

Primed by Cortex

# MAGICK

The Ascension

A guide to Cortex Prime system  
conversion of the game

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# Distinctions

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Distinctions are a trait that represents a character's background, personality, and role in the game and that differentiates them from other PCs and GMCs.

Each player has three Distinctions: Personality, Sleeper Life, Awakened Identity.

Distinctions are the first of your Prime Sets to be used in every roll and are rated at ♦8.

## Personality

Who is your character? What are they at their core?  
What motivates them?

The personality distinction defines your core personality and concept in one short phrase.

## Sleeper Life

Before you Awakened, you were someone, you had a job, were studying or trying to just get by. Describe your Sleeper side, what still remains of your Sleeper past.

## Awakened Identity

After you Awakened you changed, a truth of the world opened up to you, you now belong to a group of other Awakened or you are fending for your own, you have a method to your magick or it is a chaotic collection of random knowledge that somehow works. Be it as it may, magick is now an inherent part of you.

# Attributes

Attributes represent raw ability and essential traits every character possesses.

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.

## 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 she speaks, and how much people can read into her intentions.

### Composure

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

# Skills

Whereas Attributes represent innate ability, Skills reflect behaviors learned and honed over a lifetime. These are things that could be practiced or learned from a book.

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

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 her understand what Crowley did... and to use those principles herself.

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.

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## 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 she intends. With Politics, she knows 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 re-location. 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 her how to navigate the city, how to get information from unlikely sources, and where they'll be (relatively) safe. If they wants 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 she says, hide motivations, and notice deception in others.

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

# Spheres

All Magi Possess True Magick, though alternative names for the trait set are possible (Spheres, Enlightened Science, Ars Magia).

True Magick consists of 9 Spheres, each governing a fragment of the Tapestry. And each Sphere is ranked ▲ to 12, representing the depth and intricacies of the mage's understanding of it, and therefore their power to control it.

## Sphere Rating

All magick is codified into practices based on practitioners mastery over a Sphere, the Practices are:

### Initiate ▲4

**Perception:** 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 she can put her observations to good use.

### Apprentice ▲6

**Manipulation:** The mage begins to use the Sphere to make small alterations in her local reality. The mage begins to use the Sphere to make small alterations in her local reality.

### Disciple ▲8

**Control:** 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 ▲10

**Command:** An impressive command of the Sphere in question allows the mage to perform dramatic feats.

### Master ▲12

**Mastery:** 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 her whim.

## Correspondence

*Connections and Dimensions*

By manipulating the ties between places, objects, and people, the Correspondence Sphere allows a magus 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 magus reach across distances and affect hidden or faraway targets. Tenuous connections require several successes, but spanning close connections is easy for a magus who understands this Art.

On its own, Correspondence allows the magus to reach across distances, even to places she cannot see or touch. At Rank ▲6 or higher, she can grasp items and work with them from a distance. To manipulate other objects or beings in ways other than physical contact, however, that magus 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 magus 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 Immediate Spatial Perceptions/ Landscape of the Mind**

Basic spatial understanding allows a magus to sense things in her immediate vicinity even if she cannot perceive them with her normal senses. Using that perception, she 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.

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

That magus can now extend her 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, she can also thicken space to cover her tracks.

By adding Life or Matter to Rank 5

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

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

Now the magus can tear holes in space, large enough for her 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 she is alone and

is 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 magus 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 magus can move things around from a distance, levitating, manipulating or teleporting them without physical contact.

#### **10 Rend Space/Ward/Co-locate Self**

Creating larger holes in space, the magus 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, magus can also appear in several different places at once. To function, however, she must add Mind 4 to that Effect. Each self mirrors the original's actions unless she also adds Life 6 to that Effect, granting independence to every self.

#### **12 Spatial Mutation/Co-Location**

Distance and dimensions become child's play to a magus at this Rank. She 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 ♈, the magus may also expand her senses to perceive many different places at once.

## Entropy

### *Chance and Mortality*

Controlling the energies of probability and decay, an Entropy-schooled magus 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 his 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 magus assumes some of the Resonance of decay within his own Pattern, and bears the weight of mortality within his mind and soul. Still, the powers of this Sphere – though less obviously destructive than those of other Arts – give that magus 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.

