session milestones tie the PCs directly into the story, giving them personal motivations (and XP!) for becoming involved.

As you have two milestones, you can replace your current personal milestone with the session milestone, or if the GM allows, replace the group milestone until the session milestone is completed.

## Unlockables

XP earned from achieving milestones may be spent between scenes to increase a PC's traits or to unlock other benefits. You may spend as much XP as you've earned to unlock multiple upgrades at once.

### Spend 1 XP to:

- Start the next game session with 1 extra Plot Point. (You can't start a game session with more than 5 Plot Points.)

### Spend 5 XP to:

- Raise a **V** skill to **6**.
- Add a **6** signature asset or specialty.
- Rewrite a distinction.

### Spend 10 XP to:

- Add a new talent.
- Raise a **6** skill or signature asset to **8**.
- Raise a **V** attribute to **6**.
- Add a **V** Sphere.

### Spend 15 XP to:

- Raise a **8** skill or signature asset to **10**.
- Raise a **6** attribute to **8**.
- Raise a **V** Sphere to **6**.
- Add a **6** to Quintessence pool size.

### Spend 20 XP to:

- Raise a **10** skill or signature asset to **12**.
- Raise a **8** attribute to **10**.
- Raise a **6** Sphere to **8**.

### Spend 25 XP to:

- Raise a **10** attribute to **12**.
- Raise a **8** Sphere to **10**.

### Spend 30 XP to:

- Raise a **10** Sphere to **12**.

Primed by Cortex

# MAGE

The Ascension



**MAGE**  
THE ASCENSION

PRIMED BY  
**cortex**  
COMMUNITY