### ▼ Sense Flaws, Fate & Fortune/Ring of Truth

Basic Entropic understanding allows a magus 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 she’s telling what she believes to be the truth. Although they cannot yet control such phenomena, the magus 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 his advantage.

### 6 Control Probability

Now the magus 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 his 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.

### 8 Affect Predictable Patterns

Things eventually break down. At this Rank, the magus 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 magus 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.

### 10 Affect Living Things

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

### 12 Affect Thought/Shape Memes/Binding Oath

The most esoteric applications of Entropy allow the magus to alter ideas, strengthening or breaking down concepts. Although he does not affect the actual

workings of consciousness, he 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 his 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 her loyalty; if she breaks the oath, then her luck goes really, really bad.

## 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 magus 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 his or her 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 Perceive Forces

Unlocking basic perceptions of the elements, a Forces-savvy magus can sense the flow of forces in her environment. She can boost her 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.

### 6 Manipulate Forces/Elemental Touch

Although she cannot conjure energies just yet, the magus may now alter the flow of existing forces. Sound can be muted or amplified; shadows can be gathered, shaped, or dispelled. The magus 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 her hand, she can disrupt electrical currents; flare flames; or direct the course of winds, momentum, or gravity.

Combining this Rank with other Spheres, that magus could also make an object (Matter) or organism (Life) attract or repel forces. Thus, she 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 magus 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.

## ⑧ Transmute Minor Forces/Telekinetics/ The Dragon's Touch

Now the magus can alter and invoke the energies she could only touch before. By adding Prime 6, she may conjure winds, fire, electricity, gravitational wells, and so forth. Combining this Rank with Life or Matter, she 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, she 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.

## ⑩ Control Major Forces/Gift of Zeus/ Weather-Witching

Larger Effects become possible. Our magus 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.

## ⑫ Transmute Major Forces/Conjuring Infernos

With godlike power, a Forces Master works her Will upon vast areas. She 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.

## 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, he evolves his understanding toward godlike ends. A true Master, therefore, may end life, but he 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 magus 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 magus 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 Sense Life

Basic Life knowledge allows a person to read the presence and health of nearby life forms. With such knowledge, the magus can discern a living being's age, sex, and overall health. By combining those perceptions with other Spheres, he 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).

#### 5 Alter Simple Life-Forms/Heal Self

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

#### 8 Transform Simple Life-Forms/Alter Self/Heal Others

Advanced understanding allows the magus 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 his own Pattern, that magus can work substantial alterations on himself, growing gills, claws, armor and so forth. He remains essentially human, but

begins to master the definition of “human.”

Meanwhile, he also gains the ability to heal damage to other complex organisms, put them to sleep, or inflict harm upon their living Pattern forms.

#### 10 Alter Complex Life-Forms/Transform Self

At this Rank, the magus may enact radical changes on any complex organism – people, dogs, horses, and so forth. He can uplift other species with new limbs, opposable thumbs, increased brain capacity, etc., so long as he does not change their intrinsic nature. Working with his own Pattern, that magus can transform himself into other life forms of similar size and mass; he 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.

#### 12 Transform & Create Complex Life-Forms/Perfect Metamorphosis

Now the Master of Life may adopt any form he wishes to achieve and may transform other complex organisms the same way. His expertise allows him 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, his creations remain mindless, soulless sacks of life – alive, but nothing more.

## 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 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, she 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.

## 6 Basic Transmutation

With advanced knowledge, the magus can transmute one substance into another, so long as she does not alter its essential shape, temperature, or basic state (gas, liquid, solid). Depending upon that magus's practice, she 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 magus 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 magus 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 magus 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.

## 8 Alter Form

At this Rank, the magus can alter the shape of materials in whatever ways she desires, and she 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 magus 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.

## 10 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 magus 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 magus understands the principles behind such things (in game terms, possesses the proper Skills). As usual, though, complicated creations demand extended.

### **⑫ 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 ⑯), 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.

## **Mind**

### *Art of Consciousness*

Human beings perceive reality through complex interplays of consciousness. The Mind-mage, therefore, alters the realities of his 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.

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

With basic mental magick, the magus learns to sense the emotions and surface impulses of other people. Although he cannot read specific thoughts, he is able to perceive psychic impressions about a person or (with Matter ▷) a place or object. Through this perception, he can guess at the nature of weak Resonance signatures and read the stronger ones outright. Even without Resonance, that magus 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 magus also learns to shield his own mind from the thoughts and emotions of other people, constructing mental barriers around his aura, emotions, and consciousness.

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

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

Now the magus 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.

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

With increasing skill, the magus 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, he is able to employ telekinesis, pyrokinetics, and psychophysical assault, influencing objects, elements, or people with the power of his mind. Unlike most other Effects, this sort of thing is not coincidental, although such talents do have a place within popular culture.

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

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

### 12 Control Subconscious/Forge Psyche/ Untether Consciousness

A true Mind Master commands not only his own conscience but other minds as well. He may alter someone's mind forever, raising (or lowering) her Traits, rewriting her personality, changing her Distinction Trait, or (with Life 10) switching her mind into another body. He can do the same things to his

own mind as well, and he 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.

## 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 magus, therefore, can create and destroy things at their essential level, power items of enchanted or Enlightened creation, and sustain her own life essence through her understanding of Primal Force.

Ripe with such energies, a Prime Sphere specialist pulsates with Primal Force. Unless she is working to suppress it (or has wiped her aura clean with high-Rank magicks), her Resonance bears strong signatures from her 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 Etheric Senses/Consecration/Infuse Personal Quintessence

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

When infusing her Quintessence into an object, that magus may also consecrate the object with her personal energy. When she shapeshifts, steps sideways, or otherwise alters her Pattern's metaphysical nature, that consecrated object will then change with her. In the process, it also picks up her personal Resonance... which, because it both identifies her and becomes essentially connected to her, is not always a good thing.

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

Attaining a degree of control over Prime energies, the magus may divert Quintessence into new or existing forms. Combined with other Spheres, this allows that magus 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, she 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 magus 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 magus herself.

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

By tapping into the flow of Quintessence around her, the Prime-skilled magus can draw both free and raw Quintessence from Nodes, Junctures (special times), and Tass (solidified Quintessence)... and she may channel that energy into new and existing Patterns as

well. With such powers, she could (with Life **8**) pull small amounts of life force from a living sacrifice or (with Matter **6**) 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 magus 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.

### **10 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 magus 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, she is able to enchant items permanently and draw Quintessence from the energetic Wellsprings of exciting events. By infusing her personal Quintessence into a Periapt, the magus might use Matter **10** to create a Soulgem - a portable vessel that is filled with her own Resonance and energy.

### **12 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 her to obliterate a living being by consuming all of his life force, whereas the reverse of that power infuses him with life force so strong that he is essentially blessed. Combining that ability with Life **12**, she may turn complex organisms into Soulflowers - living Periaps

who become walking batteries of boosted Quintessence. Such Mastery also allows the magus to create Nodes in significant places, and to nullify Paradox.

## Spirit

### *Art of the Otherworlds*

Reaching into the essence beyond Earthly life and matter, the Spirit magus 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 magus 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, he 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.

### ▼ Spirit Sight/Spirit Sense

To most of humanity, the spirit world remains invisible. Not to a magus who knows the Spirit Sphere. Although he'll be most attuned to spirits with Resonance similar to his own, that magus 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 magus 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.

### ■ Touch Spirit/Manipulate Gauntlet

Perception moves to contact. The Spirit-savvy magus 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 magus cannot lower the Gauntlet to less than 10 within the mortal world.

By adding other Spheres, that magus 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).

### ■ Pierce Gauntlet/Step Sideways/Rouse & Lull Spirit

Now the magus can cross over, transmuting his living tissue to ephemera. He 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 his own; bringing large items or other people across demands a higher Spirit Rank. Meanwhile, a combined Spirit 8/Mind 6 Effect allows the magus to read Resonance, Synergy, and other spiritual energies (Essence, a spirit's place within a hierarchy, etc.).

At this Rank, a mortal magus can also harm an Umbral entity as if they was using Life 8 against that entity. While Spirit 6 allows the magus to touch that entity, Spirit 8 lets him actually damage its ephemeral Pattern's integrity the way that Life 8 damages a physical creature's form.

By combining this Rank with Matter ♦ and Prime ▲, the magus 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 magus rouse the slumbering spirits within objects or places, or else put active spirits to sleep. (See Awakening Substances in Chapter Nine, p. 443).

### ⑩ Rend Gauntlet/Seal Breach/Bind Spirit

As the magus 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 magus 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 magus can even turn himself into a temporary Fetish, channeling a spirit entity into his mortal body; in such cases, they loses his ability to use true magick, but they may employ the capabilities of the spirit inside him. On the flipside, they can also exorcise a spirit that has possessed a mortal host. In all cases, the magus enters a series of resisted rolls against the spirit, pitting his Willpower against that spirit's own.

### ⑫ Forge Ephemera/Gilgul/Break the Dreamshell

The Spirit Master is now able to command ephemera itself, creating, challenging, and destroying spirit matter as they Wills. 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 magus's Avatar. Such powers are always vulgar and feature devastating consequences even when the magus succeeds.

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

## 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 magus 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, she 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 magus who manipulates the Time Sphere tends to appear distant from the moment at hand. Although she might have excellent timing, her 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.

### ▼ Time Sense

Temporal understanding begins with the magus's own perceptions of time. At this stage, she develops 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 magus can notice them as well. Combined with additional Spheres, this Rank allows the magus to detect the influence of the Time Sphere on other spells or Patterns too.

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

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

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

### **8 Time Contraction or Dilation/"Bullet Time"/Rewind Time**

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

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

Combining this Rank with other Spheres, the magus 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 she just left (Life 8/Mind 4), or even invoke multiple probabilities (Entropy 8). Again, such attempts are Paradox magnets with awful long-term consequences.

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

Now the magus learns to withdraw herself 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 magus can also set a temporal anchor point for herself for when she dares to travel through time at Rank 12.

### **12 Temporal Travel/Time Immunity**

The “Dr. Who Effect” allows the magus 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 magus 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?

# 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 disjoining reality. Exceptionally offensive mages can be catapulted into Paradox Realms, or hounded by Paradox spirits.

## Paradox Pool

Mages accumulate Paradox into a 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 the pool and gains 1 **PP**.

### 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 the pool instead of a **6**.

- **Hitching while casting a spell:** Whenever a player rolls a hitch, the Storyteller may add that die to a Paradox pool instead of the Doom pool, paying for it as normal.
- **Special circumstances:** Certain special circumstances like encounters with Mad Ones may inflict Paradox in unusual ways too.

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

- **Burn:** Roll the Paradox pool or a part of it to inflict stress of your choice.
- **Paradox Flaw:** Spend a die from the Paradox pool and create a Complication attached to the character equal in size to the die spent.
- **Paradox Spirit:** Spend a die from the Paradox pool 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 the Paradox pool 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 the Paradox pool to separate one player into a Paradox realm, every additional die spent will constitute the Realm's crisis pool.

# SFX

## Universal SFX

All Magi benefit from these SFX:

**Affinity Sphere:** Spend a **PP** to double the Sphere die in your pool if the Sphere you are using is your affinity Sphere.

**Spend Willpower:** Take **6** Unsound stress to gain a **PP** or add a third die to your total on a roll.

**Necessary Tools:** Whenever your action includes a Sphere you must use at least one tool conforming to your Paradigm, otherwise treat all 1s and 2s as hitches and gain 1 **PP**.

**Opposed Resonance:** Step down the highest die in the pool when employing opposed Resonance in the casting.

**Appropriate Resonance:** Step up the lowest die in the pool when employing appropriate Resonance in the casting.

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

## Magick SFX (Supernatural SFX)

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

**Advanced Necromancy:** Spend 1 **PP** to use both Matter and Life when your action is related to animating the dead.

**Area Effect:** When your action includes a Sphere, spend 1 **PP** to add a **6** and keep an additional effect die for each additional target past the first.

**Conjunctional Effects Mastery:** Use two or more Spheres in a single dice pool and step each Sphere

down by one for each additional Sphere beyond the first.

**Discard Instruments:** When unlocking this SFX choose a Sphere rated **8** or higher Necessary Tools SFX doesn't apply for effects unlocked at rating two steps down. You can buy this SFX multiple times choosing a new Sphere each time.

**Enchant Patterns:** When your action includes Prime **6** you can take **6** Quintessence stress to inflict **6** Hurt stress.

**Extra Attacks:** Spend 1 **PP** to add **6** and keep a second effect die as a complication or Hurt stress against an extra target. If you have Time **8** or higher, you can act against more than two targets, adding **6** and keeping an extra effect die for each target beyond the first.

**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 stress 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 stress level for each Paradox stress inflicted.

**Primal Channeling:** When your action includes Prime **10** or higher and you have the Primal Fraying SFX you can recover one Quintessence die for each step of Stress.

**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 the Paradox pool.

**Note:** Describe a magickal Effect when buying this SFX, whenever you cast it add a **6** to your pool. You can buy this SFX multiple times specifying a new Effect each time.

**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.

# **Adversity**

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**Doom pool**

# Assets

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## Signature Assets

In Mage, Signature Assets represent your social connections, special equipment, status in Sleeper or Awakened society, special arcane knowledge, Sancta etc, so almost anything that is not innate to your character but is important to them.

## Dropping 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.

# 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 (a 1) on any of their dice, the Storyteller can hand over a **PP** and to create a complication instead of adding that die to the doom pool. 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 **6** 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 **8** **8**. 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 **6** 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 ♦♦ 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, or motivation;
- One for your Sleeper life;
- One for your affiliation with a Group of Magi. >  
Examples: A Hermetic Mage, A Verbena Witch, A NWO Agent...;

Each of your distinctions benefits from the Hinder SFX:

**Hinder:** Roll a  $\heartsuit$  instead of a  $\diamondsuit$  for a distinction to earn 1  $\text{PP}$ .

## Step 2: Assign Attributes

Each attribute defaults to  $\heartsuit^4$  and you have 3, 5 and 7 points to step them up.

## Step 3: Assign Skills

Each Skill defaults to  $\heartsuit^4$  and you have 15 points to step up skills.

Maximum skill at character creation is  $\heartsuit^{10}$ .

As a general guide, 9 points represent what you learned from your Sleeper Life and 6 represent what you've learned since Awakening if you're playing a competent but young mage.

## 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 Power;
- Two points to step your Power up;
- Two points for a new SFX;

At character creation Signature Assets may not be larger than  $\heartsuit^8$ .

## Step 6: Assign universal SFX and Quintessence Pool

Write down universal SFX. Assign  $\heartsuit^6$  to the Quintessence pool, this is your Quintessence pool size.

# Character Advancement

In The Adept character advancement is handled with milestones. Between scenes you can spend XP to increase your traits or unlock other benefits.

## Spend 5 XP to:

- Unlock an SFX.
- Raise a **4** Skill to **6**.
- Add a **6** Signature Asset or Specialty.
- Rewrite a distinction.

## Spend 10 XP to:

- Add a new SFX.
- Raise a **6** Skill or Signature Asset to **8**.
- Raise a **4** Attribute to **6**.
- Add a **4** Sphere.
- Add a **6** to Quintessence pool size.

## Spend 15 XP to:

- Raise a **8** Skill or Signature Asset to **10**.
- Raise a **6** Attribute to **8**.
- Raise a **4** Sphere to **6**.

## Spend 20 XP to:

- Raise an existing **10** specialty to **12**.
- Raise a **10** Skill or Signature Asset to **12**.
- Raise a **8** Attribute to **10**.
- Raise a **6** Sphere to **8**.
- Add a **6** to your Quintessence pool.

## 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